

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Alaska
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Committee on Natural Resources
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As prepared for delivery.

Chairman Hastings and Representative Markey, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify this morning on a matter of such importance to Alaska and the Nation.

As much as I am happy to give my thoughts, it is in reality unfortunate that we are still having this discussion on whether to develop the 1002 area's oilfield. As some on this panel can recall and attest, the question is somewhat improperly couched as whether to develop and would more appropriately be posed as when and how to develop this resource.

A few words about the Fish and Wildlife Service's so-called "Comprehensive Conservation Plan," or the CCP.

As a threshold issue, I find it to be both misguided and, as an Alaskan, somewhat insulting when federal agencies continue to look for ways to lock up additional wilderness in Alaska when Alaska doesn't want it and when the law says, plainly, "no more." Three separate provisions in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act made Congress' intent on this matter clear, yet our federal agencies can't help but trudge a path to more wilderness review. And for what?

The draft CCP cites a "symbolic value" of the refuge and states that "millions who will never set foot in the Refuge find satisfaction, inspiration, and even hope in just knowing it exists." Well Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to this committee that millions more would do well to find jobs. I am not sure who is in charge of quantifying the value of satisfaction inspired by knowing something exists somewhere, especially set against the hundreds of billions in federal revenue we are consciously foregoing by this exercise. But I am sure that our priorities have escaped the realm of all common sense if we are spending taxpayer money to rationalize the sterilization of a resource of this value for the sake of some undefined form of "satisfaction."

The draft CCP seems very at odds with itself beyond that. After going through the legal gymnastics to try and skirt the "no more clause" so that considering the coastal plain for wilderness review is back on the table, it acknowledges, somewhat begrudgingly, that the 1002 area contains almost 40,000 acres of lands that are not even suitable for wilderness designation, even if such a designation were legal.

Compare that number, 40,000 acres, within the 1002 area which the Obama Administration's Fish and Wildlife Service concedes is not even eligible for wilderness protection, with the mere 2,000 acres which Congressman Young's legislation, and my Senate bill, would authorize for development in the same area. Keep in mind that the 1002 area has also been subject to exploratory drilling and all of the motorized equipment that attends to that activity in the past; yet somehow we're being asked to believe the irreconcilable argument that drilling now would cause the area to lose its character, even as technology has improved in ways Congress couldn't

have contemplated when writing the law. This year we had unrefuted testimony in the Senate Energy Committee which spoke to the truly amazing advancements in seismic acquisition data, directional drilling, and enhanced oil recovery, with specific application to the 1002 area, all of which would lend substantial reassurance of a minimally intrusive development program, with no lasting impacts, if we were only allowed the access.

Members of the committee, here we are with the federal government essentially broke – fighting all day every day over every scrap of spending cuts and revenue ever conceived, when the simple delivery on a decades old promise could render literally hundreds of billions in federal revenue without so much as raising a tax or cutting a single program. But instead of looking for a responsible path towards accessing the resource, the Fish and Wildlife Service looks for a way to lock it up.

So I would suggest to this committee that we are witnessing a gross misappropriation of resources. When an agency's response to our Nation's current debt and jobs crisis is to seek more ways to twist the law just to keep money buried in the ground, our priorities have spun out of the realm of rationality. It's been well documented and repeated that, depending on the price of oil, nearly \$300 billion in federal revenue – and untold jobs – could be associated with developing the 1002 area. Consider what that amount could fund; consider what it would allow us to preserve.

In hopes that the discussion can evolve, I thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for this opportunity to speak and for bringing light to this ongoing federal failure.