
Assembly of First Nations

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June 18, 2018

Open letter to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management Regarding Oil and Gas Development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

To Whom It May Concern:

The Gwich'in share an intimate connection to the lands and waters that make up the very substance of their spiritual and cultural identity, and livelihood. The Porcupine Caribou Herd holds very strong social, spiritual, and cultural importance to the Gwich'in people – simply put, it is their life blood. The herd's calving grounds are located in the 1002 area of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The Refuge has been recognized as one of the largest intact ecosystems in the world and sustains one of the greatest land animal migrations left on the planet, that of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Time-and-time again the Gwich'in, researchers, and other experts have shown that resource development on these lands would devastate the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and other species.

The Chiefs-in-Assembly have demonstrated overwhelming and continuous support for the Gwich'in people and the Porcupine Caribou Herd, calling for immediate steps to be taken to ensure the preservation and protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas development. Given the recent decisions of the U.S. Government to begin the process for selling oil and gas leases in the 1002 area, we continue to stand in solidarity with the Gwich'in and call for full protection of these precious lands and waters to ensure this region and the Porcupine Caribou are cared for future generations to come.

This is a matter that goes beyond environmental protection. It is about ensuring the human rights of the Gwich'in are upheld. Under international and domestic law, the Gwich'in have rights in connection to the Caribou. Specifically, resource development in ANWR violates terms set out in the *Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd (1987)*. This agreement states the two nations "should avoid or minimize activities that would significantly disrupt migration or other important behavior patterns of the Porcupine Caribou Herd."

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We add our voices in stating that development in this region cannot be done responsibly, threatens the rights of the Gwich'in, and would be an infringement of international law. Simply put, oil and gas leases cannot be sold in ANWR.

Sincerely,



Perry Bellegarde
National Chief



Kluane Adamek
Interim Yukon Regional Chief

c.c.: The Honourable Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.

