

From: JaneFasullo
Affiliation:
Address: 68 Old Field Rd.
Setauket, New York, 11733

Comment: Northeast NPR-A Planning Area

Dear Northeast Planning Area,

1

I am asking you to protect the Teshekpuk Lake and other important wildlife areas in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska by going back and offering a new alternative that protects more special fish, wildlife and subsistence hunting areas and includes more protective stipulations. At the very least, the BLM should adopt Alternative A, the "No Action" Alternative.

2

The new plan for the northeast area of the NPR in Alaska proposes to open 96 percent of the area to oil and gas development and reduce protections for critical wildlife habitat of Teshekpuk Lake by 75 percent. This is a complete reversal of the BLM's 1998 plan, in which 87 percent of the planning area is open to leasing and 600,000 acres are off limits around Teshekpuk Lake to protect important habitat and subsistence use for caribou and waterfowl.

3

The majority of scientific evidence indicates that significant impacts could occur to fish and wildlife if more of this area is opened to oil development. Teshekpuk Lake and its surrounding wetlands is a vital tundra-wetland complex in the circumpolar Arctic that is home to thousands of waterfowl and caribou. Tens of thousands of birds, including brant, greater white-fronted geese, and Snow geese gather in the Teshekpuk wetland system to molt their flight feathers and are thus vulnerable to human disturbances.

4

Additionally, coming to nest in this area with few predators are thousands of birds, including the threatened spectacled eider. These birds will also suffer from the increased number of predators, such as gulls, ravens and foxes that are attracted to oil fields.

5

Also, the 45,000-animal Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd will be threatened by such development. Each year, the herd migrates to the Teshekpuk Lake area to calve and escape from insects. If caribou are forced to move to less desirable habitats, calving numbers could decline, reducing the population and greatly impacting many Alaska Natives who depend on the herd as a subsistence resource.

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Basic

And all of this for what reason? Increasing our oil supply while doing nothing to create a significant reduction in demand? Giving us a few months of oil which will take billions of dollars and at least five years to generate? FOOLISH behavior. Opening these lands for oil exploration cannot be justified and the destruction caused by the move will take centuries to correct (if the damage can be repaired at all).

7

Instead of opening up more of the area to leasing and oil and gas development, the BLM should provide a more balanced, science-based approach to energy development and environmental protection by permanently protecting the Teshekpuk Lake and Colville River Special Areas and strengthening monitoring and lease stipulation requirements. At a very minimum, the BLM should adopt Alternative A, the "No Action" Alternative, which retains

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114822 (Cont'd)

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current protections for the critical fish and wildlife habitats around Teshekpuk Lake.

Sincerely,

Jane Fasullo
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Attached: None