

Act

By Jill Filipovic

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Inside the fight to save this Alaska refuge 06:51

Editor's Note: Jill Filipovic is a journalist based in New York and Nairobi, Kenya, and the author of the book *"The H-Spot: The Feminist Pursuit of Happiness."* Follow her on [Twitter](#). The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of the author. View more [opinion](#) articles on CNN

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Republicans have indeed been building to this for a long time. They've spent decades on [campaigns](#) intended to undermine a basic belief in science among their voters, and they've [largely succeeded](#).

Among our economic peers around the globe, even most social conservatives agree that climate change is real and we have to protect the environment for future generations. Not so in America, where half the country seems to operate under the delusion that we can do whatever we want to our land, our plants and our animals and it will magically have no ill effects on us, our children or our grandchildren.

The [proposed changes](#) to the Endangered Species Act fall in line with this anti-science sentiment: They drastically reduce the role scientists will have in identifying endangered and threatened species in the first place.

The changes would let the views of lawmakers take precedence over the in-depth research and on-the-ground observation of scientific experts. They would also let politicians weigh financial interests against whether plants and animals ought to be allowed to survive -- and also against the rights of the rest of us to enjoy the many benefits of balanced and diverse ecosystems.

Rare plant species and gray wolves don't have lobbyists; big oil does, and companies pay significant money to get politicians on their side so that they can plunder habitats to make more money. If it's elected officials -- whose coffers are filled by corporations -- making decisions previously left to scientists and researchers, who do you think will benefit: animals and their environs, or the people holding out cash?

What scientists know -- and many politicians want to ignore -- is that ecosystems are fragile, and they survive in precarious balance. Conservationists don't do their work because they have a particular fetish for [Oahu tree snails](#) or [Florida bristle ferns](#); they seek to conserve endangered species because those species are part of a broad biome whose inhabitants are interdependent -- and which we as humans also depend on. We are part of it.



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When this system gets out of whack, or certain species disappear, that can have a domino effect that goes far down the line, wiping out or endangering other species as well, and even affecting our own food supply and security. That impact isn't always immediately foreseeable.

The kind of short-term thinking reflected in the administration's proposals to gut the Endangered Species Act is fueled by insatiable avarice that doesn't just affect Northern sea otters and prairie gophers. It sells out the future of our country -- the very land you and I, people without a ton of money to throw at politicians, rely on. And it does this for the benefit of a very few.

Short-sighted, heartbreaking -- and exactly what we've come to expect from this administration. Speak up, and don't let this happen.

