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ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Sovereign Iñupiat for a Living Arctic and five allied groups filed an appeal with the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals yesterday, along with a motion for an injunction pending appeal with the U.S. District Court today, to request a halt to gravel mining and road building on the ConocoPhillips Willow oil and gas project. The filing is a response to yesterday’s District Court ruling that rejected a March 16 [request for](#) a preliminary injunction to stop ConocoPhillips’ aggressive construction work this winter and spring while the litigation makes its way through court.

“That the District Court failed to halt construction while our case moves through court comes as more hard news and demonstrates again how the oil and gas industry exerts so much power over those whose health and food are most impacted and those who will most experience the climate harms this project will cause,” **said Siqiñiq Maupin, executive director of Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic.** “Corporate and political interests continue to sacrifice places like Teshekpuk Lake and communities like Nuiqsut for their benefit. Today we continue to fight in court for our communities, the land, and future generations.”

ConocoPhillips began its aggressive construction plan the same day the Biden administration approved the project, starting almost immediately with building ice roads, and has now started work on the gravel mine and road construction. Trustees for Alaska filed a [lawsuit](#) on behalf of six clients challenging authorization of the Willow oil and gas project the day after its approval, followed by a motion requesting a preliminary injunction. Today’s filing with the District Court asks that it put in place a short injunction halting construction activities so that the Ninth Circuit has time to rule on the appeal. Plaintiffs requested a ruling from the District Court by noon Wednesday.

“We’re taking our case to the Ninth Circuit Court to do everything we can to prevent permanent harm in the region while litigation moves forward,” **said Bridget Psarianos, lead staff attorney with Trustees for Alaska.** “There are profound legal problems with Willow’s approval and it’s essential to stop on-the-ground harm while the case gets heard. The District Court found in our prior 2020 lawsuit that winter road construction and gravel mining would do immediate and permanent harm to land and the community of Nuiqsut. It’s no different this time. It’s heartbreaking for all who want to protect local communities and prevent more devastating climate impacts in the Arctic and around the world to know that blasting and road building is happening for Willow despite the legal problems with this project.”

No single oil and gas project has more potential to set back the Biden administration’s climate and public lands protection goals than Willow — the largest new oil and gas project

proposed on federal lands. The project would significantly expand ConocoPhillips' extensive oil and gas extraction operation in the Arctic and become a hub for future industrialization for decades.

The Biden administration approved Willow on March 12, despite acknowledging and failing to mitigate known harms to Arctic communities, public health, wildlife, and climate. The people of Nuiqsut, the community located just a few miles away, would endure increased air pollution, repeated blasting for gravel mining, and continued rapid industrialization that would lead to significant physical and mental health harms.

The public interest non-profit law firm Trustees for Alaska represents six clients in this litigation: Sovereign Iñupiat for a Living Arctic, Alaska Wilderness League, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Environment America, Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society.

Group statements:

“We know that the Arctic tundra is one of the most threatened ecosystems in North America—one that the people and animals of the Arctic rely heavily on,” said **Emily Sullivan, Arctic program manager for the Northern Alaska Environmental Center**. “We are disappointed to hear that the court did not grant our preliminary injunction to protect this landscape, and we will be taking our case to the Ninth Circuit in hopes of preventing further harm.”

“This is a profoundly disappointing decision by the District Court,” said **Karlin Itchoak, Alaska regional director for The Wilderness Society**. “Willow poses a serious threat to air quality and subsistence resources for Indigenous communities in the region—as well as the world’s climate—and ConocoPhillips should not be allowed to begin work on a destructive project that was poorly evaluated by the Bureau of Land Management. We will continue to fight with all means at our disposal.”

“We went to court over approval of the Willow oil and gas extraction project in Alaska’s Arctic because the Biden administration didn’t thoroughly consider its project impacts,” said **Andy Moderow, senior director of policy for Alaska Wilderness League**. “Yesterday’s ruling is a setback, but we will continue doing everything we can to halt this massive project, because the impacts of development are clear. Make no mistake: we will never stop fighting to address climate change and protect biodiversity in America’s Arctic.”

“The Willow project is a climate disaster waiting to happen,” said **Mike Scott, senior campaign representative for Sierra Club's Our Wild Alaska campaign**. “The lands, wildlife, and communities of Arctic Alaska, and our global climate, will face serious consequences if ConocoPhillips is allowed to drill. Yesterday’s ruling is only one step in the process of stopping the Willow project, and we will continue fighting to make sure this carbon bomb never goes off.”

“This is a huge disappointment,” said **Environment America Public Lands Campaign Director, Ellen Montgomery**. “If construction goes forward, it will fragment habitat, mar the landscape and pollute the air and water. We will continue our work to protect this and other sensitive areas from destruction.”

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