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Buttressed by Canada to the east and the Beaufort Sea to the north, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) covers roughly 19.3 million acres. Largely overlooked by human development, the refuge plays host to a diverse spectrum of fauna, including wolverines, arctic foxes, polar bears, brown bears, swans, geese, shorebirds, and seabirds. ANWR spans the eastern portion of the Brooks Range and covers six distinct ecozones including the Ogilvie Mountains, Alaskan Foothills, and the famously contentious Arctic coastal plain.

Known as Section 1002, 45% of the plain is sparsely vegetated foothills encompassed by limestone and talus mountains. It is the migratory summer home for North America's largest porcupine caribou herd. In a 1987 commission by the Department of the Interior, the “Coastal Plain Resource Assessment” estimated the herd's population to be 180,000 individuals. Deemed an “international resource” the caribou are important to the ecology of both Canada and the United States. ("Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska, Coastal Plain Resource Assessment" 19)

A stunning oasis of untamed wilderness, ANWR is not just rich in ecology. It believed to hide a wealth of oil beneath its frozen soil. In the same 1987 report, when the caribou was named an international resource, The Department of the Interior stated, “the area 1002 is the Nation’s best single opportunity to increase significantly domestic oil production” (“Coastal Plain Resource Assessment VII). With a quoted 19% chance of finding 3.2 billion barrels of oil, Section 1002 presents $79.4 billion in untapped economic potential.

As the demand and technology for oil production increases, the pressure on government to open Section 1002 for development also increases. Since the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) passed in 1980 the gas and oil industry has fought environmental movement organizations (EMOs) to amend policy and redefine the refuge’s purpose.

In their article “Resources and Strategies of Interest Groups,” Brent Steel, John Pierce, and Nicholas Lovrich identify the key tools EMOs and special interest groups use to influence policy and protect public resources: economic persuasion, public campaigning, lobbying, and coalition formation. The viability of these strategies changes within the context of a given group. For industry, traditional tactics like economic persuasion and lobbying are favored. However, ANWR advocates succeeded protecting the refuge by implementing a range of different strategies. Of the strategies outlined, the most effective were arguably coalition formation and vigorous public campaigning.

Industrial groups, and in particular the oil industry, have vast amounts of financial resources. According to an article in the Huffington Post published in February of 2013, Exxon Mobil almost broke the world record for profits in a single year. Earning an overall $44.9 billion dollars in 2012, they took in a net income of $2.20 per share. Exxon is not exceptional in its earning. The Center for American Progress analyzed the profits and respective spending of the ‘Big Five,’ the five largest oil producers. The group includes Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, BP, and Shell, and as of the third quarter they collectively earned $90.7 billion in profits from the sale of crude oil and gas (Weiss, and Weidman).

Not only does the Center for American Progress track the income of the Big Five, it also tracks their spending. Using data from the Center for Responsive Politics and the FEC, the group spent $6.7 million in claimed campaign contributions, three fourths of which went to Republican candidates. The Center only tracks the Big Five though, and there are many more oil industry contributors to Capitol Hill.

Using information from the FEC and including only significant contributions (those over $200) Open Secrets, a self-described non-partisan organization following Washington investments, tabulated the oil industry’s total economic contributions for 2012. Soft money added up to $16.3 million and total contribution from PACs was over $15.9 million. The largest category of contribution came from individuals with affiliations to the oil industry at $40.5 million. In total, the industry and its supporters spent $72.7 million in political investments that year.

This investment is a tremendous number, but it pales when compared to the $90.7 billion dollars earned by just the Big Five in the third quarter alone (Center for American Progress). Set side by side it appears that the oil industry spent relatively little on political investments. However, when analyzed on an individual campaign level the contributions make a significant impact. Based off the previously cited total contributions, Open Secrets compiled a list of the top twenty oil and gas investment recipients in 2012. Nineteen were Republican, with Mitt Romney taking the lead at approximately $5.7 million in contributions. Others included Rick Perry and Ted Cruz with $1.03 million and $752,000 respectively. The only democrat, President Barack Obama, collected over $840,000. Keeping in mind that 2012 was an election year and the contributions are inflated, this overall investment in individual politicians by oil companies is significant. That year Romney took in $992.5 million in contributions, which means approximately 5% of it came directly from big oil (Ashkenas et al).

Beyond contributions to individual campaigns, the oil industry relies on a second traditional tool of policy influence: lobbying. Lobbyists inform, debate, and persuade representatives to support a particular political stance. In some instances they even propose legislation. Most representatives have limited time to research issues, and as a result, rely on lobbyist to provide them with accessible and accurate data. Acting as a disseminator of information, a lobby exerts great influence over the political process. The majority of big oil’s political investments are in lobbying. In 2012 Open Secrets reported that 211 clients (oil and gas companies) employ 804 registered lobbyists in Washington. In total, these clients invested $143.6 million in lobbying, three quarters of which came from the Big Five alone (Center for American Progress).

It is important to note that these numbers only represent contributions made on behalf of the *oil and gas industry*. Individual oil companies donate to lobbies beyond this, including natural resource, energy consumption, and transportation groups. Thus, it is likely that these industries have an even greater influence on policy than described by the numbers given.

Economic contributions and lobbying offer three distinctive advantages over other non-traditional strategies. First, it is the most direct means of shaping policy. While other strategies like public campaigning requires two phases of interaction (interest group to people, then people to government) these strategies only require one. The industry, or their salaried lobbyist, speaks directly to policy makers. Second, these methods are more certain. Once a contribution has been made a representative must comply with the group’s request, or risk losing future funding. Furthermore, by hiring a lobbyist, a group can control the information and image being presented to a politician. Finally, economic contributions and lobbying allow an industry to operate outside of the public eye, avoiding scandal and political backlash. As Judith Layzer writes in *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy*, “in the absence of public attention, an influential industry or local economic development interest can almost always have its way” (109).

While EMOs engage in economic strategies and lobbying, they do not pursue it to the level the oil industry does. For example in 2012, when the oil industry contributed $72 million to politicians, environmental groups invested only $14.9 million. Democrats comprised nearly all of the recipients, with Barack Obama receiving the largest investment of approximately $462,000. In Washington, 98 clients supported 359 lobbyists, spending a grand total of $16.6 million. The same year the oil industry spent over $143 million on lobbying alone (“Open Secrets”). Clearly the oil industry has a tremendous economic advantage over EMOs. Industries have a constant income with which to pursue their political interests. Indeed, the industry made heavy use of these two strategies to influence drilling policy in ANWR.

Just a decade after the passage of ANILCA, the oil industry again proposed drilling in ANWR. With war looming in the Gulf, the oil lobby petitioned George W. Bush to develop the north coast for national security. In response, the drilling friendly Department of the Interior revised its resource estimates, raising the probability of discovering oil in ANWR from 19 to 46 percent. To further bolster their position; in 1990 the industry funneled $320,000 into Senator Bennett Johnston’s (D-La) campaign. The next year Johnston introduced S 1120 which permitted resource development in Section 1002. For the next two years, while the bill was debated in congress and Bush was up for reelection, oil industry contributions nearly doubled from $11 to $20.6 million (“Open Secrets”). As Layzer writes though, the bill faced significant opposition from environmental and other resource management groups. Despite increased lobbying by big oil the bill was struck down, and the election of Bill Clinton lead to an eight year standstill on the matter. Another decade passed before the issue resurfaced, and in 2004 the oil industry funneled another $26.9 million in contributions and $52.4 million in lobbying into Washington. However, they once again lost to preservationist interests, and today ANWR’s northern plain remains closed to development.

In most environmental cases the vast financial superiority of industry overwhelms EMO initiatives. However, as the above examples demonstrate, economic advantages did not translate into political gains in ANWR. The success of EMOs in this case is unique, and it is largely due to preservationists’ political strategies of coalition formation and public campaigning.

At just over one hundred and fifty years old, American EMOs are relatively young. Their political identities flourished in the 1960s when the Environmental Movement swept the nation, spurring an upwelling of support. In her book, *Environmental Politics*, Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer identifies a diverse range of American EMOs. Most can be organized into three categories: mainstream groups, local/regional groups, radical groups. The first two organization types employ the most rational and effective strategies and have made the largest contribution in preserving ANWR.

Mainstream organizations comprise the largest EMOs. Their ranks include the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and the Wilderness Society (Switzer 25). Though they cover a wide range of issues and interests, mainstream organizations principally focus on public land preservation. With more national attention they command a significant amount of economic and political resources and engage on a national, political stage.

The second category Switzer identifies is local and bioregional organizations. In *Ecopolitics: Building a Green Society*, Daniel Coleman defines bioregionalism as,  “a movement and a fundamental orientation toward attaining an ecological society...society [can] be consciously oriented to natural life and that this consciousness [can] be based on an understanding of a particular locale or region” (124-125). Drawing from a smaller, more localized constituency, bioregional EMO strategies include awareness/educational campaigns and cross-group networking. Their primary goal is to encourage political change through individual actions, such as voting. Bioregional groups are not funded like the mainstream groups, but what they lack in capital they make up for in strong and responsive membership. This ability to engage on an individual level is an invaluable tool which, due to their size, is more difficult for mainstream organizations to maintain.

As a result of their unique advantages, bioregional and mainstream organizations often cooperate. Daniel Coleman describes their symbiotic relationship, where grassroots groups fill out the top-down organization of mainstream EMOs by providing ground members to promote an issue in the public sphere (124). The mainstream organizations are then free to work in the political sphere, maintaining contacts and a strong presence in Washington. In many environmental cases, national and bioregional organizations collaborate to some extent. Ultimately though, these groups tend retain their autonomy and act as individual political agents.

However, the refuge’s EMOs deviate from this pattern by cooperating intimately, integrating their political efforts into a comprehensive top-down system. Primarily affecting the northern coast of Alaska, drilling in Section 1002 was by its nature a bioregional issue. The ANICLA act though placed the area under federal jurisdiction and made it a national issue. Sharing a mutual goal for protection, these organizations formed a powerful joint-force known as the Alaska Coalition, which proved to be one of the strongest strategies for ANWR supporters.

According to the group’s website, the Alaska Coalition was established in 1970 to advocate the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Initially a temporary organization, the Coalition grew into a formidable political action group comprising over 1,000 members. Their national ranks include the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Friends of Earth, and Bird Conservation Network. More local to the issues are the Trustees of Alaska, Alaska Center for the Environment, and Shadow of the Bear. The Coalition even attracts organizations not typically associated with the environmental movement such as the Hoonah Indian Association, Alaska Injured Workers Alliance, and the Performing and Fine Artists for World Peace & Earth-Friendly Schools based out of Hawaii (“About Us”).

Uniting as a single entity afforded preservationists several advantages. First, it consolidated support, making anti-drilling support appear stronger. In January 1989 the Coalition sent a petition to the Bush administration signed by over 100 EMOs and civic groups to protest the pro-drilling legislation. By sending a single petition under the title of one group, the Coalition was able to impress the importance and popularity of protecting ANWR. Although the petition alone did not convince the administration, there was a noticeable softening in their rhetoric.

Another distinct advantage of coalitions is that interests from contrasting fields can unite to achieve a shared goal. After they sent the petition, the Alaska Coalition joined with energy consumer special interest groups to protest the passage of S 1120. While the Coalition wanted to preserve wilderness Alaska, the energy groups wanted to stop the expansion of the oil industry which was threatening their own market share. Despite their contrasting values, the groups compounded their efforts and effectively dissuaded policy makers from passing S 1120 (Layzer 123). These diverse contacts spread ANWR’s importance to citizens who were not directly impacted by the legislation, but who were still interested in the issue.

The greatest advantage of a coalition strategy though is not necessarily the coalition itself. It is the strategies that a well formed alliance can enact that makes this tactic so powerful. As Steel, Pierce, and Lovrich write on page 415 of their article, “environmental interest group influence derives primarily from their capacity for mobilizing human resources.” Mobilizing the public to act upon an issue is the single strongest tool an interest group possesses. Politicians depend on the support of their constituents to hold their position. Campaign contributions and lobbying aside, if a politician is unpopular they will lose their seat. Thus, representatives are highly responsive to public opinions and actions.

In *Northern Landscapes: The Struggle for Wilderness Alaska* Daniel Nelson examines one of the greatest instances of public campaigning in the history of ANWR. In the early 70s the fledgling Alaska Coalition commenced a massive national grassroots campaign to pass H.R. 39. The legislation, also known as the Udall Bill, doubled the area of ANWR and was a prelude to ANILCA. The mainstream organizations took political charge in the effort, creating a comprehensive national campaign and securing support in Washington. The Friends of Earth contacted all the bioregional groups within the Coalition to compile a mailing list. With their help, the alliance was able to identify key congressional districts to target.

The bioregional EMOs then disseminated the informational pamphlets generated by the mainstream organizations, contacting individuals and local policy makers to express their concerns. The groups worked closely, with mainstream and bioregional groups responding to each other and the situation. In 1970 the bill was finally passed. Through a strong coalition these groups were able to implement a successful public campaign that would have otherwise been impossible if a single group had attempted it alone (Nelson 184-190).

This type of public strategy was again employed in 2000, when plans for drilling were reopened. The Coalition responded with petitions and a massive public campaign. Judith Layzer writes how dozens of EMOs lead by the Audubon society mobilized citizens to e-mail, call and fax their representatives. They ran national TV and radio ads highlighting the plight of the caribou and polar bear, the charismatic megafauna of the refuge. This effort caused a dual increase in public and extra-organizational support, with citizens and EMOs joining the Alaska Coalition. The Section 1002 issue climaxed in 2005 and the Coalition redoubled its campaigning. The rising oil prices complicated the preservationists’ campaign as more citizens clamored for lower prices. Debates in congress became heated as both sides fought vehemently for their position. Ultimately, the propositions to open ANWR were denied by a slim margin (Layzer 134).

For over thirty years the oil industry has fought to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for resource development. Through economic contributions and lobbying the industry is a formidable opponent to public lands preservationists. Despite their vast reserves of wealth and resources though, the oil industry has been unsuccessful in their campaign. They are unable to overcome the arguments for preservation put forth by the environmental movement groups. Using the meta-strategy of coalition formation, the Alaska Coalition and other EMOs have used national public campaigning to influence policy creation. Through educational crusades, media blitzes, and public participation events preservation groups have, for the time being, successfully protected Section 1002 from industry encroachment. With each successive bill though, preservationist have won by a smaller and smaller margin. For the time being, the strategies employed by EMOs surpass those used by the oil industry; but only time will tell if these strategies have an absolute advantage over traditional tactics.

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