



U.S. Department of the Interior News Release

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Biden-Harris Administration Announces Sweeping Protections for Up To 16 Million Acres of Land and Water in Alaska

President Biden has protected more lands and waters in his first two years than any president since John F. Kennedy

WASHINGTON – Today, the Biden-Harris administration is taking sweeping action to complete protections of the entire U.S. Arctic Ocean from any future oil and gas leasing. The Interior Department also announced that it is preparing new rules to provide maximum protection to millions of acres of lands in the western Arctic, including the area around Teshekpuk Lake, a vital home to caribou and other wildlife that are central to Alaska Native communities' traditional way of life. The actions announced today build on the President's record of having conserved more lands and waters in his first two years than any president since John F. Kennedy.

Using his authority under Section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Act, President Biden is withdrawing approximately 2.8 million acres of the Beaufort Sea in the Arctic Ocean nearshore in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) as indefinitely off limits for future oil and gas leasing. Today's withdrawal ensures this important habitat for whales, seals, polar bears, as well as for subsistence purposes, will be protected in perpetuity from extractive development. It also completes protections for the entire Beaufort Sea Planning Area, building upon President Obama's 2016 withdrawal of the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the majority of the Beaufort Sea. The withdrawal provides additional protections for Teshekpuk Lake, guarding against the potential that future Beaufort Sea oil and gas developments would seek to build onshore pipeline infrastructure into the NPR-A. A federal oil and gas lease sale has not been held in the Arctic Ocean since 2007.

The Interior Department is also initiating a rulemaking to establish maximum protection for ecologically sensitive, designated Special Areas in the NPR-A. The proposed rule, which will be available for public comment in the coming months, will consider additional protections for the more than 13 million acres within the reserve designated as Special Areas in recognition of their significant natural and historical values. The administration intends to propose to limit future oil and gas leasing and industrial development in the Teshekpuk Lake, Utukok Uplands, Colville River, Kasegaluk Lagoon, and Peard Bay Special Areas – places collectively known for their globally significant intact habitat for wildlife, including grizzly and polar bears, caribou, and hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. The proposed rulemaking would help protect subsistence uses in the NPR-A, responding to Alaska Native communities who have relied on the land, water, and wildlife to support their way of life for thousands of years.

With these actions, President Biden continues to deliver on the most aggressive climate agenda in American history. He has made the United States a magnet for clean energy manufacturing and jobs. He secured record investments in climate resilience and environmental justice. And his economic agenda has put the United States back on track to reach its climate goals for 2030 and 2050, all while reducing America's reliance on oil and protecting American families from the impact of Putin's war on global energy markets.

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