

# Unequal Access to the Decision-Making Process: Repeating chances for ConocoPhillips but inadequate opportunity for Alaska Natives

This timeline shows a repeated effort by ConocoPhillips and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to rush the review and approval process for the Willow oil drilling project, often at the expense of input from the nearby Village of Nuiqsut.

<b>August 2019: BLM sets comment period during subsistence hunting season</b>
<b>November 2019: BLM restarts NEPA process</b> for new proposal to address concerns about Teshekpuk lake
<b>March 2020: BLM opens comment period as Nuiqsut hunkers down</b> for COVID
<b>May 2020: Rep. Haaland et. al. request halt to project</b> due to the loss of irreplaceable cultural values
<b>August 2020: BLM green lights permit, Alaska Native groups challenged it in court</b> with conservation groups
<b>February 2021: Courts halt project</b> , confirming irreparable harm to the landscape and subsistence hunting
<b>August 2021: Alaska District Court invalidates project permit</b>
<b>September 2021: ConocoPhillips advises BLM on next steps</b> to address court decision.
<b>March 2022: Gas blowout at nearby Alpine field</b> reignites old fears in Nuiqsut
<b>July 2022: BLM again sets comment period during subsistence hunting season</b>

## **Willow threatens local health and culture**

Oil and gas activities in the Arctic are reducing access to traditional foods and polluting the resident's water, land, and air with toxic chemicals. Nuiqsut residents bear an unequal proportion of the burdens of the Willow. According to the EPA, "Nuiqsut will be

profoundly impacted by the Project by impeding access to, and the availability of, their traditional food sources and increasing their food insecurity.”

### **Uneven burdens and benefits**

ConocoPhillips made more money in Alaska last year than the local and state governments stand to gain from 30 years of drilling at Willow. Only one percent of employed residents of the North Slope of Alaska work in the oil and gas industry and nonresidents would fill most Willow jobs. DSEIS at 252. Residents are also disproportionately affected by the pronounced impacts of climate change in the region and by impacts to subsistence caused by changing ice, wind, and permafrost conditions. DSEIS at 295-96.

### **Willow threatens Teshekpuk Lake**

The project would include at least one development pad now, and at least two more soon, in the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area. This area is one of the most ecologically important wetlands in the entire Arctic, providing habitat for tens of thousands of molting geese, threatened species, nesting shorebirds and waterfowl, and the birthplace for the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd. The area and the caribou herd are important for communities' traditional and cultural activities.

***Environmental justice requires that everyone enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process.***