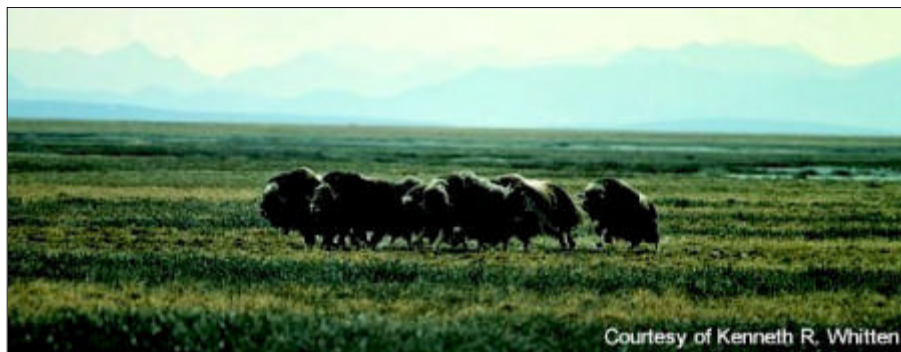


## Why We Need An Arctic Refuge National Monument

by Jimmy Carter  
Fall 2000

When I was President there were four maps with which I was thoroughly familiar. One was the land around Jerusalem from the Golan Heights, East and West Jerusalem, all the occupied territories, including the Sinai Desert. I knew it almost by heart. I also learned about the land in the Panama Canal Zone. I learned about a small place in Iran, the streets that surrounded the embassy in Teheran where 52 hostages were held. And I learned about Alaska. Those were the four maps that are most vivid in my mind.



*Musk oxen near the Huluhula River on the coastal plain.*

I remember the names of people who were so deeply involved in the political contest that has affected every life represented in this room. I remember Mo Udall and I remember Cecil Andrus and I remember Scoop Jackson and I remember Paul Tsongas, and I remember Senator Roth, I remember Bob Byrd and others who played a vital role, maybe a forgotten role, almost, in what finally occurred. Those were names that still mean a lot to me. I remember Senator Stevens and Senator Gravel, who were not much help in those days. And I have to say I remember Ronald Reagan and James Watt and Congressman Young and Senator Murkowski. But the memories overwhelmingly have proven to be pleasant.

I don't believe there's ever been an issue so contentious in the U.S. Congress that involved more powerful interests marshaled against one another in a debate that really began as soon as Alaska became a state. How would it be possible to treat the state of Alaska with respect and to allot to the state a substantial portion of the land that belonged to the people in this particular part of America? How would it be possible to honor the Natives who have been here since time immemorial and treat them fairly? How would it be possible to protect the incredible and unmatched beauty of Alaska as contrasted with the entire rest of the world? And how would it be possible to protect the interests of the rest of our country?

When I first knew about it, it was the Alaska lands bill. I didn't really understand ANILCA. But I learned quite soon that the N-I part of Alaska was dominant. And many Alaskans may not agree with me. National interest is not just Alaska. And I think it was that national interest element in the ANILCA legislation that was predominant. It was not because of Mo Udall, it was not because of me, it was not because of Cecil Andrus or the others that I've mentioned. It was because the entire nation of America, certainly including this beautiful state, came forward in this hard-fought battle and ultimately prevailed to a substantial degree.



Courtesy of Kenneth R. Whitten

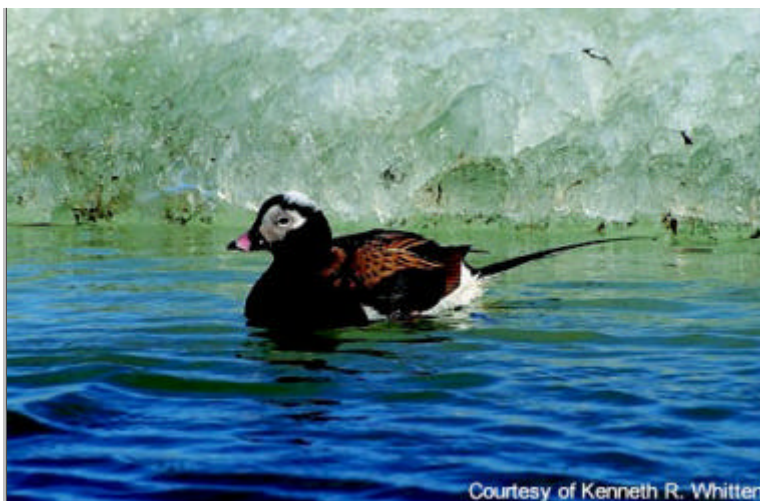
*Porcupine herd caribou graze near Beaufort Lagoon on the coastal plain of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge.*

The House of Representatives while I was President was always compatible with what Cecil Andrus and I wanted to see occur, but the Senate of the United States was where the contention focused and where the powerful special interests, not all benevolent, most benevolent, focused their attention. We passed a very good bill through the House of Representatives, but we found in the first two years I was in office that it was not possible to get it through the Senate. We were faced with a deadlock, and I felt that the time was running out for me.

I had a meeting with Cecil Andrus, and he and his attorneys, some of them here, had found a 1906 Antiquities Act where a President had the right to designate a certain small portion of America to be a national monument. And all of you are familiar with monuments like the Statue of Liberty and so forth, you know. This is a national monument. So we decided in a private meeting in the White House that I would utilize the Antiquities Act to declare national monuments. And I did so in 1978.

The monument that I declared in the conglomerate form encompassed 56 million acres— a little larger than the state of Minnesota. And it was that exhibition of determination and that total protection of those precious areas, some of which we were willing to concede in the legislative process, that forced the opponents of ANILCA to be more cooperative. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was passed and signed a month after I was defeated for reelection. I don't believe that there has ever been more of a focus of powerful interests on any legislation than this one. One hundred six million acres were put in conservation areas. Fifty-seven million acres were placed in wilderness designation, which is a special category which protects them to an extraordinary degree. Forty-six million acres were allotted for Native Alaskans. And 104 million acres were designated for the state of Alaska, five times more than had ever been granted to any state when it became part of the United States of America. Ninety-five percent of all the known oil reserves were made available for exploration and extraction. Ninety-five percent.

After I was out of office and even during the campaign in 1980, Ronald Reagan looked upon this as a land grab. And he carefully chose his Secretary of the Interior to subvert and to repeal, if possible, the historic legislation. James Watt represented the views of those who had opposed this legislation since it was first introduced. I don't know what's going to happen in the future, but the struggle to subvert the basic elements of ANILCA is still going on, led, unfortunately, by members of your own congressional delegation. Not entirely, but they represent the basic threat.



*An oldsquaw duck, one of the many migratory bird species that use this undisturbed wild habitat for breeding and feeding.*

There were other pieces of legislation that were important to me then to protect America's energy capabilities, and to reduce the amount of oil that we had to import. I was very much aware of that.

One of the things that I tried to do was to insist on conservation of energy that we consumed, and we passed even after the 1980 election legislation that mandated that automobile manufacturers had to increase the efficiency of their automobiles. Each average fleet had to have increasingly high miles per gallon of gas consumed. One of the first things that happened when my successor took office was that he reduced those restraints. And even with a liberal interpretation of the amount of oil possible in one of your precious and untapped areas, by reducing the miles per gallon by one and a half miles per gallon, that more than consumes all the oil that could possibly come from the Arctic Wildlife Refuge area.

Well, what's going to happen to Alaska as a result of ANILCA? A lot of predictions were made that Alaska would go to hell if this much precious land was taken away from the developers and the oil companies. I noticed recently that your population has grown by 50 percent, tourism has more than tripled. Your tourists who come here now bring more wealth into your state than the timber production and fishing, but the tourists don't really come here to look at the back of the neck or to elbow aside others pouring off the tour ships into the small villages along the coast, and the tourists don't come here to see oil wells, nor to hear the constant noises of helicopters and snowmobiles. They come here to find a different form of human pleasure and enjoyment, a solitude, beauty, sights that are not available to a Georgian or to a person from New Mexico or Maine or Ohio or Texas. The beauty of Alaska is still threatened.

Let me point out that Alaska in recent times has prospered. You're the number one state in the percentage of your children who finish high school. You're the number one state in household income, you're the number one state in longevity, so I think that Alaska is doing well. Maybe not entirely because of, but certainly not impeded by, the prices of ANILCA.

I've had a chance to learn about this state. For a long time I mainly knew it through maps over which we pored, studied, plotted for hours at a time, day after day in the conference room of the White House as we negotiated and planned our tactics in getting the legislation passed. Since then I've had a chance to go to the tops of some of the mountains in the Brooks Range. I've gone from there to the coastal region. I've stood in front of the migrating Porcupine herd. I have been on a peninsula in the Beaufort Sea within 100 yards of muskoxen circled facing outwards when they heard the noise that Rosalyn and I made in hiding behind some tundra. I have sat on a glacier and looked across a small valley at a herd of 32 Dall sheep. I've been very close to a den of wolves and seen them in their natural habitat. While fishing, I've been within 100 yards of a mother grizzly. I've fished in the vicinity of Lake Iliamna and some other places several times, and I wrote a book about that one experience because I caught a rainbow trout on a very small fly that was 31 inches long and weighed 12 pounds. So you can see I've had some wonderful experiences in Alaska, maybe enjoyed your

state even more than some of you. But I have learned since leaving the White House what a wise decision the U.S. Congress made in approving the ANILCA legislation.



It was not perfect. We had to compromise to some degree, which is almost always the case with important legislation. My most grievous disappointment was that the Arctic Wildlife Refuge area was not completely protected. We still have an agenda to fulfill. Some mandates of ANILCA have not yet been fulfilled. We didn't expect them to be carried out under President Reagan or President Bush, but even since they left office and we have Democrats in the White House, some still remain to be done.

One that's mandated by the legislation is to assess all of the parks to see which need to be set aside as wilderness areas, which totally protect them. That has not been done. The one estimate is that there's still 100 million acres of land that could be set aside as wilderness areas. And this is a premise with which President Reagan did not argue. That is still a responsibility of the Park Service, or at least the Secretary of the Interior. James Watt issued a directive that no BLM lands could be included in the wilderness areas. James Watt's mandate still prevails. I would like to see all of James Watt's mandates reversed.

The Tongass Forest area provides now about 300 jobs in the timber industry, which are very important, I know, for those people, those families involved. It costs the U.S. taxpayers, including you, about \$65,000 per year to support each one of those jobs. I think the balance of the Tongass Forest region should be prevented from building further roads.

One of the most difficult parts of ANILCA that we had to negotiate laboriously was how to deal with Native subsistence claims. The key word was traditional. When we established five major parks, maybe more, we crafted legislation that said that the Secretary of the Interior would determine in those parks which rights of Native families to hunt and fish should be preserved, and the point was what have they traditionally done. So obviously, the next step was to require that the Secretary of the Interior determine in all those parks what were the traditional rights of Native families. James Watt said all those parks should be declared open for these rights whether they were traditional or not. The Secretary of the Interior still has that responsibility unfulfilled.

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Courtesy of Debbie Miller

Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn converse with Alaska writer Debbie Miller and her daughter Casey at their camp near the Okpilak River in 1990. The site is in the foothills of the Brooks Range near the seacoast.

Debbie Miller is the author of *Midnight Wilderness: Journeys in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* (softbound, \$14.95), published originally in 1990 and recently reissued by Alaska Northwest Books. The book vividly details both the grandeur and vulnerability of the second-largest of America's national wildlife refuges and makes a fervent argument for its protection against industrialization. Part of the royalties from sales of the book will be donated to the Alaska Conservation Foundation, which supports efforts to protect the refuge.

There are two more points I want to make. I think I'll just concentrate on one. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should be declared without further delay a national monument. And it should be given full wilderness status. And if you don't do anything else in the next few weeks, I hope that every one of you will write a letter to President Clinton and tell him that we are just as interested as he in the legacy that he will leave behind.

Some have said that this would not be a legal step. I disagree with that strongly, and I think the attorneys who helped to draft ANILCA would agree. This would be a protection not permanent. Anytime either I or other Presidents declare an area to be a monument area, the Congress by a simple bill can reverse that decision. Also, when I decided with Cecil Andrus's help to declare monument areas in Alaska, it was contested in the courts, and the U.S. District Courts ruled that it was completely constitutional and legal. So this is something that President Clinton can do.

I wouldn't depend on the next four years. I don't know how the elections are going to turn out. I don't know who will be the next President. I don't know whether we'll have a Democratic or a Republican majority in the House and Senate. But I would like to see another Mo Udall chairman of the Natural Resources Committee in the House and maybe somebody like Paul Tsongas the chairman of the Natural Resources Committee in the Senate, and I would like to see a President who's an environmentalist, and a Vice President who has not just received \$20 million from the oil companies as retirement benefits.

This issue is not yet resolved. And I don't really believe that ANILCA could be repealed. And I think that the basic elements of it will withstand political attacks. In my opinion, what needs to be done is to fulfill completely the mandates of the ANILCA legislation. The Secretary of the Interior should carry out his duties as prescribed in the legislation. President Clinton should exert his authority. The people of Alaska should realize that the legislation was designed to protect the integrity and the sovereignty of the state of Alaska as all other states have their sovereignty protected, that Native claims should be honored, and that the nation's jewels should be protected. It's an ongoing challenge for us all. Not just Alaska lands conservation interests, but interests that include the entire nation.

Of all the things I've ever done, nothing exceeds my pride in having been committed to play a small part, at least, in the passage of this legislation.

Jimmy Carter is a former President of the United States.

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