



## Vuntut Gwitchin Condemns Opening of Entire *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* for Oil and Gas Leasing

October 23, 2025 - Old Crow, Yukon

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation strongly condemns the decision by the U.S. Department of Interior to open the entire Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling. This sacred landscape, which we call *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* (The Sacred Place Where Life Begins) is the birthplace and nursery grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd, which sustains the physical, cultural, and spiritual well-being of our Gwich'in Nation.

Earlier today, U.S. Secretary Bergum announced the repeal of the Biden-era leasing program in favor of reinstating a leasing program that opens the entire Coastal Plain with fewer environmental and cultural protections. Secretary Bergum also announced plans to reinstate all oil and gas leases held by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, covering more than 350,000 acres within the Coastal Plain.

These decisions carry serious and far-reaching consequences for the Porcupine caribou herd, for climate stability, for our sacred lands, and for our inherent Indigenous rights.

Today's announcements follow the introduction of a Congressional Review Act Resolution to overturn the Biden Administration's Arctic Refuge protections. The Trump Administration and its allies in Congress have made expanding Arctic oil and gas development a clear priority, even amid a continuing government shutdown, despite the devastating consequences these actions will have on our people, whose culture, identity and survival are inextricably tied to these sacred lands.

For thousands of years, we have lived alongside *Vadzaih* (Caribou), which provide us with all we need to thrive in our northern homeland. We know that drilling in *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* would devastate *Vadzaih* by destroying their calving and nursery grounds.

In the face of these threats, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, together with our Gwich'in relatives in Alaska and the Northwest Territories in Canada, and with our allies and partners around the world, remain united in our commitment to protect the sacred lands of *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*. Our future generations depend on it.



## Quotes

“The Trump Administration continues to completely disregard the sacred importance of *Iizhik Gwats’an Gwandaii Goodlit* to the Gwich’in Nation. What happens in the Coastal Plain has profound implications for the food security and the way of life of our Nation and all those who depend on these sacred lands. No amount of money or political argument can ever justify what is being done here. We will work closely with the Gwich’in Steering Committee, and our partners to determine how best to respond and to protect the Coastal Plain.”

— Chief Pauline Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

“In 1988, our Elders directed us to work in a good way until *Iizhik Gwats’an Gwandaii Goodlit* is permanently protected. Any development on these lands would cause lasting harms to Vadzaih and to our way of life. We will continue to protect this sacred place for our ancestors, our children, and the generations yet to come. It is our responsibility as Gwich’in and we will never give up.”

— Harold Frost Jr., Deputy Chief and Gwich’in Steering Committee Board Member for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

## For all media inquiries, please contact:

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## Background

Statement: [Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation condemns Trump Administration’s continued push for drilling in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge](#) (April 11, 2025)

Statement: [Our Work is Not Done - Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation responds to reckless actions by President Trump](#) (January 23, 2025)