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March 28, 2013

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, Record of Decision

Dear Secretary Salazar:

We are writing to express our appreciation for signing the Record of Decision for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan. This first-ever comprehensive management plan for the Reserve establishes an important balance between resource extraction and the need for protection of natural resources.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954. We have over 5500 individual members and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing whitewater paddlers across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. As a conservation-oriented paddling organization, American Whitewater has an interest in the uniquely spectacular backcountry paddling opportunities that Alaska offers including those on the Colville and Utukok rivers and their tributaries. Flowing through the Reserve, the Colville River drains a remote region north of the Brooks Range. River travelers can float more than 300 miles of river, one of North America's longest Arctic river trips.

We are particularly pleased to see language in the final Record of Decision that commits the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to protect the free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values of the rivers and river segments identified as eligible for wild and scenic designation. As stated in the Decision, "this plan decision does not recommend these rivers for Wild and Scenic River designation, but by committing the BLM to protect the rivers, it preserves Congress's option to pursue Wild and Scenic River designation in the future."

While the plan stops short of a formal recommendation for Wild and Scenic designation, the Decision makes it clear that the BLM must maintain a commitment to protection of the rivers that flow through this incredible landscape. The benefits of this action will be enjoyed by those who journey to this globally significant landscape to paddle the rivers as well as those who call it home and depend on the natural resources of the river corridor for subsistence. We are pleased with your decision to balance resource extraction with resource protection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas O'Keefe'.

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

cc:

Neil Kornze, Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management
Bud Cribley, Alaska State Director, Bureau of Land Management
David Hayes, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior