

## Ravalli County Commissioners Office

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**From:** MACO <MACO@mtcounties.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 26, 2015 8:07 AM  
**To:** MACO  
**Subject:** FW: Obama Administration Moves to Protect Arctic National Wildlife Refuge



Date: January 25, 2015

Contact: Jessica Kershaw, [Interior\\_Press@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov)

### **Obama Administration Moves to Protect Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** *Recommends Largest Ever Wilderness Designation to Protect Pristine Habitat*

WASHINGTON, DC – President Obama’s Administration moved to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, widely considered one of the most spectacular and remote areas in the world. The Department of the Interior is releasing a conservation plan for the Refuge that for the first time recommends additional protections, and President Obama announced he will make an official recommendation to Congress to designate core areas of the refuge – including its Coastal Plain – as wilderness, the highest level of protection available to public lands. If Congress chooses to act, it would be the largest ever wilderness designation since Congress passed the visionary Wilderness Act over 50 years ago.

**Watch the President discuss the announcement [here](#).**

“Designating vast areas in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as Wilderness reflects the significance this landscape holds for America and its wildlife,” said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. “Just like Yosemite or the Grand Canyon, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of our nation’s crown jewels and we have an obligation to preserve this spectacular place for generations to come.”

Today’s action builds upon years of public engagement by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to revise the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and complete an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as required by law. The plan will guide the Service’s management decisions for the next 15 years.

Based on the best available science and extensive public comment, the Service’s preferred alternative recommends 12.28 million acres – including the Coastal Plain – for designation as wilderness. The Service also recommends four rivers – the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning – for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Currently, over 7 million acres of the refuge are managed as wilderness, consistent with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. However, more than 60 percent of the refuge – including the Coastal Plain – does not carry that designation.

Designation as wilderness would protect and preserve the refuge, ensuring the land and water would remain unimpaired for use and enjoyment by future generations. Only Congress has the authority to designate Wilderness areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Recommendations for Wilderness or Wild and Scenic River designations require approval of the Service Director, Secretary of the Interior and the President. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released the revised comprehensive conservation plan and final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. While the Service is not soliciting further public comment on the revised plan/EIS, it will be available to the public for review for 30 days, after which, the record of decision will be published. At that point, the President will make the formal wilderness recommendation to Congress.

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge preserves a unique diversity of wildlife and habitat in a corner of America that is still wild and free,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “But it faces growing challenges that require a thoughtful and comprehensive management strategy. The incorporation of large portions of the refuge into the National Wilderness Preservation System will ensure we protect this outstanding landscape and its inhabitants for our children and generations that follow.”

The revised plan/EIS addresses a variety of issues, including the protection of wildlife populations and their habitats, opportunities for fish- and wildlife-dependent recreation, subsistence needs of local inhabitants, and other public uses. The plan also strengthens wildlife and habitat monitoring, as well as the monitoring of public use of the refuge so as to better respond to changing conditions on the landscape, particularly those associated with climate change.

The 19.8 million acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is home to the most diverse wildlife in the arctic, including caribou, polar bears, gray wolves, and muskoxen. More than 200 species of birds, 37 land mammal species, eight marine mammal species and 42 species of fish call the vast refuge home. Lagoons, beaches, saltmarshes, tundra and forests make up the remote and undisturbed wild area that spans five distinct ecological regions.

The refuge holds special meaning to Alaska Natives, having sustained their lives and culture for thousands of years. The Gwich’in people refer to the Coastal Plain of the refuge as “The Sacred Place Where Life Begins,” reflecting the area’s importance to their community, maintaining healthy herds of caribou and an abundance of other wildlife.

More information will be available at [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

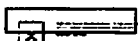
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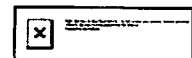


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## Ravalli County Commissioners Office

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**From:** MACO <MACO@mtcounties.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 26, 2015 8:28 AM  
**To:** MACO  
**Subject:** Wyden Senate Amendments in support of SRS and PILT

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Good afternoon Public Lands Steering Committee and Western Interstate Region Board Members:

The Senate is currently engaged in debate on S. 1, the Keystone XL Pipeline Act - a summary of recent Keystone XL actions provided last week by NACo Associate Legislative Director Julie Ufner is copied at the bottom of this email - and is currently considering amendments to S. 1.

I wanted to take a moment to draw your attention to 2 amendments introduced by Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.). SA 135, if enacted, would provide a 1 year retroactive reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program; text of the amendment is available here - <https://www.congress.gov/amendment/114th-congress/senate-amendment/135/text>. SA 136, if enacted, would provide a permanent mandatory authorization for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program; text of the amendment is available here - <https://www.congress.gov/amendment/114th-congress/senate-amendment/136/text>

Although full funding of PILT was provided for FY15, the 113th Congress adjourned without providing a retroactive authorization for FY14 for the SRS program. As a result, forest counties across the 41 states and Puerto Rico have not yet received critical funds education and transportation funds. Some counties have already begun reducing county services and staffing due to the lack of these funds. Last week, the Forest Service announced it is preparing to distribute 25% payments to counties with forest lands. The 25% Payments are expected to total approximately \$50 million, a far cry from the over \$300 million provided by SRS last year.

A motion for cloture on the Keystone XL bill has been filed and the Senate will likely dispense with all amendments offered on S. 1 by the end of session on Monday, January 26th. Timing on if and when the Wyden amendments will receive floor consideration in the Senate is unclear at this point.

Senate leadership will likely be working over the weekend to come to an agreement which will determine which amendments receive floor consideration before debate on S. 1 is concluded. It is important that county officials reach out to their Senators and share with them the importance of the SRS and PILT programs to their counties and to their constituents. Please encourage your Senators to support floor consideration of the Wyden SRS and PILT amendments and ask for their support.

More information and talking points on the SRS program is available here - <http://www.naco.org/legislation/policies/Documents/Public%20Lands/ry%20--%20SRS.pdf>

More information and talking points on the PILT program is available here - <http://www.naco.org/legislation/Documents/2014PILT.pdf>

As always, please don't hesitate to contact me at [cmarklund@naco.org](mailto:cmarklund@naco.org) or 202.942.4207 if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Chris

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## House Approves Construction of Keystone XL Pipeline; Senate Begins Debate

On January 9, the House passed the Keystone XL Pipeline Act (H.R. 3), by a vote of 266-153. [Click here to see how your member voted.](#) The measure is sponsored by Rep. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.) and 30 cosponsors, and would authorize construction of the northern section of the Keystone XL Pipeline. To see if your Representative is a co-sponsor, [click here](#). The southern section of the pipeline, which runs from Cushing, Okla. to the Gulf Coast, went operational in January 2014, but construction of the northern section of the project has been delayed due to environmental and siting concerns.

On January 8, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed a companion bill (Keystone XL Pipeline Act, S. 1) by a vote of 13-9. The bill was introduced by Sens. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) on January 6 and has 59 cosponsors. To see if your Senator is a co-sponsor, [click here](#).

Debate on the measure is began Jan. 12 and is expected to last several weeks to accommodate the President's State of the Union Address and lawmaker retreats. S. 1 is identical to a measure debated in the Senate in the 113th Congress (S. 2280) which was also introduced by Sen. Hoeven.

Both bills would approve construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline to transport crude oil from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The legislation would also streamline pipeline approval by waiving regulatory conditions that require a permit from the U.S. State Department because the pipeline would cross the U.S.-Canada border.

The Keystone XL Pipeline project was originally proposed in 2008 by TransCanada, a Canadian energy company. The proposed project would stretch from Alberta, Canada and the Bakken regions of North Dakota and Montana to a hub in Nebraska before reaching its terminus at refineries along the Gulf Coast.

Even if both chambers pass legislation, the White House has issued a veto threat. If the president vetoes the bill, proponents would have to muster a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers to override the veto.

In July, the National Association of Counties (NACo) adopted a policy resolution supporting the Keystone XL Pipeline (page 61): "NACo Urges Presidential or Congressional approval for the Keystone XL Pipeline."

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time at [jufner@naco.org](mailto:jufner@naco.org) or (202) 942-4269.