



Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7
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CONSENT CALENDAR

November 27, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Opposing Land Lease Near The Teshekpuk Lake In The National Petroleum Reserve In Alaska

RECOMMENDATION:

Send a letter to the U.S. Department of the Interior opposing the leasing of any land north and east of the Teshekpuk Lake in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

BACKGROUND:

Currently, eighty seven percent of the northeastern portion of the Western Arctic Reserve is already open to leasing and more than 1.3 million acres of it are already being actively explored.

Nevertheless, two years ago, the Bush administration announced its plans to lease every last acre of the fragile Teshekpuk Lake area defying more than 200,000 citizen comments, warnings from biologists and objections from Alaskan natives who live on the North Slope.

The Teshekpuk Lake area is an extraordinary wildlife habitat. Allowing for oil and gas drilling will disturb tens of thousands of vulnerable molting geese, caribou and other species. It will also adversely affect several native Alaskan communities on the North Slope who depend on the caribou and other fish and wildlife at Teshekpuk Lake for their survival.

While other portions of the Western Arctic Reserve have been opened up for drilling, the area around Teshekpuk Lake has been protected because of its extraordinary important to wildlife. Numerous Secretaries of Interior have recognized the impacts that exploration would have on this sensitive habitat and have prohibited oil and gas leasing in this area.

Nevertheless, the Bush administration has been pushing for the leasing of this area to oil companies. In response to these efforts the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) went to court and won a temporary injunction stopping any leasing of land in the area. In the wake of this decision, the Department of the Interior has conducted additional review of the environmental impacts of oil and gas development and has decided to move forward with its plans. However, the administration is required to seek public comment on the proposal.

It is important that the City of Berkeley join NRDC and other organizations in urging the federal government to protect this rare and important wildlife habitat and stop the destruction of our environment for oil profits.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

NONE

CONTACT PERSON:

Councilmember Kriss Worthington, 981-7170.

Attachments:

1. Proposed letter

November 28, 2007

Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary, United State Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kempthorne,

At its regular meeting of November 27, 2007, the Berkeley City Council voted to send a letter expressing its opposition to the leasing of any land to the north and east of the Teshekpuk Lake in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

Currently, eighty seven percent of the northeastern portion of the Western Arctic Reserve is already open to leasing and more than 1.3 million acres of it are already being actively explored.

Nevertheless, two years ago, the federal government announced its plans to lease every last acre of the fragile Teshekpuk Lake area defying more than 200,000 citizen comments, warnings from biologists and objections from Alaskan natives who live on the North Slope.

The Teshekpuk Lake area is an extraordinary wildlife habitat. Allowing for oil and gas drilling will disturb tens of thousands of vulnerable molting geese, caribou and other species. It will also adversely affect several native Alaskan communities on the North Slope who depend on the caribou and other fish and wildlife at Teshekpuk Lake for their survival.

While other portions of the Western Arctic Reserve have been opened up for drilling, the area around Teshekpuk Lake has been protected because of its extraordinary important to wildlife. Numerous Secretaries of Interior have recognized the impacts that exploration would have on this sensitive habitat and have prohibited oil and gas leasing in this area. Additionally, many organizations, including the National Resources Defense Council have also expressed their opposition to the opening of this area to oil drilling.

It is important that the fragile ecosystem around the Teshekpuk Lake continue to be protected. The City of Berkeley urges your Department to end its plans to open up this area for leasing by oil companies. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

