

JAY INSLEE
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 31, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

I write to express my concern with the federal administration's decisions to open areas of the nation's Arctic coastline to oil and gas drilling, and to ask you to withhold from issuing any further lease sales for drilling operations in these areas.

Drilling off of the Arctic coast presents tremendous ecological dangers and would pose significant challenges in responding to a spill or accident, should one occur. Furthermore, the decision to open new areas in the Arctic for oil and gas production stand in conflict with the important federal and states efforts to shift to cleaner forms of energy and reduce the carbon pollution that is driving climate change. The impacts of climate change are already proving too costly for the economy, public health and environment in Washington and all fifty states.

As you know, last year I joined with my colleagues from California and Oregon in urging the Department of the Interior to again exclude our states' coastlines in its 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Draft Leasing Plan. I was pleased to see your continued commitment to protect the Pacific Coast from oil and gas drilling, consistent with the long-standing position of our states. However, the current 2012-2017 OCS leasing plan will lead to drilling America's Arctic coastline for the first time this coming summer. And the draft 2017-2022 plan would take our nation even further in that wrong direction.

For years I have expressed significant concerns about offshore drilling in the Arctic. The harsh conditions, including extreme cold, rough seas and extended darkness in winter months, and the remoteness of the Arctic, pose severe limitations in the ability to respond to oil spills. The challenge of quickly accessing a spill site in the presence of ice is compounded by the lack of proven spill response technologies in this environment. The extreme weather further limits the ability of responders to sustain their response. The abundant, diverse and productive natural resources of the Arctic are too significant to abide these risks.

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I cannot in good faith support this new oil and gas development given the slow and insufficient progress that countries have made to date in limiting carbon pollution. In the absence of that progress, the nation should not invest in new long-term infrastructure for Arctic production that will increase and further entrench our use of fossil fuels. The federal administration should not enable new oil and gas drilling in these untouched areas that host such a fragile environment.

I thank you for your consideration of my concerns and my request.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Inslee", written over a horizontal line.

Jay Inslee
Governor