



Vuntut Gwitchin Government responds to Biden Administration's approval of massive Willow oil development project on Alaska's North Slope

FOR RELEASE

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Earlier this week, the Biden Administration approved ConocoPhillips' multibillion-dollar Willow oil drilling project in Alaska's North Slope. The company plans to produce 600 million barrels of oil from a pristine area west of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

While the Willow Project is located outside of the migration route of the Porcupine caribou herd, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government is concerned about the potential implications of the project on international efforts to seek permanent protection of the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is critical to the survival of the herd.

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government is concerned with the process that was followed leading to the approval of ConocoPhillips' project. A number of organizations have already filed lawsuits challenging the environmental impact study carried out for the project, and the City of Nuiqsut and Native Village of Nuiqsut have raised significant concerns with the consultation process and the identified mitigation measures.

The approval of the largest North Slope drilling project since the 1990s runs counter to the Biden Administration's commitment to cut US greenhouse gas emissions by 50% and protect 30% of the country's lands and waters, both by 2030.

While President Biden is on record opposing drilling in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and has taken several immediate steps in support of temporarily protecting the area, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government knows that measures for permanent protections are still needed and further, and that such measures would support the broader goals of the Biden Administration.

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government will continue to work with the Biden Administration, members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and its partners and many allies to ensure that drilling never proceeds in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Quotes:

"We are very disappointed that ConocoPhillips' multibillion-dollar Willow oil drilling project has been given the green light by the Biden Administration. Major concerns raised by the Alaskan Native community located near the drilling area remain unanswered. If the project goes ahead as planned, ConocoPhillips' will be overseeing the largest oil drilling operation on US federal lands. This seriously undermines President Biden's commitment to combat global climate change, and goes against the Administration's often repeated desire to foster a new era of Nation-to-Nation relationships."



—Chief Pauline Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

“For three decades, the Gwich’in people have fought to protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the critical calving grounds of the majestic Porcupine caribou herd. The approval of a multibillion dollar oil development project adjacent to the Refuge only strengthens our resolve to push for President Biden and Congress to permanently rule out oil and gas exploration and development in the Coastal Plain. The fate of one of the earth’s last great land animal migrations is at stake, and we will not stop until these sacred lands are permanently protected.”

—Chief Pauline Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

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