

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 14, 2012

Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We submit this letter for your consideration as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepares the first-ever comprehensive Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) for National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPRA). There is a clear Congressional foundation to balance both energy development and important conservation areas and we respectfully urge you to give Alternative B of the IAP all due consideration. We believe this alternative fulfills Congressional intent by providing reliable protection for sensitive wildlife areas while still allowing for energy development.

The Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (NPRPA) directs the Secretary of the Interior to determine what areas in the NPRA to lease for oil and gas exploration while requiring "maximum protection" of areas recognized by the Secretary as having "significant subsistence, recreational, fish and wildlife, or historical or scenic value."¹ As recognized in the first IAP initiated for the northeastern part of the NPRA in 1998, the fundamental purpose of an activity plan "is to determine the appropriate multiple use management" of the Reserve; NPRPA "encourages oil and gas development in NPRA while requiring protection of important surface values."² These goals are not incompatible. With nearly 23 million acres, a management plan would balance both the need to protect these special areas while still leaving millions of acres available for leasing.

Under NPRPA, Congress specifically identified the Teshekpuk Lake and Utukok River areas as deserving of maximum protection. Two other special areas, Kasegaluk Lagoon and the Colville River, have since been recognized. Collectively, these areas include the concentrated calving grounds of two of Alaska's largest caribou herds (i.e., the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and the Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd); globally important nesting, molting and staging habitat for migratory waterfowl, seabirds and shorebirds; essential habitat for various marine mammal species including polar bear, walrus, spotted seal, and beluga whale; internationally-recognized raptor nesting concentrations; and exceptional predator populations including grizzly bears, wolves and wolverine. In addition to a spectacular diversity and abundance of wildlife, these areas provide vital subsistence harvest resources that support more than 40 small villages and communities throughout northern and western Alaska.

¹ 42 USC § 6504

² 1998 NE NPRA Final IAP/EIS, Vol 1: Introduction - Purpose and Needs, p. I-1

Congress has also required that there be an oil and gas leasing program in the NPRA. To that end, there has been extensive seismic exploration and the Department of the Interior has been offering lease sales in the NPRA for decades. There have been 11 sales since 1982, with the most recent in December, 2011. More than six million acres have been leased and dozens of exploration wells have been drilled. Based on surveys from these exploration wells, the United States Geological Survey recently reassessed the hydrocarbon potential of the NPRA and significantly decreased its estimate of undiscovered recoverable resources in the NPRA. The NPRA has a valuable role to play in meeting the nation's future energy needs, as demonstrated by the Administration's recent approval of industry plans to develop additional production facilities in the NPRA adjacent to the existing Alpine oil field.

At the same time, consistent with the NPRPA, the Administration has appropriately balanced NPRA leasing and development authorizations with protection of key sensitive areas in the NPRA such as Teshekpuk Lake. Both Congress and successive administrations have long-recognized the importance of providing maximum protection for this area to safeguard its unique combination of biological values. Protection of the Teshekpuk Lake area has enjoyed broad bipartisan support from successive administrations across time. Secretary James Watt, on behalf of President Reagan, took action to keep vital waterfowl breeding and molting habitat at Teshekpuk Lake free of leasing and development, as have subsequent administrations. The final management plan must continue this tradition.

As the BLM now prepares the first-ever comprehensive management plan for the entire NPRA we hope that Teshekpuk Lake and other special areas will continue to be strongly protected. There is room for balance in the NPRA that includes both production and protection. We support future resource development in the NPRA, consistent with the NPRPA, which includes the conservation of areas with exceptional ecological values. We ask that you give special attention to Alternative B, and look forward to a final plan that will keep Teshekpuk Lake and other key special areas free of leasing while developing energy resources in other parts of the NPRA.

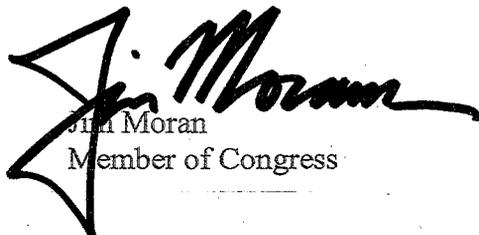
Sincerely,



John D. Dingell
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Jim Moran
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



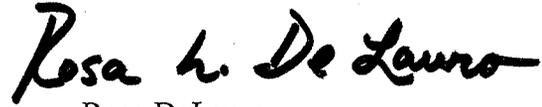
Dale Kildee
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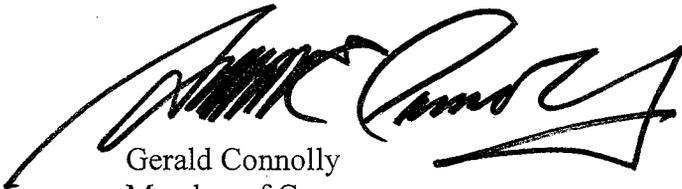
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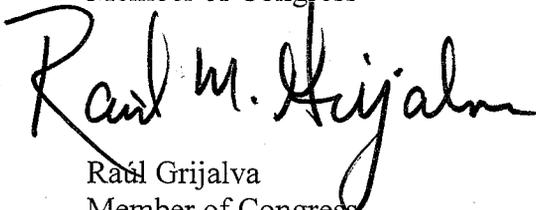
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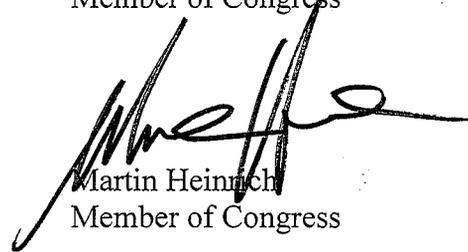
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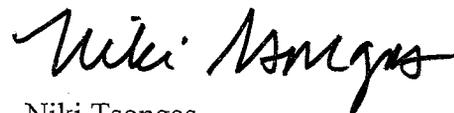
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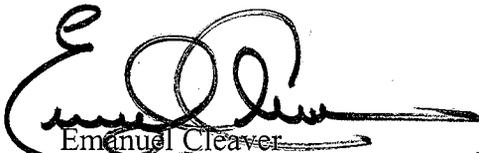
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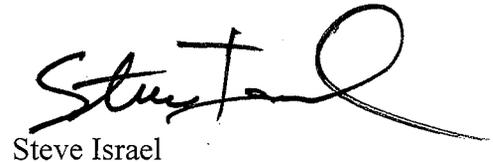


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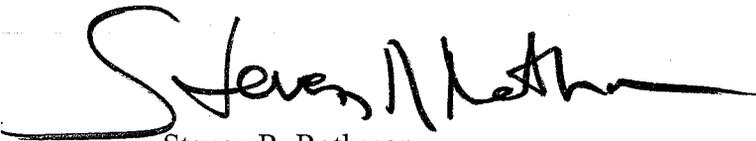

Adam Smith
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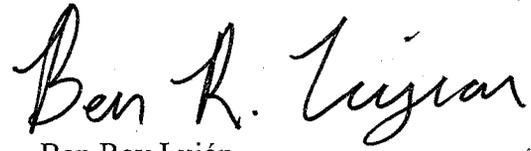

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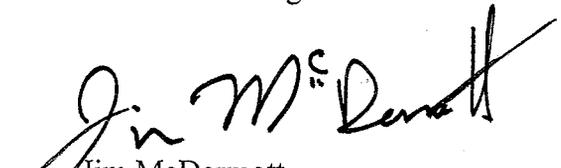

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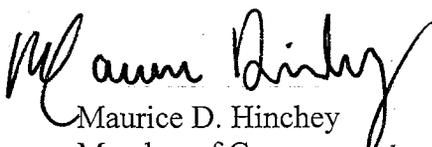

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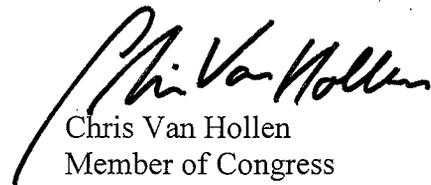

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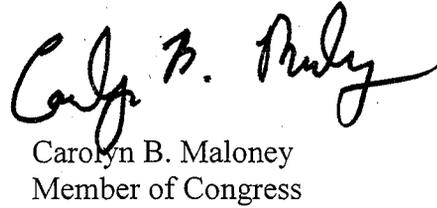

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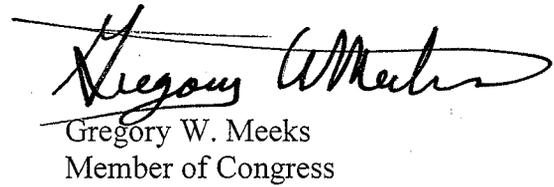

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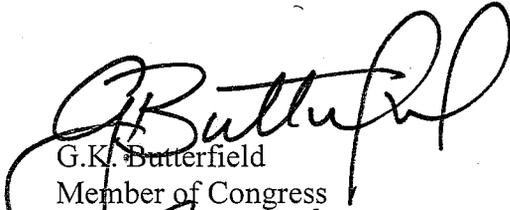

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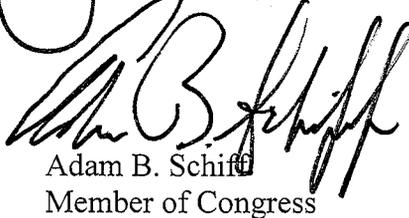

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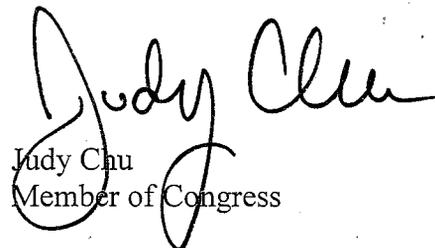

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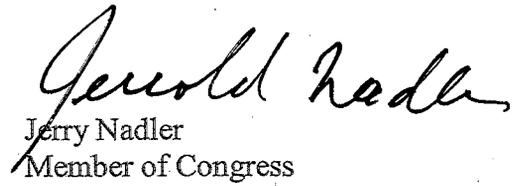

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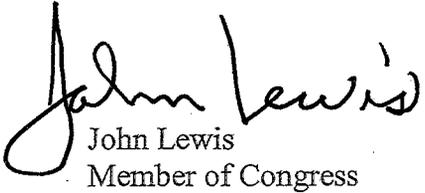

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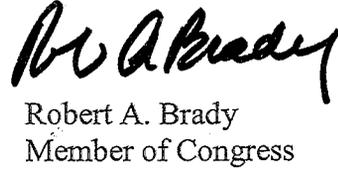
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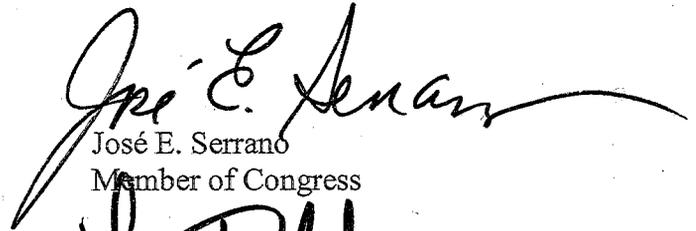
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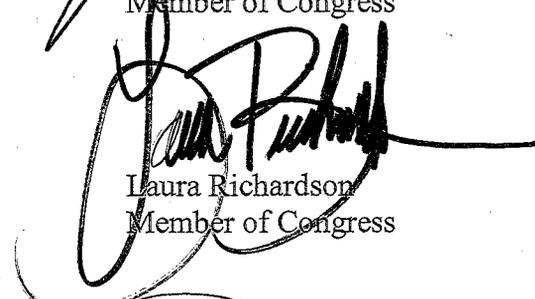
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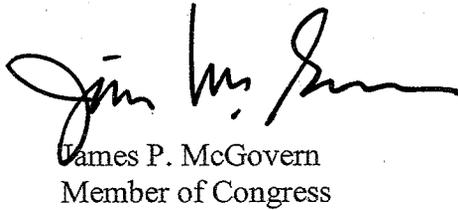
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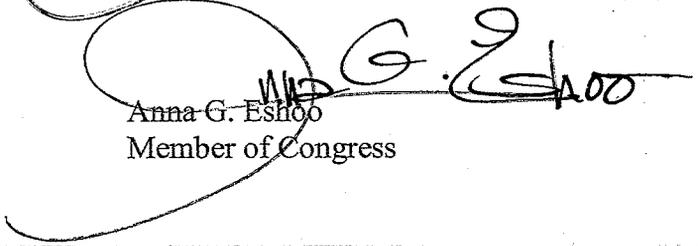
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