

Burning of fossil fuels (oil and gas) leads to the release of carbon dioxide. This is a greenhouse gas which increases the greenhouse effect and leads to global warming. This climate change may be creating a climate crisis that may increase the incidence of hazardous climatic events and negatively affect food production.

The local indigenous population, the Inuit (eskimo) people may lose their livelihoods and culture due to the developments. This may be due to the negative impact on the environment and destruction of local food chains that the Inuit are dependent on, or through economic development of local economies.

Most of the money from the development of the oil and gas fields and the selling of the products goes to large Trans-National Corporations and very little goes to the local Alaskan economy or people.

The 800 mile Trans-Alaskan Pipeline was completed in 1977 to move oil from the fields of Prudhoe bay, on the north slope of Alaska, to the southern ice free port of Valdez. Habitats were affected, the breeding grounds of species damaged and fragile ecosystems were destroyed.

EXPLOITATION OF FOSSIL FUEL OIL AND GAS IN ALASKA PRUDHOE BAY AND ANWR DISADVANTAGES/ CONS

Oil spills at the site of exploitation, along the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline (TAPS) and by tanker incidents such as the Exxon Valdez in Prince William Sound in 1989 can have devastating effects on local habitats, ecosystems, flora and fauna.

There is a limited amount of oil and gas in the fields of northern Alaska and it seems to be a little shortsighted to develop these fields when the world is being urged by most climatological experts to move towards greener, more sustainable, renewable forms of energy production. When the fields are exhausted, extra costs will be incurred returning the pristine Tundra environments of Alaska back to their original states.

In 1989 the Exxon Valdez oil tanker was transporting oil from the port of Valdez in southern Alaska when it went aground and spilt over 11 million gallons of crude oil. The disaster killed over 2000 sea otters, 250,000 seabirds, 300 harbour seals and 22 orca (killer) whales as the oil spread over 3500 miles of shoreline. The whole of the coastal ecosystem and food chain was affected and even 20 years later oil continued to pollute the coast.

