

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

June 21, 2017

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We are writing to express our significant concerns with the Secretarial Order you signed on May 31, 2017.<sup>1</sup> This order would negatively affect two iconic public land units in America's Arctic: the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska (Reserve). The actions called for in the order are short-sighted and disregard the long history of support for these exceptional natural landscapes.

We are extremely concerned that the Order directs the United States Geological Survey to update the assessment of oil and gas resources in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The 19.6-million-acre Arctic Refuge is one of our nation's most iconic and celebrated landscapes. The 1.5 million acre Coastal Plain is the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge, providing vital habitat for polar bears, the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and more than 250 bird species. The Gwich'in people have relied on the Porcupine Caribou Herd for subsistence, spiritual, and cultural purposes since time immemorial.

The Order incorrectly states that the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge (or the Section 1002 Area) was set aside by Congress "because of its potential for oil and natural gas development." In fact, this area was first designated as the Arctic National Wildlife Range in 1960 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to protect its "unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values." In 1980, with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, this area was re-designated as a national wildlife refuge and expanded. Other than a time-limited exploration program completed in the 1980s, oil and gas activities have been, and continue to be, prohibited by law on the Coastal Plain.

During the recent Comprehensive Conservation Plan process, more than 600,000 public comments were submitted to the Department of the Interior, with over 96% of them calling for permanent protection of the Coastal Plain. Because all oil and gas activity is federally prohibited on the Coastal Plain, the assessment of the oil and gas resources in this area does not need to be revised.

We are also concerned that the Order seeks to begin the revision of the Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) for the Reserve. The Reserve is our nation's single largest unit of public land — nearly 23 million acres. In the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act (NPRPA), Congress directed that the wildlife, cultural, and scenic values of the Reserve be protected, and that "Special Areas" be designated to ensure maximum protection of areas with particularly important ecological and subsistence values. Congress specifically recognized Teshekpuk Lake

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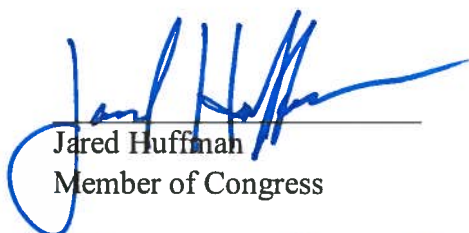
<sup>1</sup> Secretarial Order No. 3352

and Utukok River as Special Areas for protection. The importance of protecting the Teshekpuk Lake area has been recognized by Republicans and Democrats for decades. In 1981, Congress amended the NPRPA to allow for oil and gas leasing in the Reserve, while still mandating the protection of surface values and Special Areas.

In 2013, following the completion of a multi-year, robust public process, the Department of the Interior adopted the first-ever comprehensive IAP for the entire Reserve. The IAP implemented a balanced approach: allowing oil and gas leasing on 11.8 million acres while protecting the most important wildlife habitat and conserving subsistence resources in the Reserve. There was overwhelming support for the IAP from the public, native organizations, and the scientific community, with over 400,000 public comments and over 90 Alaskan villages supporting conservation and protection of key caribou habitat. The IAP achieved Congress' goal of protecting wildlife and subsistence uses and Special Areas, while allowing for energy development in the Reserve. There is no need to re-visit the balanced decisions made in the IAP four years after its adoption, and we urge you to leave the IAP in place.

We ask that you recognize the tremendous public support for protecting these public lands, respect the results of the planning processes that have been undertaken in recent years, and not proceed with any actions called for in Secretarial Order No. 3352.

Sincerely,



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



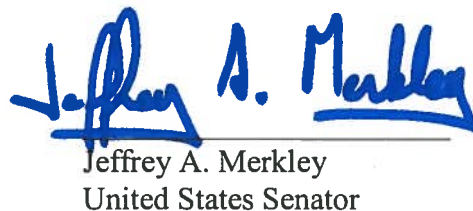
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