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### **Outdoor businesses, guides and athletes express opposition to drilling in the Arctic Refuge**

WASHINGTON – Today, outdoor businesses, professional athletes, guides and other outdoor recreation professionals submitted letters to the U.S. Department of the Interior opposing all oil and gas leasing and development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Thanks to last year's congressional tax bill, oil industry allies in Congress were able to circumvent normal legislative channels and slip Arctic Refuge drilling into the bill using an expedited legislative process. Two months ago, the Interior Department moved forward and issued a Notice of Intent to initiate the environmental review process for oil and gas leasing on the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge.

Public lands like the Arctic Refuge are the lifeblood for millions of individuals that use them for recreation. In addition to their popularity for recreation activities, they are a boon for the economy as well. According to a study conducted by the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation generates \$887 billion in annual consumer spending and supports 7.6 million jobs. In Alaska alone, 81 percent of residents participate in outdoor recreation, spending \$4.39 billion each year. When you include visitors to Alaska, the outdoor recreation economy generates \$7.3 billion annually in consumer spending and supports 72,000 direct jobs. In addition, at a time when Alaska's economy is facing a recession, the outdoor recreation economy is growing at a rate higher than the US economy.

#### **Letters:**

[Conservation Alliance Letter, signed by 44 businesses opposed to Arctic Refuge drilling](#)  
[Athletes and Influencers Supporting Arctic Refuge Protections Letter](#)  
[Letter from 104 Guides and Outdoor Recreation Professionals](#)

The businesses, athletes, guides and others behind these letters are a testament that public lands – especially the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – are worth far more to our collective legacy than the natural resources that lie beneath them.

The Arctic Refuge is among the most extraordinary landscapes in our public domain. It is a vast and remote wilderness, bursting with biodiversity and framed by the awe-inspiring Brooks Mountain Range. It belongs to all Americans and should be safeguarded within our public lands heritage.

The Arctic is also experiencing the impacts of climate change more than any other region of our country – permafrost is thawing, sea ice is receding and temperatures are rising at twice the rate of the rest of



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the planet – and proposed oil and gas drilling in this region will only make matters worse. The impacts from those activities would last for generations.

**Statements:**

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a truly pristine landscape that offers singular outdoor recreation opportunities. There are few places left on the planet where a visitor can experience such a vast expanse of mountains, rivers, tundra, and wildlife. I had the good fortune to float the Canning River, where we camped among hundreds of caribou, watched a group of musk oxen grazing in the fog, and spotted a pack of wolves traveling through acres of land blanketed in wildflowers. It was a peak experience totally incompatible with oil drilling.”

**-John Sterling, Executive Director, The Conservation Alliance.**

“We are all in awe of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Two of our athletes, Kit Deslauriers and Hilaree Nelson, returned from an expedition there only a few weeks ago and saw first-hand what is at stake with the potential impacts of drilling. The coastal plain is a stunning, fragile wilderness and an inspiration to The North Face and to future explorers everywhere.”

**- Eric Raymond, Sr. Advocacy Manager, The North Face**

“When it comes to our public lands – which we all own, as Americans – we need a balanced approach to energy development, and an approach that does not compromise a stable climate. These places are our backyards, our most cherished playgrounds, and we should not exploit them for fossil fuel extraction.”

**- Mario Molina, Executive Director, Protect Our Winters**

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It’s not an acronym or a budget item, it’s a refuge and America has the singular opportunity to protect this wild and pristine landscape.”

**- Kit DesLauriers, The North Face Athlete**

“I have lead trips on all seven 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, Pack Paddle Ski, Corp.**

“Ever since Congress rushed Arctic Refuge oil development into law late last year, more and more voices are speaking up to protect this one of a kind place. Today guides, athletes, adventurers and outdoor brands alike have spoken, adding their voice to the countless others calling for Arctic Refuge protections. I’m confident Congress and the next administration will listen to the people and undo this tragic mistake.”

**- Andy Moderow, State Director, Alaska Wilderness League**

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