

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515
December 22, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

We are writing in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) request for public comments on the proposed rule to designate critical habitat for polar bear populations in the United States under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

We urge the FWS to rely on the best available peer reviewed science when determining the appropriate critical habitat for the polar bear, especially if such habitat designation could adversely impact activities essential to our nation's economy and severely impact U.S. industry and consumers. As was the listing itself, the habitat designation is critical to Alaska, the nation, and the international community.

It is no secret that Alaska has bountiful natural energy resources - both onshore and offshore - that have contributed to the prosperity of the state and our nation for decades. The Trans Alaska Pipeline is nearing the delivery of its 16 billionth barrel of American made energy to the U.S. consumer, and Alaska has much more to give. Thousands of families, both inside and outside Alaska, depend on these resources for a living, and many people have lost their jobs due to unjust, unbalanced regulatory and legal actions regarding the environment. By ensuring that offshore areas surrounding the Alaskan coasts remain open to responsible oil, natural gas and alternative energy development, the federal government will provide the nation with the opportunity to safely produce our own energy, an effort that will significantly benefit our economy by creating domestic jobs and decreasing U.S. dependence on foreign energy. In addition, we sincerely hope the economic well-being of hardworking Americans will not be an afterthought in the FWS' decision-making process.


The FWS acknowledges that the sum of documented impacts from activities, such as oil and gas development and shipping, have been minimal on the polar bear population. Data provided by monitoring and reporting programs in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, as required under the more restrictive Marine Mammal Protection Act incidental take authorizations for oil and gas activities, have shown that oil and gas activities can coexist with polar bears through the use of appropriate mitigation measures.

To be sure, we support the efforts of the FWS to ensure that the polar bear and other wildlife thrive. We also understand that the polar bear has become iconic in the climate change debate, and as such, any policy affecting them quickly becomes one infused with emotion and attention from certain special interest groups. We strongly urge the FWS to use sound science and incorporate any applicable technological and scientific advances when determining the most effective way to proceed forward with the polar bear proposed critical habitat. As climate modeling and scientific technology continues to develop, we trust that the FWS will reevaluate any determinations.

Sincerely,



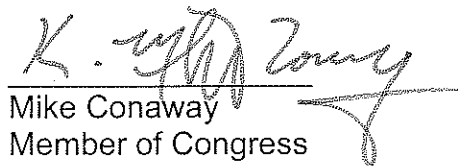
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Dan Boren
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Mike Coffman
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Mike Conaway
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Cynthia Lummis
Member of Congress



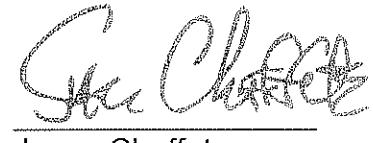
Tom McClintock
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George Radanovich
Member of Congress



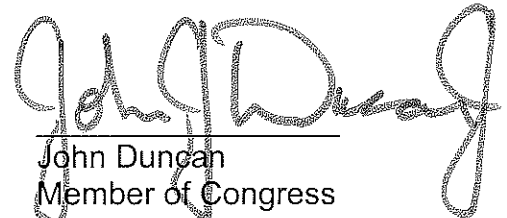
Rob Bishop
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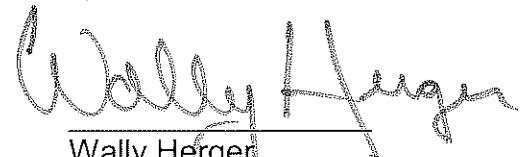
Jason Chaffetz
Member of Congress



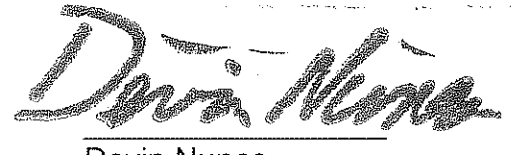
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