

Where We Stand

Outdoor Industry Association's position on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Coastal Plain

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Few places in this world are as inspirational and pristine as Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and its Coastal Plain. From its breathtaking natural beauty and rugged, virtually untouched wilderness to its wildlife great and small, the Arctic offers some of the world's most incredible outdoor recreation experiences. As outdoor industry companies that make and sell products for outdoor recreation and depend on our nation's natural landscapes and waters, it is imperative for our businesses, for our quality of life and for our shared American heritage, to protect places with high recreation value, from our backyards to the backcountry.

Those who go there today, to hunt and fish, to paddle, hike and camp, come back with a life changing experience. From encounters with polar Bears, to catching a glimpse of the 250,000 caribou that migrate thousands of miles to calf, it is fair to say this place is the last big, untouched Wilderness left on the planet. It is our job, as leaders in the outdoor industry to protect these places, not only for their inspiration today, but for the aspirations of future generations.

In the late 19th Century, when John Muir worked in Yosemite and later fought for its protection, he likely never imagined that millions of people a year would travel from across the globe to visit that iconic place. We cannot see what lies ahead for the Arctic, but we know that without protection today, its awe-inspiring beauty and recreational value are unlikely to survive.

Outdoor recreation contributes \$9.5 billion in consumer spending for Alaska's economy and supports nearly 100,000 jobs. Our industry brings in \$711 million every year in state and local tax revenue and is an economic driver that can continue year after year without depletion.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is threatened by energy and mineral development and climate change. The federal government should bestow the highest possible protection on this special place. Last year, President Obama recommended that Congress protect the Coastal Plain as Wilderness. OIA believes the recreational, cultural, and intrinsic value deserves no less in order to ensure wild exploration that benefits current and future generations.