

Dear Senators and members of the Special Committee on the Arctic,

As a 42-year Alaska resident, I strongly urge you to oppose HJR 5, urging Congress to open the Arctic Refuge to oil development. For many years the State of Alaska has unsuccessfully pushed for development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain in the hopes of another bonanza. Most Americans and many Alaskans are opposed to drilling there. The vast majority of Alaskans who testified at the recent hearings in the House on HJR 5 were opposed to oil drilling — 42-1 ratio showing overwhelming opposition.

The coastal plain of the Arctic refuge is the biological heart of the refuge, the most sensitive area in terms of the diversity of life that flourishes there, from the Porcupine Caribou Herd that gives birth to tens of thousands of calves on the coastal plain, to the threatened polar bears that den on the coastal plain during winter, to the millions of birds that migrate from six continents to nest and gather on the coastal plain.

I've walked across the coastal plain and floated its rivers on several occasions, and I assisted former Refuge Manager Ave Thayer when we conducted the wilderness assessment of the coastal plain in the 1980s. That assessment shows that the coastal plain meets the wilderness criteria and President Obama recently recommended that the coastal plain and other lands in the Arctic Refuge be designated wilderness. Having spent many seasons in the Arctic Refuge, and witnessed the aggregation of one hundred thousand caribou near my tent, as well as wolves, grizzly bears, and musk oxen, the coastal plain is clearly a unique treasure in terms of the great diversity of wildlife and the spectacular scenery where 9,000-foot mountains dramatically rise up from the coastal plain — the highest mountains in the Brooks Range. Yes, this is the wildest most beautiful northern corner of Alaska.

There are many other reasons why the State has no business invading a wildlife refuge:

1) The State of Alaska has many other economic choices for oil development. To the west of the Arctic Refuge, the State owns 14 million acres of land open to oil and gas leasing, coupled with offshore areas within three miles of the coast. This would include the recent Smith Bay discovery off the coast of NPRA. The State has the largest land entitlement of any state in America — it's plain greedy for Alaska to pry open a national wildlife refuge set aside for its "wildlife, wilderness and recreation" values in 1960.

2) The oil industry has other opportunities for exploration and development within NPRA, such as Fish Creek and the Moose's Tooth development. Roughly 11 million acres are set aside in NPRA for future leasing.

3) The State and NPRA lands together constitute **25 million acres** currently available to industry for future exploration and development. The scales are tipped heavily in favor of North Slope oil and gas development with the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge (5% of the North Slope) the only place permanently off limits. It should stay that way. It's a wildlife refuge. This is a rare and beautiful wild landscape worth protecting for future generations. A sliver of Alaska's vast North Slope.

4) Instead of the *drill baby drill* mantra for the Arctic Refuge, which we've heard so many times before, the State of Alaska should look to the future and invest in sustainable industries: fisheries, tourism, renewable and alternative energy. We should become the "salmon state" vs. the boom and bust oil-dependent state. Let's be thoughtful and visionary and address climate change.

5) Many Native groups are opposed to oil drilling in the Arctic Refuge: Tanana Chiefs Conference representing 42 Alaska Native villages from 37 tribes, the National Congress of American Indians (250 tribes), the Gwich'in people of Alaska and Canada, many Inupiat residents, including a strong number of residents in Kaktovik — all opposed to drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

6) The USGS has ruled out any superfields in the Arctic Refuge. In their 1998 assessment they determined that there is "no single large accumulation" of oil on the coastal plain — no potential for a Prudhoe Bay giant. To the contrary, there are experts who believe there is little chance of finding major commercial fields in the Arctic Refuge, including a former Director of Exploration for BP with 18 years of experience on the North Slope. I've attached his letter to Secretary Jewell and President Obama which states his geological perspective on the potential for discovery in the Arctic Refuge. As an expert who was present at both the Prudhoe Bay and Kaparuk discoveries, I hope you read his words carefully.

This is one place in Alaska that we have no business turning into an industrial park. Please vote **NO** on HJR 5.

Sincerely,

Debbie S. Miller, Author of *Midnight Wilderness: Journeys in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* (Braided River, 2011)