August 8, 2023

Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Deb Haaland
Secretary
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Biden and Secretary Haaland,

On behalf of the organizations and businesses signed below, and our millions of members, we are calling on your administration to take bold action in America’s Arctic for our climate and conservation. Home to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (Reserve), America’s Arctic provides some of our nation’s last remaining opportunities to protect ecosystems at a landscape level, a scale that is unparalleled in our nation. In front of you is the tremendous opportunity to protect tens of millions of acres of critical biological and cultural resources relied upon by local Indigenous communities, which will significantly contribute to your America the Beautiful goals and leverage the critical role that the Arctic, along with all our public lands, must play in addressing the climate crisis.

The science is clear, it is imperative to our climate that new fossil fuel projects cannot move forward and existing fossil fuel extraction must be phased out. In a region where temperatures are rising at four times the rate of the rest of the planet, America’s Arctic is ground zero for climate change. Drilling for oil on these sensitive landscapes will compound devastating climate impacts, allowing for the exposure of carbon emissions, worsening climate pollution, and harm to communities already bearing the brunt of a changing climate. Below are opportunities your administration can take that would ensure durable protections for the most ecologically and culturally important sites in the Arctic and would showcase a new approach for addressing fossil fuel extraction on federal public lands.

**ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE:**

As part of the 2017 Tax Act, the Arctic Refuge was opened to oil and gas development for the first time since its creation. After a failed Trump-era lease sale in January 2020, President Biden took bold action to suspend all activity on the coastal plain and to address the fundamental legal errors with the Arctic Refuge Leasing program. Over the next year, the Department of the Interior (DOI) should prioritize the important work to complete a robust supplemental environmental analysis (SEIS) for the Arctic Refuge leasing program. This effort should include a decision to cancel the remaining illegal leases on the coastal plain and an assessment of the climate impacts of leasing and its compatibility with U.S. climate goals. Protection of the Arctic Refuge is a human rights issue for the Alaska Native communities that rely on its resources. Widespread and strong public support exists for its protection. Canceling the remaining leases and finalizing a highly protective program is essential for keeping oil rigs off this sacred land long into the future.
NATIONAL PETROLEUM RESERVE-ALASKA:

Over the past decades, management of the Reserve has been subject to shifting political winds. President Biden reinstated the protections that the Trump Administration rolled back, and now has an opportunity to take further necessary action through the impending conservation rulemaking. Addressing future oil and gas leasing in the Reserve by strengthening protections for existing Special Areas is a critical first step. We look forward to working with you on this process and the opportunity to address stronger and expanded protections for the entire Western Arctic. We also urge this administration to quickly and boldly address the millions of acres of lands in the Reserve already leased to oil companies. With Willow as a hub, more than 4 billion barrels of oil are poised to be extracted from this area, including from Special Areas. A robust protection effort for the Reserve must address all lands to prevent the sprawl of industrialization already unlocked by the Willow Project. The massive Peregrine oil project alone, which could move forward at any time, would be nearly twice the size of Willow. Unchecked development will jeopardize our nation’s climate commitments for decades to come.

We implore this administration not to advance any new oil and gas permits in the Reserve until there is a clear assessment completed regarding the compatibility of the Reserve’s oil and gas program with U.S. climate commitments. A new approach for addressing fossil fuel extraction on federal public lands is needed. America’s Arctic provides your administration the opportunity to showcase a new future for oil and gas extraction on public lands. Bold action will honor our global climate commitments and safeguard subsistence resources for Alaska Native communities who have relied on these lands, waters, and wildlife to support their way of life for millennia.

Bold protection action for both the Refuge and Reserve would bolster the exceptional climate achievements that your administration has accomplished. A sobering energy forecast from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) recently warned that our domestic oil and gas production would increase steadily in the coming decades, potentially erasing all the climate benefits from the landmark Inflation Reduction Act. It is no secret that high-cost Arctic oil projects are extremely complex and long in duration. On top of providing no immediate relief to high gas prices for Americans today, this also means that Arctic oil production will ramp up at a time when it will be even more critical to abandon our reliance on fossil fuels.

Indigenous peoples’ livelihoods, well-being, subsistence rights, and food sovereignty depend on a healthy and interconnected pan-Arctic. As a nation, we are reminded that the climate crisis is not biased to one region but is interconnected across the globe. This administration must continue to uphold commitments to Tribal Nations by mitigating Arctic oil and gas developments and looking toward long-term solutions that recognize traditional knowledge and stewardship, foster collaboration between stakeholders, and build capacity within Indigenous communities to participate and lead in decision-making processes.

We encourage you to take hold of the tremendous opportunity in America’s Arctic to protect tens of millions of acres of unparalleled biological and cultural resources, which will significantly contribute to your America the Beautiful goals and leverage the critical role that the Arctic, along with all our public lands, must play in addressing the climate crisis.

On behalf of the 107 undersigned,
198 Methods
350Hawaii
350Juneau
Action for the Climate Emergency (ACE)
Advocates for the Environment
AFGE Local 704
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Alaska Wilderness League
Alpacka Raft
American Humanist Association
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
Arkansas Valley Audubon Society
Audubon Colorado Council
Braided River
California Environmental Voters
Californians for Western Wilderness
Cass County, MN IWLA Chapter
Central Minnesota Audubon Society
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Clean Energy Action
Clean Water Action
Climate Hawks Vote
Climate Law & Policy Project
Climate Reality, Greater Maryland Chapter
Coalition to Protect New York
Concerned Health Professionals of Pennsylvania
Conservation Lands Foundation
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship
CT League of Conservation Voters
Clean Up the River Environment (CURE)
Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action
Denver Audubon
Don't Waste Arizona
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Earthjustice
Education Through Engagement, LLC
Elders Climate Action Maryland
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environmental Action
Evergreen Audubon
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Extinction Rebellion US
Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition
Figure 8 Investment Strategies
Fridays for Future US
Friends of Alaska Wildlife Refuges
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Friends of the Lost Coast
Georgia WAND Education Fund Inc.
Good Neighbor Steering Committee of Benicia
Great Bear Foundation
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Inland Ocean Coalition
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Jitterbug Art Studio
Kachemak Bay Conservation Society
League of Conservation Voters
Mattol Restoration Council
Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League
Natural Resources Defense Council
NC Council of Churches
NC Interfaith Power & Light
Nicaragua Center for Community Action
Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS)
Oil and Gas Action Network
Patagonia
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
Protect All Children's Environment
Santa Fe Forest Coalition
Seeding Sovereignty
Selkirk Conservation Alliance
Sierra Club
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
SOMA Action
South Asian Fund for Education Scholarship and Training Inc.
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
Spirit of the Sun
St. Cloud Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
St. Paul Audubon Society
Stand.earth
Student Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs)
Sunrise Durham