



## Alaska's Arctic Refuge leads list of "Too Wild to Drill" landscapes

*New report brings attention to America's vulnerable public lands*

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**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA** (Sept. 19, 2017) – A new report released today by The Wilderness Society raises the alarm about wild lands threatened by extractive industries eager to exploit the resources on or underneath them, including oil, gas and coal. Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge leads the list of at-risk landscapes.

"Too Wild To Drill" identifies 15 unique places found on public lands that are at high risk of drilling, mining and other development—and the damage and destruction that inevitably follow. These lands provide Americans with important benefits such as clean air and water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and jobs and other socioeconomic benefits.

"Some places are simply too wild to drill," said Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society. "The federal government must resist pressure from energy companies and other special interests to open up our last remaining wild places for development."

The Arctic Refuge is a national treasure that is being targeted by the Trump administration, Gov. Bill Walker and Alaska's congressional delegation for oil exploration and potential drilling despite decades of the American public's overwhelming support for protecting it as one of our last untouched, pristine landscapes.

The Arctic Refuge is an amazing, wild landscape of 19.2 million acres in northeastern Alaska, and is home to polar bears, wolves, migratory birds and the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which consists of more than 180,000 animals. Alaska's indigenous Gwich'in people rely on the refuge's subsistence resources to sustain their communities and culture. It has value far beyond whatever oil might lie beneath it and, as a nation, we have an obligation to protect it for our children and grandchildren.

Energy development damages landscapes across America, often permanently. Impacts resulting from infrastructure like well pads, oil rigs, roads, fences and pipelines include air and water pollution from haze, spills, chemicals and dust, as well as phenomena like industrial traffic, gas flares and other light pollution, and loud noise that can disrupt communities and wildlife.

The Wilderness Society issues a new, updated version of "Too Wild To Drill" every few years to call attention to vulnerable places on public lands. In this edition, places highlighted include the Arctic Refuge, Utah's Bears Ears National Monument, and the Appalachian Trail.

These places show how varied, unique and geographically dispersed our public lands are, and the many different ways Americans use and enjoy them.



“The Interior Department is required by Congress to manage, on behalf of the American people, almost 450 million acres of public lands for many different purposes, not just energy extraction,” Williams said. “Yet oil, gas and coal have long had an outsized influence—and footprint—on public lands. It is long past time that we take some of these lands off the table.”

Energy companies already have more leases than they can apparently use. Of the [27 million acres currently under lease](#) to oil and gas companies—an area about the size of Tennessee—more than half are sitting idle. And the coal industry already has 20 years of reserves under lease on public lands.

The release of “Too Wild To Drill” falls in midst of numerous reviews of public lands policies, ordered by President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, that are taking place behind closed doors with little or no public oversight or accountability.

This month also marks the end of the 180-day review period established by President Trump’s “Energy Independence and Economic Growth” Executive Order. The directive requires federal agencies to review any regulations that could “potentially burden” fossil fuel development. The Trump administration is known for its close ties to the extractive industries.

“We must set aside our wildest, most pristine places for future generations to enjoy,” Williams said. “Selling out our public lands for short-term profit should not be an option for these special places. Once they’re gone, we can never get them back.”

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*The Wilderness Society is the leading conservation organization working to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. Founded in 1935, and now with more than one million members and supporters, The Wilderness Society has led the effort to permanently protect 109 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands. [www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org).*