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Trump administration seeking last-second rollback of Arctic offshore drilling safety regs

Washington — Today the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced they will publish in the Federal Register a draft revised rule for Arctic offshore exploration that rolls back equipment and operations requirements necessary to ensure adequate safety and environmental protections, measure put in place following the disastrous Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Statement by Leah Donahey, Legislative Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“Deepwater Horizon exposed massive shortcomings in our ability to quickly and effectively respond to a massive oil spill, and the current Arctic-specific requirements incorporated lessons learned from that tragedy and applied them to the uniqueness of the Arctic Ocean environment. Given the massive challenges of operating in the Arctic and the extremely limited response capabilities available, rolling back these requirements would increase risk in the Arctic Ocean and endanger the wildlife and coastal communities that depend on the ocean for survival.

“There simply are no effective means to clean up an oil spill in the Arctic’s harsh and remote conditions. The Arctic Ocean supports some of the world’s most iconic wildlife species, and its living resources are relied upon by local indigenous people who have lived on its shores for thousands of years. Large corporations stand to benefit from drilling activities, while the risk would be endured by those who depend on the Arctic Ocean for their culture and sustenance.

“With a new administration coming in that has pledged to keep new drilling out of the Arctic, this is an obvious play to add to the environmental rollbacks that the Trump team has sought and that the incoming Biden administration will have to roll up its sleeves to fix. And it’s a useful reminder as Trump looks to 2024 that no administration has been worse for our environment or our nation’s public health than this one.”

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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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