

**The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges
urges you to submit comments by November 15, 2011 on
the
Draft Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive
Conservation Plan**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released the draft environmental impact statement for revision to the Arctic Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). (see the summary and full document at: <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>). This is a historic opportunity for the Fish and Wildlife Service to make a wilderness recommendation for almost the entire 19.8 million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, including permanent protection of its biological heart in the Arctic Coastal Plain. The final plan will guide stewardship of this magnificent and wild “crown jewel” of the National Wildlife Refuge System for at least the next 15 years. Your comments are needed to achieve the respectful stewardship and protection the Arctic Refuge so richly deserves. The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges includes many veterans of Arctic Refuge advocacy who know the Refuge from many years of experience. We urge you to submit your personalized comments that should address the following:

The Most Important Comments to Keep the Arctic Refuge Natural, Wild, and Free from Destructive Development:

1. Support Alternative E recommending wilderness designation for the entire Refuge, except for lands near villages. Wilderness designation for all qualified lands will allow the continuation of traditional activities on the Refuge by the Gwich'in and other Alaska Natives, including subsistence gathering of food, timber harvest for local use, and guided travel within the Refuge.
2. Support the proposed goals, especially 1 and 2, specifying protection of ecological processes and wilderness character.
3. Support Management Guidelines 2.4.12 and 2.4.12.7 allowing the natural behavior, interactions, and population dynamics of all species to continue (no predator control).
4. Support management Guideline 2.4.11 specifying leaving habitats natural, unaltered, and free from manipulation and intensive management .

5. Support addressing climate change by reducing other stressors on wildlife, and allowing natural systems to adapt and evolve as they will, without intervention.
6. Support Goal 5, wilderness recreation to perpetuate opportunities for visitors to experience adventure, challenge, solitude, independence, and freedom with minimal interference from the government.

Other important comments:

1. State vs. Refuge “Game” Management—The draft plan appropriately recognizes the need to coordinate with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. However, it fails to acknowledge that the state’s goals for managing wildlife sometimes conflict with the Refuge’s purposes for maintaining natural and wild wildlife populations, e.g. predator control and intensive management. The plan must explicitly state that when in conflict, Refuge purposes must prevail. The Fish and Wildlife Service must exercise its responsibility to preempt the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Board of Game.
2. Visitor Use Impacts and issues—During the scoping process, the public identified many actions needed to protect wilderness qualities and experiences, but almost all were deferred to some future planning process. The Refuge 1988 CCP also committed the agency to address visitor use issues in future plans, but none was ever undertaken. Significant visitor use impacts and issues should be addressed in this plan.
3. Special Values—The Special Values of the Arctic Refuge section describes the most important characteristics of the Refuge. It should be supported to serve as a guide for all management decisions.
4. Wilderness and Wild Rivers—Wilderness land designation would provide overall, enduring protection for the Refuge and its resources. Within wilderness, wild river designation would be redundant and compete with funds and resources needed to protect all the wilderness values. Supporting wilderness recommendations should be the priority.

Please frame your comments in your own words, and speak from the heart. Include any personal experience you have with the Refuge. This is a critical crossroads in the historic struggle to keep the Arctic Refuge unspoiled and wild.

Send your comments by Nov 15, 2011:

Email: ArcticRefugeCCP@fws.gov

Online: <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>

Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arctic NWR- Sharon Seim, 101 12th Ave, Rm 236,
Fairbanks, AK 99701.

THANK YOU