

12 November 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

You have identified disruption of the earth's climate as a significant concern of your administration because it poses a grave threat to the future of our planet.

Your trip to Alaska publicized the fact that climate disruption is most evident in the Arctic. Fossil fuel emissions have warmed the planet and, in the Arctic, that warming is amplified by diminishing sea ice and thawing permafrost. Arctic marine ecosystems are being overwhelmed by ocean acidification, increasing atmospheric and oceanic variability, and increasing human activities. In turn, rapid warming of the Arctic is contributing to further climate disruption around the world, including melting ice sheets and rising sea levels.

The world is ambivalent about the Arctic. We marvel at its cold, majestic beauty, but many of us also yearn to exploit its resources. Pressures are mounting to fish, mine, and tour the Arctic, but fossil fuels are the resources most coveted. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Arctic Ocean.

We can lay no claim to sustainability if we continue to develop the Arctic's offshore fossil fuels. First, the hypersensitivity of Arctic ecosystems, combined with our obvious inability to respond to significant spills under Arctic conditions, means that we are taking risks that we cannot manage; we are essentially crossing our fingers that we will cause no severe, adverse events such as the Exxon Valdez or Deepwater Horizon oil spills. That is not the approach of a country committed to sustainability.

Second, thoughtful research and careful management are necessary for dealing with climate disruption but, in the foreseeable future, no amount of Arctic research can counter the full adverse effects of more oil and gas development on the global climate. Moving away from our heavy reliance on fossil fuels is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid such disruption.

Exploitation of offshore Arctic fossil fuels poses unnecessary risks to Arctic marine ecosystems specifically and the global environment generally. Such exploitation places our needs above those of future generations, and undercuts efforts to address climate disruption in a responsible manner. The basic tenets of good citizenship call for thoughtful, responsible, enlightened action—including restraint—to address climate disruption, even if other countries are slow to follow our example.

Your strong leadership these past eight years indicates that you know these things to be right and true. Your wisdom and courage have brought new hope to our country and the

world. Please take yet another difficult, courageous step: Withdraw — permanently — the U.S. Arctic Ocean from further oil and gas development.

Respectfully,

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