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Dear President Biden:

I would like you to seriously consider issuing a Record of Decision for a no action alternative on the proposed Willow Project SDEIS.

I am an Alaska resident who previously lived, worked and recreated in the Arctic for many years, who relies heavily on subsistence activities to provide a good portion of my food supply, and who lives a life of appreciation in and reliance on our vast natural resource and stunning wild places.

The facts about the proposed alternative E of the Willow project are somewhat misconstrued by the term “scaled back”. The alternative would allow for 3 drilling pads with approval of the 4th pad to be deferred. The initial BLM approval was only for 3 well pads anyway, and deferred approvals are not guaranteed additional analysis or public comment . The alternative for 3 well pads still approves a total of 219 total wells, which is only 32 wells less than the other alternatives. Approving only 2 well pads will only slightly decrease the major problems associated with this project

The Willow project is designed for expansion. According to the Washington Post, ConocoPhillips Alaska Inc. (CPAI) has privately revealed to its investors that is will extract roughly 3 billion barrels of oil from the Willow project fields. This is five times the estimate used in the assessment and evaluation of the Willow development climate impact in the DSEIS. The building of oil development infrastructure in the NPR-A will make it that much more economically feasible for additional oil development projects to be built, and be a major step in CPAI’s plan to develop the Western Arctic far beyond the currently proposed project.

The Project has been hyped as a grand benefit to the local villages and to Alaska. However in reality only 1% of employed North Slope residents work in the oil fields, and most of the jobs would go to non-residents of Alaska. The true beneficiary of the proposed Project would be SPAI itself, which last year alone made $1.4 billion in Alaska.

The proposed Project would also further threaten the health, culture and subsistence way of life for the village of Nuiqsut and other North Slope villages that depend on the Teshepuk Caribou herd. “Reduced subsistence harvester access or subsistence resource availability would adversely affect community health by reducing the availability of subsistence foods and increasing dependence on store bought foods, increasing food insecurity. The effects on public health in Nuiqsut may be highly adverse and disproportionately borne by the Nuiqsut population.” [*DSEIS vol, 1, 3.17.3.3.3*] These concerns are real and serious ones in a population already at risk.

However the biggest argument against this project, and the real reason it should never be constructed, is that it goes against all of the Administration’s stated national and global Climate Goals. It is contrary to the Administration’s National Climate Goals to decrease carbon emissions by more than 50% by 2030, and to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Instead, the Project promises to provide another 30 years of oil and gas extraction, at a time when we are attempting to move away from our reliance on fossil fuels. The DSEIS claims that the oil produced by the Willow project would lower oil prices without any substantiation of that claim. To the contrary, oil from the North Slope has been among the highest cost to drill, transport and refine. As actual oil extraction and refinement is probably at least 6 years away, it would do nothing to lower the present oil costs. Developing and burning oi from the Willow project would produce up to 287 million metric tons of CO2over the next 30 years, equal to the annual emissions of 76 coal fired plants.

The proposed Project is an investment in what should be an economy of the past. As acknowledged in the current SDEIS, the current Climate Change caused decreased snow cover in the arctic will add to the warming chain reaction by exposing dark tundra longer, which absorbs more radiant heat, which melts the permafrost and releases more carbon and, even worse in the short term, more methane gas. [SDEIS 3.2.1.1] Additionally, the loss of pack ice in the arctic seas exposes dark water to the radiant heat with similar effects of increased sea temperature, causing loss of even more sea ice. The SDEIS details the increased temperature averages for the arctic, the rapid warming of the tundra, the increased vegetative growth etc, all of which is a direct result of climate change and all of which exacerbates permafrost thawing and increases the climate change spiral. [SDEIS 3.2.1.2]

The planet is at a major climate change crossroads now, as the Adminstration has recognized as part of the Paris Accord, and in it’s National Climate Goals. We should be directing our research and development efforts into renewable energy sources. America has always been able to lead in innovation and development and now is the time to be a leader. This could be a major legacy of the Biden Administration, and would be in keeping with promises made by this Administration. Approval of any part of the proposed Willow development project would lead to at least another 30 years of increased carbon pollution and dependence on oil and gas production. This project is an environmental time bomb, is contrary to and undermines the Biden Administration’s stated climate goals, is fraught with environmental and social injustice concerns, and would be responsible for a major increase in climate change problems in a fragile arctic, such as thawing permafrost, villages having to relocate due to eroding shorelines, food and infrastructure insecurity, wildlife habitat problems, stronger storms and increasing wildland fire activity. Please do not approve any part of the proposed Willow project.

Sincerely,

Loren J Karro