

**For Immediate Release
February 17, 2004**

192 Members of Congress receive Straight A's in "Wilderness"

Washington, DC - The independent American Wilderness Coalition today released the 2004 Wild Card – the nation's only comprehensive and quantitative analysis of congressional action on key wilderness and public lands issues. Votes and positions by Members of the 108th Congress are analyzed in the report, including action regarding the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, and a new federal regulation that would allow abandoned trails and cow paths to be claimed as public highways to prevent wilderness designation.

"Wild Card clearly identifies those Members that are living up to their responsibility as stewards of America's public lands and wilderness heritage, and those that are not," said Melyssa Watson, Chair of the American Wilderness Coalition Board. "However, President Bush is no wild card when it comes to the environment. He actively folds on any opportunity to protect wilderness."

Wild Card gives the Bush administration an "F" this year, for leading unprecedented assaults on America's wilderness and public lands. For example, the administration is:

- Promoting development of the nation's most pristine refuge and largest national forest;
- Eliminating the public voice in public lands management;
- Prohibiting the consideration of wilderness as even an option for land use planning on BLM lands; and
- Surrounding itself with former oil, logging, and other industry officials.

"The attacks by the Bush administration on America's public lands are unprecedented," said Watson. "In just three years, the Bush administration has done more than any other in recent history to dismantle protections for America's public lands and wilderness."

Wild Card also analyzed congressional action on important wilderness and public lands issues. Thirty-six Senators received grades ranging from "A-" to "A+", while 39 Senators received "Fs". In the House, 156 Members received an "A" or "A+," while 213 Representatives received an "F." Only 7 Senators and 16 House Members received an "A+."

###

To view Wild Card online or find out more about the American Wilderness Coalition, visit www.americanwilderness.org or contact Cindy Shogan at 202-544-5205