

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is America's largest wildlife refuge, comprising 19.6 million acres of one of the wildest corners left in North America. Its biological heart, the 1.6 million acre coastal plain, is home to countless species of birds and numerous land mammals like caribou, musk oxen, and polar bears. It is sacred land for the Gwich'in people, who today rely on caribou for their sustenance, as they have for thousands of years. For adventurers, a visit to the Arctic Refuge is the wilderness experience of a lifetime.



Today, for the first time in decades, the Coastal Plain faces potential oil and gas leasing, which would forever change this landscape. In 2017, Alaskan Senator Lisa Murkowski snuck two pages of drilling text into the final Tax Act, undermining decades of thoughtful management and protections. Today, the Trump Administration is pushing forward in an unprecedented mad dash to hold oil and gas lease sales by fall, before the true impacts of Arctic Refuge drilling can be understood.

What's At Stake:

-The Porcupine Caribou Herd. The Coastal Plain is critical calving and post calving grounds for the 200,000 caribou that migrate over 1,500 miles annually in the longest land mammal migration on earth.

-The Gwich'in Way of Life. The Gwich'in residents of 15 villages in the US and Canada rely on the Porcupine Caribou Herd for their subsistence way of life, and have fought to protect the area since Congress first attempted to open the area to drilling decades ago.

-Internationally Significant Wildlife & Bird Populations. The Arctic Refuge is home to every species of bear, along with wolves, musk ox, wolverines and caribou. 250 species of birds rely on the Refuge during summer months, migrating to every state in the U.S. and across six continents each winter.

-America's Iconic Wilderness. Few travel to this remote corner of Alaska, but those who do have stories and images that have captured the minds of Americans for generations. It's no wonder that 2/3rds of Americans still oppose drilling the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain, even though many will only experience it through stories, video, and images. From 2015 until today, over two million people have submitted formal comments to related agencies in favor of protecting the Arctic Refuge.

- Decades of Protection. The fight to protect this area began in the early twentieth century by a group of visionary conservationists led by Olaus and Margaret Murie. In 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower made their vision a reality by establishing the 8.9-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Range specifically for its "unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values." In 1980, President Jimmy Carter continued this legacy by expanding the area, designating much of the land as Wilderness.

This iconic American wilderness is on the brink to be irreversibly destroyed, all for short term profit. If the government is willing to sacrifice a place as wild as the Arctic Refuge, are there any special places in America that will forever remain off limits to destruction?