

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 18, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We write to you today to strongly urge the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to extend the timeframe for the public to comment on the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the proposed Willow Master Development Plan (Willow) that the BLM released on Friday, July 8, 2022.<sup>1</sup> If fully permitted, ConocoPhillips' Willow oil drilling project would be a 30-year project capable of producing more than 600 million barrels of oil in the Arctic, a region home to communities, wildlife, and ecological habitats already suffering the catastrophic effects caused by climate change and oil and gas extraction. The Willow draft SEIS and appendices total nearly 2,000 pages. Yet, BLM announced it would offer the shortest comment period allowed by law—45 days—despite serious concerns about this project held by the public, Members of Congress, and Alaskan tribal and indigenous communities. We request a minimum 75-day extension to submit comments as part of this process—through at least November 14, 2022.

Furthermore, the public meeting schedule should be adjusted to reflect this extension; this is most critical for local communities currently in subsistence harvesting season. Extending the comment period to 120 days would ensure robust participation by the American public, both in person and in writing, and is especially important for Alaska's indigenous peoples, given the overlap with the summer harvest timing. Following the release of the draft SEIS, we spoke with Rosemary Ahtuanguak, Mayor of Nuiqsut, about how the 45-day comment period and abbreviated schedule for public meetings and subsistence-related hearings will cause significant difficulties for Nuiqsut residents that wish to comment and be involved in the process. Rosemary also shared a June letter she sent to the BLM in which she underscored the likely conflicts of a 45-day public comment schedule.<sup>2</sup> We find this incredibly troubling and ask that you reconsider such a short comment period.

Under your leadership, the Department of the Interior has begun to restore the principles of transparency, public engagement, and tribal consultation that the previous administration

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<sup>1</sup> "BLM seeks public input on revised draft environmental analysis for proposed Willow project in Alaska." *U.S. Bureau of Land Management*. July 8, 2022. <https://www.blm.gov/press-release/blm-seeks-public-input-revised-draft-environmental-analysis-proposed-willow-project>

<sup>2</sup> Letter via email from Rosemary Ahtuanguak, Mayor of Nuiqsut, to BLM Alaska State Office regarding Willow draft SEIS comment period and meetings in Nuiqsut. June 6, 2022.

weakened. We ask that you continue to follow through on your commitments to these values as you oversee our public lands by extending the public comment period for the Willow draft SEIS by at least 75 days to 120 total days. However, should our request be denied, there will be a need for urgency if residents of Nuiqsut and other Alaskan villages are to submit comments by the current August 29 deadline. Accordingly, we ask that you respond to our letter no later than Friday, July 22. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Peter Gallagher or Naomi Miguel on the Natural Resources Committee staff at 202-225-6065.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Chair  
House Natural Resources  
Committee



Alan Lowenthal  
Chair  
House Energy and Mineral  
Resources Subcommittee



Jared Huffman  
Chair  
House Water, Oceans,  
and Wildlife Subcommittee

cc:

The Honorable Tommy Beaudreau, U.S. Deputy Secretary of the Interior  
The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management  
Stephanie Rice, Bureau of Land Management Alaska Project Manager