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## **Groups sue Trump agency for illegal plan to expand leasing, drilling in the NPRA**

*Lawsuit charges BLM with violating NEPA, other laws in plan to hand public land to fossil fuel industry*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Six groups filed a [lawsuit](#) Monday, August 24 in U.S. District Court charging the U.S. Bureau of Land Management with breaking the law by advancing a new management plan for Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve that would give the vast majority of the nation's largest unit of public land to oil companies. This effort to expand fossil fuel exploitation in the western Arctic would increase harmful climate impacts, diminish public health, degrade land, water and air, and encroach on long-protected areas vital to wildlife and people.

"The Trump administration has again catered to Big Oil by handing over the western Arctic to the fossil fuel industry," **said Lisa Baraff, Program Director at the Northern Alaska Environmental Center.** "BLM's disregard for the ecological and cultural values of the Arctic, including the food access and security needs of local communities, puts oil industry profits before the people and animals of the region, and the real-world suffering caused by the carbon-polluting fossil fuel industry. We're taking BLM to court because it violated its legal obligation to provide maximum protection to Teshekpuk Lake, the Utukok River, and other areas with significant subsistence, fish, wildlife, recreational, scenic, and historical value."

The suit says BLM's environmental review failed to address the true impacts of oil and gas on water, land, wildlife and people or to adopt protective measures, and failed to provide a reasonable range of alternatives, including options that maintain or increase protected areas.

"Clearly this administration will stop at nothing to give away public lands to the oil and gas industry, regardless of the impacts to local communities, wildlife, and long-protected areas essential to the health of wildlife and people," **said Suzanne Bostrom, staff attorney with Trustees for Alaska.** "BLM's decision to launch an all-out assault on the western Arctic is completely at odds with its obligation to provide maximum protection for areas like Teshekpuk Lake and lands and waters essential to the health of western Arctic animals and people."

The law firm Trustees for Alaska filed the suit in Anchorage, Alaska, on behalf of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Alaska Wilderness League, Conservation Lands Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society.

## **Group statements:**

“The new western Arctic management plan has faced clear public opposition, especially from local communities who have seen traditional hunting areas diminished, wildlife displaced and air quality worsen because of oil and gas development,” **said Adam Kolton, executive director of Alaska Wilderness League.** “There isn’t a single inch of America’s Arctic this administration doesn’t want to develop – no land too important to Alaska Native people or too critical to the survival of fish and wildlife. We will not let this stand.”

“We’re suing today because the document the Trump administration published is not a viable management plan for the Western Arctic,” said **David Krause, assistant Alaska state director for The Wilderness Society.** “It’s not a management plan for globally unique ecosystems. It’s not a management plan for culturally irreplaceable resources and traditional-use areas. And it’s not a management plan to constrain greenhouse gas emissions. It’s a scientifically baseless document that is not in the public’s interest.”

“The Bureau of Land Management’s plan to open up nearly all of the land in the Reserve to drilling will harm polar bears, migratory birds and caribou that call this land their home,” **said Nicole Whittington-Evans, Alaska program director, Defenders of Wildlife.** “Amid a climate and biodiversity crisis, we should be protecting imperiled wildlife and their habitat. Defenders is taking this issue to the court to do just that.”

“The Trump administration continues to inflict tremendous damage on Indigenous communities and public lands in the western Arctic,” **said Brian Sybert, executive director of Conservation Lands Foundation.** “Its plan is skewed entirely toward fossil fuel industrialization instead of maintaining the natural resources that support the people, cultures, and wildlife for the region. By stopping this egregious plan we will show that it’s possible to improve financial and social health and sustainability of the region by protecting the quality of its public lands and waters.”

“The Trump administration has repeatedly refused to account for the serious damage expanded drilling would do to the rivers and landscapes of the western Arctic as well as our climate,” **said Dan Ritzman, director of the Sierra Club’s Lands Water Wildlife campaign.** “We will keep fighting to hold them accountable for their reckless rush to sell off the Arctic to corporate polluters.”

“We’re suing today because the document the Trump administration published is not a viable management plan for the Western Arctic,” said **David Krause, assistant Alaska state director for The Wilderness Society.** “It’s not a management plan for globally unique ecosystems. It’s not a management plan for culturally irreplaceable resources and traditional-use areas. And it’s not a management plan to constrain greenhouse gas emissions. It’s a scientifically baseless document that is not in the public’s interest.”

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