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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than 400 Teachers and Scholars Submit Letter to BLM Calling for Arctic Refuge Protections

Albuquerque, N.M. – Tomorrow, a letter will be submitted to the Bureau of Land Management on behalf of more than 400 teachers and scholars from across the United States and beyond in recognition that fossil fuel development on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would devastate an Arctic nursery of global significance. [You can read the final letter in its entirety here.](#)

“Fossil fuel development in the Coastal Plain would devastate an Arctic nursery of global significance. It would violate human rights, jeopardize food security, and threaten the health and safety of Indigenous communities. It would contribute to the escalating crises of climate change and biological annihilation. The Arctic Refuge is an irreplaceable ecological treasure. Its fate should not be decided on an expedited timeline that prioritizes outcome over process to benefit the oil industry and its allies,” the teachers and scholars write.

The letter is being submitted to coincide with the closing of BLM’s public comment period on its draft environmental impact statement on oil and gas leasing of the Arctic Refuge coastal plain. The public comment period is scheduled to close March 13.

The letter campaign was spearheaded by the following four teachers and scholars from the United States and Canada. These teachers and scholars have been involved in educating the public about the importance of defending the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and upholding Indigenous rights.

Rosemary Ahtungaruak (Iñupiaq), Arctic Indigenous Scholar, Arctic Research Consortium of the United States (Alaska, USA)

Subhankar Banerjee, Lannan Chair and Professor of Art and Ecology, University of New Mexico (New Mexico, USA)

Finis Dunaway, Professor of History, Trent University (Ontario, Canada)

Norma Kassi (Vuntut Gwitchin), Director of Indigenous Collaboration at the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (Yukon, Canada)

“As teachers and scholars, we know that younger generations are worried about the escalating dangers to our planet’s biological, climate and life-support systems. The short-term drive to drill in the Arctic undercuts their hopes for a sustainable future. The natural and cultural values of the Arctic Refuge far exceed any oil that may lie beneath the coastal plain. Rather than rushing to lease and drill,



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the U.S. government should keep this cherished place and vibrant ecosystem protected for generations to come.”

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