



ANWR: ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is located in the Northeast corner of Alaska and within the Arctic Circle. Next to it is a portion of land that has been set aside by Congress for oil exploration and production. ANWR is NOT part of the designated Wilderness area. It is completely flat and barren with no trees, hills, or mountains. Nine months of the year it is covered with snow and ice and practically void of life.

Congress is currently investigating tapping oil reserves beneath the Arctic Coastal Plain to support both our national energy security needs and to mitigate the skyrocketing cost of gas and related expenses for working families. At the same time, Senator Dan Akaka is working closely with the indigenous people of Alaska and the Alaskan Congressional delegation to provide economic stability for Native Alaskans while protecting the fragile environment of the nearby Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

"Clearly, a balance between environmental and social concerns and the economic realities of an energy strapped world must be struck," says Senator Akaka. "To achieve either goal at the expense of the other is no solution at all. We can and we must find strategies that will allow us to protect our environment while providing for our energy, economic and national security needs. The Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act attempts to do just that." One of the primary aims of the Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act (S. 1891), co-sponsored by Senators Akaka and Inouye of Hawaii and Senators Lisa Murkowski and Ted Stevens of Alaska, is to minimize any harmful impact on the Coastal Plain that may come as a result of exploratory drilling. The measure directs the Secretary of the Interior to ensure that such activities will be environmentally sound and take into consideration the interests and concerns of the Kaktovikmiut Inupiats, who are native residents of the Coastal Plain.

The residents of Kaktovik, the only people living on the Coastal Plain of the ANWR, have long supported oil and gas development there. Alaska's indigenous people have benefited greatly from the North Slope production of oil. In addition to providing a tax base for the local government, oil development has provided jobs, funding for water and sewer systems and schools. Native and village corporations with oil field-related subsidiaries are working on the North Slope, and the local government has a voice in permitting and environmental regulation. The indigenous people of Kaktovik have lived on the Coastal Plain for thousands of years and are keenly aware of the fragility of their environment and support sound and responsible oil exploration. They have asked Senator Akaka for his support and he has continued to give it to them.