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As a 44 year resident of Alaska, I have seen this battle to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge before.

And the arguments today are even more compelling to protect this last true wilderness in the United States.

With global warming disrupting our planet increasingly, we certainly do not need more oil development, but to switch to renewable sources of energy. We have the technology. It is imperative to our survival and that of the myriads of species, plant and animal, that share this planet with us.

As a backcountry guide with sled dogs in winter and horses in summer since the 80's, I have seen firsthand the rapid and devastating changes in our landscape and weather firsthand.

More oil will not help, and more profit for oil companies or even a bigger PFD will not change the catastrophe heading towards us.

Environmentally that seemingly small section of coastal plain is critical for caribou calving, containing special grasses and protection for newborns. It is migrational bird nesting areas, and denning areas for polar bears.

Do we not have a responsibility to save this critical and beautiful place for our children and grandchildren?

Obviously we cannot be weaned off oil by next week. But Alaska does have other sources of oil besides this isolated and extreme weather location; these 400,000 acres of potentially high petroleum production in the western edge of the Refuge. BLM calls for these 400,000 ~~to~~ be open to development within 2 years, with an additional 400,000 to be opened by 2025.

Tourism is a vital part of our state's economy but rarely talked about. Many of us are too small to be able to "lobby" for ourselves, but look at the figures for yourselves. I guarantee no one wants to come here to see oil wells or mines.

This destruction, once started, cannot be undone. Please save this environmentally critical piece of our planet.

Kathy Lenniger