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\* CONSERVATION ALLIANCE \* DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE \* EARTHJUSTICE \* THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH \*  
FRIENDS OF ALASKA WILDLIFE REFUGES \* GREENLATINOS \* GREENPEACE \* GWICH'IN STEERING  
COMMITTEE \* LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS \* NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY \* NATIONAL  
WILDLIFE REFUGE ASSOCIATION \* NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL \* NORTHERN ALASKA  
ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER \* OUTDOOR AFRO \* RESISTING ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION ON  
INDIGENOUS LANDS (REDOIL) \* SIERRA CLUB \* VET VOICE FOUNDATION \* THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY \*  
WOMEN VETERAN'S SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Senators Michael Bennet and Ed Markey Introduce Arctic Refuge Wilderness Bill**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Ed Markey (D-MA) today introduced a bill to designate the Coastal Plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness. This legislation has historic levels of support with 34 Senators.

Since its creation, support for protecting the Arctic Refuge has been diverse and extensive. Nearly 1 million Americans have asked President Obama for the strongest possible protections for the Arctic Refuge.

Earlier this year, Obama announced a historic wilderness recommendation for the Refuge that includes its biological heart – the Coastal Plain – as well as the Brooks Range and Porcupine Plateau. Collectively, these areas represent the largest wilderness recommendation ever made for a single unit of public land. The sensitive Coastal Plain provides crucial habitat for muskoxen, wolves and migratory birds, calving grounds for caribou, and denning areas for female polar bears and their cubs.

Unfortunately, the Coastal Plain is the most threatened part of the Refuge because the oil and gas industry has targeted it for development. Disregarding the ecological, cultural and spiritual values of the Coastal Plain, a number of bills have been introduced in this Congress to open the area to industrial development. The bill introduced by Sens. Bennet and Markey offers a sensible alternative to those drilling bills and parallels legislation to protect this critical area introduced in the House earlier this year.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was first established as the Arctic National Wildlife Range on December 6, 1960, by President Dwight Eisenhower because of its "unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values." In 1980 Congress passed, and President Jimmy Carter signed, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The act designated wilderness for most of the original range area, while expanding the acreage to the south and renaming the entire area the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, the act specified additional purposes for the Refuge, including conserving wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, as well as protecting subsistence opportunities. It is time for Congress to act and finally pass wilderness legislation for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge once and for all.

**QUOTE FROM GWICH'IN STEERING COMMITTEE:**

"The Gwich'in Nation has been working tirelessly to protect 'The Sacred Place Where Life Begins' – the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, for more than 25 years now," said **Bernadette Demientieff, Gwich'in Steering Committee**. "We are so grateful to Senators Bennet and Markey for showing bold leadership by introducing the Arctic Refuge Wilderness Bill and we hope that other Senators will see that protection of the Refuge is truly a moral choice for the United States."

**QUOTE FROM Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands:**

"The Arctic Refuge is one of the last remaining intact ecosystems of its kind in the world. We are grateful to Senators Bennet and Markey for following through with the official stance of the Obama Administration's formal recommendation of Wilderness for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Porcupine Caribou Herd remains a crucial part of the diet of both Gwich'in and Inupiat peoples and protection of the calving and birthing grounds on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge makes this an International Human Rights and Food Security issue," said **Faith Gemmill, Executive Director, Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL)**.

**QUOTE FROM THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH:**

"The Episcopal Church gladly welcomes the introduction of this bill that would permanently protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We thank Senators Bennet and Markey for working to safeguard both the ecological integrity of this sacred landscape and the Gwich'in Nation's subsistence practices that have ensured their survival for thousands of years," said **Alexander D. Baumgarten, Director of Public Engagement and Mission Communication, The Episcopal Church**

**QUOTE FROM GREENLATINOS:**

"GreenLatinos applauds Senators Bennet and Markey taking action to protect one of our nation's most iconic places by seeking Wilderness designation for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," said **Mark Magana, President of GreenLatinos**. "The Latino community's historical and cultural defense of the health of our community, lands, waters and planet can be traced back for centuries. As a historically and culturally indigenous community, we believe that defending indigenous populations like the Gwich'in of Alaska, who are struggling to protect their cultural practices and their sacred Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain from the threat of oil and gas development, is a priority of ours and we appreciate the significance of their plight."

**QUOTES FROM VETERANS GROUPS:**

"Having visited the Arctic Refuge I can attest to the incredible power of this wild place. It's an area we must protect for itself, the lives it supports, and because it is a timeless offering from the great outdoors to our veterans," said **Genevieve Chase, Founder and Executive Director of American Women Veterans**.

"Permanent protection of our public lands like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a service to veterans and all Americans. Veterans find peace in the great outdoors, and the Arctic Refuge is an example of true wilderness. We thank Senators Bennet and Markey for their efforts to protect the Coastal Plain, and urge their colleagues in Congress to support protections for the Arctic Refuge. This is a

historic opportunity to protect one of our most iconic public lands for future generations," said **Garett Reppenhagen, Rocky Mountain Director, Vet Voice Foundation**.

"I served my country to protect the people and the land; the two are not separate. Nature, out your backdoor or way up in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, has a unique power to heal and inspire. We must act now to protect this beauty for others to experience," said **BriGette McCoy, founder of Women Veteran Social Justice**.

#### **QUOTE FROM OUTDOOR AFRO:**

"I've been lucky enough to feel the elemental connection between people and nature that exists in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It's an inspiration for what's possible, even for those who may never get to visit," said **Rue Mapp, founder and CEO of Outdoor Afro**. "Preserving this symbol of the wild is essential as we work to strengthen the connection between Americans and the outdoors."

#### **QUOTE FROM THE CONSERVATION ALLIANCE:**

"The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an iconic landscape with endless opportunities for outdoor adventure," said **John Sterling, Executive Director of The Conservation Alliance**. "Few places are as remote, vast, and largely untouched by the impacts of man. We should keep it that way."

#### **QUOTES FROM CONSERVATION GROUPS:**

"We applaud Senators Michael Bennet and Ed Markey for continuing the tradition of congressional support for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This bill would ensure that one of the most imperiled pieces of our natural heritage will be protected now and for future generations of Americans," said **Cindy Shogan, Executive Director of Alaska Wilderness League**. "The Arctic Refuge is one of our most iconic landscapes and one of the last truly wild places in America. It's time to move beyond drilling and provide the strongest protections possible for this natural wonder."

"Reeling back offshore drilling in the Arctic was a big victory, but Alaska's coastal plain still needs protection. Big Oil hasn't given up on projects that threaten polar bears, migratory birds and other wildlife," said **Miyoko Sakashita, ocean program director at the Center for Biological Diversity**. "It's time to permanently ban fossil fuel production in the most threatened areas of this pristine natural habitat."

"The Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is long overdue for Wilderness protection," said **Robert Dewey, Senior Vice President of Government Relations at Defenders of Wildlife**. "The Arctic Refuge is vital habitat for hundreds of species, from the iconic polar bear to the spectacled eider duck. Each year, as climate change alters the arctic landscape, it becomes even more important to protect priceless places like the coastal plain, which is a critically important linkage between the large tundra landscapes of Alaska and Canada, from polluting energy interests. The Arctic Refuge belongs to all of us and the future generations of Americans who will inherit it. Congress should permanently protect the Coastal Plain of the refuge by designating it as wilderness, along with the other areas the administration recommended for wilderness in the refuge. "

“We applaud Senators Bennet and Markey for introducing a bill to protect the pristine coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This unique place deserves to be protected, not just for the Alaskan Native communities and abundant wildlife that rely on it, but for all Americans as part of our shared natural heritage,” said **Jenifer Collins, Legislative Assistant for Earthjustice**.

“We support the bill introduced by Senators Bennet and Markey to obtain wilderness protection for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,” said **David C. Raskin, president of the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges**. “The Coastal Plain is the most immediately threatened portion of the larger area of the Refuge that President Obama requested the Congress to permanently protect as designated wilderness. However, we view this legislation as only the first step toward obtaining final wilderness designation for the Coastal Plain, Brooks Range and Porcupine Plateau of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior Secretary Jewell and President Obama.”

“America needs more wilderness protection initiatives like this bill from Senators Bennet and Markey to protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. As the impacts of climate change make these regions increasingly vulnerable, our leaders must protect them now for the people and the wildlife that rely on the vitality of national treasures like the Refuge,” said **Greenpeace USA Arctic Campaigner Mary Sweeters**.

“We thank Senators Bennet and Markey for their leadership in protecting one of America’s crown jewels, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. For decades Big Oil has wanted us to sacrifice this majestic American wilderness simply to pad their profits, but with Senators Bennet and Markey leading the way, the Arctic Refuge will finally get the permanent protection it so richly deserves,” said **Alex Taurel, Deputy Legislative Director, the League of Conservation Voters**.

“The Arctic Refuge is a stunning, unique American treasure, which supports millions of birds that migrate to all fifty states”, said **Brian Moore, Deputy Director of Government Relations for the National Audubon Society**. “This is a truly extraordinary place that deserves permanent protection.”

“We commend Senators Bennet and Markey for introducing this important piece of legislation to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and it’s biologically vital coastal plain,” said **David Houghton, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association**. “The entire refuge is an invaluable wildlife resource worthy of permanent wilderness protection, and we look forward to helping make that happen.”

“Senator Bennet and Senator Markey are rightly moving to bring the highest level of protection to the Arctic Refuge’s rich, pristine, and fragile coastal plain,” said **Niel Lawrence, Alaska Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council**. “While all of the Refuge’s wildlands deserve to be safeguarded as congressionally designated Wilderness, none need it so urgently as the coastal plain, a vital nursery for wildlife that is perpetually under attack from Big Oil and its allies.”

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of the last ecosystems left in the world where wilderness and culture remain intact,” said **Jessica Girard, program director, Northern Alaska Environmental Center**. “The permanent protection of the Arctic Refuge, as recommended by President Obama, Secretary

Jewell, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, indicates that we are a nation that understands and appreciates the myriad of values in this remote wilderness, not simply the economic value."

"For more than half a century Americans from all walks of life have advocated for the protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This effort by Senators Bennet and Markey sets the right course to permanently protect the wonder of the region, the wildlife, and the future of our wild places," **said Alli Harvey, Alaska representative for Sierra Club's Our Wild America campaign.**

"Senators Bennet and Markey are responding to the president's bold and visionary wilderness recommendation for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and to hundreds of thousands of Americans who have called for its protection," said **Nicole Whittington-Evans, Alaska regional director for The Wilderness Society.** "The Arctic Refuge is truly America's wildest and last remaining intact ecosystem, and this bill would ensure lasting protection for its most sensitive and threatened area."

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