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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Colorado West Slope and Four Corners Area Outdoor Gear Manufacturers Travel to Washington D.C. to Urge Senator Gardner to Protect America's Arctic Refuge**

*Senate Budget vote likely this week*

Durango, Colorado: Business owners and directors from Colorado-based outdoor gear manufacturers Seek Outside, based in Grand Junction, and Alpaca Raft, based in Mancos, will be visiting Representative Scott Tipton and Senators Bennet and Gardner early this week in Washington D.C. Both companies signed onto a letter this summer with over [100 Colorado outdoor businesses](#) asking Senator Gardner to preserve and protect America's National Arctic Wildlife Refuge by not allowing any congressional or executive order to drill for fossil fuels in the Arctic Refuge.

Drilling in the Arctic Refuge was included in the administration, house and senate fiscal year 2018 budgets. Senator Gardner, who sits on the Senate Budget Committee, voted before the Senate's Columbus Day recess to move forward with a budget that includes drilling in the Arctic Refuge. Senator Gardner is a key vote this week as the full senate will likely vote on the budget that passed out of committee by party line vote.

Protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been supported by Democrats and Republicans for decades, and the most recent inclusion of drilling the Refuge is the most aggressive attempt to open the Refuge in many decades. Far from meeting the budget target of \$1 to \$1.8 billion that proponents claim drilling could yield, a [recent analysis](#) found that "offering oil and gas leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is likely to yield no more than \$37.5 million in revenue for the U.S. Treasury over the next 10 years...."

As Kevin Timm, owner of Seek Outside said, "Having had the privilege of exploring the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, our company has first-hand experience as to why this unique wilderness must be protected. We witnessed dramatic mountains, wild rivers, and important Native Alaskan cultural sites. It offers a vast, rugged wilderness experience that simply is not available anywhere else. Sneaking the opening of the Refuge into the complicated budget process is unnecessary and unwarranted. We hope Senator Gardner listens to the over 100 Colorado outdoor businesses who want him to protect America's Arctic Refuge for future generations. We're traveling to D.C. this week to make sure he knows we're serious."

“While this ecosystem is sometimes described as a ‘wasteland’, as someone who travelled through the Arctic Refuge this summer, I can tell you that this is far from the truth,” Sarah Tingey, Outreach and Operations Director at Alpacka Raft said. “In fact, the biodiversity in the coastal plain of the Refuge is staggering and beautiful, and losing this ecosystem would be a detrimental loss, not to mention a great sadness for packrafters. The importance of protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge far outweighs the short-term gains from drilling. It is not worth destroying America's last truly wild place for less than a year's worth of oil. We are proud to be taking a stand along with 100 other Colorado businesses to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from fossil fuel development. We hope Senator Gardner hears our voice; that’s why we’re traveling to the Nation’s capital this week.”

Senator Gardner stated in an email to the [Denver Post in February](#) that having the Outdoor Retailer show move from Utah to Colorado is largely due to the Colorado delegation’s support of public lands. “Conserving and protecting the public lands Coloradans cherish is a top priority of mine,” he wrote. “I’ll continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to protect public lands in Colorado and around the country.” Senator Gardner often touts his work to protect our public lands and how he is a strong public lands supporter. The Senator’s website states: “Public lands are some of our most cherished national treasures, and as a fifth-generation Coloradan I understand the importance of preserving iconic landscapes in my state and across the nation. We must be good stewards of our natural environment, and this includes being responsible for the lands placed into parks, historic sites and trails, monuments, and recreation areas.”

Outdoor businesses across Colorado hope Senator Gardner will back his public statements claiming he is a supporter of public lands across the country with action. In addition to the over 100 outdoor Industry companies who have reached out to the Senator, [over 50 Colorado breweries, distilleries, and wineries from across the state sent a similar letter](#) to Senator Gardner this fall asking that he protect the Arctic Refuge. These businesses are eager to see if Senator Gardner will listen to their voices this week and not vote to allow drilling in America’s irreplaceable Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

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#### ***About [Seek Outside](#):***

Seek Outside is a family owned business based in Grand Junction, Colorado that was founded in 2010. They are passionate about the outdoors and produce lightweight, all season, backcountry performance tents, backpacks, and wood stoves. They employ, with a living wage, over 25 staff who work in four fabrication services on the Western Slope. All Seek Outside products are produced in western Colorado and shipped worldwide. Owner Kevin Timm traveled to the Arctic Refuge in 2015.

#### ***About [Alpacka Rafts](#):***

Alpacka Raft started in the fall of 2000 as a collaboration between Sheri Tingey, the designer of Alpacka products, and her son Thor, who had just completed a 600-mile packrafting traverse of Alaska’s Brooks Range.

Alpacka Rafts is the largest second largest employer in Mancos, Colorado. All products are made in and with materials sourced in the U.S.A. Sarah Tingey, Operations and Outreach Director with the company traveled to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in 2017. She grew up in Alaska.