



Our Natural Wonder:
AMERICA'S ARCTIC

America's portion of the Arctic – northern Alaska above the Arctic Circle – is one of the world's most dynamic, intact ecosystems. America's Arctic is home to polar bears, walrus, seals, whales and much more. Each year millions of birds from each state in our nation, and from around the world, migrate to America's Arctic. Alaska Natives have thrived there for thousands of years, living off the land and seas – it is one of the few places left where people still maintain a subsistence lifestyle.

America's Arctic is made up of soaring mountains, verdant valleys, lush wetlands and ice-covered seas. Within this vast array of life are three of our nation's greatest wild treasures:

- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and
- National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska.

Teeming with life, America's Arctic is a true wonder of nature.

Yet, industrialization has put all this at risk. Global warming has hit the Arctic region harder than anywhere else in the world. The sea ice that is a vital part of the ecosystem's survival is melting at an alarming rate – surpassing scientists' predictions. Tundra is eroding into the sea. Compound these existing stresses with the impacts of oil and gas development, and the life that thrives in this region will be in dire straits.

As we look to the future, we have a choice. We can protect America's Arctic for the next generation, or we can tell stories about a mystical place where life once thrived in a delicate balance, before we let it melt away.



"I try to explain Alaska to my friends and family. All I can say is this: Alaska has taught me how to think, how to be in this world. It is my constant context and my source of grace and humility."

Erica L., Washington

teeming
with Life



Wilderness Icon:

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an irreplaceable, unspoiled wilderness. The Refuge's Coastal Plain is the birthing and nursing grounds for the 120,000 animal Porcupine Caribou Herd – critical to the survival of the native Gwich'in traditional way of life. The Coastal Plain also hosts 180 species of birds as well as polar bears, brown bears, wolves, musk oxen, moose, Arctic foxes and more.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

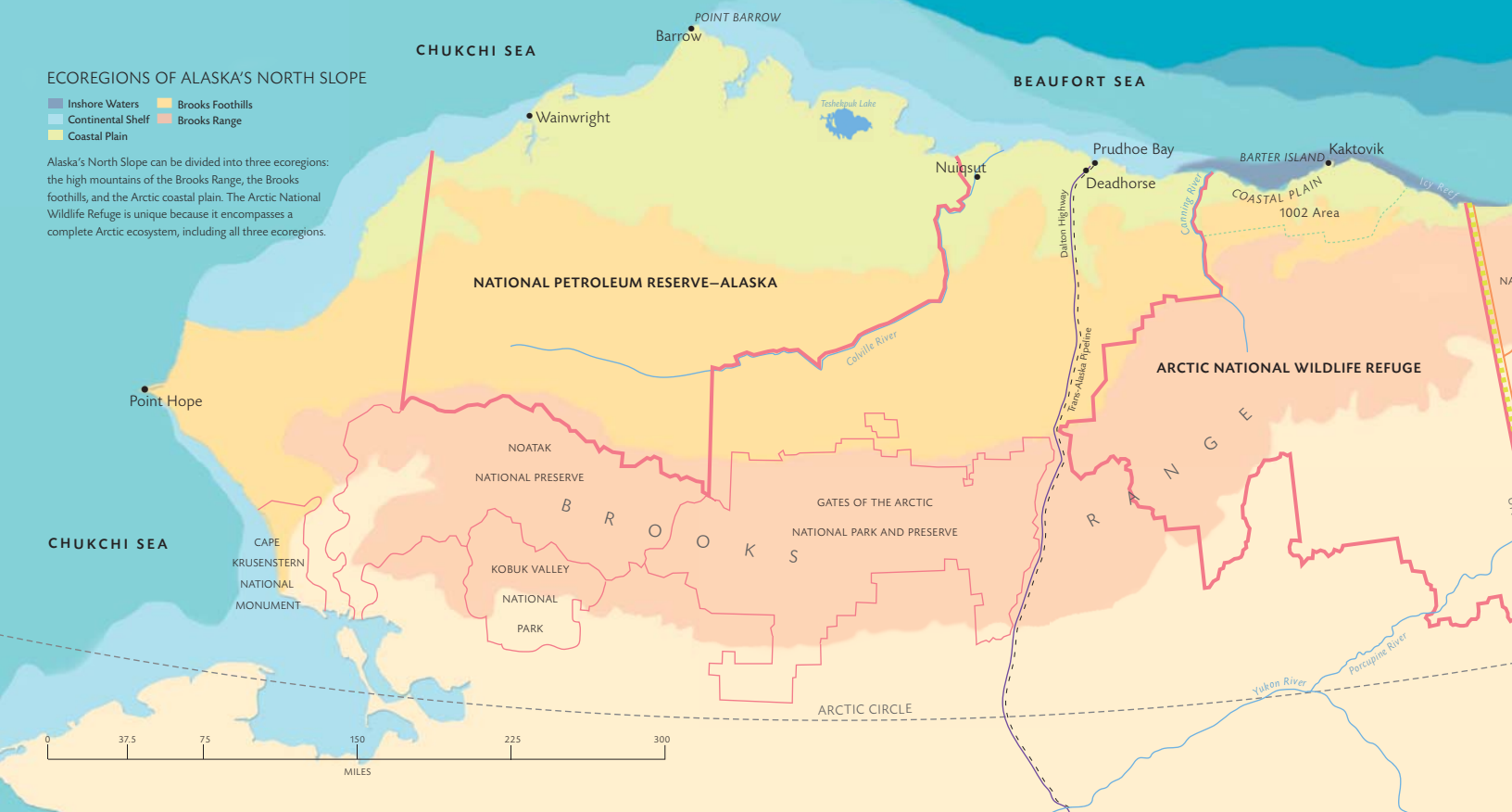
The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge (or the 1002 area) is perhaps the most well known target of the oil industry. Yet despite the relentless push to drill in the Refuge, this iconic wilderness remains untouched. In order to ensure that the Arctic Refuge remains this way for future generations, it must be given the strongest protection possible.



ECOREGIONS OF ALASKA'S NORTH SLOPE

- Inshore Waters
- Continental Shelf
- Coastal Plain
- Brooks Foothills
- Brooks Range

Alaska's North Slope can be divided into three ecoregions: the high mountains of the Brooks Range, the Brooks foothills, and the Arctic coastal plain. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is unique because it encompasses a complete Arctic ecosystem, including all three ecoregions.



America's Unknown Treasure:

National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska

At 23 million acres, the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska (Reserve) is the largest piece of publicly owned land in the nation. From lush wetlands and wild rivers to sparkling coastlines and a vast horizon of rich tundra, the Reserve is Alaska's best-kept secret. Millions of migratory birds, caribou and other wildlife, as well as many Alaska Native communities, call this place home.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

While oil and gas activities have a place in the Reserve, a balanced approach is essential. The federal government must assess and permanently protect areas within the Reserve, such as the Teshekpuk Lake area, that contain key natural values and provide critical traditional food sources for Alaska Native communities.





America's Polar Bear Seas: Beaufort and Chukchi Seas

The Beaufort and Chukchi Seas make up America's Arctic Ocean. Covered largely by sea ice, this ocean has long been one of the world's most unique marine ecosystems. America's only polar bears can be found there, along with several species of whales, walrus, seals, sea birds and more.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Global warming is causing sea ice in the Arctic Ocean to melt at an alarming rate, imperiling marine life and the communities that depend on them. At the same time, environmentally risky oil and gas development is encroaching. Before this development is allowed to move one step further, a comprehensive conservation and energy plan that ensures protection of this ecosystem must be put in place.



"I am a retired FAA Radar technician. I first came to Alaska in 1957. I liked it the way it was when I got here, and I'd like to keep it as close to that — wild, natural, and unspoiled — as I can."

Gerald B., Alaska

America's Arctic is one of our nation's great natural wonders. Alaska Wilderness League is working hard to ensure that oil and gas development and other industrial activity does not destroy this fragile and abundant environment already stressed by climate change.

The Arctic region is the "least studied and most poorly understood area on Earth," according to the U.S. Arctic Research Commission. Yet, throughout the eight years of the Bush administration, oil and gas development in America's Arctic forged ahead at a breakneck pace. In the Arctic Ocean alone, more than four million acres were leased to oil and gas interests, compared to just 186,000 acres in the previous eight years. At the same time, the oil industry has acknowledged that there is constant risk of a major oil spill, and a lack of technology to clean up such a spill in the Arctic's icy conditions.

It is time to halt any new oil and gas development activities in America's Arctic until we develop a comprehensive conservation and energy plan that ensures that the region's dynamic web of life — and the wildlife and humans that depend on it — will be protected. As part of this plan, special places such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Teshekpuk Lake must be declared off limits to any and all oil and gas development and given the strongest protection possible.

America's Arctic is so much more than the world's gas tank. If we hope to pass this unique place on to future generations, the oil and gas industry must be held to a balanced approach that prioritizes protection of the region's fragile ecosystem.

Visit our website at www.alaskawild.org to learn more and find out how you can help protect America's Arctic.

For more information, call the Alaska Wilderness League at 202-544-5205 or email info@alaskawild.org



"I am a lawyer living in New Jersey. I have never visited Alaska and likely will never do so. But there is a certain psychic pleasure in knowing that somewhere there is a pristine wilderness untouched by commercial exploitation."

Gene H., New Jersey

*Your Land.
Your Voice*



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