

United States Senate

July 15, 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 reiterate our strong support for the Willow Master Development Plan (Willow) in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), and to urge the U.S. Department of the Interior to complete, without delay, a thorough public comment process for the July 2022 draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for this critical project.

The SEIS published on July 15 is limited to one new project alternative, which includes fewer drill sites and reduced surface impacts. At the end of this 45-day comment period, the project will have undergone 215 days of public comment with 25 public meetings, on top of a 30-day scoping period this past February. This clearly represents a comprehensive and rigorous public comment process.

We therefore firmly believe that a 45-day comment period will allow all stakeholders and the general public more than enough time to review the SEIS and provide meaningful comment. Timely completion of this process is critical to the project's ability to undertake any level of development activities during the rapidly-approaching 2022-2023 winter season – the shortest construction season in the world due to Alaska's world class environmental standards, which incorporate standards, including ice roads and pads, which virtually eliminate any surface disturbance. It would also demonstrate the urgency required to address the seriousness of rising energy costs, the need for greater energy security, and the Administration's stated goals for its environmental justice initiatives.

As we previously noted in our March 8, 2022 letter, the review process for Willow has already consisted of multi-year environmental analyses by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) across multiple federal agencies, the State of Alaska, and affected communities on the North Slope. The results have shown that Willow abides by the strictest environmental considerations in the world and has widespread support across Alaska and committed support from the President of the United States. The Alaska District Council of Laborers, for example,

has pointed out, “not only will the Willow Project generate Alaska jobs, it will substantially increase revenue for state and local governments.”¹

Alaska Natives are also especially supportive of this project, as it would contribute to their economic well-being and prosperity for years to come. For example, Julie Kitka, President of the Alaska Federation of Natives, wrote to you in a letter that Willow “could jumpstart our economy with thousands of jobs and be a model in community and environmental stewardship for years to come.”² Hallie Bissett and Kim Reitmeier, Executive Directors, respectively, of the Alaska Native Village Corporation Association and ANCSA Regional Association, have urged you not delay Willow “given the exhaustive and thorough review process it has already undergone, and the urgent need for vetted, economic opportunities for safe development in Alaska.”³ The cities of Utqiagvik, Wainwright, and Atkasuk, located on the North Slope, have even passed resolutions in support of oil and gas development projects, like Willow, within the NPR-A, and explicitly asked you “not to undercut us as a people and to honor the work” they have done with your agencies throughout the development of Willow.⁴

Again, given BLM’s previous evaluations of Willow, a 45-day public comment period is a sufficient time frame for any interested party to wholly evaluate the SEIS. Willow has already faced multiple delays, and now again awaits approval at a pivotal moment. Given the current pace of inflation, high gas prices, and international geopolitics, we urge you to recognize the immense benefits this project will bring and act promptly to approve it.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski

United States Senator



Dan Sullivan

United States Senator

¹ Letter from A.J. “Joey” Merrick II, Secretary-Treasurer, Alaska District Council of Laborers, to Stephanie Rice, Project Manager, Bureau of Land Management (Mar. 1, 2022).

² Letter from Julie Kitka, President, Alaska Federation of Natives, to the Honorable Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior (Feb. 23, 2022).

³ Letter from Hallie Bissett, Executive Director, Alaska Native Village Corporation Association, and Kim Reitmeier, Executive Director, ANCSA Regional Association, to the Honorable Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior (Feb. 4, 2021).

⁴ Letter from Fannie Suvlu, Mayor, City of Utqiagvik, Alaska, John Hopson, Jr., Mayor, City of Wainwright, Alaska, and Doug Whiteman, Mayor, City of Atkasuk, Alaska, to the Honorable Debra Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior (Apr. 26, 2021).

CC: The Honorable Tommy Beaudreau, *Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior*
The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning, *Director, Bureau of Land Management*