

Offshore Oil Leases in America's Arctic Rejected by U.S. Court

*Court Decision Paves the Way for Obama Administration
to Reconsider Drilling in Wildlife-Rich Arctic Waters*



Usfws

Spectacled Eider

Published: Jan 22, 2014

NEW YORK –

Today, the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that the Department of the Interior violated the law when it sold offshore oil and gas leases in the [Chukchi Sea](#) off the coast of Alaska. The decision stems from a lawsuit filed by a coalition of Alaska Native and conservation groups made up of the following: the Native Village of Point Hope, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, Alaska Wilderness League, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, National Audubon Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Oceana, Pacific Environment, Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL), Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and World Wildlife Fund. Earthjustice, a nonprofit environmental law organization, represented the groups.

Statement from Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold:

"We don't know nearly enough about the Chukchi Sea ecosystems - let alone about how to clean up an oil spill in ice-locked seas - to let international corporations go around poking holes in the seafloor," said Audubon President and CEO [David Yarnold](#). "We do know that the Arctic Ocean is crucial for marine birds and mammals, holding globally significant feeding and resting areas for dozens of species, and they need to be protected. This decision gives the White House a chance to reconsider drilling in the Chukchi."

Joint Statement from Plaintiffs

"Today's ruling is a victory for the Arctic Ocean. The government has no business offering oil companies leases in the Chukchi Sea. The area is home to iconic species such as polar bear, bowhead whales, and walrus and to a vibrant indigenous subsistence culture. Drilling for oil puts at risk the region's wildlife and people, and it takes us off the path toward a clean energy future.

For the second time, a court has found that the government ignored basic legal protections for our ocean resources in deciding to open the Chukchi Sea to offshore oil leasing. The Obama administration must now take seriously its obligation to re-think whether to allow risky industrial activities in the Chukchi Sea. As Shell's problems have clearly demonstrated, companies are not ready to drill in the Arctic Ocean."

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Visit Audubon online at www.audubon.org.