

FILM MAKER AND ALASKA NATIVE TO SPEAK ABOUT ARCTIC DRILLING

Written by test2
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CLINTON, IOWA (February 3, 2005) – Jeff Barrie, producer of “Arctic Quest: A Search for Truth” and cross-country cyclist, will speak on Tuesday, Feb. 8 at noon in Collis Hall (Durgin Educational Center) at The Franciscan University of the Prairies in Clinton. Barrie’s appearance in Clinton is being sponsored by the Alaska Coalition of Iowa.

In Barrie’s words, “We’re being told that the Arctic Refuge is a solution to our dependence on foreign oil, but in fact it’s merely a speculative six month supply of oil that won’t be available for ten years and will require destroying one of our nation’s last truly great wilderness areas.”

The 100-mile stretch of arctic coastal plain in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the only fragment of the United States’ total 1,100-mile arctic coastline not already open to oil and gas development. Now, oil industry officials are pushing for access to this fragile heartland of this last complete eco-system in North America. According to the United States Geological Survey, the most likely amount of oil to be found under the Arctic Refuge is roughly the same amount that the United States consumes in six months. Even at peak production, government experts estimate that the U.S. will still need to import a whopping two-thirds of all of its oil. Were oil and gas development to occur, the U.S. Department of Interior estimates up to a 40% loss (70,000 animals) to the Porcupine Caribou herd (129,000 animals).

“It is puzzling that people and the government would be willing to sacrifice a renewable resource, such as the herd, and the lives of the Gwich’in Indian people, who depend upon it, for merely the possibility of the short term benefits we could gain by extracting a small amount of petroleum, a non-renewable resource,” Barrie said.

Barrie will be joined on this two-week tour of Nebraska and Iowa by Robert Thompson, an Inupiat Eskimo, who is a wilderness guide, specializing in winter excursions, river rafting, and kayaking in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He and Subhankar Banerjee traveled 4,000 miles within the refuge, over the course of 14 months in 2001 and 2002, documenting the area and its inhabitants through each change of season. Thompson and his wife, Jane Akootchook Thompson, live in Kaktovik, Alaska.

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In his public presentations, Thompson shares his thoughtful views on the environment, development, and his worries about global warming.

During the past three years, despite tremendous pressure from special interests, a bi-partisan majority in the US Senate has twice voted with the will of the American people and rejected proposals to allow drilling in the calving grounds of the Arctic Refuge.

Cindy Shogan, executive director of the Alaska Wilderness League said, “ 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 a dozen of the world’s largest oil companies. But I’ve become a believer since I’ve seen the results.”

For more information about the program that is free and open to the public, please contact David Sharkey, Coordinator of Student Activities, at 563-242-4023, ext. 3511.

The Alaska Wilderness League has been helping to bring the message of protection for our Arctic costal plain all over the country during the past 11 years, and Jeff Barrie and Robert Thompson will be in Clinton on Tuesday, Feb. 8 and will be available for in-person or phone interviews by members of the press at various times during the period of January 31 through February 11.

For further information contact: Scott Hed, Alaska Coalition, 605-336-6738 Jeff Barrie, Last Great Wilderness Project, 615-438-5060.

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