I would like to submit my deeply held opinion that the 1002 Coastal Plain of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge should not ever be opened to oil drilling or exploration. This is a vital area for migrating birds and for the Porcupine caribou herd. This particular section of the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve is of such great importance to these caribou because this is their calving ground. It is a place where they can get relief from horrible biting bot flies that would drive them crazy, raising their stress levels and making their lives miserable. These flies lay eggs in the caribous’ skin which will cause them more anguish as the eggs hatch and mature under the skin.

The activities associated with oil exploration, drilling and production has been shown in the past to make caribou change their calving grounds. In the case of the 1002 area, this would drive the caribou further from the coast and nearer the hills where animals would prey on the baby caribou. The 1002 should be reserved as a place for the caribou to safely raise their young.

The Porcupine caribou herd is important to the Gwich’in people, not only for subsistence but as an essential part of their culture which it has been for many, many years. It is part of their identity and their heritage. Non-Native people do not have the right to risk the loss or decline of the Porcupine caribou herd.