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For Immediate Release

Arctic Refuge lease sale gets no big oil interest, but AIDEA wastes Alaska dollars again

Leasing program breaks the law and disregards Arctic people, wildlife, health

ANCHORAGE (Alaska)—The Interior Department put the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on the auction block today to prop up fossil fuel exploitation of ecologically and culturally vital Arctic areas of Alaska. The lease sale received only nine bids from two parties. The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority outbid HEX Energy LLC on three of these leases, and HEX Energy ended up with two of them. All five tracts had received bids in a prior lease sale and were later relinquished.

AIDEA is not an oil and gas company, and HEX Energy is a privately held natural gas exploration and production company operating in Alaska's Cook Inlet with no Arctic experience. The lease sale revenue, even combined with revenue from two previous leases sales in 2021 and 2024, drew less than a fraction of one percent of promised revenue when the 2017 Tax Act passed. This failed program repeatedly wastes taxpayer dollars while demeaning the concerns of local people, the public interest, and Arctic health.

"The willingness of this administration, the Alaska delegation, and the Alaska Industrial Development and Export authority to throw the Arctic Refuge under the bus has meant that little to no care has been taken to address the real impacts that oil industrialization will have on Arctic communities, the Refuge, and the public's interest," said Suzanne Bostrom, senior staff attorney with Trustees for Alaska. "We're in court because this leasing plan and any leases that come of it violate the law and betray the trust of Americans who value public lands and do not support the reckless and lawless handing over of those lands to private interests. Here again, AIDEA has wasted State money on a nonviable, irresponsible extraction program while Alaska schools and state programs suffer budget cuts."

Any industrialization of the Refuge would do lasting harm to local communities and Arctic health while hoisting the consequences of oil and gas exploitation onto the backs of local people, taxpayers, and future generations. This abundant Arctic landscape is vital to the foods and cultures of Gwich'in and Iñupiat communities. Trustees for Alaska filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Gwich'in Steering Committee and other groups in 2020, later [updated in January](#), to challenge the leasing program for violating multiple laws.

Executive orders about unleashing energy and dominance do not and cannot rewrite the legal mandates to which agencies must be accountable to and abide by—mandates that protect food and cultures, that protect wildlife and landscapes, and that support public engagement and informed decisions. This administration didn't comply with the law, and that's why we're asking a court to get rid of any leases from the leasing program, including those from today's sale.

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