



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®

National Advocacy Center
1200 G Street NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005
202-797-6800
www.nwf.org

October 3, 2017

Dear Senator/Representative:

The National Wildlife Federation, with over 6 million members and supporters along with affiliate organizations from 51 state and territories across the country, represents a broad diversity of political affinities that mirror that of the nation. Regardless of party affiliation, our members count on clean air, clean water, and healthy ecosystems to support our nation's wildlife. Any federal budget must uphold these values by ensuring there is enough nondiscretionary spending to conserve and protect our natural resources. Furthermore, the budgets currently being considered by both the House and the Senate include reconciliation instructions to the resources committees, suggesting a willingness to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling in order to raise revenues. NWF and our members are deeply concerned about both budget cuts and attacks on our cherished landscapes; therefore, **the National Wildlife Federation calls on Congress to oppose any budget resolution that underfunds conservation spending or includes reconciliation instructions that would lead to attacks on our public lands and treasured natural places.**

With environmental challenges at a scale inconceivable thirty years ago, America's wildlife populations are now suffering unprecedented declines. Existing federal funding aimed at maintaining healthy wildlife populations, recovering endangered species, and restoring impaired ecosystems has only barely held the line against irreversible loss of our nation's wildlife. **Cuts to funding for federal agencies responsible for managing natural resources would threaten our environment and the wildlife we love, and would threaten America's economy with it.**

Additionally, while we are very concerned about the high unemployment and growing state budget deficits in Alaska, **the National Wildlife Federation opposes drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.** With current oil commodity prices significantly lower than the cost of extracting oil from the Arctic, we do not believe that opening the Arctic Refuge will address these local economic challenges. We instead encourage investments in Alaska's infrastructure and natural resources that would spur job creation. By contrast, drilling would have devastating and permanent impacts on the Refuge and the wildlife that live there. Further, any revenues from drilling in the Arctic Refuge are highly speculative, and including potential revenues from drilling the Refuge, estimated at \$1 billion, into a \$1.5 trillion budget process is not a credible effort towards a sustainably balanced budget.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska's northeast corner is often considered the crown jewel of all national wildlife refuges, as it is truly one of America's greatest wild places. It was Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower who first protected the refuge in 1960 for its "unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values." Some of America's most iconic wildlife and fish, including polar bears, grizzly bears, musk oxen, caribou, and hundreds of thousands of birds from around the globe, live in or annually migrate through the Refuge's Coastal Plain. The Coastal Plain is not only one of the most significant onshore polar bear denning habitats in the United States, but also vitally-important calving and post-calving habitat for the Porcupine Caribou Herd – nearly 200,000 animals strong. The area is also breeding habitat for an abundance and diversity of songbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Broadly, wildlife populations and Native Alaskans depend upon the Refuge for shelter and sustenance.

Our public lands are the heritage of all Americans. The Refuge's unique value is demonstrated by the fact that **it is the only conservation system unit that protects a complete and undisturbed spectrum of all arctic ecosystems found in North America**. This includes the peaks of the Brooks Range, reaching 9,000 feet at their highest point, to boreal forests in the Yukon River watershed, and the Coastal Plain's tundra, outer bays and barrier islands. Oil and gas development would disturb and destroy these wilderness values and the pristine habitats where wildlife thrive, and thus harm the subsistence way of life of local indigenous people.

Some natural treasures are simply too special to degrade, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of those special places. For this reason, the National Wildlife Federation believes the entire Arctic Refuge, including the Coastal Plain, should be protected and designated as wilderness—the highest level of conservation protection on Earth—to preserve it forever for wildlife and people. For the caribou, bear, musk ox, and waterfowl that call this pristine wilderness home, and Native Alaskans that depend upon it, our vigilant efforts to protect this special place are absolutely essential.

To protect our nation's wildlife and the places they call home, **the National Wildlife Federation urges Congress to oppose any budget resolution that cuts conservation spending or includes reconciliation instructions that would lead to degradation of our treasured natural places, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.**

Sincerely,



Collin O'Mara
President and CEO
The National Wildlife Federation