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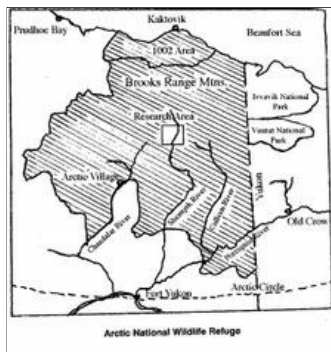
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR): why not drill in ANWR for oil?

Creating a renewable future

By Janice Mason
Friday, July 25, 2008



Mike Oatley, sports editor for the Trail-Gazette, has traveled to Alaska six times. He was in the Brooks Range in 2001 camping and fishing for several days. Above: Oatley's camp along one of the many lakes in the area.



Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) as documented in "Four Seasons North" by one of the first wildlife biologists to visit the area, local resident and author H. Robert Krear.

Editor's note: This is Part I in a series on the effects of climate change. Editorial comments by the author will be included. The climate of planet earth is in crisis. Evidence of this can be seen in weather and climate changes across the globe, producing fires, increased storm activity and melting polar ice. The climate of energy is also changing. The long wait for clean energy technologies discovered years ago are finally being implemented. The earth's resources stretched, an examination of current discussions and solutions will be presented in this series.

What price are we really paying for the continuous use of limited oil reserves? Why not just drill more oil nationally, find more and continue the status quo when it comes to burning the energy that fuels transportation?

In 1955-56, local, retired professor, wildlife biologist and World War II veteran, Dr. H. Robert Krear, participated in the Olaus Murie Arctic Brooks Range Expedition, which set in motion the creation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in northeast Alaska. ANWR stands today as the last portion of protected arctic wilderness in the world.


Looking into the eyes of Krear, the prospect of drilling in ANWR is preposterous. One only read chapter three, "The Olaus Murie Arctic Brooks Range Expedition," in Krear's book "Four Seasons North" to understand the priceless treasure that sits in the northeast corner of Alaska. And it's not all about wildlife.

The life that supports planet earth takes part in an intricate dance. Air, water, ice, plants, animals and humans play a part and must work together in order to support the interplay of all species living on earth.

According to Krear, thousands of birds migrate to the Brooks Range in ANWR each year. Weakening these patterns begins a domino effect, disrupting the intricate balance of nature. The caribou, fur seals, bears and other wildlife play into this balance. When humans loose the understanding of the connection between destroying plant and animal species, and the destruction of the human species, mistakes are made in evaluating solutions to the climate crisis.

But do politicians and/or corporations contemplate possible destruction before going forward with plans to drill for oil on protected lands? Do the demands for oil overpower the need to preserve the environment?

Some may be surprised to learn that politicians in Alaska are


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anxious to promote drilling in ANWR. The website devoted to this is none other than anwr.org. A republican delegation of congressional delegates from Indiana, Utah, Wisconsin, South Dakota and Pennsylvania visited the region this week and the following was reported on anwr.org:

"Seven Congressional candidates spent the last few days visiting the people of Kaktovik, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and are calling for Congress to open ANWR to drilling.

"I believe that we can drill and obtain that oil on the North Slope certainly much sooner than the 10-year doom and gloom argument made by my opponents in Indiana and the whole Washington leadership," said Republican Indiana Congressional Candidate Greg Goode.

"Our districts are crying out for help on these energy issues," said Craig Williams, a former assistant U.S. attorney who is running in suburban Philadelphia. "We need an energy plan now and although ANWR won't be the solution, it should be a component of that plan."

According to procon.org, Democratic Presidential candidate Barack Obama opposes drilling in ANWR.

"I strongly reject drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge because it would irreversibly damage a protected national wildlife refuge without creating sufficient oil supplies to meaningfully affect the global market price or have a discernable impact on U.S. energy security." — Barack Obama, Oct. 24, 2007 (procon.org)

This is what Al Gore, former Vice President and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner, had to say to Tom Brokaw on NBC's Meet the Press on July 20, 2008:

"...the areas that are protected now are protected for a reason," said Gore. "The coastal economy has been hurt in the past by oil spills..."

"I think that the areas that have environmental values and economic values connected to the environment at stake should be protected. And the larger reason why is even if they went in that direction, everybody acknowledges, it would have zero impact on gasoline prices or oil prices. It's a drop in the bucket that would pose high risk of very important values. It wouldn't even start until 10 or 15 years from now and would likely to be — likely be sold to China anyway. And going back over and over and over again to the old ways of the past just puts off the reckoning with the opportunity that we need to seize now to shift over to renewable sources of energy.

"The entire North Polar ice cap, Tom, has been there three million years, it's the size of the lower 48 states, and the scientists now say that there's a 75 percent chance it'll be completely gone during the summer in as little as five years. This is happening on our watch. We have got to respond."

Amory Lovins, co-founder, chair and chief scientist of Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado, spoke about this issue to Amy Goodman on "Democracy Now!" on July 16, 2008.

"Well, we seem to be wanting to drill in all the wrong places," said Lovins. "For example, over 50 times as much oil as might be under the Arctic Refuge, at very high prices, can be saved at very low prices by using the oil efficiently... You know, I've worked for major oil companies for about 35 years, and they understand how expensive it is to drill for oil.

"Take the Arctic Refuge as an example. You might think that at today's oil prices, it would be clearly a great deal to go drill there. Well, it wasn't before, when oil was in the 20-odd dollar a barrel range instead of \$140. And that's why the oil companies weren't interested. Guess what. They're still not interested. Why not? Well, because their costs of drilling have gone up more than the oil price went up. If you talk to people who run exploration in major oil companies, they're still not excited about the Arctic Refuge, because practically any other place in the world they could drill would be cheaper and less risky than that extraordinarily remote and hostile environment.

"... it doesn't make any economic sense. There's no business case for it. And the real showstopper, interestingly, is national security..." Lovins continued. "[The] former CIA director has actually testified against Arctic Refuge drilling on national security grounds. There's a very simple reason. There's only one way to get the oil south: it's through the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which is the most vulnerable part of our energy infrastructure, the biggest terrorist target in our energy infrastructure.

"So, think about it. You've got an 800-mile pipeline, mostly above ground, mostly accessible by road or by floatplane. And if the flow through it is interrupted in the winter for about a week, 900 — well, nine million barrels of hot oil congeals into the world's largest Chapstick, a big candle. Then you can't pump it anymore. Could this happen? Well, actually, yes, if certain points on the pipeline, pumping stations and so on, were attacked.

"A drunk shut it down with one hole from a rifle bullet," Lovins continued. "And the scariest thing to me is around Y2K, at the turn of the century, a disgruntled engineer was caught by accident about to blow up three critical points with 14 bombs he had built and tested."

Local resident, Dr. Paul Newendorp, has a Ph.D. in petroleum engineering from the University of Oklahoma. His 30-year career began in 1959 working in the petroleum exploration division of Standard Oil Co. of

Indiana. He worked in the U.S. and on temporary assignments in 22 oil-producing countries around the world. His petroleum engineering assignments involved the engineering aspects of oil and gas fields, drilling and recovery.

Taking his vast knowledge of the oil industry, Newendorp is now a proponent of renewable energy — preferably electricity derived from solar and wind. He believes that it is disingenuous for politicians to continuously propose that drilling for oil in ANWR will solve any impending oil shortage or lower the cost of gas at the pump.

Newendorp explains that no one knows how much oil is along the northern coast of ANWR (see the 1002 area on Krear's map, page B 1) — not the politicians or the oil companies. He also explains that the form in which possible oil reserves are stored within ANWR is also unknown.

"The first point that the public needs to understand about ANWR is that the oil industry does not have a perfect oil finding tool," said Newendorp. "What that means is that they can do their geology and geophysics, which at the present is very limited because it is off limits for the oil companies to run geophysical surveys. That's what they need to run to get an understanding of the rock formations and see if there's a rock formation that can be a possible trap [for oil]. No one knows how much oil is there or whether there is oil there because there has been absolutely no drilling and no detailed geologic studies that would answer those questions.

"Even if we knew with certainty... if all that oil was in one or two big structures, the oil companies could jump in hand and feet and make money at it. On the other hand, if it's dispersed in a whole lot of itty bitty deposits around there — none of which by themselves economic — you could have 15 billion barrels that would never be developed because of the cost of putting in facilities for all the itty bitty oil fields. The oil's got to be in a deposit big enough to justify building a pipeline over to get it.

"The point I would make about ANWR is... the era of fossil fuels — coal, oil and natural gas — we're at the twilight... it's over... done!" Newendorp continued. "The longer we talk about keeping the oil spigot going, the longer we finally realize and accept that what we need to be doing is realize we are no longer in the fossil fuel era. The future is electricity and I'm absolutely convinced that in about five years, we are going to be driving electric cars."

According to Newendorp, the Department of Energy (DOE) was asked to conduct a study in 2005 to estimate how much oil was in ANWR and DOE found the following:

"If it was open by development in 2005, there would not be the first drop of oil until at least 2013," Newendorp said, "and that the peak oil, after they had drilled all of the wells, would not occur until 2025.

"It's a drop in the bucket. It's fair to say that it would be at least eight to 10 years to get any oil [from ANWR] to market and it would then take 20 to 30 years to get it all out of the ground."

The concern, of course, shared by many environmentalists is the possible destruction left behind by oil drilling in Alaska, specifically in ANWR.

"Anything we do is putting the environment at risk," said Newendorp. "It [ANWR] is a caribou calving area and a nesting area from all six continents. The arctic tern, for instance, nests in the summer, hatches its little babies out and flies all the way to Southern Chile at the end of summer. That's just one example... and the butterflies and the bees and all the wildlife springs fourth in just two or three months in the summer. It's an incredible eco-system. What the public needs to think about is... is the potential risks of an oil spill... is it worth taking that risk for just a few drops of oil 20 years from now?"

Krear records in "Four Seasons North" a conversation between the first researchers in ANWR that winter of 1955-56.

"We all had a good talk in the evening in the cook tent, pertinent to the possible establishment of this arctic wilderness area," wrote Krear. "We all felt there should be important regulations that would provide for keeping out permanent camps and other installations, and for preventing hunting from airplanes to protect the endangered barren ground grizzlies, arctic wolves, wolverine, and other arctic wildlife. Above all, it would be of utmost importance to prevent exploration for oil or other mining activities."

Olaus Murie, the national director of the Wilderness Society, led the ANWR expedition. Upon return, he, his wife, Dr. Margaret (Mardy) Murie, and colleagues campaigned to save this last stretch of land in the arctic. Due to the actions of this team, including Krear, Fred Seaton, secretary of the Interior under the Eisenhower Administration established ANWR by administrative order on Dec. 7, 1960. Congress expanded the refuge to 19 million acres and declared part of it wilderness in 1980.

The Olaus Murie Arctic Brooks Range Expedition later received recognition by renowned scientists and the nation's leaders. Mardy would later receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest honor, from President Clinton in January 1998.

Politicians and the oil industry have fought with environmental groups and scientists since that time to open the last arctic wildlife refuge on the planet for drilling.

Since burning oil is one of the major causes of carbon emissions, causing irrefutable harm to the entire planet, the day for implementing clean, renewable energy has come. Let ANWR be an example for the way humanity treats the rest of the planet. Let it be... and let us all find new ways to fuel the future.

For further details on The Olaus Murie Arctic Brooks Range Expedition, see chapter three of "Four Seasons North" by H. Robert Krear.

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Posted by **Art_n_Music** on July 26, 2008 at 9:33 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Great article! I want to applaud the Trail Gazette for its leadership in getting out the word on the energy problems we face and the solutions we can adopt. Articles like this one and the series, 'Balance of Nature' that you ran earlier this season are some of the best I have read. Congratulations on your effort to inform your reading public about our situation and the things we can do to alleviate the problem. This kind of awareness is partly why I have chosen to buy property for our new home and bring my family to Estes Park next year.

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