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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2015

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Celebrating the Landmark Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act

WASHINGTON – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the implementation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980.

Statement by Cindy Shogan, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League

“This week marks the 35th anniversary of the signing of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act into law and the passage of ANILCA is worth celebrating. This historic lands conservation bill set aside over 100 million acres of federal lands in Alaska to be protected for Alaskans and all Americans alike.

This week also marks the 55th anniversary of the creation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - one of the most wild and spectacular ecosystems in our nation. One important decision that ANILCA left unresolved was the fate of the Arctic Refuge’s biologically sensitive Coastal Plain. My organization has fought since its inception to make sure that the Refuge and its Coastal Plain remains unmarred by drilling rigs and sprawling oil and gas development and becomes protected as Wilderness.

After more than 30 years, the debate about whether to drill in the birthing grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd drags on in Congress. Earlier this year, President Obama called on Congress to designate more than 12 million acres in the Arctic Refuge as Wilderness. Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Ed Markey (D-MA) joined with 32 other senators and reintroduced legislation to designate the Refuge’s Coastal Plain as Wilderness. It’s time to protect the Arctic Refuge once and for all. Let’s protect this special place and keep the Refuge wild for future generations.”

Statement by Valerie Brown, Legal Director, Trustees for Alaska

“I moved to Alaska in 1988. At that time, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was just seven years old. Today, on its 35th anniversary, I am proud to be in Washington, D.C. to testify about why this is the most important piece of conservation legislation of the 20th century. ANILCA protected an unprecedented 104 million acres of federal lands in Alaska, including Denali National Park, which is one of the three most visited parks in the National Park system.

This week, U.S. leaders are meeting in Paris for climate talks. The issue of climate change is even more important for Alaskans because we suffer the effects of climate change twice as much as the rest of the nation. We can’t drill our way to a solution for climate change and more drilling will not protect our state from its impacts.



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The areas that are conserved by ANILCA help with mitigating climate changes adverse impacts. These lands provide the basis for sustainable economic practices, they protect traditional subsistence uses and they are a basis of a national heritage that benefits all Americans, and all Alaskans.”

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