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Home > President and federal agencies propose new restrictions, leases in Arctic

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## President and federal agencies propose new restrictions, leases in Arctic

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In late January, the Obama administration and federal agencies proposed new policies governing Arctic oil and gas exploration. These policies restrict activities in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and open up new leases in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The proposed policies received both praise and opposition from members of Congress, industry, and environmentalists.

On January 25th, the Obama administration proposed designating 12 million acres of ANWR as wilderness following the release of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Comprehensive Conservation Plan and final impact statement. This designation would ban oil and gas development, road construction, and other activities. Alaskan members of Congress strongly opposed to this proposal, which Senator Lisa Murkowski called an attack on Alaskan sovereignty.

Following the Administration's ANWR recommendations, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) announced its 2017-2022 offshore leasing plan. The plan, released January 29, includes opening up leases in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas off Alaska, while protecting Barrow Canyon and Hanna Shoal, which are used by bowhead whales and walrus respectively. The leasing plan was met with frustration from many members of industry who feel it offers too few new leasing locations. Many Republicans feel the plan covers too small an area and contains too many restrictions, while many Democrats oppose Arctic drilling in general, arguing the likelihood of oil spills.

Sources: Arctic Council, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, E&E News, the White House, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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