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Pew Statement on Obama's Arctic Drilling Decision

WASHINGTON (May 27, 2010) – Marilyn Heiman, director of the Pew Environment Group's U.S. Arctic Program, released the following statement in response to the Obama administration's expected announcement today that any applications for exploratory drilling in the Arctic will be suspended until 2011.

"We are very pleased with the President's decision to suspend Arctic exploration drilling this summer. A delay until 2011 will provide the affected communities and agencies the opportunity to further study proposed drilling technology, oil spill response capabilities and the effects of oil drilling in the sensitive Arctic marine environment.

"Unlike the Gulf, the proposed drilling sites in the Arctic Ocean, the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas are in some of the most remote areas on earth. They are thousands of miles away from spill response infrastructure equipment and personnel. Eight foot seas in the Gulf sidelined initial cleanup efforts. Arctic waters have extreme weather conditions where 20 foot seas and moving sea ice are the norm.

"Our thoughts are with the communities in the Gulf affected by the spill. The Pew Environment Group commends the administration for taking a cautious approach and gathering additional information about resource risks and environmental sensitivities before moving forward.

"No new oil leasing, exploration or production should take place until the president's independent commission completes its process and reforms are implemented."

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The Pew Environment Group is the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. <http://www.oceansnorth.org/arctic-spill>