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City Council Will Consider Letter Asking Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to Reject Arctic Drilling

by [Sydney Brownstone](#) • Mar 23, 2015 at 9:31 am

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The Seattle City Council will soon decide whether to sign a letter urging Jewell to "seriously consider the impacts to Seattle, the interconnected Pacific Ocean ecosystem, and the planet as you make decisions about oil and gas drilling in the Arctic Ocean." GOLDY

City council member Mike O'Brien will ask the full city council this morning to sign a letter calling on Secretary of the Interior (and former Seattleite) Sally Jewell **to reject Shell's Arctic drilling plans.**

"It has come to our attention that the Department of Interior will soon make decisions on whether to enable further drilling in the Arctic Ocean," the letter reads. "We respectfully request that **you rescind the Chukchi Lease Sale 193**, and remove from consideration any lease sales located in the Arctic Ocean in the current and proposed Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program."

The *Guardian* **reported** yesterday that Jewell is expected to give the thumbs-up to Shell's summer Arctic drilling goals in the Chukchi Sea this week. Meanwhile, it appears that Shell's first Arctic drilling rig could arrive in Seattle by early April, according to **leaked audio of port commissioner Bill Bryant** speaking at a recent GOP event.

In response to concerns about hosting Shell's Arctic drilling fleet in Seattle, both the mayor and city council two weeks ago **initiated a review** of the port's permitting process for its lease with Foss Maritime, the company welcoming Shell at Terminal 5. But now that the federal decision is inching closer, the city council will consider going straight to the top of the chain of command.

(Governor Jay Inslee has said that he thinks concerns about the **lack of public process** in the decision to host Shell's Arctic drilling rigs **are legitimate**, but also denies that the state can do anything about it.)

The proposed council letter cites both Shell's Arctic track record (see **here**, for example), and the **climate change implications** as reason to halt the oil company's pursuit of new territory.

So who will sign the letter? We'll see what happens after the city council **9:30 a.m. briefing**. Read the full letter below.

March 23, 2015

Sally Jewell, Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell,

It has come to our attention that the Department of Interior will soon make decisions on whether to enable further drilling in the Arctic Ocean. We respectfully request that you rescind the Chukchi Lease Sale 193, and remove from consideration any lease sales located in the Arctic Ocean in the current and proposed Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

We are deeply concerned about increased leasing and drilling in the Arctic Ocean. There is no proven way to recover spilled oil effectively in the harsh conditions prevalent in the Arctic. Yet, according to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, if Shell Oil is allowed to produce oil from the Chukchi Sea, there is a 75% chance of a large oil spill that could have significant harm on marine life, many of which are already listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Shell Oil's long history of failed operations and near misses—with severe problems at every stage—from vessel construction to deployment, drilling operations, and transit—are evidence that Shell is entirely unprepared to operate safely in the Arctic Ocean. For this reason we are also concerned about the impacts of readying Shell's ships at the Port of Seattle on the water quality of Puget Sound.

Madame Secretary, suspending Arctic oil and gas activities will provide the time to carefully reassess whether and how offshore drilling in the Arctic Ocean is possible or prudent, and will help to ensure good practice and transparency on the part of drillers.


Moreover, overwhelming scientific data tells us that the carbon dioxide released from Arctic drilling will contribute to rising sea levels, global warming, and ocean acidification. Exploiting the melting of polar ice caps as an opportunity to drill for more oil, where the ice used to be, represents an act of unconscionable climate irresponsibility.


Our goals of good jobs and sustainable communities are not mutually exclusive; nor do they require capitulation to, or collaboration with, the oil industry's reckless plans to develop new supplies in the Arctic. In fact, the environmental consequences associated

with higher oil consumption jeopardize our City's long-term economic prosperity, as the Port and Industrial lands are most at risk from rising sea levels.

As someone who comes from the Seattle area you are keenly aware of our City's proven record in firm support of science-based carbon limits, strong state and national climate policy to effectuate those limits, and responsible, aggressive local action to advance solutions. Supporting Arctic drilling is one of the most conspicuous possible repudiations of sound climate science and our own local commitments to protect our environment. For these reasons, we urge you to seriously consider the impacts to Seattle, the interconnected Pacific Ocean ecosystem, and the planet as you make decisions about oil and gas drilling in the Arctic Ocean.

Thank you for your consideration.

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