

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 30, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

It has recently come to our attention that Shell's proposal to conduct drilling operations in the Chukchi Sea is in direct conflict with Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) regulations on incidental take under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. We urge your administration to rescind the conditional approval of Shell's Exploration Plan due to the clear violation of wildlife protection and mitigation plans.

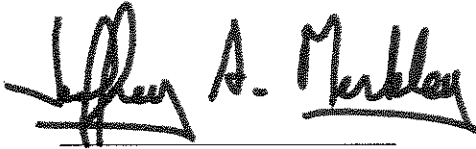
We have previously written to your agencies highlighting the hazards and potentially devastating consequences of drilling in the Arctic Ocean. Under the best circumstances, drilling operations will unlock an untouched fossil fuel reserve and hinder your efforts to address climate change. More likely, as the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) analysis shows, the harsh, remote, and treacherous conditions will result in an oil spill within sensitive ecosystems and vital subsistence areas for local communities.

Shell's Exploration Plan has received conditional approval from the BOEM, and is seeking Letters of Authorization from the FWS for the take of polar bears and pacific walrus that will be harassed by drilling operations. Under FWS regulations, Shell must maintain a 15-mile buffer between all wells or seismic activity. Shell's submitted Exploration Plan uses specifically identified drill sites, none of which maintain a 15-mile separation. Without this mandated separation zone, Shell's planned wells will negatively impact the resting, feeding, and breeding grounds of walruses.

The Arctic region is home to vibrant communities, iconic wildlife, and some of the last wild places relatively untouched by industrial development. Over the past decade, attempts to conduct oil and gas exploration in the Arctic Ocean have resulted in controversy, successful lawsuits, and the diversion of government resources. Shell's latest permit will be no exception if it is approved despite inconsistencies with the requirements of federal agencies.

New lease sales in the Chukchi Sea and Arctic Ocean are an unnecessary risk which threaten local communities, fragile ecosystems, and efforts at climate change mitigation. Your administration has both the opportunity and obligation to reexamine past decisions and to follow your own agencies' guidelines to protect wildlife, indigenous peoples, and limit greenhouse gas emissions. We reiterate that drilling operations in the Arctic Ocean are unacceptable, and we urge you to rescind Shell's conditional Exploration Permit in the Chukchi Sea.

Sincerely,



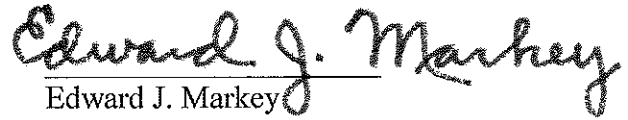
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Edward J. Markey
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