

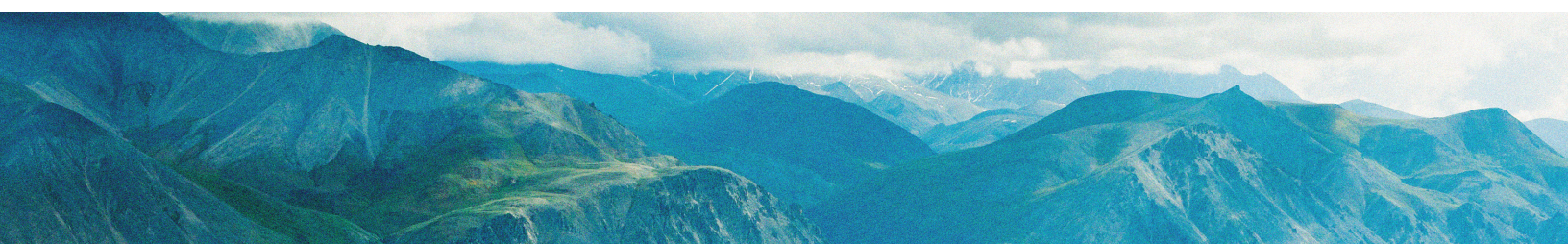
The Biden Administration's New Western Arctic Rules will Help Protect Indigenous Communities and Cultures

From the coasts of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, along the Colville River, to the lands and waters around Nuiqsut, the Western Arctic is where our people have sustained and passed along the traditions and activities of our elders for generations. These lands are our home, and where we hunt, fish, and gather the food and resources that are not just important to our culture, but essential to our livelihoods. Yet, in recent years, our communities and our way of life have come under constant pressure from the effects of fossil fuel extraction and climate change that threaten air, water, wildlife, and land.

For too long, Native communities, our culture, and our rights have been pushed to the side in a mad dash to meet the demands of just a few oil and gas CEOs. Previously, we've had little support from the federal government, as the Bureau of Land Management has focused almost exclusively on advancing extraction projects instead of listening to our communities and respecting our needs.

Thankfully, the Biden Administration just announced new protections for our communities and the wildlife and land that we rely on.

The Administration's action couldn't come at a more important time. These meaningful protections are vital steps towards balancing resource development in the Arctic so that Alaska Native communities who have called the Arctic home since time immemorial can continue to do so.




SUBSISTENCE

- These new safeguards prioritize protection of subsistence activities and communities will see the benefits of these protections.
 - Protecting subsistence traditions and protecting Indigenous communities go hand in hand. There are no roads to many of our villages. Moreover, it would cost nearly \$30,000 every year to replace the food we hunt, fish, and gather with store-bought food - an expense that far exceeds the budgets of most families. In fact, 80 percent of households in the region use subsistence resources for more than half of their diet. 40 communities rely on the Western Arctic caribou herd to survive. We need clean and pristine land and healthy, thriving wildlife to survive, and the Biden Administration's action helps secure that.
- Expanding Special Areas in the Western Arctic will also safeguard the rich biodiversity of the region and support healthy ecosystems for one of the most diverse wildlife collections on the planet.
- The Biden Administration is taking important steps to ensure that the best available science – including Indigenous Knowledge – is incorporated in the management of the area, while also emphasizing consultation and genuine co-stewardship with the people who call this area home.

COMMUNITIES BEFORE OIL EXECUTIVES

- The threats of oil and gas extraction have loomed large for years. Whether it be oil and gas drilling displacing caribou, the emissions threatening the respiratory and neurological health of our children, or oil leaks dangerously polluting the waters we drink and the fish and wildlife we eat, expanded fossil fuel extraction on the traditional lands of our Arctic peoples is a direct threat to our source of food, clean air and water, and other essential resources. The unusually high rates of cancer and asthma across our communities are not a mere coincidence.
- Moreover, with nearly all oil and gas jobs in the Arctic going to non-residents, the residents of the Western Arctic have seen few meaningful benefits despite the many threats to our health and way of life.



This makes a difference because it will elevate the priorities of our communities instead of just the voices of fossil fuel executives. When it comes to listening to Alaska Natives and safeguarding our way of life, we both need and deserve the opportunities afforded by these protections.



These new protections are a critically important step forward but President Biden can continue to ensure that our communities and our people are put first over the demands of oil and gas CEOs. We encourage the administration to build upon them by expanding protections to other parts of the Western Arctic that are essential to our communities. *That includes creating a Nuiqsut Subsistence Use Special Area that overlaps with the lands where we practice traditional use and a Special Area that protects the migratory corridors of the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd as they migrate to their calving grounds.*

At a time when Alaska Native communities and the resources we rely on to survive and thrive are at risk from pollution and climate change, this could not be more important. We have lived here in harmony with nature countless years before the oil and gas industry set its eyes on our land.

Now, with protections like these, we have great hope that we can continue to do so for countless years to come.



Grandmothers Growing Goodness is an Inupiat group dedicated to elevating the understanding and protection of Inupiat culture and people in the face of rampant oil and gas development and climate change. Its core purpose is to help support equity for communities facing significant environmental justice threats and to strengthen equity for the Inupiat.