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Alaska Supreme Court Rejects Greenpeace Challenge to the State's Approval of Northstar Oil Development Project

(Juneau, AK) – The Alaska Supreme Court today rejected a challenge by Greenpeace, Inc. to the State of Alaska's Coastal Management Program approval of the Northstar oil development project in February of 1999.

In upholding the state's determination that the project was consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program, the court rejected Greenpeace's argument that the state was required to conduct a rigorous "cumulative impact" analysis as required by the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental impact statement process.

"This decision is extremely important," Attorney General Gregg Renkes said. "Along with the changes the Murkowski administration has made to the Coastal Zone Management Program, this decision will improve the climate for investment in Alaska oil and gas resources. This is all about increasing responsible exploration, more oil in the pipeline and more jobs and resources for Alaska."

The court found that the state correctly undertook a review of the "whole project" and that the Alaska Coastal Management laws did not require the state "to speculate about unknown and unpredictable future events."

The court also rejected Greenpeace's argument that the state improperly "phased" its approval of the Northstar Project by only reviewing parts of the development. The court found that the state "expressly undertook to review the complete Northstar Project".

The decision by the Alaska Supreme Court upholds an earlier decision by Superior Court Judge John Reese that affirmed the state's consistency determination.

The Northstar Project is a major offshore oil facility and subsea pipeline in the Beaufort Sea near Prudhoe Bay. It is operated by British Petroleum Exploration (Alaska) Inc.

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