

January 26th, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Representing communities of diverse faith traditions, we share a common theological responsibility to care for God's creation and to be good stewards. Today, we write to thank you for releasing the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with its formal Wilderness recommendation for the Coastal Plain. This action represents a critical step in protecting a sacred part of God's creation, and we thank you for working to safeguard this national treasure.

The CCP's recommendation would also protect the cultural and subsistence rights of the Gwich'in, an indigenous Alaskan people who depend upon the Refuge's Porcupine caribou herd to survive. The Gwich'in have based their livelihood on the Porcupine caribou for the past 10,000 years, and oil exploration in the Arctic Refuge would negatively affect the birth rates of this herd, irreparably alerting the Gwich'in way of life. The CCP's Wilderness recommendation upholds the Gwich'in people's cultural, spiritual, and subsistence rights for generations to come.

This recommendation is a necessary step in the effort to identify and safeguard irreplaceable parts of God's creation while also meeting the needs of the Gwich'in people. This recommendation will ensure that efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge are scientifically guided and informed by our nation's highest levels of scholarship. We thank you for being the first President in history to formally recommend a Wilderness designation for the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain to Congress, and we hope that Congress will follow your lead and act to protect the biological heart of the Refuge.

Please be assured that we are praying for you, and will continue to do so moving forward. We hold a special respect for the ministry of public service, and are grateful for your efforts to better the United States and the global community.

Sincerely,

Simone Campbell, SSS
Executive Director
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Patrick Carolan
Executive Director
Franciscan Action Network

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe
General Secretary
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Peter Illyn
Founder and Executive Director
Restoring Eden
Christians for Environmental Stewardship

Diane Randall
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

Barbara Weinstein
Director
The Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism