



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE

CANADA-U.S.
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

February 23, 2022

The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

I am writing in response to the letter you recently received from House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raul Grijalva about the Willow project in my state, Alaska. I firmly oppose his request that you “suspend” or “freeze” the Willow permitting process. Willow should get fair consideration on its merits under the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable law. I thank you for the Administration’s earlier support and defense of the Willow project Record of Decision in court.

Willow is not a typical oil and gas development or the product of any single federal administration. Willow has been designed under laws uniquely applicable to Alaska, including the Naval Petroleum Reserve Production Act of 1976, the Alaska National Interest Lands Act of 1980, and the local land use and zoning requirements of the North Slope Borough. At the heart of each of these processes is the goal of using public lands to best serve the broad public interest. There are very few projects that serve the public interest better than Willow.

The processes leading to approval of Willow began in 1999, during the Clinton Administration, when the first Willow-area oil and gas leases were sold by BLM. After years of careful exploration efforts, the area is finally ready for development and production under a plan that includes up to five drill sites connected to existing development on the eastern edge of the massive National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). The project design complies with the NPR-A Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) developed by the Obama-Biden Administration in 2013. The 2013 IAP adopted the most environmentally protective alternative considered at the time and had the support of many of the environmental advocacy groups that are now opposing Willow. Although a new IAP was adopted in 2020, BLM has recently announced a plan to revert to the 2013 IAP. The IAPs primarily address future leasing decisions and reverting to the 2013 IAP would pose no obstacle to the Willow project.

Our great country has the most stringent environmental regulations for oil and gas development anywhere, and nowhere is that truer than in Alaska. Willow protects the land, wildlife and subsistence activities that are unique to the region. Contrary to suggestions otherwise, Willow complies with all applicable requirements of the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area and the Colville River Special Area. The project has design features such as elevated pipelines that are proven to provide for caribou passage. The project has mitigation measures such as parking areas and boat launches to ensure improved access for hunting, fishing, and other subsistence activities. The project is subject to conditions of approval imposed by the North Slope Borough local government, which applies strict zoning criteria to ensure development does not adversely impact subsistence. In January 2021, the Borough Assembly – which includes representatives from all NPR-A communities and their predominantly Inupiat residents – approved rezoning of lands specifically to allow Willow construction to proceed.

As directed by existing federal law, 50 percent of the federal royalties from Willow production will be available to fund a grant program administered by the State of Alaska for the benefit of affected communities. This program is already in effect, but the current funding is small compared to what communities are rightfully expecting when Willow comes online. Under BLM's estimate, this program will make \$2.6 billion available over the 30-year life of the project to communities impacted by development. These grant funds will be available to NPR-A villages – historically, grants have been provided to Utqiagvik (Barrow), Atkasuk, Nuiqsut, Anaktuvuk Pass, and Wainwright -- to serve public safety, public health, climate change resiliency, education, and other important public uses.

Willow is a balanced development plan that was refined during an extensive public process, complies with the law, and serves the broad public interest. Willow should not be a mythical climate change symbol as advocated by people far removed from Alaska who contend that moving Willow forward is incompatible with addressing climate change challenges. That contention is wrong. Outside groups attempting to advance their agendas at the expense of the majority of North Slope Alaska Native stakeholders who support the Willow project is offensive to me and to them, as noted in the attached January 26, 2022, letter from the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, the North Slope Borough, and the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation to Chairman Grijalva.

Production from Willow would constitute a tiny fraction of national and international greenhouse gas emissions. If Willow were to be blocked, those emissions would occur anyway or even be exceeded from production generated in places like Russia or elsewhere, who have worse environmental records and standards, and whose outputs would still be traded on the international market. The reality is that oil and gas production is necessary, now and in the future, even as a transition to lower-emission energy sources occurs over time. I am not aware of any source of oil and gas production that the U.S. government should prefer to Willow. The project makes use of existing infrastructure like the Trans-Alaska Pipeline system; provides public revenue streams to federal, state and local governments; will fund an existing mitigation program that makes grants available to local communities; protects subsistence resource and access for subsistence activities; and has broad support in Alaska and the North Slope region. Thus, the project fulfills core

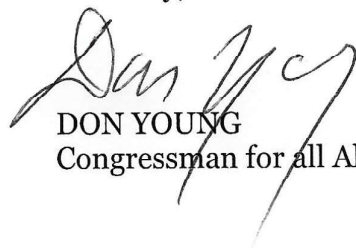
principles of environmental justice and should rise to the top of any list of realistic energy development projects worthy of approval.

I urge you to reject calls to stall approval of the Willow project. I further urge you to direct staff in the Department of the Interior and the BLM to complete a supplemental environmental impact statement and new Record of Decision in a timely fashion to address the narrow issues identified in the Federal District Court's ruling and bring the benefits of the Willow project to life. A reminder that Willow has extensive support from the North Slope Inupiat people:

- The Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope
- The Voice of the Arctic Inupiat
- The North Slope Borough
- The ANCSA Regional Association
- Arctic Slope Regional Corporation
- The Alaska Native Village Corporation Association
- The Cities of Utqiagvik, Wainwright and Atkasuk

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss Willow with you at any time, and further to facilitate your meeting with the groups above to hear from them directly.

Sincerely,



DON YOUNG
Congressman for all Alaska

Y.S.
Do what is
RIGHT
