

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

April 26, 2022

Ryan Lance
Chairman and CEO
ConocoPhillips
925 N. Eldridge Parkway
P.O. Box 77252
Houston, TX 77252

Dear Mr. Lance:

We write seeking information in the wake of a recent month-long natural gas leak at the Alpine Oil Field, owned and operated by ConocoPhillips on Alaska's North Slope. While ConocoPhillips has publicly stated that the leak is under control, it has also said that gas may continue leaking into the atmosphere indefinitely.¹ The ongoing leak and ConocoPhillips' response raises a number of troubling questions, including how your company would respond to similar leaks at your proposed Willow project inside the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The Committee on Natural Resources has jurisdiction over oil and gas resources on public lands under House Rule X.1(m).

1. Why did it take a month to identify the source of the leak and bring it under control?
2. Have there been any similar incidents at other ConocoPhillips sites on the North Slope?
3. Though the leak reportedly involved at least seven separate wells,² it has been reported that the primary source of the leak was a well that was not fully cemented,³ resulting in the leak of gas from what the company called a "shallow formation." Is it standard industry practice to build wells that are not fully cemented? Will any of the 250 wells anticipated as part of the Willow project be similarly uncemented or only partially cemented?
4. ConocoPhillips obtained permission to undertake emergency seismic surveys after the leak began because it reportedly was not aware initially of this shallow gas-bearing formation. This raises questions about the completeness of the survey process at the Alpine site prior to development. Have all areas of the Willow project been fully seismically surveyed? Is ConocoPhillips aware of all geologic formations that bear hydrocarbons? How many other remedial seismic surveys has ConocoPhillips undertaken in the wake of an incident? How did this formation go unnoticed for more than 20 years?

¹ <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2022/04/08/conocophillips-alaska-says-north-slope-gas-leak-is-controlled/>

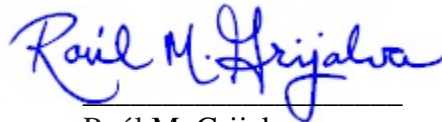
² <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/alaska-gas-leak-occurred-seven-wells-conocophillips-site-state-regulator-2022-03-18/>

³ <https://www.adn.com/business-economy/energy/2022/03/31/details-emerge-on-potential-cause-of-gas-leak-on-alaskas-north-slope/>

5. Is any of the Willow formation similar to or the same as the geologic formation at Alpine?
6. ConocoPhillips reportedly evacuated some 300 of its own personnel⁴ even as it publicly denied that the leak represented a threat to human health and safety. How close was this leak to becoming something more severe such as a blowout or explosion?

Please respond to this letter no later than May 13, 2022. Thank you for your attention to these important matters; we look forward to your answers and further discussion.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources



Katie Porter
Chair
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Alan Lowenthal
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and
Mineral Resources

⁴ <https://www.adn.com/business-economy/energy/2022/03/22/conocophillips-prepares-drilling-rig-to-investigate-and-stop-weeks-long-natural-gas-leak/>