



Too Wild To Drill: Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Alaska is one of the last pristine and untouched wild landscapes on Earth. At 19.2 million acres, the vast refuge encompasses coastal lagoons, windswept alpine tundra, boreal forest and other varied habitat that is home to some of the most diverse and stunning populations of wildlife in the Arctic—including polar and grizzly bears, wolves, beluga and bowhead whales, more than 200 migratory and resident bird species, and the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Stretching from the peaks of the Brooks Range Mountains to the icy waters of the Arctic Ocean, the refuge’s coastal plain contains the most important land denning habitat for polar bears along America’s Arctic coast.

Sacred Lands

The indigenous Gwich’in people have lived in and around the Arctic Refuge for thousands of years, and honor the land and the wildlife with the reverence they deserve. To them, the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is sacred ground. They call it “Izhik Gwats’an Gwandaii Goodlit,” which means, “The Sacred Place Where Life Begins.” The Episcopal Church, other faith groups and a coalition of conservation organizations stand in solidarity with the Gwich’in as strong partners in defense of the coastal plain.

The Arctic Refuge is a unique national treasure with values far beyond whatever oil might lie beneath it, and we have a moral obligation to preserve it for our children and grandchildren.

“To my people, wilderness is not a luxury or indulgence. It is a necessity,” said Trimble Gilbert, the traditional chief of Arctic Village, a Gwich’in community at the southern edge of the refuge. “We feed our families and sustain our culture by living on the land, taking only what we need, and caring for our clean air, clean water and abundant wildlife.”





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“As politicians in Washington, D.C., argue over what should be done with the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Gwich'in people say that, to us, protecting the refuge from oil and gas development is a matter of human rights. The survival of the Gwich'in Nation is at stake.”

Since the day it was established, the American people and a bipartisan list of champions in Congress have stood firm to protect the refuge from destruction. However, with the election of President Trump and his agenda of fossil fuels above all, the threat to the refuge is greater than ever.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Under Threat

Drilling the Arctic is risky and would leave permanent scars on this pristine land. Oil and gas drilling requires massive infrastructure to extract and transport the oil, which would have devastating effects on the land and wildlife in the refuge. Chronic spills of oil and other toxic substances, as

well as air, water and noise pollution that accompany oil drilling, would threaten the existence of wildlife and harm indigenous communities that rely on this ecosystem for subsistence hunting and other cultural traditions.

Yet—against the desires of the American people—the Trump Administration is trying to auction off this national treasure to the oil industry by hoodwinking Congress into authorizing drilling on an unrelated budget proposal

Protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Republicans and Democrats alike have supported designating wilderness in the Arctic Refuge, and virtually all of the Arctic Refuge has been recommended for permanent protection as designated wilderness by the Fish and Wildlife Service. We need to continue to protect and preserve the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as one of the last untouched pristine places in America. Congress should reject President Trump's call to open up this wild place to oil drilling.