



# NEWS

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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## **STATEMENT BY SECRETARY BABBITT ON USGS ASSESSMENT OF OIL RESERVES UNDER ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

The resource update compiled by the U.S. Geological Survey should provide a cold shower of reality for those who continue to seek a justification for oil drilling within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This assessment makes the probability that other Prudhoe Bays exist under the coastal plain - the biological heart of the Refuge - vanishingly small.

The USGS data assessment indicates that any oil under the Arctic Refuge coastal plain is more likely held in a multitude of small reservoirs. The implication is clear: to recover this oil would require the kind of infrastructure that would forever and drastically alter the landscape of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, now dedicated to the conservation of Alaska's magnificent wildlife and wilderness resources.

The Administration's commitment to protect and preserve the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has not and will not change. At the present time, the Department of the Interior is cooperating with the State of Alaska and other stakeholders on an environmental impact statement looking at a portion of the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska to explore whether oil and gas leasing could be compatible with the subsistence needs of Alaska Natives and the needs of wildlife. But let me be very clear. There are places on the Arctic Coastal Plain that should be forever set aside to sustain and protect the abundance of wildlife. The coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge must remain that place.

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