North of the Arctic Circle and beyond Alaska’s Brooks Range mountains, lies America’s Arctic – the last frontier in American conservation.

From Point Hope on Alaska’s far western edge, to the pristine coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the east, America’s Arctic is made up of soaring mountains, verdant valleys, lush wetlands and ice-covered seas. Within this vast array of life are our nation’s greatest wild treasures: the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Polar Bear Seas, and the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska in the Western Arctic. Teaming with life, America’s Arctic is a true wonder of nature.

The Arctic’s rolling tundra, wild rivers, wetlands, ponds, deep lakes and sparkling coastal waters are home to a stunning array of wildlife. Every year millions of birds from across the country and around the world return to America’s Arctic tundra and wetlands to nest and raise their young. Caribou, musk oxen, wolverines, grizzly and polar bears roam the vast expanse of land while walrus, bowhead and beluga whales ply the Arctic waters.

These creatures have roamed the far north for centuries and have long supported the indigenous subsistence way of life. But now all of this is in danger. All across the Arctic rapid climate change is altering the fragile landscape, melting the sea ice and changing the tundra, and the push to drill for oil and mine for coal is mounting – threatening the wildlife and people who call this area home.

The Arctic Refuge, special areas in the Western Arctic and the Polar Bears Seas are the jewels of the far north. We must act now to save them from destructive drilling and mining and to help these special places, wondrous wildlife, and local communities survive in a rapidly changing world.

**THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE — THE WILDEST REFUGE**

Nestled between the Brooks Range and the shores of the Beaufort Sea in remote northeast Alaska, the narrow coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is the biological heart of this untamed wilderness. The Refuge contains the greatest diversity of animal life of any conservation area in the circumpolar region.

The fabled Porcupine Caribou Herd returns to the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge year after year to birth their young; birds migrate from all 50 states and six continents to nest and feed there; and for polar bears the coastal plain is the most important on-shore denning area. The coastal plain is the only patch of Alaska’s coastal Arctic that is not open to oil and gas development.

But Big Oil and its allies in Congress continue to scheme to open the coastal plain of the Refuge (or 1002 area) to oil and gas drilling— ignoring indisputable proof that drilling irreparably damages the fragile tundra and its wildlife. Yet despite the relentless push to drill, this iconic wilderness remains untouched. In order to ensure it remains this way for future generations the coastal plain must be given the strongest possible protections.
WESTERN ARCTIC — A NATURAL TREASURE

The land in the Western Arctic is the nation’s largest, wildest landscape. This area supports the calving grounds of our nation’s largest caribou herd, the highest concentration of grizzly bears and wolverines in the Arctic, and critical habitat for millions of shorebirds and waterfowl.

Within this vast landscape are areas that are incredibly important for wildlife and provide vital subsistence resources for the local people. These special places include Teshekpuk Lake, the Utukok Uplands, Kasegaluk Lagoon, Colville River, Dease Inlet-Meade River, Peard Bay, Southern Ikpikpuk River, and the DeLong Mountains-Arctic Foothill areas.

Together these places support a delicate web of life found nowhere else. The special places in the Western Arctic need permanent protections to keep them out of the hands of the oil and coal developers.

THE POLAR BEAR SEAS

The Arctic’s Beaufort and Chukchi Seas—the Polar Bear Seas—provide critical habitat for polar bears and other important marine mammals such as endangered whales and bearded and spotted seals.

The Beaufort and Chukchi Seas are part of the circumpolar Arctic Ocean. They have a rare mix of mineral-rich, cold offshore waters and freshwater flows from melting snow. The Chukchi Sea provides important feeding grounds for Pacific walrus, birds, and fish, and the sea’s unique open water leads offer feeding ground for bowhead and beluga whales and winter habitat for migrating mammals and birds, including a critical habitat for threatened spectacled eiders. These ocean waters have also sustained local Inupiaq culture for thousands of years.

The Chukchi Sea alone supports approximately one-tenth of the world’s remaining polar bear population. But climate disruption is causing the sea ice in the Arctic Ocean to melt at an alarming rate, imperiling marine life and the communities that depend on it. Instead of working to save the polar bear from a warming climate, Big Oil and their friends in power have added one more hurdle to its survival: oil drilling.

Despite the fact that there isn’t any proven technology that can clean up oil spills in Arctic waters there is a mounting push, driven by corporate greed, to drill in the Polar Bears Seas. We must act to protect the seas, and the polar bears and other marine mammals for future generations.
A WAY OF LIFE

The Arctic is home to more than just rich scenery and stunning wildlife. For the indigenous Gwich’in and Inupiaq people, the region sustains a way of life. The word “Gwich’in” means “people of the caribou”, and it refers to approximately 7,000 people who have lived in the Arctic since long before political maps divided Alaska and Canada. Oral tradition suggests that the Gwich’in have occupied the area between the Yukon and Porcupine Rivers since time immemorial, or, according to conventional belief, for as long as 20,000 years.

The 15 Gwich’in villages are located along the migratory paths of the Porcupine Caribou Herd in order for their people to subsist off the caribou as they have done for thousands of years. Gwich’in culture, spirituality and tradition are all deeply tied to their relationship with the caribou.

Scientists have proven that existing North Slope oil development has already disturbed the migration patterns and habits of the caribou in some areas. If oil and gas exploration and development were to occur in the Arctic Refuge, where the Porcupine Caribou Herd makes its annual migration to calve each spring, the Gwich’in way of life would be radically disrupted.

The Inupiaq people, or “real people” of Alaska’s northwest Arctic, rely on subsistence hunting of the land and sea for caribou, moose, whales, walrus, seals, and ducks, as well as salmon and berries, for their food. Their traditional whaling practice dates back thousands of years and forms the center of their diet and culture.

But today, global warming jeopardizes this way of life. Thinning sea ice makes it difficult to hunt and travel, and erosion places coastal villages in danger of flooding. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference, a group representing the Arctic’s indigenous people, has made the case that climate change represents a threat to their human rights.

THE DESPOILED ARCTIC

America’s Arctic is on the front lines of global warming — temperatures are climbing at twice the global pace. Although remote for most of us, the changes happening today in the Arctic are important signs of what may come for the rest of the planet. Climate change poses a special danger to the region, where wildlife and nature have formed a delicate balance.

Dirty energy like oil and coal is a one-two punch for the Arctic: The region’s wildlife suffers

ICE VANISHING In 2007 the area of melted sea ice grew by 1 million square miles—an area three times the size of Texas; the trend continues.
immediate threats from pollution, industry, and spills. But the inevitable impacts of this kind of development are more far-reaching: Burning the fossil fuels found in the Arctic will only accelerate global warming and hasten the disappearance of animals like the polar bear.

Wrestling coal from the Western Arctic to ship to Asia will leave behind a permanent trail of destruction. And seismic testing, boat traffic, and chemicals used in offshore oil development create a hostile environment for marine mammals like the polar bear and upset sensitive whale migrations. History has proven that oil spills are an inevitable part of oil drilling in Alaska.

To understand what’s at stake, one need only look as far as Prudhoe Bay—one of the world’s largest industrial complexes. The oil industry reported 4,534 spills across Alaska’s North Slope and Beaufort Sea between 1996 and 2004. Decades-old diesel spill sites still show little plant re-growth. Gravel fill, excavation, and waste disposal alone have destroyed 17,000 acres of wildlife and marine habitat.

A similar fate awaits the rest of the Arctic if Big Oil and its allies have their way. The reality is that we do not have the technology or the know-how to cleanup an oil spill in the Arctic Ocean. Trying to clean oil out of frigid water, covered in sea ice, in the perpetual darkness of winter would be impossible. The closest help, a Coast Guard station, is 1,000 miles away.

We cannot let the drilling and mining disasters happen across the Arctic.
Most of our public lands in America’s Arctic are already open to oil and gas leasing and the destructive activities associated with exploration and development. Activities like pipeline and well pad construction, along with road building, destroy wildlife habitat, create air and water pollution and forever compromise the wild character of land and sea. But the U.S. Department of Interior and its sub-agencies continue to issue new oil drilling leases in the places where wildlife live and raise their young.

There is a better way. America’s Arctic should be protected for the benefit of future generations. We don’t need to sacrifice irreplaceable wildlife habitat in places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Teshekpuk Lake, the Utukok Uplands, and the Polar Bear Seas in the pursuit of oil.

American ingenuity has already produced clean energy solutions—including wind and solar power—that make drilling these sensitive areas unnecessary. Instead of ruining one of America’s last truly wild expanses for a very limited amount of oil, we should be investing in ways to make our cars cleaner and more efficient and expanding our transportation choices to include better walking, biking and mass transit options.

Some places are just too special to drill—like the jewels of the far north. If we want future generations to enjoy their pristine wilderness and majestic wildlife, we must protect these places now.

Historically we have set aside our nation’s precious natural places—places like the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Mount Rainier—as a legacy for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. The Arctic is a touchstone of our generation, a wild place that touches our soul and inspires us to take action.

We have the opportunity and an obligation to protect America’s Arctic—home to the richest ecosystems in the region. It will be a gift not just to America but to the world; a legacy not just for our time, but for all time.

**HERE’S HOW YOU CAN HELP**

**CALL OR WRITE YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES**

This is the most important step you can take. Urge the Obama administration to permanently protect the special places of America’s Arctic and encourage key decision makers to support administrative actions to save the Arctic.

**Find and contact your Representative:** www.house.gov

**Find and contact your Senators:** www.senate.gov

**White House:** (202) 456-1111, www.whitehouse.gov/contact/submit-questions-and-comments

**Department of Interior:** (202) 208-3100, feedback@ios.doi.gov

**TELL YOUR FRIENDS, TELL THE WORLD**

Ask your friends and relatives to write letters and make calls to key decision makers to save the Arctic.

Educate your community and highlight the important role the Obama administration plays by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Look up your local newspaper at www.usnpl.com and find out how you can submit a letter.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:** www.ChillTheDrills.org