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NORTH STAR NEWS

*Your Land.  
Your Voice.*



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# New Strategic Plan for Alaska Wilderness League

By Adam Kolton, Executive Director

I'm excited to share a few details from our new strategic plan, which sets ambitious goals for the next three years. In particular, below are some of the key strategic shifts and background on the feedback that helped shape this plan from allied conservation groups, bipartisan members of Congress and supporters and activists like you.

## What We Learned from Listening to You

Many of you value our unique role as the only national organization devoted solely to Alaska conservation. You value our expertise, support for grassroots advocates and leadership in vital fights to save Alaska's wilderness. You value our presence in Alaska and D.C. And you appreciate our deep collaborations with national, regional and local groups both within and outside the environmental arena.

Many of you also shared your frustrations at last year's tax bill vote, that we haven't succeeded in rebuilding broad bipartisan support for Alaska conservation and that the League wasn't as powerful as it needed to be at such a challenging time. In response, here are four ways we're enhancing our role as "your voice for Alaska's wilderness:"

**1. Strengthening Federal Advocacy.** The new political landscape has huge opportunities with dozens of new members of Congress already signaling their pledge to fight for the Arctic Refuge and prioritize the environment and clean energy. By partnering with our sister organization, Alaska Wilderness Action, we're enhancing our advocacy work, cultivating bipartisan champions and holding politicians accountable when they undermine Alaska's wild places.

- 2. Leading the Arctic Refuge Defense Campaign.** Defending the Arctic Refuge remains our top priority. In deep partnership with national and Alaska-based allies, we're creating a stronger community-wide campaign to stop drilling, restore protections for the Arctic Refuge and bring new resources, staffing and energy to this fight.
- 3. "Network of Networks" Approach to Organizing.** All who care about Alaska's wild places can soon turn to us for online tools, training and other resources to make their voices heard. This includes cultivating and supporting allies including outdoor retailers like The North Face and Patagonia, faith denominations like the Episcopal Church as well as veterans, indigenous rights and sportsperson's groups.
- 4. Bridge the Alaska/D.C. Divide.** Given our headquarters in D.C. and our trusted presence in Anchorage, we are uniquely positioned to ensure tribal leaders, outfitters, scientists and conservation leaders from Alaska can tell their stories and press their cases directly with federal decision makers.

Overall, our new plan will heighten our **power**, lead to strengthened and diverse coalitions and **partnerships** and deliver on **policies** necessary to protect the public lands and waters we cherish.

Thank you for being part of this incredible Alaska Wilderness League family of donors, advocates and supporters helping ensure that the wildest places in our country are protected for future generations. \*

Adam Kolton  
Executive Director

**Alaska Wilderness League** is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1993 to further the protection of Alaska's incomparable natural endowment. Our mission is to galvanize support to secure vital policies that protect and defend America's last great wild public lands and waters.

**Board of Directors:** President Jimmy Carter, Honorary Chair, Honorable Robert Mrazek, Chair Emeritus, Betsy Loyless, Chair, Richard Spener, Vice Chair, Gareth Martins, Treasurer, Ellen Ferguson, Secretary, Toni Armstrong, Steve Barker, Tom Campion, Kristen Grimm, Debbie S. Miller, Lorraine Netro, Brian O'Donnell and David Weinstein. For questions about our newsletter, please email us at [info@AlaskaWild.org](mailto:info@AlaskaWild.org) or call us at 202-544-5205.

**Cover photo:** A polar bear on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain in the dead of winter. Florian Schulz/[FlorianSchulz.org](http://FlorianSchulz.org).

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# Caribou Trails

By Eliot Headley

Two thousand miles north of California, along the border of the 1002 area on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, I spent five nights with a group of like-minded nature lovers. Five nights by definition, though not in spirit, for this time of year in the Arctic Circle darkness is a stranger. During the summer solstice at our tundra camp, at the base of the Sadelrochit Mountains to the south of Kaktovik, the midnight sun shined bright. Shining not only on this small group of people but on the backs of countless caribou as well.

As the calving grounds for the

200,000-strong Porcupine caribou herd, the coastal plain is an expansive piece of tundra and its wilderness is vital for these migrating ungulates. Traveling hundreds of miles across land and the thousands of vertical feet of the mighty Brooks Range, countless caribou migrate to the coastal plain within the Arctic Refuge each year to bring new life into the world.

I was lucky enough to witness these caribou walk that land. The native Gwich'in people who depend on these beautiful animals call the coastal plain "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins," certainly a fitting

name for the birthplace of the Porcupine herd.

And these mighty Arctic animals don't simply stick to the valleys when navigating the Brooks Range, preferring instead to go over the tops of ridges and around proud peaks. Just as impressive as the number of caribou on the tundra were the visible trails they left on the nearby mountains.

Nursing a desire to climb on the last day of my Arctic journey, I spotted through binoculars their route, ascending from the tundra floor. The switchback trail existed

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*(continued on page 4)*



The sun sets over the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Eliot Headley

**Caribou Trails (continued from page 3)**

courtesy of countless generations of caribou traveling to and from the coastal plain. This trail set steep and fearless by the steps of the caribou was the route I used to gain a lofty perspective of this northernmost part of the Arctic Refuge. The ice of the Beaufort Sea gleamed in the distance to the north, and a



Eliot Headley

panorama of the Brooks Range rippled to the south. Thanks to the trail-making prowess of the caribou, I witnessed once-in-a-lifetime sights from atop an unnamed peak of the Sadelrochit.

Mountains to scale or hungry wolves crouching in the nearby tussocks may soon no longer be the greatest obstacles for these caribou to gain safe ground to rear their calves. Possible oil and gas exploration and development lay on the horizon. A small army of industrial vehicles and equipment with a mandate to conduct seismic exploration could be crisscrossing every square inch of the Refuge's biological heart by this winter. The development that follows could alter caribou migrations and lower birth rates. Caribou and other Arctic creatures such as the wolf, the polar bear and the musk ox are at risk of losing their sovereign space in which to thrive. Yet, in this time of turbulence for the

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the caribou trek on, one two-toed step at a time.

Yosemite, Sequoia, Redwood – names synonymous with breathtaking public lands here in the Golden State, places where allowing full-scale development would be unthinkable. Now, back in California, I think often of my experience in the Arctic Refuge and the animals that reside there with lingering wonder, clarifying in my mind that such a place of refuge also must stay as wild as it is. That the midnight sun above the mountains and tundra of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should never shine upon a single oil rig or length of pipeline.

*Eliot Headley educates on ocean plastic pollution awareness with Clean Oceans International in Santa Cruz, CA. He visited the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge this summer. \**

## As the Weather Cools, the League's Campaigns are Heating Up

By Corey Himrod, Senior Communications Manager

### A Flurry of Arctic Refuge Administrative Actions are Coming

The Bureau of Land Management is moving forward with plans for seismic exploration as well as a draft Environmental Impact Statement for Arctic Refuge oil and gas leasing. Dr. Steven Amstrup, an expert on polar bears with Polar Bears International, recently released a report analyzing the impacts that the proposed 3D seismic exploration would have on polar bears, and concluded that oil exploration would put the already threatened Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population at an even greater risk.

Seismic blasts can frighten mother polar bears into leaving their dens and abandoning their cubs, and there is a very real chance that seismic vehicles could



Check out a video illustrating seismic exploration from Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society at [bit.ly/seismic\\_exploration\\_video](http://bit.ly/seismic_exploration_video). Above is a screenshot from the video.

roll right over polar bear dens, killing the mother and cub inside. The League is pushing to put both of these administrative processes on ice, even as we work to restore legislative protections for the Arctic Refuge on Capitol Hill. \*



## Hundreds of Thousands Speak Out in Defense of Tongass Roadless Rule Protections

The U.S. Forest Service is moving forward with a rulemaking process to

consider an Alaska-specific Roadless Rule that could exempt the Tongass from federal Roadless Rule protections. Doing so would clear the way for road building and damaging clear-cut logging of precious old-growth forest, while threatening Southeast Alaska's

billion-dollar tourism and fishing industries.

From Alaska to Washington, D.C., hundreds of thousands of people across the country submitted public comments to the Forest Service in opposition to undermining Roadless Rule protections for Alaska's national forests. At public meetings, almost all that attended spoke against an exemption. \*



Protesters gather outside a public hearing on Tongass Roadless in Washington, D.C. Alaska Wilderness League



(Above) National Forest System Acting Deputy Chief Chris French speaks at a public informational meeting in Juneau, Alaska. U.S. Forest Service

(Left) National Forest System Acting Deputy Chief Chris French speaks at a public informational meeting in Washington, D.C. The Wilderness Society

## Trump Administration Looking to Increase Offshore Drilling

The Trump administration is working on redoing the current five-year offshore oil and gas leasing plan, and a draft Environmental Impact Statement for 2019-2024 – which will likely include the Arctic Ocean – is moving forward. To date, the Trump Interior Department has created much controversy

by proposing opening areas in the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans to development as well as increasing the available waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

The League will continue to push back on this reckless plan. In the courtroom, we are working with our lawyers to ensure that current areas in the Arctic Ocean that have been withdrawn from development stay that way. And on Capitol Hill, our team is supporting legislative

efforts that would keep the current five-year plan – as finalized by the Obama administration in 2016 – in place.

Congress and the Trump administration have together put some of our most special places in Alaska at risk. The League will continue to fight to keep those threats at bay. And we appreciate enormously the support of our members, who inspire us to keep pushing forward! \*

# Bringing the Arctic Refuge to the American Southwest

By Lois Norrgard, National Field Organizer

I recently spent a week traveling in Arizona, reaching out about the looming plight to our Arctic Refuge coastal plain from seismic exploration and oil leasing with partners and congressional member offices across this beautiful state. What I found is a place of amazing partners, people and organizations, passionate about the Arctic Refuge. This place that would seem so far away and having a very different ecosystem – is actually intertwined and connected on many levels.

First of course are the birds – many of the species that make Arizona and especially Tucson such a hotspot for birders across the country are directly connected through migration with the Arctic. It was made very clear to me, if you want to have thriving bird populations here, you need to make sure their nesting habitat on the Arctic tundra is protected.

The connection does not stop there though. Another Arizona legacy that was brought to my attention is Congressman Mo Udall, a leader in the conservation and environmental protection movements. One of Arizona Congressman Udall's "proudest achievements" was passage of an Alaska lands bill (ANILCA),

permanently preserving 104.3 million acres of extraordinarily scenic wilderness in Alaska, including our special Arctic National Wildlife Refuge!

It was an inspiring trip. I met my first Saguaro Cactus, but more importantly was able to share the plight of the Arctic Refuge with the students of the UA Fish and Wildlife Society, and met with many of our wonderful supporters and partners in addition to the five congressional district offices. I would like to thank our many passionate supporters as well as the members of Tucson Audubon Society, Audubon Arizona, Arizona Sierra Club and the Sierra Rincon Group, The Wilderness Society, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, the Arizona Wildlife Federation, and Center for Biological Diversity for attending congressional district meetings, helping with all of the logistics and travel tips, sharing coffees, lunches and dinners.

Our amazing Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has many active passionate supporters in Arizona and still to this day amazing champions in the Arizona congressional delegation. \*

(Below) A surprise meeting with Representative Ruben Gallego (AZ-07) in his Arizona district office!

Alaska Wilderness League







(Above) With volunteers outside the Arizona office of Representative Tom O'Halleran (AZ-01).



(Left) With volunteers inside the Arizona office of Representative Martha McSally (AZ-02).  
Alaska Wilderness League



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### Planned Giving

A little planning now can help you achieve your charitable giving goals. Introduce yourself and learn how easy it is to plan a legacy gift.



### Alaska Wild Society

A community dedicated to the preservation of Alaska's wild places. Learn what members are doing to go above and beyond for Alaska.



### Matching Gifts

Did you know you could double or even triple your support for protecting wild places in Alaska simply by asking if your employer sponsors a matching gift program?

Looking for more information on ways to give? Go online [AlaskaWild.org/Ways-To-Give](http://AlaskaWild.org/Ways-To-Give).



# Supporters Across the Country Turn Out to Support Alaska's Wild Lands

By Paul Christianson, Development Coordinator

**F**all is always an eventful time for the League, and this year is no different, with events in Seattle and St. Louis just weeks apart.

On October 18, more than 100 activists and supporters of America's Arctic packed into the Burke Museum on the University of Washington campus for Alaska Wilderness League's 14th annual Voice of the Wild Award presentation. The League holds this event each year to honor and thank the individuals

and organizations that make significant contributions to the preservation of America's wild places. The League was proud to honor Bernadette Demientieff and the Gwich'in Steering Committee with this year's Voice of the Wild Award. As executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, Bernadette is the voice that represents the importance of both the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Gwich'in people to the world.

Bernadette works tirelessly to

promote the cause of the Gwich'in Nation and has been invaluable in opposing the administration's efforts to advance oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Sacred Place Where Life Begins. The event featured music from "Alaska Suite: A Story of Beauty, Loss and Hope", from Seattle pianist and composer Nelda Swiggett, as well as special remarks by Lorraine Netro, a board member of both the Gwich'in Steering Committee and Alaska Wilderness League. A big thank you to our event co-hosts, League board members Ellen Ferguson and Tom and Sonya Champion, as well as our host committee: Helen Cherullo, Ken Fabert, Ali Fujino, Darren Gray, Amy Gulick, Thea Levkovitz and Taldi Walter.

In early November, the League brought activists and community members together for two events featuring author and League board member Debbie S. Miller in St. Louis. The first, on Monday, November 5, was an intimate discussion and presentation at the historic Hawken House on Debbie's new book, "A Wild Promise: Prince William Sound." Miller collaborated on her new book with photographer Hugh Rose, which displays the wild expanse of the more than two million acres of land known as the Nellie Juan-College Fjord Wilderness Study Area as the two traveled throughout the wilderness. A huge thank you to League board members Toni Armstrong and Richard Spener for co-hosting this event, along with Steve Mahfood



(L-R) League board member and Vuntut Gwich'in Lorraine Netro, League board member and founder of retail chain Zumiez Tom Champion, Bernadette Demientieff and League executive director Adam Kolton at the 2018 Voice of the Wild Award event in Seattle. Alaska Wilderness League





Author and League board member Debbie S. Miller stands atop the Chugach Mountains in southcentral Alaska.

Hugh Rose

and Elizabeth Peterson, Steve and Chris Janney, Steve and Barbara Archer, Bob and Judy Jung, Richard and Vicki Lane, and Joan and Sherman Silber.

Two days later on November 7, Miller – as a part of the St. Louis Academy of Science’s Science Seminar Series – was the featured speaker at the Saint Louis Zoo Anheuser-Busch Theater, where she gave a highly attended lecture on the proposed Wilderness area in the Chugach National Forest that surrounds Prince William Sound. Students from local middle and high schools attended along with the general public to learn more about these special places. \*



Past winner and founder of Friends of Cooper Island George Divoky, with Ali Fujino of HomeSight, and David Thoreson, a professional photographer, Explorers Club Fellow and the first American sailor in history to sail the infamous Northwest Passage in both directions. They were on hand to honor Bernadette Demientieff at the Voice of the Wild Award in Seattle.

Alaska Wilderness League



# The Impact of Your Support

By Chris Konish, Development Manager

For the first time, the Alaska Wilderness League annual report has its own webpage, and is now a “Donor Impact Report” to showcase how your generosity has positively impacted a wild Alaska. I encourage you to check out the 2017 report at [AnnualReport.AlaskaWild.org](http://AnnualReport.AlaskaWild.org), which features highlights from each of our program areas.

Revisit some of the League’s 2017 accomplishments, and see how your donations made a difference. From securing bipartisan opposition to Arctic Refuge drilling, to blocking

efforts that would exempt the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule or otherwise weaken the Tongass Land Management Plan, the League’s 2017 efforts lay the groundwork for our work in 2018 and beyond, as we fight to restore and strengthen protections for wild areas throughout Alaska.

Alaska Wilderness League was founded more than a quarter century ago to serve as the only national conservation organization devoted exclusively to the protection of America’s last great wild public lands and

waters. Thanks to the passion and generosity of donors, members and supporters like you, we are poised to continue this work and optimistic that Alaska’s wildest places are protected for generations to come.

We hope to update and improve upon this report with each new edition, so if you have any thoughts or feedback, please email me at [Chris@AlaskaWild.org](mailto:Chris@AlaskaWild.org). You can also contact me to request a hard copy of the report, or if you have already done so, your copy is in the mail! \*




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## 2017 Donation Impact Report

Last year, 2017, was one of the most challenging in our 25-year history with the Trump administration intent on undoing decades of Alaska conservation progress. It was also a year of transition for Alaska Wilderness League, as I took the reigns as executive director in mid-October, succeeding Cindy Shogan who led the organization so capably for the bulk of its history. The enormous threats notwithstanding, it was incredibly gratifying to return to the Alaska arena, fighting alongside such a talented staff and with so many of you who care deeply about the fate of these iconic lands and waters.

Even with passage of tax legislation last December – a bill that included a mandate for oil leasing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – I remain optimistic about our ability to protect this last great wilderness. Because of the passion and generosity of donors, members and supporters like you, we are already setting the stage to block drilling and restore protections for the Arctic Refuge. Your donations, your engagement and your support have strengthened our resolve and commitment. We will not rest, we will not yield and we will not forsake for a moment our responsibility to defend the Arctic Refuge and other irreplaceable, iconic and deeply cherished Alaska land and

View our new 2017 Annual Report online at [AnnualReport.AlaskaWild.org](http://AnnualReport.AlaskaWild.org)!

### Hope to see YOU soon on:



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[YouTube.com/  
KeepAlaskaWild](https://www.youtube.com/KeepAlaskaWild)



# Deepening Your Engagement

By Chris Konish, Development Manager

Your donations to Alaska Wilderness League support critical legal, legislative and public education efforts to protect areas like the Arctic Refuge and Tongass National Forest. We strive to limit nitty-gritty expenses like overhead and fundraising costs

in order to maximize the effects of your generosity, while still maintaining a healthy organization with happy staff. You can support the League in a few ways to help ensure that these cherished and iconic national treasures are protected for future generations.\*

Type of Gift	How to Make It
Check, cash, money order or credit card	Mail your donation to the League using the enclosed envelope. Call us at 202-544-5205 to provide your credit card over the phone. Donate online at <a href="http://AlaskaWild.org/donate">AlaskaWild.org/donate</a> .
Wild Stars Monthly Giving	Call or visit us at the information above and select the “Monthly” giving option to help defend a wild Alaska every month.
Wild Giving Society	Visit <a href="http://AlaskaWild.org/GivingSociety">AlaskaWild.org/GivingSociety</a> to learn more and provide your leadership support with a gift of \$500 or more.
Stock and IRA Rollovers	Provide our tax ID (52-1814742) to your financial advisor or broker, and if giving a gift of stock, contact <a href="mailto:Mladen@AlaskaWild.org">Mladen@AlaskaWild.org</a> for instructions or more information.
Planned Giving	Consult with your financial advisor or contact <a href="mailto:Chris@AlaskaWild.org">Chris@AlaskaWild.org</a> for more information on how to include the League in your estate plans.

# Midterm Election Results and Alaska Wilderness

By Adam Kolton, Executive Director

The midterm elections marked a significant change in the national political landscape that affords new opportunities to defend Alaska’s wild places in 2019 and beyond. Here are four key outcomes:

**#1 Positive mandate for conservation.** 19 incoming House members declined to take any fossil fuel money, at least 32 members who supported the tax bill (which included the Arctic leasing scheme) lost and more than 40 new members have signaled their support for the Arctic Refuge. This includes eight who took a pledge promoted by our sister organization, Alaska Wilderness Action, to play a leadership role in the fight.

**#2 New leaders.** Champions for Alaska’s public lands will assume leadership positions in the House

including Representative Raul Grijalva (AZ-03) who takes the gavel on the House Natural Resources Committee and can now hold oversight hearings on threats to Alaska’s wild places.

**#3 GOP centrist ranks dwindle.** Between incumbents retiring and others who were defeated, only three House GOP refuge champions remain. But 15 fiscally conservative House members who opposed subsidized logging roads in the Tongass Forest will return including longtime champion Steve Chabot (OH-01).

**#4 Washout for offshore drilling.** The Trump Interior Department’s efforts to expand oil leasing offshore were unpopular in California, Florida and South Carolina, where it may have been decisive in Joe Cunningham’s (SC-01) surprise victory.\*

# Team Tongass in Southeast Alaska

By Corey Himrod, Senior Communications Manager

**O**ur roadless forests provide clean drinking water to millions of Americans, give wildlife free places to roam, and serve as the backdrop for our favorite outdoor activities. Right now, they are facing an immediate threat. And we need to take action to defend them.

That's why Alaska Wilderness League is proud to partner with organizations from Southeast Alaska and across the country on [SaveOurRoadlessForests.com](http://SaveOurRoadlessForests.com), coming together to keep roadless areas in the Tongass protected. We will also be working hard to oppose new old-growth timber sales,



For more information, go to [SaveOurRoadlessForests.com](http://SaveOurRoadlessForests.com).

including a U.S. Forest Service proposal to harvest as much as 225 million board feet of old-growth

timber on Prince of Wales Island. Stay tuned to find out how you can help protect the Tongass! \*



Musk ox on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as winter sets in.

Florian Schulz / [FlorianSchulz.org](http://FlorianSchulz.org)