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**Interior Department, Bureau of Land Management announce plan to gut protections in Western Arctic**  
*Alternatives could open Teshekpuk Lake Special Area up to oil development*

Washington, D.C.—The Bureau of Land Management announced today it is seeking public input on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a new integrated activity plan (IAP) for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The Notice of Availability will officially publish in the Federal Register tomorrow, Friday, Nov. 22, 2019.

**Alaska Wilderness League issues the following statements in response:**

“The Interior Department spent years working with local stakeholders including tribal and local governments, conservation organizations, the state of Alaska, the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group as well as the public to build consensus on the Reserve’s current management plan,” **said Kristen Miller, Conservation Director at Alaska Wilderness League.** “It was built on a foundation of broad public and scientific input that recognized special areas of critical importance that must be protected for the benefit of all Americans. Abandoning this science-based, common sense approach in favor of oil and gas interests is recklessly short-sighted and will place at risk local Indigenous communities and the region’s diverse wildlife that rely on this vital piece of our nation’s public lands.”

“Special Areas in the current plan were designated to protect significant wildlife, subsistence, wilderness and other values,” **said Pat Pourchot\*, former Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior for Alaska Affairs under the Obama administration, and current board member of Alaska Wilderness League.** “Noteworthy is the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area which protects the calving grounds, migration routes and insect relief areas of the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd, from which local residents harvest between three and five thousand animals annually. This Special Area also contains internationally important waterfowl nesting, migration and molting area surrounding the Lake; Endangered Species Act-listed Polar Bear, and spectacled and Steller’s eiders; and the highest breeding density of shorebirds in the circumpolar Arctic. Alternatives C and D of this proposed plan revision would permit oil and gas leasing and development in this Special Area which would seriously impact these critical resources and values.”

*\* Over the past 46 years in Alaska, Pat Pourchot served as a senator and representative in the Alaska State Legislature, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Senior Policy Representative with Audubon Alaska, and most recently, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior*



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*for Alaska Affairs. Pat currently serves as Vice President of Alaska Wilderness League's board of directors.*

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*Alaska Wilderness League stands with, serves and supports the many people and organizations that believe in a sustainable future for Alaska. We honor and respect the cultures of Alaska Natives whose way of life remains deeply connected to the state's land, waters, and wildlife. We believe that Alaska's long-term economic future and subsistence traditions are inexorably tied to the health and sound stewardship of its natural resources, which support hunting, fishing, tourism and unrivaled outdoor experiences that are central to Alaskans' quality of life.*



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