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RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

February 15, 2023

Submitted electronically via: House.Resources@akleg.gov

Chair Representative McKay
House Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

Re: Support for HJR 6, the Willow Project and the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska

Dear Chair Representative McKay and Members of the House Resources Committee:

The Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc. (RDC) writes in support of the recently introduced HJR 6 supporting oil and gas leasing and development within the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) to support the Willow Project over the finish line.

RDC is a statewide trade association comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's fishing, tourism forestry, mining, and oil and gas industries. RDC's membership includes Alaska Native corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC's purpose is to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources.

In 1923, Congress specifically set aside and designated the NPR-A, an area larger than the state of Maine, to ensure American energy independence. The 23 million acre reserve was specifically set aside nearly a century ago for its petroleum value. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates the reserve could hold as much as 9 billion barrels of oil. Given the vast resources estimated to be in the NPR-A, future production from Willow and other fields in the NPR-A could reverse recent declines in throughput in the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), maintaining its viability for decades to come.

As you know, the federal administration previously took steps to limit the ability to develop the NPR-A as Congress intended. It reversed course on the NPR-A Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD) published in December 2020. Following legal challenge of the 2020 final decision, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was ordered to conduct further environmental analysis, including potential impacts of greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation measures. The Final Supplemental EIS (FSEIS) published on February 3, 2023, addresses the concerns presented by the court and the analysis clearly supports permitting of the Willow Project through its Preferred Alternative "E".

RDC encourages support for Alternative E, which, although it reduces the scope of the project RDC originally supported, the FSEIS addresses the courts concerns. Alternative E also addresses concerns by Project opponents: it reduces and realigns the number of drilling sites (from 5 down to 4, but only 3 would be approved as currently proposed in the Draft SEIS); reduces the amount of roads, both gravel and ice, which also reduces freshwater usage; reduces the amount of infield pipelines; realigns the Project to avoid yellow-billed loon buffer zones; and reduces the length of airstrips.

[continued...]



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RDC asks that you encourage the Biden Administration and Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to move forward in finalizing the FSEIS without any further changes or delay. After many years of rigorous environmental review and analysis, including complying with additional court-ordered review, the FSEIS presents a reasonable alternative (Alternative E) that is science-based, responds to the court's concerns, and was developed in coordination with cooperating agencies and stakeholders.

The Willow Project is a critical component to not only the Alaskan economy, but to our national domestic energy security. As President Biden himself said during his recent State of the Union address on February 7, 2023, America is "still going to need oil and gas for a while." We know that means decades, even in the case of a clean energy transition. The Willow Project will produce an estimated 180,000 barrels of oil per day; deliver billions of dollars in new revenues for the federal, state and local governments, including North Slope Borough communities; and will serve as a jobs creator with an estimated 2,500 construction jobs and 300 long-term jobs.

RDC encourages you to fast track this resolution to the best of your ability given the unanimous support of House Joint Resolution 34 last year. We would also encourage the body to select Rep. Paktotak to hand deliver the resolution, once passed, to President Joe Biden and Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland before March 6th, 2023 (the earliest date when a final record of decision on the Willow Project must be made).

RDC appreciates all your continued work to ensure Alaska's resources are responsibly developed and to ensure well-paying jobs for Alaskans. If we can support you further in any way, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Leila Kimbrell
Executive Director

