



World Wildlife Fund

1250 24th St. NW
Washington, DC 20037-1193

Phone: 202-293-4800
Fax: 202-293-9211

www.worldwildlife.org

July 21, 2008

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

As gas prices soar to \$4.50 a gallon, Americans all over the country are feeling the effects. The response from the President has been to lift the presidential moratorium on oil and gas development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) put in place in 1990 by his father, President George H.W. Bush. The President has suggested that the only obstacle standing between the American people and lower gas prices is the United States Congress. Proponents of drilling claim that the answer to both energy independence and lower gasoline prices is to open up Alaska and the rest of the OCS to drilling. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), Bristol Bay, the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas –the “Polar Bear Seas” –and the entire OCS are all facing renewed threat. But drilling in or off of Alaska, or elsewhere in the OCS, will not produce any new oil supply for decades, and even then will only have an “insignificant” effect on prices, according to the Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration (EIA). Oil extraction will not solve the current economic burden felt by American consumers, but it will put at risk America’s most precious natural places, especially the vulnerable Arctic realm, to oil pollution and the potential for oil spills with disastrous consequences.

On behalf of its 1.2 million members here in the United States, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) calls on Congress to resist the temptation to sacrifice long-held bipartisan protections for our oceans and uphold the Congressional moratorium.

The current situation in America demonstrates that providing public lands to oil companies does not decrease our oil dependency or lower prices. Currently, oil and gas companies hold leases to 90 million acres (onshore and off), including Alaska. Of this area, roughly three-quarters are not being used for energy production, leaving 68 million acres—the size of Nevada—untouched. While the number of drilling permits has doubled in the last five years, the price of gas during this time period has tripled. Even if oil and gas companies started exploiting the land they currently lease, price decreases would not be seen for decades. According to the EIA, oil in the Arctic Refuge or offshore will not affect prices until 2027, at earliest.

Extracting oil off of Alaska is a particularly high-risk operation, susceptible to extreme weather and oil spills. The icy conditions make oil cleanup in this region nearly impossible placing in jeopardy valuable natural resources and coastal economies. Even the U.S. government’s own expert agency, the

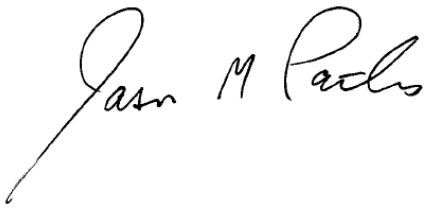
National Marine Fisheries Service, has stated repeatedly that there are not enough safeguards or information to go forward with drilling in the Arctic, and recommended against it. These ocean and coastal ecosystems are home to some of the richest fisheries in the world. Forty percent of the U.S. fisheries production comes from the Bering Sea, “America’s fish basket,” and a spill there could be catastrophic. The Arctic waters are also habitat for polar bears, walrus, seals, endangered whales, and serve as staging and molting grounds for hundreds and thousands of migratory birds. The region’s pristine marine resources are integral to the livelihoods and cultures of Alaska’s native communities.

These intact marine and coastal regions constitute America’s ocean legacy. We cannot afford to place them at risk due to short-sighted and failed energy policies. We need a comprehensive energy policy that does not perpetuate what the President himself has dubbed “our addiction to oil,” but places a priority emphasis on energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy resources.

Proponents of offshore drilling claim that we can lower current gas prices by lining our coasts and shorelines with oil rigs. They are looking for black gold, but peddling nothing more than fool's gold – providing a path to more profits for the oil companies while leading cash-strapped consumers to a dead end.

WWF urges you to reaffirm your continued bipartisan support for the Congressional moratorium.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason M. Patlis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Jason M. Patlis
Vice President and Managing Director
U.S. Government Relations