



Save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Oppose destructive drilling in America's crown jewel refuge



America's Wild Arctic

One of the largest intact ecosystems in the world, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska is a place of breathtaking natural beauty and untouched, rugged wildness. Its remarkable glaciated peaks, northern forests and fragile tundra provide habitat for polar bears, caribou, muskoxen, wolves and other iconic, unique and sensitive wildlife species.

The Arctic Refuge is the crown jewel of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a 19.6-million acre reserve boasting the greatest biodiversity of any protected area north of the Arctic Circle. It is home to 45 mammals, including eight marine mammals, 42 fish species, and more than 200 migratory and resident bird species.

The Refuge's Biological Heart

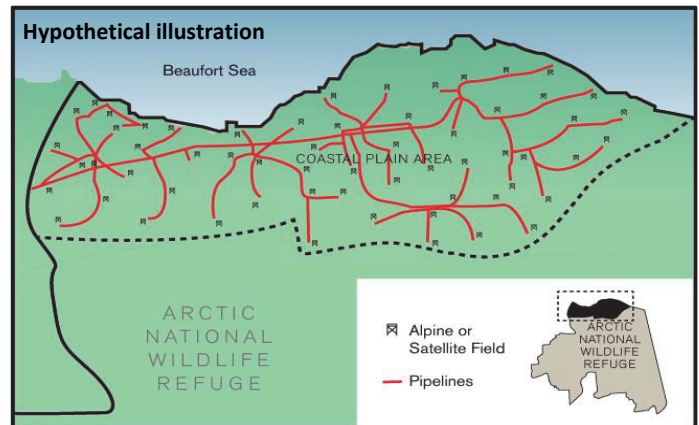
Located on the northern-most portion of the Arctic Refuge, the 1.5-million-acre Coastal Plain descends from the Brooks Mountain range to the Arctic Ocean. This incredible ecological zone is the biological heart of the refuge, supporting a diverse array of animals, including grizzly bears, arctic foxes, wolverines, Dall sheep and birds that migrate from six continents and all 50 states.

Dubbed by biologists as "America's Serengeti," the Coastal Plain is the principal calving ground of one of North America's last great caribou herds; it is our country's most important onshore denning habitat for polar bears; and is a landscape sacred to the native Gwich'in people. A comprehensive assessment of the refuge by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended the highest level of protection for the Coastal Plain—Congressional wilderness designation.

The Oil Threat

Unfortunately, the Coastal Plain has for decades been a target for industrialization from oil development and the subject of multiple congressional battles dating back to the 1980s. Big Oil and the state of Alaska—which would likely receive 90 percent of any government revenues generated from drilling in the refuge—have been relentless in their efforts to open this pristine wildlife haven to extraction.

The consequences of drilling on the Coastal Plain are stark and permanent. Oil drilling would require harmful seismic blasting and create a vast industrial complex across the Coastal Plain. The wilderness and habitat values would be forever destroyed by a steel spider's web of hundreds of miles of pipelines from dozens of well pads, along with airstrips, gravel mines, roads, and other infrastructure.



Spills, Leaks and Pollution

Even well-regulated oil drilling is a messy business, plagued by periodic spills and pollution. The once wild landscape 60 miles west of the Arctic Refuge at Prudhoe Bay, America's largest oil field, is forever changed. Hundreds of toxic spills of crude oil and other hazardous materials seep into Prudhoe Bay and the North Slope every year. One spectacular fire at an oil drilling site sent up a plume of black smoke that could be seen for hundreds of miles. Air pollution is unavoidable at drilling locations.

Birds, mammals and fish exposed to oil and other chemicals can die from acute poisoning or suffer a slow death from debilitating illness from ingestion.

IMPACTS OF OIL DRILLING IN THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge is one of the last undeveloped preserves on the north-slope Arctic Ocean coastline. As early as 1987, Fish and Wildlife Service research showed that drilling on the Coastal Plain would have major impacts on wildlife. Species would suffer from displacement, increased mortality and slower reproduction rates. Scarce fresh water supplies diverted for ice roads and other development would no longer be available for fish and wildlife.

Harm to Polar Bear Denning Habitat

With seasonal sea ice in the Arctic Ocean continuing to shrink, onshore denning habitat on the Coastal Plain has become vital to the survival of polar bears. These federally threatened bears have very low reproductive rates and are highly sensitive to human disturbance. Mother bears come ashore in the fall to make their dens to give birth and raise their cubs through the winter. Oil drilling activities, such as seismic testing, aircraft and vehicle noise, or even the mere presence of humans, can lead mother bears to abandon their dens and cubs.



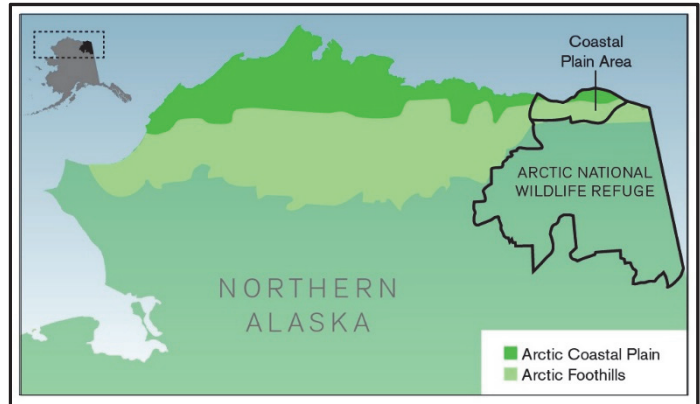
Three noses © Tim Grams

Destruction of Migratory Bird Habitat

During the summer months, hundreds of bird species migrate from the lower 48 states and beyond to find breeding, nesting or resting places on the Coastal Plain. Disturbing this avian nursery is likely to have population-scale impacts on many of these species, including snow geese, trumpeter and tundra swans and arctic terns.

Threats to Muskoxen

Majestic relics of the ice-age, muskoxen live on the coastal plain year-round and are uniquely adapted to survive the frigid winter conditions. Any disturbance that forces them to expend extra energy, however, could decrease calf production and threaten species survival.



Threats to the Epic Migration of Caribou

Every year for thousands of years the Porcupine caribou herd of the Arctic Refuge has migrated hundreds of miles to reach the Coastal Plain to birth and raise their young. Individual caribou from the herd have been recorded to travel 3,000 miles in one year – the longest of any land animal in the world. The infrastructure, chronic noise and spills associated with oil drilling would likely cause the caribou to abandon these historic calving grounds, forcing them into the mountains where forage value is low and predators are more abundant.

Harm to Indigenous People and Culture

Drilling would also devastate the vibrant indigenous Gwich'in people who have depended on the caribou's sustained productivity for their subsistence economy and cultural identity for thousands of years and who consider the Coastal Plain as the sacred place where life begins.



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**PROTECT
THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**