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Arctic Refuge Oil Lease Sale Compromises Vital Alaska Wilderness

Lame duck administration takes next step in a rushed process to open one of the nation's most iconic and sacred landscapes to oil drilling

Washington — The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority emerged as the apparent high bidder in the Trump administration's illegal oil and gas lease sale as part of its Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Today's bids disregard the facts: oil and gas drilling on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain would threaten Indigenous rights, industrialize one of America's last wild places, threaten imperiled wildlife, and exacerbate climate change. \$1.8 billion total was promised in the Tax Act; today's failure of a lease sale generated only \$14.4 million, or less than 1% of what was promised.

The remote nature of the Arctic Refuge combined with the global desire to limit climate pollution makes drilling on the coastal plain an expensive risk that's not worth taking, which is why all major banks in the U.S. and Canada are now among the two dozen banks around the world that have announced they will not fund any new oil and gas development there.

Today's illegitimate lease sale by the lame-duck Interior Department occurred as the incoming Biden administration has pledged to protect the Arctic Refuge on Day One.

A coalition of Indigenous, human rights and environmental organizations respond:

“The Trump administration railroaded this lease sale through amid a global pandemic and economic recession, and absent any real evidence that pursuing Arctic Refuge oil would provide any significant federal returns. Not surprisingly, today's sale generated significantly less federal revenue than the \$1 billion promised by drilling proponents, resulting in a fire sale of some of the most valuable and ecologically significant wilderness remaining in North America.

“Today's coastal plain lease sale is a continuation of this administration's disregard for human rights, climate science and public process. This has been a flawed process from the start that altered or disregarded scientific data on the impact of drilling on land and imperiled wildlife, and failed to

adequately consult with all frontline Alaska Native communities, in particular the Indigenous Gwich'in of Alaska and Canada who have strongly opposed oil extraction. The Gwich'in and Iñupiat people have been the caretakers of Alaska's Arctic for millennia — and selling the coastal plain for corporate profit disregards that legacy of stewardship.

“Indigenous Arctic people are already experiencing the most dramatic climate impacts in a region warming at three times the rest of the planet, and selling out the coastal plain puts our climate and the Arctic's people, land and wildlife at further risk. Arctic oil drilling will boost carbon emissions even further and harm communities already bearing the brunt of the changing climate.

“Any company participating in today's sham process now faces the reality of a President Biden who has made permanent protection for the Arctic Refuge a top priority. It is incumbent that his administration come in on Day One and use all the tools at its disposal to stop the industrialization of this iconic national treasure.”

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