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Outdoor Adventurers and Athletes in D.C. to Protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The Trump administration's rush to lease the Arctic Refuge coastal plain for oil and gas development threatens the land and wildlife, and the people and communities that depend on them.

Washington, D.C. — This week, Alaska Wilderness League has been honored to join [Protect our Winters](#) and the [American Packrafting Association](#) to advocate on behalf of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, bringing outdoor adventurers, athletes and others to Washington, D.C., to educate members of Congress on the importance of protecting our public lands and waters and the need to restore protections to the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.

The American Packrafting Association created two custom packrafts to send on trips across the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in 2018, collecting signatures and stories of support along the way. These functional activist art pieces carry the wishes of those who hope to protect the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain from oil and gas development. On Tuesday, the APA, Protect Our Winters and Alaska Wilderness League in solidarity floated the Potomac before delivering the boats — and our message — to Congress.

The recreational, cultural and intrinsic value of the Arctic Refuge and its coastal plain deserves no less than full wilderness protection to ensure wild exploration that benefits current and future generations. It is imperative for our quality of life and for our shared American heritage to protect places with high recreation value, from our backyards to the backcountry. Those lucky enough to visit the Arctic Refuge remember it as the trip of a lifetime. Few places in the world offer the rare opportunity to encounter a vast array of wildlife while hiking, fishing or paddling through a pristine, wild landscape.

The Arctic is ground zero for climate change, with temperatures in the Arctic are rising at twice the rate of the rest of the planet. Villages are eroding into the sea, permafrost melt is making infrastructure insecure and food sources are disappearing. The Arctic Refuge permafrost is an effective storage container for carbon, at risk of release as temperatures continue to warm and permafrost continues to melt. Arctic drilling will only compound the devastating impacts already being felt from climate change, worsening climate pollution and harming communities already bearing the brunt of the changing climate as they are forced to adapt.

For photos and video of the Packrafting Event, [CLICK HERE](#).

For more photos from the Potomac, Capitol Hill, and the packrafts in the Arctic Refuge, [CLICK HERE](#).

QUOTES FROM OUTDOOR ADVENTURERS AND ATHLETES:

“I have spent a lifetime exploring Alaska’s wilderness, national parks and wildlife refuges,” **said [Roman Dial](#), world-renown Alaskan mountaineer, paddler and backcountry racer.** “Now, I feel it is time, with the Arctic Refuge under threat, for me to come to Washington, D.C., and advocate for its protection.”

“The Arctic Refuge is a unique landscape unlike any other I have experienced,” **said [Sarah Tingey](#), COO of [Alpacka Raft](#).** “It speaks to me on a visceral level and provides unique opportunity to experience lands that have not been impacted by large scale development. This is an opportunity worth protecting.”

“I came to DC to help convey how valuable the Arctic Refuge is as a continuous track of wilderness,” **said [Luc Mehl](#), Alaskan adventurer with more than 10,000 miles traveled on foot, ski, boat or ice.** “I was frustrated when the Refuge was opened for development by sneaking a rider into the 2017 tax bill. H.R. 1146 offers an opportunity to vote on the Arctic Refuge as its own issue.”

“I’ve been going to the Arctic Refuge since 1981 and have visited every year since. I’ve traveled all over the world and there is no other place like this. It belongs to all Americans and is part of our greatest legacy,” **said [Brad Micklejohn](#), Senior Representative (Alaska) for [The Conservation Fund](#).**

“My experiences in the Arctic Refuge have shown me that even amongst all the other places I have traveled in the Arctic, there is nowhere that compares to the thriving biocultural diversity found here,” **said educator, writer, ski guide and athlete [Brennan Lagasse](#).** “Your voice matters. If you care about having access to enjoy the outdoors in your home community, you can care about protecting the Arctic Refuge. You can help by supporting efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge, efforts that on a macro scale can be funneled on more local scales to protecting the public lands and outdoors in your local own local community.”

“I want to protect the Arctic Refuge because the Gwich'in people have opened their doors and hearts to me and I owe it to them to stand up in their defense to protect the area they depend on and regard as sacred. To this day the Gwich'in rely on the Porcupine caribou herd, and if the Arctic Refuge is drilled for oil, not only will our climate be further in jeopardy, but so will the future of the Gwich'in,” **said filmmaker, writer and professional snowboarder [Zeppelin Zeerip](#).** “The Arctic Refuge is a symbol of corporate interests taking precedence over the environment nationwide. If the Trump administration allows oil development in a wildlife refuge, what's next?”

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