



United States Senate Committee on
Energy & Natural Resources



Senator Lisa Murkowski, Alaska, *Chairman*

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Sen. Murkowski: We Will Continue to Fight Administration's Restrictive Actions Against Alaska

Responds to Advancement of Wilderness Designation in ANWR

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, today criticized the Obama administration for unilaterally advancing a new wilderness designation in the coastal plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) despite overwhelming, bipartisan opposition from Alaska's elected leaders. In a classic news dump late on this Good Friday afternoon, the administration finalized the Record of Decision for its misguided ANWR land management plan and announced its formal transmittal to Congress.

"The vast majority of Alaskans do not support creating new wilderness in ANWR, so I am disappointed to see the Obama administration is continuing to press the issue," Murkowski said. "Congress designated the coastal plain of ANWR for oil and gas exploration more than three decades ago and we will continue to fight against the administration's efforts to impose new restrictions on Alaska's lands and resources. A congressional designation of the coastal plain as wilderness will not happen on my watch," Murkowski said.

Under the terms of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), additional wilderness designations are barred in Alaska without the express approval of Congress. The administration's plan attempts to designate the 1.5 million acre coastal plain of ANWR as wilderness – adding to the eight million acres of ANWR already designated as wilderness – and would lead to a management status that prohibits motorized access to the coastal plain, permanently places off limits North America's most promising onshore oil prospect, and restricts access for subsistence hunters and other uses of the area.

Murkowski also questioned the timing of today's announcement two days before Easter, on Good Friday, echoing a pattern of anti-Alaska announcements by the Obama administration.

"I'm stunned by the timing of this announcement. Given our past, I expected the administration would at least try to avoid delivering bad news to us on Good Friday. Yet that is apparently asking too much of them. For the second time in her brief tenure, Secretary Jewell has delivered terrible and unwelcome news to Alaskans right before a major holiday. Secretary Jewell's King Cove announcement was two days before Christmas; her decision on ANWR comes two days before Easter. This is part of an offensive pattern -- as offensive as the decisions themselves."

The administration's continued efforts to restrict ANWR come despite strong opposition from the vast majority of Alaskans. On March 4, the Alaska State Legislature passed, with the unanimous support of all members present in both the House and Senate, [House Joint Resolution 10](#) opposing the administration's efforts to restrict energy production in ANWR.

Alaska has more federally protected land than any other state, with 58 million acres of federal land designated as "wilderness." This is an area larger New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire combined.

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