

## Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Danger

Sent as an email on March 21, 2005...

Dear Family and Friends,

On Wednesday, March 17, we saw a disturbing attack on one of our most treasured natural wonders sneak through the Senate on a 51 to 49 vote. While Scott Peterson's death sentence and Robert Blake's acquittal led the news of the day, the Senate approved oil drilling in the striking, pristine and irreplaceable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Most of the Senators know that oil from the refuge would hardly make a dent in our dependence on foreign imports -- leaving our economy and way of life just as exposed to wild swings in worldwide oil prices and supply as it is today. When it comes to meeting America's energy needs, drilling in the Arctic Refuge would be like a drop in a bucket. The truth is, we simply can't drill our way to energy independence. Although drilling proponents often say there are 16 billion barrels of oil under the refuge's coastal plain, U.S. Geological Survey scientists' estimate of the amount that could be recovered economically -- that is, the amount likely to be profitably extracted and sold -- represents less than a year's U.S. supply, probably closer to six months. And oil companies admit that it would take 10 years for any Arctic Refuge oil to reach the market, and even when production peaks -- in the distant year of 2027 -- the refuge would produce a paltry 1 or 2 percent of Americans' daily consumption. Whatever oil the refuge might produce is simply irrelevant to the larger issue of meeting America's future energy needs.

Oil produced from the Arctic Refuge would come at enormous, and irreversible, cost. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's 19 million acres comprise one of the last places on earth where an intact expanse of arctic and sub arctic lands remain protected. The refuge is among the world's last true wildernesses, and it is one of the largest sanctuaries for Arctic animals. Traversed by a dozen rivers and framed by jagged peaks, this spectacular wilderness is a vital birthing ground for polar bears, grizzlies, Arctic wolves, caribou, the endangered shaggy musk ox (a mammoth-like survivor of the last Ice Age), golden eagles, snow geese and more. Millions of other birds use the Arctic Refuge to nest and as a critical staging area on their migratory journeys. Of course, the Arctic Refuge supports more than wildlife. For a thousand generations, the Gwich'in people of Northeast Alaska and Northwest Canada have depended on it and lived in harmony with it. To them, the Arctic Coastal Plain is sacred ground.

For a sense of what big oil's heavy machinery would do to the refuge, just look 60 miles west to Prudhoe Bay -- a gargantuan oil complex that has turned 1,000 square miles of fragile tundra into a sprawling industrial zone containing 1,500 miles of roads and pipelines, 1,400 producing wells and three jetports. The result is a landscape defaced by mountains of sewage sludge, scrap metal, garbage and more than 60 contaminated waste sites that contain -- and often leak -- acids, lead, pesticides, solvents and diesel fuel. While proponents of

drilling insist the Arctic Refuge could be developed by disturbing as little as 2,000 acres within the 1.5-million-acre coastal plain, a recent analysis by NRDC says otherwise. U.S. Geological Survey studies have found that oil in the refuge isn't concentrated in a single, large reservoir. Rather, it's spread across the coastal plain in more than 30 small deposits, which would require vast networks of roads and pipelines that would fragment the habitat, disturbing and displacing wildlife.

The solution to America's energy problems cannot be found in the Arctic Refuge. It will be found in American ingenuity, not more oil. Only by reducing our reliance on oil -- foreign and domestic -- and investing in cleaner, renewable forms of power will our country achieve true energy security. The good news is that we already have many of the tools we need to accomplish this. For example, car makers have the technology right now to produce high-performance hybrid cars, trucks and SUVs. My wife Priscilla and I already own a Toyota Prius Hybrid and we love it. We are looking forward to replacing our truck with a Toyota Highlander SUV Hybrid when it becomes available. If the rest of America made the transition to these more efficient vehicles, far more oil would be saved than the Arctic Refuge is likely to produce. Conservation can help, too. Every time you chose to walk, bike, carpool, or ride mass transit, you are helping. Everything you do makes a difference. Your little decisions every day really DO make a difference. Using less oil will also help lower prices at the pump!

Senators Maria Cantwell (D-Washington) and John Kerry offered a critical amendment to stop this attack on our environment, but they were unsuccessful. However, they did launch an Internet Citizens' Roll Call in favor of protecting the Arctic Refuge, and saw more than 260,000 Americans act by adding their names in less than 24 hours.

"It was the first time ever that I or anyone else could stand on the Senate floor and announce that, in a day's time, a quarter of a million Americans had gone online to express their passionate support for a given course of action," said Kerry in an email to supporters. "If we keep working together -- committed pro-environment Senators and a powerful grassroots movement all pulling in the same direction -- we can still stop the plan for drilling in the Arctic from making it the rest of the way through Congress. And we can win the larger battle over two very different visions of America's energy future."

If you haven't acted yet, please take one minute now to sign the roll call and, if you've already signed, use that minute to forward this message to friends and colleagues. The roll call can be found at: <http://www.johnkerry.com/RollCall>

It seems opponents have plans to sell off our public lands to powerful special interests. As a result of their ruthless drive to undermine America's most beautiful natural treasures, the oil rigs are closer to the Arctic Refuge than they have ever been. And our own scientists and economists admit that the plan will not make us less dependent on foreign oil and will not lower prices at the pump.

“We have to put America's energy future in the hands of Americans -- by inventing our way to real energy independence and having energy sources that create jobs and lower prices,” added Kerry. “And, if we act with the same energy and determination as we have on this critical Arctic Refuge vote, sooner than later, our power and commitment will carry the day.”

Massive numbers of citizens around the country are rising up to demand that the Congress protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. You can help carry the day by contributing to an emergency ad campaign to make sure politicians know how strongly the people they represent feel about protecting the Arctic. Donations are being accepted at: <http://contribute.johnkerry.com/>

Another way to help is by writing your leaders in Washington. You can find out who your Senator is and get the address at: <http://www.senate.gov/> and to find your Congressman use this website: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>

More information can be found at: <http://www.nrdc.org/land/wilderness/arctic.asp>

Thanks for your help,  
Bill and Priscilla Johnson-Miles