

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 4, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

As a united Alaska delegation, we have strong concerns with the US Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal to include a wilderness review of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) as part of the revision of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for ANWR. While we understand the current 22-year-old CCP for ANWR needs to be updated, we strongly object to any further wilderness reviews for ANWR since we all recognize any new wilderness designations can only be made by Congress. The Fish and Wildlife Service's limited financial resources – and taxpayer dollars – should not be wasted on such an unproductive exercise.

Alaska already leads the nation in the number of wilderness designations and in the total amount of protected land. Under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), nearly half of ANWR has already been designated wilderness. After considerable debate, the coastal plain of the Refuge, the so-called 1002 area, was not so designated and instead was left open for potential oil and gas development. Alaska furthermore leads the nation with 25 Wild and Scenic River designations with several in and around ANWR, including the Ivishak, Sheenjek, and Wind Rivers. The ANWR coastal plain likely contains the continent's largest onshore deposit of hydrocarbons and, given advancements in technology, it is possible to access those resources without any significant impact to the wildlife frequenting the coastal plain.

As the Service states in its planning update for the Refuge, the future of the 1002 area of ANWR can only be resolved by Congress so "this is one issue the plan won't decide." Since the plan revision clearly will not decide this issue, we strongly urge you to take the wilderness review off the table as part of the CCP revision. We believe this will save the

The Honorable Ken Salazar
May 4, 2010
P. 2

Service considerable time and money and allow Refuge personnel to focus on critical issues such as managing increased visitor use and changing habitat conditions.

Additionally, as much as the advance of time may have changed habitat and wildlife management concerns, new technology can now facilitate both a better understanding of the oil and gas reserves within the 1002 area as well as enable more environmentally responsible development. Modern 3-D and 3-C seismic techniques can provide a substantially more accurate oil and gas resource assessment, and this can properly inform policy decisions. Additionally, directional drilling techniques would allow extraction of oil and gas from some of the 1002 area with no surface disturbance. We request you meaningfully consider both of these technological advances and their application in future planning for the 1002 area of ANWR. Furthermore, because seismic acquisition studies are expressly authorized in ANILCA Section 1002(b), so long as they are conducted in such a way as to avoid significant adverse effects, we request you comprehensively authorize and/or conduct such studies and make the resultant information available to Congress prior to any consideration of additional conservation measures.

We hope you will strongly consider these recommendations and alter your planning process accordingly so as to provide Congress with the information necessary to make informed decisions about the lands with which it is entrusted. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

		
<hr/> Lisa Murkowski United States Senator	<hr/> Mark Begich United States Senator	<hr/> Don Young United States Representative