The Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, the Arctic waters north of Alaska, are known as America’s ‘Polar Bear Seas’ – and for good reason. One of the most unique marine ecosystems in the world, these waters are home to the entire population of U.S. polar bears and have consequently been designated a critical habitat.

Here sea ice meets the northern edge of the continent and animals congregate in great numbers. In addition to polar bears, this bountiful zone is home to millions of migratory birds, beluga whales, and endangered bowhead whales. It has been called the “Arctic Ring of Life.” But aggressive oil and gas industry interest in leasing these areas for exploration and development threatens the sustainability of this natural area and the livelihood of Alaska Native communities.

Oil exploration and development pose serious risks to the Polar Bear Seas,

- The intense noise of seismic exploration and drilling is pushing marine mammals farther out to sea. According to the National Academy of Sciences and reports from Inupiaq subsistence hunters, drilling has already changed the migratory patterns of endangered bowhead whales by as much as 30 miles. At that distance, the animals are not entering their critical habitat and community needs cannot be met.
- Polar bears are especially vulnerable to oil spills because they search for food in the open lands and broken ice where spilled oil would pool.
- Ringed seals would be displaced by the effects of full-scale, offshore exploration and development, and would also see increasing mortality and lower birth rates.
- Pacific walrus and gray whales could be disturbed from important feeding areas in the Chukchi Sea.
Call or write your elected representatives
This is the most important step you can take. Urge the Obama administration to permanently protect the special places of America’s Arctic and encourage key decision makers to support administrative actions to save the Arctic.

Find and contact your Representative: www.house.gov
Find and contact your Senators: www.senate.gov
White House: (202) 456-1111, www.whitehouse.gov/contact/submit-questions-and-comments
Department of Interior: (202) 208-3100, feedback@ios.doi.gov

Tell your friends, tell the world
Ask your friends and relatives to write letters and make calls to key decision makers to save the Arctic.
Educate your community and highlight the important role the Obama administration plays by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Look up your local newspaper at www.usnpl.com and find out how you can submit a letter.

Chill the Drills
Sierra Club