



# Congressman Tim Bishop

*FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK*

## NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT: JON SCHNEIDER**

**PHONE: (202) 225-3826**

### **BISHOP JOINS BIPARTISAN EFFORT TO PROTECT ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

**WASHINGTON**—Congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) joined over 125 lawmakers of both parties in introducing the Morris K. Udall Wilderness Act of 2003. The Act will designate nearly 1.6 million acres— the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge— as wilderness, permanently protecting the area from development.

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of our nation’s most treasured places,” Bishop said. “Scientists call the Coastal Plain the ‘biological heart’ of the Refuge, and it deserves the highest level of federal protection. Long Islanders understand the importance of protecting our environment.”

Currently, 95 percent of Alaska’s vast North Slope is open to oil and gas exploration and leasing. The Coastal Plain represents the last five percent that remains off-limits to development. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the mean estimate of oil that could be recovered from the Refuge would amount to less than a six-month supply for America. In addition, it would take at least 10 years to do the exploration, construction, and drilling necessary to get it to U.S. markets.

“The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge is a priceless piece of American wilderness, set aside for future generations in recognition of its unique wildlife values,” Bishop said. “The idea that we would forever despoil this pristine environment in exchange for six months of oil just does not make sense.”

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge stretches from the Beaufort Sea to the Brooks Range and serves as a crucial breeding and migratory habitat for more than 200 species, including polar bears, caribou and more than 160 bird species. The area is also a critical calving ground for the 130,000 caribou of the Porcupine herd. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Coastal Plain ecosystem is “unique compared to the rest of northern Alaska.”

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