



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan  
Public Hearing  
May 11, 2010  
Alaska Regional Office  
1011 East Tudor Road

Comments Submitted By:

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Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today. My name is Tara MacLean Sweeney, I am the Vice President of External Affairs for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and I am an Iñupiaq from Barrow, Alaska. My ancestry has footprints across the North Slope thousands of years old; not simply for a float trip in the summer. Our people are the aboriginal environmentalist for the region, long before it was trendy to have a membership in the Audubon Society.

I submit to you comments on behalf of ASRC in opposition to proposed Wilderness designation for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The village of Kaktovik is the only village within the 19.6 million acres of the ANWR boundary, and is situated within the 1.5 million acres of the Coastal Plain. In the context of the CCP revision process, the major problem with proposed Wilderness designation is that it will severely impact the subsistence activities and traditional way of life for the residents of the Village.

Despite being private land owners within the Coastal Plain, the village will be surrounded by Wilderness, making the villagers essentially refugees on their own land. Subsistence activities are a major element of the traditional Native culture in the area and a primary source of nutrition for residents. Wilderness designation carries with it significant limitations on access and uses that will choke off traditional activities.

Motorized access to the vast hunting areas around the villages by snowmachine and other vehicles, and shelters and semi-permanent structures used for camping and hunting activities, will be limited and problematic. Alaska Native communities already confront these issues with existing nearby Wilderness areas. Now, the USFWS is contemplating transforming to Wilderness status the thin ribbon of coastal plain that exists between the mountain front and the coastline. This coastal plain includes the total remainder of caribou and waterfowl hunting areas, fish camps, ancestral campsites, and existing Native allotments. The agency is proposing Wilderness "creep" toward the shoreline to eventually surround privately-held lands near the Village. Life is difficult enough already with current Wilderness areas. Sending this burden further northward will be devastating.

As early as last November (2009), at the White House Tribal Nations Conference, President Obama acknowledged that, "Promises were broken. You were told your lands, your religion, your cultures, your languages were not yours to keep." Proposing the Coastal Plain for Wilderness designation flies in the face of the promises that were made to the only Native Americans to live within the federal boundaries of the 19.6 million acres of ANWR.

The residents of the Village of Kaktovik already are deprived of substantial economic opportunity because without further act of Congress, the Coastal Plain of ANWR is closed to such activities as oil and gas development. \*

The USGS estimates a median of 10.6 billion barrels of oil within the Coastal Plain, and yet as private land owners within the Coastal Plain, Kaktovik is barred by Federal law from taking advantage of this substantial, sustainable economic resource. Proposing Wilderness to shut down the community's traditional activities on top of this does not only seem at odds with the Obama Administration's Federal Indian Policy position; **it seems unconscionable.**

There is no valid reason to designate the Coastal Plan as Wilderness. The section 1002 area has unique status that needs to be taken into account in the planning process. President Carter recognized the unique status of this area by setting it aside because of its oil and gas potential. He had the opportunity to designate this area as Wilderness, and chose not to because of the potential for domestic oil and gas production.

This is a matter of national security. In a time of federal OCS policy uncertainty, ANWR holds the greatest North American potential for on-shore development where technology, regulations and mitigation standards are well established. To designate the Coastal Plain as Wilderness is shortsighted, and a national security risk as America continues to import oil from countries hostile to our nation.

Finally, it is important for me to point out that the public hearing process afforded to us by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides insufficient opportunities for the local communities that will be most affected by the plan revision. Although approximately 63% of the refuge lies within the boundaries of the North Slope Borough, and 100% of the Coastal Plain that could be recommended for Wilderness designation is located in the region, only one out of six public meetings are to be held within our region. Additional public hearings in the region are necessary to provide a fair and meaningful opportunity for the most affected communities to participate in the plan revision process.

Thank you for your time, your work and the opportunity to comment.