

## Alaska Oil and Gas Association

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121 W. Fireweed Lane, Suite 207  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-2035  
Phone: (907) 272-1481 Fax: (907) 279-8114

### Alaska Oil and Gas Association files lawsuit to challenge decision to list Bearded Seals as threatened

#### For Immediate Release

May 23, 2013

Contact: Laura Butcher (907) 227-0187/lauraoatesbutcher@gmail.com

**ANCHORAGE-** The Alaska Oil and Gas Association (AOGA) announced today it has filed a lawsuit challenging recent federal decisions to list certain populations of Arctic bearded seals as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

There is no scientific evidence linking climate change now or in the future to adverse effects on Arctic bearded seals. AOGA's complaint explains that these listings are not supported by the available scientific data, which show bearded seal populations to be healthy, abundant, and thriving.

The lawsuit filed today by AOGA follows a series of climate-based listings from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; however, the bearded seal listings are further removed from the state of scientific knowledge than any previous decision to list a species on the sole basis of a future threat.

AOGA's members have a long history of supporting and advocating wildlife conservation and research in the Arctic. "AOGA members have always been committed to protecting the wildlife we interact with during the course of doing business," says Kara Moriarty, Executive Director for AOGA.

There is no evidence that oil and gas activities are a present or foreseeable threat to bearded seals. "Restrictions on activity must be based on the scientific record and consistent with the law. Unfortunately, we believe these listings are flawed and misguided," continued Moriarty.

AOGA opposes the listings because if it is lawful to list Arctic bearded seals as threatened when their populations are currently healthy, abundant, and wide ranging, and are experiencing no adverse effects linked to climate change, then it is possible to list any and virtually all species on the basis of unsupported speculation.

"NMFS' decisions, in our opinion, are not consistent with its own policy or the best available

science,” says Moriarty. “The decision to list bearded seals is based on speculation regarding how climate change might affect these species 100 years from now, despite their populations currently being healthy and abundant. That’s bad precedent for making evidence-based decisions that have real impacts for Alaska.”

The Alaska Oil and Gas Association is a private, business trade association. Its member companies represent the majority of oil and gas exploration, production, transportation, refining and marketing activities in Alaska. More information about the organization is available at [aoga.org](http://aoga.org).

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