ANWR Drilling Will Not Reduce America’s Dependence on Foreign Oil

Natural Resources Defense Council

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is a nonprofit membership organization that advocates for the preservation of the environment worldwide. The NRDC has strongly and consistently opposed opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration and production.

Despite the fact that both Congress and the American people have been overwhelmingly clear and consistent that they want the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (AMWR) permanently protected rather than opened for oil exploration, “Big Oil” is pushing harder than ever to gain access to what it believes would be a hugely profitable and game-changing venture. Producing domestic oil for energy independence is not the real issue here; the real issue is profits and lifting barriers to the private development of mineral resources on public and protected lands nationwide, which would be a huge boon to the oil industry. In and of itself, ANWR oil is nothing more than a drop in the proverbial bucket, and it would do very little to further American energy independence. As one of the world’s most extensive and pristine wilderness areas, ANWR should not be sacrificed for the false illusion of energy security.

On the northern edge of our continent, stretching from the peaks of the Brooks Range across a vast expanse of tundra to the Beaufort Sea, lies Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. An American Serengeti, the Arctic Refuge continues to pulse with million-year-old ecological rhythms. It is the greatest living reminder that conserving nature in its wild state is a core American value.

In affirmation of that value, Congress and the American people have consistently made clear their desire to protect this treasure and rejected claims that drilling for oil in the Arctic Refuge is any sort of answer to the nation’s dependence on foreign oil. Twice in 2005, Congress acted explicitly to defend the refuge from the (President George W.) Bush administration and pro-drilling forces, with House leaders removing provisions that would have allowed for drilling from a massive budget bill, and the Senate withstanding an attempt by Republican leaders to open up the Arctic.

Since then, concerned Americans have continued to push Congress to thwart recurring efforts to see the refuge spoiled. During President (Barack) Obama’s 2008 campaign he pledged not to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas leasing. Over the last year (2011) the Fish and Wildlife Service has been developing a new management plan for the Refuge and is considering recommending Wilderness for the coastal plain.

Opening the Arctic Refuge to energy development is about transferring our public estate into corporate hands so it can be liquidated for a quick buck.

Americans Oppose Drilling the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The controversy over drilling in the Arctic Refuge—the last piece of America’s Arctic coastline not already open to oil exploration—isn’t new. Big Oil has long sought access to the