

## A Pro-Conservation President!

Olympic National Park, Washington

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**With the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on January 20, 2021, a window of opportunity opened for conservation, the climate and our communities. We now must put our collective imagination and passion into pursuing our vision of a future where people and wild nature flourish together, meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing planet.**

It will take all of us working together to not only undo damage from the Trump administration, but also to achieve conservation gains at the scale needed to tackle the existential threats we face. We're ready to dig in with your help and with the support of the Biden-Harris administration, which is taking several steps that support the **two key priorities** that drive the focus of our work at The Wilderness Society.

### Priority 1

#### **Making public lands a solution to climate change and species loss.**

This means ending the role of public lands as a major contributor to climate emissions by sharply reducing coal mining, as well as fracking and drilling for oil and natural gas on public lands. It also means protecting forests, to keep them working for us as "carbon sinks" that remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere. Finally, it means increasing protections for intact ecosystems on wild public lands to secure a resilient continental network of protected landscapes that will serve as habitat havens and allow species to migrate as they adapt to the changing climate.

The Biden-Harris administration is focused on addressing climate change. The President has required every federal

[continued on page 3](#)



## Dear Conservation Champion,

You have been instrumental in protecting America's wild places and laying the groundwork for fulfilling their promise in the coming years.

Your commitment to conservation fills me with gratitude and hope. In you, I see a way forward to help heal our increasingly divided nation—and confront the climate, extinction and equity crises.

Time and again—even in recent years—we've seen that protecting public lands provides common ground. Around these lands we love, people of all political views, ages, races, ethnicities, cultures, faiths and communities continue to come together to discover and build upon shared values and hopes.

With your leadership, we can invite people across our differences to unite and join us in building a future where people and wild nature flourish together.

Thank you for all you have done—and will do—to champion our natural world!

Jamie Williams  
President



Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming

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**The Wilderness Society recognizes Native Americans and Indigenous peoples as the longest serving stewards of the land.**

**To learn more visit:  
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agency to measure and consider the climate impacts of its actions and decisions. And on Inauguration Day, he took a number of strong actions to protect public lands, address the climate crisis and combat systemic racism, including an executive order placing a moratorium on all oil and gas activity in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition, President Biden has taken many actions that we and our partners recommended to make public lands a solution to climate change and species loss, among them:

- Reviewing more than 100 of Trump’s environmental rollbacks, including the gutting of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. These rollbacks have fueled climate change and encouraged damaging development on irreplaceable public lands.
- Reconsidering the unlawful exemption to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which since 2001 has protected the wildest areas of national forests from development. This exemption was improperly granted by the previous administration, putting 9.5 million acres of the Tongass National Forest at risk for roadbuilding and logging. It also set a dangerous precedent that imperils all 58.5 million acres of U.S. national forests protected by this rule.
- Adopting 30X30, the effort to protect 30% of all U.S. lands and waters by the year 2030, heeding the scientific consensus that achieving this goal is vital to averting catastrophic and irreversible consequences of climate change and species loss.

## Priority 2

### **Transform conservation policy and practice so all people benefit equitably from public lands.**

The time is long past to put public lands in service of community well-being instead of resource extraction. These shared lands should contribute to a healthy future for all communities and be accessible, safe and welcoming for all people. However, the people with the power to make decisions about protecting and funding parks and public lands rarely reflect the diversity of the nation they serve. That lack of representation has helped maintain a “nature gap” that leaves communities of color bearing a disproportionate share of the harms that come from development on public lands while reaping fewer of the benefits.

President Biden has appointed leaders throughout his administration who bring the strength of our nation’s racial, ethnic and cultural diversity to the highest levels of government. Among them is former New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland, Biden’s selection for Secretary of the Interior. A strong voice on climate issues and a steadfast advocate for Tribal and Indigenous rights, she is the first Native American nominated to lead a Cabinet-level agency.

We’re hopeful about the next four years. The Biden-Harris administration has offered many opportunities to address these critical priorities. But it will not be easy. With a razor-thin pro-conservation majority in both houses of Congress, our imperative will be to build bipartisan support and strong, inclusive coalitions that represent everyone. In doing so, we can achieve enduring conservation gains that enable people and nature to flourish.





Wild Places

# The Fight Goes on to Protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska

The Wilderness Society's decades long campaign to protect and defend the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge goes on—and we've made some big progress in protecting its coastal plain from destructive oil and gas development.

In partnership with the Gwich'in Steering Committee and Iñupiat activists, representing Indigenous peoples whose way of life, livelihood and cultural traditions face destruction, The Wilderness Society is working with a dozen key conservation groups to protect the coastal plain of the refuge.

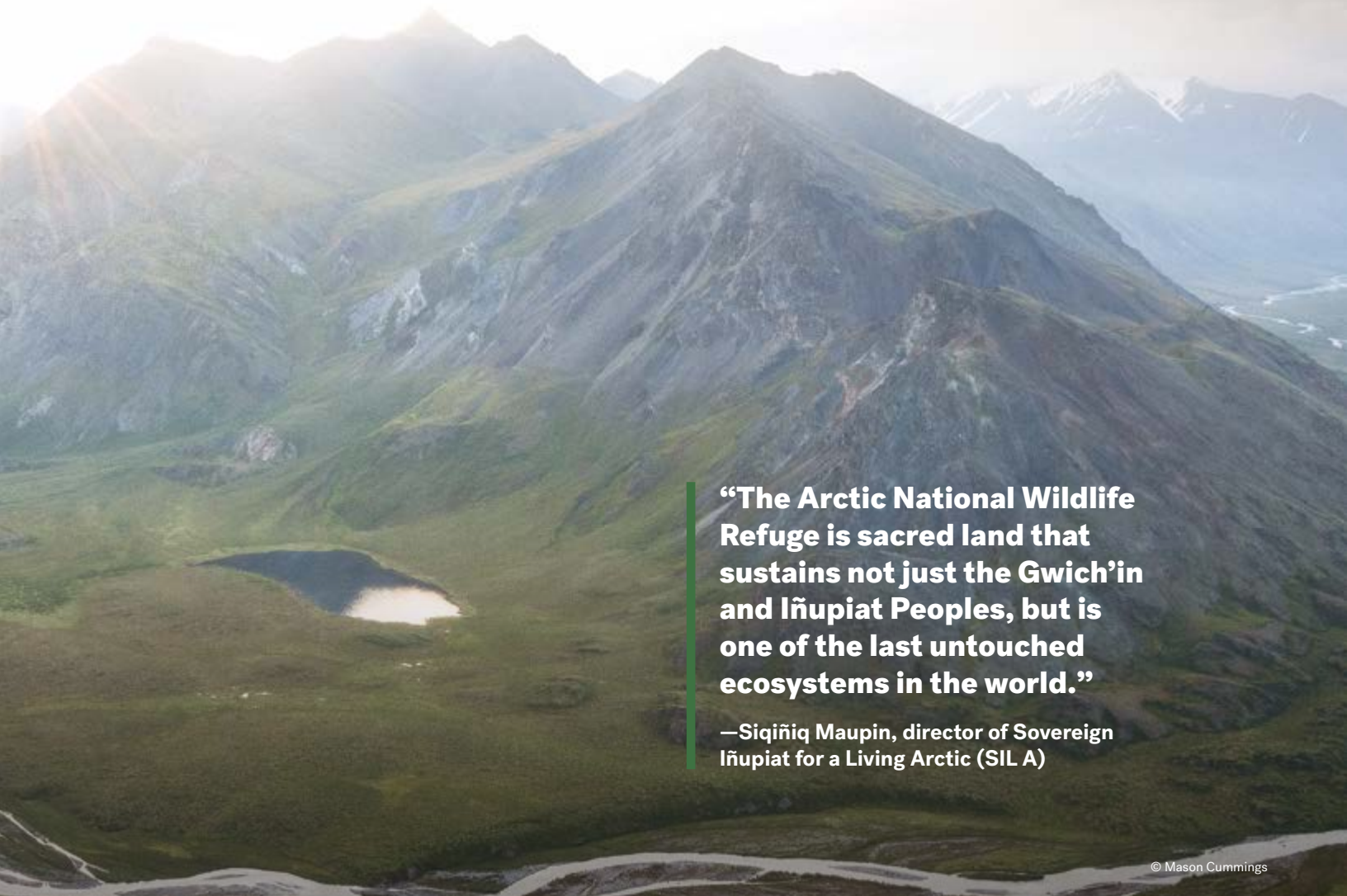
We fought hard for over three years—in court, in corporate offices and with a massive public information campaign—to prevent the sale of oil and gas leases mandated by Congress in the 2017 Tax Act and stop a proposed seismic exploration project.

In response to the irresponsible rush to open the coastal plain to industry bidders, we partnered with the Gwich'in

to file a lawsuit challenging the process in August 2020. Yet, on January 6, a mere 14 days before leaving office, the Trump administration held its first lease sale, furthering an agenda that aimed to threaten Indigenous cultural values and future generations' health and wellbeing.

The result was a bust. All of Big Oil stayed away from the lease sale and the six largest financial institutions in the U.S. and Canada declined to finance drilling in the Arctic. Of the 22 tracts offered in the lease sale, 11 were sold, nine secured by the state of Alaska and two by small oil companies. The sale generated under \$12 million in revenue, less than one percent of the \$1.8 billion projected when Congress mandated the lease sale. Despite this, the Bureau of Land Management signed and issued all but two of the leases on the last full day of Trump's presidency.

With your help, The Wilderness Society is working closely with the new administration to use the tools at



**“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is sacred land that sustains not just the Gwich’in and Iñupiat Peoples, but is one of the last untouched ecosystems in the world.”**

—Siqiñiq Maupin, director of Sovereign Iñupiat for a Living Arctic (SILA)

© Mason Cummings

its disposal to protect the Arctic Refuge. On January 20, one of President Biden’s first actions in office was to impose a temporary freeze on all oil and gas leasing activities in the Arctic Refuge pending a careful review and reconsideration of the Trump administration’s actions. This fight is important to the Biden team, because it aligns with their top priorities to fight climate change, ensure environmental justice and protect the rights of Indigenous people and other disenfranchised communities.

In the meantime, we are pressing ahead in our lawsuit to overturn the Trump administration’s leasing program given its flawed environmental analysis, wholesale rejection of scientific and public input objecting to the program, lack of any meaningful safeguards, and problems with how the lease sale was held.

Further, we are working to get the new Congress to pass legislation to rescind the provision of the 2017

Tax Act that opened the coastal plain to drilling and to secure its permanent protection. Our efforts gained momentum after the January lease sale showed tremendous public opposition and proved that proponents of drilling vastly exaggerated the revenue it would generate.

And finally, we are continuing our coalition’s campaign to convince energy companies, as well as companies who finance or insure their projects, that drilling in the Arctic Refuge would be bad for business with little chance of profit and clear reputational risk.

Your unwavering support of these efforts keeps hope alive for the Arctic Refuge, environmental justice and our climate. The Wilderness Society has been at the forefront of this battle for decades, and because of you, we will remain steadfast as we work with local Indigenous communities to preserve this cherished place for generations to come.

# Isolde Edminster-Genet



Cochise Stronghold, Arizona

## Youth Speak

With Ironwood Tree Experience, The Wilderness Society proudly presents **In Our Nature**, a short film that features the next generation of public lands stewards.

Visit [wilderness.org/InOurNature](https://wilderness.org/InOurNature) to view the film. Together, we can build a healthier, more sustainable future!

Tucson native Isolde Edminster-Genet can remember the day her high school science teacher shared a flyer about a 15-day backpacking trip hosted by Ironwood Tree Experience. The Arizona non-profit's mission to connect youth with their communities through experiences in nature was intriguing to the young environmentalist, but the opportunity to share in an adventure with like-minded teens sold her. It proved to be a foundational experience. "I felt a stronger connection to the Earth and to my peers than ever before," Isolde says.

Eager to maintain that connection, Isolde was in the first class of interns for Ironwood Tree Experience's Wilderness Warriors program, which was created in 2018 with support from The Wilderness Society. The internship connects youth in Tucson with local public lands, conservation professionals and advocacy opportunities. It also incorporates The Wilderness Society's Public Lands Curriculum, fostering a greater understanding about local ecology and history, how public lands are managed, and what it takes to protect them. "For the first time," Isolde recalls, "I found myself thinking about jobs in the environmental sector and how my life might look in the future."

When the pandemic made outdoor expeditions impossible, Ironwood Tree Experience and The Wilderness Society organized a virtual alternative. Several Wilderness Society staff headlined a series of video calls sharing stories about their work to protect the wildlands they love. "Listening to passionate people share their knowledge about different natural landscapes kept me going during a challenging time," Isolde says. Inspired, she and another activist reciprocated with a presentation to The Wilderness Society's staff about the public lands surrounding Tucson that they have come to know and love—and are working to protect.

Now a college sophomore, Isolde is more invested than ever in giving back to the community that has supported her journey. Not only did she become a member of The Wilderness Society, but she continues to help others seek out a connection with their natural surroundings. She is also pursuing her interest in intersectional environmentalism—a new approach to environmental activism that keeps people at the forefront of the conversation. A firm belief guides her forward: "When you take care of people, it ends up working in the environment's favor."

# Leveraging Litigation for Lasting Conservation Gains

The Biden-Harris administration took swift action to reverse some of the most damaging policies of the previous administration and lay the foundation for additional reversals.

But you know that restoring the pre-Trump status quo is not enough. In order to achieve the enduring conservation gains demanded by the climate, extinction and equity crises—such as protecting 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 and rapidly reducing fossil fuel emissions from energy development on public lands to net zero—we must make the laws, regulations and policies that protect public lands and neighboring communities more resistant to future attacks.

Much of this complex work will play out in the courts over the coming months and years in the dozens of active cases we're pursuing to challenge attacks on public lands. Our top-notch legal team is working to leverage our legal

challenges and foster creative solutions to strengthen the vital conservation and environmental protection policies and safeguards that were undermined or overturned. Extractive industries and other opponents will resist these efforts—so we will have to press on, often for many years, until final decisions are rendered or better conservation laws take effect.

The stakes are very high, and your impact as a member of The Wilderness Society will be immense. Together, we are standing up to protect irreplaceable wildlands in key court battles alongside communities that reflect the full diversity of our nation, including Indigenous peoples—the longest stewards of the land.



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Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska

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