



May 23, 2017

National Wildlife Refuge Friends Organizations Oppose Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

We, the undersigned national wildlife refuge Friends organizations, are united in our opposition to drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

The Arctic Refuge is the crown jewel of the National Wildlife Refuge System. At 19.6 million acres, the refuge safeguards one of the last truly wild and unspoiled places on Earth. From the towering Brooks Range to the productive coastal plain, the Arctic Refuge is an iconic landscape that is home to a dizzying array of wildlife that includes caribou, wolves, musk oxen, and over 200 bird species. The Arctic Refuge is one of the only places in the world where black, brown, and polar bears coexist and thrive.

Congress designated 7.3 million acres of Arctic Refuge as wilderness under the Wilderness Act, our nation's strongest land conservation law. The Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan recommends that the entire refuge be designated wilderness, and in 2015, President Obama recommended that the Congress designate the entire Arctic Refuge as wilderness to ensure its complete and permanent protection. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service currently manages these proposed wilderness lands to maintain their wild and untrammeled character.

The Arctic Refuge is under threat. With the support of Alaska's congressional delegation, the oil and gas industry has had the Arctic Refuge in its crosshairs for more than 35 years, and the current political climate provides these developers a golden opportunity to finally drill the Refuge.

Drilling for oil in Arctic Refuge would cause irreparable damage to the pristine habitat of the Refuge and its wildlife. One of the primary target sites for drilling operations is the coastal plain, often referred to as the "biological heart" of the Refuge. The sprawl of drilling infrastructure coupled with the high likelihood of leaks and spills would forever ruin the fragile habitat, its wildlife, and threaten the way of life for the Gwich'in people who depend on the caribou for their subsistence and spiritual values. Furthermore, this pro-drilling crusade blatantly disregards the overwhelming and bipartisan support of the American people for a wild, protected Arctic Refuge.

As Friends organization leaders from across the country, we strongly oppose any effort to open the Arctic Refuge to drilling. During his Senate confirmation hearing, Secretary of the Interior Zinke stated: "I fully recognize and appreciate that there are lands that deserve special recognition and are better managed under the John Muir model of wilderness, where man is more of an observer than an active participant." There is no landscape more deserving of this recognition and protection than the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

National Wildlife Refuge Association

Alabama

Friends of the Cahaba National Wildlife Refuge
Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association

Alaska

Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

California

Friends of San Diego National Wildlife Refuges
Friends of San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge
San Diego Audubon Society
San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society

Colorado

Founders and Friends of Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge

Delaware

Friends of Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Florida

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society
Friends and Volunteers of Refuges – Florida Keys
Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Carr Refuge
Friends of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge
Friends of the Tampa Bay National Wildlife Refuges
Pelican Island Preservation Society

Georgia

Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges
Okefenokee Wildlife League

Hawaii

Friends of Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge
Kilauea Point Natural History Association

Idaho

Friends of Camas National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

Illinois

Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

Indiana

Big Oaks Conservation Society
Friends of the Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge

Iowa

Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Pool 9, Upper Miss Refuge, Inc.

Kentucky

Friends of Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge

Louisiana

Friends of Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc.

Maine

Friends of Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery

Maryland

Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Eastern Neck

Massachusetts

Friends of Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge, Inc.
Friends of Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Michigan

Friends of Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Minnesota

Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Refuge Headwaters

Missouri

St. Louis Audubon

Nevada

Friends of Nevada Wilderness

New Hampshire

Friends of Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge

New Jersey

Friends of Cape May National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

New Mexico

Friends of Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

New York

Friends of Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge
Genesee Valley Audubon Society

North Carolina

Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society

Northern Mariana Islands

Friends of the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument

Oklahoma

Association of the Friends of the Wichitas

Oregon

Friends of Haystack Rock

Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge

Shoreline Education for Awareness, Inc.

Pennsylvania

Friends of Heinz Refuge

Rhode Island

Friends of the National Wildlife Refuges of Rhode Island

South Carolina

Friends of Coastal South Carolina

Friends of Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges

South Dakota

Friends of Gavins Point National Fish Hatchery

Friends of Maga Ta Hopi

Tennessee

West Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge Complex Friends

Texas

Friends of Anahuac Refuge

Friends of Aransas & Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of High Plains Refuge Complex

Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

Utah

Friends of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

Virginia

Chincoteague Natural History Association

Friends of Back Bay

Friends of Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Washington

Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards

Friends of Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of the Hanford Reach

Friends of the Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuges

Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

The Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge

West Virginia

Friends of the National Conservation Training Center

Wisconsin

Friends of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of the Refuge – Upper Mississippi River Pools 7 & 8

Friends of the Upper Mississippi