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## **House Takes First Step to Open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Drilling**

(Washington, D.C.) – The National Wildlife Refuge Association strongly condemns the reconciliation instructions directed to the House Natural Resources Committee included in the House FY18 Budget Resolution released today.

These instructions mark the first step in the legislative process to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling.

“It is disappointing to see these reconciliation instructions included in the House FY18 Budget bill,” said Geoffrey Haskett, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “For as long as there has been an effort to open the Arctic Refuge to oil drilling, the American people have demonstrated overwhelming bipartisan support for a permanently protected Refuge. The Refuge Association will continue to work with our conservation partners and allies in Congress to defend the Arctic Refuge and its wildlife.”

The President’s FY18 Budget specifically called for drilling in the Arctic Refuge, claiming this would generate \$1.8 billion over 10 years. Even if this revenue estimate is correct, \$1.8 billion represents a negligible 0.05 percent of the \$3.8 trillion federal budget. It is clear that any attempt to justify balancing the federal budget by sacrificing irreplaceable wilderness is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to advance political and corporate interests.

Pro-drilling advocates have targeted the Arctic Refuge since the 1980s, and today the Alaska congressional delegation is leading a renewed push to allow for drilling on the refuge’s fragile Coastal Plain. Drilling infrastructure and inevitable oil spills would irreversibly damage the Arctic Refuge’s Coastal Plain habitat and the wildlife it supports.

The 19.6 million-acre Arctic Refuge is home to iconic American wildlife, including polar bears, muskoxen, and hundreds of species of migratory birds. The Coastal Plain is the primary calving area for the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which Alaska Native communities rely on for survival.

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*The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America’s wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect and enhance the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries.*