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Shell was recently denied access to oil fields near Antarctica, in a federal court ruling contractorsunlimited

Shell Was Not Allowed to Drill Near Alaska

The court said an environmental impact study was not conducted

A recent decision, made on Thursday by a federal court, banned the Royal Dutch Shell company from installing even more drill platforms in the Arctic, amidst concerns about the effect that new installations may have on bowhead whale populations living in the area. Environmental organizations and Inupiat representatives of the indigenous population saluted the decision and said that this day marked a turn in the way the American administration conducts its decision-making processes on such matters.

The court said that Department of Interior failed to attach an environmental impact report to the authorization they released for Shell. Alaska Wilderness League and the North Slope Borough sued the company earlier this year, claiming that more icebreakers and drilling ships in the area could pose a serious threat to the well-being of whales.

The San Francisco US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit emphasized that "There remain substantial questions as to whether Shell's plan may cause significant harm to the people and wildlife of the Beaufort Sea region." Out of the three judges making up the court, two saw eye-to-eye with environmental groups, while one dissented and voted against stopping Shell's plans.

"This is really a signal that Shell's plan was simply too much, too fast, and too shoddy. By this decision, the court has opened the door to a new administration to take a whole new approach, and hopefully a more precautionary approach, to America's Arctic and make sure we don't lose endangered species," argued Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) Alaska project director, Charles Clusen.

"We believe the Minerals Management Service (MMS) did a thorough job and that Shell has met or exceeded requirements for responsible Arctic exploration. Shell is committed to operating safely and responsibly and will continue to comply with all regulatory requirements," the company said in an official communicate, after it invested some \$84 million in obtaining lease contracts in the Beaufort Sea.

The MMS, which granted Shell the project, was accused of breaking the National Environmental Policy Act - set in place in 1970 - by "failing" to provide a comprehensive picture of how future exploitations could affect both marine wildlife and indigenous populations living on Antarctica's North Slope.