

Oil exploration: ANWR

It is estimated that the Arctic region contains 25% of the world unexploited gas and oil reserves. The Arctic region lies within the Arctic circle (66.5 degree line of latitude) and consists of ice covered Arctic ocean surrounding the North Pole, as well as the Northern parts of 8 countries - Canada, Greenland, Alaska (USA), Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden.

CASE STUDY: The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR)

ANWR is the most biological diverse Arctic region in the world and is located in the northern part of Alaska (USA). The area is a total of 19 million acres, with 37 species of land mammal, 8 marine mammals, 42 fish species and 200 migratory bird species.

The area though has been the focus of attention for many years because it is estimated that beneath the land there is 1 million additional barrels of oil that could be extracted for use each day. This would produce around 27 million gallons on petrol and diesel. The extraction of this oil would increase the supply and therefore lower prices in the USA.

Advantages of ANWR	Disadvantages of ANWR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The increased oil and gas supply will decrease the dependency that the USA has on foreign imported oil and gas. - It will dramatically help the economy of Alaska by providing thousands of jobs - The revenue generated from the oil could lead to a drop in price, creating another economic boom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The drilling may not yield the amount that has been predicted. This means that the huge biodiversity in the area will be destroyed for no reason - The wildlife refuge could be disturbed by humans, with animals lives and migratory routes being disrupted - By drilling for new fossil fuel reserves it doesn't encourage the move to renewable fuel in order to reduce emissions - It could be decades before the oil starts leaving the well meaning that it will not help secure the USA energy immediately.

Key players in the ANWR debate:

1. **Labour Union** - they are for drilling in ANWR because they believe that it will reduce the dependency on foreign oil and will create 750,000 jobs in Alaska alone with 25,000 in maintenance and support. However they are not fully supportive due to the environmental impacts caused by it.
2. **The Sierra Club** - They are against drilling for oil in ANWR because they believe that we should explore and protect the refuge. They also argue that a large amount of infrastructure will be needed which will be divesting for the refuge
3. **The Gwich'in Nation** - this group are again against drilling. These are the natives of the Arctic in which there are 9,000 of them in 15 communities. They believe that the environmental damage would be too great. They rely on the 180,000 caribou on the coastal plain of Alaska which could be disrupted by the drilling.
4. **The Inupiat People** - They are for drilling in ANWR due to the fact that it will create many jobs for them. Although they believe that it will impact the environment they do not think that it will affect them so they therefore are not bothered about the drilling in ANWR.

