

March 29, 2019

VIA EMAIL

Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Logan.Ferree@mail.house.gov

Re: The Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act

Dear Committee Members:

Friends of Animals (FoA)¹ submits this testimony in support of H.R. 1146, the Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act, and the repeal of section 20001 of Public Law 115-97. FoA represents a broad and diverse constituency that deeply believes that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge deserves protection and that the oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain will cause irreparable harm to the crown jewel of our nation's Refuge system.

The Arctic Refuge is home to some of the most stunning populations of wildlife in the world. In addition to the Porcupine Caribou herd, polar bears, and musk oxen, hundreds of species of migratory birds make their way to the Coastal Plain for its rich and varied ecosystems and excellent denning, nesting, and forage grounds.

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of our nation's most iconic wild areas and it deserves the most stringent levels of protection. H.R. 1146 is an important step towards protecting the Refuge from adverse impacts caused by oil and gas development.

Climate change intensely impacts the Arctic because the Arctic is warming at more than double the rate of the rest of the country. The Refuge supports the highest density of land denning for polar bears, as melting sea ice forces bears inland. In his testimony at the subcommittee hearing, Dr. Steven C. Amstrup, the chief scientist of Polar Bears International, explained that oil and gas development on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain would accelerate the decline of the region's already imperiled polar bear population. Polar bears depend on sea ice for catching their prey and sea ice extent is directly related to global mean temperature. Allowing oil and gas extraction of the Coastal Plain will directly impact the polar bear because it perpetuates unsustainable dependence on fossil fuel and would remove protections of critically important onshore polar bear

¹ Friends of Animals is a non-profit international advocacy organization incorporated in the state of New York since 1957. FoA has nearly 200,000 members worldwide. FoA and its members seek to free animals from cruelty and exploitation.

habitat. In addition, oil and gas development will increase risks to maternal denning polar bears and cause fragmentation of vital Arctic Refuge polar bear habitats.

In addition, oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain would negatively impact the Porcupine Caribou herd. Drilling would cause lower birth rates and threaten migrations. Pregnant females reside in the Coastal Plain when they give birth because the food on the Coastal Plain helps the mother provide rich milk and nutrition for the new calves. The breeze on the Coastal Plain protects the calves from mosquitoes, which can kill a newborn calf. If the caribou were forced to leave their habitat due to oil and gas development, it would cause significant risk to the calves because the Coastal Plain has fewer predators than other areas.

Oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development would further damage the quality and health of important natural resources like wildlife, air, water, and land. These resources have intrinsic value and oil and gas development would cause irreversible damage that will be felt by many generations to come. Repealing section 20001 of Public Law 115-97, H.R. 1146 will help protect our natural world and move towards a sustainable future.

In conclusion, we believe that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should remain a symbol of America's purity. Moreover, informed people recognize that the 19.6 million-acre Refuge is a national treasure. Its abundant wildlife is worth protecting from oil and gas companies for oil we don't need. Thus, FoA supports passage of the Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plains Protection Act (H.R. 1146).

Sincerely,

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