

BUREAU: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
MEMBER: Multiple Member interest
ISSUE: Oil and Gas Development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

I. ISSUE BACKGROUND

- The original 8.83 million acre Arctic National Wildlife Range was established in 1960, and expanded through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980 to its current 19.6 million acres and renamed the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Arctic Refuge).
- Section 1002 of ANILCA required DOI to conduct a resource assessment of the 1.5 million acre Arctic Refuge coastal plain (1002 Area). The assessment was completed in 1987 and recommended that Congress consider leasing the 1002 Area for oil and gas.
- In 2009, the USGS estimated the coastal plain had a mean estimate of 10.4 billion barrels of technically recoverable oil with 80 to 90 percent being economically recoverable.
- The Arctic Refuge's initial Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), completed in 1988, recognized the coastal plain as a critical calving area for the Porcupine caribou herd, an important subsistence resource for Alaska Native people.
- A revised CCP was completed in 2015. It recommended designating 12 million acres of the Arctic Refuge as Wilderness, including the coastal plain. Additionally, four rivers were recommended for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The revised plan also recognized the importance of the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain to polar bears, highlighting critical denning habitat.

II. POSITION of INTERESTED PARTIES

- The Alaska delegation supports leasing the coastal plain for oil and gas development.
- The State of Alaska, North Slope Borough, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and other development interests oppose the proposed Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River designations in the Arctic Refuge.
- The Native Gwich'in people as well as environmental and conservation groups support permanent wilderness designation.
- The majority of public comments on the 2015 CCP supported wilderness designation.

III. RECENT CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITY

- The FY18 Budget Resolution instructed the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to raise at least \$1 billion in revenue.
- Consistent with the FY18 budget instructions, the final tax package, H.R. 1, signed into law on December 22, 2017 requires two oil and gas lease sales on the coastal plain.
- Sen. Markey (D-MA) introduced S. 820, and Rep. Huffman (D-CA-2) introduced H.R. 1889, which would designate 1.6 million acres of the Arctic Refuge as wilderness.

IV. NEXT STEPS/ OUTLOOK

- The Department will develop the necessary regulations and conduct the required environmental reviews and resource analyses for holding lease sales on the coastal plain.
- To avoid significant adverse effects on fish, wildlife and other resources, the Department will authorize activities within the coastal plain in a manner consistent with both the original ANILCA conservation purposes and the recent oil and gas program purpose.