



Gwich'in Steering Committee

3401 Airport Way, Suite 201 Fairbanks, AK 99709 • Office: 907-458-8264 Fax: 907-457-8265

"In no case may a people be deprived of their own means of subsistence."
International Covenants on Human Rights

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gwich'in Steering Committee wins in court in ruling that rejects AIDEA's attempt to force an illegal Arctic Refuge drilling program to continue.

The Gwich'in Steering Committee won in U.S. District Court today in a ruling that dismissed all claims made by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority and the State of Alaska in their legal effort to undermine the Interior Department's suspension of an illegal drilling program on sacred lands in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Steering Committee and allies intervened in AIDEA's lawsuit against the Department of the Interior in March 2022.

"AIDEA has an agenda to drill on lands sacred to our people and to promote a leasing program that threatens our way of life," **said Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee.** "Today's ruling comes as good news as we continue defending the Porcupine caribou herd and our traditional way of life from a destructive, disrespectful, needless and illegal leasing program. We will always protect these sacred lands that connect our people culturally and spiritually. We will always protect the caribou."

Congress included a leasing program for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge in the 2017 Tax Act. The first lease sale on Jan. 6, 2021 drew no major oil and gas companies and failed to bring in even a fraction of 1 percent of the promised revenues — sacrificing these sacred lands for mere pennies on the dollar. Two bidders renounced their leases and only AIDEA, a state of Alaska-owned corporation, continues to hold any leases.

President Biden signed an executive order on the first day in office that called for the Secretary to pause all oil and gas activities in the Arctic Refuge because of legal concerns and pending a new review of the impacts that a leasing program would have on coastal plain lands, waters, animals, and people. AIDEA's lawsuit attempted to invalidate that pause and force Interior to permit damaging activities.

The Gwich'in Nation has repeatedly called for protection of the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge in a formal resolution first passed in 1988. On the first full day of the most recent Gwich'in Gathering in Old Crow within the Yukon Territory of Canada in July 2022, they again reaffirmed that [resolution](#) calling for the U.S. President and Congress to "recognize the rights of

the Gwich'in to continue to live our way of life by prohibiting development in the calving and post-calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.”

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Contact:

Dawnell Smith, communications director, Trustees for Alaska, dsmith@trustees.org