

National Affairs and Legislation Committee
The Garden Club of America
110th Congress, 2nd Session — October 29, 2008
Update # 18

Energy Supply and the Environment

• **The Arctic National Wildlife Reserve - ANWR**

Last summer, Update #17 discussed increasing our nation's energy supply by opening up deep offshore waters to oil and gas drilling and production. This issue, #18, looks at another potential source for U.S. domestic oil production: the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Garden Club of America:

For many years, the National Affairs and Legislation and Conservation Committees have been active and vocal opponents of attempts to open up ANWR in the past. As early as 1991, a position paper was issued by the Garden Club of America opposing oil and gas development in the refuge. Most recently, we opposed the protracted efforts in the 109th Congress in 2005-2006 to use the Congressional Budget Resolution and the Budget Reconciliation process to force the opening up of ANWR lands to oil and gas development (see Legislative Updates # 54, #56, #58, #60, #61, #62, #65, #66, #70, #72, and # 74.) Today, our opposition still remains as strong as ever to exploration and development of oil and gas in the ANWR coastal plain.

Background on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge:

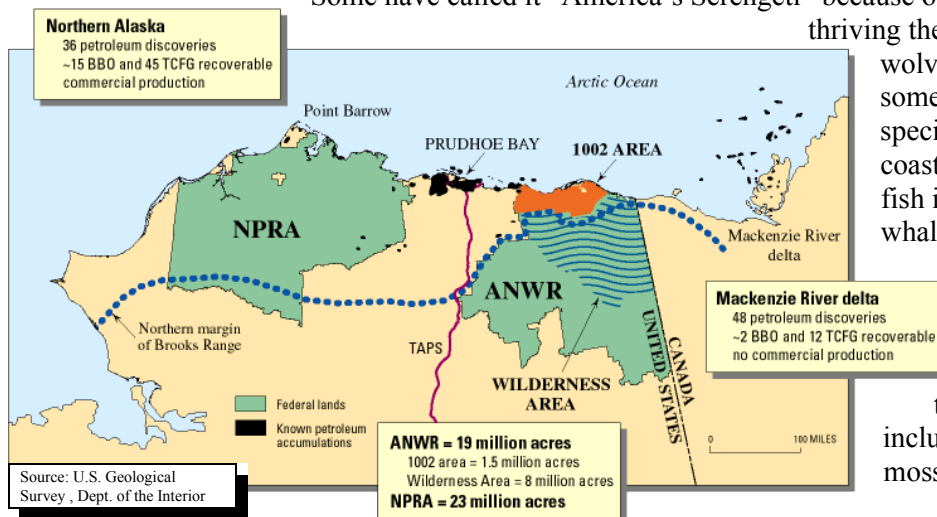
Efforts to protect northeastern Alaska began in the 1950s, even before Alaska became a state in 1959. An executive branch order in 1960, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971, and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) contributed to ANWR's present protected status. Among the purposes were to conserve fish and wildlife habitats, fulfill international wildlife and habitat treaty obligations, protect water quality, and enable indigenous people to continue their traditional lifestyle. Section 1002 of ANILCA defined the coastal plain and called for a study of its resources, which was completed in 1987. Thus the coastal plain is referred to as "1002 lands." Section 1003 of ANILCA prohibited the development or production of oil and gas in ANWR unless specifically authorized by Congress.

ANWR consists of 19 million acres in northeastern Alaska, including some 1.5 million acres located on the particularly fragile and ecologically significant coastal plain. It is administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Some have called it "America's Serengeti" because of the rich diversity of species thriving there: caribou, polar bears, grizzlies,

wolverines, musk oxen, wolves and some 200 other species, plus 125 bird species that migrate to the ANWR coastal plain as well as 36 species of fish in ANWR waters and bow-head whales, belugas and three seal species in ANWR's coastal waters.

The nearly undisturbed coastal plain is the biological heart of the refuge and brims with flora including hundreds of species of mosses, grasses, wildflowers, shrubs



and other plants. ANWR along with two neighboring parks in Canada have been proposed for an international park. Several species found there are protected by international treaties or agreements. ANWR has eight million acres of designated Wilderness areas, three Wild Rivers, two Research Natural Areas, and several distinctive scenic and scientific features that have been recommended as National Natural Landmarks. ANWR includes boreal forest, rolling upland taiga, glaciers of the Brooks Range, arctic tundra on the coastal plain, and lagoons and islands of the Beaufort Sea Coast, but no artifacts of civilization save traditional lands of Inupiaq Eskimos on the coast and Athabascan Indians in the interior. Perhaps the finest example of wilderness left on earth, the unbroken continuum of arctic and subarctic ecosystems continue large-scale ecological and evolutionary process free from human control or manipulation.



Why Worry About ANWR Now?

When oil prices shot up to \$150 a barrel last summer and looked as if they might keep rising, many politicians called for increasing U.S. domestic oil supplies. They called for fully exploiting oil deposits in deep offshore coastal waters, for opening up ANWR to exploration and eventual production, and for increased leasing of western federal lands for energy development.

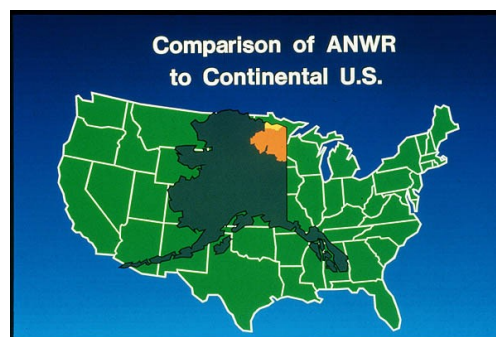
Public opinion shifted from opposition to support not only for offshore drilling but also for ANWR development. As recently as February, 2008, there were only 42% in favor of developing ANWR and 50% opposed. A June 29, 2008 Pew Research Poll reported that 50% of Americans favored drilling of oil and gas in ANWR. By the end of August, a CNN poll reported 59% in favor of drilling in ANWR and 39% opposed. This was a dramatic shift, and the presidential candidates listened.



- Republican nominee John McCain, a long-time foe of ANWR development, nominated Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin as his vice-presidential running mate. Palin passionately exhorted the country to “drill, baby, drill” even in ANWR and pledged to “keep working on” McCain to get him to change his views on ANWR—just as he had shifted on off-shore drilling.
- Democratic nominee Barack Obama voted against development in ANWR in 2005, 2006 and 2007, and sponsored a bill to designate the coastal plain “1002 area” as a Wilderness area. His vice-presidential running mate Joe Biden has also strongly opposed development of ANWR over the years.

Obama and Biden have emphasized renewable energy and energy conservation as the key to U.S. energy independence. But they are also in favor of the Alaskan Gas pipeline to send Alaskan North Slope (not ANWR) gas to the lower 48 and the streamlined development of shale oil in western states. Their energy position is posted at http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/factsheet_energy_speech_080308.pdf

Obama, like McCain, changed his position on off-shore drilling, saying that “we have to compromise in terms of a careful, well thought-out drilling strategy that is carefully circumscribed to avoid significant environmental damage—I don’t want to be so rigid that we can’t get something done.” Some worry that this flexibility could extend to other energy issues, including ANWR. <http://uk.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=UKN0340213420080803>



What are the arguments?

After so many years of legislative battles over opening ANWR to oil exploration and production, there are no new arguments. Each side knows the other's charges and comebacks. There is nothing new. Here are some of the most frequently voiced arguments.

Arguments in favor of opening ANWR:

- In 1998, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimated there were between 5.7 and 16.0 billion technically recoverable (but not proved) barrels of oil and gas liquids in the ANWR coastal plain. Developing this resource would increase US energy supplies and reduce energy prices.
- The U.S. is too dependent on foreign oil, much of which comes from adversarial nations. We need to fully develop any resources available within our own territory. We import 60 percent of the oil we use. Our resources are only 3% of the world's supply. We need to increase our own U.S.-based supplies.
- Like oil from the North Slope which is brought through the pipeline 800 miles south to Valdez, most of the oil from ANWR would go directly to the U.S., world oil-market dynamics notwithstanding. The U.S. west coast is the closest major place where oil is needed.
- Arctic Power cites a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report which states that 77 of the 567 wildlife refuges in 22 states had oil and gas activities. Developing ANWR could be done compatibly with wildlife protection.
- Since drilling began in a similar area on the Alaskan North Slope over 20 years ago, the Arctic caribou herd has grown from 3,000 to 27,500. No polar bear has been injured or killed as a result of extracting oil in Prudhoe Bay. Furthermore, the Marine Mammals Protection Act, which protects the polar bear in existing oil fields, also would do so on ANWR's coastal plain.
- Environmentalists are making too much of the ANWR coastal plain. It is a desolate, treeless place, not the picture of ecological high values generally used to portray ANWR by anti-drilling advocates.
- Only a very small portion of ANWR would be involved. Of the 1.5 million acres of coastal plain, the development footprint would involve fewer than 2000 acres, an area smaller than the Los Angeles International Airport, according to Sarah Palin.
- New techniques, including lateral drilling, will enable exploration and development to occur with only a minimal impact on the environment.

Arguments against opening ANWR:

- ANWR oil, if it proves out, is just a small drop compared to total U.S. proven reserves of 29 billion barrels and the world's resources of about 1.2 trillion barrels. The U.S. consumes 20 million barrels a day, of which more than half is imported. ANWR could not yield even 1 million barrels a day.
- The Department of Energy has uncertainties about USGS estimates for ANWR (which were rough estimates made decades ago) and the impact of ANWR output on oil supplies and prices. For one thing, any production from ANWR would probably be offset by lower production by OPEC and other nations. In 2030, total ANWR production would be between 0.4 and 1.2 percent of total world oil—not enough to have much influence on world oil prices. Even if the ANWR oil were used in the U.S. domestic market, the global economic dynamics of oil prices and flows would be largely unaffected.
- It would take at least 10 to 12 years to produce oil from ANW. In that time, our nation could reduce its total oil consumption by a much larger amount by investing in renewable sources of energy and promoting conservation.
- A great deal of oil still remains on the Alaskan North Slope, offshore, and in the lower-48 states that has not been developed or produced. These oil reserves should be exploited before we even consider whether to open the fragile ANWR area to the heavy environmental impact of oil production.
- The required network of oil platforms, pipelines, roads and support facilities, not to mention the threat of foul spills, would play havoc on wildlife. The coastal plain, for example, is a calving home for some 129,000 caribou. It is a critical habitat for polar bears, seals and the endangered bowhead whale.
- When the debate over opening ANWR began decades ago, the plan was to work only in the winter, using iced roads, airstrips and platforms to minimize damage to the tundra. Global warming since then has softened the permafrost, and there is no longer sufficient snow cover in the winter to build temporary roads of snow. It is increasingly doubtful that the boggy tundra could even support oil drilling platforms, pipelines, roads and other infrastructure in the summer months.

Looking Ahead:

Two huge factors will determine whether the next Congress makes a run at opening ANWR for oil development. First, the election next week will bring not only a change in the leadership in the White House but also a likely large shift in Congress. Congressional Democrats traditionally have been more opposed to ANWR development than Republicans, with notable exceptions on both sides. If Senate Democrats gain seats, they will be more likely to muster the 60 votes needed for closing debate and for protecting ANWR.

The world-wide economic downturn is the other macro-factor. High gasoline prices in the summer resulted in a reduction in miles driven and U.S. oil consumption. Whether those lower levels will continue now that prices are moderating remains to be seen. Overall, however, the economic recession looming over the world will mean less oil consumption (and less emission of carbon dioxide) than under a business-as-usual scenario. Lower demand for oil and lower oil prices make it less likely that political leaders will feel they need to open ANWR for oil development.

How you can help:

- As in the past, you can remind your legislators that you continue to support full protection of ANWR. Even though enactment of new legislation is unlikely in 2008, this issue could come up again in the future, and it doesn't hurt to register your opinions early.

How to contact your legislators:

To send e-mail to your representative, go to <http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW.shtml>. Click on your representative's name, and then look for the "contact" box and follow the directions for sending e-mail.

To send e-mail to your senator, go to http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?OrderBy=last_name&Sort=ASC.

Then click on the link to your senator's web form.

To telephone any representative or senator: Call the Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121. Ask for your legislator's office. When the phone is answered, say that you want to leave a message about upcoming legislation. A young aide will take the message or send you to the legislator's voice mail. This seems impersonal, but is nevertheless effective—legislators keep track of how many calls come in on different issues and the direction in which sentiment is running. Even a relatively small number of calls are enough to warrant serious consideration of the view expressed.

NAL updates serve in an advisory capacity, based on committee research. **Individual clubs and members may act on any issue as they choose.**

Editor: Martha Phillips. mhphillips@optonline.net (new e-mail address), 860-491-2284.

To **unsubscribe**: Contact Mary Jane at GCA Headquarters, 212-753-8287 or maryjane@gcamerica.org.

All emails and faxes are sent from GCA Headquarters,

