

September 17, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Leader Jeffries:

Thank you for your service to all Americans. We, the undersigned organizations, write to bring your attention to an amendment added by the Senate Armed Services Committee to the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act that could aid our adversaries and is of great concern to fish and wildlife professionals, conservation organizations, and hunters and anglers. **We urge you to reject the Ambler Road amendment in the final NDAA.**

Alaska's Brooks Range is our nation's most wild and remote hunting and fishing grounds. The fish and wildlife resources in this vast region—including one of the largest remaining caribou herds in North America and world-renowned sheefish fisheries, known as "tarpon of the north"—support 66 rural communities as well as a collective of guides, outfitters, transporters, air taxi services, and other small businesses.

The proposed Ambler Industrial Road—approximately the width of Ohio—would bisect the Western Arctic Caribou Herd's migratory habitat and winter range. Habitat fragmentation would likely impact this herd that is already experiencing a population decline. This could result in fewer hunting opportunities and elevated conflicts between the various user groups that rely on this important wildlife resource. The industrial corridor would also result in more than 2,900 stream culverts that could degrade fish habitat and block fish passage. The project would cross 11 major rivers, diminishing the region's recreation and tourism economy and potentially threatening fisheries that are essential for dozens of rural communities.

More than 14,000 hunters and anglers are on the record supporting the Bureau of Land Management's recent decision to deny the right-of-way permit to build the road across BLM lands.

The NDAA is no place for a controversial provision that would force the Interior Department to permit the Ambler Road. Here's why:

1. ***The Ambler industrial mining road would not strengthen U.S. supply chains of critical minerals, but it could strengthen the supply chains of our adversaries.*** The road would facilitate the sale of Alaska's mineral resources to foreign processors, including China, an adversary to the United States. The most abundant minerals in the Ambler District are copper, zinc, and lead; only zinc is currently classified as a critical mineral. Based on mining industry reports, none of these mineral concentrates are intended to be processed in the U.S. The one feasibility study conducted within

the Ambler District (commissioned on behalf of Trilogy Metals for the “Arctic” deposit) made it clear that, “the significance of the Chinese market for concentrate cannot be understated.”

2. ***Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) does not guarantee the road.*** The Ambler Road language in ANILCA Section 201(4) refers only to the portion of the road that crosses Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. The Ambler amendment would bypass the law in ways that were not contemplated by Congress when it passed ANILCA: Congress did not intend for Section 201(4) to override Section 810, which prioritizes subsistence uses and resources in permitting projects, including the Ambler Road. Congress did not intend for ANILCA Section 201(4) to override Title XI, which requires a joint permitting process for any transportation system through a conservation system unit. Congress was aware in passing ANILCA that other agencies would be involved in any permitting process to allow surface transportation across Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and other public lands.
3. ***The Ambler Road amendment directly contradicts the will of rural Alaskans and the hunt-fish community.*** The proposed Ambler Road is opposed by [dozens of leading outdoor brands, hunt-fish organizations, and Alaska-based small businesses](#). Within the Northwest Arctic region, opposition to the Ambler Road outweighs support. A plurality of NANA Regional Corporation shareholders oppose the project, and more than 85 Alaska Native tribes and First Nations have passed or signed onto resolutions against the Ambler Road. During the BLM’s most recent national comment in Fall 2023, 82 percent of public testimony at a dozen in-person hearings across Alaska opposed the Ambler Road. That sentiment was echoed nationally: More than 135,000 Americans—including many Alaskans—spoke out against the proposed Ambler Road within the last year.

If the Ambler Road provision is included in the final NDAA, it would upend the robust public process, ignore scientific review, and undermine the future that many rural residents want for their communities and families. It could also undermine the national interests of the United States.

We urge you to ensure that the Ambler Road amendment is not included in the final NDAA.

Sincerely,

ALASKA-BASED BUSINESSES

Arctic Fishing Adventures
Arctic Pro Shop
Coyote Air
North River Air
Northern Sky Expeditions
Pristine Ventures
Remote Waters

HUNT-FISH BRANDS

Alpacka Raft
Argali
Fishpond

Fly Fisherman magazine
Fly Water Travel
Iron Will Outfitters
KIFARU
MeatEater
Redington
RIO Products
Sage Fly Fishing
Vortex Optics

CONSERVATION GROUPS, TRADE ORGANIZATIONS, AND COALITIONS

American Fly Fishing Trade Association
Angler Action Foundation
Archery Trade Association
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Fly Fishers International
Hunters & Anglers for the Brooks Range
National Deer Association
National Wildlife Federation
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Falconers Association
North American Grouse Partnership
Orion: The Hunter's Institute
Outdoor Industry Association
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Whitetails Unlimited

CC: Senator Jack Reed
Senator Roger Wicker
Senator Joe Manchin
Senator John Barrasso
Representative Mike Rogers
Representative Adam Smith
Representative Bruce Westerman
Representative Raul Grijalva