



For Immediate Release: Nov. 28, 2016

Gwich'in to Congress: Designate the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain as Wilderness

Patagonia and Alaska Wilderness League Today Release The Refuge - a Short Film Urging Congress to Help Protect One of America's Last Wild Places; XX,XXX sign [Care2 petition](#) in support.

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA, WASHINGTON, D.C. and VENTURA, CALIFORNIA – The Gwich'in people of Alaska and Northern Canada have fought for three decades to protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil drilling and other threats. Today outdoor apparel company Patagonia and non-profit conservation group Alaska Wilderness League released *The Refuge*, a 15-minute film telling the story of two Gwich'in women who are fighting for their ancestral home and the survival of the wild animals that bring them life. In conjunction with the film, Patagonia has partnered with Care2, the world's largest social media site for good, to launch a [Care2 petition](#) asking Congress to pledge to protect the Refuge's Coastal Plain as wilderness.

"Patagonia has supported the Gwich'in Steering Committee and Alaska Wilderness League through our Environmental Grants Program since the early 2000s," notes Rose Marcario, Patagonia's Chief Executive Officer. "We stand in solidarity with the Gwich'in community today to ask Congress to designate the Coastal Plain as wilderness and protect the Gwich'in way of life forever."

To the Gwich'in, the Refuge's pristine Coastal Plain where caribou calve their young is "the Sacred Place Where Life Begins." The coastal plain, although a true national treasure, lacks protection as wilderness and has become a target for drilling by the oil industry and its allies. It's now under more threat than ever – with pro-oil forces stating they will work quickly to push for drilling in the Refuge. Drilling in this Arctic nursery would likely drive the Porcupine Caribou from their calving grounds, endangering the survival of the herd and the Gwich'in way of life. The Gwich'in have depended on the Porcupine Caribou Herd for millennia. But their connection to the caribou goes far deeper than traditional subsistence hunting: the Gwich'in believe that they are guardians of the herd, and that the fates of their people and the caribou are forever entwined.

"For decades the Coastal Plain, known as the Refuge's biological heart, has been in political limbo, at best, and nearly at the tip of a drill bit, at worst," said Cindy Shogan, executive director of Alaska Wilderness League. "But the Obama administration has given us all hope that the Arctic Refuge will be taken off the table forever. In January 2015, President Obama took an important step to recommend wilderness for the Refuge and its Coastal Plain. The president and his administration have done more than any other in the last two decades to protect the Arctic Refuge. Now, it's time for Congress to act."

"For us, this is a matter of physical, spiritual and cultural survival," said Gwich'in spokesperson Bernadette Demientieff. "It is our basic human right to continue to feed our families on our ancestral

lands and practice our subsistence way of life. We ask that Congress take the next step to protect the Coastal Plain by designating it as wilderness.”

Starting November 26, customers will have the ability to purchase a beautiful limited edition Nomads of the Arctic print by photographer Florian Schulz with a donation of \$250 to Alaska Wilderness League. Patagonia is matching these donations up to \$50,000. Prints can be purchased at Patagonia retail locations.

[FILM LINK](#)

[PRESS IMAGES](#)

[CARE2 PETITION](#)

[ABOUT THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE PATAGONIA/ARCTIC](#)

About Patagonia

Founded by Yvon Chouinard in 1973, Patagonia is an outdoor apparel company based in Ventura, California. A certified B-Corporation, Patagonia’s mission is to build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm and use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis. The company is recognized internationally for its commitment to authentic product quality and environmental activism, contributing over \$77 million in grants and in-kind donations to date.

About Alaska Wilderness League

Alaska Wilderness League was founded in 1993 to fight and advocate for public lands and waters in Alaska. The League is the only Washington, DC-based environmental group devoted full-time to protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other wilderness-quality lands in Alaska.

About Care2

www.Care2.com is the world’s largest social media site for good, a community of 37 million standing together, starting petitions, supporting each other’s campaigns and sharing stories that inspire action. People, nonprofits and brands are creating extraordinary global impact with Care2, helping individuals, animals and the environment to make the world a better place. A pioneer of online advocacy since 1998, Care2 is a B Corporation, or social enterprise, using the power of business as a force for good.

CONTACT:

Alaska Wilderness League: Corey Himrod | Corey@alaskawild.org | (202) 544-5205

Patagonia: Jessica Clayton | jessica@wilderpr.com | (805) 708-1078

Care2: Alison Perris | alisonp@care2team.com | (415) 385-6388