

## Greenpeace Backgrounder on Alaska Governor Sarah Palin

### Oil

Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin is a strong proponent of oil drilling, regardless of its environmental consequences. She supports drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and in offshore beluga whale<sup>1</sup> and polar bear habitat. Polar bears in Alaska already have been observed drowning and cannibalizing each other due to the melting of their sea ice habitat. The Southern Beaufort Sea population of polar bears off Alaska's north coast has already declined by 17 percent.

Palin has proposed giving an Italian oil company a major financial break on its planned Beaufort Sea oil field.<sup>2</sup>

“When I look every day, the big oil company's building is right out there next to me, and it's quite a reminder that we should have mutually beneficial relationships with the oil industry,” Palin said.<sup>3</sup>

### Endangered species

Under Palin's leadership, the State of Alaska filed suit against the Department of Interior to undo the listing of the polar bear as threatened, even though polar bears are under extreme threat due to the melting of sea ice from global warming and expanding oil drilling activities.<sup>4</sup>

Palin also opposed listing beluga whales, which are threatened by seismic testing and potential oil spills.<sup>5</sup>

The governor endorses and defends the aerial shooting of wolves and bears in her state. The practice chases the animals until they are exhausted and recently included the slaughter of 14 wolf pups in their den. More information (including photos and video) at [http://www.defenders.org/programs\\_and\\_policy/policy\\_and\\_legislation/aerial\\_hunting.php](http://www.defenders.org/programs_and_policy/policy_and_legislation/aerial_hunting.php)

### Mining

The Pebble Mine project - proposed by foreign mining companies Anglo-American and Northern Dynasty- would build one of the world's largest gold and copper mines in southwest Alaska. Pebble Mine would sit at the headwaters of two major rivers that drain into Bristol Bay, America's most productive salmon fishery. Even without a major

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<sup>1</sup> KTUU. “Palin: Beluga whale listing would cause economic harm.” (<http://www.ktuu.com/global/story.asp?s=6901295&ClientType=Printable>)

<sup>2</sup> Loy, Wesley. “State sweetens oil proposal for Eni” *Anchorage Daily News*. December 5, 2007 (<http://dwb.adn.com/news/alaska/story/9499985p-9410040c.html>)

<sup>3</sup> Toepfritz, Shira. “Young Fights Alaska's Thirst for Change.” *Roll Call*. August 25, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Howell, Katie. “Alaska sues Interior over polar bear listing.” *Greenwire*. August 7, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Anchorage Daily News, April 22.

disaster in the earthquake-prone region, the toxic chemicals that would be used in the mining process pose a major threat to salmon by interfering with their ability to migrate.<sup>6</sup> Palin opposed a ballot measure that would have prohibited mines that contaminated salmon streams.

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<sup>6</sup> Vick, Karl. "Alaskans Weigh the Cost of Gold" *Washington Post*. December 25, 2007. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/24/AR2007122401915.html>)