

Alaska Lands Update

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monthly updates on Federal management actions for the people of Alaska

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

BLM-AK Issues NPR-A Final IAP/EIS 30-day Waiting Period Before Record of Decision

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Alaska State Office, has issued the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) Final Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS); it is available to the public. After 30 days, the BLM will issue a Record of Decision (ROD) accepting the plan that will supersede the Northwest NPR-A IAP ROD (signed January 22, 2004) and the Northeast NPR-A Supplemental IAP ROD (signed July 16, 2008) and may amend the Colville River Special Area Management Plan (signed July 18, 2008).

The Final IAP/EIS offers five alternatives for future management of the nearly 23-million-acre NPR-A. Unlike the Draft IAP/EIS published March 30, 2012, the Final IAP/EIS includes a Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative, designated Alternative B-2, most closely resembles Alternative B in the Draft IAP/EIS, particularly the decisions to open public lands for oil and gas leasing and to expand Special Areas. The Preferred Alternative, however, differs from the Draft IAP/EIS's Alternative B by expanding the areas in which the BLM could approve an application for pipelines and other infrastructure in support of offshore oil and gas development, and by not recommending congressional Wild and Scenic River designation, among other revisions.



Requests for information regarding the Final IAP/EIS, or for copies of the document in either CD or paper format, may be sent to Jim Ducker (907-271-3130) or Serena Sweet (907-271-4543), Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office (AK931), 222 West 7th Avenue 13, Anchorage, AK 99513-7599. The Final IAP/EIS is available on the BLM-Alaska Web site at <http://www.blm.gov/ak>. ♦

Timber Stand Improvement on the Tongass

The Forest Service is seeking your involvement regarding a proposal to pre-commercially thin overstocked second-growth forest within the Juneau and Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger Districts. These Timber Stand Improvement Projects are intended to reduce the number of trees per acre in overstocked young-growth stands to improve tree diameter growth and vigor, enhance wildlife values, and promote greater structural diversity.

Forest Service intends to prepare a Categorical Exclusion and issue a Decision Memo. The rationale for Categorically Excluding this project from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment is that this activity falls within a category of actions established by the Chief of the Forest Service that normally do not individu-

ally or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

The proposed projects are located on the Juneau Ranger District and the Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District, each has released scoping packets specific to the district. The purpose of scoping is to identify any potential issues, concerns, and opportunities associated with the proposed projects. It is important that your comments identify specific issues to be considered, places within the project areas that are important, or suggestions to improve or change the project.

In order to be most useful to the respective planning teams please note the following deadlines and contact information:

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Juneau Ranger District Project contact is Chris Budke, phone 907-945-1218, comments specific to this District should be received by Monday, January 14, 2013;

More information specific to the **Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District Project** may be obtained at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/projects.shtml>, comments should be received by Friday, January 18, 2013 and may be sent by to: comments-alaska-tongass-ketchikan-mistvfiord@fs.fed.us, include "2013 TSI" in the subject line. ♦

Comment Deadline Reminders

- BLM Alaska has also released the **Final Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska**. The project website is: <http://www.blm.gov/ak>;
- USF&WS is accepting comments on its **Surrogate Species** and draft technical guidance for **Strategic Habitat Conservation** framework until January 31, 2013. The project website is: <http://www.fws.gov/landscape-conservation/draft-guidance.html>;
- Comment period for USF&WS Proposed Rule on the **Impact Analysis of Critical Habitat** has been reopened. The new deadline for comments is February 6, 2013. You may submit comments and view project information at the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>; search for FWS-R9-ES-2011-0073, which is the docket number for this rulemaking.
- Katmai NPP **Fire Management Plan**; comment deadline February 1, 2013. Project website is: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=13&projectID=39260&documentID=50741>;

Documents expected out soon:

- BLM Alaska **Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan** supplemental documents on hard rock mining are expected to be released on January 11, 2013. This will start a 90-day comment period for both the Draft RMP/EIS and the Supplement. The project can be found at: <http://www.blm.gov/ak>;
- **Izembek Land Exchange/Road Final Environmental Impact Statement and Public Interest Determination** from the US Fish and Wildlife Service is not expected until February 2013;

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 - Region 10, AK

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

Bureau of Land Management

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

Department of the Interior

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

National Marine Fisheries Service

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

BLM Releases Kuskokwim River Fish Tissue Study Results

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is releasing an interim research report, "Mercury, Arsenic and Antimony in Aquatic Biota from the Middle Kuskokwim River Region, Alaska, 2010-2011." The report evaluates mercury, arsenic and antimony concentrations in fish tissue samples collected during 2010 and 2011 in the Kuskokwim River and 17 tributaries.

The purpose of this study is for a better understanding of the concentrations of metals in fish that live in the Kuskokwim watershed year round. According to the BLM, study results indicate that many natural mercury deposits and historic mine sites are contributing to mercury and arsenic levels in the Kuskokwim watershed.

The study encompasses the Kuskokwim River from McGrath to Aniak and numerous tributaries. It reflects the efforts of multiple agencies. The BLM and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game collected water, sediment and fish tissue data, assisted by Kuskokwim residents who provided local knowledge on where and when



to collect pike and burbot samples for this study. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service analyzed the contaminants data and prepared the interim report for the BLM.

The natural geology of the region includes numerous mineralized areas that contain over two-thirds of all known mercury deposits in Alaska. Those same mineral deposits also contain other metals, including arsenic and antimony.

The study found the highest concentrations of mercury were in adult pike from the George and Holitna rivers, two major tributaries of the Kuskokwim River. Smaller fish sampled from Cinnabar Creek on the Holitna and Red Devil Creek on the Kuskokwim had elevated concentrations of mercury and arsenic compared to small fish from tributaries where no mining occurred.

For more information on the fish tissue study, visit the project website at http://www.blm.gov/ak/fisheries/rdm_fish.html. The BLM will present its results at the 2013 Alaska Forum on the Environment, February 5, 2013. ♦

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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.

Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Haines Planning Area on December 14, 2012, initiating a 90-day public review and comment period. The Draft document evaluates whether to retain the Special Rec-



BLM Washington plans Environmental Impact Statement To Evaluate the Use of Three New Herbicides on Public Lands in 17 Western States

The BLM, Washington, DC, released a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS to evaluate the use of aminopyralid, fluroxypyr, and rimsulfuron herbicides as part of the its vegetation treatment programs on public lands in 17 Western States. This notice is announcing the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues.

This is a national programmatic EIS which proposes to add aminopyralid, fluroxypyr, and rimsulfuron to the BLM's approved list of herbicides for (1) Controlling noxious weeds and other invasive species; and (2) Conserving and restoring native vegetation, watersheds, and fish and wildlife habitat. The EIS will evaluate the use of the three new herbicides as part of the BLM's vegetation treatment programs on public lands in 17 Western States. The analysis area will include all surface estate public lands administered by the BLM in the following Western States: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, North and South Dakota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. The purpose of the proposed action is to expand the BLM's vegetation treatment program to allow herbicide treatments with aminopyralid, fluroxypyr, and rimsulfuron. This action would increase the number of active ingredients approved for use, and would give the BLM increased flexibility and options when designing herbicide treatments. The BLM has initially identified the following issues for analysis in this programmatic EIS: Effects of herbicides and inert ingredients used in herbicide formulations on human, vegetation, fish and wildlife, livestock, and wild horse and burro health; water quality; Native American resources and resource use; and the cumulative use of these

and other herbicides by the BLM and other landowners in the Western U.S.

Comments on issues may be submitted in writing until February 19, 2013. For inclusion in the Draft EIS, all comments must be received prior to the close of the scoping period, or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later. The BLM will hold three public scoping meetings: On January 7, 2013, in Worland, Wyoming; January 9, 2013, in Reno, Nevada; and January 10, 2013, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

You may submit scoping comments related to the EIS for the use of aminopyralid, fluroxypyr, and rimsulfuron on BLM Public Lands in 17 Western States by any of the following methods:

- Web site: <http://blm.gov/3vkd>.

- Email: VegEIS@blm.gov.

- Fax: 206-623-3793.

- Mail: AECOM, Attn. Stuart Paulus, 710 Second Avenue, Suite 1000, Seattle, WA 98104.

For further information and/or to have your name added to our mailing list, contact Gina Ramos, Senior Weeds Specialist, telephone 202-912-7226 or Stuart Paulus, Project Manager, telephone 206-403-4287.



BLM AK Releases an amendment to the Ring of Fire RMP for the Haines Planning Area

The BLM Anchorage Field Office has released the Ring of Fire Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment and Draft Environmental Im-

The Planning Area is located in Southeast Alaska. Approximately 320,000 acres of BLM-managed public lands are located in two main blocks or parcels: the north block is located northwest of Skagway along the United States-Canada border and the south block is located southwest of the City of Haines along the boundary of Glacier Bay National Park. The planning area encompasses the cities of Haines and Skagway.

The Draft RMP Amendment / DEIS considers four management alternatives, which are designed to address resource concerns and issues in varying ways.

The public is invited to review and comment on the Draft RMP Amendment / DEIS. Public comments will be most helpful if they relate to specific concerns or conflicts that are within the legal responsibilities of the BLM and can be resolved in this planning process. Comments will be accepted through Thursday, March 14, 2013.

Copies of the Draft Ring of Fire RMP - Haines Planning Area Amendment and DEIS are available at the Anchorage Field Office or on the Anchorage Field Office's planning website: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning.html>. ◆

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New Denali NP Superintendent Named

The National Park Service has named Don Striker as Denali National Park and Preserve's new superintendent. Striker has been the superintendent at New River Gorge National River, West Virginia, for the past five years, and brings a strong background in both business and resource management to his new position. He has been instrumental in improving relationships with state government and local partners, building a large cadre of volunteers, and managing significant construction projects. Prior to working in West Virginia, Striker served as a special assistant to the Comptroller of the National Park Service, as superintendent of Mount Rushmore National Memorial (South Dakota), as superintendent of Fort Clatsop National Memorial (Oregon), and comptroller at Yellowstone National Park.

"I am deeply humbled to have been asked to serve as the chief steward of one of our country's most spectacular and iconic parks," Striker said. "My wife, Gretchen, and I are excited to be moving to Alaska, a goal we've long held. We are really looking forward to becoming productive partners in our new community." Striker will move to Alaska in January.

NPS Alaska Regional Director Sue Masica said that Striker's accomplishments over more than 15 years with the Service position him well for the Denali job. "Denali is a complex park, with many major business and resource decisions coming up. Over the next couple of years, the park will be looking at implementing its new road management plan, re-bidding the main concession contract and continuing to work on a variety of wildlife issues with the State of Alaska and others. Don brings the talents we need to lead the Service on these issues." ♦



NPS to Hold Hearings on Trail Closure in Wrangell-St. Elias

The National Park Service will hold public hearings on January 8 in Sana and Tok on a proposed trail closure in Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve. The National Park Service re-routed the Soda Lake Trail, accessed at Lost Creek at mile 30.8 of the Nabesna Road. The proposed closure would prohibited off-road vehicle use on the damaged section of trail and redirect off-road vehicle users to a newly constructed route.

Public hearings will be held on January 8 in Sana at 4:00 p.m. at the Community Building and in Tok at 7:00 p.m. at the Tok school). A map showing the area is available www.nps.gov/wrst.

Calling Young Artists!

The National Endangered Species Day Youth Art Contest is going on right now. The contest is organized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Endangered Species Coalition, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and the International Child Art Foundation. It offers a chance for young artists to learn about endangered species and express their knowledge and support through artwork. The deadline for submission is March 15, 2013. The contest began in 2010 and the Grand Prize winner that first year was 2nd grader Carter Schroeder, from Anchorage, Alaska! More information about the contest and endangered species is available at <http://www.stopextinction.org/esd/194-esd-art.html>. ♦

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Completes Draft EIS for the Shadura Natural Gas Development Project

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Shadura Natural Gas Development Project is available for public review and comment. It describes five alternatives for accessing the subsurface natural gas estate owned by Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), and provides analysis of the effects of those alternatives. The Service does not have a preferred alternative.

The EIS is in response to an application received for a proposed right-of way within the Refuge, draft EIS has been prepared. The right-of-way would be in compliance with the Alaska National Interests Lands

Conservation Act (ANILCA) Section 1110(b) regarding access to inholdings, for the construction and operation of facilities associated with the exploration and production of natural gas from the subsurface estate within the Refuge. The United States owns the surface estate which is managed by the Service as part of the Kenai Refuge, and Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), owns the subsurface estate of coal, oil, and gas in the project area. The Project would be in the northwestern portion of the Kenai Peninsula, approximately 4 miles southeast of the end of the road in Captain Cook State Recreation Area. The application is being made by NordAq Energy, Inc., the holder of the lease from CIRI

acres within the Refuge as part of its ANCSA entitlement. The State of Alaska also owns lands adjacent to the Refuge (Captain Cook State Recreation Area). ANILCA Section 1110(b) requires that the Service provide adequate and feasible access to the CIRI-owned subsurface estate. CIRI has previously leased other portions of its subsurface estate within the Refuge. Oil and gas are currently being produced from other production units within the Refuge.

The EIS and information pertaining to the right-of-way application for the project are available for viewing and downloading at <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/nepa.htm>. DATES: Please provide any written comments or information on the EIS by February 19, 2013. Additional information concerning the Project can be found at <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/nepa.htm>. Additional information concerning the Refuge may be found at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=74525>.

Send your comments or requests for information by any one of the following methods:

- Email: fw7_kenai_planning@fws.gov;
- Fax: Attn: Peter Wikoff, (907) 786-3976;
- U.S. Mail: Peter Wikoff, Natural Resource Planner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Rd., MS-231, Anchorage, AK 99503. ♦

for the area. The EIS describes and evaluates a range of reasonable alternatives and the anticipated impacts of each.

While the United States owns the land surface within the Refuge, portions of the subsurface estate are owned by CIRI. CIRI is an Alaska Native regional corporation established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA; 43 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*). CIRI received the subsurface oil, gas, and coal estate to nearly 200,000

Dear Friend of the Chugach National Forest

Do you enjoy the outstanding natural resources and opportunities provided by your National Forest? Would you like to advise the Forest Service on projects that will sustain forest resources and enhance existing infrastructure? If so, please consider applying for a Chugach National Forest Resource Advisory Committee (RAC)!

The Chugach National Forest has two RACs: one spanning Prince William Sound, and another encompassing the communities along the road system that connect the Kenai Peninsula with Anchorage. The RACs work collaboratively to advise the Forest Service on projects funded by federal dollars provided by the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Public Law 110-343).

RAC Member applications will be accepted through January 31, 2013. The application form and additional information on RAC membership requirements are available by contacting April Sanders, Kenai Peninsula-Anchorage Borough RAC Coordinator, at (907) 754-2313, amsanders@fs.fed.us or Nancy O'Brien, Prince William Sound RAC Coordinator, at (907) 424-4722, nobrien@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to engage in the stewardship of your National Forest