

## **Preserving Wilderness vs. Stimulating Economic Growth and Ensuring the Security of U.S. Oil Supplies: A Study of the Arguments for and Against Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

**Patrick Brown**  
Providence College

Since its demarcation in 1980, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) has featured in an intense debate over natural resources. Its pristine terrain is home to a variety of wildlife species – and much more, according to certain geological assessments. Several surveys by the federal government over the years claim that an abundance of oil is situated underneath the refuge’s surface. Environmentalists and conservationists favor preserving ANWR in its “natural” state and are extremely skeptical of the argument that it sits atop an abundance of easily-accessible oil reserves. Drilling proponents, on the other hand, see exploration of the Coastal Plain area as an opportunity to generate economic growth, create jobs, and ensure the security of U.S. oil supplies. In the legislative arena, efforts on Capitol Hill calling for the permanent prohibition or immediate initiation of development have both been thwarted since the refuge was first established. But, with President Bush’s steadfast pro-development support and the current Republican congressional majorities, the likelihood of resolving the debate over ANWR is perhaps greater than ever.

An endless trail of superlatives and hyperboles has been used to describe it. Many who have ventured to the boundaries of the “Serengeti of the Arctic” and beyond claim to have experienced the most moving and humbling spiritual encounter of their lives. Indeed, even the slightest glance at photographs of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska is usually sufficient to convince someone of its astonishing and perhaps unsurpassable beauty.

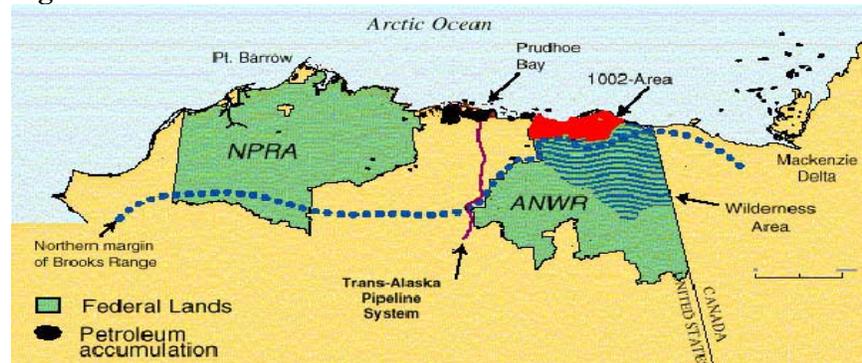
However, the attention the refuge garners is not only attributable to its breathtaking panoramas and vistas. Even before Alaska’s formal entrance into the Union in 1959, talk of exploiting the potentially abundant deposits of oil nestled underneath the terrain was piquing the interest of developers and the opposition of conservationists worldwide. The foundation was laid for an intense, politically-charged debate between the

proponents of oil-drilling on one side and opponents of refuge development on the other. Fifty years later, with U.S. domestic oil production in decline and the country facing increased dependence on imports from volatile foreign markets, the intensity of the conflict has by no means subsided.

A comprehensive study of the decade-old question over drilling for oil in ANWR would consume hundreds of volumes. To probe the depths of this subject requires input and data from myriad sources and ample time to process and analyze them all. Thus, for the purposes of this report, I will focus on the most important issues at play in the current debate over further oil exploration along the Alaskan coastline.

## **Background**

**Figure 2**



Source: Energy Information Administration

In order to put the situation into perspective, I will first provide some brief background information on the refuge itself and its prospects for oil production. I will then outline some of the major arguments for and against ANWR development, as articulated by its most prominent advocates and adversaries. This outline will illustrate the principal concerns and convictions underlying each side's position. Issues pertaining to the interests and needs of Alaskans themselves, especially Native Americans, will also be considered. Furthermore, this report will underscore how the

arguments presented by drilling proponents and opponents seem to reflect a divergent understanding of America and which of its qualities are the most worthwhile to preserve. Finally, with a particular focus on the last four years, this study will highlight legislative actions on the part of Congress and the president pertaining to oil production in ANWR, and will attempt to gauge what President Bush's re-election means for the future of the refuge. Originally named the Arctic National Wildlife Range, ANWR adopted its current title and borders when Congress legislated its expansion through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. Encompassing 19.6 million acres in northeastern Alaska, ANWR is roughly the same size as New England (not including Maine) (Layzer 2000, 107). To the west, it borders the trans-Alaska pipeline corridor; the east, Canada; the south, Arctic Village lands and the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge; and to the north, the Beaufort Sea (Layzer 2002, 107). It acts as breeding grounds for migratory waterfowl, and remains home to musk oxen and caribou herds, grizzly bears, polar bears, wolves and golden eagles (Cogwell 2002, 2). Sections of ANWR also fall within the boundaries of land granted to Native American Alaskans in 1971, as stipulated by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. As we shall see later on, this overlap of territory still serves as a contentious point in the ongoing debate over ANWR.

While designating approximately eight of its 19.6 million acres as "wilderness" (for more on the legal ramifications of "wilderness," see **The environmentalist opposition** below) and therefore off-limits to any form of development, Congress postponed any decision on wilderness designation of the refuge's Coastal Plain (Cogwell 2002, 2). In section §1002 of ANILCA, Congress prohibited all leasing, development and production of oil and gas within the refuge without its expressed authorization – an unusual provision, at first glance, considering the U.S. Wildlife and Fish Service is traditionally afforded such discretion (Layzer 2002, 106).

Congress' desire to maintain jurisdiction over resources in ANWR by designating it as federal land was not that surprising. Various assessments of ANWR's onshore oil prospects have led many to believe that it could rival nearby Prudhoe Bay (to date, the largest oil field ever discovered in the United States) with regards to the abundance of "black gold" buried underneath its surface. The Department of the Interior (DOI) concluded in 1987 that the Coastal Plain could harbor as much as 600

million to 9.2 billion barrels of oil, with there being a 19% chance of finding “economically recoverable oil reserves” – an impressive statistic in oil development terms (U.S. DOI 1987). If exploration and development were initiated the same year, the report projected production of 147,000 barrels per day (b/d) by 2000; peak production of 659,000 b/d in 2005; decline to 400,000 b/d over the next decade; and, a gradual phasing out during the field’s three to five remaining decades of use (Layzer 2002, 109). DOI also predicted a GNP increase of \$74.9 billion and an annual trade deficit reduction of \$6 billion as a result of oil development in ANWR (Layzer 2002, 109).

Although they acknowledge many uncertainties regarding the impact ANWR drilling will have on U.S. oil production, recent government studies support DOI’s original conclusions. In 2001, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimated that between 5.7 and 16 billion barrels of oil, with a mean estimate of 10.4 billion, are located in the Coastal Plain area (commonly called the “1002 Area” – see Figure 2) (U.S. Geological Survey 2001). In early 2004, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) – “the independent statistical and analytical agency within the Department of Energy” – reported that if developers began extracting oil from the 1002 Area in 2013, production would range between 600,000 and 1.6 million b/d in 2025, with a mean of 900,000 b/d (Energy Information Administration 2004, March). It also foresaw ANWR oil production constituting “between 0.5 to 1.3 percent of total world oil consumption,” reducing world oil prices “by as much as 30 to 50 cents per barrel, relative to a projected 2025 world oil price of \$27 per barrel,” and reducing future U.S. petroleum imports “on an equal barrel-to-barrel basis” (Energy Information Administration 2004, March).

The results of these studies assume even greater significance in light of recent forecasts of the dramatic decline in domestic U.S. oil production. In the 2005 edition of its *Annual Energy Outlook* (Energy Information Administration 2004, December), the Department of Energy (DOE) foresees a significant drop-off in U.S. crude oil production between 2010 and 2025 – from 6.2 million to 4.7 million b/d. Finally, it also confirms an increased dependence on foreign oil supplies, which are expected to account for 68 percent of consumption, up from 56 percent in 2003 (Energy Information Administration 2004, December).

I trust this background information will be useful in making sense of the following focus on the politics of the lingering question of ANWR development. As this section illustrates, the refuge's 1002 Area has been heralded for almost half a century as a feasible and desirable outlet of ensuring the security and diversity of U.S. oil supplies. However, it would be erroneous to assume that this heraldry has no opposition. Indeed, for as long as there have been calls for opening up ANWR to oil development, there has been a vocal and sizeable delegation resisting them. This opposition does not regard drilling in the 1002 Area as a constructive industry; it views such enterprise as a destructive scourge.

### **The environmentalist opposition**

Debate over ANWR development in the legislative arena still retains the defining characteristics of its earliest stages in the 1950s. What this has meant with regard to the anti-development parties is a persistent opposition to oil-drilling for two main reasons. Firstly, contrary to what government studies assert, opponents claim that it is impossible to accurately measure the recoverable oil potential of ANWR's Coastal Plain. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, their hostility towards industrial activity in the refuge is predicated upon the overriding value they have for "wilderness" – an ideal they believe trumps all consideration of development when the two find themselves at odds.

As mentioned above, even government reports and assessments concede that, despite their best efforts and technology, they cannot profess the accuracy of their conclusions with absolute certainty. Instead, they find themselves at the mercy of projections and the language of probability.

Advocates of prohibiting industrial activity in the 1002 Area have seized this opportunity to raise the following question: Why take an unnecessary risk of destroying wildlife on the basis of unverifiable data and speculation? Since the boundaries of ANWR were first demarcated, opponents to oil development have argued that "the amount of oil that ANWR is likely to hold would satisfy just a tiny fraction of total domestic demand and therefore would only marginally reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil" (Layzer 2002, 109).

The reiteration of this point over the years by conservationists and environmentalists has been a major feature of their anti-development campaign. In 1991, the Natural Resources Defense Council (n.d.) claimed that the amount of recoverable oil in ANWR would likely add up to “less than 200 days worth of oil at current consumption rates [and] less than 3 percent of our daily demand.” A decade later, in response to assertions by pro-development congressmen that opening up ANWR would lead to lower crude oil prices and increased government revenue, President Clinton’s former Interior Secretary, Bruce Babbitt, argued that “new geological analysis shows there’s probably less oil under the Arctic Refuge than what the Republicans are counting on” (Speer et al. 1991). In a speech to the National Press Club in 2001, Jamie Rappaport Clark, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Clinton administration, reminded his audience that not only is the quantity of ANWR oil deposits unknown, so too is their location:

There is a big difference between Prudhoe Bay and the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain. At Prudhoe Bay, there is one giant oil reservoir to tap into. At Arctic, the oil *is believed to be* scattered in small accumulations all along the Coastal Plain.  
 (“Expert” 2001; italics mine)

More recently, in his testimony before the House Committee on Resources, Peter van Tuyn of the environmental public interest firm, Trustees for Alaska, told the committee “oil from the Arctic Refuge would not make a dent in our need to import oil. The U.S. Geological Survey has concluded that the refuge holds less economically recoverable oil than the U.S. consumes in six months” (U.S. Congress 2003). (I could not examine the USGS document to which Mr. van Tuyn referred, as it was not cited in his official testimony). In the “Big Oil Q & A” section of the portion of its website (<http://www.defenders.org>) devoted to ANWR, the advocacy group Defenders of Wildlife wholeheartedly affirms van Tuyn’s declaration.

Thus, to say that there is any consensus over the likely quantity and distribution of oil deposits in the 1002 Area is simply untrue. Opponents of ANWR drilling are extremely skeptical of the argument that the refuge is probably sitting atop an abundance of easily-accessible oil reserves. On the

contrary, they foretell of the fruitless folly which awaits if the land is opened up to development.

### **The value of “wilderness”**

Despite its spirited denouncement and dismissal of large estimates of ANWR oil reserves, the impetus for the opposition rests primarily in its desire to preserve the refuge as “wilderness.” Since the creation of ANWR, many of its environmental admirers have argued that *all* the territory within its boundaries qualifies as “wilderness” and should therefore be protected from development. (Recall from the background information that less than half of the refuge’s acreage enjoys the status of “wilderness.”) Under the *Wilderness Act of 1964*, the term “wilderness” is defined thus:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural Conditions. Wilderness Act 1964

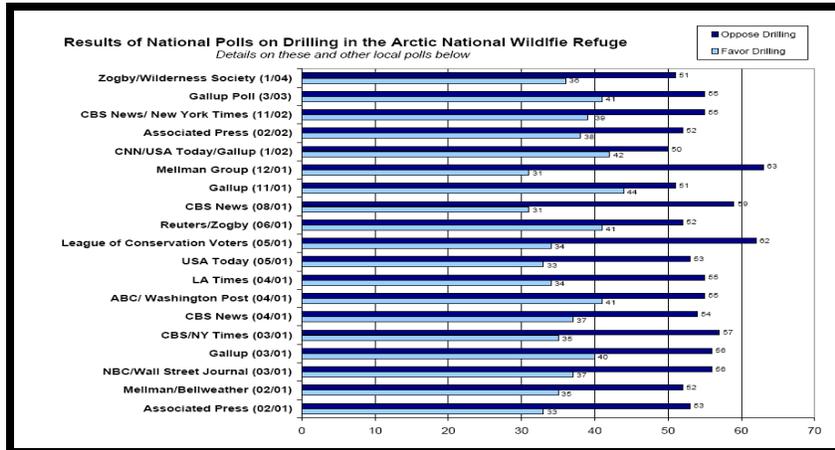
More importantly, this law restricts the development or leasing of any land designated as “wilderness.”

For the environmentalists, any incursion by human activity and/or industry into ANWR will disrupt its natural state, thereby spoiling its pristine condition. In their opinion, any trace of human activity or any attempt to initiate it within the refuge will serve as an indelible blemish upon the landscape. Alaska Coalition, a consortium of over 700 state, national, and international environmental groups, is one organization which upholds this conviction and feels justified in maintaining that “oil drilling and pristine environments simply do not mix” (U.S. Congress 2001). With Trustees for Alaska being one of the most vocal members of the coalition, Peter van Tuyn articulated their philosophy during his House testimony: “The Arctic has a strange stillness that no other wilderness knows. The

beauty is in part the glory of seeing moose, caribou, and wolves living in natural habitat, untouched by civilization” (U.S. Congress 2001). Defenders of Wildlife (2004) states that attempts to open up the refuge to drilling ignore “the significance of the refuge to our natural wildlife heritage.” Likewise, the major premise of Jamie Rappaport Clark’s address to the National Press Club (see above) was that ANWR is “much more valuable [than Prudhoe Bay] as wildlife habitat...[It] is one of the most biologically diverse places in all of Alaska. It has been called America's Serengeti...[The] Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the wildest place left in America and is a crown jewel in America's natural treasure chest” (“Expert” 2001).

These sentiments from drilling opponents confirm that they value preservation of natural wilderness territory above all else in matters pertinent to the ANWR dispute. They believe that land which has been and continues to be removed from human industry and activity deserves to remain as such. For the environmentalists, ecosystems like those of the Coastal Plain lose their value as the level of human interference rises. Interestingly, public opinion polls over the years suggest that the majority of Americans concur and can therefore also be considered as members of the anti-drilling opposition. Since early 2001, polls have consistently found that more than half of the country’s population is opposed to ANWR drilling. Table 1 displays the results of nearly 20 polls conducted since February 2001. As the reader can determine, the American public has expressed sentiments against ANWR drilling on many occasions over these past four years. Even before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, which threatened to destabilize oil markets and prices, Gallup found that 55% of Americans opposed oil development in the 1002 Area (Defenders of Wildlife 2004).

Table 1



Source: Defenders of Wildlife

While many of these surveys did not require their respondents to specify their reasons for opposing drilling, several of them did, allowing us to infer that much of the American public's opposition to ANWR development is fueled (no pun intended) by environmental concerns. The March, 2001 Gallup poll inquired whether or not "environmental protection should take precedence over developing new energy supplies" (52% agreed, 36% disagreed), while *The Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll in the same month found that 56% of Americans "want to see the Arctic Refuge and other federally protected lands off limits to oil exploration" (Defenders of Wildlife 2004). These and other public opinion surveys prove that the American public occupies its own important place in the opposition movement.

While labeling groups and/or individuals as either opponents or proponents of oil development in ANWR, it is imperative to attempt to situate Alaskans themselves along the spectrum of support. It is one thing to gauge the disposition of Americans living in the Lower 48 states; it is something completely different to hear the opinions of those for whom the future of their own backyard is in dispute.

What makes any effort to assess the stance of Alaskans on ANWR development rather complicated—and yet intriguing—is recognizing the distinct role played by indigenous peoples in the debate. As mentioned above, native Alaskans enjoy a significant degree of control over territory in their home state. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 granted ownership rights over 44 million acres to various tribes among the indigenous population, plus a \$1 billion settlement – half of which would be financed by oil production royalties (Layzer 2002, 105). Interestingly enough, while this arrangement was meant to provide incentives for native Alaskans to support the construction of a trans-Alaskan pipeline, it would ultimately complicate the debate over ANWR. While these 44 million acres did not fall within the proposed oil pipeline corridor, much of it does overlap with the refuge's boundaries. Thus, the voice of native Alaskans is an important one in the ANWR debate, as the indigenous population has much at stake.

Some native Alaskans have joined the opposition in its chorus of condemnation. The 150 Gwich'in Athabascans of Arctic Village, a tiny community on the southern outskirts of the refuge, are the most vocal of Alaska's native opposition constituency. (See Figure 1 for Arctic Village's location). In 1988, Alaska's 7,000 Gwich'in natives gathered in the village to pass the "Resolution to Prohibit Development in the Calving and Post-Calving Grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd," which explicitly demanded "that the 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge be made Wilderness" (Gwich'in Nüintsyaa 1998).

Among other things, they fear that seismic testing and the construction of extraction infrastructure will dislocate herds of Porcupine caribou – "the heart of their subsistence culture" – which migrate from the Coastal Plain to their village (McAllister 2001c). The chiefs of the village, Moses Sam and Evon Peter, have both expressed concern "whether [their] people will be able to live off the land in the future" and thus are wary of any discussion of permitting development within the refuge (McAllister 2001a). Faith Gemmill, staffer for an Athabascan political advocacy group called the Gwich'in Steering Committee, expressed her peoples' sentiments thus: "We've lived with that herd for thousands of years. Congress should respect our knowledge and trust our wisdom on this issue. [The herd] is not going to give birth in an oil field" (McAllister 2001c) Wilderness, then, is an

issue of utmost importance to the Gwich'in aboriginals, as they regard its preservation as inextricably linked to their subsistence and survival – hence their membership in the anti-development opposition.

It is interesting to note, though, that Arctic Village's tribal government in 1971 opted not to engage in "the cash and federal land selections offered under ANCSA, instead taking title to its traditional lands" (McAlister 2001c). Consequently, the community lacks anything which resembles a conventional economy and argues that its decision to forego ANCSA benefits means the state legislature now discriminates against it through negligible allocations of state funds. Thus, one can speculate that Arctic Village's stance against oil production in the refuge also stems from the desire not to miss out on oil-based remunerations yet again. (On another note, it is no surprise that even the U.S. Episcopal Church is part of the opposition coalition, given that the Gwich'in are all Episcopalians.)

However, the next section reveals how there is not only a divergence of opinion between Gwich'in Athabascans and the rest of Alaskans with regards to ANWR, but there is also no agreement between this group of aboriginals and other members of the state's indigenous population. This is largely the result of separate social circumstances compounded with an entirely different definition of the issue's parameters.

### **The "coalition of the drilling"**

This section will show that when it comes to paying serious consideration to ANWR development, proponents view the debate through a much different lens than their opponents. They have come to regard the 1002 Area's promising prospects for oil recovery as a virtual guarantor of revenue. And while they make some effort to rebut the assertion that development is incompatible with wildlife conservation, the issue of "wilderness" preservation ranks far below the overriding priorities of local control of land, economic growth, the security of U.S. oil supplies and consequently, the security of the U.S. homeland.

An aboriginal heritage is virtually the only thing which the Inupiat Eskimos of Kaktovik continue to share with the native Gwich'in population of Arctic Village. (See Figure 1 for Kaktovik's location along the Coastal Plain). Unlike their brethren in the Village, the Inupiat are

anxious to develop the 92,160 acres granted to them under ANCSA in 1971. However, restrictions imposed by ANILCA have forbidden them to execute their plans as these plots of land are all located within the off-limits Coastal Plain. Karl Francis, an advisor to the mayor of Kaktovik, contends that local control is the most important factor in the community's steadfast support for drilling: "The central issue is imperialism. It's not oil or gas or caribou or anything like that. [The Porcupine caribou] do not all of a sudden organize themselves like a labor union and decide to go to Arctic Village. They're scattered all over the damn place" (McAllister 2001a). Thus, if support for oil development along the Coastal Plain will restore control over the land (and a portion of the subsequent revenue, of course) to the Inupiat, the latter will give their blessing without hesitation.

Furthermore, unlike the Gwich'in, the residents of Kaktovik "sense more economic opportunity than environmental threat in the possible opening of the Coastal Plain to oil exploration" (McAllister 2001a). They equate oil revenues with high quality social services and an increase in educational opportunities for their youth. The Inupiat are also vehemently critical of Arctic Village's call for designation of the 1002 Area as "wilderness." For them, the increased population of the Central Arctic caribou herd near existing oil fields 120 miles west of Kaktovik attests to the compatibility of wildlife and development. Moreover, this stipulation is not only foolish in their eyes, but offensive. Francis and the town council view it as "implicitly genocidal," seeing as their long-standing, Coastal Plain community would likely face immediate displacement if such legislation was passed (McAllister 2001a). It is no surprise, then, that there is little interaction between the two communities of Arctic Village and Kaktovik, for the distance between them appears to be equally great in miles as it is in values.

Along with the Inupiat, the vast majority of non-native Alaskans espouse pro-development views when it comes to ANWR. In February 2001, an Anchorage poll announced that 75% of respondents to a public opinion survey favored oil exploration, while 23% did not. According to the firm that conducted the survey, the smallest statewide margin in its polls occurred in 1989 immediately after the Exxon Valdez oil spill. That poll

found 69% for and 29% against oil exploration (McAllister 2001b). What is more, during the 2004 race for U.S. Senate in Alaska, pro-development candidates Lisa Murkowski (R) and Tony Knowles (D) each made oil exploration in ANWR a primary issue of their campaign, mindful that recent polls showed more than two out of three Alaskans supporting resource recovery in the refuge (Hoare 2004). For Alaskans, then, it seems that there is no place for partisan divisions when it comes to opening up the Coastal Plain for drilling.

Such lop-sided support among Alaska's 640,000 residents should come as no surprise. In 2001, the oil industry's contribution to the state's general fund amounted to 82.3% of total revenues (McAllister 2001d). Thus, until oil and gas pipelines no longer act as the state's lifeline, one can expect pro-development positions to perpetuate and prevail throughout the Last Frontier.

Predictably, ever since ANWR was first thrust to the forefront of legislative debate in the United States, oil companies have spearheaded the coalition of the drilling: "The primary force behind the campaign to open up ANWR to development is the oil industry, which has always been a formidable presence in U.S. politics" (Layzer 2002, 108). Bearing in mind the figures cited in the previous section, the current influence of industry officials is hardly shocking.

At the time of writing, Arctic Power, a grassroots, not-for-profit citizens organization with 10,000-plus members, remains the supreme advocate for ANWR drilling ("The Players" n.d.). Founded in 1992, it seeks the expeditious "congressional and presidential approval of oil exploration and production on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge" ("The Players" n.d.). Although its board of directors includes representatives from myriad interest groups,<sup>1</sup> its major source of funding is the state of Alaska itself, which recently provided funds upwards of \$3.75 million for lobbying Congress (McAllister 2001d). Alaska's all-Republican congressional delegation – Senators Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski, and

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<sup>1</sup> Arctic Power's members include the Alaska Support Industry Alliance, Alaska State Chamber of Commerce, Resource Development Council, Alaska Forest Association, Alaska Miners Association, Alaska Oil and Gas Association, Alaska Trucking Association, Alaska Women in Timber, and the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce.

Congressman Don Young, - as well as the state's Republican Governor, Frank Murkowski, and legislature are all committed partners of Arctic Power.

In addition to the usual suspects, drilling proponents have found some unlikely allies to support their cause. Despite their traditional, long-standing affiliation with the party of FDR and JFK, an increasing number of labor leaders and unions have lent their energetic support in recent years to the Republican-led efforts in Congress to open up ANWR for oil exploration. Indeed, in March 2002, an unlikely gathering of Republican senators and the Teamsters took place at their international headquarters in DC. During that event, the two parties conveyed a symbolic display of solidarity and commitment on the issue of ANWR and were united in their belief that in addition to billions of oil barrels, development would generate vast quantities of another precious resource – jobs.

The Teamsters concur with the native population of Kaktovik, a sizeable majority of non-aboriginal Alaskans, as well as the powerful oil industry and its advocates when it comes to the staggering job-growth potential of oil-drilling along ANWR's Coastal Plain. During its rendezvous with Republican legislators, the international fraternity made its declaration in support of oil development in the 1002 Area candidly and confidently: "A vote for ANWR is a vote for jobs and opportunity for all Americans" ("Teamsters" 2002). Indeed, they reminded the audience that the nation can expect as many as 735,000 ANWR-related jobs upon passage of congressional approval for exploration and drilling. It is little wonder, then, why the Teamsters have cast aside their normal partisan affiliation on this particular issue, complicating matters for their traditional political allies. Like their pro-development partners, they have placed great faith in the economic impact an open ANWR will have on America's economy – not just for the people of Alaska, but all across the Lower 48 states. Their membership in "the coalition of the drilling" is predicated upon this faith and until projections for new ANWR-generated jobs decline dramatically, one can expect them to remain loyal proponents of the cause.

In addition to economic growth, proponents of ANWR drilling also define the parameters of the debate in terms of the security of U.S. oil supplies and the security of the United States at large. These parameters are inextricably linked to those inherent in America's security policy, which

over the last few decades has witnessed the rise of “the protection of global resource flows” as “an increasingly prominent feature” (Klare 2002, 6). As early as 1975, U.S. military intervention was considered “in the Middle East to prevent any interruption in the flow of Persian Gulf oil” (Klare 2002, 33). Likewise, in the early 1980s, President Jimmy Carter told Congress that “an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America” (Klare 2002, 4). Furthermore, during his second term in the Oval Office, President Clinton went so far as to associate the energy potential of the Caspian Sea basin with American national security (Klare 2002, 4).

The voices that call upon Congress to permit exploration and development within the 1002 Area echo the outlooks of these former commanders-in-chief. For them, drilling in ANWR is not merely of strategic economic importance, it is vital for the security of the homeland. In 1987, Interior Secretary Donald Hodel argued that production along the Coastal Plain would “reduce U.S. vulnerability to disruptions in the world market and could contribute to our energy security” (U.S. DOI 1987, 1). In the Report of the National Energy Policy Group, the bedrock of President George W. Bush’s energy policy, it is argued that “ANWR production could equal 46 years of current oil imports from Iraq” (U.S. Department of Energy 2001, 77). From this, one can infer that ANWR development will allow the U.S. to distance itself from such volatile and often hostile oil-exporting markets as Iraq.

What’s more, when Senator Frank Murkowski introduced an energy bill in the fall of 2001 that included a provision for opening up the refuge, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MI) expressed his support for the measure thus: “American dependence on foreign oil threatens our national security and our freedom” (Layzer 2002, 121). In his estimation, ANWR development meant pursuing the fulfillment of the nation’s fundamental objectives and values – namely, security and liberty. Likewise, when Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Resources, conducted hearings during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress on proposed legislation for opening up ANWR, he referred to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in his official statement, noting that “it defies commonsense to buy oil from a dictator who can convert American dollars into weapons of mass destruction that will be used against American people” (U.S. Congress

2003). It seems safe to assume, then, that the congressman regards buying oil from Alaskans as much more conducive to ensuring the security of the United States.

It is interesting to observe that the opposition to ANWR oil-drilling rarely engages proponents on the issue of national security. Though they might agree in principle that oil is indeed vital to U.S. national security interests, they decline to meet ANWR advocates in the legislative arena on these defined terms. Defenders of Wildlife, for example, seem content to not consider the issue from this angle of approach: “Because total known U.S. reserves represent only 2.8% of the world’s oil and our nation uses nearly a third of the world’s production, we are really powerless to reduce our dependence on foreign oil” (Defenders of Wildlife 2004). Sure, they make the connection between the flow of oil resources and national security; but, any attempt to reverse the movement towards dependence is casually regarded as futile.

The divergence between the two sides’ efforts to define the debate over ANWR drilling is quite intriguing. Though proponents and opponents have often found themselves on the same plane of dialogue throughout the last few decades, their respective priorities are essentially separate from each other. As this report has shown, the vast and vocal majority of opponents engage in this debate for the purposes of preserving environmental wilderness, whereas proponents are concerned with local land rights, economic growth and national security.

Upon further reflection, it seems that this disagreement stems from different perceptions of what defines America. The above quotations from environmentalists reveal that they understand expansive tracts of untamed, unindustrialized wilderness to be an inherent feature of America’s landscape and identity. For them, America cannot exist without its “natural treasure chest.” Thus, to threaten the boundaries and residents of its wildlife habitats is equivalent to jeopardizing the integrity of the country’s spirit and character.

While proponents do not deny the value and beauty of America’s rugged terrain, they do not regard it as a supreme quality of the country’s identity. In many ways, their attitudes on ANWR drilling are rooted in other enduring ideas of what America represents – a society whose citizens are free to engage in commerce and are entitled to reap and to safeguard the

profits of their own commodities, especially land. For them, the history of the United States is one which features the evolution and success of industry, innovation, growth and development. To deny Alaska and the entire country the opportunity to continue cultivating these activities in ANWR is not only unwise and unfair in their eyes, it is contrary to the American spirit.

### **ANWR drilling: 100<sup>th</sup> – 106<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1987 – 2000)**

With the previous sections focusing on the major players in the debate over ANWR as well as their overriding objectives and motivations, it seems fitting to highlight legislative directives pertinent to ANWR over the last few decades. This section will illustrate where certain members of Congress have stood on the issue and the major pieces of legislation which have met with varying degrees of success and (mostly) failure since the early days of the debate.

Nearly seven years after the expansion of the refuge in 1980, congressional hearings regarding the future status of ANWR were finally conducted. Held largely in response to a long-awaited report from DOI on the projected impacts of development on the ecosystem, these committees would consider a total of seven bills concerning ANWR – five of which called for exploration, development and production (Layzer 2004, 114). However, despite extensive deliberations, none of the proposed legislation ever made it out of committee. In the Senate, the Energy and Natural Resources as well as the Environment and Public Works committees held hearings on two separate Republican bills – William Roth (DE)'s wilderness measure and Frank Murkowski (AK)'s development one. When the press announced “the DOI had begun dividing the Coastal Plain among Alaskan native corporations for leasing to oil companies without congressional approval,” the fallout from the scandal derailed the bills’ progress (Layzer 2002, 115). Meanwhile, in the House, Alaskan Rep. Don Young (R) managed to win approval for a pro-leasing bill in his Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment. However, Rep. Morris Udall (D-AZ), Chairman of the House Interior Committee, “claimed equal jurisdiction over the matter and refused to report out a bill” (Layzer 2002, 115).

Though the environmentalist lobby believed the election of George H.W. Bush in 1989 signaled more promising prospects for ANWR's wilderness designation, the president nevertheless called for the refuge's "cautious development" during his first month in office (Layzer 2002, 115). Despite the expeditious introduction of development legislation by Congress in response to Bush's request, any chance of its passage disintegrated a month later when the Exxon Valdez oil tanker filled Alaska's Prince William Sound with approximately 11 million gallons of fuel. Images of oil-soaked wildlife and mass media coverage of the event convinced legislators of the virtual impossibility of the bills' success and they were subsequently retracted from Congress' agenda.

Two years later, though, the threat of war in the Persian Gulf renewed debate over dependence on foreign oil and the security of the U.S. homeland (Layzer 2002, 116). Combined with the U.S. Geological Survey's revised estimate of ANWR's oil deposits (it projected a 46% chance of finding economically recoverable oil reserves – a 25% increase in 1987's projection), talk of an imminent military intervention compelled Republican Senators Bennett Johnston (LA) and Malcolm Wallop (WY) to include a provision for ANWR development while drafting the administration's *National Energy Security Act of 1991* (Layzer 2002, 117). In order to appease Democratic opponents, the authors also included a provision calling for higher fuel efficiency standards.

However, unforeseen circumstances once again scuttled the bill's passage. In anticipation of war in the Middle East, oil prices skyrocketed, earning industry giants massive profits. Moreover, a surplus – instead of the anticipated shortage – in production soon followed, when Saudi Arabia increased its output, thereby stimulating a slump in demand (Layzer 2002, 117). Finally, domestic interests joined forces in their attempt to derail the administration's comprehensive energy bill. Energy consumer groups allied with the auto industry and successfully lobbied for the removal of the legislation's two contentious provisions.

When President Clinton assumed control of the executive branch, he made no effort to conceal his staunch opposition to oil development in the 1002 Area. During the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1993-1994), ANWR remained tucked away in the recesses of Washington's legislative agenda. But, when Republicans regained control on the Hill midway through Clinton's first

term, they seized the opportunity to thrust the drilling issue back into the limelight of debate. With Don Young and Frank Murkowski – both Republican Alaskans – assuming the chairmanships of previously obstructionist committees in the House and Senate, respectively, development advocates were encouraged.

The congressmen’s strategy for opening up the refuge was simple: attach drilling provisions to the omnibus budget bill for the fall. This would attract less public attention, prevent an opposition filibuster,<sup>2</sup> and reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto. Unfortunately for the Republicans, President Clinton did not balk and, bolstered by support from his Interior Secretary, Bruce Babbitt, he vetoed the legislation. Its sponsors eventually conceded defeat and stripped the bill of its ANWR provisions. Towards the end of Clinton’s second term, both wilderness and development bills were introduced in Congress on occasion, but they failed to gather sufficient momentum and dissolved in committee.

### **Bush II and the future of oil exploration in ANWR**

Unlike his predecessor, President George W. Bush entered the Oval Office having already articulated his unwavering support for drilling along the Coastal Plain. Like his predecessor, though, he would witness the repeated failure of attempts to push ANWR-development legislation through Congress during his first term.

Despite early success in eliciting positive feedback on its plans for the 1002 Area, the Bush administration suffered a serious setback when the House Budget Committee’s 2002 budget release did not include anticipated revenue from refuge drilling (Layzer 2002, 121). With the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee signaling his intention to follow suit, the administration seemed to start “backing away from ANWR drilling proposals” (Layzer 2002, 121). Indeed, with waning political support from the White House, the Senate voted down Frank Murkowski’s energy bill and its provision on ANWR development.

The second half of Bush’s first term brought along a flurry of ANWR-related activity, as the Republicans surprised the nation by

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with Senate rules, budget bills cannot be filibustered.

increasing their numbers in both houses of Congress. Nevertheless, the familiar curses of rejected omnibus bills and contentious provisions returned to haunt development advocates once more. For the second time in a decade, Republican legislators inserted a pro-development section on ANWR into their omnibus energy bill – H.R. 6, *The Energy Policy Act of 2003*. This proposal would ultimately meet the same fate under Bush II as its ancestor under Bush I. Having already rejected the ANWR provision by the closest margin in recent history (52-48) in March, the Senate adopted a new version of H.R. 6 in July, 2003. While the House agreed to the conference report drafted to reconcile differences between the two bills, enough Senators filibustered consideration of the report for the matter to stall completely.

Extensive, yet inconclusive attention was also paid to two separate ANWR proposals – one wilderness and one development – during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. Despite capturing much attention from legislators and the public, as well as igniting a lot of controversy, H.R. 39, the *Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act of 2003*, and H.R. 770, the *Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act*, lingered in committee and expired after the conclusion of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress in December, 2004. Richard Pombo (R-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Resources, even held a legislative field hearing in Kaktovik for the purposes of evaluating these proposals and still was unable to secure their passage onto the House’s agenda!

At a campaign stop in Ohio on September 4, 2004, the president fielded the following question: “I support drilling in ANWR, and I just wanted to know what your position is on that” (Office of the White House 2004 September). Bush did not hesitate in his response: “I believe we should [drill]... They say that had we been exploring there a decade ago, we'd have an additional million barrels of oil coming into our country that would have affected world price and would have helped America become less dependent on foreign sources of energy” (Office of the White House 2004 September). Less than sixty days later, he earned a second term in office.

Three months later, he nominated Sam Bodman to replace outgoing Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham. During the nomination ceremony, the president pledged that he and his advisor “will continue to enhance our economic security and our national security through sound

energy policy. We will pursue more energy close to home, in our own country and in our own hemisphere, so that we're less dependent on energy from unstable parts of the world" (Office of the White House 2004 December). The implications of these words became clear in early February 2005, when President Bush unveiled his FY 2006 federal budget package. The budget projects state and federal revenues in 2007 from ANWR oil lease payments, an unmistakable sign that if the president gets his way, exploration of the refuge will commence within the early months of his second term in office (Mauer 2005).

With the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress only a few months young, there are also clear signs that ANWR will remain at the forefront of certain legislators' priorities on Capitol Hill. At the time of writing, Rep. Don Young (R-AK) has already reintroduced his ANWR development bill (now titled H.R. 39, the *Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act of 2005*) which never went to a vote on the House floor between 2003 and 2004. Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) has led the charge for development opponents in the House, sponsoring H.R. 567, the *Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act*, which looks to designate the Coastal Plain as "wilderness" and safeguard the area from industrial interference.

At the other end of the Capitol, Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) has introduced S. 261, a piece of wilderness legislation similar to Markey's. Though the predominantly Republican pro-development forces in the Senate have yet to present any bills, they have been anything but inactive and silent on the issue. In early February, Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) dispatched a letter to each of his congressional colleagues urging them to authorize ANWR oil exploration during this next legislative session. Moreover, during the first weekend of March, five Republican senators joined Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Energy Secretary Sam Bodman for a tour of Alaska's northeastern coastline and its oil facilities. Remarks delivered by Senator Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) during the excursion to a crowd of pro-development, Native Alaskan residents of Kaktovik reflect a growing consensus that the early phases of President Bush's second term will probably determine the ultimate fate of ANWR: "Soon a decision will be made. People like us don't have to come back any more because we will vote, and if it proceeds, we won't have to come back. If it loses, we

probably are going to say we have done our best and then we won't come back and bother you any more" (Berman and Geman 2005).

Senator Domenici's remarks seemed to be vindicated—at least in the short-term—when 51 members of the Senate voted down an amendment proposed by their colleague Maria Cantwell (D-WA) on March 16. The amendment would have removed ANWR development authorization from the FY 2006 federal budget, which was approved by the Senate a day later by the slim margin of 51-49. Although the budget adopted by the House of Representatives contains no ANWR language, there is speculation that this recent victory for pro-development forces may well determine the ultimate future of the refuge. The political climate in Washington has long resisted refuge development, but that has never seemed more likely to change than it does now.

### **Conclusion**

As the length and density of this paper demonstrate, the debate over drilling for oil in the 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge remains complicated and contentious. A host of political players with conflicting interests and values continue to jockey for influence in the decision-making process which will ultimately decide ANWR's fate. The environmentalist opposition continues to dismiss assessments of the refuge's potential for recoverable oil, scoffing at data it deems exaggerated and politically charged. Furthermore, it champions the notion that protecting existing wilderness from the adverse impacts of development should be a major legislative priority.

The "coalition of the drilling" disagrees. While intent on regaining local control of land to a certain degree, it has set its sights first and foremost on trumpeting the economic growth that will inevitably follow the opening of ANWR to industrial activity. What's more, development proponents argue that we can no longer afford to ignore the benefits for our national security, which the refuge will provide.

At first glance, the prospects for the current coalition seem bleak on account of past legislative history. During the last two decades of deliberations, dozens of development bills in Congress have come and

gone. Many have approached the threshold of passage and public promulgation, yet all have met the same ignominious demise.

It is uncertain what President Bush' re-election means for these ardent supporters. Though he failed to push through development legislation in his first term, he appears to possess the necessary political capital to avert defeat a second consecutive time. Only one thing is for certain. With the preliminary passage of FY 2006 budgetary projections banking on ANWR oil-lease revenues, it has been made clear that one of the most contentious political debates of the late twentieth century will live to endure another day and perhaps another death.

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