

HJR

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STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

JAY S. HAMMOND, GOVERNOR

SUBPOST BUILDING - JUNEAU 99801

April 8, 1977

The Honorable Alvin Osterback
Chairman, House Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Pouch V, State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Mr. Osterback:

This is in reply to your letter of March 21, 1977 requesting information on the proposed Arctic National Wildlife Range resolutions.

The Department supports the passage of HCR 41 Arctic National Wildlife Range Protection and HJR 34 Environmental Defense of the Arctic National Wildlife Range. The resolutions are consistent with the intent of the withdrawal which established the Range to preserve the "unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values" of the area.

During the Gas Line Public Hearings, the Department opposed development within the Arctic National Wildlife Range. The Range is unique in that it is the United States' last example of virtually undisturbed arctic ecosystems-- coastal plain, foothills, mountains and the plant and animal species that exist there.

The Arctic National Wildlife Range provides habitat for caribou, bears, wolves, musk oxen and other mammals. It is a nesting, molting and staging area for waterfowl, gulls, terns and other birds.

Caribou are probably most dependent upon the Range not being disturbed by development. The Porcupine caribou herd has an estimated population of 100,000 - 120,000 animals which makes it the largest caribou herd in the state. The Porcupine herd's calving grounds are within the boundaries of the Range. Although the herd uses different ranges and migration patterns from time to time, the calving areas tend to remain constant and are critical to the caribou's existence. Development in the calving areas would be extremely detrimental to the herd.

The Range is also a scientific laboratory and asset and a recreational resource. Development within the Arctic National Wildlife Range would diminish the value of these activities and would destroy some of the Range's most important values. The Arctic National Wildlife Range's primary value is as an essentially pristine area that contains the entire sweep of natural ecological communities from the Brooks Range to the Arctic Ocean. This value can be protected only by maintaining the integrity of the Range.

The Department believes the term "commercial development" needs clarification. Although the Department opposes industrial types of development, we have no objection to guiding and related activities. It should be made clear that the guide industry will not be adversely affected by the resolutions.

The Department is not submitting a fiscal note at this time. Although it is not anticipated that additional funds will be necessary, the actions taken by the Governor and the President of the United States will be the determining factor in this regard.

If additional information is needed please let me know.

Sincerely

for J. W. Brooks
James W. Brooks
Commissioner

