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Alaska Oil and Gas Association applauds the district court's decisions to vacate the ringed seal listing under Endangered Species Act

Anchorage, AK- March 12, 2016- Viewed as a win for sound science by the Alaska Oil and Gas Association (AOGA), the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska overturned the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) listing of the arctic ringed seal as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The court found that the ESA listing of the ringed seal was "arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law". In doing so, the court highlighted the "lack of any articulated discernible, quantified threat of extinction within the reasonably foreseeable future." This represents the latest example of federal agencies failing to engage in sufficient research prior to taking the extreme regulatory step of an ESA listing. The ringed seal is a species that is believed to number in the millions. As such, the limited federal resources are better served to focus on species that are truly imperiled.

"This decision is good news for the oil and gas industry, Alaska Natives, and the State of Alaska as a whole," said Kara Moriarty, President/CEO of AOGA. "The ringed seal currently have a healthy population and abundantly healthy habitat. Listing species based on speculative 100-year projections sets a terrible, and frankly scary, standard for the ESA process. We're pleased to see such overreach rejected."

AOGA, in conjunction with the State of Alaska, Arctic Slope Native Corporation, and others, jointly filed a lawsuit challenging the listing. The suit sought to overturn the listing on the grounds of limited scientific evidence supporting the species as threatened. Such listing could stymie oil and gas development in an area that holds tremendous natural resource reserves.

"AOGA does not stand in opposition to the ESA or the federal agencies tasked with its implementation," said Moriarty. "Rather, we endeavor to ensure that ESA actions are predicated on a thorough and sound scientific process that ignores ideological or political pressures."

AOGA is the professional trade association of oil and gas explorers, developers, producers, refiners, and pipelines in Alaska whose mission is to foster the long-term viability of the oil and gas industry for the benefit of all Alaskans. More information about the organization is available at www.aoga.org.

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