

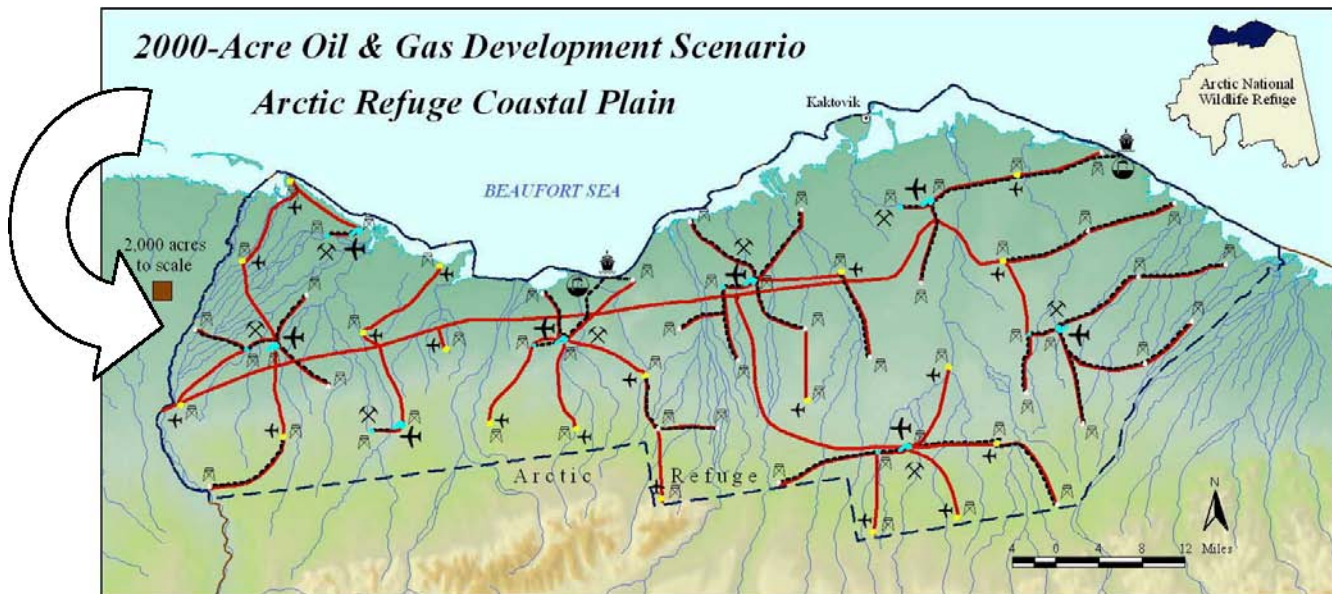
# The “2,000 Acres” Hoax

“And, clearly, repeating the worn-out claim that oil drilling will affect only 2,000 acres of the refuge has become unproductive...everyone knows that the web created by these roads, pads and posts will affect a far greater area in every sense – visual, auditory and olfactory. So our congressional delegation, Gov. Sarah Palin, Arctic Power and all other proponents of oil drilling in ANWR should drop this line.”

--FAIRBANKS DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL, JANUARY 11, 2009

## The Hoax . . .

Arctic Refuge drilling proponents love to repeat the long debunked claim that drilling in the Refuge will be limited to a 2,000 acre footprint. In fact, many versions of Arctic drilling legislation, including H.R. 49 in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, contain misleading language referring to a 2,000 acre limitation, designed to make oil exploration and development appear less environmentally devastating<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, in practice, every version of Arctic Refuge legislation with this language would actually open the entire 1.5 million acres of protected wildlife habitat across the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain to harmful oil drilling. Moreover, these bills would also effectively exempt or severely limit the application of national environmental and judicial review laws.<sup>2</sup>



Map illustrates what “2,000 acres” of development, by drilling proponent’s math, might look like. Arctic Refuge drilling would require a spider web of industrial development that spreads across the entire 1.5 million-acre Refuge Coastal Plain.

## The Reality . . .

Review of the area by U.S. Geological Survey has shown that oil speculated to be found in the Arctic Refuge is strewn across the entire 1.5 million acre coastal plain and would require approximately 800 wells to tap it. That means that, in addition to the roads, airports, gravel mines, pipelines and other infrastructure necessary for drilling, the coastal plain would become a virtual pin cushion of oil derricks across a vast wilderness currently untouched by humankind. The so-called 2,000-acre limitation is based on the area where the drills actually touch the ground. The places in between - covered by that spider web of infrastructure – don’t count.

# The Facts...

... **The entire 1.5 million-acre Refuge Coastal Plain would be open to leasing and drilling.** Drilling proponents claim the energy bills would open only “2,000 acres” to oil corporations, but in reality the entire 1.5 million-acre Refuge Coastal Plain (1002 Area) would be opened to leasing, drilling, exploration, and development.<sup>3</sup>

... **Bills mandate the first lease sale be 100 times greater than the supposed limit to development** The drilling bills mandate that the first lease sale be no less than 200,000 acres,<sup>4</sup> one-hundred times greater than the supposed limit to development.

... **There is no requirement that the 2,000 acres be contiguous (it's not a compact square).** Oil corporations want you to think they are talking about one compact area of 2,000 acres. As with North Slope oil fields west of the Arctic Refuge, exploration, drilling, and development would sprawl over a very large area.

... **The “2,000 acres” does not include all necessary oil infrastructure or operations.** The “2,000 acres” as defined by drilling bills did not include gravel mines, roads, seismic or other exploration operations, air and noise pollution, or even pipelines (except their posts) across the 1.5 million-acre Refuge Coastal Plain.<sup>5</sup> The exclusion of pipelines is especially ironic since in 2006 corroded pipelines were the cause of a 200,000 gallon oil spill, the largest ever on Alaska's North Slope.<sup>6</sup>

... **Drilling and supporting infrastructure would have to sprawl across the Refuge Coastal plain.** The “2,000 acres” of oil field development would not be contiguous, as it could not be since the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) said that whatever oil and gas is under the Refuge Coastal Plain is in small deposits spread throughout the 1.5 million-acre area,<sup>7</sup> and their review of production prospects “precluded accumulations as large as the Prudhoe Bay field.”<sup>8</sup> Networks of pipelines and roads would be built to produce oil, harming wildlife and fragmenting their habitats.

... **National Academy of Sciences said harm to wildlife extends well beyond the direct “footprint” and effects could last centuries.** “The effects of industrial activities are not limited to the footprint of a structure or to its immediate vicinity. Nearly all the roads, pads, pipelines, and other infrastructure ever built are still in place. The environmental effects of such structures on the landscape, water systems, vegetation, and animals are manifest not only at the “footprint” itself (physical area covered by the structure) but also at distances that vary depending on the environmental component being affected... The Committee judges it unlikely that most disturbed habitat on the North Slope will ever be restored. Natural recovery in the Arctic is very slow, because of the cold; so the effects of abandoned structures and unrestored landscapes could persist for centuries.”<sup>9</sup>

... **The wilderness would be lost forever (even if the “2,000 acres” were continuous).** Note that the 12-lane wide New Jersey turnpike stretches more than 100 miles across the state but covers only 1,773 acres.<sup>10</sup> No matter how well done, oil drilling will industrialize the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge. Once the wilderness is destroyed, it will be gone forever.

**Pamela A. Miller, Arctic Program Director - Northern Alaska Environmental Center - [www.northern.org](http://www.northern.org) - July 20, 2008**

<sup>1</sup> H.R.6544; H.R.6421; H.R.6412; H.R.6397; H.R.6384; H.R.6301; H.R.6207; H.R.6161; H.R.6165; H.R.6107; H.R.6009; H.R.6001; H.R.5437; H.R.3089; S.3222; S.2973; S.2958; S.2758 contain the provision: “ensure that the maximum amount of surface acreage covered by production and support facilities, including airstrips and any areas covered by gravel berms or piers for support of pipelines, does not exceed 2,000 acres on the Coastal Plain.”

<sup>2</sup> <http://trustees.org/programs/Arctic/ARDL.html>.

<sup>3</sup> The bills listed above all define the Refuge “Coastal Plain” as “that area described in appendix I to part 37 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations.”

<sup>4</sup> The bills listed above all contain this provision: “Acreage Minimum in First Sale – In the first lease sale..., the Secretary shall offer for lease those tracts the Secretary considers to have the greatest potential for the discovery of hydrocarbons, taking into consideration nominations received pursuant to subsection (b)(1), but in no case less than 200,000 acres.”

<sup>5</sup> H.R.6544; H.R.6421; H.R.6412; H.R.6397; H.R.6384; H.R.6301; H.R.6207; H.R.6161; H.R.6165; H.R.6107; H.R.6009; H.R.6001; H.R.5437; H.R.3089; S.3222; S.2973; S.2958; S.2758 contain the following provision: “ensure that the maximum amount of surface acreage covered by production and support facilities, including airstrips and any areas covered by gravel berms or piers for support of pipelines, does not exceed 2,000 acres on the Coastal Plain.”

<sup>6</sup> [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/03/0320\\_060320\\_alaska\\_oil.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/03/0320_060320_alaska_oil.html);

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Geological Survey. April 2001. *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 1002 Area, Petroleum Assessment, 1998, including economic analysis*. USGS Fact Sheet FS-028-01.

Bird, K.J. 1998. Chapter AO. Assessment Overview. In: *The oil and gas resource potential of the 1002 area, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska*, by ANWR Assessment Team, U.S. Geological Survey Open File Report 98-34. Figs. AO6-15.

<sup>8</sup> Emil D. Attanasi and John H. Schuenemeyer, “Frontier areas and resource assessment: The Case of the 1002 Area of the Alaska North Slope” (U.S. Geological Survey, Open File Report 02-119, March 2002), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> National Research Council. 2003. *Cumulative environmental effects of oil and gas activities on Alaska's North Slope*. National Academies Press. P. 4, 9, 148, 158; [http://books.nap.edu/html/north\\_slope/reportbrief.pdf](http://books.nap.edu/html/north_slope/reportbrief.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> There are 1219 “lane-miles” contained in the New Jersey Turnpike (the road itself is 118.5 miles) and all lanes are 12 feet wide. This comes out to 1773 acres. That number does not include the shoulders because no exact number of miles of shoulders was available. If one assumes that shoulders run along either side of the turnpike for the entire length (118.5 miles) then that would add 287 acres, making the total 2060 acres (the shoulders are 10 feet wide). See: <http://www.nycroads.com/roads/nj-turnpike/>.