

Alaskans dispute oil leasing plans

COMPASS: *Other points of view*

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Endangered species are at risk

Not only does offshore oil development threaten Alaska's oceans with industrial noise, increased human activity, and the increased possibility of another catastrophic oil spill, it also directly contributes to the greenhouse gas emissions that are destroying sea ice habitat. For example, under the Bush Administration's five-year plan for offshore oil development 2007-2012, more than 5 billion tons of carbon dioxide would be emitted over the life of the program -- a huge contribution to greenhouse gases.

Unfortunately, under the Bush administration's midnight endangered species regulations, federal agencies are forced to turn a blind eye to climate change and its impacts on polar bears and other ice-dependent species. We cannot protect Alaska's amazing oceans and the animals and people who depend upon them without addressing climate change and the rapid melting of sea ice habitat. And to address climate change, we need the full protections of the Endangered Species Act.

Luckily, the FY 09 Omnibus Appropriations Act specifically grants Secretary Salazar additional authority to repeal the unlawful Bush endangered species rules. We urge the new Interior Secretary to rescind these illegal Bush rules and to phase out damaging fossil fuel development in Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf.

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