



VUNTUT GWITCHIN GOVERNMENT

Government of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

MEDIA RELEASE

VUNTUT GWITCHIN GOVERNMENT RESPONDS TO SHORTSIGHTED PLANS TO RUSH THE SALE OF COASTAL PLAIN OIL LEASES

(Old Crow, Yukon, Canada – March 9, 2018) Vuntut Gwitchin Government is deeply troubled to learn that the Trump Administration and Alaskan officials are colluding to advance an aggressive plan to rush the sale of oil leases in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as early as 2019.

Several reports have confirmed that senior officials from the U.S. Department of Interior have recently made their way to Alaska to begin laying the groundwork with industry and community groups that stand to profit from exploiting the critical calving habitat of the Porcupine caribou herd for its oil and gas potential. This is consistent with the undemocratic methods employed in opening the Coastal Plain to oil and gas development by attaching it to the recent tax bill passed into law in late December 2017.

The aggressive timeline indicates that the Trump Administration and Alaskan officials have no real intention to conduct a robust regulatory process for assessing potential impacts and have no apparent plans to meaningfully consult or engage Gwich'in on the impacts to our communities in Alaska and Canada. This violates the terms of the *Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* (1987) which requires, among other things, the parties to “ensure that the Porcupine Caribou Herd, its habitat and the interests of users of Porcupine Caribou are given effective consideration in evaluating proposed activities within the range of the Herd”.

Vuntut Gwitchin Government will continue to coordinate its response with its various partners including Government of Canada, Government of Yukon, Government of Northwest Territories, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Gwich'in Steering Committee and Alaska Wilderness League.

Quote:

“It is alarming to think that oil leases could be put out to bid as early as 2019 without any due process or meaningful consideration of what impacts this will have on the Porcupine caribou herd and the lives of Gwich'in. We will stand united with all our allies against these plans to run roughshod over our human rights protected under domestic and international laws. The world needs to take notice that this is an international human rights crisis playing out before their eyes.” – Chief Bruce Charlie, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

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