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February 26, 2013

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Conservation Groups Applaud Arctic Refuge Bipartisan Leadership by Reps.
Markey and Fitzpatrick

Washington – Representatives Edward Markey (D-MA) and Michael Fitzpatrick (R-PA) have shown great bipartisan leadership this Congress by introducing legislation to protect one of America’s greatest treasures and a truly iconic place: the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. H.R. 139, the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act, would designate the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge’s Coastal Plain as Wilderness.

The Arctic Refuge and its Coastal Plain – the Refuge’s “biological heart” – is home to polar bears, grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, muskoxen, and more than 130 species of migratory birds. The Refuge is one of the last pristine, untouched wilderness areas in America. Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower led the effort to protect this area for future generations half a century ago when he set aside 8.9 million acres as the Arctic National Wildlife Range in 1960. The Arctic Refuge has enjoyed widespread public support over the years, and today it is reflected in the bipartisan leadership in the House.

Quotes:

“We applaud Representatives Edward Markey and Michael Fitzpatrick for continuing the bipartisan tradition of support for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Their bill to protect the Refuge, H.R. 139, would ensure that this important piece of our natural heritage will be protected now and for future generations of Americans,” said Cindy Shogan, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League. “After 50 years, I can’t think of another place that is so deserving of a Wilderness designation. I hope the House of Representatives will pass this piece of legislation and get the issue of drilling in the Arctic Refuge off the table once and for all. Decades of advocacy from drilling proponents in Congress have failed, time and again. Let’s move on! The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge is home to America’s most spectacular wildlife.

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All three species of America’s bears, caribou, wolves and muskoxen are just a few of the more than 250 species that rely on the Coastal Plain to thrive and survive.”

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a national treasure and oil drilling has no place there,” said Jamie Rappaport Clark, president of Defenders of Wildlife. “A wilderness designation would not only protect the wildlife values and pristine Coastal Plain from the destruction and potential disaster of drilling, but stand as a legacy for this Congress, the White House and everyone who strives to protect our natural heritage. We welcome this bipartisan effort to ensure the future of the Arctic Refuge.”

“Representatives Markey and Fitzpatrick are doing exactly what their constituents sent them to Washington to do; protect America's natural resources for future generations,” said Jessica Ennis, Earthjustice legislative representative. “H.R. 139 would protect the important wildlife and spectacular wilderness of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We support this bill and applaud the efforts of these Congressional leaders to protect our natural heritage.”

“Not only is protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge of crucial ecological importance, it is a human rights issue to the Gwich’in communities which depend upon the Porcupine (River) Caribou Herd for their survival.” said Princess Lucaj, Executive Director of the Gwich’in Steering Committee. “Representatives Markey and Fitzpatrick in this legislation uphold the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which states that, ‘in no case shall a people be deprived of their own means of subsistence.’ We hope the House of Representatives will protect this remaining 5% of the entire North Slope of Alaska that is not open to development, not just for our communities but for the millions of Americans that have voiced their desire to see this sacred place protected time and time again.”

“The Coastal Plain is the biological heart of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, home to nearly 200 species of birds that have ranges that reach all 50 states,” said Taldi Walter, Assistant Director of Government Relations, National Audubon Society. “This legislation would ensure future generations will continue to enjoy their backyard connection to the Arctic Refuge.”

“In a time where climate change is wreaking havoc in our planet and threatening the wildlife that depend upon it, it is extremely important to protect one of the most sensitive ecosystems in the world, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,” said Adam Kolton, Executive Director of National Wildlife Federation’s National Advocacy Center. “Representatives Markey and Fitzpatrick have shown what bipartisan leadership should look like by collaborating on H.R. 139, which would protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's Coastal Plain. Refuge visitors may see eagles, gyrfalcons, tundra swans, plovers, sandhill cranes, longspurs and terns among the area's nearly 180 bird species, some full-time residents but mostly visitors from six continents and every U.S. state. Forty-five mammal species-including marmots, wolverines, grizzlies and wolves...
— live here at least seasonally, nine of them, such as the endangered bowhead whale, in offshore waters.”

“Alaskans played a key role over 50-years ago when President Eisenhower established the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to preserve wilderness and wildlife values on an ecosystem scale,” said Pamela A. Miller, Arctic Program Director, Northern Alaska Environmental Center in Fairbanks, Alaska. “Today, the Arctic Refuge remains the only area of Alaska’s North Slope off-limits by law to oil and gas exploration and development. Keep it wild! The value of the Arctic Refuge as an intact ecosystem is increasingly important in the face of our rapidly changing climate for future generations of Alaskans and others.”

“Drilling delivers a one-two punch to America’s Arctic, destroying one of our most pristine places to dredge up dirty fuels that will only further melt the Arctic when burned into the atmosphere. Representatives Markey and Fitzpatrick understand that if we are serious about protecting our special places and fixing our climate crisis, we have to start by preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This legislation is a great step forward in not just protecting our wild lands and wildlife, but in ensuring future generations of Americans have a safe and healthy planet to enjoy,” said Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club.

“We are grateful for this kind of bipartisan leadership on behalf of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,” said Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society. “H.R. 139 would leave a great legacy for future generations by preserving one of the last great expanses of wilderness in North America. This legislation from Representatives Markey and Fitzpatrick honors the public’s opposition to drilling in this unspoiled landscape. For more than 30 years, the oil industry and its allies in Congress have failed to open the Coastal Plain to oil rigs, because Americans want this place protected. Let’s hope the House of Representatives serves the will of the people and passes this bill.”

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