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**Alaska Wilderness League \* Audubon Alaska \* Defenders of Wildlife \* Sierra Club  
The Wilderness Society \* World Wildlife Fund**

### **Rep. Jared Huffman Introduces Polar Bear Cub Survival Act**

WASHINGTON (July 30, 2020) — Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) introduced the [Polar Bear Cub Survival Act of 2020](#) in response to reports that lease sales in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are imminent. Drilling would further threaten the critically-imperiled Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population, especially by increasing the risk of death to newborn polar bear cubs sheltered in maternal dens in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Successful denning in Arctic Refuge is vital to sustaining this imperiled population. Rep. Huffman's bill would safeguard polar bears by prohibiting oil and gas activities from impacting maternal denning habitat on the coastal plain of Arctic Refuge.

#### **Quote from Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) below:**

"The Trump administration's rushed attempts to open the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas drilling will have virtually endless devastating consequences to the environment and peoples and animals that call these lands home – including already threatened polar bears," said **Rep. Huffman**. "The proposed oil exploration would further threaten this species, crushing and destroying their dens and cause some mother polar bears to abandon their maternity dens leaving any surviving cubs to perish. My bill takes a clear, science-driven approach to protecting this imperiled polar bear population from proposed oil activities in the Arctic Refuge as the government continues to haggle over the ill-conceived plan to lease, explore, and develop one of the last sacred American wildernesses."

#### **Quotes from conservation groups below:**

"Oil and gas development in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge jeopardizes the existence of the [Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear](#) population, which is already one of the world's most imperiled due to climate change and habitat loss. Reproductive success is key to saving these imperiled bears, but [polar bears and cubs](#) will be harmed by oil and gas development. Rep. Huffman's bill is an antidote to the Trump administration's reckless plan to lease Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the critical polar bear maternal denning habitat that Arctic refuge provides," said Jamie Rappaport Clark, **president and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife**.

"The Trump administration's reckless plans for drilling in the Arctic Refuge would pose an unacceptable risk to critically threatened polar bear mothers and cubs," said **Sierra Club Lands Protection Program Director Athan Manuel**. "We applaud Rep. Huffman for his leadership in defending the Arctic Refuge and the species that depend on this unique place for survival."

"By protecting habitat for polar bears, a keystone species of America's Arctic, we are also protecting important areas for birds, and other wildlife that will have to learn to adapt with a rapidly changing climate," said **Natalie Dawson, executive director for Audubon Alaska**. "This legislation would protect rivers and creeks that provide nesting habitat for our world's migrating birds in the summer, and critical habitat for polar bears in the winter. Climate change will drive bears and birds to seek out new food,

shelter, and territories, and we need to create laws that promote the resilience of species in our changing world, or risk losing them forever."

"The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge provides the densest onshore polar bear denning habitat in all of America's Arctic, and its importance will only increase as a result of the climate crisis," said **Karlin Itchoak, Alaska director for The Wilderness Society**. "Protecting this area from oil drilling, pollution and toxic contamination is also essential to ensuring the survival of Indigenous Gwich'in and Iñupiat communities in Alaska and Canada, which have been the original stewards of the land for thousands of years."

"The Arctic Refuge is one of America's most majestic public lands and vital to the survival of the endangered Southern Beaufort Sea polar bears, with oil and gas development and climate change threatening their very existence," said **Margaret Williams, managing director, Arctic Program, World Wildlife Fund**. "This bill would provide critical safeguards for the polar bear maternal denning habitat in the refuge as the Administration and industry continue to push a damaging plan to lease and develop one of our last and most sacred American wildernesses."

"The threatened Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population is increasingly relying on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain as maternal denning habitat due to climate change and loss of sea ice," said **Adam Kolton, executive director of Alaska Wilderness League**. "Mother bears use these dens to birth and nurture their newborn cubs, but during the winter months dens are hidden under the snow and visually undetectable. We already know that current den detection methods are wildly inaccurate, missing 55% of polar bear dens in surveyed areas. Rep. Jared Huffman's bill is vital because there's no way to ensure that we're not going to end up killing polar bears during an industrial intrusion into the heart of the wildest place in America. Climate change is having an enormous impact on the Arctic, and there's simply no reason to put polar bears at additional risk there."

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*Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With over 1.8 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. For more information, visit [Newsroom.Defenders.org](http://Newsroom.Defenders.org) and follow us on Twitter [@DefendersNews](https://twitter.com/DefendersNews).*

*The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3.8 million members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org).*

*The Wilderness Society, founded in 1935, is the leading conservation organization working to protect wilderness and inspire all people to care for our wild places. With more than one million members and supporters, The Wilderness Society has led the effort to permanently protect 109 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands. [www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org)*

*WWF is one of the world's leading conservation organizations, working in nearly 100 countries for over half a century to help people and nature thrive. With the support of more than 5 million members worldwide, WWF is dedicated to delivering science-based solutions to preserve the diversity and abundance of life on Earth, halt the degradation of the environment and combat the climate crisis. Visit [www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org) to learn more and keep up with the latest conservation news by following [@WWFNews](https://twitter.com/WWFNews) on Twitter and signing up for our newsletter and news alerts [here](#).*

*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. [www.alaskawild.org](http://www.alaskawild.org)*