

Alaska Lands Update

monthly updates on Federal management actions for the people of Alaska

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
Photo Credit: USFWS

Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources
3700 Airport Way Fairbanks, AK 99709

Supplemental EIS for Exxon Valdez Oil Spill – Comments Accepted

The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council intends to prepare a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement (EIS) on restoration efforts for the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. Comments on this supplement are being accepted until April 1, 2010. The draft supplemental EIS is expected to be released for comment by spring 2010. Comments can be emailed to dfg.evos.nepacomments@alaska.gov. Written comments can be sent to Laurel Jennings, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, 441 West 5th Avenue, Suite 500, Anchorage, AK 99501.

Public scoping meeting have occurred in Anchorage, Cordova and Homer. Future meetings are scheduled for Kodiak, Seward and Valdez. More information can be found at www.evostc.state.ak.us. Agencies cooperating in this process include: Alaska Departments of Law, Environmental Conservation, and Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office
(Exxon Valdez continued on page 3)

Proposed Withdrawal Extension

Kenai River Recreation Area, Russian River Campground Area and the Lower Russian Lake Recreation Area and the Sixmile Creek Recreation Area

The Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service filed applications to extend Public Land Order Numbers 6884 and 6892 for an additional 20-year period. On September 23, 1991, Public Order 6884 withdrew approximately 1,855 acres of National Forest System land from surface entry and mining (not mineral leasing laws) to protect recreational values associated with the Kenai River Recreation Area, the Russian River Campground Area and the Lower Rus-

sian Lake Recreation Area. Land order 6892 withdrew 473 acres of National Forest System Land from surface entry to protect recreational values of Sixmile Creek Recreation Area.

Comments on this extension or requests for public meetings should be submitted by April 8, 2010 to:
BLM Alaska State Office, Alaska State Director, 222 West 7th Avenue, No. 13, Anchorage, AK 99513-7504.

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Recap from CACFA Meeting in Juneau, February 19-20

Notes from the Executive Director, Stan Leaphart

At its February 19 and 20 meeting in Juneau, the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas made recommendations to federal agencies on a number of issues. After hearing a report from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and taking public testimony on the proposed designation of critical habitat for the Cook Inlet Beluga whale population, the Commission directed staff to submit comments recommending that NMFS not designate critical habitat at this time. Members felt that the agency needed to incorporate additional information and data before making a final decision on designating critical habitat for the Cook Inlet belugas.

In other action, the Commission decided to ask Alaska's Congressional delegation to consider legislation that would allow federal agencies to resume longstanding hiring practices for the ANILCA Section 1307 Local Hire Program. Recent changes imposed by the Office of Personnel Management now require agencies to follow competitive hiring procedures when filling 1307 Local Hire positions. These procedures, which

are significantly different from those used by the agencies for the last 28 years, put many Alaskan applicants at a disadvantage in the recruitment process and are contrary to the original intent of ANILCA.

Commission members also voted to request the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to allow full public involvement, including public meetings and opportunities for review and comment, in any regulatory or policy changes which may be forthcoming as a result



of the recent review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program.

Members of the public and representatives and shareholders of Sealaska Corporation were in attendance at the meeting to discuss proposed legislation that would allow Sealaska to complete its land selections under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The proposed legislation S. 881 the *Southeast Alaska Native Land Entitlement Finalization Act* contains a number of provisions that have generated concerns for many residents and communities in Southeast Alaska. Sealaska representatives indicated to the Commission that they would encourage people with questions about the legislation to contact the corporation. Senator Lisa Murkowski, the primary sponsor of S. 881, has scheduled a series of town meetings throughout Southeast Alaska beginning the week of March 8th so that residents of the region can make their concerns known. A list of meetings dates and locations is published on **page five** of this newsletter.

Members of the CACFA Commission

Rick Schikora, Fairbanks
Chairman

Mark Fish, Anchorage
Vice Chairman

Rod Arno, Willow
Executive Committee

Charlie Lean, Nome
Executive Committee

Susan Smith, Chitina

Mike Meekins, Anchorage

Alex Tarnai, Tanana

Frank Woods, Dillingham

Senator Linda Menard, Wasilla

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For more information, visit our website:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa/index.htm>

AS 41.37.160 The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Management Areas in Alaska is established in the department [Natural Resources]. In the exercise of its responsibilities, the commission shall consider the views of citizens of the state and officials of the state.

(Exxon Valdez continued from page 1)

of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Funds are diminishing from the Exxon Valdez settlement and the Council wishes to redirect remaining money. The Council is proposing to focus efforts on herring, lingering oil, long-term monitoring of marine conditions, harbor protection and marine restoration, and habitat acquisition and protection. The reasons for selecting these focus areas are summarized below.

Herring

The Prince William Sound population of Pacific herring has not recovered from the effects of the 1989 spill. There is a degree of uncertainty in the role the spill is playing in the depressed population levels. The Council is proposing to spend \$20 million for research on

herring restoration over the next 20 years.

Lingering Oil

Approximately 97.2 metric tons of sub-surface oil persists in a relatively un-weathered state in discontinuous patches across beaches initially impacted by the spill. They are a continued source of exposure for sea otters and birds. No prospective funding amount has been proposed.

Long-term Monitoring of Marine Conditions

Long-term monitoring has two components: monitoring the recovery of resources from the initial injury and monitoring how factors other than oil may inhibit full recovery or adversely impact recovered resources. The council proposes to spend \$25 million over 20 years on long-term monitoring.

Harbor Protection and Marine Restoration

Several project fall under the category of harbor protection and marine restoration. The council is proposing to fund projects that do the following: develop waste management plans for coastal communities and aid with implementation, marine debris removal, and outreach efforts that discuss damage caused by spill effort response.

Habitat acquisition and Protection

These funds are used to purchase private lands so that restoration efforts can occur on those lands.

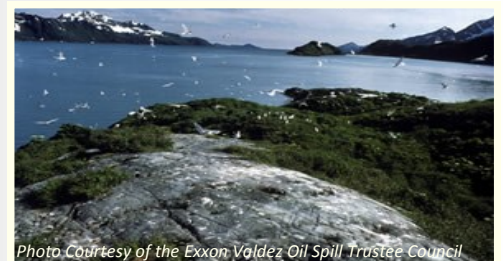


Photo Courtesy of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council

Gates of the Arctic General Management Plan and Wilderness Study



Gates of the Arctic National Park
Photo Credit: Terri McMillan

In the January 27, 2010 Federal Register, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve announced intent to prepare and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a General Management Plan (GMP) Amendment and wilderness study. The amendment to the GMP will set management goals for the area for the next 15 to 20 years, address visitor-use related issues, and provide management direction for six designated wild rivers. It will also outline types of resource management activity, visitor activity and developments that will be appropriate for the park in the future. The wilderness study will evaluate certain parts of the park and preserve for potential designation to wilderness.

Written comments on the scope of the EIS are being accepted until March 29, 2010. Comments can be submitted on park planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gaar> or through the mail at 4175 Geist Rd, Fairbanks, AK 99709. Public meetings are being held in Anchorage on March 1 and Fairbanks on March 4. Additional meetings are planned for Anaktuvuk Pass, Bettles/ Evansville, Wiseman, Alatna/Allakaket, Nuiqsut, Kobuk, and Shungnak, but dates have not yet been set.

Experimental Wood Bison Population Introduction

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced intent to prepare an environmental assessment on establishment of an experimental population of wood bison (*Bison bison athabascæ*). Written comments are being accepted until March 29, 2010.

The elimination of wood bison from Alaska is thought to be due to the effects of hunting by humans and changes in habitat distribution. Over the past 15 years, the Alaska Depart-



Wood Bison
Photo Credit: www.naturespicsonlin.com

ment of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has been investigating reintroduction into parts of the historic range in interior Alaska. Prospective release sites include Yukon Flats, Minto Flats and the lower Innoko/Yukon River area. The goal of a release program would be to reestablish 1-3 free-ranging populations of approximately 400 individuals within one or more of the three sites. Additional information on the ADF&G program can be found at www.wc.adfg.state.ak.us/index.cfm?adfg=game.restoration.

In the past, concerns about reintroduction stemmed from a fear that additional restrictions would be imposed on Federal, State and private activities. The Endangered Species Act allows the USFWS to designate reintroduced populations established outside the

species current range, but within its historical range, as experimental. Under the category of a “nonessential experimental population”, designation of additional critical habitat is prohibited and the likelihood of additional imposed restriction is low.

For more information, go to the [Federal Register](#) notice or contact Judy Jacobs, 907-786-3472.

Comments can be mailed or hand delivered to:

Fisheries and Ecological Services Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503. Comments can also be submitted by fax or email to 907-786-3575 or woodbison-ak@fws.gov.

Beluga Whale Recovery Plan, Public Input Requested

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced intent to develop a recovery plan for the Cook Inlet beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*) and is requesting input from the public. The Endangered Species Act requires that such plans be developed when a species is federally listed as threatened or endangered and the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale was listed as endangered on October 22, 2008. NMFS is therefore requesting information on the whales and their habitat for this recovery plan. Specifically, NMFS is looking for information on the following: criteria for removing the Cook Inlet beluga whales

from the list of threatened or endangered species, factors that are presently limiting or threaten to limit the survival of belugas, actions to address limiting factors and threats, estimates of time and cost to implement these recovery actions and research, monitoring and evaluation needs. Comments should be submitted by 5 PM on March 29 via email CIBRP@noaa.gov, mail National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802, attn: Ellen Sebastian, fax 907-586-7557 or hand delivery to 709 West 9th Street, Room 420, Juneau, AK 99802.

Agency Websites:

National Park Service

<http://www.nps.gov/state/ak/index.htm>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

<http://alaska.fws.gov/>

U.S. Forest Service

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/>

Bureau of Land Management

<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en.html>

Department of Interior

<http://www.doi.gov/>

National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration

<http://www.noaa.gov>

BLM Resource Advisory Council to Meet in April

The Bureau of Land Management has announced that the Alaska Resource Advisory Council (RAC) will hold a public meeting on April 6–7, 2010, in the Campbell Tract Facility at 4700 BLM Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99507. On April 6, the meeting starts at 1 p.m. in the training room. On April 7, the meeting begins in the same location at 9 a.m. and the council will accept public comment from 1–2 p.m.

The 15-member Council advises the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, on a variety of planning and management issues associated with public land management in Alaska. At this meeting, topics planned for discussion include:

- Election of Chair and Vice-Chair.
- Manager reports.

- Stimulus projects update.
- Alaska Land Information System.
- National Landscape Conservation System anniversary.
- Resource management planning.
- Other topics of interest to the RAC

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ruth_mccoard@blm.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:



Public Meetings

Izembek Land Exchange

Public Meetings

Public scoping meetings will be held to discuss a land exchange between the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, the State of Alaska and King Cove Corporation. The meetings will also include discussion of a proposed road corridor through the Izembek Refuge. Meetings are scheduled in Anchorage on March 4, 2010 and in Washington, D.C. on March 11, 2010. Additional meeting will be held in King Cove, Cold Bay, Sand Point and Nelson Lagoon. For more information, go to:

<http://izembek.fws.gov/EIS.htm>

Sealaska Lands Bill, Town Meetings Announced

A series of town meetings will be held on Prince of Wales Island and Southeast Alaska during the week of March 8 to allow residents of the area to comment on proposed land selections by Sealaska Corporation. According to Senator Murkowski, “these meetings will allow those most affected by the Sealaska bill to have their concerns fully heard.” The meeting schedule is as follows:

- Monday, March 8: 6:30 PM–8:30 PM @ the Craig School Auditorium
- Tuesday, March 9: 12 PM–2 PM @ Thorne Bay City Council Chambers
- Tuesday, March 9: 7 PM– 9 PM @ the Harborview Hall in Coffman Cove
- Wednesday, March 10: 5:30 PM– 7 PM @ the Naukati School
- Wednesday, March 10: TBA in Edna Bay
- Thursday, March 11: 12:30 PM– 3 PM in the Port Protection Community Bldg.
- Thursday, March 11: 7 PM– 9 PM in the Petersburg City Council Chambers
- Friday, March 12: 7 PM– 10 PM in the Sitka Centennial Bldg.

The public is being invited to comment on the bill during these town meetings. Comments can also be submitted to Chuck Kleeschlte, Professional Staff, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, SD 316, Washington, DC 20510.