

ALASKA COALITION



'To Preserve Alaska's National Interest Wildlands'
September 7, 1989

Mr. Lenny Kohm
P.O. Box 3571
Boone, NC 28607

Dear Lenny,

I wanted to express appreciation from the Alaska Coalition for your grassroots educational efforts for the Arctic Refuge and the importance of the new trip you now have planned.

I must admit I was skeptical at first at the idea that a couple of people showing slides in church basements could compete with the sophisticated multi-pronged PR campaigns launched by a half dozen of the world's largest oil companies. But I've become a believer since I've seen the results: inspired conservationists who rededicate themselves to working on behalf of a place so far away that they may never see it; new people attracted to the cause who before were too busy to realize how important their help can be; friendly cooperation, respect, and joint success with our friends and allies of the Gwich'in people; interest and understanding by the local media in dozens of small cities where they came to realize why an internationally important conservation resource hinges on the voices of their locality; and finally, members of Congress and their staffs, who by your efforts directly or indirectly, take time to learn more about the Arctic and its peoples. When they will listen, we have half the battle won.

Clearly, I underestimated the quality of your presentation, your ability to blend cultural issues and conservation, and your dogged willingness to do presentations, day after day, mile after mile. You can match the oil companies because you don't sleep. While successfully defending the Arctic Refuge demands more effort by more people than any one person could name, I feel your effort has been the single most effective grassroots education project.

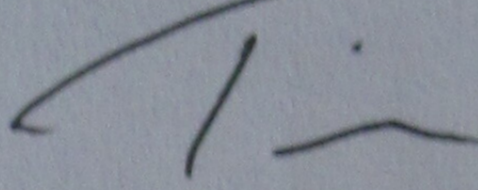
As we discussed last month, the "oil patch" states: Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana; and the Deep South: Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas are the toughest challenge of all. This is the strongest region for those who would develop the Arctic; it is our weakest. But if the area is to be protected, we will have to make headway here or fail.

It is not that there are no sympathetic individuals out there willing to learn and to lead; there are. But because of the oil companies' location and economic clout, they have a big head start on us. Some discouraged conservationists have turned away from Alaska because it seems too tough. And without them, thousands of others will never know about it.

The Exxon Valdez disaster has given us a political pause and the opportunity to use the time in educational efforts. Furthermore, it has brought under question some claims by the oil companies that pollution is a thing of the past in Alaska. Never will you have a more receptive audience. And if this opportunity to educate and inspire slips away, we will soon be on the defensive elsewhere.

That is why your efforts are so valuable, so important at this time, and so appreciated. Thanks from those all across the country working to save America's wildest wilderness. Please let us know when we can help you.

Sincerely,



Tim Mahoney
Chairman