

Testimony by Douglas Brinkley

No picture book can do justice to the ethereal beauty of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). I camped there in the summer of 2010 along the Hulahula River. The sky was like another ocean. The nearby mountains were ruins left over from the Ice Age. One afternoon in the Arctic I saw a grizzly climbing up a hill, running at tremendous speed. It was like a time machine had taken me back to the beginning of the world. Everything from the caribou herds to the wildflowers was primordial, uncontaminated, and fresh. Back in 1960 President Dwight D. Eisenhower was a true visionary when he created the Arctic Refuge. To Eisenhower, and his Interior Secretary Fred Seaton, Arctic Alaska—like Antarctica—was too precious a wilderness heirloom to permit destructive oil, gas, military, and mining activity. By saving this remote part of Arctic Alaska, Eisenhower earned his gold-starred place as one of America's great conservation presidents.

To Eisenhower there were some natural places that defined what it meant to be American; the ANWR wilderness in northeastern Alaska is one of those sacred spots. Fifty years ago, our parents' and grandparents' generation—in the Eisenhower era—looked out across Alaska's North Slope wilderness and decided to set the Arctic Refuge aside as protected sanctuary for the abundant wildlife that depended on it. It rapidly became spiritual grounds where U.S. soldiers returned from overseas combat to heal. Outdoorspersons from all over the world come to Arctic Alaska to hunt, fish, and clear their minds from the white noise of hyper-industrialization. Congress, in my opinion, has a moral responsibility to help save Eisenhower's Arctic sanctuary—a wonder like Yellowstone, the Tetons, Big Bend, and the Grand Canyon—for future generations to enjoy.

Last year ANWR celebrated its 50th anniversary as America's premier refuge. But virtually nothing was done to commemorate Eisenhower for his incredible conservation accomplishment as its brave founder. The U.S. Interior Department now has an opportunity to rectify this omission, to honor our 34th president for his extraordinary environmental foresight. Congress should urge President Obama to use the Antiquities Act of 1906 to permanently establish the Eisenhower National Monument out of Section

1002 land within ANWR. The Coastal Plain along the Beaufort Sea is the most important denning habitat for U.S. polar bears in the Arctic Alaska. It is also an essential habitat for wolves, grizzly, and brown bears. Over 130 bird species rely on the coastline, lakes, and rivers of ANWR for nesting, feeding, and breeding. Throughout the course of a year, at least one avian species from every state (except Hawaii) makes its way to ANWR. Birders from all of the country track the migratory patterns of birds like mallards, tundra swans, red-throated loons, snow geese, and northern pintail ducks on their way to the Arctic. Any loss of habitat in this region will necessarily result in a corresponding loss of opportunities for bird watching and hunting. The Eisenhower National Monument would secure lasting protection for the Coastal Plain's terrestrial and marine wildlife. There are those in the U.S. Congress who believe the Coastal Plain of ANWR should be leased to foreign oil companies like British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell. I believe it should remain an unmolested U.S. wilderness sanctuary, public land used for outdoors recreation by world citizens.

As a former director of the Eisenhower Center, World War II scholar, and lover of Wild America, I think it's important that our nation honor conservation heroes. By commending the life and legacy of Eisenhower, declaring the 1002 area of ANWR the Eisenhower National Monument—via executive order—the Obama administration would be preserving one of America's wildest landscapes and honoring the great Supreme Allied Commander of the Second World War who was responsible for Alaskan statehood. Re-designating the Coastal Plain—the “biological heart” of ANWR—is the proper way to nationally honor Eisenhower with something more meaningful than Interstate Highway signs and a parkway in New Jersey.

As president of the United States, Eisenhower pushed for world peace and conservation in a number of imaginative ways. It is Eisenhower who spearheaded the successful global campaign to prohibit military bases, military exercises, and weapons testing in Antarctica. Today the majestic mountains that rise between Reeves Neve on the west, Reeves Glacier on the south, and Priestley Glacier on the north and east in Victoria Land, Antarctica are officially known as the Eisenhower Range.

If Antarctica can honor Eisenhower's conservation legacy with a range, surely the United States can do the same in Arctic Alaska. There are those that argue Section

1002 should be designated Wilderness by Congress. I believe that process is too time consuming and slow. Alaska has already been harder hit by global warming than any other part of the nation. The state's average temperature has risen 4 degrees Fahrenheit in the past fifty years, and there have been major reductions in populations of coastal and marine bird species, seals, and sea lions. President George W. Bush rightfully used the Antiquities Act in 2006 to designate 195,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean as the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument when he thought that ecosystem was in peril. President Obama could become a conservation hero for doing the same for Section 1002 of Arctic Alaska.

Let history show that Congresspersons on November 18, 2011—recognizing the need to honor Eisenhower, protect a world-class landscape, and address the global climate crisis—urged the White House to add an additional layer of federal protection in Arctic Alaska. I look forward some day to camping with my wife and three children in the Eisenhower National Monument—a far better name than Section 1002—as the premier attraction in ANWR.