

U.S. Senate defeats Bush's energy plan

The plan called for opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling; activist and others continue debate

Aimee Rudin

City/State Politics Reporter

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been called both "an area of flat, white nothingness," and the "jewel of America's refuge system." Located in the Northeast corner of Alaska, it is an area most Americans will not see and is inhabited by animals with which most people are unfamiliar. It has been shrouded by controversy since its creation in December 1960.

Underneath the frozen tundra of the arctic coastal plain lies one of the largest untouched supplies of crude oil in the United States, according to U.S. Interior Secretary Gale Norton. The area, called Area 1002 by developers, is also the principal calving ground for the porcupine caribou herd, the second largest herd in the United States.

Big oil companies have lobbied for drilling access in the refuge, and environmental activists have rallied for the area's protection. The controversy has made numerous trips to the national capitol, where it has been piggybacked onto energy bills, discussed by fundraisers and looked at through a U.S. Geological Survey.

Recently, legislation to develop the area was blocked. On March 19, the U.S. Senate voted 52-48 against Presi-

dent George W. Bush's energy plan largely because a provision in the plan called for the opening of ANWR to oil drilling. However, the area is still being considered for oil development.

Proponents of drilling said ANWR contains roughly 16 billion barrels of oil, equal to about 30 years of Middle East imports.

"The coastal plain is this nation's single greatest prospect for onshore oil," Norton said in a hearing earlier this month.

But, according to the U.S. Geological Survey the amount of oil that could be recovered economically is about 3.2 billion barrels, and even at the peak of production — the year 2027 — oil from ANWR would only contribute about two percent of the oil Americans would use in that year.

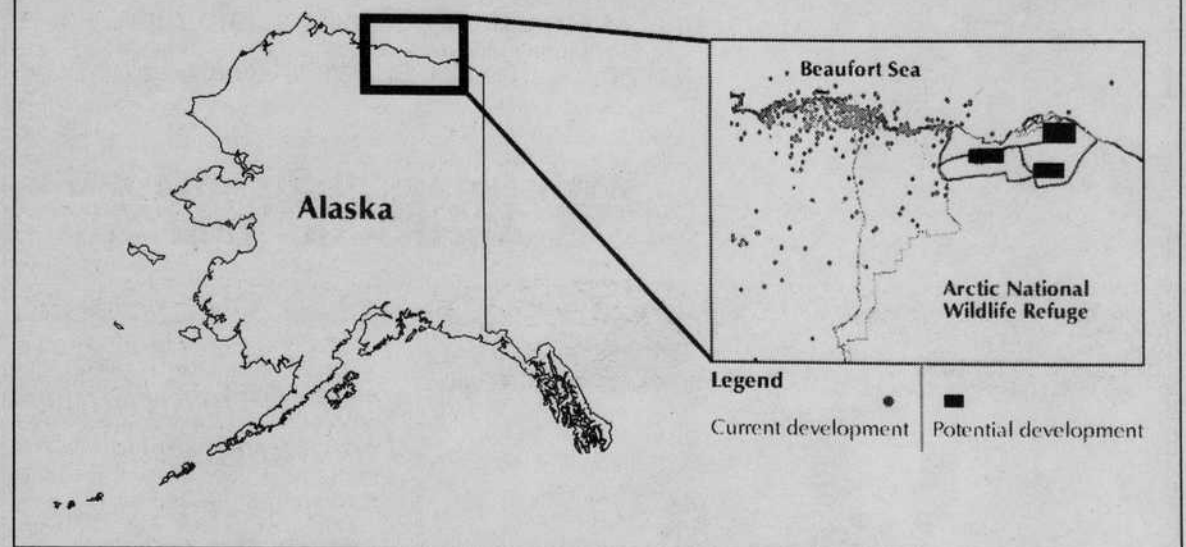
Currently, the United States consumes about 20 million barrels of oil a day, according to a 2001 report by the U.S. Office of Transportation Technologies. At this rate, the 3.2 billion barrels of oil thought to be available in ANWR would last the United States about 160 days. Many legislators feel this number is not large enough to justify disrupting the refuge.

U.S. Rep. Ed Markey D-Mass., said ANWR is the "wrong place" to attempt to solve the nation's energy problems.

"The value of ANWR should never be measured in barrels of oil," Markey said in a statement. "It is priceless, a national environmental treasure that should never be sacrificed."

Area 1002 was considered for possible oil and gas exploration during

Areas of current and potential oil development



Adelle Lennox Emerald

the Carter administration, but was not approved for drilling. It is home to more than 100 species of wildlife including caribou, polar bears, musk oxen and wolves. It also serves as part of the migratory pattern for 160 species of birds.

Drilling proponents, including Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski and Interior Secretary Gale Norton, said it would be possible to drill in Area 1002 without disturbing wildlife.

Norton pointed to a recent survey of

the Central Arctic caribou herd, which said the herd is at its largest size ever.

"The fact that the herd has grown steadily over the past 25 years while energy production has been ongoing on Alaska's North Slope is a solid sign," Norton said.

ANWR advocates argue that the size of the herd is not representative of the effect of drilling on wildlife. Members of Defenders for Wildlife said drilling and oil transportation may lead to oil spills,

which endanger wildlife. According to the group, the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill contributed to the deaths of thousands of animals and continues to affect wildlife populations today.

"Oil and pristine environments simply do not mix," Peter Van Tuyn, litigation director for Trustees for Alaska said.

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Low coffee prices fuel coca farming in Colombian areas

Gary Marx

Chicago Tribune (KRT)

ANDES, Colombia — With coffee prices near historic lows, the economic crisis facing thousands of small farmers in this picturesque region also is feeding Colombia's civil war and could threaten an intensive U.S.-funded antinarcotics program.

Perched high on lush mountain slopes and intersected by rivers, Andes and the surrounding area stand on the edge of Colombia's once-prosperous coffee region. The crop has provided a steady income to generations of small farmers and migrant laborers while satisfying the needs of American, European and other coffee drinkers.

But a flood of cheap coffee from Vietnam and other countries, combined with weak worldwide demand for Colombia's high-grade beans, has sent many local farmers into bankruptcy and pushed unemployment above 20 percent, officials say.

The crisis has made it easier for Colombia's leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary forces to push into the coffee-growing region and recruit the growing number of unemployed youths, according to coffee farmers and Andes officials.

It also has caused some farmers to abandon coffee and plant coca, the key ingredient for cocaine.

"A family that is going to lose their farm is going to grow illegal crops to save it," said Jaime Restrepo, mayor of Andes, which is home to about 3,100 small coffee farms. "Without a good price for coffee, it's a survival economy, and one way to survive is coca."

The crisis has vast repercussions for the United States, which has poured \$2 billion into the fight against drug trafficking and more recently into a war against armed insurgents.

So far, only a fraction of the nation's 500,000 coffee growers have switched to growing coca, which earns far more per acre than coffee, officials say.

But some experts warn that if the trend accelerates it could undermine a U.S.-funded fumigation program that so far this year has eradicated more than 90,000 acres of coca and a smaller amount of opium poppies in Colombia.

Government officials here support eradication because both leftists and right-wing groups use drug trafficking to fund their insurgencies, though the efforts have sparked protests from peasant groups who complain they have no other way to make a living.

The government has warned farmers not to grow illegal crops and is in discussions with the main coffee federation to begin a fumigation campaign.

"Our policy is zero tolerance," Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos said in an interview. "What we cannot allow is for more coca to grow in Colombia. It's a national security issue."

Gabriel Silva, head of the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia, a powerful group that markets Colombian coffee, said he supports fumigation as long as it affects only illegal crops. He said eradication in coffee areas would be done manually rather than through aerial fumigation, which is less accurate and sometimes destroys food and other crops.

"Anyone who makes a pact with the devil has to pay for the consequences," Silva said. "What we need to do is to avoid that the consequences fall on legitimate coffee growers."

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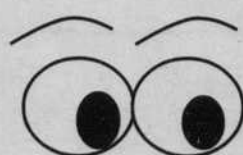


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