

“POMBO IN THEIR POCKET”

Representative Richard Pombo's Recent Efforts to Eviscerate America's Landmark Conservation Laws

Representative Richard Pombo (CA-11) has the worst anti-conservation record of any member of the U.S. Congress. This year alone, Rep. Pombo, House Leader Tom DeLay's hand-picked chairman of the House Resources Committee, has worked relentlessly to destroy our country's conservation heritage. It's about time he be held accountable for his efforts to destroy wildlife and the conservation legacy we should be leaving to future generations.

Congressman Pombo is leaving a destructive mark through the following ways:

Endangering Our Coast Line for Drilling: As Chair of the House Resources Committee, Representative Pombo ushered budget reconciliation legislation through his committee that included a provision to immediately rescind the 24-year bipartisan congressional ban on drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf of the United States. The ban, in effect since 1981, has protected our west and east coasts and adjoining coastal waters. The Pombo provision would entirely remove Congress from any future decisions about offshore drilling, even off the coasts of members' own home states. If one coastal state invites new offshore drilling through Pombo's plan, a nearby state that prefers continued coastal protection will inevitably suffer from the oil spills or routine toxic discharges that will not respect the arbitrary state boundaries. Mr. Pombo's bill exempts some lease sales from federal environmental oversight laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act. (October 2005)

For Sale Signs on our National Parks: Representative Richard Pombo recently outlined his plan to close 15 national parks and sell them off for energy or commercial development by 2010. These parks make up 23 percent of the total acreage of the National Park System. They honor Revolutionary War heroes, African American Leaders, and American Indians. These federal lands currently preserve some of the most wild and spectacular areas in the National Park System. In addition, he recommended that parks sell advertising and naming rights to everything from vehicles and facilities to trails. (September 2005)

Gutting Protections for Endangered Wildlife: Representative Pombo's long-standing ambition has been to "reform" the Endangered Species Act in a manner that excludes the species and promotes reckless oil and gas exploration, encourages sprawl and other industrial development. In September, the U.S. House of Representatives passed Mr. Pombo's bill that would do just that. It is filled with loopholes to make it easier for developers to bypass protections for our nation's endangered and threatened species. Pombo's bill includes near elimination of any requirements to protect wildlife habitat for imperiled species, forces federal taxpayers to pay developers not to kill or injure endangered and threatened plants and animals, and allows federal regulators to approve new and expanded pesticide uses without consulting with wildlife experts on the impact on endangered and threatened species. Considering the huge roll that pesticides such as DDT played in the near loss of the bald eagle, this could severely harm numerous wildlife

recovery efforts. The bill thoroughly undermines the intent of the Endangered Species Act, which is recovery of threatened and endangered wildlife. (September 2005)
Link to <http://www.saveesa.org>

Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Representative Pombo has been a longstanding and leading supporter of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Most recently, he ushered a budget reconciliation package through the House Resources Committee that opens the refuge to drilling. The bill paves the way for oil companies to drill in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Provisions of the bill would allow the oil and gas industry to bypass environmental regulations, further increasing the threat of destruction facing this pristine wilderness. The coastal plain represents the only remaining portion of our Arctic coast, 5%, not already open to drilling. Sold as a plan to so-called “save Americans money at the pump,” the government’s own analysis estimates that drilling will not lower gas prices at all in the short term and only save drivers a mere penny a gallon at the pump 20 years from now. (October 2005) Link to <http://www.savearcticrefuge.org>

Selling Off Our Federal Public Lands to Mining Interests: As Chair of the House Resources Committee, Representative Pombo shepherded budget reconciliation legislation through his committee, which included a proposal authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to sell public lands containing mineral deposits. The proposal includes more than 16 million acres of Wilderness Study Areas and other places previously protected from mining, such as Headwater Forest Reserve (CA), the Rocky Mountain Front (MT), and the New World District adjacent to Yellowstone National Park. If enacted, Pombo’s provision will remove a ban on such sales that has been in existence for more than a decade.

Given Representative Pombo’s long record of supporting the special interests’ agenda promoting environmentally unsound development, it is no surprise to learn that these same special interests are the main financial supporters of his own campaign and of his so-appropriately named political slush fund, Rich PAC.