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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What We Could Gain in Alaska

People who love nature, as Jonathan Waterman clearly does ["What We Would Lose in Alaska," op-ed, June 6], harm their cause when they get key numbers wrong.

Mr. Waterman noted that Americans consume about 7 billion barrels of oil a year. Then he said that 1 million barrels a day of new Alaskan oil would represent only a "0.5 percent annual increase in domestic supply." Our domestic production is just over 9 million barrels a day; the increase therefore would be more than 10 percent. Moreover, Mr. Waterman offered his erroneous 0.5 percent figure to refute the argument that Alaskan oil would make the United States "less dependent on oil imports." The imports that concern everyone are those from the Persian Gulf. The United States imports about 2.5 million barrels of Persian Gulf oil a day, so new Alaskan oil would cut those imports by 40 percent. If the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge contains as much as 16 billion barrels of oil, as Mr. Waterman acknowledged it might, that would be enough to cover 100 percent of current Persian Gulf imports for the next 18 years.

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