

October 3, 2021

Ms. Serena Sweet, Project Lead
BLM Alaska State Office
Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Supplemental EIS
222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13
Anchorage, AK 99513

Submitted via <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2015144/510>

Re: Comments on SEIS and lease sales in ANWR

Dear Ms. Sweet,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announcement regarding a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on the oil and gas lease sales in the 1002 Area of the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

The Alaska Chamber was founded in 1953, and our mission is to advocate for a healthy business environment in Alaska. The Chamber has more than 700 members and represent businesses of all sizes and industries from across the state.

Our top federal priority at the Chamber for years has been to support oil and gas exploration and development in Alaska's federal areas and to encourage and to strongly advocate for responsible development of these valuable resources. Our reason for prioritizing this issue is simple: developing the 1002 area of ANWR would provide incredible opportunity all Alaskans, especially economic opportunities.

The Notice of Intent to prepare a SEIS explains the alternatives in designating certain areas of the Coastal Plain as "open or closed to leasing." These alternatives provided do not fall within the Secretary of the Interior's statutory authority.

The Secretary of the Interior is not granted the authority to temporarily or permanently change any portion of the Section 1002 Area leasing and development details per the The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (Tax Act). ANILCA specifically identified the Section 1002 Area as a potential area for oil and gas leasing as part of the agreement struck among the State of Alaska, the federal government, and native groups to allocate land within the State. Congress made the final determination in the Tax Act to open the Section 1002 Area for leasing and designate a specific timeframe for the Department to hold lease sales. The previous Administration abided by the law in hosting a lease sale before the first required deadline of January 2021. Neither ANILCA nor the Tax Act includes any mechanism or grant of authority for the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw the Section 1002 Area from leasing.



The previous Final EIS determined that development in the 1002 Area of ANWR can take place without harm to the environment. The layout of production and support facilities is limited to not more than 2,000 surface acres at any given time, including private land holdings inside the Coastal Plain. Future actions, including potential exploration and development proposals, requires additional National Environmental Policy Act analysis based on the detailed proposal. As a result, decisions evaluated in the initial EIS and its record of decision would not authorize any on-the-ground activity associated with the exploration or development of oil and gas resources on the Coastal Plain.

A project the size and scope of ANWR would create high-paying jobs for Alaskans. In addition, oil development on a fraction of the coastal plain would create thousands of jobs nationwide, generate billions of dollars in government revenue for public services, keep energy prices for American consumers affordable and further improve energy security for decades in the future. Responsible development in the 1002 area would provide an invaluable boost to America's energy security and bring much-needed economic growth potential to Alaska at a time when we need it most. Our iconic pipeline also desperately needs the new oil ANWR development could provide.

Finally, the Alaska Chamber's statewide scientific polling of Alaskans' attitudes about ANWR continually show the vast majority of Alaskans support opening a small portion of ANWR to oil and gas development: Two-thirds of Alaskans support it and have for decades.

The Alaska Chamber was pleased to see potential development of ANWR making historic progress in recent years. However, with a new administration in Washington D.C., ANWR's future is less certain. We hope our collective Alaskan voices make a difference to federal policymakers. We strive for a resolution that stands to improve the business climate and create jobs here in Alaska, at a time we need it more than ever, and we offer our full support.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,



Kati Capozzi, President & CEO
Alaska Chamber

