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Reprehensible: Energy Secretary Comments Compare Banking Decisions to Racial Redlining

Washington — Alaska Wilderness League executive director Adam Kolton issued the following statement on U.S. Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette’s comparing decisions by major banks to forego financing Arctic oil development to racial redlining practices:

“It’s time for the Trump administration to stop bending over backwards to help fossil fuel companies at the expense of frontline communities during this national health crisis. Energy Secretary Brouillette’s recent comments equating the Arctic oil financing decisions of major U.S. banks to the kind of pervasive racial discrimination experienced by African Americans and other minority communities throughout our country’s history is reprehensible and wrong-headed.

The denial of loans and mortgages through systemic racism is not remotely the same as sensible, free market decisions not to invest in the destruction of the wildest place left in America. In fact, it has been the financing of massive coal, tar sands and other oil and gas projects that has too often compromised the health and well-being of frontline communities, leading to dramatically higher cancer and asthma rates among people of color.

By committing not to finance Arctic Refuge drilling, major banks have responded to requests from the Gwich’in people whose cultural survival depends on the protection of these lands they consider sacred. They are responding to the vast majority of Americans who oppose drilling in our nation’s largest and most iconic wildlife refuge and a haven for calving caribou, denning polar bears and nesting migratory birds. These banks are also simply responding to real world economics. Making a long-term bet on extracting oil from one of the most remote landscapes on earth for a speculative fix of oil makes little business sense, especially when considering the necessary transition to cleaner sources of energy.”

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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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