

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, Department of Natural Resources, State of Alaska
3700 Airport Way Fairbanks, AK 99709

New Comprehensive Tribal Consultation Policy

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk announced on December 1, a Tribal Consultation Policy, launching a new era of enhanced communication with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. The new policy emphasizes trust, respect and shared responsibility in providing tribal governments an expanded role in informing federal policy that impacts Indian Country. "This comprehensive initiative reflects President Obama's commitment to strengthening the government-to-government relationship between the United States and tribal nations and recognizing their fundamental right to self-governance," Secretary Salazar said in signing a Secretarial Order implementing the departmental policy. "The new framework institutionalizes meaningful consultation so that tribal leaders are at the table and engaged when it comes to the matters that affect them."

"Under this policy, consultation will be an open, transparent and deliberative process," said Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk. "Forging a strong role for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes at all stages in the government's decision-making process will benefit Indian Country and federal policy for generations to come."

The new policy sets out detailed require-

ments and guidelines for Interior officials and managers to follow to ensure they are using the best practices and most innovative methods to achieve meaningful consultation with tribes. Interior officials will identify appropriate tribal consulting parties early in the planning process, provide the tribes a meaningful opportunity to participate in the consultation process, and participate in a manner that demonstrates a commitment and ensures continuity. To increase accountability, bureaus and office heads will implement training, performance standards and comprehensive annual reporting to the Secretary, through his designated Tribal Governance Officer, on the scope, cost and effectiveness of their consultation efforts. Based on information received from the bureaus and offices, the Secretary will provide an annual report to the tribes on the Tribal Consultation Policy. In consultation with the tribes, the Secretary will also establish a joint Federal-Tribal Team to make recommendations on implementing and ensuring continued improvement of the policy.

For more information and to view the new policy go to: <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Secretary-Salazar-Assistant-Secretary-Echo-Hawk-Launch-Comprehensive-Tribal-Consultation-Policy.cfm>

IN THIS ISSUE:

USFS Schedule of Proposed Actions - Tribal Consultation Policy - 1

White Sulphur Hot Springs Appeal and Resolution 2

White Sulphur Hot Springs Information Request 3

USFS Schedule of Proposed Action

Resource Specialists for the US Forest Service, develop proposals that will enhance or maintain resource values on public lands, as well as generate products from those public lands. In addition, the public may submit proposals for the use of public lands such as rights-of-way, land exchanges, and recreational events. The Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) provides a list of proposals that will begin or are undergoing environmental analysis and documentation so that people can become aware of and indicate their interest in specific proposals. Each Forest publishes a Schedule of Proposed Actions quarterly in January, April, July, and October. It contains the best available information at that time.

For more information on the current SOPA's for the Alaska's National Forests, Region 10's home page is <http://www.fs.usda.gov/r10>. ♦

White Sulphur Hot Springs Appeal and Resolution

White Sulphur Springs, bathhouse and cabin is located 65 miles northwest of Sitka on Chichagof Island within the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness Area in the Sitka Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest. It is accessible year-round, weather permitting, by boat with anchor-



age in Mirror Harbor. There is a trail that leads to the cabin about one mile away. In recent years this facility has fallen into disrepair. Both the bathhouse and cabin along with the trail have structurally deteriorated enough to require substantial work to remain stable. Currently, the bathhouse is closed for fear of collapse from strong winds and snow loading. This cabin is the 9th highest used cabin out of the 25 cabins on the Sitka Ranger District with an estimated 900 users per year. Subsequent to an Environmental Assessment of the White Sulphur Springs facilities, the following decision was made in August 2011 as to extent of the improvements the Forest Service would undertake. The Bathhouse walls and roof would be removed to create an outdoor soaking pool, decking would be installed for access to the pool; the existing cabin, outhouse and woodshed would be removed and a new cabin constructed approximately 30' uphill to provide for additional privacy, a reconstructed woodshed and outhouse is also planned; and 30' of new trail will be added with improvements to the existing trail using local materials.

An appeal of this decision ensued with six appellants, including CACFA, local area resident and users, and the City and Borough of Sitka, expressing valid concerns over the removal of the bathhouse without plans to replace it, arguing that the

bathhouse provides for the safe use of the hot springs and that the cultural and traditional use of the facilities had been overlooked. With further discussion during the appeals review hearing it became apparent that the bathhouse may actually receive higher usage than the cabin as it is

not only used by people who rent the cabin, but by fishermen, kayakers, camper's and boaters from the local area. Appeals were withdrawn after an agreeable solution was reached, improvements to the cabin, outhouse, woodshed and trail would continue as proposed but that further analysis of the bathhouse and greater public outreach to gather use information was needed. The Forest Supervisor,

Forrest Cole has agreed to the following:

1. Get structural engineers to the site as soon as safely possible to determine what it would take to stabilize the bathhouse and reopen it for use. The bathhouse will remain closed until it can be stabilized;
2. Closely examine the contract for the cabin reconstruction and determine if the bathhouse reconstruction can be included based on health and safety concerns and reconsider his decision to reconstruct the bathhouse;
3. Collect additional information on usage of the White Sulphur Springs site included evaluating the health, safety, traditional and cultural usage of the site as it is an integral part of the surrounding area; advertising in the Sitka

A new NEPA analysis and decision document is anticipated in late spring to early summer 2012 followed by a 30-day comment period with a 45-day appeal period for this new decision.

For more information contact Annemarie Lapalme of the Sitka Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest, by phone 907-747-6671, by email alapalme@fs.fed.us or online at http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/nepa_project.shtml?project=19743 ♦

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For more information, visit our website:
www.dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa

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.



White Sulphur Hot Springs Information Request

Have you used the White Sulphur Springs Bathhouse or Cabin? Will you share what you know?

The Sitka Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest is collecting information on the current and historic use of the White Sulphur Hot Springs to supplement its environmental analysis. This site has fallen into disrepair and presently the bathhouse is closed. The current decision includes reconstructing the cabin, woodshed, and outhouse along with improving the trail but the bathhouse is only scheduled to be removed, not replaced. These improvements are due to begin next spring. An appeal has withdrawn the bathhouse from the current decision pending

further analysis and information gathering regarding use of the bathhouse.

If you have information about the historic, traditional, or cultural use of the bathhouse or usage of the bathhouse as an emergency shelter, please share what you know by:

1. Calling the Sitka Ranger District at **907-747-6671** to respond to questions below;
2. Email to request a questionnaire to alpalme@fs.fed.us;
3. Send responses to question below to comments-alaska-tongass-sitka@fs.fed.us;
3. Mail the questions below to Sitka Ranger District Office, attn A. LaPalme, 204 Siginaka Way, Sitka, AK 99835. ♦

Name* _____ Address* _____ Phone* _____ Date* _____
 *Required information in order for your comments to be considered. Email _____

White Sulphur Supplemental Information

A decision made by Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor on the Tongass National Forest, concerning White Sulphur Springs bathhouse, cabin, and trail has been modified by removing the bathhouse from the decision. Your information will be used to develop a new decision concerning the bathhouse, for example whether to replace or remove it, which is anticipated to be made in the spring of 2012.

Would you like to be included on a mailing list for this Decision? Yes No

1. How often do you use the White Sulphur Springs Bathhouse? (please check one)

Never been there <input type="checkbox"/>	Only one or two times in my lifetime <input type="checkbox"/>	Every few years <input type="checkbox"/>	Every year, once or twice each year <input type="checkbox"/>	Every year, several (3-5) times each year <input type="checkbox"/>	Every year, many (>5) times each year <input type="checkbox"/>
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2. Have you ever had to use the cabin or bathhouse because of an emergency? Yes No
If "Yes," which building and what were the circumstances?

3. Are there customs or traditions that you associate with the bathhouse? Yes No
Please describe:

4. If the bathhouse were no longer at White Sulphur, but instead an open pool, how would this affect your community or social group?

Thank you for your comments. Please return forms by Jan. 16, 2012