

OPINION

COMPASS: *Points of view from the community*

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Here's a NEW solution for ANWR

By **TED and FRANCOISE GIANOUTSOS**

We have been wildlife conservationists, environmentalists, hunters and fishers our entire adult lives — some 40 years now. Nearly 20 years ago we put our money where our mouths are and became life members of Audubon, National Wildlife Federation, Izzak Walton League of America and the NRA. We also founded the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with the gift of our estates, in the form of a 30-year testamentary trust fund, to our country — specifically the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior.

For the nearly 40 years that we have been married we have also been consumers of petroleum products. They have literally fueled our uniquely American pursuit of happiness. Oil and gas have taken us to work as public servants, warmed our home, cooked our meals and taken us on vacations both in America and abroad. We are grateful for the convenience, comfort and security that oil and gas have afforded us.

So, what now to do about ANWR? For two decades we have listened closely to the leaders of our organizations and others tell us, and our fellow concerned Americans, that ANWR should not be drilled. That drilling ANWR will irreparably harm the environment and the critters. At the same time we have watched Prudhoe Bay responsibly produce billions of barrels of oil. Even the notorious Exxon Valdez oil spill was successfully cleaned up. We have witnessed many times with our own eyes the otters, salmon and other wildlife flourishing where the spill took place in Prince William Sound.

Common sense tells us that oil and gas fuel America and all of our pursuits



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of happiness. Common sense also tells us that it is always in our national best interest — economic, security, and yes, environmental! — to develop our own oil and gas wherever and whenever we responsibly can. We have been doing just that for a quarter century in Prudhoe Bay only 70 miles from ANWR in the same ecosystem.

Over the years we have come to believe that "green" organizational leaders have turned the ANWR issue into a fundraising cash cow. Common sense tells us that any organization would drill ANWR in a heartbeat if they owned it. They would do so for the billions of dollars in royalties that they then could use to do unprecedented good for wildlife and the environment on a scale that otherwise is clearly impossible for them to accomplish. Indeed, officers of our own organizations, of which we are life members, told us in candid conversations that they would of course drill ANWR if they owned it. "Do you think we're crazy?" they said. These are the same folks who cry crocodile tears over ANWR oil drilling while telling us all to keep sending more money for the "good fight." Right! No matter how much we all enjoy the

benefits of petroleum, PR-wise stinky oil can never compete with warm and fuzzy wildlife. So the ANWR "debate" continues.

As wildlife conservationists and oil consumers we propose a solution. Open ANWR to responsible oil and gas development with strict environmental controls including a revenue-generated fund for spill clean up, reclamation and promotion of energy conservation and alternative fuels. Split the rest of the revenue between Alaska and the federal government, with the federal share earmarked to create a National Endowment for Wildlife (NEW) invested in U.S. Treasury securities. Encourage the private sector to participate in the endowment. Individuals, businesses and organizations could make matching gifts to establish endowment accounts for their own wildlife interests. The NEW would thus fund wildlife conservation and environmental projects for as long as America exists, far beyond any oil and gas development. It's a NEW common sense solution to the interminable ANWR dialogue of the deaf. How about it?

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