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Contact: Desiree Sorenson-Groves, [dgroves@refugeassociation.org](mailto:dgroves@refugeassociation.org), (202) 290-5593

## **President Donald Trump Proposes Opening Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Oil and Gas Drilling, Cuts to the National Wildlife Refuge System**

Washington D.C. - Today, the White House released President Donald Trump's first full budget for Fiscal Year 2018, which recommends drilling for oil and gas in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and significant cuts to the National Wildlife Refuge System and important conservation programs such as the Partners for Fish and Wildlife, North American Wetlands Conservation Act and State & Tribal Wildlife Grants.

[The Refuge Association and eighty-eight independent Refuge Friends groups from around the country have called upon Congress](#) to oppose any effort to open the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas drilling. Once gone, this untouched wilderness will be lost to all future generations of Americans.

"It seems our nation's most pristine areas have a price, and for President Trump, despoiling the Arctic Refuge forever is worth \$1.8 billion – the amount his budget assumes would be generated in oil and gas revenue," said Geoffrey Haskett, Acting President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. "To put it in perspective, here are some other things that cost our nation \$1.8 billion: about a day and a half worth of interest on our national debt; half of a Stealth bomber; or 16 days of tax cuts for the wealthiest of Americans."

The Refuge Association agrees we must deal with our debt, but to ruin forever one of the world's most wild places – where polar bears, musk oxen, caribou and millions of birds are free – we must ask ourselves what we truly value as a people.

"It is beyond irresponsible for this Administration to propose opening up some of the most pristine natural lands in the world to oil and gas exploration – particularly at a time when our nation has a surplus of oil," said Haskett. "We have seen the damage that occurs to wildlife and habitat as the result of oil spills and accidents, and we can't afford those damages to the Arctic Refuge."

Also in this budget, the National Wildlife Refuge System's Operations and Maintenance budget would receive \$470 million, a \$14 million decrease from last year's allocation. This decrease in funding would severely hamper the Refuge

System's ability to meet its conservation mission. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which is used to conserve working lands through the acquisition of conservation easements, as well as acquire fee areas for hunters, birdwatchers and other recreationalists, received only \$17 million - a 66% cut. An effective zeroing out of the program because no new projects would be started and there would be very little to complete existing ones.

As the only shining light in the budget request, the administration has requested language that would give them the authority to go after those who knowingly damage refuge resources, similar to authorities already existing for the National Park Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The combination of opening up refuge lands for drilling, yet decreasing funding for operations and maintenance is incredibly dangerous. Refuge staffing levels are down, visitor centers are partially closed, the number of law enforcement officers is at an all time low, habitat acres treated with prescribed fire have dropped significantly, and outdoor recreational opportunities for over 48 million Americans continue to decline.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association stands side-by-side with [refuge Friends organizations](#) and other conservation partners to fight this ill-advised proposal to open the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas drilling and the damaging budget cuts that will hurt our communities and the wildlife habitat we treasure.

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*The National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only independent nonprofit that promotes and protects the world's largest wildlife conservation network: the National Wildlife Refuge System. Learn more at: [refugeassociation.org](http://refugeassociation.org).*