

<https://www.alaskapublic.org/2021/02/05/judge-denies-requests-that-she-halt-work-at-conocos-willow-project/>

Judge denies requests to halt work at Conoco's Willow project

A federal judge has denied requests by conservation groups that she block ConocoPhillips from starting construction work this winter on its massive oil discovery, called Willow.

Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic, the Center for Biological Diversity and about a half-dozen other groups sued the Trump administration in late 2020, arguing it violated environmental laws when it [approved the Willow project](#) in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska on the western North Slope.

RELATED: [*Trump administration approves Conoco's Willow project in National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska*](#)

The groups also asked U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Gleason to block Conoco from starting construction on Willow this winter until the lawsuits are resolved.

Gleason denied those requests on Monday.

In [a 28-page order](#), her reasons for the denial included that the groups, she said, didn't demonstrate that polar bears would likely suffer "irreparable injury" if the construction work was allowed while she considered the lawsuits.

The conservation groups [have appealed Gleason's decision](#), and the broader lawsuits will also continue.

"We are hopeful that the court will put us back on the right path and stop the Trump administration's last-minute effort to allow work on this environmentally reckless project to begin," said a statement Friday from Earthjustice attorney Jeremy Lieb.

Meanwhile, Conoco said this week that it will begin laying gravel for the Willow project soon.

According to court documents, the company's work this winter includes the construction of gravel and ice roads, as well as the opening of a gravel mine.

The company will have about 120 employees working on the projects, said Rebecca Boys, a company spokeswoman.

Conoco has said it expects oil production to start around 2026.

Willow would be the North Slope's westernmost oil field, and Conoco said it could produce [more than 100,000 barrels of oil a day at its peak.](#)