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Governor Bill Walker
STATE OF ALASKA

February 19, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
United State Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding the release of the final Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This Plan is the vehicle for the Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River recommendations announced by President Obama on January 25th, which the State continues to assert are unsupported by objective scientific basis and are not permitted by law.

The final plan lays bare the President's express desire to prevent the State of Alaska and the nation from benefiting in any way from the rich oil and gas resources of the coastal plain, and is an unfortunate political attack on our state at a time when federal and State cooperation is sorely needed. The State of Alaska is countering significant economic challenges, and access to and productivity from the resources found within the immense federal land holdings within our State is now more critical than ever.

Public rancor between my State and the federal government has been especially high during the last few years; however, the administrative record for this planning process reflects a respectful and meaningful effort by the State of Alaska to express its concerns and call for data-based, rational decision making. Instead, the final CCP/EIS, and the manner in which it was publicly released – two years after it was apparently finalized, but without any consultation with my administration – only serves to aggravate this rancor.

The CCP recommends almost tripling the acreage of contiguous designated "Wilderness" in the Arctic Refuge, in addition to more than doubling the number of wild and scenic rivers. These actions are unprecedented anywhere else in the country, and they make a mockery of the express and hard fought compromises and commitments established three and a half decades ago with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). Congress's clear intent expressed in ANILCA is that, without further direction from Congress, the federal government had a limited opportunity, long since expired, to nominate additional Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers in Alaska.

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The CCP also threatens to permanently lock up vital oil and gas resources – estimated by the federal government itself, through the U.S. Geological Survey, to include billions of barrels of technically recoverable oil and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas. These resources represent the economic lifeblood of Alaska and a significant store of the resource of the nation as a whole. To discard oil and gas leasing, development, and production from detailed consideration because such activities are prohibited “until Congress takes action” while including Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River reviews and recommendations that would similarly require Congressional action is, at best, logically inconsistent, and at worst, a fatally-flawed, overtly-biased analysis that ensures pre-ordained conclusions.

The attached comments from the State of Alaska departments responsible for both the development and protection of the State’s valuable natural resources provide additional detail on the concerns that the State has repeatedly expressed throughout the planning process.

I ask that you consider these comments, and the serious implications of federal planning on the State, prior to the finalization of the Record of Decision for the CCP/EIS.

Federal cooperation, respect, and shared science-based decision making is something that I believe the State of Alaska would immensely benefit from. However, we must have a willing federal partner to succeed in this effort. Politicized, unfounded, and uncommunicated federal decisions will only continue to drive us apart.

Sincerely,



Bill Walker
Governor

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate
The Honorable Dan Sullivan, United States Senate
The Honorable Don Young, United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Charlotte Brower, Mayor, North Slope Borough
Pat Pourchot, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Alaska, United States Department of the Interior
Dan Ashe, Director, United State Fish and Wildlife Service
Geoff Haskett, Alaska Regional Director, United States Fish and Wildlife Service
The Honorable Sam Cotten, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
The Honorable Mark Myers, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Kip Knudson, Director of State/Federal Relations, Office of the Governor