

WILDERNESS ON THE COASTAL PLAIN OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Background:

In 1952, a FWOC Resolution called for the "creation of an Arctic Wilderness Preserve." In 1959, the Arctic National Wildlife Range was established to protect this large, integral wilderness ecosystem and its wildlife. In 1980, when the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was passed, it established the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—strengthening the protection and doubling its area. It also, however, left an area of the coastal plain—the 1002 area—open to possible oil and gas drilling by Congressional action.

The Alaska congressional delegation has repeatedly sought riders to open the area up to oil and gas exploration. The protection is essential to the ecological integrity of the entire ecosystem, inasmuch as the major rivers of the refuge flow from the Brooks Range north through the coastal plain to the Arctic Ocean, and the area is a wetland. It is of major importance as a calving area for the Porcupine caribou herd, a denning area for the Polar Bear, and a nesting and feeding area for migratory birds.

Resolution:

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs urges member clubs to support legislation, such as H.R. 39, the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act, which would give wilderness designation to the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in order to permanently protect the area from the constant threat of oil and gas development.