



Protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Proposal Questions

Mission/History Of Organization

Protect Alaska's wild lands and waters by inspiring broad support for federal policy action.

JEDI Efforts and Impact

Alaska Wilderness League has long focused on building meaningful relationships with Indigenous Tribes and community leaders, to identify shared interests in land and water protections and work collaboratively towards securing them. This includes partnering frequently with the Gwich'in Steering Committee on fly-ins and other tactics

which continue today, along with elevating the voices of leaders like Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak as she stood up against the Willow project near her home community of Nuiqsut, Alaska. The organization also recognizes the need for conservation to improve how it works with BIPOC communities across the nation, as evidenced in our commitment to justice found on our website. We've leaned in on changing our approach over the past years and are grateful for continued partnerships with groups like "Love Is King" who connect BIPOC individuals to Alaska experiences, and then bring those voices to our nation's capital.

Final Success The 1.6-million acre coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge remains free from industrialization, ensuring the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd remain intact.

Location Details Nestled by Alaska's Brooks Range to the south and the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is home to approximately 250 species of wildlife including caribou, musk oxen, Dall sheep, wolves and millions of migratory birds from all over the world. It also includes the most important onshore denning habitat for polar bears in the United States.

Within this 19.6-million-acre wildlife refuge is a coastal region along the border of Alaska and Canada where hundreds of thousands of Porcupine caribou arrive each year to birth their young. These animals complete the longest land migration of any mammal in the world to get to this coastal plain, where conditions provide safe refuge for giving birth to their young calves before the herd continues its migration across the Arctic tundra.

The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge remains one of the last remaining intact wild landscapes left on this planet, where people can take off on 100+ mile human-powered explorations and not cross a single road or see any sign of industrialization. It also retains immense cultural significance to the Native Gwich'in people, whose livelihood and cultural values are intertwined with the Porcupine caribou herd, which relies on this region for survival.

Biodiversity in Project Area If our nation will address the climate crisis, it must do so by dealing with how oil production on federal public lands contributes to the problem. Last year the Energy Information Administration highlighted that the "United States is producing more oil than any nation, ever," and that was prior to President Trump's "energy dominance" initiative and mad dash to unlock even more federal public lands to drilling.

Holding the line in the Arctic Refuge would meaningfully contribute to the direction we must head as a nation in the

Expected Economic & Recreational Impact

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, including the Coastal Plain, was originally set aside in 1960 by President Eisenhower as the Arctic National Wildlife Range to preserve "the unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values" of the area. Today that legacy continues, with a trip to the Arctic Refuge representing a trip of a lifetime for many outdoor adventurers and enthusiasts. If drill pads and roads are allowed to divide up the landscape, public access to places could easily be closed, like observed to the west of the Arctic Refuge where visitors to Prudhoe Bay can no

fight for a livable climate. While there are extreme challenges facing us in the next two years, the Arctic Refuge has a history of bipartisanship in Congress, and potential support across the aisle to oppose mandated lease sales. We must capitalize on that history, along with the tight margins in Congress, to keep the Arctic Refuge out of budget reconciliation in the year ahead, so that a future Congress and administration can invoke stronger protections and not face more mandated lease sales.

On top of climate benefits, securing the critical calving and post calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd is critical as caribou across the Arctic face more and more impacts of industrialization. Projects like the Willow oil and gas project, along with mining access roads in the state, threaten to carve up unimpeded caribou migrations in other areas of Alaska. Research shows how these roads can impact migrations and stress herds. To keep the Arctic Refuge a true refuge to caribou, it's critical to prevent these impacts.

More than caribou stand to lose if industrial activity takes place on the Coastal Plain. Many Arctic Refuge species are feeling impacts from climate change, with the iconic polar bear as a key example. Seismic exploration – where convoys of tracked vehicles weighing up to 95,000 pounds traverse the tundra, “thumping” the ground occasionally to search for oil – poses a dire threat to denning polar bears during the Arctic's long winter. This is one of the first things that could happen if industry gets unfettered access to the Arctic Refuge. It's another example of the activities we must stop to benefit biodiversity.

Final success will be achieved when we restore meaningful protections for the Arctic Refuge, through an act of Congress. While the landscape is not right for that in the year ahead, we must continue to grow support in Congress by emboldening our champions and persuading moderates to join us in the fight to protect the Coastal Plain. This requires us to expand our national network of grassroots activists and partners, highlighting and elevating strong public opposition to Arctic industrialization. (It's also important to note that no Conservation Alliance funds will go support lobbying activities.)

As we build momentum for eventual protections, we also need to fight off threats in the short term. Right out of the gate this year, a focus on budget reconciliation – where policies that have budgetary implications can avoid a

longer access the Arctic Ocean shoreline due to oil field closures. Wildlife populations would be directly harmed and sounds of trucks and bulldozers could overpower the sounds of streams, birds, and wildlife enjoyed by visitors today. Views of vast landscapes without the obvious signs of humans would be forever changed, and water and air quality could easily be impacted.

If places like the Arctic Refuge become industrialized, this could also harm the brand of Alaska, and what it represents in the hearts and minds of people around the world. Today, the state is recognized for its globally significant lands, waters, wildlife, and experiences. It's this imagery that supports the continued growth of the tourism industry in the state, which brought \$3.9 billion in direct spending to Alaska in 2024, supporting 48,000 jobs across Alaska. The state needs renewable industries – like tourism and sustainable fisheries – if it will successfully move away from an extractive economy future in years to come, and protecting the Refuge furthers that goal.

**Strategy & Timeline
For Final Success**

Key Decision Makers

To address the threat of budget reconciliation, we need to secure the support of moderate Senators and Representatives who may go either way on the inclusion of budget language that requires future Arctic Refuge oil and gas lease sales. These moderates – belonging to both parties – come from districts where their constituents may feel the pressure of high gas prices or are more likely to be sympathetic to Trump's energy dominance rhetoric.

To address this challenge, we will work closely with constituents of moderates to bring the Arctic Refuge into in-district meetings. Our government affairs team has identified key districts in Maine, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Colorado for targeted advertisements, and our national outreach and partnership teams will seek LTEs and other public displays of support for protecting the Arctic in

Senate filibuster and pass into law – has required the identification of key states and lawmakers who we need to hold the line. This includes identifying more moderate lawmakers – on both sides of the aisle – who we need to maintain or switch to support us in keeping additional mandated Arctic Refuge lease sales off the books. With targets in place, we are now planning multiple fly-ins this spring and summer – one featuring BIPOC Arctic travelers, and the other elevating the voice of the Gwich'in Nation – to help put faces to the landscape, embolden our champions, and gain new supporters in Congress. In parallel, we will run targeted ad pushes and mobilize the constituents of moderates to speak in favor of Arctic protections, through letters-to-the-editor, in-district meetings, phone calls, and more. Tactics like these will continue throughout the year, until a budget reconciliation bill either passes, or collapses as a threat if the Senate and House give up on pursuing an agreeable package.

As we fight to keep the Arctic out of budget reconciliation, we must also engage this administration directly. Doing so will help hold the line as much as possible today while we also build a record for our use in the future. There is little room to work directly with the Trump administration to protect Alaska, and with Trump's proven disdain for the law, we anticipate that joining litigation will be necessary to challenge any unlawful administrative actions, using legal victories and arguments to build more champions on the Hill. These legal challenges are also useful to our communications teams, who can use them to inspire our base of support and audiences for future actions and engagement.

On top of short-term administrative accountability, largely through the courts, we must build a record of opposition by evaluating Trump policies and weighing in during comment periods. While comments to any administrative effort are unlikely to go unread today, they are critical for us to submit, so that we have the grounds to legally challenge future Trump administrations. At the same time, and with an eye towards our successes at the start of the Biden presidency, we must make sure Alaska protections make the short list for a future administration to act on immediately when taking office. That work must start now, and be constant in the next three years, so that public interest in Alaska is clear to a future president. With that support, we can succeed in convincing a future transition team to act on Alaska.

As a small group that works on Alaska issues, we know we can't do this alone.

lawmaker districts. Fly-ins with a variety of constituencies will bring these messages to offices in Washington, D.C., and our D.C. staff will be on the ground interacting with offices when Arctic Refuge votes are imminent.

We know that moderate lawmakers are sympathetic to economic arguments in favor of drilling, so our communications team is working with our policy team to sharpen economic arguments AGAINST drilling in the Arctic Refuge. The business voices of the outdoor industry have been instrumental in making this case in years past, and we plan to continue our work with brands and industry alliances that have an interest in helping to see the Arctic Refuge protected in the years to come.

This is why we focus so heavily on collaboration, helping to bridge the gap between Alaska and our nation's capital through the Arctic Defense Campaign, and through participation in collaborative campaigns that focus on key areas of Alaska. Our in-Alaska staff works closely with groups in-state, helping to mobilize Alaskans when their voices will move decisionmakers, and we help state-based groups do the same when they don't have in-house Washington, D.C. know-how, by assisting with building narratives that can help in Washington, D.C.

Elevate Voices

Alaska Wilderness League is focused on expanding the narrative around Arctic Refuge protections, while also keeping the focus on Indigenous people who would be most affected by a decline in the Porcupine caribou herd if industrialization is allowed to proceed on the Coastal Plain.

The Gwich'in Nation – long time leaders from villages in Alaska and Canada alike – has worked with our organization since it was founded more than three decades ago. Today we look to Gwich'in leadership on how we communicate and articulate the human story, and the threat, posed by drilling. We do this by supporting and financing fly-ins that bring Tribal leaders to Washington, D.C., and we also provide trainings, communications resources, media connections, and policy updates to the Tribes whenever requested.

We also seek to expand the number of advocates for the Arctic Refuge, by helping to support efforts like Love is King in their work to connect BIPOC leaders to wild Alaska landscapes. Working with their director Chad Brown, we have supported Love is King trips to the Refuge, which are then followed up on by trip participants attending fly-ins and other events in Washington, D.C.

TCA Funding Plan

Alaska Wilderness League is a small but mighty organization where gifts of this magnitude have significant impact on our team's ability to achieve our goals. Unfortunately, the funding landscape for public lands conservation in Alaska is surprisingly scarce for myriad reasons including funders' geographic restrictions that exclude Alaska, a perceived notion from funders that public lands are somehow not a part of climate solutions, or that abundant resources are available to protect landscapes like the Arctic Refuge. The Conservation Alliance remains one of a very few longstanding committed funders to this cause and would be critical for this campaigns' success.

Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

At the end of 2025, we will measure our success by whether we have achieved the overarching goal of protecting federal lands in America's Arctic by stopping any new oil and gas development. This means that we will work to ensure:

- No seismic/industrial activity ever takes place on the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain
- The Arctic Refuge is kept out of the budget reconciliation process
- A clear, shared long-term vision (10+ years) for Arctic protections is crafted with partners

How long it took to complete application