



THE 2,000 ACRE SCAM

When drilling proponents want to downplay the impacts of drilling, they claim that drilling will be limited to 2,000 acres. In reality, the entire 1.5 million acre “1002” area would be opened for leasing and exploration. Oil companies that purchased leases would get the rights to drill virtually anywhere on the coastal plain.

There is no requirement that the 2,000 acres be contiguous.

Oil corporations want you to think drilling would be limited to one compact area. Actually, development would be spread over a very large area, as with the North Slope oil fields, which sprawl out over more than 640,000 acres (1000 square miles), while maintaining a direct “footprint” of only 15,500 acres.¹

Supporting infrastructure would have to stretch across the coastal plain.

The United States Geological Survey found that whatever oil is under the coastal plain is in small deposits spread throughout the plain. This is why the bill includes the entire coastal plain and not a smaller portion of it. To produce oil from this vast area, networks of pipelines and roads would be built, fragmenting wildlife habitat.

Even if the 2,000 acres were contiguous, it would have a huge impact on the wilderness.

The 12-lane-wide New Jersey Turnpike, which stretches more than 100 miles across the state, covers only 1,773 acres.

Twenty oil fields the size of the Alpine oil field could be scattered across the Coastal Plain under the amendment.

The 2,000 acres does not include all oil industry infrastructure, facilities, or operations.

The amendment only includes the area where oil facilities actually touch the ground, and excludes gravel mines, roads, and pipelines (except their posts). It did not cover seismic or other exploration activities. Air and noise pollution carry far from their sources.

The National Academy of Sciences said impacts extend well beyond the immediate “footprint.”

“The effects of industrial activities are not limited to the footprint of a structure or to its immediate vicinity, a variety of influences can extend some distance from the actual footprint...”

The common practice of describing the effects of particular projects in terms of the area directly disturbed by roads, pads, pipelines and other facilities ignores the spreading character of oil development in the North Slope and the consequences of this to wildland values. All of these effects result in the erosion of wildland values over an area far exceeding the area directly affected...

Nearly all of the roads, pads, pipelines and other infrastructure ever built are still in place. The environmental effects of such structures on the landscape, water systems, vegetation, and animals are manifest not only at the “footprint” itself (physical area covered by the structure) but also at distances that vary depending on the environmental component being affected.”²

¹ National Academy of Sciences. March 2003. Cumulative environmental effects of oil and gas activities on Alaska’s North Slope.

² National Academy of Sciences. March 2003. Cumulative environmental effects of oil and gas activities on Alaska’s North Slope.

