

**PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEFENSE OF  
NATURE:**

ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION BUILDING IN ALASKA

**By**

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Point of Departure

In the new millennium, environmentalism is responding to the critical voices of the previous decades. Being a powerful political and social force in the 1960s and 1970s, much of the environmental movement was reduced to courtroom and lobbyist activism during the 1980s. Institutionalization and compromises with Big Business created a distance between the grass-roots activists and the corporate environmental organizations. Popular environmental awareness suffered as a consequence. The limitations of the American mainstream environmental movement were becoming clear, as underrepresented causes were voiced by interest groups. The movement was accused of ethnocentrism, sexism and social injustice. Critics followed with an outcry for environmental justice. This “new environmentalism” was to deal with socially oriented issues such as urban pollution, food and water safety, slums and so forth. Issues pertaining to wilderness preservation and wildlife protection were seen as backwards and tending to the interests of a privileged few.

The lack of a broader social and cultural focus moreover sparked debate in the humanities. Here, the wilderness idea in general, and the ecocentric philosophy of the Deep Ecology movement in particular, became subjects of criticism. The essence of the questions at stake was: Which nature view is better equipped to deal with environmental problems – the anthropocentric or the ecocentric? That is, should environmental questions be approached from a viewpoint where humans are above nature, or from one where they are merely one (albeit important) species found in the ecological systems of the world? These are major philosophical questions, too complex to be discussed adequately in this thesis; however, the gist of the issues will be presented. My take on these questions will follow the ideas of Robert J. Brulle: It is not a matter of either/or questions when it comes to fashioning effective environmental politics. There has to be room for diversity of values. Both the anthropocentric and the ecocentric discourses have strengths and weaknesses. Neither possesses universal solutions.

As Mark Dowie proclaimed in his book *Losing Ground*<sup>1</sup> in the mid-1990s, any chance the environmental movement would have to be an influential actor in the global era of the

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Dowie, *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995).

twenty-first century, would require fundamental structural changes on its part. It would have to widen; to include people of different social classes, races, cultures and religions. It would have to become a broad social movement rooted in many different values and agendas. Dowie hinted at an emergence of a so-called “fourth wave” of environmentalism, where these dimensions would play a larger part. The global warming and environmental depletion challenges do indeed require a whole new approach to environmentalist work, as any effective measures will have to engage and include global society.

The case of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) on the north slope of Alaska has proven to be an interesting backdrop against which to discuss many of these issues. Here, economic, social, cultural, religious, aesthetic and ecological values come together and are being weighed against one another as the battle over petroleum, subsistence culture and wilderness experiences unfolds.

David M. Standlea has written the book, *Oil, Globalization and the War for the Arctic Refuge*<sup>2</sup>, which deals with the different actors and interests that take part in this drama. On the one hand, there are powerful interests pursuing the extraction of petroleum resources within the State of Alaska; major oil companies and the federal government. On the other hand there is a coalition of several organizations which has so far been successful in holding up such a development in ANWR: the Alaska Coalition. This coalition has been made up of actors such as environmentalist organizations, the Gwich'in Athabascan Indians, and the Episcopal Church, USA. Although this coalition has dividing goals and interests among itself, it has been able to hold together on this issue for nearly three decades. Perhaps it can be seen as representative of a new wave of environmentalism, a model for what Dowie has theorized. Has the Alaska Coalition progressed into a new environmentalism? This is a central question in this thesis. The stories behind these actors are central to Standlea's book, as he has followed and interviewed many of the people involved in this controversy. In this regard it is a valuable source for getting to know the dynamics taking place within these groups.

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this thesis rests on the discourses of the American environmental movement. In this context, I base my discussion on the work of Robert J. Brulle, *Agency, Democracy, and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical*

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<sup>2</sup> David M. Standlea, *Oil, Globalization, and the War for the Arctic Refuge*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

*Theory Perspective*.<sup>3</sup> His conceptual framework, based on the critical theory system of Jürgen Habermas, explains how isolated environmental discourses can be brought into relation, which suggests how the environmental movement could become less fragmented. The key, according to Brulle, is for different value systems to stop competing and acknowledge that none of them can single-handedly cover all issues that need to be addressed in order to prevent ecological crisis. To achieve this, open and respectful communication is required.

Critical theory seeks to expand our social horizons. It strives to foster an examination of our social behavior and beliefs, to develop the recognition that the existing state of affairs does not exhaust all possibilities, and to offer suggestions for the conscious development of more effective and morally sensitive actions.<sup>4</sup>

Brulle argues that critical theory is useful to enable social understanding and change. This process is primarily described through the communicative action model of Habermas.

Language and discourse are central components of this model.

Habermas's scheme progresses from the fundamental presuppositions of speech to the formation of coherent worldviews, or discourses. These coherent worldviews serve as the basis for social organization, which form the components of a social order. Thus, Habermas's work builds from the everyday use of language to the formation of discourses and social organizations. These discourses and social organizations become institutionalized and form an interrelated system that constitutes a society. These institutions then evolve and adapt to changing conditions through communicative action.<sup>5</sup>

What is described here is the link between everyday speech and the possibility for changing the social order. I have offered a rather superficial presentation of critical theory and communicative action and I will not focus much on these theories in and of themselves; they merely help form a frame through which the discourses of American environmentalism can be understood. Brulle's ideas on environmental discourses are my main focus.

### **1.3 Discourse Analysis**

The language and arguments used by a selection of coalition members will be analyzed in this thesis. The goal of the discourse analysis is to evaluate where the values and worldviews of

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<sup>3</sup> Robert J. Brulle, *Agency, Democracy, and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Brulle 9.

<sup>5</sup> Brulle 23.

the subjects overlap, and where they differ. This process is central to understand to what degree different value systems within the Coalition have converged and consequently how unified the Coalition is. In this analysis I have selected two terms that are central to the discourse taking place in ANWR on the anti-development side. These key terms are “wilderness” and “sustainability”. How these terms are understood within each organization reveals their values and worldviews. Further, how these worldviews are positioned in relation to each other can tell us something about the dynamics between them.

#### **1.4 Rhetoric Analysis- Terms and Concepts**

Another approach to analyzing these interest groups and their cooperation is through using rhetoric analysis tools. The content of their published websites is naturally crucial to the analysis, but the way it is presented is equally interesting. Rhetoric analysis entails using the Aristotelian concepts of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. *Ethos* plays on the appearance or credibility of the character, and uses that as a basis to persuade the audience. *Pathos* entails the use of emotional appeals for persuasion, and *logos* is an appeal by demonstration of the truth, real or apparent.<sup>6</sup> Where the style of the published material of the organizations provides an interesting perspective, these tools will be used to make additional comments on the primary source material.

#### **1.5 Primary Source Material**

The primary source material consists of a sample of websites, online articles and other online publications produced by a selection of organizations involved in the Alaska Coalition. Moreover, the perspective of the Kaktovik Inupiat of ANWR, on the outside of the coalition, will be considered. As these sources are internet-based, the question of validity needs extra concern. I do, however, reckon the official publications of these organizations are generally trustworthy. Some of them are influential political actors. Furthermore, their main usefulness is to help build an analysis of the worldviews and values of these actors, in which case written pieces signed off on by their organizations are as valid as any other source.

These online publications are regularly updated, and while not all of them are dated in terms of when they were written, I have to assume that they remain relevant and

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<sup>6</sup> Linda Woodson, *A Handbook of Modern Rhetorical Terms*, (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1979).



representative of their positions. I have to the best of my knowledge chosen current material.<sup>7</sup> The discourse and rhetoric analyses are performed to place these actors in the current environmental value debate. To this effect, the most recent updates of the websites have to be considered adequate for this task.

## **1.6 Thesis Questions**

This thesis looks at the Alaska Coalition and its work to halt development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Primarily, I seek an answer to whether the environmental project of the Alaska Coalition has progressed into a so-called “new environmentalism”. Can its success in preventing development so far be explained by methods that go beyond traditional environmentalism? In other words, I am concerned with why and how the Alaska Coalition has been successful in halting oil development in ANWR so far.

My discourse and rhetorical analyses are central to achieve this goal. The dynamic between the interest parties in the Alaska Coalition is crucial to understanding how their message to the public has been put together. This message is in turn the key to their popular support, which provides political power. Central points of discussion are as follows: Have the different value systems and the agents representing them gone through a social learning process? Have they incorporated the value systems into a unified discourse? This entails more than a unified rhetoric; it would be a new environmental discourse where the strengths of the represented discourses are merged into a new way of understanding environmentalism.

So, while external circumstances surely have contributed to their success, the internal dynamics between the parties in the coalition are particularly interesting. The coalition will moreover be discussed in light of the various environmental discourses, and furthermore in relation to problematic concepts such as the indigenous perspectives, sustainability and the wilderness problem.

## **1.7 Chapter Outline**

In chapter two I will present the political, legal, historical and cultural framework for the ANWR case, with emphasis on the controversial aspects surrounding it. The different actors

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<sup>7</sup> Shortly before the completion of this thesis the Wilderness Society refashioned their entire website, downsizing the amount of material on ANWR, and focusing more on America’s Arctic in general. I choose to stick to my original source material on account of the time factor, and moreover because it is more comprehensive and detailed. The message conveyed on the updated version of the website is largely the same, and thus my evaluation of the organization will not be affected. The source material is naturally dated by time of access.

and the dynamics between them will be discussed. I will analyze the current situation in an environmental perspective, based on the arguments given by both sides, and herein address the questions of sustainable development, and how the indigenous perspectives play into the situation.

Chapter three will map out the discourses of American environmentalism. This will be done from a historical angle, where the important institutional and philosophical developments are presented. The demographic basis, and values present in the different movement epochs, is necessary to understand in order to discuss whether we are now seeing something new in environmental networks such as the Alaska Coalition. The vastness of this topic means that not every aspect of it can be covered in this thesis. However, while the presentation of the American environmental movement is done somewhat briefly, I think the discourse angle is useful in terms of getting a larger perspective on the strong and weak sides of the different types of organizations.

In the second part of the chapter I will get into how the call for a new environmentalism happened. This will be done through discussing different criticisms that have been made against the mainstream environmentalism from social, feminist and indigenous environmentalists, and furthermore from the ecocentric perspective. The discussion aims to illustrate the points made about the strengths and weaknesses of the different environmental discourses.

Chapter four will focus on the analysis of the primary source material. This is where the discourse -and rhetoric analyses will take place. Through performing this evaluation of the Alaska Coalition based on the websites of a member selection, I attempt to answer the major question asked in this thesis: Has the coalition progressed into a “new environmentalism”? As previously stated this question rests on the coherence of the values revealed in the material. How does the coalition handle the diverging value systems? Are some values more prominent than others?

### **1.8 Motivation for Topic – Why this Issue is Important**

The work to prevent the Alaskan State and the oil industry in destroying one of the few large continuous wilderness areas in the United States is immense and more important than ever. With the current situation of a warming climate putting a great deal of stress on the Arctic ecosystems, and the cultures that depend on them, wilderness preservation is even more pertinent than it was twenty-eight years ago, when Wilderness designations were made

throughout Alaska with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). There does not seem to be any significant future let up for existing undeveloped oil reserves. The world's thirst for oil has never been stronger, and while the global financial problems might slow down the carousel a bit, the fundamental belief in an expanding economy and consumerism is likely to bring the world back on the same course eventually. In fact, I think it is disheartening how far the economy had to spin out of control before any unified international effort at damage control was made. I wonder what that says about the ability of global society to prevent the more sneaking ecological crisis experts are telling us is at hand if nothing drastic is done to change the course of the world. I hope I am wrong.

This thesis is not directly about global structural issues; however is an overarching dimension that is important to keep in mind. The United States has historically been a nation which has fronted nature preservation, and moreover it often functions as a trendsetter for much of the developed world. Therefore I think it is important to keep an eye on the development of this particular case. Which values will win out in the end? Will economic and political considerations in time trump the ecological, cultural and aesthetic values? The ANWR controversy illustrates the value conflicts which are almost always present when closing off a natural area to development. Ultimately, the value judgments being made in each and every case like this, in sum determine the future ecological stability of the world.

Some people put their hopes in a new environmentalism, where a wider range of values is represented. Value diversity could in turn enable more popular involvement in the environmentalist agenda, and make it a truly democratic project. The Alaska Coalition fighting development in ANWR displays some signs of having progressed into such a movement. Is this truly so, or does it only appear to be the case? With this point of departure, exploring the possibilities of this coalition is a worth while task.

## Chapter Two: A Case Study of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

### 2.1 Introduction

The battle over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is peaking after decades of growing resentments. The wildlife refuge on the north-eastern coast of Alaska holds possible oil -and gas reserves, a fragile ecosystem and scattered native villages. In this controversy, demands for energy, jobs and economic development collide with values such as wilderness experience, the protection of endangered species and subsistence living among indigenous peoples. This is a familiar scenario in a world where the global economic market sets the agenda.<sup>8</sup> Economic growth is the primary goal, a growth that is predominantly based on the consumption of fossil fuels. The hunt for fossil fuels is intensifying, and is responsible for many miserable fates among poor, unstable states in the developing world, displacement and extinction of species due to loss of habitat, and the creation of large wounds in the natural landscape. In addition, here lies the responsibility for changes in the atmosphere that has brought on global warming.

Counterpoints to the values of the oil corporations, privately or state-owned, are found among others in non-governmental organizations. In the case of ANWR, a coalition fighting the oil companies' plans to drill in the refuge is put together of environmentalists, the Gwich'in Indians and religious, labor and sporting groups.<sup>9</sup> This coalition has been able to halt drilling in ANWR up to this point, in a high-profiled battle that has lasted more than two decades. Continuous attempts to open the area to development have been made by the pro-oil Bush administration. The issue is hotter than ever with the looming threat of a coming energy crisis and the instability of the price of oil.

As David M. Standlea claims in his book *Oil, Globalization, and the War for the Arctic Refuge*, the controversy over ANWR is a great example of a case where worldviews collide. One part of the case pertains to displacement of an ecological system and an indigenous people by massive financial interests. However, the interests of the actors standing up to the oil boosters represent a wide range of values on their own. The coalition has diverging worldviews within its own ranks.<sup>10</sup> The wide range of environmental perspectives

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<sup>8</sup> Globalization happens through a myriad of processes; this is merely one less fortunate.

<sup>9</sup> "About Us," *Alaskacoalition.org*, 9 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.alaskacoalition.org/about-us/>>.

<sup>10</sup> Standlea 13-16.

and values represented could suggest that the coalition has progressed beyond traditional environmental approaches. A debated “new environmentalism”, which includes social and cultural dimensions, may be an appropriate label for the Alaska Coalition. This thesis aims at discussing the ANWR controversy and in particular the Alaska Coalition, in terms of the “new environmentalism” approach.

The perspectives of the indigenous peoples are in this case particularly interesting in that they add a new dimension to the culture-nature dichotomy. The polarization of the natural and cultural environments is challenged by the indigenous perspectives. Native subsistence cultures residing in wild natural areas, leaving no significant “footprint” on the environment, are problematic in the western-industrial perspective in that they do not fit our nature and culture categories. This issue is further highlighted in that both industrial development and wilderness designation are potentially destructive to these peoples and their traditional ways of life.

This first chapter of the thesis will present the historical, cultural, political and legal framework for the ANWR case. Moreover, I will present the key actors involved in the controversy and map out some connections and compromises between them. These mechanisms will be tied to the development of the ANWR situation during the last decades. The scope of the thesis limits the number of actors to be discussed: I thus choose to focus on the oil companies and the State of Alaska on the pro-oil side, and the national environmental groups and the Gwich’in Indians on the other side. The Kaktovik Inupiat Eskimos of Kaktovik City in ANWR, a native village that is not a member of the coalition, will also be presented.

Finally, an environmental analysis will be given, where some arguments against oil drilling will be used as a platform. A key question is what has kept oil developers from obtaining permission to drill in the refuge so far.

## **2.2 Oil Fever in Alaska**

The area now known as Alaska was Russian territory until 1867, when it was sold to the U.S. Nearly another 100 years passed before Alaska was included as the 49<sup>th</sup> state, which took place in 1959. By then the discussion was already running on how this vast tract of wilderness should be managed.<sup>11</sup> Alaska was seen as the last frontier, and it represented a second chance

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<sup>11</sup> Wilderness can be a legal term; its definition is given in the Wilderness Act of 1964. It can also be a term used to describe a wild, uninhabited area, often denoting beauty and sublimity. In this thesis I will distinguish the two by capitalizing the legal term.

at experiencing frontier life and wilderness. The frontier experience, which entailed settling in the outskirts of civilization and subduing wilderness by one's own hands, was an attractive idea that prompted a fair number of Americans to leave the well settled lower 48 states and move to Alaska. The land was abundant in natural resources, such as timber, gold, fish, and as was discovered, oil and gas. This possibility for resource extraction was a great motivating factor for the settlers, who soon outnumbered Native Alaskans. Another major pull factor for settlers was Alaska's military strategic importance during WW2 and the Cold War. The result of the migration into Alaska was a clash between settlers from the lower 48 states, seeking to extract national resources and develop the area, native peoples wanting a subsistence-based lifestyle, and people looking for an experience of the wild, untrammelled nature.<sup>12</sup>

Alaskan oil was discovered by European descendants in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Several discoveries of oil on the North Slope were made by exploring companies from the 1830s and onwards, but harsh climate and remote access discouraged development at the time. A conservation policy, attributed to ex-president and sports-hunter enthusiast Theodore Roosevelt, withheld the area from exploration between 1909 and 1920. In 1923, President Harding set aside most of the western part of the North Slope as a naval petroleum reserve (Naval Petroleum Reserve no. 4). The area was subject to exploration by the navy and its contractors during the 1940s and 1950s, resulting in more natural gas finds than oil. When oil was struck on the Kenai Peninsula in 1957, it set the stage for imminent statehood and a new oil era.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) gave permits to oil companies for exploration east of the petroleum reserve in 1962. This must be seen in relation to national attempts to lessen the dependence on foreign oil, from the Middle East in particular. The break-through for North Slope oil activity happened in 1968, when the largest oil reserve ever found in the U.S. was struck at Prudhoe Bay. Oil companies involved in the upstart phase of Prudhoe Bay were Atlantic Richfield (Arco), British Petroleum (BP) and Humble Oil and Refining Company (later Exxon).<sup>13</sup>

### **2.3 Native Claims Complicate the Oil Development**

Meanwhile, in the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s, the Natives of Alaska were arguing their claims to land according to the Alaska Statehood Act (ASA). In 1966 their claims resulted in

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<sup>12</sup> Standlee 19-26.

<sup>13</sup> Ken Ross, *Environmental Conflict in Alaska*, (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000) 145-149.

Interior Secretary Stewart Udall halting leases of federal lands in Alaska. A land settlement had to be put in order before leases and concessions could be given, and oil development could proceed.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, a planned pipeline system that would transport oil from Prudhoe Bay to the lower 48 states was in danger of being stalled by native villages located along the proposed route. The issue had to be addressed quickly. The conflict between developers and natives was settled in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, where native tribes were made corporate regions and villages. The settlement granted twelve regional and more than 200 village native corporations \$1 billion and 44 million acres, including subsurface rights. Through this act the native villages who accepted the settlement signed away future claims to land.<sup>15</sup>

ANCSA has later on been subject to criticism by Alaskan native sovereignty movement alliances for being a calculated ploy to get the natives out of the way for resource development, resulting in their disconnection from the land and all its historical, cultural and spiritual ties. The act was developed without the involvement of the Alaskan native population, and in effect took away their control over their own heritage and lifestyle. Legal and economic concepts introduced as the villages became corporations were unnatural and artificial to these peoples.<sup>16</sup> While a meeting between western commercial and native cultures was inevitable, much more could have been done to sustain the latter in the face of the developmental and commercial juggernaut.

## **2.4 The Trans-Alaska Pipeline**

As oil was struck on the North Slope, the challenge of transporting the oil from Prudhoe Bay to the lower 48 states presented itself. A proposition to build a pipeline stretching from Prudhoe Bay to the ice-free port of Valdez in the south was put forward by the three oil companies in charge. Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) was a consortium of these three main oil developers, Arco, BP and Humble Oil (Exxon). From Valdez, the oil would be transported by sea in tankers to the west coast of the U.S. The proposition was contested. Loading oil from pipes on to tankers presented risks of spillage, and some were concerned about earthquakes, soil erosion and thawing of the permafrost surrounding the pipes. The scenic and biologically rich shoreline of Prince William Sound would be on the route of the tankers between Valdez and the Gulf of Alaska, and oil spills in this area were feared. An

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<sup>14</sup> Ross 146.

<sup>15</sup> Standlee 26-28.

<sup>16</sup> Standlee 110-119.

environmental impact statement for the Prudhoe-Valdez route predicted numerous smaller spills each year, but concluded that there were no routes superior to the others. The danger to the fragile ecosystem of Prince William Sound was not sufficient to discourage this pipeline route. Alternate routes for a pipeline system were proposed; one was to go through ANWR and along the McKenzie River Valley, another from Prudhoe Bay to Fairbanks and further down the Alaska Highway. There was moreover talk of a route across Canada. These suggestions were rejected by the oil boosters. Lawsuits filed by concerned environmentalists and native groups followed the efforts to push through the Prudhoe-Valdez alternative. The issue was in the last instance left up to Congress, which under the Nixon administration passed the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act in 1973, thus enabling the Prudhoe-Valdez pipeline desired by the oil companies. Independence from foreign oil, specifically seen in the light of the Arabic Oil Embargo, became a major factor in the decision, both in terms of finance and security. The pipeline needed to be built quickly, and be under complete U.S. control. Other motivating factors were the expected boost for the shipbuilding industry, and in addition jobs and revenue income for the State of Alaska.<sup>17</sup>

Aside from the danger of small and large spills from the pipeline or tankers, the vastness of the construction project entailed the presence of access roads, debris, heavy machinery and noise. These factors presented challenges to the wild life populations, as access to forage and migration routes could be restricted. Spills and leaks did happen during the construction of the pipeline, and the company to be put in charge, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, did not have particularly much knowledge or regard for the environment they were altering.<sup>18</sup> The legacy left by the oil industry during this construction period did not inspire much confidence for future undertakings. Impact and damage always seemed to exceed what was promised. In this manner, the distrust from current anti-development groups in ANWR and the rest of Alaska is valid.

## **2.5 The Creation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

The clash between developers and environmentalists in Alaska continues today to be a major issue. However, some steps were taken as early as 1960 to ensure that some areas within Alaska were set aside for wilderness-use. The area now known as ANWR was established at this time and was named the Arctic National Wildlife Range. The wilderness qualities of

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<sup>17</sup> Peter A. Coates, *The Trans-Alaska Pipeline Controversy: Technology, Conservation and the Frontier* (1991. Paperback edition: University of Alaska Press, 1993) 175-250.

<sup>18</sup> Ross 149-158.



Alaska had not gone unnoticed in the hundred years that had passed since it became U.S. territory. Efforts to set aside land for preservation were set in motion years before statehood. The Wilderness Society, led by Olaus Maurie, fronted this cause during the 1950s, which resulted in the creation of the 1960 range. This was merely one step on the way to preservation; ANWR still had to face major developmental interests, especially after the 1968 petroleum findings in Prudhoe Bay. Attention to the possibility of further oil reserves on the North Slope was then increased.

The wildlife range was made a wildlife reserve in 1980, when the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was ratified. The area was then renamed Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The background for the passage of ANILCA was increasing antagonism between pro-development interest groups and preservationists during the 1970s. The building of the trans-Alaska pipeline and the opening of the oil fields at Prudhoe Bay escalated the boosters' interests in North Slope oil, and simultaneously the resistance of natives and environmentalists, as they grew more worried about the fate of the wild areas. The tug-of-war between the main pro-development organization, The Alaska Delegation, and the Alaska Coalition, were in large part over land management and unprotected federal lands. These issues dated in part back to ANCSA's call for federal lands studies, which in turn stalled land selection and thus resource extraction. During the Carter presidency between 1977 and 1981, the President and his political supporters set out to pass legislation that would protect 140 million acres of federal lands in Alaska. A revised version of the bill was passed in 1980, after dramatic negotiations. A reduced area total was protected, but the act was nevertheless a victory for wilderness preservers.<sup>19</sup>

ANILCA not only provided protection of areas, it also specified how they should be managed. A unique provision for subsistence practices in Alaska's national parks was made. This entailed that the rural, and specifically the indigenous population, was allowed to continue its hunting and fishing practices necessary for consumption and cultural rituals. Theodore Catton emphasizes the democratic principle inherent in the subsistence provision:

In the formation of Alaska's national parks one important principle gradually emerged: American democracy would not be well served if the national parks oppressed this small minority. The process involved a search for balance and commonality between the interests of preservationists and those of resident peoples.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Standley 28-34.

<sup>20</sup> Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997) 3.

Moreover, the acknowledgement of the human component in these natural areas was important from an ecological standpoint. It moved away from looking at nature and culture as two separate entities. The significance of the Alaskan natural parks created through ANILCA was the attempt to maintain focus on scientific, aesthetic, cultural and social aspects simultaneously: “The new Alaska parks are striving (1) to protect native cultures; (2) to satisfy wilderness preservationists; (3) to treat resident peoples justly; and (4) to maintain pristine environments for ecological study - all at the same time.”<sup>21</sup>

ANWR was doubled in area through the enactment of ANILCA. Through further adjustments it has been brought to a total of 19.8 million acres. The protection of an area of such a substantial size, including “an intact, naturally functioning community of arctic/subarctic ecosystems”<sup>22</sup> was unique on a worldwide scale. While ANILCA was successful in establishing an impressive number of protected areas and allowing subsistence use, it failed to protect the contested North Slope. Only the interior part of ANWR was designated as Wilderness, the coastal slope was to undergo scientific wildlife study and oil exploration, pending a final decision.

## **2.6 The Repercussions of ANILCA**

The passage of ANILCA in 1980, although important from a preservation perspective, entailed that the key biological area of ANWR, the coastal slope, was not under any kind of real and permanent protection. The most contested area of the refuge still had an uncertain future. The provision to conduct oil and gas exploration studies shows that the Federal government was reluctant to seal off an economically valuable area, and that the profitability had to be assessed before any final decision could be made. Not to diminish the value of Wilderness designation of the less contested areas of ANWR, but leaving a possible petroleum reserve untouched could be seen as a litmus test of real progressive environmental thinking. Developmental interests certainly had been able to have their say before the final version of the bill was passed.

Crucial to the effect of ANILCA was moreover how well the governmental agencies enforced the law and its intentions. Shortly after the enactment of ANILCA the Reagan administration took office, and brought a radically different philosophy on environmentalism.

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<sup>21</sup> Catton 5.

<sup>22</sup> “Potential Impacts of Proposed Oil and Gas Development on the Arctic Refuge’s Coastal Plain: Historical Overview and Issues of Concern,” U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Background and Issues*, M. Lynne Corn et al., (New York: Nova Science, 2003) 135.

Strong developmental interests were during the 1980s found not only in the oil industry and among Alaskan state officials, but in the federal administration as well. This marked a shift from the more conservation friendly decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

The high profile battle over ANWR began in the late 1980s. The environmental impact statement, a result of studies on wildlife and oil development possibilities, was presented in 1987 by Department of the Interior (DOI).<sup>23</sup> This report was required by §1002 in ANILCA, and the 1.5 million acre coastal area of ANWR has since the report frequently been referred to as the 1002 area. It acknowledged the harmful impact from industrial activity on the 1002 area, nevertheless it recommended development. The report was criticized for being politically motivated, as it concluded that the impact could be mediated, and that economic and security interests should take precedence.<sup>24</sup> While it was now established that oil activity would be harmful to the environment on the coastal slope, the fact that a governmental report nevertheless chose to advise this, speaks to the extent of the environmentalists' challenge. This was by no means a unique or shocking scenario; it has often proven to be the rule rather than the exception. Still, it called for a hardened battle.

A major deterrent in oil development in ANWR was the Exxon-Valdez oil spill in 1989, when an oil tanker spilled nearly 260 000 barrels of North Slope crude oil into Prince William Sound, the southern point of the Trans Alaskan Pipe System. Killing hundreds of thousands of birds, and thousands of mammals, the previously rich ecosystem was put under such stress that the area has still not recovered 19 years later. The disaster has gone down in the history books as one of the worst oil spills ever. It received massive media coverage nationally and internationally, and protests against the oil industry were loud.<sup>25</sup>

A major spill was, nevertheless, not wholly unexpected. During the time of production in Prudhoe Bay, recklessness and irresponsibility when it came to safety measures were a commonality. In the Carter, and moreover the Regan eras, the never ending quest for oil led to numerous leases of fields. Environmentalists, Alaskan natives and other citizens concerned with the development filed lawsuits to ensure that environmental safety standards were being met and that environmental impact statements were produced and their recommendations followed. The non-profit legal organization Trustees for Alaska joined efforts with these groups in an attempt to stagger the most aggressive industrial developers, oil boosters being

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<sup>23</sup> More specifically, the report was put together by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Land Management.

<sup>24</sup> M. Lynne Corn, Lawrence C. Kumins, and Pamela Baldwin, "The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Background and Issues*, M. Lynne Corn, et al., (New York: Nova Science, 2003) 38.

<sup>25</sup> Ross 163-191.

central. Smaller spills were commonplace since the opening of the oil fields, which brought massive impact on the arctic ecosystems. There were moreover concerns that there did not exist enough knowledge about the effect of these spills on the arctic environment, and also that there was not to date any equipment suitable to deal with a potential major spill. There had simply not been done enough research on how to prevent spills and perform damage control in such a climate. Oil tankers were risky, and there was plenty of room for human error. The minor spills that took place up until the Exxon-Valdez disaster did worry many Alaskans, not only environmentalists and natives. The fisheries of Valdez and others preoccupied with the state of marine life voiced concerns that precautions were not being followed. The catastrophic outcome for Prince William Sound, however, shocked an entire nation.<sup>26</sup>

## **2.7 The Status of the 1002 Area**

As explained, the 1002 area of the refuge is not designated Wilderness, and thus not permanently closed off to industrial development; Congress has the power to open it up by an act of law. The future of ANWR has three scenarios; designate the area as Wilderness and close it off to development, do nothing, and the area cannot be developed, or enable development through an Act of Congress.<sup>27</sup> There was little development in either direction during the 1990s. President Clinton vetoed a bill to open for oil drilling in 1995, when it was passed in both the House and the Senate, but otherwise it largely remained quiet. The inauguration of the Bush Administration in 2001 reinvigorated the oil drilling proponents. The Bush Administration's close connection to the oil industry made the fate of ANWR more uncertain than in a long time, and attempts to push through bills allowing oil drilling in the 1002 area were once more heavily pursued. Rising oil prices and energy security questions have also been factors that have contributed to the interest in ANWR oil and gas. The current situation for ANWR energy bills is a hold-up in the Senate with a deadlock between pro-oil and pro-wilderness senators. Predominately, the Republican senators adhere to the pro-development view and the Democrats to the preservation view; however there are exceptions.

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<sup>26</sup> Ross 163-188.

<sup>27</sup> M. Lynne Corn, Lawrence C. Kumins, and Pamela Baldwin, "The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Background and Issues*, M. Lynne Corn, et al., (New York: Nova Science, 2003) 30.

## **2.8 Parties Involved in the Controversy**

The main actors involved in the struggle over ANWR on the pro-development side are the oil companies, union teams, the State of Alaska and the Federal government. Fighting against development is a coalition of different environmental groups from national, regional and local levels with different working approaches. The Alaska Coalition moreover extends to religious-, labor- and sporting groups. The inclusion of the Gwich'in Indians is an important characteristic of the organization. This collaboration above all highlights the discussion on the cultural and social aspects of environmentalism. While united on the matter of halting development in one of the last wild areas on the North Slope, they represent different value systems among themselves.

The oil drilling proponents have formed the organization Arctic Power, which is dedicated to convince the public of the necessity of continued oil activity in Alaska. They receive some support from the Kaktovik City Inupiat, a native corporate village in ANWR, and use that to heavily downplay the dangers to the environment and native settlements from development. Arctic Power argues the sustainability of their oil ventures in ANWR, supported by the fact that a local indigenous culture maintains it can be done.

The Alaskan state has since it became U.S. territory exported natural resources, and is heavily dependent on revenues from oil and gas leasing, and the employment opportunities the industry provides. The primary motivation for developing ANWR is yielded revenues for the state, and the rest of the nation, and furthermore employment opportunities. The price of oil, while unstable, is generally so high that most ventures are profitable. The high percentage of oil which comes from imports, about two-thirds of total consumption, consists to a large extent of oil from unstable areas such as the Middle East and certain South American countries. This is used to play the energy security card. Historically, energy security has been a strong argument to facilitate national oil production. The terrorist threat and Iraqi war arguments are seen as valid by many; however the means to less dependency on foreign energy is contested.

The role of the Alaskan state as resource provider connects it closely to the oil industry. Thus, state officials vigorously argue for further development. Alaska is a Republican state, both historically and at the presently. In the already existing oil fields, oil production is declining, and the profitability of the trans-Alaska pipeline is at stake. The federal administration's eagerness to secure more oil findings off the coast of Alaska has during the recent years lead to multiple leases being sold in the Beaufort Sea, the Chukchi and Bering Seas. Seismic testing for oil deposits is a widespread practice, and has proven to be

harmful to whale migration routes, in the next instance affecting Inupiat settlements which rely on the whales for subsistence.<sup>28</sup>

The main oil companies involved in ANWR are Exxon Mobil, British Petroleum and Conoco-Phillips. These companies have since 2000 been in control of the oil production and transportation through the Trans-Alaskan pipeline. Mergers have over the years produced different constellations and names with regards to these companies. Each of them control about a third of the oil production today. Both BP and Phillips are lobbying intensely to open ANWR, while Exxon Mobil is still laying low since the disastrous oil spill in Prince William Sound, Valdez in 1989.<sup>29</sup>

Nearly 40 years old, the Alaska Coalition is made up of close to a thousand larger and smaller organizations nationwide, and in addition some Canadian organizations are included. A great number of environmental groups are represented, together with native, religious, labor and sporting organizations. The Alaska Coalition has predominately used political, legal and public education efforts in order to gain support for their case. While originally it advocated a more traditional wilderness preservation philosophy, it has grown to include social and cultural dimensions as well. As will be discussed later in the thesis, the preservation approach has been under critique for being ethnocentric and elitist. A wider definition of environmentalism has in response emerged gradually over the last two to three decades. How progressive the Alaska Coalition really is remains to be discussed in further chapters.

## **2.10 Land Management Issues**

The coastal slope of ANWR stretches across 1.5 million acres and is habitat to numerous species of birds, grizzly and polar bears, moose, arctic fox, musk oxen, Dall sheep and Porcupine caribou.<sup>30</sup> The Porcupine caribou is vital to the Gwich'in Indians, an inland-based indigenous people in ANWR. This is moreover one of the great points of contention in the debate. The Gwich'in did not accept the settlement act of 1971, and is currently involved in the campaign to prevent oil drilling in the 1002 area by working with the Alaska Coalition.

The parties involved in the conflict over ANWR have as mentioned spent considerable resources formulating arguments to win public support for their positions. Constituents

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<sup>28</sup> Peter Matthiessen, "Alaska: Big Oil and the Inupiat-Americans," *New York Review of Books* volume 54, number 18. Nov. 22 2007. 19 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20835>>.

<sup>29</sup> Standlee 35-52.

<sup>30</sup> "Description of the Refuge: Refuge Brochure Text," *arctic.fws.gov*, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 12 Sep. 2008, 2 Nov. 2008 <<http://arctic.fws.gov/descrip.htm>>.

putting pressure on their elected officials has been crucial for the result we have so far seen. The positions of the indigenous peoples of ANWR, and what wildlife protection entails for these groups of peoples have been central areas of discussion. The ecological and social factors merge into a more wide-reaching argumentation. The Gwich'in Indians have been a central part of the anti-drilling campaign. Their interests in the controversy are mainly connected to the Porcupine caribou and its calving grounds, but the current trends of warming climate in the arctic also brings them great worry.

The Gwich'in Indians have a subsistence culture that is based upon the Porcupine Caribou Herd (PCH), which migrates from areas in Canada into ANWR during calving season in the summer. The coastal slope of ANWR is particularly fit for calving due to few predators and insects, and abundance of food. Opponents of drilling claim that development on the narrow coastal slope of the 1002 area could lead to displacement of the pregnant cows into areas with more predators and less food, disrupting the herd significantly. This issue is of the greatest concern to the Gwich'in Indians, who rely heavily upon this herd, and regard its habitat as sacred. Not only does it sustain them physically through food, clothing and tools; it moreover has a key position in their cultural practices.

Arctic Power does not perceive the caribou herds to be threatened by oil development. The Central Arctic Caribou Herd (CACH) has thrived and grown side by side with development in the Prudhoe Bay area, they claim. Moreover, the support of onshore oil activity they receive from the Kaktovik Inupiat Eskimos of Kaktovik City is used as a counter argument for the dangers of oil development to indigenous cultures.<sup>31</sup> The two cultures have different points of departure, though, as the Kaktovik Inupiat are marine-based and modernized. Consequently, their culture would be less disrupted by a decline in the PCH. To the Gwich'in it means everything.

The two caribou herds are not directly comparable, wildlife experts say, as they live under different conditions. The CACH that inhabits the area around Prudhoe Bay is different from the PCH, which uses ANWR as range and calving ground. The oil industry maintains that the CACH co-exists well with oil installations. Studies of these two herds show, however, that the CACH has had disrupted movement and has been displaced to poorer calving grounds. Further, the rise in population can be explained by favorable weather conditions. The PCH has unlike the CACH less access to alternative calving grounds, as the coast line in ANWR is narrower and there would be fewer snow free areas to calve in were the coastline to

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<sup>31</sup> "Top 10 Reasons to Support Development in ANWR," *anwr.org*, Arctic Power, 7 Nov. 2007 <<http://www.anwr.org/topten.htm>>.

be developed. Moreover, the herd has been in decline for some years, and disruption in calving and movement may be particularly damaging. As the herd is much larger, it numbers 130.000 while the CACH numbers 32.000, impaired movement is thought to occur more easily.<sup>32</sup>

These nuances are lost on the oil industry and the State of Alaska, or at least seen as unimportant. The inability to see the bigger picture is perhaps the most important reason that the development interests should be seen as irresponsible. While altering landscapes and harvesting from nature can be a good thing for both the natural and cultural environments, the scope of today's activity and the methods used demand a larger awareness of the complexity of the environment than is discernable among these actors. The issue is not merely a porcupine herd or an indigenous culture under stress: It is the entire arctic ecosystem and the repercussions of its distress are global. Aside from the cooling mechanisms it has on the world's climate it is necessary to take into consideration the extent of ecological degradation already put upon most of the world's ecosystems. In such a context ANWR is not merely another natural area. The sum of depletion throughout the world's ecosystems must be considered.

## **2.11 Indigenous Perspectives on the ANWR situation**

The issue of cultural imperialism also enters into the discussion of the PCH, as the Gwich'in Athabaskan Indians of Alaska and North-West Canada have based their culture on the food, clothing and tools provided by the porcupine caribou. Their ways have existed for thousands of years, and to further endanger the lifestyle of an already marginalized arctic indigenous people for oil is problematic, and adds to the issue of loss of nature. The Kaktovik Inupiat Eskimos, who under certain conditions support the opening of the 1002 area, are a marine-based people, unlike the Gwich'in who are an inland-based culture. Onshore petroleum activity would then be a more direct threat to the culture of the Gwich'in. The Kaktovik Inupiat have a relationship to the Bowhead Whale which is similar to that of the Gwich'in to the caribou, and they fiercely oppose any offshore activity in the 1002 area that would threaten their cultural lifestyle. As mentioned, the recent multiple leases and seismic testing in the Beaufort, Chukchi and Bering Seas, show that the Kaktovik have as much reason as the Gwich'in to be concerned for their continued lifestyles.

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<sup>32</sup>Tatiana Shohov, ed, "Factual Overview of the Wildlife Refuge," *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Background and Issues*, M. Lynne Corn, et al., (New York: Nova Science, 2003) 28-29.



Whether the Kaktovik draw a parallel between their whaling situation and that of the Gwich'in to the caribou is uncertain. It could seem as though their support for some limited petroleum activity in ANWR comes as much from their resentment of the wilderness concept and the environmentalist thinking it represents, as it does from a positive view of the oil industry. Their concern is first and foremost centered on what is best for their local community, particularly their cultural heritage. The same can presumably be said for the Gwich'in. The most important focus is the continued existence of their villages and cultures. There exists a lot of resentment against outsiders among the Gwich'in, many of whom have been environmentalists, wildlife experts and eco-tourists. In some ways either people sees both the oil industry and environmentalists as threats to their culture. The alliance made between the Gwich'in and some environmentalist organizations only addresses the question of oil drilling in ANWR. If ANWR gets Wilderness designation, the questions regarding subsistence activity in the area will probably be divisive. As I will discuss later in the thesis, the subsistence provision in ANILCA has not solved all management issues, and there are still conflicts between the rural population and land management officials.

It is established then, that the fight over ANWR is not merely among the oil industry and environmentalists. The factor of the indigenous groups that side with both of the above complicates the issue. They have different traditions when it comes to their relationship to the land and resources that surrounds them. They have their own traditions as to how nature is managed. The Kaktovik Inupiat who support oil drilling have been a corporate village since the settlement act in 1971, and have as a consequence in some ways abandoned the old lifestyle and are now dependent on the money system. The Gwich'in, who was one of two indigenous groups that did not accept the 1971 ANCSA settlement, are trying to retain their cultural heritage, and the Porcupine caribou is central to this effort. The two indigenous cultures have different takes on what constitutes sustainable development. The Kaktovik Inupiat have embraced the comforts of industrialized life and would to a greater extent be able to continue life as usual with a marine-based, semi-industrialized lifestyle. Even more important, they are insulted by the wilderness concept, and fear further restrictions on their ways of life if the 1002 area were designated Wilderness.<sup>33</sup>

While Wilderness designation through ANILCA in theory allows for the continuance of the cultural practices of the indigenous peoples, there are rules and regulations to follow which makes contact with bureaucracies and management officials inevitable. Hence, they are

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<sup>33</sup> "Wilderness," *kaktovik.com*, The City of Kaktovik, 7 Nov. 2007 <<http://www.kaktovik.com/perspectives2.html>>.

not free to govern their lives completely. On the other hand, the impact of an industrial complex would also restrict their lifestyles.

## **2.12 Arguments against Oil Development**

Further concerns about effects on wildlife have been voiced in relation to the polar bear population. The 1002 area is used for dens by polar bears during winter, and since drilling would take place in wintertime, breeding conditions would be affected negatively. Drilling opponents argue that no matter how much the industrial footprint may be reduced or minimized, such a complex will inevitably bring a great deal of activity, which is stressful for newborn cubs and their mothers. The polar bear's endangered status due to global warming makes the effort to protect this habitat especially important. The recent inclusion of the polar bear on the endangered species list, under the Endangered Species Act<sup>34</sup>, can hopefully have an effect in preventing oil development in ANWR.

The main arguments from the pro-oil organization Arctic Power focus on the profitability of the petroleum reserves, and simultaneously downplay the risks and harmful aspects connected to development. They claim that oil development in ANWR can be done in a responsible and sustainable manner because modern technology can reduce the impact to a satisfactory level. Arctic Power argues that only a very small part of the Refuge would be subject to development, 2000 acres is estimated. This is made possible by development in technology since Prudhoe Bay oil field began production in 1977. Thus, the footprint made on the environment would be significantly smaller today.<sup>35</sup>

The argument made that only 2000 acres would be developed depends on how the developmental infrastructure is defined. Is the grid of access roads, ports, housing, power lines, air strips and so forth included, or just the actual oil rigs? The Wilderness Society maintains that the 2000-acre estimation is a scam, and that the figure has not included the infrastructure that supports the rigs. Further, the entire 1002 area would be opened to industry, and there is no requirement that the 2000 acres are continuous. The U.S. Geological Survey

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<sup>34</sup> United States Department of the Interior, "Secretary Kempthorne Announces Decision to Protect Polar Bears under Endangered Species Act," *doi.gov*, 14 May 2008, 10 Sep. 2008 <[http://www.doi.gov/news/08\\_News\\_Releases/080514a.html](http://www.doi.gov/news/08_News_Releases/080514a.html)>.

<sup>35</sup> "Top Ten Reasons to Support ANWR Development," *anwr.org*, Arctic Power, 10 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.anwr.org/ANWR-Basics/Top-ten-reasons-to-support-ANWR-development.php>>.

(USGS) has found that the oil is spread across the area in smaller deposits, and that would require widespread development, having a huge impact on the ecosystem.<sup>36</sup>

The new technology that would be applied includes improved seismic methods for searching for oil deposits, reducing the danger of drilling “dry holes”. Horizontal drilling would reduce the impact on the surface, by reaching holes horizontally from fewer pads. The use of ice roads is now more widespread, intended to minimize damage to vegetation.<sup>37</sup> The danger, however, is that the seismic testing requires large vehicles that are driven across vast areas, off the ice roads, and are in this manner likely to encounter herds of musk oxen or polar bear dens, having a negative effect on animal life. Moreover, ice roads require a large amount of water, a scarce resource on the arctic tundra in wintertime. Even if the companies use ice-chips from ponds instead of spraying water to create ice roads, as they claim is often the practice, there is no escaping the fact that global warming will shorten the winter season. Nowhere is the temperature rising as fast as in Arctic areas. Reality is that ice roads alone are not a realistic alternative for the future, and we will probably see widespread use of permanent gravel roads after all.<sup>38</sup>

The amount of recoverable oil in the 1002 area has a mean estimate of 7.7 billion barrels. How much of this oil that is economically recoverable depends on oil price, recovery technology, size of accumulation and how close that accumulation is to the existing infrastructure.<sup>39</sup> At the current oil price a developmental project could yield a substantial amount of economically recoverable oil. As mentioned, accumulation is in several smaller pools; however USGS has found most of them to be in the western part of ANWR, close to the infrastructure of the existing oil fields. No matter how promising the oil developers find the project, critics argue that ANWR oil would not decrease dependence on foreign oil in any real sense. A large percentage of U.S. oil consumption would continue to be imported, and the price of permanently altering a pristine natural area would be too high. The U.S. would be better off increasing energy efficiency and developing alternative energy to fossil fuels. This effort would moreover improve security, as the country would be less involved in the Middle East. The number of jobs from a development project in ANWR projected by drilling

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<sup>36</sup> “The”2000 Acres” Scam,” *wilderness.org*, The Wilderness Society, 7 Nov. 2007 <<http://www.wilderness.org/Library/Documents/upload/2000AcreHoax200510.pdf>>.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew C. Revkin, “Hunting for Oil: New Precision, Less Pollution.” *New York Times* 30 Jan. 2001. 22 Oct. 2007 <<http://query.nytimes.com/search/>>.

<sup>38</sup> “Broken Promises: The Reality of Big Oil in Americas Arctic,” The Wilderness Society, *alaskacoalition.org*, The Alaska Coalition, 7 Nov. 2007 <[http://www.alaskacoalition.org/PDFs/Boken\\_Promises\\_BigOil\\_Arctic.pdf](http://www.alaskacoalition.org/PDFs/Boken_Promises_BigOil_Arctic.pdf)>.

<sup>39</sup> United States Geological Service, “Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 1002 Area, Petroleum Assessment, 1998, Including Economic Analysis,” *usgs.gov*, 7 Nov. 2007 <<http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/fs-0028-01/fs-0028-01.htm>>.

proponents a matter of contention, and job opportunities could arguably be created within the renewable energy sector as well.

These arguments show that the petroleum industry attempts to appease the public, while the environmentalists focus on ways to discredit the oil companies. Here, scientific arguments are presented, but there are also ethical, aesthetic and cultural values at stake in the ANWR controversy. How well these values have been incorporated into a multidimensional environmental approach is indicative of whether the Alaska Coalition has progressed beyond traditional environmentalism. “New environmentalism” is a pluralistic and multidimensional environmentalist approach with the potential to reach a large percentage of the population. This is badly needed as the extent of ecological degradation in the world today requires a movement with enough appeal and possibilities for coalition building to engage global society in an unprecedented effort.

### **2.13 The Question of Sustainability**

An environmental analysis of the issue of oil development in ANWR needs to address the question of sustainability. This term has a number of meanings and interpretations, ranging from a business-as-usual approach to economic development, to a complete restructuring of the economic and social spheres. The idea is inextricably linked to economic, social and environmental development, and tries to point out a workable long term plan for our planet, taking both natural and cultural environment into consideration. The different definitions of the term are mostly based on how much emphasis is put on the different categories. A widespread understanding of “sustainable development” is that it must encompass continued economic growth, and the environmental and social challenges must be met with technological improvements and increased resource efficiency. Some believe, however, that the paradigm of economic growth is in itself the root of much of the problems facing our planet today, and that the entire economic and social systems must be restructured. The rich-poor divide among people, and ecologic depletion must be dealt with through transference of values from the rich to the poor. This would be done by reducing the level of material standards in the rich countries to ensure a better life quality for people in undeveloped countries. The question of the role of government control versus market mechanisms in this process is not agreed upon. The more extreme idealistic preservationist positions call for a reduction of the human population. This would be a long-term project by humane means.

Combined, reduced human numbers and activity would free some of the planet's capacity, enabling it to restore some balance to disrupted ecosystems.<sup>40</sup>

The question of sustainable development is closely related to issues regarding land management. The more philosophically oriented debates of these issues deal with the human place in nature. Here, deeply complex questions arise, some of which I will address in the following chapter. What is particularly relevant regarding the case of ANWR are questions involving the subsistence rights of indigenous peoples. As mentioned, ANILCA attempts to include the human component in Wilderness management, but this has not yet proven sufficient to solve all practical issues that arise. Subsistence means harvesting nature for own consumption, however some modern methods are allowed. This can cause conflicts with the aesthetic wilderness value. Motorized vehicles and rifles are not a part of everybody's idea of a wilderness experience.

Another matter is the question of sustainability with regards to the plan for oil drilling in ANWR. While economic and social factors enter into the question, the main focus of this thesis is the environmental aspect. A consideration of this question brings us to both local and global levels. Focusing on the local arctic environment, it is necessary to look at the impact of seismic testing, wells, pipelines, roads and other types of infrastructure. As discussed earlier, new technology and methods may reduce the impact on vegetation and landscape. Air and water pollution can be controlled if the desire is there. If the situation of the wildlife population is taken seriously, and all activity within important habitats is carefully conducted in cooperation with experts on arctic ecosystems, the direst predictions of wildlife impact could possibly be stalled. However, even best case scenarios must allow for a great deal of strain on an ecosystem already vulnerable from global climate change. The considerable interest in Arctic oil and gas around the world is an added stress factor that will contribute to massive ecological change and degradation in arctic areas. In Alaska, most of the coastline is already developed or leased for testing. This is bound to affect the habitat and migratory patterns of wildlife both on -and offshore. Moreover, this fact enhances the need for a Wilderness sanctuary that can preserve somewhat continuity for the landscape, wildlife and cultures of north-eastern Alaska. Entering into this question is also the fact that best case scenarios are unlikely. Experience shows time and time again that extracting oil and gas resources is far from risk free. No matter what technological advancements are made, the risk of human error will always be present.

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<sup>40</sup> Joy A. Palmer, *Environmental Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Theory, Practice, Progress and Promise*, (London: Routledge, 1998) 83-96.

Looking at this case isolated locally there are several factors that discourage development of ANWR from a sustainability perspective. Of all the arguments made by the environmentalists against oil drilling, the most persuasive is how this would contribute to global warming. The global perspective calls for the crucial consideration that the Arctic areas function as a cooling mechanism for the entire global climate. Consequently, continued fossil fuels frenzy is anything but sustainable.

## **2.14 Preliminary Conclusions**

The success in halting ANWR development to this date can be attributed to a number of reasons, some more clear than others. Considering the last twenty years as the time frame of the high-profile battle, the common thread has been pressure from constituents being effective in winning support from key elected officials in Congress. Public education and lobby work have thus been central approaches used by the Alaska Coalition. What has motivated so many across the United States to fight so hard for this remote, wild area is interesting. A number of explanations can be offered for this question. The efficiency and appeal of the Alaska Coalition may be attributed to the convergence of different causes such as wilderness preservation, social and cultural justice for indigenous peoples, and a religious notion of stewardship for the planet. The increasing awareness of global warming and its effect on Arctic ecosystems, and the people who live there, can perhaps help build support among demographic groups that are not traditionally associated with the environmental movement. The wide range of values represented in the coalition may secure more popular support. This can in turn be reflected in the political leverage of the coalition.

The nature of the collaboration in itself can thus in part explain the success in halting oil development in ANWR. With so many values represented, and consequently involvement of several demographic groups, the coalition forces the oil companies to counter arguments based in several different value systems. This can be seen as a challenge in that their defense has to cover more areas. The coalition's focus on moral, religious, aesthetic, scientific and cultural questions thus leads to a stronger offense.

The diversity of values is significant; still, the preservation argument has been central. The aesthetic and scientific importance of retaining one of the few undeveloped areas in the country has been a key issue. Why a remote wild area evokes so much emotion among people who probably never will visit it is an interesting question. The wilderness idea and its role in

this controversy will be one of the topics for the next chapter. The alluring as well as the problematic aspects of it will be discussed.

The question whether the coalition can be placed in the “new environmentalism” category and thus whether it has moved beyond mainstream environmentalism is the essence of this thesis. What I refer to by mainstream environmentalism is the one-dimensional organizations that are often based in pollution control- or preservation discourses, and which are lacking social and cultural focus. The social dimension requirement is present in the Alaska Coalition, which suggests that the coalition in fact stands out from mainstream environmentalism. The question then becomes to what degree the internal dynamic of the organization is coherent. Have the value systems converged or do they merely exist side by side?

Throughout this chapter I have presented the conflict in historical, political, legal and cultural contexts. The contesting parties and their motivations have been given in order to set the stage for a discussion of the values and interests at stake in this controversy. Moreover, the environmental analysis has provided a perspective on the importance of the coalition’s work. The pressure to drill in arctic areas is escalating world wide, and with the record melting of the polar ice, more and more petroleum companies are viewing this as an opportunity for resource extraction rather than as an ominous sign of a climatic system about to spin out of control. Geopolitics and energy security are essential aspects in the ANWR controversy. Nevertheless, focusing on the dynamics of the coalition defending this unique natural area is important in order to grasp the necessary qualities needed in an organization fighting the battle of our time. What can be learned from their approach?

The next chapter will look at the structures and discourses present in American environmentalism with the purpose of looking at the coalition within a discursive framework. Hopefully establishing the discursive traditions present in the coalition can provide some insight into its internal dynamics.

# Chapter Three: The Discourses of American Environmentalism

## 3.1 Introduction

A major issue in this thesis pertains to the character and social significance of American environmentalism, and whether the Alaska Coalition can be seen as an example of the “new environmentalism”. As the introductory chapter points out, the American environmental movement has undergone changes in the last decades. It has broadened to include issues concerning social class, ethnicity, and gender. Moreover, urban environmental issues are now much more acknowledged within the environmental discourse. The term environmentalism itself is being redefined as more interest parties become involved in environmental work. The case for preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can at first glance be seen as an example of such “new environmentalism”, as it contains appeals to ethnicity, culture and religion. While this case shows signs of a break with pure preservation-oriented environmentalism, it is a matter of question how dramatic the change has been. This chapter will trace the discursive frames in American environmentalism with the purpose of mapping out the agents, goals and language that have been prevalent during the development of American environmentalism. How can the “new environmentalism” movement, with the Alaska Coalition as the object of analysis, be described within these discourses? Has the coalition come up with a new and unified discourse?

Furthermore, I will present and discuss the debate which has led up to this latest revision of the environmental platform. That entails looking at how the social dimension was made a part of the discussion; i.e. how factors as class, race, gender and urban questions started to define environmental questions. With respect to this thesis, the issue of the native cultures is the most relevant, and will be at the center of the discussion. Also, the controversy surrounding the “wilderness” concept has been central in environmental philosophy during the last couple of decades.

The development in current environmentalism must be seen in light of the threat of significant climate change and massive species extinction. Never before has such a concise and powerful warning been given by the world scientific community. The response so far has not matched the graveness of the message. There is thus an overwhelming need for new environmental approaches to deal with the multiple and complex causes of the environmental crisis. The approaches used so far have only had limited success, as they have merely been



able to address a fragment of the problem. Each of the environmental discourses has important insight to contribute to the cause; however it seems that they are still too fragmented to utilize this collective knowledge.

The social dimension of environmentalism is useful and necessary in providing enough popular support to make the changes required. However, I do believe that an ecocentric approach is needed in that large areas must be set aside for minimal human interference. If you look at what is best for nature isolated, the ecocentric approach is likely to be most fruitful. The problem has been that this form of environmentalism has traditionally been advocated by the white middle-and upper classes, and is a western invention. The challenges we are faced with today, however, requires the involvement of nothing less than global society, and that is unlikely without including utilitarian nature interests. The right of nature to exist on its own terms is a valuable and important viewpoint, but the argument is too narrow to have any chance at worldwide appeal. Nature must also be understood in terms of human use; the methods will just have to be steered into a more sustainable direction.

In this chapter I will map out environmental discourses in American environmentalism. I will use the terminology and conceptual framework that Brulle presents in his book *Agency, Democracy and Nature*. The social, political and cultural aspects surrounding the discourses will also be explained. The purpose of this chapter is to enable an analysis of the ANWR case and Alaska Coalition in light of Brulle's framework. The coalition members represent different discourses, and by using this theory I will be able to discuss the organization and narrative of the different participants, and furthermore point out strengths and weaknesses of the separate parties and the combination present in the coalition. Another point of focus in this chapter will be explaining the debates regarding wilderness and the indigenous perspectives, which are central to chapter four.

### **3.2 Manifest Destiny and the Transformation of the Wilderness Idea**

The very first environmental discourse to emerge in United States was what Brulle refers to as Manifest Destiny. Central to this discourse was domination and exploitation of nature. This was a completely utilitarian approach: Nature has no value outside of its usefulness to humans. The human right to exploit natural resources and tame wild nature was the dominant nature view up until the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Then, the development of industrialization, mechanization and urbanization led to increased consciousness of the limitations of resources, hunting opportunities and aesthetic wilderness experiences. Nature

writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and later John Muir were central in creating interest in American nature. These writers were continuing a tradition originated in the European Enlightenment and Romanticism. Ideas of sublimity, derived from philosophers as Burke and Kant, the concept of romantic nature derived from Rousseau, and moreover the frontier myth, were merged into a new and uniquely American wilderness idea. Wilderness, the Judeo-Christian derived idea imported by the European settlers, had connoted a hostile, evil and godless place. Within a few decades during the nineteenth century, the American wilderness went from being “Satan’s temple” to “God’s cathedral”. This dramatic transformation can partly be explained by its function as a part of a nation building project; American exceptionalism. This notion became central to the new American identity, and was based on ideas about the uniqueness and grandeur of American nature. Through wild nature Americans could rival the historical and cultural capital of Europe. The complex underlying social causes for this paradigm shift in nature thinking is outside the framework for this thesis, it is sufficient to mention that true appreciation of wild nature was a cultural phenomenon that emerged as a response to social processes during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>41</sup>

### **3.3 Wildlife Management, Conservation and Preservation**

The early environmental discourses thus had focus on resource extraction, recreation and aesthetic use of nature. Within the Wildlife Management discourse hunting was a central focus. Wildlife populations should be under human control to achieve stability and viability, free for humans to harvest. Brulle’s definition of the Wildlife Management discourse is:

The scientific management of ecosystems can ensure stable populations of wildlife. This wildlife population can be seen as a crop from which excess populations can be sustainably harvested in accordance with the ecological limitations of a given area. This excess wildlife population can be used for human recreation in sport hunting<sup>42</sup>

A central organization fronting sports hunting and wilderness exploration was the Boone and Crockett Club, founded by President Theodore Roosevelt. The popularity of recreational activities such as hunting was massive among the upper class, and wilderness activities reached a much larger segment of the population during the Progressive Era. The concept of returning to the wilderness to regain masculinity was popularized and is mirrored in cultural

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<sup>41</sup> Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> Brulle 98.

symbols such as Tarzan, the authorship of Jack London and the rise of the Boy Scout Movement. Primitivism, i.e. ideas that celebrated the savage, and proclaimed that happiness and authenticity was obtained away from civilization, was widespread. This was a reaction to industrialization and urbanization as people experienced that “progress” had a downside. Environmental historian Roderick F. Nash explains why the pull of wilderness became so strong: “In the primitive, specifically, many Americans detected the qualities of innocence, purity, cleanliness, and morality which seemed on the verge of succumbing to utilitarianism and the surge of progress.”<sup>43</sup> Besides public awareness of the possibilities and effects of wilderness activities, this era produced a rise in organization activity. *The Boone and Crockett Club* is an example of an organization with a utilitarian view of nature. It uses the Wildlife Management discourse, where the focus is instrumental and anthropocentric.

The concept and implementation of national parks was a major step for nature conservation. Yosemite became the first designated park area in 1864, and the purpose was scenic and recreational use. The need to conserve the experiences of wild nature rested to a certain degree on the idea of the frontier. Turner gave his famous frontier thesis in 1893, after a census of 1890 declared that the frontier no longer existed. With this, anxiety grew in the American population over which direction the nation would take. The frontier image was a significant part of the American identity during the Progressive Era. As mentioned, it helped create the concept of American exceptionalism. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the closing of the frontier meant that the wilderness was conquered and subdued, which had both positive and negative ramifications. The frontier experience, living on the margins of civilization, was lifted up to be one of the defining characteristics of the nation, and it was with great sadness and concern that many saw it disappear. The image of the frontier connoted independence, individuality and innovation, plus the mastering of wild forces. Preserving these experiences and qualities became the key arguments for setting aside tracts of land.<sup>44</sup>

The idea of creating wilderness parks was developed within the discourses of Conservation and Preservation. The two discourses were united in the early stages of what was at the time referred to as the conservation movement. The division between conservation and preservation perspectives happened during the issue of the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley. A disagreement between Gifford Pinchot, arguing the conservation principle, and John Muir, advocating preservation, led to a formal split within the conservation movement.

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<sup>43</sup> Nash 157.

<sup>44</sup> Nash.

The conservation term focused on managing natural resources for maximum human benefit, while the preservation term viewed nature as valuable independent of human interest in it. It also focused on the aesthetic dimension of nature experiences. Brulle's Conservation discourse definition states that "natural resources should be technically managed from a utilitarian perspective to realize the greatest good for the greatest number of people over the longest period of time."<sup>45</sup>

The weakness of this discourse, according to Brulle, was (and is) the lack of focus on the intrinsic value of nature. "Conservation cannot provide a basis for the protection of aspects of the natural world that do not serve human purposes. Hence, this discourse cannot inform a cultural practice that could protect biodiversity."<sup>46</sup>

The preservation discourse is prevalent in a great number of environmental organizations. Brulle's definition of the Preservation discourse is that "nature is an important component in supporting both the physical and spiritual life of humans. Hence, the continued existence of wilderness and wildlife, undisturbed by human action, is necessary."<sup>47</sup> Ideas behind this discourse are acknowledging the value of nature in itself, and moreover the necessity of it for human well being. Undisturbed wilderness for aesthetic or spiritual experiences were fronted by John Muir, who himself searched for God in the wilderness. He founded The Sierra Club, which still adheres to the preservation principle. The central weakness of the Preservation discourse is the narrow focus on wilderness and wildlife which "hinders the development of an alternative cultural model that can inform an ecologically sustainable society."<sup>48</sup> Our environmental challenges are results of how society is structured, and only fundamental social and cultural changes can produce a healthier world. Hence, a viable discourse must have a social dimension.

The concept of ecology became known through the work of Aldo Leopold in the post-WW1 era. Leopold's great insight was that he viewed the human species as a part of nature. Philosopher Max Oelschlaeger describes the consequences of Aldo Leopold's land ethic in these words:

The land ethic, which states that humans ought to act to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of natural systems, gives Leopoldian ecology an explicitly normative dimension....In Leopold's normative ecology the human species is viewed

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<sup>45</sup> Brulle 98.

<sup>46</sup> Brulle 160.

<sup>47</sup> Brulle 160.

<sup>48</sup> Brulle 172.

as a part of rather than apart from nature. Subsequently, the membership of sentient beings in the community of life entails obligations to preserve the land.<sup>49</sup>

The inclusion of humankind in ecological systems provides an ethical imperative to ensure the health and stability of the natural world.

This was a new direction in environmental language. There were scientific and moral motives besides the aesthetic and utilitarian. Leopold's ecology concept combined a more scientific approach to wildlife management and the ethical aspect of nature preservation, intrinsic value. Thus, according to Brulle, ecology should be seen in light of these two discourses, the Wildlife Management discourse, which was purely utilitarian, and the Preservation discourse, which focused on ethics and aesthetics.<sup>50</sup> Through the course of Leopold's career, he came to focus more on the ethical component of nature management. The Wilderness Society was founded in this tradition, and is today predominately situated within the Preservation discourse. The Wilderness Society is one of the organizations to be analyzed in chapter four. This organization can, like the majority of early nature conservation/preservation organizations be recognized by its exclusivity and privileged membership. Its members have historically been predominantly white males with an interest in preserving wilderness areas for hunting and recreation. Mark Dowie sees this as a central flaw of this movement:

The ecology movement was saddled from the start with conservative traditions formed by a bipartisan, mostly white, middle-class, male leadership. The culture they created has persisted until very recently and hampered the success of the movement. There has always been something very safe and unthreatening about conservationists... Rarely have they challenged the fundamental canons of western civilization or the economic orthodoxy of welfare capitalism-the ecologically destructive system that gives the nation's resources away to any corporation with the desire and technology to develop them."<sup>51</sup>

The legacy of Aldo Leopold in regard to the term and idea "wilderness" is discussed in Daniel J. Philippon's book *Conserving Words*. Leopold argued the importance of wilderness for science, and herein followed that protected wild areas should be of a significant size, enclosing a functional ecosystem. Moreover, protecting wilderness for science meant

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<sup>49</sup> Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 206.

<sup>50</sup> Brulle does not present Ecology as a discourse in and of itself. He categorizes the idea of ecology as a renewed and combined version of the Wildlife Management -and Preservation discourses.

<sup>51</sup> Dowie 28.

protecting areas with little aesthetic value, such as desert or swampland. The inclusion of such natural areas was an important leap within nature preservation.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.4 Reform Environmentalism

The modern concept “environmentalism” did not emerge until the 1960s, when a new awareness of dangerous chemicals used in modern agriculture followed the release of Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* in 1962. The grave ecological effects of pesticides used in agriculture, DDT in particular, raised concerns about the health of the human and natural environments, and led to a popular movement demanding action. The modern, political environmental movement grew out of a time when the country saw a boom in production, technology and consumption. At the same time the Civil Rights Movement helped bring about massive legislative change. Environmental laws were part of the revolutionary social changes of the 1960s.<sup>53</sup> The legislative body consisted of among other the Wilderness Act (1964), the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), the Clean Air Act (1970), the Clean Water Act (1972), and the Endangered Species Act (1973).<sup>54</sup>

Reform environmentalism was a result of this new ecological awareness and popular mobilization, and it became a widely used discourse in the late 1960s. This is how Brulle explains the essential aspects of this discourse: “Human health is linked to ecosystem conditions. To maintain a healthy human society, ecologically responsible actions are necessary. These actions can be developed and implemented through the use of the natural sciences.”<sup>55</sup> Science here in this formulation has become the primary solution to ecological degradation. This set of ideas is linked to the awareness of pollution, both in the sense of hazardous urban environments and the effects of industrial and agricultural chemicals on humans, animals and the natural environment. As described in the introduction, the environmental movement of the 1960s achieved major legislative changes to prevent the worst damage.

The organizations rooted in this scientific discourse have an advantage in that they have a wide range of ecological problems to address, and hence a wide range of issues to

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<sup>52</sup> Daniel J. Philippon, *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement*, (2004, Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 2005) 159-218.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Washington: Island Press, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, “Laws that We Administer,” *epa.gov*, 11 Sep. 2008, 24 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/index.html>>.

<sup>55</sup> Brulle.98.

front. This can in turn enable them to reach a large audience. Moreover, the fact that their messages are based on scientific research provides leverage.

Nonetheless, this basis in science is, according to Brulle, also a drawback in that it does not provide any solutions to the social structure at the root of the ecological degradation. “The problem with this form of analysis is not that it is empirically wrong, but rather that it is partial. It can identify the ecological consequences of our practices, but it fails to consider the social origins.”<sup>56</sup> This criticism applies to many current environmental organizations, as the movement Brulle categorizes as Reform environmentalism has modeled a working approach widely used today. By using technology the worst environmental hazards of industrial and technological society can be staved off. This can remedy some problems, but does not offer any long term solutions.

### **3.5. Deep Ecology, Ecotheology, and the Social Discourses of Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice**

The ecocentric view seen in the writing of Aldo Leopold emerged in more radical versions a few decades later. During the 1970s and 1980s Deep Ecology, an ideology and movement attributed partly to philosopher Arne Næss, claimed that ecosystems must be at the center of protection, and that the survival of other species and systems must be safeguarded even at the expense of human numbers and activity. Society, it was felt, must be restructured on a fundamental level. Deep Ecology rejects anthropocentrism as a shallow and inadequate way of understanding the nature-culture dynamics. Andrew McLaughlin blames industrialism for the state of the world in *The Heart of Deep Ecology*: “Both capitalist and socialist variants of expansionary industrialism routinely require the destruction of species and ecosystems.... The changes required are of the magnitude of the agricultural and industrial revolutions.”<sup>57</sup>

Brulle’s definition of the Deep Ecology discourse is:

The richness and diversity of all life on earth has intrinsic value, and so human life is privileged only to the extent of satisfying vital needs. Maintenance of the diversity of life on earth mandates a decrease in human impacts on the natural environment and substantial increases in the wilderness areas of the globe.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Brulle 191-192.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew McLaughlin, “The Heart of Deep Ecology”, ed. George Sessions, *Deep Ecology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*, (Boston: Shambhala, 1995) 85.

<sup>58</sup> Brulle 98.

A more confrontational ecocentric organization was founded on the utopian nature ideas of Edward Abbey. The Eco-sabotage organization Earth First! took the radical step of destroying equipment and machinery to prevent development.

A more positive development in the Deep Ecology discourse was the moral incentive for protecting biodiversity and reducing human impact on the world. Equating the rights of nature with the rights of humans forces a greater consciousness of the negative consequences our activities have on nature. There are some weaknesses to the discourse, such as the inability to provide political solutions to environmental problems. The emphasis on wilderness is too limited, Brulle argues. Moreover, their method of self-reflection and transformation towards a more sympathetic relationship to nature is weak when it comes to calling for collective action.<sup>59</sup> This is necessary to achieve cultural changes on a significant scale. When it comes to achieving such changes it is perhaps more important how many people will follow, than how deep and thorough the strategy is.

Brulle categorizes several discourses in opposition to Reform Environmentalism, which has dominated the field since the 1970s. In addition to Deep Ecology, other dissenting discourses are Ecofeminism, Ecotheology and Environmental Justice. As the terms indicate, Ecofeminism blames the uneven patriarchal structure of society for ecological degradation, while Ecotheology uses stewardship of God's creation as a moral imperative to tend to it after one's best ability. Environmental Justice plays a central part in the ANWR controversy. Essential to this discourse is to empower people of all races, classes and cultures so as to achieve equality. Equality between people is believed to bolster a similar development between humans and our natural surroundings. Respect for diverse peoples will also bring respect for other species. This is similar to the deep ecological belief of maintaining diversity within both biology and human cultures. Although Deep Ecology has been accused of being misanthropic, it argues the preservation of cultural diversity.

The key aspects of the Environmental Justice discourse are according to Brulle:

Domination of humans by other humans leads to domination of nature. The economic system and the nation-state are the core structures of society that create ecological problems. Commoditization and market imperatives force consumption to continually increase in the developed economy. Environmental destruction in low-income and racially distinct communities or in Third World countries originates in the exploitation of the people who live in these areas by the dominant social institutions. Resolution of

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<sup>59</sup> Brulle 205-206.



environmental problems requires fundamental social change based on empowerment of local communities.<sup>60</sup>

Organizations based in this discourse have traditionally been focused on class and race issues. A purely anthropocentric approach is common. The Gwich'in Indians of the ANWR controversy are partially rooted in this discourse. They are an endangered culture and an endangered race, and the oil production in arctic areas coupled with global warming is a direct threat to their existence. The twist in this case is that the Environmental Justice discourse has an ecocentric dimension. As the stability of the ecosystems affects the caribou population, the balance of America's arctic ecosystems plays a central role in their message. Brulle's objection to the Environmental Justice discourse is the lack of a vision to protect biodiversity; however this is addressed in the Gwich'in case. By adopting aspects from preservation language they are able to connect the defense of nature to the continuation of their culture.

### **3.6. The Call for a New Environmentalism**

The background for the call for revision of the American environmentalism has roots in the discourses above. The ecocentric position of Deep Ecology has played a central part in the wilderness debate, where extreme non-anthropocentric views have been accused of undermining the entire environmentalist cause by setting impossible standards for human presence. On the other hand, the emergence of the socially focused environmental discourses, such as Eco-feminism and Environmental Justice, brought focus on the limitations of mainstream environmentalism, often rooted in preservation ideas or Reform environmentalism.

The critiques coming from environmental historians Mark Dowie and Robert Gottlieb are concerned with the inability of the mainstream environmental movement to connect with and include parts of the population. In *Forcing the Spring* Gottlieb criticizes the large mainstream organizations for being too wrapped up in issues that mostly resonate with the white, middle-class population. He wants to include urban environmental issues in the debate and acknowledge the questions pertaining to gender, social class and race.

Gottlieb moreover accounts for many of the underlying social causes for the emergence of the Environmental Justice movement. In a time where the large environmental organizations consolidated their power in collaborations such as the "Group of Ten", small

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<sup>60</sup> Brulle 207-208.

local organizations had been left in the background. This was to change as local community-based organizations reclaimed the arena using Environmental Justice- based discourses. During the 1980s neighborhood organizations started to make loud protests against the conditions they were living in. Health hazards such as waste dumps, incinerators and factories were in proportionally often placed in the vicinity of poor, often black neighborhoods. These neighborhoods were subjected to a dangerous living environment because they lacked the resources to prevent it. This way being colored or poor represented a higher risk of environmentally caused diseases, which triggered protests as the awareness of these facts grew. Paralleled, dangerous working environments caused similar social reactions.

As these people spoke up, they challenged the existing environmental organizations on method, structure and agenda. By method I am referring to their use of direct protest action contrasting the Washington-based organizations with their lobby work and lawsuits. Workers and communities were empowered through these actions as they took control of their surroundings. The involvement of “grass-roots” communities in protest action, directly involving citizens, was a different structural approach than the corporate, professionalized structure dominant among the “Group of Ten”. Last, the agenda or focus of the organizations differed as the Environmental Justice organizations included a social dimension lacking in the traditional wilderness preservation and pollution control agendas.

Another key focus for Gottlieb is the problematic definition of nature by mainstream environmentalist organizations, which would predominately belong in the Reform Environmentalism or Preservation discourses. However, he also includes biocentric movements such as Deep Ecology as part of the problem. They have taken a wrong approach, in his opinion, in creating an artificial separation of nature and culture. This separation will not produce any viable long term solutions for better balance between interests of nature and culture.

Dowie’s primary focus in *Losing Ground* is the need to steer away from the trends of professionalization and institutionalization that arose in the 1970s and 1980s. These trends were a consequence of the political and legal paradigm shift of the 1960s, and developed as a part of the Reform Environmentalism approach. The result was disconnection from grass roots members, as environmental work was limited to interest group politics and courtrooms. During the Regan years, the hostile political environment forced the organizations into a defensive position. Many sought to cooperate with Big Business rather than going head-to-head with it. Dowie argues that this was a fatal error, and calls for a new environmentalism that can encompass a larger range of issues, such as urban environmentalism. The

organizations need to be democratized and widened to include women, people of different ethnicities and social classes. There has been some movement in this direction in the years that have passed since this book was written in 1995. The question remains whether this renewal constitutes a “new environmentalism”.

### **3.5. Environmental Discourses and the Alaska Coalition**

A global environmental view entails that the third-world perspectives and the western cultural influence of environmentalism needs to be acknowledged. Aside from the racial, social and cultural environmental injustice issues that exist in American society, the global inequality, environmental or otherwise, is intricately connected to the halting of global warming and ecological degradation. The realization that a global effort is necessary has been growing during the last decades, and a pluralist environmental discourse and approach seems more and more crucial to be able to address problems of this magnitude.

The case of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can be seen as an example of the need for such a pluralist or multidimensional environmental approach. The social dimension is present in the indigenous perspectives, which call for a revision of the preservation focused environmentalism, with particular emphasis on the wilderness question. Similar to the voices of the indigenous peoples of ANWR are criticisms made by third-world and native representatives from other corners of the world. This highlights the global relevance of the debate taking place in the ANWR controversy. Land and wildlife management issues in this little altered natural area poses utilitarian interests against aesthetic and scientific values. Not only the petroleum industry, but the indigenous population argues the right to use natural resources. Consequently, a solution for ANWR needs to address this question, whether the result is oil drilling or Wilderness designation. Likewise, a global environmental approach needs to include scientific, utilitarian, aesthetic, social and cultural values.

Brulle’s categorization of discourses and organizations that operate within them is helpful when placing the Alaska Coalition within the framework of environmental organizations. This thesis seeks to evaluate the success of the Alaska Coalition, and look at its effort from the “new environmentalism” angle; hence issues pertaining to the nature-culture dichotomy and the fragmentation of the environmental movement must be discussed. Looking at the reasons why the movement during the 1980s and 1990s was deemed unsuitable to address the looming global ecological and climate crisis is necessary to understand wherefrom the “new environmentalism” movement grew.

The nature-culture dichotomy was subject to great discussion during the 1990s, which led to a redefinition of the term “environmentalism” within the humanities. Critiques of the wilderness concept appeared from academics both within the developed and third-world countries. Indigenous peoples from around the world also argued the ethnocentricity and elitism inherent in the term. The dehumanizing aspect of the Euro-American wilderness concept is discussed in the essay *Indigenous People and Wilderness* by the aboriginal Australian Fabienne Bayet. Although indigenous or aboriginal peoples are clearly not a homogenous group, the resentment of the American national park model and the exclusion of human presence in protected natural areas seems to be a common denominator.

Aboriginal people now perceive National Parks and wilderness legislation as the second wave of dispossession which denies their customary inherited right to use land for hunting, gathering, building, rituals and birthing rites. The concession that allows traditional hunting practices in some national parks is simply another form of colonial thinking. This is regarded by Aboriginal people as an unfair and unrealistic imposition forced upon them by the Western dominant society.<sup>61</sup>

Within the context of Alaskan natives, many of the same attitudes towards preservation are apparent. By this follows adherence to the belief that “wilderness”, as it is depicted in the Preservation discourse, is a Euro-American cultural invention that upholds the culture-nature dualism, and is damaging to the environmental cause. A challenge for the Alaska Coalition could be how to come to terms with the fact that while Wilderness preservation is a western cultural invention, and perhaps even elitist and ethnocentric, it should continue to play a central role in environmentalist work, as sometimes the ecological quality of an area should take precedence over human needs.

Susan Kollin discusses the image of Alaska as a last frontier or wilderness in the book *Nature's State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier*, where the role of the native population within this landscape is central. She argues native peoples' need for “environmental sovereignty”, where they create a narrative of their own to counter the Euro-American nature view. This is how she describes the alternative indigenous environmentalism:

Alaska Native environmentalism has often included concepts and ideas foreign to dominant American nature writing; indigenous environmentalism in Alaska understands, for instance, that conquest and genocide are aspects of a postcontact

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<sup>61</sup> Fabienne Bayet, “Indigenous People and Wilderness,” eds. J. Baird Callicott, and Michael P. Nelson, *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1998) 318.

ecosystem. Indigenous environmentalism also resists understanding the subject and agent of nature writing as a solitary individual in retreat and instead concerns itself with the collective community. A reenvisioned understanding of nature writing that incorporates an Alaska Native perspective must therefore come to terms with the way the lone or antisocial nature advocate is not a useful model for political action; an environmental politics that leaves behind the concepts of territorial encroachment and conquest is doomed to failure from an Alaska Native perspective.<sup>62</sup>

She expresses a need to rewrite the western narrative which idealizes solitude in natural experiences. The Alaskan indigenous perspective focuses on shared communal experiences, which adds a social dimension to the narrative. Moving beyond this focus, many American Natives are seeking to create a counter environmentalism where their narrative of exile, dislocation and resistance of “the dominant culture’s environmental ideologies” are brought forth. Further, it is important to move away from idealizing indigenous peoples collectively as America’s original ecologists, as this also is a distorted picture.<sup>63</sup>

Within this context, to refrain from romanticizing or idealizing these peoples’ relationships to nature could entail bringing forth the question whether they always are the preferred stewards of it. While they often present a holistic and locally focused nature perception, the expertise and outside perspective of the large environmental organizations are necessary to counter the global ecological degradation and climate change caused by the deep-seated structural factors in global society. While the indigenous groups have a unique and important knowledge of the land they live on, this does not mean that they possess the best solutions in all situations. After all, many areas under control of native corporate villages have been subject to development. It is moreover important that the decisions regarding development are based on consideration of what is best for the ecological community rather than being made out of resentment to land- and wildlife management officials and environmentalists. This is seemingly the case with the Kaktovik Inupiat. Granted, some of this resentment may be warranted on the part of the indigenous population, however what is at stake ecologically, socially and culturally should override old grudges. If not, it is doubtful that these communities are best equipped to handle such issues.

Indian writer Ramachandra Guha has presented a critical essay on Deep Ecology and other preservation-focused environmentalist groups. He calls it *A Third-World Critique*. His main focus is that the Euro-American wilderness model is not suitable to implement on a

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<sup>62</sup> Susan Kollin, *Nature’s State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 56.

<sup>63</sup> Kollin 158.

world-wide scale without grave consequences.<sup>64</sup> In a densely populated country like India, creating wilderness parks<sup>65</sup> requires displacement of entire peasant villages and livestock. Guha argues that this effectively transfers resources from the poor to the rich, as the peasants are further marginalized. These parks, as seen in both India and certain African countries, exist primarily for rich tourists, while the local population is disregarded.<sup>66</sup> Guha's essay speaks to the radically different views on wilderness and land management in many third-world countries. The excess of uninhabited nature in North America has created a tradition for viewing it in terms of aesthetics, recreation, science and intrinsic value.

While these values have had important functions in that part of the world, other areas with a different demography, social structure and cultural tradition need different approaches to finding the right balance between nature and human presence. That is not to say that protecting tigers or elephants is unimportant; the measures taken so far have merely not had a positive impact, in the eyes of Guha. The situation in Alaska is of another character, but this critique of radical preservation models is relevant in terms of the need to look beyond the nature-culture dichotomy to find a workable solution for nature protection. In Alaska this has also been a necessity, and this was acknowledged in the subsistence provision of ANILCA. The problem in Alaska has not yet been solved satisfactorily, but the point is that an environmental approach, or discourse if you will, needs more dimensions if it is to be useful on a world-wide scale. Guha's critique is proof that the Preservation discourse cannot provide the whole solution. Like the indigenous population of ANWR, on a world basis there is a significant part of the population using nature first-hand. This fact underscores the need to implement utilitarian environmental discourses, as so many are directly dependant on the continued use of the natural resources surrounding them.

William Cronon's famous essay *The Trouble with Wilderness* brings up some philosophical problems regarding the wilderness idea. Cronon argues that this concept is more a part of the problem than the solution; it is an obstacle to feasible environmentalism. Like Guha, Kollin and Bayet, he claims that the wilderness idea is distinctly a western cultural invention. Environmental historian Cronon represents a larger trend within the humanities, where "environmentalism" has been reconsidered and redefined within the last couple of decades. As the third-world and indigenous critics, Cronon emphasizes the cultural dimension

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<sup>64</sup> Ramachandra Guha, "A Third-World Critique," eds. J. Baird Callicott, and Michael P. Nelson, *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1998) 232.

<sup>65</sup> Unlike traditional preservation models, where "wilderness" means keeping development out of a natural area, Deep Ecology argues for reverting certain inhabited places to a "wild" state.

<sup>66</sup> Guha 235.

of nature; that it is shaped and interpreted within cultural and historical contexts. That is not to reduce nature to culture, but rather to acknowledge the human component. Within human agency is after all where the solution to ecological degradation lies. Cronon attributes the American wilderness idea to cultural concepts as the frontier and the sublime. He calls it a cultural construct that through different myths and images has represented a flight from history.

Seen as the original garden, it is a place outside of time, from which human beings had to be ejected before the fallen world of history could properly begin. Seen as the frontier, it is a savage world at the dawn of civilization, whose transformation represents the very beginning of the national historical epic. Seen as the bold landscape of frontier heroism, it is the place of youth and childhood, into which men escape by abandoning their pasts and entering a world of freedom where the constraints of civilization fade into memory. Seen as the sacred sublime, it is the home of a God who transcends history by standing as the One who remains untouched and unchanged by time's arrow. No matter what the angle from which we regard it, wilderness offers us the illusion that we can escape the cares and troubles of the world in which our past has ensnared us.<sup>67</sup>

This passage tells us that the wilderness idea has been shaped through cultural needs of escape. That brings us to another problem with wilderness, according to Cronon; that looking to an idealized, constructed nature hinders us in seeing the environment we live in, and consequently act on the problems around us. He claims that to solve these problems:

[We] need an environmental ethic that will tell us as much about *using* nature as about *not* using it. The wilderness dualism tends to cast any use as *ab*-use, and thereby denies us a middle ground in which responsible use and non-use might attain some kind of balanced, sustainable relationship.<sup>68</sup>

The extreme consequence of the wilderness idea, he claims, is that in order to save wild nature, collective suicide is the way to go if human presence itself is what destroys it. While Cronon is right in saying that environmentalism must focus on its social and cultural aspects in order to implement a more sustainable human treatment of nature, I think that dismissing the wilderness idea in such harsh terms is unfortunate. I can see that in many ways it is problematic; however, it also represents a great incentive for many people to fight for

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<sup>67</sup> William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," ed. William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, (New York: Norton, 1996) 79-80.

<sup>68</sup> Cronon 85.

enclosure of natural areas. Restricted human access to certain areas is unequivocally needed as ecological degradation is happening at an alarmingly high speed. Moreover, Cronon should acknowledge that just as wilderness preservation alone cannot solve the world's environmental challenges; too much focus on the social or cultural dimensions might also lead to inadequate protection of wild ecosystems. Cronon has been criticized by ecocentric environmentalists for being anthropocentric and reducing nature to a by-product of culture, effectively an epiphenomenon. This is exaggerated, as Cronon clearly accepts and values the existence of nature in itself.

I think Brulle makes an excellent point in stating that each environmental discourse has something to contribute in terms of creating a collective social learning that might change the course we are headed for. With perhaps the exception of the Manifest Destiny discourse, they all represent valid approaches to creating a more balanced relationship between humans and nature. Most important, neither the ecocentric nor the anthropocentric discourses are adequate on their own. Deep Ecology or any strict preservation minded approach will neglect the human component, while social environmentalism might downplay the important function of national parks or Wilderness areas. While not all of Brulle's discourses have equally broad reach or appeal, each provides a part of the whole picture. Moreover, they represent different values, all of which have important functions, but which become much more limited one by one:

The discourses of Conservation, Wildlife Management, and Reform Environmentalism comprise the empirical analyses of ecological conditions and their impacts. However, they rely on a utilitarian and anthropocentric morality, and they have virtually no aesthetic dimension. The discourses of Ecotheology, Ecofeminism, and Environmental Justice provide strong moral cases for action, yet they are generally devoid of aesthetic representations of the type of world they value. The discourses of Preservation and Deep Ecology provide extraordinary aesthetic arguments for the protection of the natural world, yet those arguments remain focused on individuals and their personal relationship to nature. Thus, Preservation and Deep Ecology have not provided a wider vision of an ecologically sustainable society.<sup>69</sup>

Motives for protecting the environment can be moral, aesthetic, utilitarian or scientific. Who can say which one is superior? One solution could be to incorporate the different discourses and their various motives and values into what Brulle calls a metanarrative. This would

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<sup>69</sup> Brulle 267.



provide “aesthetic, moral, and cognitive reasons for collective action.”<sup>70</sup> The discourses could be united in such a manner:

An ecological metanarrative would draw on the special management, scientific and legal capacities of the Conservation, Wildlife Management, and Reform Environmentalist discourses to ensure scientific competence and adequately address scientific questions. To develop new normative criteria, it would need to encompass the moral fervor and commitment of the ecotheologists and the deep concerns over equity and justice of both the Ecofeminist discourse and the Environmental Justice discourse. To address our images of what constitutes a good life, it would need to incorporate the aesthetic insights provided by the discourses of Preservation and Deep Ecology.<sup>71</sup>

This could enable less fragmentation between the different environmental discourses and a more united effort could in turn make the movement a more influential actor. Such a “metanarrative” or “metadiscourse” could be created through Jürgen Habermas’ communicative action model, Brulle argues. Briefly, that would entail an ethics of mutual communication and respect between the different agents, which in turn could create a democratic environmental community fit for dialogue and social learning.<sup>72</sup> This model is only indirectly implemented in the thesis, through the framework of Brulle. However, it lies at the core of the challenge for the Alaska Coalition, and is a useful context within to discuss the internal dynamics of the coalition members. To create a coherent and unified coalition that can be described as an example of the “new environmentalism” movement, it is essential that the different members have consolidated the value systems to a point of mutual understanding and respect. With regards to the Alaska Coalition, where nearly a thousand organizations are collaborating, it is a matter of evaluating to what extent dialogue and social learning exists among the different environmental discourses represented.

### **3.7. Advantages of a Pluralist Environmental Discourse**

The situation in Alaska invites for discussion on the topics and theory presented in this chapter. The “new environmentalism” trend within American environmentalism is a central part of the thesis, and this trend could be useful to discuss within the framework Brulle presents in *Agency, Democracy and Nature*. Even more, the dynamics between the discourses

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<sup>70</sup> Brulle 277-278.

<sup>71</sup> Brulle 278.

<sup>72</sup> Brulle 278-279.

and values within the Alaska Coalition can be clarified. New environmentalism can be explained as a pluralistic and differentiated approach to environmental politics, where values not earlier connected to the environmentalist organizations are present. That entails that discourses such as Environmental Justice, Ecotheology and Ecofeminism are entering into collaboration with organizations largely based on Preservation discourses or Reform Environmentalism. The very emergence and growth of discourses that link religion, class, race and gender can be seen as a sign that American environmentalism is moving into a new era. This is in turn a consequence of the redefinition and re-conceptualization of “environment” and “environmentalism” within the last decades.

One great advantage in combining different discourses is that such a coalition has the potential to reach many more people, as they can pick and choose values and methods they agree with within the network of organizations. Moreover, it acknowledges the validity of the different value systems, which can give an experience among the various agents of being heard and respected. This is necessary in order to obtain a learning environment where the environmental discourses can build on each other’s strengths instead of remaining fragmented.

The case of the Alaska Coalition presents the question of whether real social learning has taken place within the discourses of the coalition. The analysis of the coalition provided in chapter four will examine the dynamics between representatives from the discourses of Preservation, Conservation, Wildlife Management, Ecotheology, and two indigenous perspectives which can in part be seen as representatives of the Environmental Justice discourse. This chapter has pointed out strengths and weaknesses of these discourses; the question now remains to what extent the Alaska Coalition has used its advantage of having multiple discourses, and integrated the strong points of each of them into a language worthy of the description “new environmentalism”. Has the coalition progressed beyond the fragmented state of the environmental discourse, and into a truly new environmental movement?

## Chapter Four: An Analysis of the Alaska Coalition

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will take a closer look at a network of interest groups dedicated to protecting wild nature in Alaska; the Alaska Coalition. ANWR is one of its main focuses, and the coalition is a key player in the current controversy. Throughout this chapter I will discuss a selection of member organizations and analyze how their different values and interests manage to fit within the coalition. The internal dynamics among the organizations will be useful in evaluating why the coalition has been successful. Moreover, I will discuss whether the coalition has progressed from mainstream environmentalism, and into a so-called “new environmentalism”.

In chapter three, I discussed the discourses of American environmentalism through the framework of Robert J. Brulle, which is based on Jürgen Habermas’ communicative action model. Here, the concept “social learning” is used to explain a process where open communication and mutual respect between parties enables an environment where change in worldview can occur.<sup>73</sup> This process is useful both in terms of creating dialogue between the environmental movement and society at large and moreover between the different discourses of the environmental movement. The dynamic between the discourses or worldviews present in the Alaska Coalition can be explored by doing a discourse analysis where the key concepts “wilderness” and “sustainability” are looked at from each perspective. Through this, I will attempt to evaluate how well the coalition has been able to create a unified and concise discourse despite the differing interests. The style and rhetorical tools used in the material will also be briefly discussed.

The Alaska Coalition consists of a number of diverging interest groups, ranging from preservation-minded environmentalist, native groups, religious denominations, and sport -and hunting groups, among others. There will not be room to examine all these parties in detail; a great deal of the focus will be on the environmentalists and the Gwich’in Indians, who oppose drilling in ANWR. Of the many environmental organizations represented in the coalition, I have chosen the Wilderness Society for its status as a large national organization, and for its tradition of advocating wilderness from a scientific as well as an aesthetic standpoint. The other environmental organization that will be analyzed is the Alaska Wilderness League. This

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<sup>73</sup> Jürgen Habermas, referenced in Brulle.

group is a fairly new (formed in 1993) DC- based organization, solely dedicated to protecting Alaska's wild areas. Also, I see it as useful to discuss the role of the Episcopalian church briefly. This group falls somewhat outside the "inhabited wilderness"<sup>74</sup> debate, of which the others are central. Still, their involvement is important in the discussion regarding "new environmentalism", and their motivations for joining the environmental debate should be dealt with. Moreover, I choose to include a discussion on the Kaktovik Inupiat, a corporate village<sup>75</sup> that partly endorses on-shore drilling in the refuge. All these groups represent interests that are central to modern environmental discourse. Although they all want to preserve the natural area of the refuge, they represent different values and approaches to doing so. The nature-culture dichotomy is challenged, as the particular indigenous positions bring about complex discussions regarding this dualism. The Preservation discourse has traditionally advocated exclusion of human activity in Wilderness areas, thus keeping nature and culture separate dimensions. The presence of the Environmental Justice discourse in the Alaska Coalition challenges this dualism, as it seeks to acknowledge the unnaturalness of treating nature and culture as separate entities.

Another factor that makes Alaskan nature management relevant in terms of the nature-culture discussion is the Alaskan historical tradition of subsistence use. Theodore Catton's work *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos and National Parks in Alaska* provides an overview of how Alaska's national parks have been designed to reintegrate subsistence activity in Wilderness areas. As indigenous groups in Alaska for the most part historically were not managed through reservations, their position was from the beginning different than that of the Native Americans in the lower 48 states. Their subsistence practices were to a much larger extent taken into consideration as the plans for management of Alaskan wild lands were developed. With the passage of ANILCA legal provisions were made for incorporating subsistence use into Wilderness management.<sup>76</sup>

The nature-culture dualism thus plays out within the management of Alaskan nature. From a preservationist viewpoint Wilderness management has traditionally meant exclusion or minimization of human activity in such areas. The native and rural population has on the

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<sup>74</sup> Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

<sup>75</sup> Through the enactment of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), native villages that accepted the settlement were made village corporations. The intention of the law was to enable native economic development and moreover clear the way for development of the state's resources by settling native land claims. The native association Arctic Slope Native Association became the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. Regional and village corporations were through this able to file for land selections. The Kaktovik Inupiat accepted the settlement; the Gwich'in Indians were one of the few villages which did not. Reference: Catton 197-198.

<sup>76</sup> Catton 191-220.

other hand advocated use of natural resources. Alaskan national parks are an arena where these interests attempt to co-exist. The issue is complicated by the different positions the Gwich'in Indians and the Kaktovik Inupiat take on nature management as the former group wants to halt oil development and the latter endorses it. That entails that the Kaktovik Inupiat are willing to allow more development and human alteration of the coastal plain than the Gwich'in Indians. These indigenous perspectives thus allow for the consideration of complex nature management issues.

The philosophical and historical basis of the “wilderness” debate was provided in chapter three, and in this chapter the discussion moves to the different interpretations of the “wilderness” term by a selection of coalition members. This analysis will enable me to place the different groups within the “inhabited wilderness” debate. The discourse analysis on the term “sustainability” is moreover linked to this question, as it addresses nature management issues. Aside from evaluating the coherence and success of the Alaska Coalition, this chapter aims towards answering to what extent it can be seen as an example of “new environmentalism”, i.e. how well it has incorporated environmental justice positions.

Primary sources for the analysis of the Alaska Coalition and the position of the Kaktovik Inupiat will consist of websites provided by these groups. These sites function as a means to provide public information on the causes and appeals to readers to perform political pressure on their elected representatives. The sources are contemporary, i.e. they are the current available versions. In addition, reports, analyses, appeals etc. that have been published in this decade, and are available in the on-line archives of the organizations are useful. They provide information on the values, priorities and opinions of these groups, and are relevant to discussing whether a new approach to environmentalism is present.

### **4.3 Gwich'in Steering Committee**

The Gwich'in Athabascan Indians have been introduced in chapter one. Their main agenda in working in this coalition is to keep the Porcupine Caribou Herd as stable and healthy as possible. The birthing and nursing grounds of the herd are held sacred by this people, and development of this area represents no less than physical, cultural and spiritual extinction to them. Their best chance against the overwhelming powers of the oil industry and the State of Alaska is to form an alliance with environmentalist groups working to have the coastline of ANWR designated legal Wilderness.

As discussed in chapter three, the idea or term “wilderness” has been viewed as controversial in the last decades. The long-standing tradition of the Preservation discourse to value wilderness from an aesthetic and ecological position has been criticized for its lack of social focus. The perspectives of the indigenous peoples involved in the ANWR controversy call for acknowledgement of the social and cultural dimensions within this issue. The Gwich’in Indians can be seen as representatives of the Environmental Justice discourse within the coalition. The environmental justice movement emphasizes social factors as race or class as a part of the environmental discourse. The message is that inequality and injustice within human societies contribute to ecological degradation.

Giovanna Di Chiro discusses the environmental justice movement in the article *Nature as Community*. She describes it like this:

What is new about the environmental justice movement is not the “elevated environmental consciousness” of its members but the ways it is transforming the possibilities for fundamental social and environmental change through processes of redefinition, reinvention, and construction of innovative political and cultural discourses and practices.<sup>77</sup>

The environmental justice movement works for a fundamental redefinition of the discourses and practices of the top-down hierarchical systems of traditional environmental organizations and the political sphere. The reconnection of humans and nature is at the core of this position, which resonates well with the “new environmentalism”, and its view on the “wilderness” question. The concept of “community”, which is central to the environmental justice position, is directly linked to the use of “place” to describe the organic relationship between natural and cultural environments: “The place- geographic, cultural, and emotional- where humans and environment converge is embodied in the ideas and practices of “community””.<sup>78</sup> Such communities can be interpreted as merely social, or as a less anthropocentric community where “connection to and interconnectedness with other groups, other species, and the natural environment through everyday experiences with family, comradeship, and work.”<sup>79</sup>

The communities described by Di Chiro fits with the social and cultural dynamics seen in the native villages of ANWR. The emotional ties to the landscape and wildlife are typical

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<sup>77</sup> Giovanna Di Chiro, “Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice,” ed. William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: Norton, 1996) 303.

<sup>78</sup> Di Chiro 318.

<sup>79</sup> Di Chiro 318.

of indigenous nature-culture relationships. One central point in this chapter is however to explore the differences between the Gwich'in and Kaktovik Inupiat in this area.

Criticisms of the wilderness idea by Third-World and Indigenous representatives were presented in chapter three. On the website of the Gwich'in Steering Committee there is little evidence of this resentment. David M. Standlea has through his visit to Arctic Village expressed the clear impression that the Gwich'in shared the viewpoint expressed by several representatives for native communities; i.e. that it is a false, western construction that undermines their existence.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, besides the occasional reference to "wilderness" as a legal status, there is not much sign of this typical "indigenous perspective". On the contrary, there is a passage that shows a use of the term similar to that of preservation-focused organizations: "Wilderness" describes an ideal natural state.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a place of wildness, where timeless ecological and evolutionary processes continue in their natural ebb and flow. The mystery of nameless valleys remains alive, where one can experience solitude, self-reliance, exploration, adventure, and challenge. The spirit of wilderness prevails here.<sup>81</sup>

From this passage it may seem as they are accepting the environmentalist view, or at least playing along with their language for whatever reason. Perhaps the importance of a united front outward is too great to expose conflicting values within the network. In any case it is reasonable to ask what this says about the position of the Gwich'in, both within the coalition and as an endangered minority culture. One interpretation could be that they are eradicating themselves through this alliance, by being swallowed up by the environmentalist agenda.

The same quote illustrates another interesting point. The Gwich'in website in general focuses mainly on their culture, history and pantheistic spirituality as something that sets them apart from modern western society. Still, this passage shows an interesting confluence of the indigenous perspective and western thoughts. The phrase "spirit of wilderness" seems to attempt to reconcile the pantheistic native tradition with the controversial "wilderness" term. It is reasonable to ask whether the Gwich'in have incorporated more of modern western ideas than previously assumed, or if they perhaps are reaching out to the environmentalist audience by using words they can relate to. In either case, this can perhaps be interpreted as a sign that the collaboration is paradoxically both enabling and threatening their cultural existence. Seeing as their best option to retain their cultural existence is by all accounts to fight

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<sup>80</sup> Standlea 111.

<sup>81</sup> "Arctic Refuge," *gwichinsteeringcommittee.org*, Gwich'in Steering Committee, 29 May 2008 <<http://www.gwichinsteeringcommittee.org/arcticrefuge.html>>.

development, the challenges they face are tremendous if they at the same time have to struggle to retain their identity within the coalition.

The passage reveals an aesthetic focus, recounting the “mystery of nameless valleys”, where the landscape exists in its own entity and integrity, almost beyond human comprehension. The word “timeless” also speaks to natural forces beyond human logic, while “ecological and evolutionary processes” are infused with western science. Experiences as “solitude, self-reliance, exploration, adventure, and challenge” points to wilderness and frontier ideas, and seem very distant from the native environmental justice perspective. This would advocate identity, community and continuity rather than self-reliance and adventure. The native peoples *are* the land. Again, some of the material on the Gwich’in website point to more typical western perspectives.

The Gwich’in perspective on “sustainability” is closely connected to their subsistence lifestyle. In short, a viable future for them is entirely dependent on the health and size of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. “Sustainability” entails balance and harmony between nature and culture. The Gwich’in view “sustainability” as in accordance with their hunting practices. Thus, harvesting caribou for sustenance, culture, health and religion is healthy and viable nature management. Further, the issue of global warming is pointed out as a great threat to the sustainability of the Arctic areas and their cultures. Measures to prevent too much temperature rise are as such crucial in the vision of “sustainability”.

The presentation of The Gwich’in culture provided by the Gwich’in Steering Committee website<sup>82</sup> shows that continuity with nature and subsistence culture are crucial factors that legitimize and substantiate their voice in the battle of the arctic. The use of *ethical appeal* is the key in their argument against oil drilling in ANWR. That entails that their status as a people with strong ties to the ANWR landscape gives them credibility and weight in the debate over the future of the area. Further, their spiritual connection to the land itself and the animals that live there resonates with the American public opinion. The content of the Gwich’in website mostly consist of a presentation of their culture and history, and the importance of the Porcupine caribou in relations to this. Many of the same arguments against development that are used by environmental organizations are listed, and in addition extensive descriptions of the hazards to the indigenous cultures are provided. The manner in which the Gwich’in Steering Committee has presented the Gwich’in people clearly builds their *ethos*.

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<sup>82</sup> “Gwich’in Culture,” *gwichinsteeringcommittee.org*, Gwich’in Steering Committee, 26 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.gwichinsteeringcommittee.org/gwichinnation.html>>.



This people is presented as “natural”, the dualism between nature and culture is less present in their environment. This is a positive characteristic of their culture, as it represents what many people in the industrialized world see as the ideal relationship between nature and culture. They have continuity with pre-agrarian and pre-industrial times, which many (including environmentalist groups) wish to rekindle. A culture in more harmony with nature can be seen as the ultimate goal of environmentalism, and this is where the indigenous peoples draw a lot of their leverage from in the nature-culture discourse.

Some of the language used in the website of the Gwich’in Steering Committee points in the same direction. It helps construct an *ethical* argument. Phrases like “The Gwich’in are caribou people” is a strong reference to their connection to and knowledge of the nature that surrounds them, which are necessary qualities in order to manage the arctic ecosystems responsibly. Even more than building an ethical appeal, the language creates a significant emotional appeal, *pathos*. In this excerpt the emotional ties of the Gwich’in to the caribou are subtle, but visible:

For thousands of years, Gwich’in have relied upon the Porcupine River Caribou Herd to meet their subsistence needs. Each spring they watch the first pregnant cows, and later the bulls and yearlings leave their country in their northern migration to the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the caribou birthing place and nursing grounds. The Gwich’in are caribou people. The birthplace of the Porcupine River Caribou Herd is considered sacred.<sup>83</sup>

The emotional connection to the caribou is here used as the premier argument for protecting their “sacred” place, the ANWR coastal plain. As the Gwich’in could conceivably manage by entering into a corporate structure, the mere physical survival is not dependent on the caribou. However, their identity, culture and spirituality are. The language that depicts the caribou’s reliance upon the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge uses words such as “birthing place” and “nursing grounds”, which are useful in creating an emotional connotations for the audience. In comparison, the language chosen in more scientific presentations, i.e. *logical* appeals, would more likely refer to the coastal plain as the “1002 area” or “calving grounds”.

The sacredness of the ANWR coastal plain to the Gwich’in evokes sympathy among the public. Spirituality is something that people with respect for religious experiences and institutions are likely to respond to. The right to religious expression in various forms has a very strong tradition in the United States. Religion is a source of great emotion to many

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<sup>83</sup> “Gwich’in Culture,” *gwichinsteeringcommittee.org*, Gwich’in Steering Committee, 26 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.gwichinsteeringcommittee.org/gwichinnation.html>>.

people, and the use of religious language could be seen as a legitimate and powerful appeal by the Gwich'in. In addition, the national guilt from the treatment of Native Americans could among some be a legitimizing factor in halting development plans in ANWR.

#### 4.4 City of Kaktovik

The Inupiat Eskimos of Kaktovik City, situated on the coastline of ANWR, is an indigenous group with a different perspective on oil development. While they also define themselves and their culture as inseparable from the landscape and animals around them, they celebrate the break with the past of the harsh and unfriendly subsistence culture. The struggles of earlier generations are not idealized in any way; modern houses and facilities that make life more comfortable are welcome. Although the Inupiat share the desire of the Gwich'in to continue their cultural traditions based on fishing and hunting, they are not as apprehensive of oil drilling on the coast of ANWR. As stated in chapter one, the Kaktovik Inupiat have a marine-based culture. They rely on the Bowhead Whale in much the same way that the Gwich'in rely on the Porcupine Caribou. The plans of the petroleum industry to drill onshore do not pose the same threat to their lifestyle as to the Gwich'in. Seismic testing and offshore drilling, however, has already proven to pose great problems for the Inupiat villages along the coast of the Chuckchi and Bering Seas farther east. An opening of ANWR could put them in a similar position. Nevertheless, they condone the plans for oil drilling in ANWR, and even function as spokespeople for the pro-oil organization Arctic Power<sup>84</sup>

The Kaktovik position is more accurately presented as follows: “we would support oil exploration and development of the coastal plain *provided* we are given the authority and the resources to ensure that it is done properly and safely. Without the necessary provisions to ensure this protection, we would not.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, they have difficulty relating to the overarching political debates and processes that exist in the larger national arena:

People come to Kaktovik asking all sorts of questions about ANWR. Do the Kaktovikmiut support oil development or do we oppose it? Here the questions are not so simple and the issue is not so easily defined as to which side of this debate do we support. That argument is not conceived here. The polemic surrounding ANWR was not created in Kaktovik, but constructed in the minds of two warring factions

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<sup>84</sup> “Alaskan Natives Support Development,” *anwr.org*, 2005, Arctic Power, 30 May 2008 <<http://www.anwr.org/People/Alaskan-Natives-Support-Development.php>>.

<sup>85</sup> “Oil Development,” *kaktovik.com*, The City of Kaktovik, Alaska, 2005, 30 May 2008 <<http://www.kaktovik.com/perspectives1.html>>.

conspiring against one another in a place very far from here. It was created outside our place, so is of little consequence to us.<sup>86</sup>

They do not want to ignore the issue that has fallen in their laps, but somehow feel that it does not concern them. The issue belongs to the outsiders, and is irrelevant, as the legal and political designations and restrictions are unnatural. Their endorsement of oil drilling has very strict conditions. They have not really taken sides, and the oil boosters' use of their position in this issue appears very over dimensioned. It is reasonable to ask how real the authority of the Inupiats would be if development was approved. It seems a bit naïve to think that the massive development interests would adhere to their conditions if the federal government allowed the project to begin.

As described, the “wilderness” issue is central to why the Kaktovik Inupiats are more removed from the environmentalists than the oil companies. On their website they describe what the “wilderness” concept means to them:

Discounting the insult this is to us, to make us either not here or not human, this notion totally obscured the reality of this place. It discounted what may be its greatest value to humankind, that it sustains physically, emotionally and spiritually, a rare and precious component of the human experience, the Kaktovikmiut. As much as we detest it, the word genocide comes to mind. Nobody came to slaughter us, to remove us, to confine us to concentration camps, but they simply made us disappear.<sup>87</sup>

This is in accordance with many of the problematic aspects of the wilderness issue discussed in chapter three. A strict separation of the nature and culture categories effectively ignores the situation of cultures with a strong natural connection and awareness. As the idea of an “inhabited wilderness” looks to a re-connection of natural and cultural habitats, the question of place also points to the connection of humans to their surroundings.

Although the Kaktovik Inupiats are not organized as a part of any movement, there are still parallels to the Environmental Justice discourse. The similarities are present when it comes to questions regarding indigenous peoples. The importance of place and community, as discussed in connection to the Di Chiro article, is highly present in the writing of Kaktovik City. The connection to the landscape and wildlife is still central to their cultural identity although they have chosen to modernize their lifestyle somewhat.

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<sup>86</sup> “Issues and Perspectives,” *kaktovik.com*, The City of Kaktovik, Alaska, 2005, 30 May 2008 <<http://www.kaktovik.com/perspectives.html>>.

<sup>87</sup> “Wilderness,” *kaktovik.com*, The City of Kaktovik, Alaska, 2005, 30 May 2008 <<http://www.kaktovik.com/perspectives2.html>>.

For centuries, we made our home along the coast as we harvested the land between the Arctic Ocean and the mountains to the south. We are the only indigenous people of this land, and to that end we help define this place, along with the air, sea, mountains, tundra and wildlife. To remove one of these elements from the other would be impossible, and we see ourselves as no different. For thousands of years our culture has been defined by our connection with this place and all of the bounty it provides. This synthesis between land and people is one of the things that has maintained us here for eons, along with our sense of community and willingness to support one another.<sup>88</sup>

While similarities to the Environmental Justice discourse are present in terms of focus on place and the need for empowerment, the Kaktovik Inupiats have chosen to partner up with the oil industry rather than the Alaska Coalition. An explanation for this may be their long standing resentment of federal wildlife officials due to their perceived arrogance. Moreover, oil industry representatives seem to have made them feel more included and respected, and this seems to be a significant part of the background for where they are today.<sup>89</sup>

“Sustainability” would according to the views of the Kaktovik Inupiats allow limited, sensible development of natural areas. Nature can be harvested through modern methods; it is a matter of knowing the land or wildlife, and its boundaries. The writing style on the Kaktovik website can best be described as philosophical. Their main objective is to pose questions about all the established “truths” presented in this case. The goal is to make the reader think beyond the information the two opposing sides have given. To this effect they present a unique viewpoint, and unlike the Gwich’in Indians they have not integrated the language of any outside discourses.

#### **4.5 The Episcopal Church, USA**

This Christian denomination has a historical tie with the Gwich’in Indians. Their missionaries have worked with the Natives, and turned many of them. The Episcopalian motivation for joining the fight for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is to emphasize the rights of this indigenous people. “Protecting the Arctic is more than an issue of stewardship of God’s creation and resources. Our strong commitment to protecting this renowned wilderness is also

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<sup>88</sup> “Our Land/Culture,” *kaktovik.com*, The City of Kaktovik, Alaska, 2005, 3 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.kaktovik.com/ourland.html>>.

<sup>89</sup> “Issues and Perspectives,” *kaktovik.com*, The City of Kaktovik, Alaska, 2005, 3 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.kaktovik.com/perspectives.html>>.

a question of human justice and the fundamental rights of the Gwich'in people."<sup>90</sup> The human aspect is most prevalent, that is the integrity of human cultural diversity and spirituality. They also speak of stewardship of God's creation as a moral imperative to join the environmental cause. However, it is the respect for the Gwich'in spirituality that is the main focus. The caribou and their birthing and nursing grounds are sacred to the Gwich'in, and this is something the Episcopalians can relate to. The language used on their website reveals a message that is primarily an emotional appeal to fellow Christians to support the Gwich'in in their right to retain their culture and spirituality.

The concept of "wilderness" entails for the Episcopalians a "vast, beautiful and unspoiled part of creation".<sup>91</sup> This resonates with the aesthetic wilderness concept; however it is clear that the culture of the Gwich'in is a natural part of it. "Sustainability" means "to encourage the development of clean, reliable and just energy policies that include our values".<sup>92</sup> Development can thus be sustainable through responsible and ethical handling of natural areas and their resources. There is no strict divide between human activity and "God's creation".

It would thus appear that the Episcopal Church advocates an environmental discourse based on aesthetic, theological and utilitarian values. In terms of the discourses presented in chapter three, they can be placed within the Ecotheology discourse. The social and cultural dimensions within their discourse seem to be the key factor in their close relationship to the Gwich'in.

#### **4.6 The Wilderness Society**

A large, influential and national environmental organization, the Wilderness Society carries much weight, which the Alaska Coalition in turn benefits from. The political clout they enjoy in D.C. has meant a great deal to the coalition's lobbying successes. The Wilderness Society is one of several leading U.S. environmental organizations that have been involved in the coalition since the beginning.<sup>93</sup> This organization, derived from the dedication and ideas of Aldo Leopold and Robert Marshall, has, as the name suggests, its main focus on wilderness preservation. Their website material has different areas of focus. The biological diversity of

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<sup>90</sup> "The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Episcopal Church, USA: Frequently Asked Questions," *The Episcopal Public Policy Network*, The Episcopal Church, USA, 8 Apr. 2004, 17 Aug. 2008 <[http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654\\_36643\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654_36643_ENG_HTM.htm)>.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Standlee 95.

the coastline of ANWR is central, and it is emphasized how rare such wilderness areas are in the world today.<sup>94</sup> Much attention is given to fight back claims made by the oil industry about the safety and importance of drilling. The Wilderness Society seeks to educate the public and be a watchdog for the environment through the use of science.

The main part of the argument of the Wilderness Society is based on a *logical* appeal. Claims from scientific experts are what constitute their basis for describing the state of the area. This is also how they assess environmental impact from different types of development. While the tone of this organization is primarily based on science and logic, there are elements of *pathos* in their writings. Aesthetics and spirituality is reflected in some parts. For example, the continued use of “wilderness” language speaks to the emotional connection their culture has to wild nature. An illustration of how the natural scenery is depicted in terms of sublimity follows: “Outstanding wildlife, beauty and recreation mark this arctic wilderness of boreal forests, dramatic peaks, and tundra.”<sup>95</sup>

The “wilderness” term is used to describe the natural features of the coast line of ANWR:

This incomparable wilderness is habitat to more than 250 animal species, including wolves, grizzlies, caribou and millions of migrating birds. It is also the subject of an intense lobbying campaign by the oil industry. Unless we stop them, this world-class wilderness will become a vast oil development field.<sup>96</sup>

Aside from denoting legal status, “wilderness” refers to an ideal natural state, both in terms of ecology and aesthetics. This is in accordance with the tradition of this organization. It can be placed within both the Wildlife Management -and Preservation discourses. As covered in chapter three, this entails focus on “wilderness” as a place to enable biodiversity, recreation and sublime experiences.

There is a passage on the Gwich’in Indians, where their role in the arctic landscape is acknowledged. “Down through the generations, the lives of the Gwich’in people of Alaska and Canada have been interwoven with the 130,000-member Porcupine Caribou Herd.”<sup>97</sup> This could be interpreted as acceptance of the environmental justice argument. However, one may ask whether the organization has grasped the deep-seated resentment to the “wilderness”

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<sup>94</sup> “Arctic Refuge: America’s Serengeti,” *wilderness.org*, Wilderness Society 18 Aug. 2008 <<http://www.wilderness.org/OurIssues/Arctic/about.cfm?TopLevel=About>>.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> “The Caribou People,” *wilderness.org*, The Wilderness Society, 18 Aug. 2008 <<http://www.wilderness.org/OurIssues/Arctic/gwichin.cfm?TopLevel=Gwichin>>.

idea by many indigenous peoples and some environmentalist historians. The exclusion of the human component inherent in the term has fostered a great deal of negative focus, as seen in chapter three. While insisting on continuing to use the term, a critical approach by recognizing the problematic aspects of it could have been a solution. To recognize the social dimension of wilderness would be to recognize the indigenous cultures, and decrease the gap between them and the Wilderness Society. While it is valid to keep the main focus on ecology and aesthetics, a slight redefinition of the “wilderness” term could open up towards alliance with more indigenous cultures. In the case of the Kaktovik Inupiat we have seen the negative effect the “wilderness” term can bring. As it currently stands, the Wilderness Society presents the encroachment of the oil industry upon Gwich’in culture and lifestyle, but fails itself to modify its use of wilderness language.

A section from the Wilderness Act, which is seen as controversial among wilderness critics, is quoted on their website: “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”<sup>98</sup> This is illustrative of the problems the Kaktovik Inupiat have with certain environmental organizations. By continuing to use the term “wilderness” uncritically, organizations as the Wilderness Society effectively diminish the historical and current presence of indigenous peoples. It is interesting to see that the Wilderness Society seems to be so sympathetic to the challenges of the Natives while not adhering to criticism made against their own role in the matter. Consequently, this can be seen as a weakness of the alliance.

What constitutes the concept of “sustainability” for the Wilderness Society is by and large functioning and self-sustaining ecosystems. This can be seen as a continuation of the “wilderness” term in that it implies nature management with minimized human interference. However, there is no principle that automatically excludes humans, and if the ecosystem were not significantly altered by human activity, there would seemingly be no reason why they should be excluded. Leopold’s Land Ethic regards humans as a part of nature, and their presence is not problematic as long as the biotic community at large remains stable and healthy. To this effect, the presence of an indigenous population with little ecological “footprint” does not stand in opposition of the “sustainability” concept. The quote from the Wilderness Act, however, points in a different direction. Here, humans are in fact excluded. Nevertheless, Aldo Leopold’s land ethic is at the core of their identity. The website of the

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<sup>98</sup> Wilderness Act, quoted in “About the Wilderness Society,” *wilderness.org*, The Wilderness Society, 26 Sep. 2008 <<http://www.wilderness.org/AboutUs/index.cfm?TopLevel=About>>.

Wilderness Society proclaims that “the land ethic continues to serve as the guiding beacon for the Wilderness Society.”<sup>99</sup> Leopold’s progressive legacy thus remains central to the organization.

The work the Wilderness Society does in ANWR is, judging from these excerpts from their website, primarily for the benefit of the ecology of the area. Human aesthetic and recreational enjoyment also plays a role. The portrayal of the Gwich’in subsistence culture and their relationship to the land can be interpreted as a step towards the environmental justice position, however other than that there is nothing that points in that direction.

The aesthetic focus is central to their presentation of ANWR. Sublimity, that is intense emotional experiences, is a crucial selling point within their argumentation. Adversely, the portrayal of the oil industry creates an image of a dirty, irresponsible actor; the Wilderness Society plays on revulsion among its audience. “Year-long vehicle traffic, production plant noise, helicopter and airplane traffic, air pollution and other activities create inevitable conflicts with wildlife in every month and season.”<sup>100</sup> This goes to show how nature and industry are polar opposites in their view. Moreover, the harmful effects of the oil industry on a culture like the Gwich’in are emphasized. The Wilderness Society mentions several times the plights the Gwich’in people is faced with regarding the oil boosters and a changing climate.

Like too many other Native American cultures, the traditional life of the Gwich’in may soon exist only as a memory. Big oil companies like BP Amoco, Chevron, Exxon, and others want to drill on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. ... Turning the Arctic Refuge’s biological heart into a sprawling industrial complex would destroy not only this wilderness, but the culture of the indigenous people.<sup>101</sup>

The Wilderness Society declares that the Gwich’in are one of the most tradition-bound native cultures left in North-America. In light of this it is interesting to discuss the realities of a subsistence culture. Subsistence living denotes a lifestyle where only a minimum of resources is used to sustain food and shelter. In other words it leaves only a small ecological “footprint”. However, in reality, subsistence includes hunting with modern equipment and

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<sup>99</sup> “Aldo Leopold,” *wilderness.org*, The Wilderness Society 7 Nov. 2008  
<<http://wilderness.org/content/aldo-leopold>>.

<sup>100</sup> “The “New Technology” Scam: Rhetoric Does Not Match Reality of North Slope Drilling,” *wilderness.org*, The Wilderness Society 23 May 2008  
<<http://www.wilderness.org/Library/Documents/upload/NorthSlopeTechnologyScam.pdf>>.

<sup>101</sup> “The Caribou People,” *wilderness.org*, The Wilderness Society 23 May 2008  
<<http://www.wilderness.org/OurIssues/Arctic/gwichin.cfm?TopLevel=Gwichin>>.



transportation by motorized vehicles. It is probably not a coincidence that the Wilderness Society endorses the activities of a traditional subsistence culture; it fits the image of wilderness as a place frozen in time, a place which serves as an escape from culture. Although the organization in some ways has caught up to the new environmental rhetoric of including certain cultural preservation, it seems to remain far from advocating the “inhabited wilderness” position.

#### **4.7 Alaska Wilderness League**

The Alaska Wilderness League is a fifteen year old conservation group dedicated especially to protecting Alaskan wilderness. It is DC based, working with lobbying, legal processes and national public awareness.<sup>102</sup> Like the Wilderness Society, their language is based on concepts as the wilderness idea and the frontier. The role of the frontier in shaping the American culture is presented as a motivating factor in fighting to keep Alaskan lands wild.

In the far northeast corner of Alaska lies one of America’s great national treasures, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Its nearly 20 million acres comprise one of the last places on earth where an intact expanse of arctic and subarctic lands remain protected. And yet this remote and undisturbed wilderness – a last vestige of the American frontier that helped shape and define our national identity – sits today at the crossroads between our short-sighted reliance on oil and a lasting conservation legacy for our children. Critically important in its own right, whether to drill the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge for oil or protect it as Wilderness is also a defining environmental issue of our time. Nothing less than the conservation soul of the country is at stake.<sup>103</sup>

As this passage reveals, this organization’s principles rest upon a traditional “wilderness” approach. Wild, pristine nature is seen as a “national treasure” which serves as an outlet for aesthetic and recreational impulses. Ecology is also pinpointed as a key incentive for designating Wilderness in ANWR. Thus, this organization can be placed within the Preservation and Wildlife Management discourses.

Unlike the Wilderness Society, Alaska Wilderness League discusses the role of both the Gwich’in Indians and the Kaktovik Inupiats in the ANWR controversy.<sup>104</sup> The Gwich’in are presented because of their active position against oil drilling in the refuge. Inupiaq

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<sup>102</sup> “About Us,” *alaskawild.org*, Alaska Wilderness League 16 Aug. 2008

<<http://www.alaskawild.org/about-us/>>.

<sup>103</sup> “Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Campaign,” *alaskawild.org*, Alaska Wilderness League 16 Aug. 2008

<<http://www.alaskawild.org/our-issues/arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-campaign/>>.

<sup>104</sup> “Alaska Natives,” *alaskawild.org*, Alaska Wilderness League 16 Aug. 2008

<<http://www.alaskawild.org/our-issues/arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-campaign/alaska-natives/>>.

Eskimos (Kaktovik City) are mentioned on the AWL website in connection to the uncertain future of their whaling culture, as climate change coupled with the aggressive tactics by oil boosters to open the remaining areas of the Alaska's coastline, present a severe threat to their traditional ways. These passages are used to underscore the human rights aspect of the controversy. This aspect seems to have gained substantial attention within environmental organizations involved in issues in the Arctic, but the question remains to what extent these organizations have addressed the conflict between the wilderness idea and the indigenous perspective, as they continue with the wilderness language. Alaskan Wilderness management is unique in that it sets out to preserve both the cultural and natural aspects of designated Wilderness lands, through a provision for subsistence cultures in ANILCA.

For AWL the concept of "sustainability" entails the maintenance of a healthy ecological system in ANWR, while at the same time the needs of the native peoples are underscored. They have a section on environmental justice where it is depicted as "the right to a safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environment for all, where "environment" is considered in its totality to include the ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, aesthetic, and economic environments."<sup>105</sup> In terms of this, AWL can be placed within the Environmental Justice discourse. The organization has incorporated a social dimension into their ecology -and aesthetic focused narrative. However, while they adhere to the environmental justice idea, the fact is still that they define themselves through "wilderness" language, without any reference to the controversy around the term. They are rooted in traditional cultural images such as the "frontier" and the idea that pristine nature is needed to uphold the national identity. This might be off-putting to indigenous peoples or others adhering to movements like Environmental justice or Ecofeminism. The problem is not the traditional nature view in itself; preservation, aesthetics and even adventure are valid motivations for protecting natural areas. Rather, the problem is that the controversial aspects of these approaches are not addressed. In order to make the environmentalist movement less fragmented, the shortcomings of the ecological, aesthetic and recreational focuses must be acknowledged.

There are thus some factors that point to renewal in environmental thinking, like the treatment of the environmental justice issue. Nevertheless, at the same time the uncritical use of ideas such as wilderness and the frontier could be holding this development back.

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<sup>105</sup> "Environmental Justice," *alaskawild.org*, Alaska Wilderness League 16 Aug. 2008 <<http://www.alaskawild.org/our-issues/environmental-justice/>>.

Similarities between The Wilderness Society and Alaska Wilderness League are that they both represent the values of traditional preservation focused organizations. AWL shows more signs of moving towards closing the gap between nature and culture than WS, but they are nevertheless not self-critical enough when it comes to their rhetoric.

#### 4.8 The Alaska Coalition

The Alaska Coalition, a network of organizations fighting to protect Alaska's wild lands, is the venue for cooperation between The Wilderness Society, Alaska Wilderness League Gwich'in Steering Committee and the Episcopal Church, USA. The coalition has a diverse range of partners to draw from, which is a great advantage when it comes to reaching out to the public. The challenge, however, is to represent these interests and values adequately. Their website contains little material that can place them within a particular value system. Much like the Wilderness Society and Alaska Wilderness League, the emphasis is on scientific facts regarding the area, and further an overview of the political and legal measures taken to bring ANWR to its current status. The "wilderness" term is used, which at best suggests that the organization has not actively taken a stand on the discussion surrounding it.<sup>106</sup> In terms of using *pathos*, there are some similarities between the Alaska Coalition and the Gwich'in Steering Committee. The portrayal of the landscape plays upon notions of sublimity:

The combination of sweeping landscapes and rich biological diversity found in the Arctic Refuge, and especially its sensitive Coastal Plain, is unmatched anywhere in the circumpolar North. The extra-ordinary diversity present on the coastal plain is a result of geography: the high mountains of the Brooks Range curve north against the Arctic Ocean and compress a full complement of Arctic and subarctic landscapes and ecosystems into one compact unit.<sup>107</sup>

In the section that deals with Alaska's arctic as America's last great wilderness, the Alaska Coalition emphasizes the importance of the area to the culture and tradition of the indigenous peoples.<sup>108</sup> The interests of the Gwich'in are well represented in the argument against drilling. What stands out in the Alaska Coalition's description of the Gwich'in culture is that it is presented as exotic and rare, mirroring the landscape, flora and fauna. The natives function as

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<sup>106</sup> "America's Last Great Wilderness," *alaskacoalition.org*, Alaska Coalition 17 Aug. 2008  
<<http://www.alaskacoalition.org/campaigns/the-refuge/americas-last-great-wilderness/>>.

<sup>107</sup> "Teaming with Life," *alaskacoalition.org*, Alaska Coalition 17 Aug. 2008  
<<http://www.alaskacoalition.org/campaigns/the-refuge/teaming-with-life/>>.

<sup>108</sup> "America's Last Great Wilderness," *alaskacoalition.org*, Alaska Coalition 17 Aug. 2008  
<<http://www.alaskacoalition.org/campaigns/the-refuge/americas-last-great-wilderness/>>.

a legitimating factor in the coalition's campaign; that is, they provide an authentic voice. They are portrayed as endangered, which is in accordance with the way the Gwich'in themselves describe their situation. Still, the likening of native peoples to endangered animals can be seen either as progressive, or repressive.

Giovanna Di Chiro's article *Nature as Community* addresses some of the perceptions and presentations of natives. As Cronon and Merchant have also discussed in the anthology *Uncommon Ground*, when the presentation of native peoples happens within a western, colonial tradition, where sublime nature stands in opposition to the fallen culture, they are often portrayed as identical with nature.<sup>109</sup> Historically this has been a justification to exploit and dominate such groups, as the colonizers did with nature. When nature is idealized, as is mostly the case with environmental organizations, it is fair to ask where that leaves the humanity of the "nature-people". However, this presupposes a nature-culture dualism. If the nature and culture categories were reintegrated, the question of humanity would be irrelevant in terms of where the humans are situated. Humanity would not depend on a cultural context. Anthropologist Stephen Feld, quoted in *Nature as Community*, believes that including human cultures in the idea of endangered species is a fruitful and important redefinition of the concept. It is also a more environmentally just approach.<sup>110</sup> In his view, then, the presentation of the Gwich'in by the Alaska Coalition has a progressive undertone.

How the presentation of the Gwich'in should be interpreted is then a bit ambiguous. The Gwich'in are using their best chance at exposing their situation to the national and international public. They rely on the PR and legal machinery of the large national organizations for keeping developers out. However, there is no question that they are being used for their status as "nature-people". How this should be interpreted, then, depends on whether the coalition can be seen as having moved beyond the traditional preservation and ecology values, and acknowledged the social and cultural dimensions of nature management.

In *Oil, Globalization and the War for the Arctic Refuge*, David M. Standlee gives an account of his visit to the Gwich'in Indians of Arctic Village. He describes their resentment towards all the outsiders invading their village. Whether they be environmentalists, wildlife experts, tourists, or representatives from the oil business, they feel invaded and want most of all to be left alone. The presence of all these outsiders is seen as a necessary evil in the battle against development. Here, the ambivalence of the natives towards the large organizations is described. This description resonates with the impression of the natives being used as an

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<sup>109</sup> Di Chiro 311.

<sup>110</sup> Di Chiro 317.

exotic peculiarity to be protected along the lines of the caribou, wolves and polar bears. The help provided from the outsiders is in some ways also a burden.

How well their interests would be taken care of in the event that the area received Wilderness protection is another interesting matter. In chapter one I discussed the opposing interests of the Gwich'in and traditional preservationists. One may ask how well this internal conflict has been dealt with. People living in Wilderness designated areas often have problems with restrictions on their lifestyles. Although ANILCA contains provisions for integrating subsistence lifestyles into Wilderness management, there are some practical obstacles to be dealt with. The intention of the law was to reconnect the cultural and natural landscapes, and as such it marks a different approach to Wilderness management in Alaska than in the lower 48 states.<sup>111</sup> Legal ambiguities in ANILCA, which provides the legislative framework for protecting both wilderness areas and subsistence living, are not helping to mediate between the different interests. One such complication has been difficulties obtaining permits for modern vehicles to access these remote places. Only certain types of motorized vehicles are allowed, and these may not be the most practical in all cases. As a result there are ongoing conflicts between people living in Wilderness areas and the government agencies managing them.<sup>112</sup> Issues pertaining to the “wilderness” idea and land management in Wilderness areas are thus remain unresolved.

#### **4.9 An Evaluation of the Alaska Coalition**

The analysis of some key interest parties of the coalition has looked into where they stand on issues as “wilderness” and “sustainability”. A central question is how well they have managed to create a platform they can unite on. How well are the different value systems represented? Moreover, how, if at all, do they stand apart from other environmental projects?

First of all it is important to note that a great deal of national, regional and local organizations involved in environmental work are represented in the coalition. This is a large and complex network comprised of actors with an environmental agenda currently working within the USA. What sets the coalition apart is how they have managed to reach out to people and organizations not traditionally directly involved in environmental issues.

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<sup>111</sup> Robert L. Arnberger, *Living Cultures-Living Parks in Alaska: Considering the Reconnection of Native Peoples to Their Cultural Landscapes in Parks and Protected Areas*. USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-27, 2003, 7 Oct. 2008 <[http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs\\_p027/rmrs\\_p027\\_094\\_098.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p027/rmrs_p027_094_098.pdf)>.

<sup>112</sup> Randy J. Tanner, *Subsistence, Inholdings, and ANILCA: The Complexity of Wilderness Stewardship in Alaska*, *International Journal of Wilderness*, August 2004, Volume 10, Number 2, 7 Oct. 2008 <[http://www.wilderness.net/library/documents/IJWAug04\\_Tanner.pdf](http://www.wilderness.net/library/documents/IJWAug04_Tanner.pdf)>.

Consequently, the very broadening of the value specter helps the coalition attract more supporters. Due to the focus and work of the coalition, the large environmental organizations have the steering power. The outreach to other interest groups such as religious denominations and native groups are probably tactical, which suggests that it is politically motivated organization rather than a deeply rooted social movement where different value systems have converged. Still, as we have seen in the case of the Alaska Wilderness League, there are signs that the organization has incorporated some environmental justice viewpoints. This can be interpreted as a step toward the “new environmentalism”, as the social and cultural aspects have been acknowledged.

The use of the Gwich'in for their status as “nature-people” could moreover be in accordance with this trend. According to Stephen Feld this is not de-humanizing, but rather a redefinition of nature by recognizing the cultural component. To this effect, by including the Gwich'in as an endangered culture to be protected along with the rest of the ecosystem, the Alaska Coalition could be seen as enforcing the “new environmentalism” agenda. If this is true, then they have taken a step forward from the traditional preservation and wildlife management agendas.

Judging from the accounts Standlea gives of his interviews with the Gwich'in, the collaboration with the environmental movements is seen as a necessary evil to stop development. His perception is that they are seen as almost as intrusive as the oil industry, and that they are very distant value wise. The discourse analysis based on material from their websites does not reveal the same distance between the Gwich'in and the large organization The Wilderness Society. The Gwich'in have no outspoken objection to the traditional “wilderness” term. On the contrary, they have on one occasion used it themselves to depict their sacred landscape. Here it is important to consider that the somewhat meager text material from the Gwich'in website provides a much more limited source pool than Standlea's interviews. Nevertheless, it is interesting to speculate why the Gwich'in would use the “wilderness” term. Perhaps the author of the text is not entirely representative of the village, i.e. belongs to the young generation and is perhaps college educated. A bleaker explanation could be that the Gwich'in culture and identity is disappearing. It may be waning as the outside world becomes harder and harder to keep at a distance. If they are in fact adopting the “wilderness” term as it has been used by environmentalists, are they succumbing to what many indigenous and third-world representatives consider western cultural imperialism? The question may then be asked whether they are inadvertently eradicating their own identity by being involved in this collaboration.

Despite my concerns for the most vulnerable member of the coalition, the Gwich'in, much positive can be said about the cooperation. They seem to have a reasonably united front, although they refrain from discussing potentially divisive subjects. Judging from the website material, the "wilderness" issue does not seem to produce much discord. There is much more distance between the coalition and the "outside" perspective of the Kaktovik Inupiats. When it comes to "sustainability" the Gwich'in and Episcopalian Church focus mostly on the human component in nature management. The Wilderness Society and the Alaska Wilderness League are more bound by the preservationist tradition, and thus focus on the ecology and aesthetics. Nevertheless, they seem to be opening up to the environmental justice idea. The Kaktovik Inupiats naturally belong with the Gwich'in and Episcopalians on this issue.

As for the question why the coalition has been successful to this date, the cooperation with such a variety of interest organizations has resulted in language that differs from pure environmental language. Environmental justice and spirituality/religion also play a part of their message. This has enabled the coalition to obtain support from a wider segment of the population. As "environmentalist" is considered a burdensome or even pejorative term by some, the involvement of religious, sporting or labor interests might convince them to support the cause. In combination with the frequently used images of wilderness and frontier, this could be an explanation for the success. The refuge and the rest of wild Alaska represent possibilities, economic for some and spiritual for others.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

### 5.1 The Evaluation Process

The success of the Alaska Coalition rested on the separate responses of two parties with distinct interests in the developing ANWR situation. Chapter two explored the historical events that led to the involvement of both preservationists and Native Americans in this controversy. Although having different points of departure, the Gwich'in Indians and a large body of environmental groups joined efforts to halt oil drilling in ANWR. The differences and conflicts likely continue to exist within the coalition, as there is evidence to support the resentment of the wilderness idea by indigenous peoples. While the website of the Gwich'in Steering Committee does not express any such position, interviews with the Gwich'in conducted by David M. Standlee suggests that there are conflicting views on nature management between the preservationists and the Gwich'in. Moreover, several representatives of indigenous populations around the world have expressed a critical view of the wilderness idea. At bottom the Gwich'in Indians do not and cannot adhere to a wilderness idea where humans are not included.

The discourses and value systems discussed in chapter three underscore the fragmentation of the American environmental movement by exploring a number of conflicting interests of which it is comprised. This further highlights the issue of the different positions of the preservationist organizations and the Gwich'in Indians within the Alaska Coalition. While on the surface there is little evidence that suggests any major disagreement between these parties, there is at the same time no visible solution to the underlying conflict in worldviews. Actually, the website of the Gwich'in Steering Committee promotes some views more in tune with a preservationist approach than the "indigenous perspective". Some possible explanations for this were presented in chapter four. In short, this discovery led me to think about the future chances of this small and tradition-bound culture caught in the middle of a top-level political battle, with the ground literally thawing underneath them.

The websites of the selected organizations were analyzed in chapter four, primarily through discourse analysis, but with some focus on rhetorical tools as well. Many of the findings resonated with the different ideas (or worldviews) that characterize environmental discourse as presented in chapter three. The Gwich'in website was a notable exception. This group did not show any significant problem with the wilderness idea in their writing. This point aside, different coalition members represented distinct discourses as identified in



Brulle's conceptual framework. The presentation of environmental discourses in his book gave me a better understanding of why the American environmental movement has not been able to affect the political course of the country in any real way for a long time.

Environmentalism needs to become a democratic project again, which entails a pluralist environmental discourse where the worldviews of as many demographic groups as possible are represented. As the framework is a useful tool to understand and describe the dynamic of the American environmentalist movement, I found it could also be successfully applied to the understanding of the Alaska Coalition.

## **5.2 The Role of the Indigenous Peoples**

The collaboration among a large variety of organizations appears to be central to the success of the coalition. This has enabled it to mobilize popular support from a larger percentage of the population, as they have more arguments to draw on. The range of value systems that exist within the coalition enables it to appeal to demographic groups not normally inclined to support environmentalist causes. As chapter two reveals, the coalition has operated within several methods. The legislative approach is one important part of their work; this is covered by the large, corporate-structured organizations such as the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, Trustees for Alaska, and so forth. The political power these organizations possess contributes to stall attempts to push legislative bills to open up ANWR.

The Gwich'in Indians play a crucial role in educating people on the valuable life in ANWR. Their perspective adds to the scientific facts that are presented for preserving the area. They represent the human face of Alaskan nature, and convey a deeper and more personal meaning to the message the coalition is presenting. Perhaps through the Gwich'in perspective on ANWR, some people can gain a new outlook on environmentalism, where the cultural component is integrated in an understanding of nature. There is possibility of a different relationship to nature than that which has developed in the industrialized world.

Still, idealizing indigenous peoples like the Gwich'in when it comes to nature and wildlife management is problematic. Nature management through the philosophy of subsistence cultures like the Gwich'in is no guarantee for ecological stability. Judging by the state of many of the world's ecosystems, allowances should be made for sometimes excluding human activity in natural areas, especially since most cultures have a less conscious relationship to their natural surroundings than the Gwich'in.

Thus while my research for this thesis has revealed a need for preserving cultural continuity among the Gwich'in Indians and the Kaktovik Inupiats- indigenous groups who understand the importance of ecosystem balance, of not consuming more resources than necessary and of a good attitude towards nature management- the disregard for the agenda of the preservationists is a shortcoming among these cultures. From a global viewpoint in particular, there is unequivocally need for natural areas where human activity is severely limited. The scale and speed with which species extinction and ecological depletion is happening, means that sometimes the human focus needs to be secondary. As Brulle maintains, the socially and culturally focused environmental discourses tend to downplay the pure ecological focus. The Environmental Justice discourse, under which the Gwich'in Indians can be considered to fall, has this weakness.

### **5.3 The Role of Religion and Spirituality**

The Episcopalian Church appears to have joined the cause to support the human rights of the Gwich'in Indians, with whom they have had a connection for a long time. They help raise questions regarding the human value at stake in this controversy. Although Ecotheology promotes stewardship of both nature and human cultures, there is a belief at the core of the theological position that humans are created above and apart from the rest of nature. While this belief may be fundamentally different from the worldviews of other environmental traditions, I do not think it should stand in the way of an alliance between religious communities such as the Episcopalian Church and environmental organizations with a scientific or even ecocentric approach. Common ground for Ecotheology and the Preservation discourse is the aesthetic importance of nature. The importance of sublimity in the preservationist tradition has a religious component. A key figure in advocating aesthetic nature experiences, John Muir used nature for connecting with God. The most persuasive argument for including religious dimensions, in my opinion, is that in order for the environmental cause to really gain ground within the world community, it should dislodge itself from the western secular and liberal tradition. Although I adhere to this belief system myself, I understand that it can be very off-putting and alien to many cultural traditions. As I see it, one essential reason for promoting a multidimensional environmental discourse is to ensure that people can bring their own background to the cause. I think the widening of the movement is maybe the most pressing issue in to achieve results fast enough to avert the worst.

## **5.4 The Progressive Elements of the Wilderness Society and Alaska Wilderness League**

The analysis of the Alaska Coalition in chapter four revealed a slight movement towards the environmental justice position within Alaska Wilderness League. There seemed to be an awareness of the importance of social and cultural dimensions in environmentalism in their writing. This deduction was based upon the inclusion of the indigenous positions of both the Gwich'in Indians and the Kaktovik Inupiats. The human rights issue was presented as central to the ANWR situation.

Albeit there are signs of progression among the preservation organizations, as seen in the case of AWL, there are still many that point to a continued preservation approach. Both Alaska Wilderness League and the Wilderness Society use the “wilderness” term rather uncritically. There is no recognition of the problematic aspects of the term despite the numerous criticisms made against it during the last decades. The Wilderness Society, in particular, does not seem to have modified their use of the term. They even quote the controversial Wilderness Act of 1964, where Wilderness is defined through exclusion of humans. As I said in chapter four, this organization is founded on Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic, which does not in principle exclude humans from wilderness. Rather, Leopold's great contribution to the development of American environmentalism was the holistic approach to environmentalism, where humans were acknowledged as integral to the world's ecosystems. The Land Ethic further condones activity that enables stability and sustainability of these ecosystems, regardless of human presence. The goal is to sustain a healthy balance in the world's ecosystems, not to exclude culture from nature on mere principle.

Thus, the website material of the Wilderness Society reads as slightly conflicted. On the one hand they adhere to the Leopoldian tradition that includes humans in ecosystems. On the other hand they show their roots in the preservation discourse by using the traditional wilderness language that connotes the exclusion of humans on aesthetic grounds. This is precisely the part of the wilderness idea that has sparked the most controversy. This discovery gives me reason to believe that the different organizations present in the Alaska Coalition remain to a large extent fragmented, although there are some signs of progress.

## 5.5 Towards a New Environmentalism?

The coalition members that have been analysed in this thesis have individual and separate agendas when it comes to the ANWR controversy. The key incentive for the Gwich'in Indians is the continued existence of their culture and traditions. To achieve this goal there is a need to protect the Porcupine caribou by halting development of their calving grounds and migration routes. The threat of global warming tops the invasive expansions of the oil industry into Alaska. The rapidly changing ecosystems of the Arctic may contribute to the demise of their culture. Speaking up against the oil industry, which is closely tied to the climate issue, is thus the best chance they have at salvaging their subsistence culture.

The preservation organizations Wilderness Society and Alaska Wilderness League seek to expand the protection of Wilderness areas. The American Arctic is unique in its size and untrammelledness. As such it has a chance at being a sanctuary for the arctic ecosystems as well as providing possibilities for human aesthetic experiences. These organizations have to some extent acknowledged the peril of the indigenous cultures involved in this case; however their objective is first and foremost to look after the natural areas.

The Episcopalian Church's primary concern is the troubles of the Gwich'in people. This underscores the importance of the human rights within their worldview. The Church acknowledges and emphasizes the importance of being better stewards for the planet than is currently the case, however their website reads primarily as a support for the Gwich'in.

As I have said repeatedly, all these agendas are important. Nevertheless, the common agenda of the coalition is, at least on some level, fragmented. Up to a point, this is inevitable considering the number and variety of organizations involved. Still, a "new environmentalism" movement should presumably be in synch in more areas than merely sharing a common enemy. The Alaska Coalition does not appear to fall under such a description; I have shown some common ground in terms of the notion of the sublime, and acknowledgement of the cultural dimension of nature. The coalition has thus seemingly been through a learning process. The downside is that this process is probably not sufficiently developed to label the Alaska Coalition a full blown "new environmentalism" project.

"New environmentalism" can in some important respects be placed within the "metadiscourse" concept advocated by Brulle. The incorporation of social and cultural dimensions in an environmental discourse is in accordance with Brulle's expansive and inclusive idea of a "metadiscourse". Environmental historians Mark Dowie and Robert Gottlieb, in advocating the need for a "new environmentalism", have mainly focused on the shortcomings of mainstream environment organizations, predominately based in the

Preservation or Reform Environmentalism discourses. Here, the lack of social and cultural focus is described as a significant contributor to the failure of the environmental movement. With “new environmentalism” the focus has been expanded to include these dimensions, but it is uncertain to what extent it embraces the “old” environmentalism, from which it has distanced itself. If one were to adhere to Brulle’s “metadiscourse” model, distancing oneself from the old values would be a mistake. The strengths and shortcomings of each environmental discourse would have to be weighed carefully, and a socially focused environmentalism would in this case not be regarded as superior to an ecocentric approach. In this respect I see the “metadiscourse” model as more useful to build a strong and coherent environmental movement.

The fragmentation seen in the discourse of the Alaska Coalition can be seen as a result of a situation where the different agents still operate too much within their own value systems. While there has been some movement towards the worldviews of other coalition members, the bottom line seems to be that there is no significant convergence of values. The outreach to the Gwich’in Indians by the Episcopalian Church does not represent a new direction; it is based on common history and religious values. Their involvement in the environmental effort can be seen as a continuation of an anthropocentric belief system where humans are at the center of focus. The Wilderness Society and Alaska Wilderness League show varying degrees of involvement in the Native American cause. They have to a certain extent understood the importance of acknowledging the human dimension of environmentalism; however the websites show contradictions within these organizations. The uncritical use of wilderness language implies strong roots in the preservation tradition at the cost of a stronger foundation for an alliance across worldviews.

In sum, the extent of the learning processes that have transpired among these discourses does not seem to be sufficient to label the coalition as a cohesive “new environmentalism” movement. The Alaska Coalition website focuses on the particular cases pertaining to Alaska, not on ideological foundations or value systems. In fact, important value based subjects, such as the wilderness question, are left out. This supports the impression that the coalition is more based on case subjects rather than a common ideological drive. To the extent that it has moved beyond traditional environmentalism, it is by taking small steps to incorporating ecology, culture, aesthetics, and social factors into one agenda. This is important as it connects the issues for the public, and opens up for a debate which takes place across the traditional categories of nature and culture.

While I remain sceptical that the Alaska Coalition represents a truly new direction for the environmental movement, it has to be said that I am careful not to dismiss their efforts at coalition-and discourse building. Whatever can be done to move in the direction of creating a more multidimensional environmental discourse is valuable. The problem is that at the speed and scale this development is taking place, it is unlikely that an ecological crisis can be averted. Ultimately, with a greater sense of urgency upon the world, progress can hopefully be seen. As this moment, this is not really the case.

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