

ALASKA AFL-CIO

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JAKE METCALFE
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March 8, 2021

Department of the Interior

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The Honorable Secretary Haaland

First, congratulations on your historic nomination and thank you for your willingness to serve and to grapple with this challenging policy area that affects every American.

We know that the challenge of balancing the future and the past is especially present in your department. There is no doubt that we must confront our changing environment, but we also must be mindful to transition in a way that is fair to workers, stakeholders and to the environment. It is with the thoughts of an intentional transition that we urge the Department of Interior to allow the Willow Project in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) to proceed with the currently issued Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD). We are dismayed about reports that the Department intends to review current Environmental Impact Statements and RODs with the potential to review the EIS ROD for the Willow Project, causing harmful delay for a project that has incorporated the best mitigation practices available.

The Willow Project was planned based on the requirements of the 2013 NPR-A Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) under the Obama-Biden Administration and Secretary Salazar with the highest standards for environmental stewardship. The permitting and environmental review process encompassed a period of well over 2 years. There were multiple rounds of public comment and public meetings; numerous meetings between the agencies and ConocoPhillips; over 100 public meetings involving Alaska Native stakeholders; and multiple significant revisions to the project to respond to suggestions and concerns from the Alaska Native community. The project is subject to over 270 mitigation measures and best practices from the 2013 Integrated Activity Plan. In addition, the Willow Project involves many proactive mitigations by ConocoPhillips. Specifically, the Willow Project has focused on lowering emissions and powering drilling rigs electrically once facilities are installed as well as increasing energy efficiency over traditional installations on the North Slope. During the North Slope Borough Rezoning Process, there were additional mitigations incorporated in the project. These include using foam insulation in roads to reduce road height and gravel quantities. The airport footprint was reduced along with adding restrictions for traffic and airport plans. There is also an extended and expanded oil spill mitigation agreement. In addition to the in-depth mitigation measures of the Willow project, hallmarks of the project planning have been community involvement, stewardship, and respect for subsistence and caribou.

This project has met all regulatory requirements in addition to working with local residents to further reduce impacts, and many are relying on the benefits it brings. The Department should

not create last minute unnecessary delays and obstacles, but should allow the Willow Project to move forward as permitted and planned.

The economic benefits will be immense, and Alaska has never needed these gains more than now. Alaska's economy was first hit with a crash in oil prices followed by the ravages of the pandemic. By any measure, Alaska workers and their families are hurting. Our state budget is reaching an unprecedented crisis, and unemployment levels reflect the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on our jobs and local businesses. These challenging conditions are hitting Alaskans while they are already on economically precarious footing, and the Willow Project has the opportunity to both jumpstart our economy with jobs and be a model in community and environmental stewardship. To highlight a few of the many economic benefits of the Willow Project, the project would generate over 2,000 construction jobs and hundreds of long-term jobs. Consistent with the Administration's goals to increase middle-class union jobs, 75% of anticipated total North Slope installation work hours would be union labor. Again, the Willow Project gives us the opportunity for the Administration to work with unions to help set records with labor-management apprenticeship hours, workplace safety, and stewardship. In addition to an influx of much-needed jobs, according to BLM estimates, the Willow Project will generate \$2.3 billion in revenue for the State of Alaska; \$7.6 billion in federal royalties, income taxes and gravel sales; and \$1.2 billion in revenues for the North Slope Borough.

The need for fossil fuels will be with us for quite some time to come. Alaska has proven itself to be a safe place to produce, has a track record of middle-class wages that support a family, and this responsible development has provided funding to our state government and the services needed by our citizens. Willow is a project that can help us bridge the gap and together we can build a just transition for our planet and our workforce. I urge you to support the current Record of Decision and allow the Willow project to move forward as planned and previously approved.

Sincerely,



Joelle Hall

Cc: Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan
Congressman Don Young
Ben Stevens
President Richard Trumka