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NORTH STAR NEWS

*Your Land.
Your Voice.*

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- The background of the entire page is a photograph of a polar bear standing on a large, white ice floe in the Arctic. The bear is facing right, and its shadow is cast on the ice. In the background, a white bird is flying over the dark blue water. The ice floes are scattered across the water, and the sky is not visible.
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Keeping the Focus on Wild Alaska

Dr. Peter Winsor, Executive Director

As winter will soon be upon us, many Americans – myself included – find ourselves especially busy this season: social gatherings, midterm election hangover, holiday travel. Here at my home in Fairbanks, Alaska, we had an unusually late start to our long winter season, but we are now in full snow-covered mode, calling for wood chopping, snow plowing and other winter chores. Despite the weight of demands and obligations, the threats to wild Alaska grow.

2022 has been another year of climate-fueled body blows to Alaska's people and resources: caribou and polar bear declines, a Yukon River deprived of salmon, shutdown of crab fisheries and a frightening milieu of wildfires, flooding and damaging storms of coastal communities.

Nonetheless, Alaska Wilderness League remains optimistic and tireless in our work to protect wilderness areas and give wildlife room to roam. The United States recently released a new national Arctic strategy, the first update since 2013, setting the country's priorities for the coming decade. The strategy recognizes the key role that America's Arctic region must play in foreign and domestic policy, naming as one of four key pillars: climate change and environmental protection. As other issues vie for White House attention, keeping

this vision in focus will be critical, especially conserving and protecting Arctic biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats and wildlife. The new Arctic strategy is at [Whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/10/07/fact-sheet-the-united-states-national-strategy-for-the-arctic-region](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/10/07/fact-sheet-the-united-states-national-strategy-for-the-arctic-region).

This crucial policy is crashing into the reality of ConocoPhillips' proposed massive Willow oil development project on Alaska's North Slope, just eight miles north of the Native Village of Nuiqsut. Allowing this project to go forward as planned will lock in at least 30 years of Arctic pollution, serving as a catalyst for future oil and gas activities, spurring extensive industrialization even further west across Arctic Alaska. The western Arctic supports robust wild ecosystems that include caribou, geese, loons, salmon, polar bears and bowhead whales, and its lands, waters and animals support many communities in the region. Any disruption that jeopardizes the ecosystem's health puts all its inhabitants at risk. It's impossible to reconcile the realities of a forward-looking overall Arctic policy against a giant leap backward on Willow and climate.

In case you missed it, Alaska Wilderness League helped reporter Charlotte Howard to file a remarkable story for

The Economist, "The Alaskan wilderness reveals the past and the future," including quotes from yours truly and Rosemary Ahtuanguak, Mayor of Nuiqsut. To help inform the story, we helped Ms. Howard see firsthand what's at stake, and think you'll agree her beautiful essay was well worth the time invested. (You can get free access to the article by signing up at [Economist.com/essay/2022/09/08/the-alaskan-wilderness-reveals-the-past-and-the-future](https://www.economist.com/essay/2022/09/08/the-alaskan-wilderness-reveals-the-past-and-the-future)).

We are also happy to report victories to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In particular, three insurance companies recently adopted policies to not underwrite oil and gas projects there: Argo, Fidelis and Tokio Marine are now among 17 international insurers and 29 global financial institutions will not support oil and gas projects in the Arctic Refuge.

Alaskan temperatures are well below zero as you read this, but our internal fires and motivation are burning bright, thanks to your support! As always, we hope you enjoy this latest update on the work that you make possible.*



Dr. Peter Winsor
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 protect Alaska's wild lands and waters by inspiring broad support for federal policy action.

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Cover photo: A polar bear travels across the melting sea ice along the coast of the Beaufort Sea, Alaska. © Florian Schulz/www.FlorianSchulz.org

Winter Updates for Alaska's Arctic

Priya Uppuluri, Legislative Associate

As we head into winter, the final month of 2022 calls for a breakdown of midterm election results, anticipation of options to move legislation for protections in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the administration's decision on the Willow Master Development Plan in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

Here are some quick updates on where things stand:

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge:

Major campaign wins secured! As of August 2022, every oil company has walked away from their leases in the Arctic Refuge coastal plain. By late summer, 88 Energy and Knik Arm Services – the only oil companies to bid during the failed January 2021 lease sale – asked the Department of the Interior to cancel their leases and refund their money, which the Department did.

Even further, the six largest banks in the United States, five largest banks in Canada, and 18 other international banks have all issued policies against financing drilling in the Arctic Refuge. There are now 17 international insurers and 29 global financial institutions that have established policies preventing them from doing business with oil and gas companies in the Arctic Refuge.

On the legislative front, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) became law in August and unfortunately did not include language to repeal the drilling mandate from the 2017 Tax Act. Alaska Wilderness League and our Arctic Refuge champions in Congress, along with help from countless Alaska lands advocates across the county, will keep pushing for the repeal of the coastal plain oil and gas program with the best legislative tool applicable.

Western Arctic:

ConocoPhillips' Willow project in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska is not only a climate bomb, but it is the largest imminent oil



As part of a national elevation effort, Alaska Wilderness League launched a video campaign targeting the Biden administration to halt the Willow project. View the full video at [YouTube.com/watch?v=cCFsXvPeJcw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCFsXvPeJcw).

development in the United States. What's even more troubling is that Willow is just the first step in the oil industry's master plan to expand industrialization in the western Arctic.

In July, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and opened a 45-day public comment period. Alaska Wilderness League led the efforts to assure BLM heard clearly that the public does not support the Willow project. Over 250,000 public comments were submitted to BLM, all five virtual public meetings had the majority of testimonies call for a stop to the Willow project, and over 160 organizations and businesses signed a letter calling on BLM to reject Willow. Additionally, both the Senate and House led congressional sign-on letters urging the Biden administration to reject the Willow project.

We anticipate a decision on whether the project is approved or denied by the end of the calendar year, though in the meantime are continuing to apply pressure on the Biden administration to reject this destructive project.

As part of a national elevation effort, Alaska Wilderness League launched a video campaign targeting the Biden administration to halt the

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Bears Without Barriers: Room to Roam From the Tongass to the Arctic

Hilary Stamper, Director of Member Engagement

Alaska is home to both the largest population of brown bears in any North American state or province and the United States' only polar bears. The state has some of the only landscapes left in the world that can provide brown bears and polar bears with the space they need to survive; whether that's space from people or space to find food. Below, learn more about bears evading barriers in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, interior Alaska (which includes parts of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska) and the Arctic.

Tongass Bears and Barriers

The Tongass National Forest has the highest density of black and brown bears in the world. Because so many bears congregate together to gorge themselves on the rich supply of salmon supported by old-growth trees in the region, bears here have various vocalization and body language to avoid fights and communicate dominance. Tongass bears hibernate for many months over the winter, and in the summer, they can gain as much as 40 pounds per week. With so much salmon available, they only eat the choicest parts and leave the rest for eagles and other creatures of the forest.

When roads and infrastructure enter traditional bear habitat, however, bear populations shrink. In the Tongass, clearcut logging and new roads harm old-growth forests and streams that safeguard salmon runs. This decreases salmon populations and ultimately pushes bears out of their preferred habitat to find other food sources. Further, logging



Brown bears traverse the water's edge in Southeast Alaska

USDA Forest Service Alaska

and clearcuts can harm deer populations over time, which increases animosity towards predators like wolves and bears where communities see them as competition for this resource. Roads also amplify this problem for bears as they provide more human access to bear habitat, which can lead to greater hunting of bears. Also, new roads often lead to more development, which then further increase human-bear interactions and degradation of bear habitat at the expense of bear survival.

To combat this potential harm, the League is working hard to push the Biden administration to finish codifying the Roadless Rule for the Tongass, which will help protect old-growth trees and all the wildlife that thrives around them.

Brown Bears of Interior Alaska

Unlike Tongass bears with their abundance of salmon, the smaller brown bears of interior Alaska do not tolerate other bears nearby. With food scarcer on the tundra and in boreal forests, you're likely to find only one bear for every 15 square miles of land. Short-lived salmon feasts provide critical sustenance, but they must roam far to find vegetation, berries, carrion and live prey. Because of this, anything that deters wildlife from migrating through bear habitat, such as development or roads that enable development, also hurts bear survival. As highlighted earlier in this newsletter, Alaska Wilderness League is fighting the proposed Ambler mining road and



A grizzly bear in the western Arctic roams the landscape along the Nigu River in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

Dave Shreffler



Polar bear sow with spring cub, newly emerged from their den in late wintertime, get acclimated to the outdoors before they head out onto the sea, along the Arctic coast of Alaska.

© Steven J. Kazlowski/

ConocoPhillips' Willow project, both of which are possible threats to interior Alaska bear populations, as the projects would introduce industrial roads that have the potential to redirect caribou migration routes and harm important fishing areas.

Polar Bears in the Arctic: Why Do They Need So Much Space?

Alaska is home to America's only polar bears, where the size of a polar bear's range depends on the availability of food and the extent of the sea ice. Historically, most polar bears from the Southern Beaufort Sea population along the Arctic Ocean have denned on the sea ice. But over the last three decades, as this ice has become thinner and prone to fragmentation, they have increasingly begun building dens on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and returning to the sea to hunt once cubs are strong enough.

Polar bears burn 13 times more calories while walking versus when they are stationary, so anything that forces a polar bear to move makes it harder for a

polar bear to survive. Polar bears frequently hunt by sitting still near seal breathing holes rather than by chasing as one means of conserving energy. A detour to avoid roads or development activities can also burn precious extra calories bears need.

Furthermore, because their food supply is shrinking as sea ice brings seal pups farther from land, polar bears require more space to spread out from one another to feed themselves. While polar bears can scavenge food in Arctic communities and industrial development sites, increased human-bear interactions can prove lethal to everyone, including the bears.

Overall, the combination of climate change and industrial development is devastating for polar bears and their habitat and might lead to extinction of some populations by 2050.

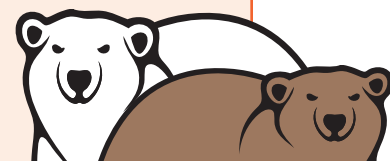
At Alaska Wilderness League, our team is particularly grateful to you for your efforts to help secure wilderness areas and critical habitat in Alaska that will give all wildlife, including our beloved bears, room to roam.*

Now Is Your Chance To Double Your Impact on Bear Habitat

As Alaska Wilderness League works to keep Alaska wild, your support can break down barriers in Alaska's landscapes to ensure bears have ample room to roam. Bears need Roadless Rule protections to protect salmon streams and prevent habitat destruction in the Tongass. They need us to

stop industrial transportation corridors like the Ambler Road and needless oil development like ConocoPhillips' Willow project in Interior Alaska. And, polar bears need peaceful space on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to den with their pups and find food when the sea

ice finally reappears. Alaska Wilderness League will take exploitive industries to the mat while bears do what bears do best, roam wild and free. Give online at AlaskaWild.org/Dec31 or postmark your donation by December 31 and it will be DOUBLED!



(Continued from page 3)

Willow project. View the full video at youtu.be/cCFsXvPeJcw.

Elsewhere in Alaska

While these major fights in Alaska's Arctic have drawn major recent attention from the League and many others concerned about Alaska public lands and waters, this has not meant that Alaska Wilderness League has backed away from efforts to protect other large swaths of wild Alaska landscapes. Indeed, the League has remained active on multiple fronts.

In the Tongass National Forest, we are eager to secure the full reinstatement of Roadless Rule protections

for the region, which we anticipate will occur by the time this newsletter reaches your mailbox. And in interior Alaska, the League and partners are combating a proposed 211-mile gravel highway through the Brooks Range – the Ambler Road – to ensure this road that would cause harm and pollution to Arctic rivers and lives that depend on them is not allowed to move forward. And throughout Alaska, the League is firmly committed to elevating the role that the preservation of Alaska public lands and water will play in achieving our nation's – and our world's – climate goals.

We look forward to updating you as this work progresses and celebrating our collective victories together in the months and years ahead. *

A New Voice of the Wild Award

Chris Konish, Director of Development

On November 16, Alaska Wilderness League proudly presented its Voice of the Wild Award to longtime partner Patagonia, in recognition of the brand's outstanding and outsized work to advance Alaska public land protections. To help celebrate the occasion, members of the League's community gathered in-person in Seattle and virtually across the country via Zoom for a special event that also announced the inaugural

recipient of the Adam Kolton Storytelling Grant Award. The League was thrilled to see so many faces – both familiar and new – joining together to share in this celebration and also hear from League leaders about the latest efforts to protect and defend iconic Alaska landscapes.

This was the first time since 2018 that the League has presented the Voice of the Wild Award, which first appeared

in 2007 and for more than a decade helped recognize the individuals or organizations whose actions, commitment and contributions have led to greater awareness about protecting and preserving Alaska's wildest places. This year marked a special opportunity to reintroduce the award and present it to Patagonia, which has stood up time and time again to protect areas like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Tongass National Forest and more.

Visit AlaskaWild.org/22SpecialEvent to view the recording of the event and learn more. *



Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia, forfeited ownership of the company in a landmark announcement this year. His ethos and commitment to protecting the environment, including Alaska lands and waters, has inspired countless advocates and driven the work of organizations like Alaska Wilderness League.

Patagonia

Midterm Election Breakdown and More

Chris Konish, Director of Development

With the midterm elections now behind us, the results of races throughout the country can now shed light onto the legislative future of Alaska public land protections. The League's expert team has pieced together the impact that these results will have on Congress and how these will

shape the work ahead, including new opportunities or threats where Alaska Wilderness League may need to step up as the organization has done for nearly 30 years.

You can learn about the current congressional landscape – including what to expect this month, and in the years ahead –

at our blog: AlaskaWild.org/Blog. There you can also find compelling stories like those from author Seth Kantner speaking out against the Ambler Road (AlaskaWild.org/Ambler), a remembrance of a League founder who shaped the nonprofit tax code (AlaskaWild.org/Troyer) and much more. *

A Partnership Revisited: Hurtigruten Expeditions

Chris Konish, Director of Development

Alaska and the Arctic, which are experiencing rapidly rising temperatures, thawing permafrost, receding glaciers, disappearing sea ice, eroding coastlines and increasing wildfires, are ground zero in the climate crisis. Alaska Wilderness League is committed to confronting the causes and impacts of climate change and defending America's last great wild public lands and waters, and we are happy to once again have the support of companies like Hurtigruten to tackle the challenges facing Alaska's wild places.

expeditions, wherein a percentage of bookings were donated to the League to advance wildlife and wild land protections. Alaska Wilderness League is once again pleased to partner with the company – recognized for its sustainable tourism and commitment to respecting local Indigenous cultures – this winter, and equally pleased to share this news with the League family.

To learn more about this year's partnership, visit AlaskaWild.org/Hurtigruten2022. *

Hurtigruten, a Norwegian-based cruise ship operator with a lengthy track record in Arctic and more recently in Alaska, has previously partnered with the League on the company's Alaska



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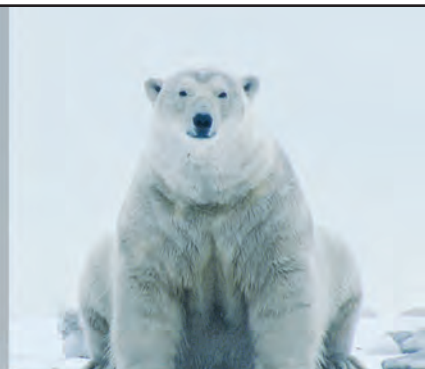
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For more information, please contact Chris@AlaskaWild.org or visit AlaskaWild.org/CGA. We would be happy to work with you and your advisors to answer your questions.

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