Whit Fosburgh  
*President & CEO*

June 15, 2012

Secretary Ken Salazar  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240


Dear Secretary Salazar:

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership appreciates this opportunity to comment on the draft Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP) for the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (Reserve). The TRCP is a coalition of sportsmen conservationists that advocate public policies to ensure quality hunting and fishing opportunities for all Americans.

The Reserve contains unique and valuable habitat for wildlife populations important to all Americans. Millions of migratory birds that use the area for nesting, molting and staging migrate throughout much of the United States and winter in nearly every state. The habitat provided by the Reserve supports abundant migratory bird populations that enable quality waterfowl hunting opportunities throughout the U.S.

Teshekpuk Lake and the surrounding wetlands sustain valuable waterfowl habitat. The high-density nesting habitat surrounding Teshekpuk Lake attracts a great diversity and abundance of waterfowl each summer to complete critical life stages. These species, especially important to sportsmen, include Northern Pintail, Long-Tailed Duck, Greater White-Fronted Goose, Canada Goose, Lesser Snow Goose, Tundra Swan, and Pacific Black Brant. This habitat is recognized as a globally-significant Important Bird Area with special significance for several species of molting geese that migrate to the Teshekpuk Lake area from other parts of Alaska, western Canada and Siberia. As much as 30 percent of the entire Pacific Brant population relies upon the Teshekpuk Lake molting area.

The remoteness of the Reserve not only provides outstanding breeding conditions for a wide range of wildlife species but a unique recreational experience for those that visit the area to hunt and fish. In addition to waterfowl habitat, the area provides crucial habitat for caribou. The Utukok River Uplands in particular provide key habitat for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, the largest in Alaska and currently estimated at 348,000 animals.
The TRCP supports the responsible development of oil and gas resources in appropriate areas. The TRCP’s “Facts for Fish and Wildlife” (http://www.trcp.org/assets/pdf/FACTSfor_web.pdf) provide guidance for responsible energy development that upholds our nation’s shared natural resources and unique outdoor legacy. Following the FACTS approach to energy development on the Reserve, we believe that the unique portions of the Reserve that provide outstanding wildlife values should be conserved. The Teshekpuk Lake and Utukok River Uplands are such areas that deserve protection.

The IAP identifies “Alternative B” as the management approach that best protects the critical wildlife habitat and other outstanding surface values in the Reserve. Alternative B protects the most important habitat in the Reserve while sacrificing little in terms of oil production. In particular, we note that only Alternative B makes the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area – the premier Special Area in the Reserve - unavailable for leasing.

In recognition of the unique fish and wildlife values designated as Special Areas we urge you to select Alternative B to ensure a balanced management strategy that allows responsible energy development while conserving the unique wildlife values of the Reserve.

Sincerely,

Whit Fosburgh
President and CEO