

Union of Concerned Scientists

Science for a Healthy Planet and Safer World

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Scientists' concerns on oil and gas operations in Alaska are buried by the Trump administration



What happened: The Department of Interior (DOI) failed to consider 18 memos from staff scientists who had raised scientific and environmental concerns about proposed oil and gas operations in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. These documents were excluded from public view, were excluded from the DOI's draft environmental assessment, and were not released during Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests filed by advocacy groups.

Why it matters: The issues raised in these documents were not minor concerns. Federal scientists identified significant data gaps on the effects of oil and gas drilling on the health and livelihoods of rural and Native Alaskans; the survivability of birds, caribou, polar bears, wolves, and fishes; and the inability to predict effects on vegetation, snowmelt, and waterways. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to carry out science-based environmental assessments

on any project that could damage the land or cause environmental harms. By ignoring the valid concerns raised by scientists – and by refusing to release the scientists’ memos to the public via FOIAs – the DOI is failing to incorporate the best available science into their environmental assessment and is failing to grant the public their lawful right to be informed about the concerns of federal scientists.

Learn more about how the DOI is [ignoring the concerns of federal scientists](#) about the effects of oil and operations on people, the wildlife, and the environment in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The 18 memos published by PEER can also be [accessed here](#).

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