

Alaska State Legislature

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

HJR 10

“Opposing the revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; opposing attempts by President Obama to alter management of the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; encouraging the United States Congress to reject a proposal based on the revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan or accompanying Environmental Impact Statement; and encouraging the United States Congress to reject a proposal that does not open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development.”

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has introduced a new draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan to turn more than 12 million acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) into Wilderness, effectively ending any chance the lands can be managed for oil and gas exploration and development. This includes the 1002 area on the Coastal Plain, which was specifically set aside for such purposes. This is in addition to the already 58 million acres of federal Wilderness which accounts for 53 percent of America’s federal Wilderness areas.

The 1002 area of ANWR was excluded from Wilderness designation in a compromise made under the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). In exchange, Congress doubled the size of the refuge and designated eight million acres outside the 1002 area as Wilderness.

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan fails to clearly guarantee protection of subsistence access, resources and uses, and further is an exercise in disparate treatment of two distinct indigenous Alaska Native groups, the Iñupiat and Gwich’in; thereby limiting access to privately owned lands held by Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation through a Wilderness designation, while failing to incorporate lands on the southern edge of ANWR into this same designation.

The people of the Arctic Slope region, especially the residents of Kaktovik, are conservation minded, and yet rely on responsible oil and gas development to sustain their communities. This proposed designation as announced would effectively slam the door shut on the substantial economic opportunities associated with future development of the potential resources in the Coastal Plain.

Alaskans strongly oppose a Wilderness designation on ANWR’s coastal plain. In fact, 78 percent of Alaskans support oil exploration in the 1002 area. Every Alaskan Governor and every legislature and elected congressional representative and senator from Alaska has supported responsible development. The North Slope Borough and the Alaska Federation of Natives also support responsible development, as well as a majority of residents in Kaktovik, a village within the Coastal Plain.