

Willow: A Climate Disaster We Can't Afford

On its own, the Willow project is immense and damaging: its emissions would be equivalent to running at least 76 coal plants for an entire year.

In addition to the downstream climate impact from the oil that would be produced at Willow, Willow itself would be among the single largest point sources of climate pollution in the United States. Only 13 out of 5,194 single point sources would contribute more emissions, meaning Willow would emit more climate pollution annually than over 99.7% of all single point sources in the country.

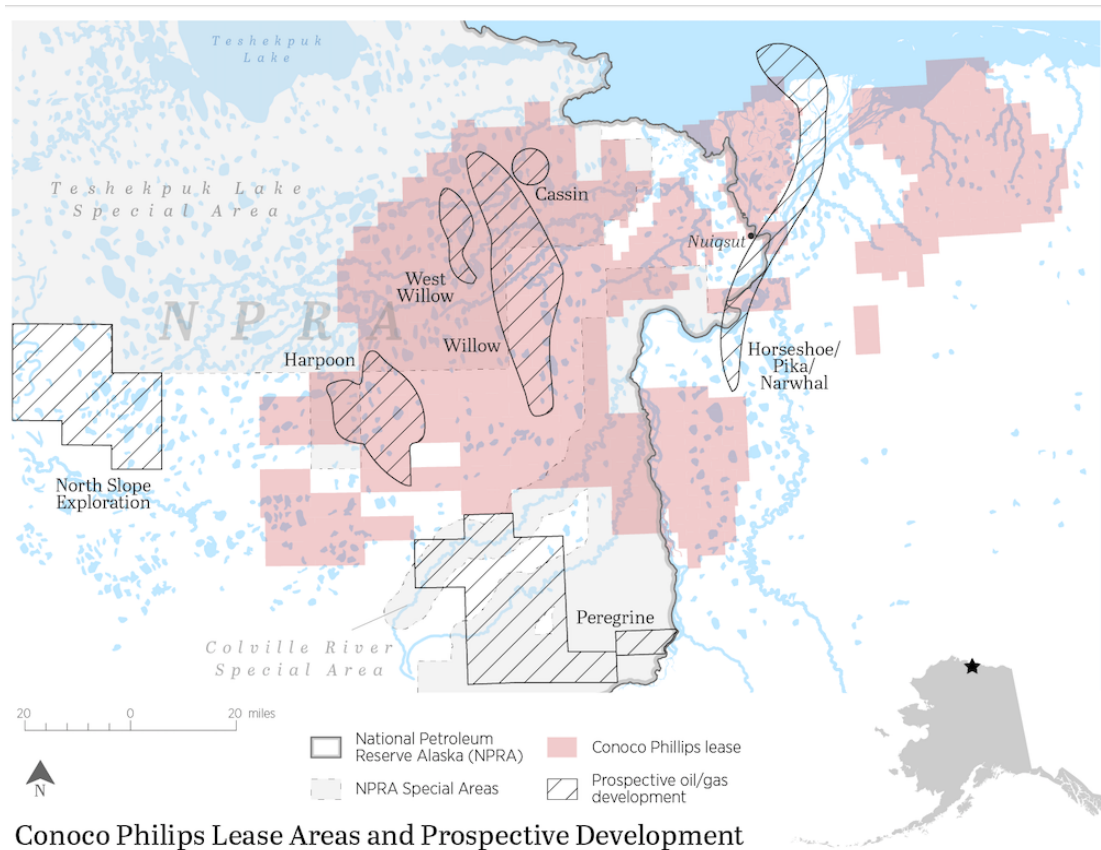
According to a [report](#) by EarthJustice and Evergreen Action, no single oil and gas project has more potential to set back the administration's climate goals than the Willow project. An [analysis](#) by the Center for American Progress reached the same conclusion – finding that Willow's expected carbon emissions would more than eclipse the emissions avoided by reaching President Biden's ambitious goals to ramp up clean energy development on our public lands and waters .

The Willow project's climate impact is intensified by its location in the Western Arctic, a region warming four times faster than the rest of the world. Because the permafrost is rapidly melting, ConocoPhillips plans to artificially chill the tundra to sustain its expansive oil and gas infrastructure. This high level of development investment would cause immense and direct damage on the ground.

Step One in ConocoPhillips' Master Plan to Industrialize the Western Arctic

What's even more troubling is that Willow is just step one in ConocoPhillips' master plan to industrialize the pristine Western Arctic. At a [June 2021 market update](#) (p. 10), **ConocoPhillips SVP for Global Operations**, Nick Olds, told investors that **Willow Oil Project could be the next great Alaska hub**.

- Nick Olds also announced that ConocoPhillips has “identified up to **3 billion [barrels of oil equivalent]** of nearby prospects and leads with similar characteristics that could **leverage the Willow infrastructure**.”
- He also added that “this offers significant long-term upside to this project.”
- A [slide deck](#) (p. 25) accompanying the presentation highlighted that this “**new infrastructure hub unlocks the west**” and that Willow incorporates a “**modular design for capital-efficient expansion**.”



Current Estimates Dramatically Understate Willow's Potential Climate Impacts

The resource estimates used in federal environmental analyses fall well short of estimates provided by ConocoPhillips.

- In November 2019, ConocoPhillips released a resource estimate of **450 million to 800 million barrels** of oil equivalent for the Greater Willow Area.
- In October 2020, BLM issued a Record of Decision estimating that Willow Oil Project would only produce approximately **586 million barrels of oil** over its 30-year life.

Based on ConocoPhillips' own estimates and previous ConocoPhillips' projects, the Willow Oil Project is likely to have much, much larger climate impact than federal analyses assume. For example:

- Alpine Oil Project, the site of recent uncontrolled leak, was approved as a 430 million barrels of oil equivalent project.
- As of 2021, cumulative production at Alpine was 600 million barrels of oil equivalent, or 30% more than initial estimates of recoverable oil.
- **ConocoPhillips has identified plans** (p. 9) expected to yield another 600 million barrels of oil equivalent, making the current estimate of ultimate recovery almost three times more than its estimated project approval.

If Willow, like nearby Alpine, were to have three times the climate impact predicted by current government estimates, that would be equivalent to the annual emissions of every coal plant in the nation.

Bottom line: Willow is a climate disaster America cannot afford. If the Biden administration approves it, they will greenlight a project that is in reality significantly larger and more damaging to the region and the planet than the project approved by President Trump.

In the recently released Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, the BLM proposes a range of action alternatives to Willow. They differ slightly in scale and connectivity, but each would each produce nearly the same amount of oil and come with comparable climate consequences. If the administration is serious about achieving its climate goals, the no action alternative is the only answer.
