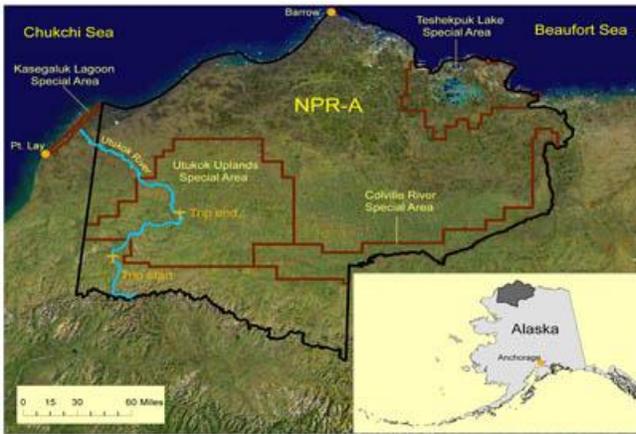


Introducing the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska

The National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (Reserve) is the largest single until of public lands in the nation. Emcompassing 23.5 million acres, the reserve harbors rich, vital wild lands and wildlife. In 1923, President Harding set aside the lands in the Reserve as an emergency oil supply for the United States Navy, since they were beginning to transition their ships away from coal power and towards oil. In 1976, the administration of the Reserve was transferred to the Department of the Interior, where it was renamed to what is now known as: the National



Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. This name is unfortunate because it fails to evoke the true images of the Reserve, which includes wilderness quality lands and abundant wildlife. The

Reserve contains some of our nations most treasured natural resources, millions of acres of wilderness quality lands with critical habitat for millions of migratory birds, as well as grizzly bears, caribou, threatened polar bears, walrus, wolves, engangered beluga whales and many more.



Map courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society/Photo courtesy of Monica Scherer

By the Numbers

- The Reserve is 23.5 million acres large.
CLASSROOM ACTION: Have your students research the sizes of states and find one that is closest.
- The Reserve is home to the **400,000** member Western Arctic caribou herd.
CLASSROOM ACTION: Use this number to have your students show its value using different powers of 10.
- The Reserve is home to the largest concentration of grizzly bears in Alaska's Arctic Circle, with male bears able to weigh up to **500 pounds**.
CLASSROOM ACTION: Ask students to research what a grizzly bear eats.

The Reserve Ecosystem



The Reserve is located above the Arctic Circle and contains a variety of ecosystems throughout its 23.5 million acres. In the south, large mountains rise up from the ground in all directions, while in the north large braided rivers open up to the Arctic Ocean. In between you can find tundra plains, wetlands, rocky cliffs and inland lakes. During the winter months the temperature will vary between single digits during the day time and negative temperatures at night. In the summer months temperatures can range from a chilly 40 degrees to a balmy 70. The Reserve contains the headwaters



and a majority of the length of the Colville river, significant because it is the largest river north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska. The Reserve represents one of the largest intact Arctic ecosystems in the United States. While many people may know about this large swath of public land because it accounts for a substantial part of America's Arctic, the Reserve has global importance as well due in part to the diversity of species it supports. The rivers located in the Reserve are home to rainbow trout, king

salmon, arctic char, grayling, pike, red salmon and coho salmon. The grassy plains full of vegetation support large populations of moose and grizzly bears. In the waters off the coast you can find beluga whales, polar bears and seals. Above in the sky are gulls, falcons, and hundreds of species of migratory birds that visit the Reserve for the summer and later migrate across the globe for the fall and winter months.



Why the Reserve is so Special

The Reserve is a unique area in that it remains a mystery to many people and is visited by very few every year. When spending time within its 23.5 million acres, a visitor is much more likely to see caribou than another person or plane. These truly wild places are harder and harder to find in our shrinking world. Yet, as remote as this area may seem, people throughout the lower 48 states and across the globe can see a small piece of the Reserve in their own backyard, thanks to the hundreds of migratory bird species that make the trek every year to the Reserve to nest and have their young. As the weather starts to turn these temporary residents pick up and head south, many of them passing through or even spending the winter in our backyards. Species making this trip include the king eider, Pacific brant, greater white-fronted goose, and the tundra swan. Please check out the additional materials on the website for a map that shows the migratory path of birds that may travel between your state and the Reserve.

While the Reserve represents one of America's great wild places, it is also symbolic as an area where a balance has been found between resource development and protection of invaluable habitat. In early 2013 the Department of the Interior (who control and manage the Reserve) announced a management plan that would make more than 70% of the projected oil in the reserve available for leasing, while protecting more than 11 million acres of habitat and subsistence resources for the people and animals that rely so heavily on this area. This decision has been regarded as a shining example of balancing responsible development with the conservation of special places.

