

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 4, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C St, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

We write to thank you for your leadership at the Department of the Interior (DOI) and offer our strong support for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) expeditious finalization of the supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Willow Master Development Plan in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). This project is critical to the economic wellbeing of our state, national energy security, and the Administration's strategy of energy dominance. Its importance has only grown as we face an increasingly challenging economy and the need for opportunities to spur recovery once markets stabilize in the wake of COVID-19.

We encourage you to continue to make the Willow project a priority for the Department. We understand the Department intends to finalize the supplemental EIS and issue a Record of Decision early in the second half of 2020, and we request you make every effort to maintain this schedule. There is no doubt the COVID-19 crisis has introduced challenges to business operations, but we understand BLM has been extraordinarily responsive to these challenges to engage all interested parties in the review and development of the supplemental EIS. A critical part of our recovery from this crisis is for agencies, like BLM, to ensure that economic development and infrastructure projects have the permits they need to move forward and that reviews are not delayed or deferred.

It is also important to acknowledge this is a supplemental EIS. It is being developed due to the request of the applicant to modify their project in response to community engagement, including feedback gathered during the extended 60-day public comment period for the underlying EIS at the end of last year. This is how projects, companies, and the process should work – with feedback incorporated, designs updated to work for communities, and decisions still moving forward in a timely manner. For these reasons we continue to support Alternative B, BLM's preferred alternative, as the most feasible and appropriate path forward, along with the "Option 3" Colville River crossing approach that has been developed through the applicant's extensive community engagement efforts.

We previously shared the benefits of this project in a letter late last year, but our state and nation now need those benefits more than ever given the economic shocks of COVID-19. We will urgently need the employment, investment, and local, state, and federal government revenue the Willow project can provide in the years ahead. Today, higher unemployment and more significant budget challenges make the timely approval of job-creating projects like Willow an imperative.


Finally, we are glad to support a supplemental EIS that protects Alaska's environment and North Slope subsistence activities. The revised proposal diminishes impacts to the critically important whale hunts from Nuiqsut and other North Slope Inupiat communities by avoiding the use of a gravel-based loading facility in coastal waters. It also minimizes the need for, and use of, gravel on the Slope, further reducing the environmental footprint. This modification is a good outcome and will help inform future work under the cooperative regulatory relationship between the federal, state, and local governments.

Thank you for bringing this project to this step. Especially in light of our current, COVID-19 induced challenges, we believe the Willow project is critical to the future of Alaska and we stand ready to support prompt and timely finalization of the supplemental EIS.

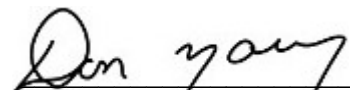
Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



Don Young  
Congressman for All Alaska