

*A Letter from Guides and Other Outdoor Recreation Professionals
in Support of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*

18 June 2018

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We are guides and other professionals in the outdoor recreation industry, and our jobs center on helping millions of individuals explore and enjoy extraordinary national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, and other wild places. Though we work across a variety of public lands and waters, we write to you today about one specific place: the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

In response to the Department of Interior's Notice of Intent to initiate the environmental review process for oil and gas leasing on the Coastal Plain, we would like to make clear that we are adamantly opposed to any and all development in the Arctic Refuge. Some of us have been there; we've accompanied individuals from across the world as they have explored this vast and rich place, and we know that any development would inflict irreparable harm on the ecological landscape and wildlife. It would also be devastating to the Gwich'in people that know the Coastal Plain as "the sacred place where life begins."

In our work, we have had firsthand experiences sharing public lands with individuals from around the world; these experiences have instilled in us a great respect and love for wild places in the United States. As guides and other professionals in the industry, we know how important it is that places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge remain protected for generations present and future alike. Few such places exist in our world today, and we understand the vital role they play for individuals, for states, and for the United States as a whole.

In addition, we know the value of outdoor recreation and tourism to both the state of Alaska and our nation. In Alaska, the outdoor recreation economy generates \$7.3 billion in consumer spending each year and supports 72,000 direct jobs. At a time when Alaska's economy is facing a recession, these tourism numbers continue to grow. On a national level, the Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates that growth in the outdoor recreation industry continues to outpace growth of the economy as a whole, today accounting for over 2 percent of the entire United States GDP, or over \$374 billion. Any threat to our public lands—to places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—is a direct threat to this industry and to our livelihoods.

We write to you today representing the wide variety of voices within the outdoor recreation industry. Though we come from many different backgrounds, and work and play in a variety of wild places across our country, we are united in our collective opposition to any and all development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Signed,

104 Guides and Outdoor Recreation Professionals (see attached)

Christa Sadler

Flagstaff, AZ, USA
River Guide

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Fairbanks, AK, USA
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Weybridge, VT, USA
National Outdoor Leadership School Instructor

Michael Wald

Fairbanks, AK, USA
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Paul Davis

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Nathan Borson

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John Stember

Bettles, AK, USA
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Cynthia Merrow

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Homer, AK, USA
Owner, AK Adventures, Inc.

Jill Pangman

Whitehorse, YT, Canada
Owner/Operator, Sila Sojourns

Additional comments from letter signers:

The 1002 lands that will be opened for drilling constitute the single most important breeding and calving area for dozens of species of animals, including migratory birds, the Porcupine caribou herd, and several other mammals. It is one of the most pristine places left on the North American continent and must be left untouched. Birds and mammals have been breeding there for millennia, and in a few short years, we can irrevocably alter the ecosystem there, permanently damaging their critical breeding grounds, and affecting the populations of these creatures forever, perhaps even to extinction. Please protect this last wild and important place!

-Christa Sadler, River Guide

It is our duty as conscious beings to take care of our nest, our planet, and preserve our precious heritage, the wild places from whence we emerged.

-Jacquie Bellon, Retired Guide

Each year for the past 40 years I have personally witnessed the unchanged wildness of the Arctic Refuge and can say without a doubt that any sort of development, of any kind, will destroy forever the wildness that has endured there for centuries. I have also taken hundreds of people from across our country, and the world, to experience this wilderness and each and every one of them have remarked that they had never seen anything, or even remotely, as wild as the Arctic Refuge is.

This is the legacy we should pass on to our children and grandchildren and all the generations to follow them, not one that destroys an intact ecosystem and continues to contribute to the effects global climate change. We as a nation have the capability and creativity to come up with energy sources that do not include fossil fuels and I believe we should be making every effort to support that.

-Jim Cambell, Co-Owner of Arctic Treks

I have instructed or guided 12 expeditions in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is not a place to be desecrated by development!

-Alan Coulter, National Outdoor Leadership School Instructor

Once you spoil an area, it's gone forever.

-Paul Davis, Owner/Captain

Plundering the Arctic National WILDLIFE Refuge not only wreaks havoc on a wild and pristine place to the detriment of the people, wildlife, and businesses that depend on it; it also contributes to global warming and potentially devastating climate change, all for short-term economic gain. Moreover, it is likely that the economics of fossil fuels will change as renewables become cheaper in the next decade, stranding investments in oil and natural gas development, further reducing the benefits of any such development.

-Nathan Borson, Co-founder of Spirit Walker Expeditions

Save land for future generations.

-Morgan Shields, YMCA Camp Menogyn

Wilderness will someday (soon) be more valuable than gold. Some countries know that (Chile for example) Alaska should follow suit and preserve the special things we have here.

-Nancy Pfeiffer, Wilderness Guide

I have visited the Arctic National Refuge several times, and shared this special place with numerous clients. Seeing my clients eye light up with passion and joy when they experience the expansive view of the coastal plain, is a highlight of every trip to this unique ecosystem. Any development on the coastal plain would disturb the expansive view of wilderness, and threaten my livelihood. Even more important, disturbances to the unique hydrology and ecology of the area would interfere with nesting migrating birds, and with the Porcupine Caribou Herd. The Porcupine Caribou Herd is essential to the Gwich'in people. Any development in the Arctic National Refuge would be an unrevokable mistake.

-Fredrik Norrsell

It's was designated as a Refuge....let it be one!

-Melanie Heacox, Naturalist and Guide

I spent time up there on the North Slope last summer guiding a 50 day expedition in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Bringing back the experience to share with people has been one of the most intricate and unyielding processes of my life. To explain what it is like to watch a full grown grizzly bear charge, pick fresh blueberries for pancakes from the tundra, catch an Arctic char on a fly rod, or listen to the din of caribou approaching, is frustrating and illusive. The matter of fact is, I can make no argument others have not. This symbolic place represents years of bitterly fought political agendas over oil and gas development. My hope is the refuge remains protected primarily for the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou herd, and the hundreds of migrating birds that seek out the coastal plains. There are no places left in the United States of America that have been left unaltered, untethered to people and their impact, except the Refuge. We should preserve ANWR's 1002 for that reason alone.

-John Stember, Bettles Lodge

Support small businesses and sustainable jobs. Support the outdoor industry. Keep wilderness wild for the enjoyment of future generations.

-Cynthia Merrow, Arctic Treks

We are losing our winters because there is too much CO2, stop drilling and adding to the problem.

-Kevin Slater, Mahoosuc Guide Service

Oil and gas development in ANWR would reduce the wonder of the place as well as reducing the miracle of caribou migrations, one of the world's last large mammal migrations. I have guided there a few precious times.

-Judy Brakel, Guide for Alaska Discovery

My time spent in ANWR showed me the importance of this landscape to the Gwich'in. After hundreds of years of violence against Indigenous people, shouldn't we begin honoring our treaties and treating Native people with respect?

-Matthew McIntosh, Field Instructor for Outward Bound

I have lead trips on all 7 continents. Our wild lands are irreplaceable and unique in the world. They are gems of our country and the world. We are stewards of them. Our care is not just for now but for the long term of our planet.

-Rick French, President of Pack, Paddle, Ski, Corp.

With national oil supplies at historic highs and gas prices recently at long-term lows, there is no justification for attempting to drill for oil in the refuge. We should honor the refuge, and future generations, by instead permanently protecting this amazing wilderness.

-Dan Oberlatz, Alaska Alpine Adventures

Caribou still roam Alaska by the hundreds of thousands, like the buffalo once did in the lower 48 states. The caribou and their lands should remain protected.

-John Gaedeke, Iniakuk Lake Wilderness Lodge

I spent 40 days backpacking in ANWR when I was 18 years old, and I found it to be one of the most magical places I have ever been. We only saw another group once in our 6 weeks there, a feat that would be basically impossible anywhere else in the country or possibly the world.

Despite being a harsh tundra landscape, it was teeming with life. But that life is in a fragile balance and development would almost certainly push it over the brink. That is unconscionable. There is nowhere else in the country like ANWR and we owe it to each other and to everyone yet to be born to keep it wild. It is a transformational place and deserves to stay that way.

-Emma Woodworth, Naturalist Intern for Sierra Outdoor School

I have guided both birding trips and polar bear viewing trips in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for over 20 years. There is no place like it left unspoiled in the US and most of the circumpolar north. The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is the highest known denning area for polar bears in the South Beaufort Sea, the birthing grounds for the Porcupine caribou herd and the breeding and nesting area for countless thousands of birds from all around the world. It simply would be heartbreaking to lose this wilderness world to any kind of development. It is not only a refuge for wildlife but a needed refuge for those who seek to explore and those who need the psychic gratification to know such places still exist. "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things that he can afford to let alone." Henry David Thoreau

-Nan Eagleson, Wilderness Birding Adventures

I have walked and paddled hundreds of miles in the Arctic Refuge and think this is the last place we should be thinking about draining for oil and gas. It is the wrong place, and we should be putting out energy toward newer technology rather than moving backwards. I, and 100% of my dozens and dozens of guide friends, clients, and friends are also against oil and gas development anywhere in AK, but especially the Refuge.

-Mollie Foster, Traverse Alaska

I have had the privilege of working in the Brooks Range and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for over 13 years. I have spent 20 years of my life working seasonally in Alaskan tourism and calling this state home. Wilderness tourism is a vital and important industry for the state. Our reputation is one of wild spaces and truly intact ecosystems where all the keystone species are still found doing their thing in their natural habitat. People come here for the opportunity to witness and experience these wild places and wild creatures - the Brooks Range and ANWR are the top of that food chain. There are so many reasons to ask you to protect the 1002 area of ANWR from oil lease sales and drilling...too many to account for here. If you spent even a little time there looking out over the coastal plain with an unobstructed view and feeling the edge of the world you would understand instantly. But for now, I ask that you protect the 1002 and the rest of the ANWR for all the reasons stated in this letter and because once the footprints of oil rigs and roads, and man camps are put in they can never be truly removed. You only get once chance in the Arctic and I hope you'll choose to give this place as a gift to all future generations, fully intact and unencumbered by the scars of the past. Thank you for your time.

-Shannon Coykendall, Arctic Treks

This is a temporary venture that will result in a permanent loss of a very special wild place on our Earth... When will this shortsightedness end?

-Davey Lubin, Esther G Sea Tours

The coastal plain of the refuge is the ONLY part of the coastal plain that is not open to oil development. Must you have it all? Leaving nothing for wildlife or the future?

-David Shaw, Wild Imagination Photography and Tours

The people of the United States, Canada and the rest of the world have spoken out overwhelmingly against oil and gas development over the last 38 years for a list of reasons that has been repeated over and over again since the exclusion of the 1002 area in 1980 (under ANILCA) during each effort to open this area to industrial development. And I'm not going to waste my words to repeat them in this letter, since most members of Congress won't listen anyway. This land is owned by the people of the United States, NOT the oil and gas industry, so my question to Congress is; why aren't you listening to your constituency? After all, last I checked we live in a Democracy for the PEOPLE, not a state managed for the benefit of corporate America! Yes there may be oil in the Arctic Refuge, yes it may provide some jobs, BUT at what irreversible cost? The fact is we Do Not need the oil, and the coastal plain is one of only a few intact Wilderness areas we have left in the USA. My message to Congress is; "START LISTENING TO YOUR CONSTITUENCY, NOT YOUR POLITICAL DONORS".

-Huge Rose, Huge Rose Photography

Let's not destroy one of earth's finest landscapes and ecosystems.

-Thomas Turiano, Guide, Author, and Publisher

Opening this last bastion of wildness to oil and gas drilling is a monumental feat of myopic stupidity.

-Jim Stanford, Barker-Ewing boatman

You can't take a decision like this back. Opening lands such as these only go in one direction. Take that logic to its ultimate end and we will eventually have no wild places left on this earth. It takes foresight and courage to see that now and it takes courage to do something about it. Thank you.

-Evan Gerald Miller, Mountain Guide for Alpine Ascents International, Exum Mountain Guides, and Teton Backcountry Guides

"We do not inherit Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children!"

-Steve Behaeghel, Outdoor Guide

I organised wilderness expeditions in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for over 25 years, beginning in 1986. I have been opposed to oil development in the refuge (and specifically the coastal plain) since the passage of ANILCA. There is so little coastal plain that is protected in Alaska, and the 1002 area of the Arctic Refuge deserves permanent wilderness protection, for the caribou, wildlife, and for biodiversity and protection of water quality.

-Karen Jettmar, Director of Equinox Wilderness Expeditions

The Arctic Refuge represents the finest remaining wild areas on the planet.

-Brad Meiklejohn, American Packrafting Association

There are few wild places left in the world and the Arctic Refuge is one of the last great ones. Please keep it wild and do not open it for oil and gas development.

-Forrest G. McCarthy, Wilderness Guide

Please let's do the right thing for all living animals, plants, and humans that live and breathe on this earth.

-Timothy Tobin

Boom and bust economies always end in a bust. And oil and gas damages the environment in such a way that it damages traditional ways of living (see the Yamal peninsula), tourism, and the livelihood of the largest mammal migration left on earth. We have eradicated 80% of the wildlife on earth (in numbers, not species). Exploiting ANWR for an outdated fuel model totally unnecessary. The times I have spent in the refuge are some of my most treasured memories.

-Sune Tamm, Polar Guide

Large swaths of wilderness are important and don't exist anymore. The difference between Colorado mountains and Montana show an example of how small deaths of wilderness lose its intended value. Grizzlies don't live there. Wilderness has huge value to people and animals. Be a visionary like Roosevelt And not short sighted like so many politicians.

-Darren Hull, Teacher

Being a Montanan I thought I understood large tracts of wildlands, because I had lived near, hunted and worked in several of our wilderness areas (guiding horseback hunting trips). But, until I started visiting and working in the Arctic Refuge I didn't really understand the importance of large intact open lands. The Arctic Refuge is the biggest and most important wild area our country has it needs to maintain free from drilling. In Montana tourism and recreation has become the number one contributor to the economy. In the near future it will be the same in Alaska. Let's preserve our great wild legacy for future generations

-Jason Matthews, Head Guide for Wild Alaska Travel

We use this area for guiding and need wild country in order to stay in business.

-Polly Mahoney, Co-owner of Mahaosuc Guide Service

The Refuge is one of the last great complete ecosystems left on the planet. Large herd migrations and huge bird and mammal habitats are becoming rare and this one deserves our lasting protection. To not see the value and special nature of this area and not see that it should be kept pristine is to not really see it for what it is and Oil development is not consistent with its preservation.

-Juliette Boselli, Owner of Denali Mt. Works and Too-loo-Uk River Guides

The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is the only place on Alaska's vast North Slope where we have a chance of protecting wilderness from the Brooks Range to the Arctic Ocean. Nowhere else is it possible to float wilderness rivers across the coastal plain to the Arctic Ocean. Hundreds of people & dozens of outfitters paddle out across this unique area every summer.

The rest of Alaska's coastal plain is being opened up to oil development. This is the only area on Alaska's vast north presently protected. We need to protect this very special area.

-Ron Yarnell, Owner of All About Adventure

I work every year in ANWR. I have witnesses personally the magic wonder of the place and the positive effect that it has in the lives of the folks we bring there. Please allow future generations the ability to experience this pristine place. Do Not open the Arctic for any additional drilling!

-Elena Kirschnet, Sundog Expeditions

As a wilderness guide I get the rare opportunity to witness firsthand how this wild place positively impacts people's lives forever. It would be a global loss to interrupt this wilderness with drilling that will only produce a very small amount of oil for a very short time.

-Brooke Edwards, Lead Guide for Alaska Alpine Adventures

It will break my heart! Enough already! End War! End Greed!

-Dori McDannold, Guide for Arctic Wild and Alaska Alpine Adventures

As a natural scientist (PhD), lifelong outdoor expert (mountain and wilderness guide) I'm deeply concerned about any easing up on the full protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This is a globally very significant and fragile environmental area. Thank you!

-Martin Latenser, Frances Wilderness Lodge

This is a unique landscape that is home to millions of plants and animals that are now forced to rely on the few who are brave enough to protect them. This is a special place where you can go to find peace and wilderness, please be one of the brave and help us protect this incredible place!

-Brita Irving, Guide for Alaska Alpine Adventures and Instructor for Inspiring Girls Expeditions

This is an unique area worthy of protection for the wildlife and the people who subsist on them.

-Cody Strathe, Owner and Guide at Squid Acres Kennel Dogsled Tours

A truly wild place needs to be preserved. This kind of wilderness does not exist anymore most places in the world. It is a very special place.

-Katharina Merchant, Alaska Ultra Sport LLC

The caribou calving grounds can only be protected (or destroyed) once. It would be a tourism marketing nightmare if the caribou die because of shortsighted oil production in an age when industry is moving towards renewable resources.

-Heather Finton, Sundog Retreat

ANWR is far too precious, on a global scale, to destroy forever for a few short years of oil!!! I have guided hundreds of people for 20 years in Ivavik National Park, just across the border from ANWR, and not only has it provided some of the most amazing experiences of their life, it is also my favourite place on the planet, and I have travelled extensively on all continents and nearly all ecosystems. It breaks my heart to think of ANWR being harmed by the greed of the oil and gas companies and the extremely short sighted vision of the politicians in Alaska and rest of America that would allow this to happen. True wilderness is THE most precious resource left on this planet and it is vanishing at an alarming rate!! If we do not change our ways, and get off our dependence on oil and gas we will not only destroy the last wild places on the planet we will also, due to climate change and destruction of ecosystems, and large scale pollution of our water, air and soil, cease to be able to survive ourselves. And in the process will make the planet uninhabitable for other species as well. Please WAKE UP to the realities of our finite world. We cannot keep consuming at the rate we are going! And PLEASE do not destroy forever the Arctic Refuge. And the wildlife that depend on it.

-Jill Pangman, Owner and Operator of Sila Sojourns