

No Thanks, President Biden

Lawsuit charges Biden administration with violating multiple laws in approving ConocoPhillips' Willow oil & gas project in Alaska

On March 14, six groups filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court charging the Interior Department, multiple agencies, and agency officials with violating an array of laws when authorizing ConocoPhillips' Willow oil and gas project in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. No single oil and gas project has more potential to set back the Biden administration's climate and public lands protection goals than Willow — the largest new oil and gas project proposed on federal lands.



[Stopwillow.org](https://stopwillow.org)

The public interest non-profit law firm Trustees for Alaska filed the suit in Anchorage, Alaska, on behalf of Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic, Alaska Wilderness League, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Environment America, Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society.

The Biden administration approved Willow on March 10, despite acknowledging and failing to mitigate known harms to Arctic communities, public health, wildlife, and climate. The people of Nuiqsut, the community located just a few miles away, would endure increased air pollution, repeated blasting for gravel mining, and continued rapid industrialization that would lead to significant physical and mental health harms.

The Willow project would significantly expand ConocoPhillips' extensive oil and gas extraction operation in the Arctic and become a hub for future industrialization for decades, spewing out toxic emissions and greenhouse gas pollution that undermines the President's climate promises.

“Once again, we find ourselves going to court to protect our lives, our communities, and our future,” said Siquiñiq Maupin, executive director of Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic. “The Biden administration's approval of the ConocoPhillips Willow project makes no sense for the health of the Arctic or the planet and comes after numerous calls by local communities for tribal consultation and real recognition of the impacts to land, water, animals, and people. Conoco Phillips has made record profits year after year and hopes to continue to do so at the cost of our communities and future generations. The true cost of Willow is rising health issues like respiratory illnesses and rare cancer clusters all over the Arctic. The true cost of Willow is a

climate crisis that displaces Arctic people and reduces access to foods like caribou and fish. The true cost of Willow is a future where we lose our traditional practices and diet because of the pollution and destruction to land, water, and climate caused by the fossil fuel industry's unending greed. We will continue to fight this project and protect Teshekpuk Lake and do so every step of the way."

The authorization of the Willow project still violates many of the same laws that the 2020 Trump-era approval did. The U.S. District Court voided those permits in 2021. Today's lawsuit charges the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Interior with violating their respective duties under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

"Interior attempted to put a shiny gloss over a structurally unsound decision that will, without question, result in a massive fossil fuel project that will reduce access to food and cultural practices for local communities. This new decision allows ConocoPhillips to pump out massive amounts of greenhouse gasses that drive continued climate devastation in the Arctic and world," said Bridget Psarianos, staff attorney for Trustees for Alaska. "The laws broken on the way to these permits demonstrate the government's disregard for those who would be most directly harmed by industrial pollution and ignores Alaska's and the world's climate reality."

The lawsuit's counts include one that charges agencies with violating NEPA by failing to consider alternatives that would further reduce impacts to subsistence users, preclude drilling in sensitive ecosystems, or reduce greenhouse gas emissions or climate impacts. It further charges agencies for not taking a hard look at direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, as required by NEPA, including impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, air quality, polar bears, caribou, wetlands, and subsistence uses and resources.

"ConocoPhillips' massive oil and gas project presents a real threat to the wildlife, ecosystems, and communities of Arctic Alaska," said Mike Scott, senior campaign representative for Sierra Club's Our Wild Alaska campaign. "If they're allowed to break ground, the Willow project would be a disaster for the climate, the effects of which would be felt for decades. We continue to support the Alaskan communities most directly in harm's way, and our work to stop Willow will go on."