

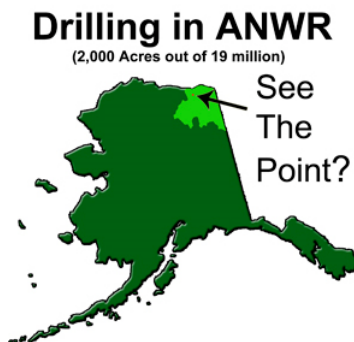
Ecologic

-the green hornet

Drill Now?

“Drill baby drill” and “we can’t drill our way out of this” seem to be two opposing views on a pretty hot topic for this upcoming election. The Republican National Convention is where the first refrain was voiced, time and again and the second verse is from the environmentalists’ point of view, but not necessarily the Democrat position. The Democrat candidate for president has indicated, at least on one occasion, that he is not necessarily opposed to drilling but again, opinions on the subject may not absolutely follow party lines.

The drilling could refer to anywhere in the US but mostly it seems that it’s in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR Province), which is located in the north east tip of Alaska amongst the tundra community. The proposed development site represents about 3.13 square miles and Alaska (at least the governor) doesn’t seem to mind the prospect of drilling.



If you can’t see the point on the image, you aren’t trying hard enough or you have poor eyesight, or maybe the fact that you can’t see the point, is the point.

The reason for supporting the drilling is almost exclusively to realize price relief and hopefully lessen our dependency on foreign oil.

The arguments against drilling seem to hinge around three concerns:

1. we would be destroying the land in our drilling efforts
2. this is paradoxically a solution with short term benefits that would take several years to realize those benefits
3. drilling and using more oil just exacerbates the GHG (green house gas, CO₂ in this case) emission problem

Destroying the land could be considered an aesthetic opinion but it seems there were official promises made where that land wouldn’t be developed, I think. The short term benefit may relate to the fact that many believe the oil market prices are manipulated and

as alternatives loom on the horizon, current high prices magically lower. I guess it's been determined that the ANWR fields wouldn't outlast the OPEC fields.

The CO₂ emission issue may be the philosophical underpinning of the entire subject. Apparently the consortium of scientists that believe global warming is a fact, further believe that it is 90% probable that it is human induced. Of course the projections of the effects of global warming are catastrophic so it is a crisis in the making. Crises demand swift and extreme reaction, so the time to stop using fossil fuels is now. It would make sense to not uncover more oil if the endgame is to reduce its use. In the meantime, we'd have a tough time dealing with high oil prices, if there is no relief in sight due to not drilling for our own oil. However, this condition would provide the necessary impetus to get serious about the development of alternate sources of fuel; could it be considered an artificial stress where the ends would justify the means?

Then there is the Paris Hilton proposed energy policy (yes really, look it up on YouTube), of drilling to help us out in the short term while we develop the alternate energy source. It's still drilling but there's a compromising element because it does address a longer term plan.

But that won't work. We would just get complacent after the oil started to flow; prices would go down and we would abandon the alternate energy projects like we've done in the past. So we may as well have our crisis now so that we can get focused and right to work. And there really is merit to that line of thinking if all those things related to global warming are correct. And again, as human nature goes, it seems we need a crisis in order to get anything done.

So in essence, lowering fuel costs by tapping local oil reservoirs doesn't address the environmental impact of burning fossil fuels. In fact, if global warming is real and higher levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere is causing it and man burning fossil fuels is responsible for that, then in order to save the planet, the higher the fuel costs, the better. So we may be able to drill our way out of price pressures temporarily but it won't do the planet any favors.

Also, in order to really do something meaningful, it seems like there would be a need for global cooperation. It was just recently announced that the US has not only taken a backseat with Olympic gold medal accumulations, we've also lost our standing, as the world's number one polluter, to China. And it seems that China's just one of the countries that is coming on-line, industrially; they're just the biggest. So who is going to tell them that they can't do that?

Unfortunately, it looks like the reality of the situation is that we're really going to have to suck the earth dry of oil before we stop using it and we'll end up like so many poached eggs in the process. On the other hand, maybe the 10% part of the scientists' statistical assessment ends up being correct and we're cooked no matter what we do. So what's the answer? Who knows; I guess we'd better keep recycling in the meantime and maybe a hybrid would help with gas prices too, that is if you can afford to buy the hybrid.