

November 14, 2017

Re: Please Oppose Oil Development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Dear Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Member:

The signatories to this letter are Republican, Democrat, and Independent. We have been confirmed by the U.S. Senate as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, or as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We have all visited the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and are all deeply concerned at the prospect of oil development on the Refuge's coastal plain (the area known as 1002). At nearly 20 million acres, the Arctic Refuge is a crown jewel among America's public lands, and we believe oil development in this area is ethically, environmentally, and economically untenable.

The native Gwich'in people call the Refuge's 1.5 million-acre Coastal Plain "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins." It is vital breeding habitat for millions-upon-millions of birds that migrate from every state and six of the earth's seven continents. It is calving ground for the 200,000-strong Porcupine caribou herd, which has migrated to the refuge, each year, for millennia. It is among the planet's most important denning habitats for polar bears. Those who know this spectacular place, including the Alaskan natives who have lived there for thousands of years understand it is the refuge's biological heart, and among the world's most important ecological resources.

Although we support responsible energy development and energy security for our nation, oil exploration and development risks significant damage to this national, cultural and ecological treasure, and it is currently a needless risk. U.S. crude oil production has risen to more than 9.3 million barrels a day, up 850,000 barrels daily since September 2016, pushing oil prices to historical lows and making economic arguments for risking this incredible resource ring hollow. Simply put, we don't need to develop the Arctic Refuge – one of the costliest, and riskiest places to develop energy resources – to promote American energy security.

We all have substantial experience in balancing economic development and environmental protection. We know the need and value of thoughtful compromise. We have the experience to recognize the opposite.

Proponents of development argue that more than \$1 billion in U.S. Treasury revenue will result from developing the Refuge Coastal Plain. These estimates strain Americans' trust. They are predicated on the following actions: that Congress change the law to reallocate leasing revenue, that every acre of the Coastal Plain would be auctioned, that lease bids would fetch more than six times the recent average price of oil-bearing lands on Alaska's North Slope, and that companies would immediately begin drilling and paying royalties. Realistically, revenues may only amount to millions, misleading American taxpayers.

As former officials at the Department of the Interior, we know our public lands intimately, having travelled, studied, managed and championed these incomparable lands and waters. In our view, there is no place like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and no place more deserving of protection for future generations of Americans. Some places are just too special to drill. We call on you to defend our natural heritage and native Alaskan culture by protecting our most vital national wildlife refuge.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nathaniel Reed
Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
President Richard Nixon

Lyle Laverty
Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
President George W. Bush

Donald Barry
Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
President William Clinton

Jamie Rappaport Clark
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director
President William Clinton

Steve Williams
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director
President George W. Bush

Daniel M. Ashe
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director
President Barack Obama