

Obama administration heeds call of Americans to protect Arctic wilderness

A paddler carries her pack raft across a shallow section of the Marsh Fork of the Canning River in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Brooks Range Mountains, Alaska.

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On January 25, 2015, the Obama administration made history by recommending that more than 12 million acres within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge be designated as wilderness, including the coastal plain—the biological heart of the refuge.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made this recommendation as part of a revision to the overall management plan for the Arctic Refuge.

"By recognizing the incredible wilderness and habitat value for species such as polar bear and caribou, the Fish and Wildlife Service has taken a tremendous step to preserve one of the wildest places in North America—the Arctic Refuge—for generations," said Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society. "Some places are simply too special to drill and we are thrilled that a federal agency has acknowledged that the refuge merits wilderness protection."

It's up to Congress to make the final decision to designate wilderness in the refuge, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's position ensures the recommended wilderness areas are managed as such for the time being.

The Wilderness Society and members like you helped make this important step happen. Your generosity has enabled our staff to build relationships with key decision makers in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Obama administration, and provide technical and scientific comments on plans for management of the refuge. With your support, The Wilderness Society spearheaded efforts alongside local and national partners to help government officials develop the rationale for a wilderness recommendation.

In fact, over the years The Wilderness Society's members and supporters have

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DID YOU KNOW?

The Arctic wilderness recommendation suggests that 12.28 million acres, including the coastal plain, be designated and protected as wilderness.

The recommendation would add the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut and Marsh Fork of the Canning River to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

This is the largest wilderness recommendation ever made by an agency for a single land-management unit.



The Wilderness Society President Jamie Williams relaxing on the Flathead River in Montana.

DEAR WILDERNESS SOCIETY SUPPORTER,

In these past few months we have seen several exciting wins for conservation, with both the Obama administration and Congress taking action to protect some of our nation's most important landscapes.

First, after five years marked mostly by congressional gridlock, Congress passed the largest package of wilderness and public lands bills since 2009. This package protected more than one million acres of public lands from Washington State to New Mexico—all representing places that Americans have been working to protect for years, and in some cases decades.

In another big win for wild places, the Obama administration made a recommendation to protect more than 12 million acres as wilderness in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This recommendation is an unprecedented gesture to shield this ecologically and culturally important area from oil and gas development and ensures that it will be managed as wilderness.

The President didn't stop there; he also used his power under the Antiquities Act to designate Browns Canyon National Monument in Colorado, permanently protecting this outdoor recreation destination for future generations to enjoy. Without all of you, these victories would not have been possible. Your support allowed The Wilderness Society to work closely with partners on the ground to permanently protect these treasured wildlands.

As we look ahead, we must also ensure that the new Congress doesn't roll back bedrock environmental laws that help protect our public lands. Whether it's defending the Antiquities Act or preventing the sell-off of public lands, we will work tirelessly to protect our nation's most cherished wildlands for the American people. As always, we thank you for your shared commitment to the wild places we all love.

Sincerely,
Jamie Williams

ADMINISTRATION HEEDS CALL TO PROTECT ARCTIC *continued*

helped provide more than 600,000 public comments urging the Obama administration to take this historic step.

With momentum on our side, it's critical that we continue our efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge—the crown jewel of America's national wildlife refuges. Visit wilderness.org/protect-the-refuge to thank President Obama for his recommendation and urge him to continue fighting for the refuge.



Darby Stanchfield

was born and raised in Kodiak, Alaska, where her father was a commercial fisherman. She is an actress who stars in the ABC political drama, "Scandal," and is an active board member of the Environmental Media Association.

"Protecting the refuge by designating wilderness will ensure that all of its recreational, scenic, scientific and cultural wonders will continue to be one of America's greatest public treasures."

"We owe it to ourselves, and we owe it to all the people who will come after us."

America's Wilderness is published three times a year by The Wilderness Society.

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DESIGN:
Studio Grafik

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HOT ISSUES

Special interests are threatening to seize public lands in 11 states for short-term private gain, putting some of America's favorite places at risk.

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KEEP AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS IN PUBLIC HANDS

In at least 11 western states—Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington—efforts are underway to sell off federally managed public lands to states. Special interest groups are lobbying state legislatures to privatize or auction public lands for drilling, mining and logging. Such action would threaten millions of acres of our nation's treasured parks and open spaces in the interest of short-term private gain.

What's the cost of public land seizures?

- Loss of recreational access for all Americans
- Potential development of prized wildlands
- Burdens for state taxpayers
- Potential damage to other state programs

You own these lands. They have been set aside for you and your family to experience and enjoy. These lands are also important

habitat for wildlife and clean sources of water that keep our communities healthy. When you support The Wilderness Society, you are standing up to say you will not allow shortsighted special interests to steal that legacy from all of us, or from our children and grandchildren.

MEMBER SUPPORT PROTECTS THE ANTIQUITIES ACT

With the continued generosity of our members and supporters, The Wilderness Society continues the fight to protect the Antiquities Act through advocacy campaigns focused on Congress. During the first weeks of the 114th Congress, several bills were introduced that would undermine this time-honored law. The Antiquities Act has been used for over a century to establish more than 130 national monuments that protect places of historic or scientific interest. Most recently, the Antiquities Act was used by President Obama to safeguard Browns Canyon in Colorado, the Pullman historic district in Chicago and Honouliuli World War II internment camp on the island of

O'ahu. This is your victory. With your support, we will continue to fight against threats that would undermine this bedrock conservation law.

REBUILDING OUR NATION'S CONSERVATION BUDGET

Our parks and other public lands are suffering from neglect and chronic underfunding. This translates into poorly maintained trails, lack of youth education programs and limited law enforcement to keep us safe, all of which have led to a decline in the quality of our shared lands. With your help, The Wilderness Society is working with our champions in Congress and the President to restore funding to a wide array of conservation programs that represent only 1 percent of the federal budget but provide huge benefits to local communities across the nation. The Land and Water Conservation Fund—a tool that has been used to protect land and expand outdoor recreation opportunities for 50 years—is one example of the critical conservation programs we are fighting to protect during this Congress.

WILD PLACES

ONE MILLION ACRES OF PUBLIC LANDS PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

After five years of little action in Congress, the end of 2014 saw a dramatic change of course for wilderness. In December, a landmark suite of wilderness and public lands bills were passed with broad, bipartisan support, covering more than one million acres of public lands. These lands gained permanent protection, spanning historic sites and remote wildlands. Thank you! The generosity of our members and supporters makes conservation victories like these possible.

245,000
acres of new wilderness
designations

392,000
acres of special
conservation areas

106
miles of wild
and scenic rivers

415,000
acres withdrawn from
energy development



Mountain goats in the Enchantments, Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Washington

© Andy Porter

“The wild places permanently protected by this measure ensure that generations of Americans will have the opportunity to enjoy these lands and all they have to offer. Congress has proven that protecting our public lands is not a Republican or Democratic issue but an all-American value,” said Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society.

ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS EXPANSION

This bipartisan legislation expanded the existing Alpine Lakes wilderness area by roughly 22,000 acres, permanently protecting low-elevation wildlands within a 45-minute drive of Seattle. It also added 10 miles of the Pratt River and nearly 30 miles of the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, protecting clean water, native trout and world-class outdoor recreational opportunities that support local economies and make this region a spectacular place to live and play.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT

The Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act protected 275,000 acres of the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana and was passed with broad, enthusiastic, bipartisan support. Included in the act was Montana’s first wilderness designation in more than 30 years, adding 67,000 acres to the eastern fringe of the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat wilderness areas. The Wilderness Society helped bring together local ranchers, outdoor enthusiasts, hunters, tribal members and public officials to advocate for the protection of these public lands along the Rocky Mountain Front.

Montana celebrated its first wilderness designation in more than 30 years as 67,000 acres along the Rocky Mountain Front were added to the National Wilderness Preservation System.



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AMERICA'S NEWEST NATIONAL MONUMENT: BROWNS CANYON

On February 19, President Obama officially designated Browns Canyon National Monument. This scenic 22,000-acre stretch of public lands along the Arkansas River is a hotspot for outdoor recreation and one of Colorado's most treasured landscapes. The area is well-known for its whitewater rafting, fishing and hiking and generates more than \$55 million per year in economic activity for the local economy. With the support of our members, The Wilderness Society and many local leaders have been working since the early 1970s to protect the natural values of the Browns Canyon landscape.

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A photograph of a man with short grey hair and sunglasses, wearing a blue jacket and tan pants, sitting in a field of tall, dry grass. He is looking towards the right. The text 'WILDERNESS AND YOU' and 'Tuck Stebbins' is overlaid on the top left of the image.

WILDERNESS AND YOU

Tuck Stebbins

© Christy Stebbins

In 1977, Tuck Stebbins created a challenge for himself that ultimately changed his life. An experienced solo backpacker, he set out to find the two places that were most separated in Alaska but each of which had scheduled air service. "I settled on a plan to walk between Arctic Village and Kaktovik," he says. Nearly 21 days and 183 miles later, Tuck emerged from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge transformed by the experience. "At the end of the day, I'd have to say that maybe there's a wilderness area in America that is more spectacular, but I don't know it, and I can't imagine it."

As he read about other pioneers of the Alaska Arctic—most notably the Murie family—another surprise emerged for Tuck. "It just so happened that all the people who caught my imagination were in some way connected to The Wilderness Society." He became a member of the organization, and now, more than three decades later, he puts his passion for preserving our nation's public lands into action by serving on The Wilderness Society's President's Council.

For this NASA astrophysicist, wild places have always been a respite from the urban setting. As a young man, Tuck traveled back and forth between the New York City suburbs and the very wild, remote reaches of east-central British Columbia, where his family spent their summer vacations. And today, from his home in Silver Spring, Maryland, he ensures that his family maintains this integral connection with the outdoors by exploring wild places across the country, and particularly in Alaska. Tuck recalls dozens of memorable trips shared with his wife Christy and their two grown children to places like the Alatna River in the Gates of the Arctic National Park and the volcanic landscape of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, to name a few.

Tuck insists that he will continue to support all efforts to protect the crown jewel that is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as well as other key wildlands. "When it comes to our collective wild heritage, it's important to find a way to work for the societal solution—and I think The Wilderness Society is the premier organization to identify and advocate for the protection of wilderness."

A wide-angle photograph of a turquoise lake in the foreground, with dark, rugged mountains in the background under a cloudy sky.

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, Alaska



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