



AMERICA'S ARCTIC OCEAN





home to polar bears, walrus, seals and whales

A Vulnerable Region

America's Arctic Ocean, which includes the Beaufort and Chukchi seas, is a vulnerable region, and home to polar bears, walrus, seals, bowhead whales and many species of birds. The Chukchi serves as a migration corridor and important area for the endangered bowhead whale and thousands of spotted seals, as well as a key location where walrus come ashore to rest or "haul out." The Beaufort Sea also serves as a migration corridor for whales and is vital habitat for birds and polar bears. These seas play a key role in regulating the world's climate and are the source of life for coastal communities.

The Inupiat people, who have lived in the region for thousands of years, depend on healthy Arctic ecosystems for their survival and cultural traditions.

What's At Stake

This unique area is in peril. For years the oil and gas industry has been pushing to open the Arctic Ocean to development despite the Arctic's harsh and remote conditions. Sub-zero temperatures, long periods of darkness, shifting ice floes and hurricane-force winds make industrial activities particularly risky. The Arctic Ocean is already suffering some of the effects of climate change.

According to the National Climate Assessment, "Alaska has warmed twice as fast as the rest of the nation, bringing widespread impacts. Sea ice is rapidly receding."

And as sea ice coverage disappears, historically inaccessible parts of the Arctic are now even more vulnerable to oil and gas development and other industrial activities. Besides continued interest in oil and gas development, the loss of sea ice leads to increased shipping traffic and the potential for industrial fishing.



For most of history, the U.S. Arctic Ocean was protected from large-scale industrial activities by sea ice, isolation, and the ability to develop resources in other, less risky regions. That reality is changing rapidly as receding sea ice and the growing world demand for resources have led to an explosion of corporate interest in the Arctic Ocean. The United States is at a crossroads with regard to energy, the environment, and human activities in the Arctic Ocean.



Alaska Wilderness League is working hard to ensure that these important marine areas are protected into the future from harmful development activities. Any plan for the future of America's Arctic Ocean must include protections for the region's dynamic web of life.

To learn more about Alaska Wilderness League's Arctic Ocean campaign call 202-544-5205 or email info@alaskawild.org.



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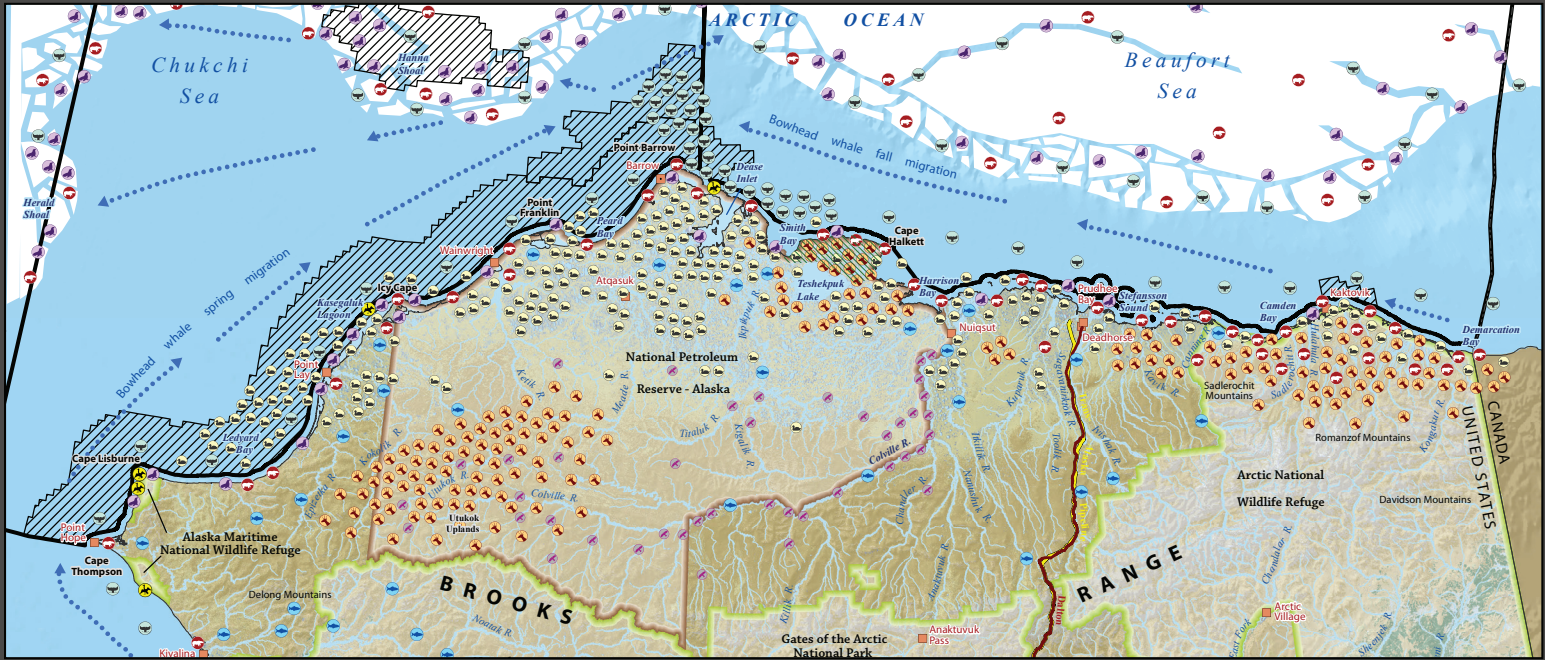
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Alaska's Arctic

Selected Wildlife Values



MAP FEATURES	
	Whale feeding and migration areas
	Caribou concentrated calving area
	Waterbird nesting, molting, and/or staging area (goose molting area indicated by green hatching)
	Polar bear denning and feeding areas
	Raptor nesting area
	Seabird colony
	Salmon stream
	Marine mammal haulout area (walrus and spotted seal)
	Mid-summer sea ice
	Presidential withdrawal areas

0 25 50 100 150 200 Miles 0 25 50 100 150 200 Kilometers

America's Arctic Ocean, the Beaufort and Chukchi seas, provides habitat for countless species of wildlife, is central to life in coastal communities, and plays an important role in regulating the world's climate. Arctic Ocean ecosystems are largely intact and are habitat for iconic wildlife species, including whales, polar bears, walrus, seals and hundreds of species of birds. The Inupiat people who live in the region utilize healthy Arctic ecosystems for subsistence, which provides sustenance and cultural continuity. The Arctic Ocean is a critical part of the global climate system that acts much like an air conditioner for the rest of the planet, helping to regulate climate and weather.

November 2015

About important marine areas in America's Arctic Ocean

In January 2015, President Obama withdrew specific areas of America's Arctic Ocean, such as the 1.6-million-acre Hanna Shoal, from oil and gas leasing in order to protect subsistence values as well as marine mammals, other wildlife, wildlife habitat, and to "ensure that the unique resources of these areas remain available for future generations."

Hanna Shoal

Hanna Shoal plays an essential role in the Arctic Ocean that is only growing more important with climate change. The shoals are shallow enough to divert warmer waters while also maintaining persistent ice flows while the rest of the Arctic Ocean melts around them in the summer. As such, they are a stronghold for ice-dependent wildlife like the Pacific walrus, polar bear, gray whale, bearded seal, and ringed seal. This area is also part of a migration corridor for ivory gulls, king eiders, and beluga whales.

Barrow Canyon Complex

Straddling the boundary between the Beaufort and Chukchi seas, Barrow Canyon is a key Arctic Ocean area for marine mammals and birds, especially during spring and fall migrations. Significant concentrations of bowhead and beluga whales, yellow-billed loons, brant, king eider, and spectacled eider all use Barrow Canyon extensively. It is also a critical sea ice and denning habitat for polar bears and a major foraging area for walrus.



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