

Alaska Lands Update

Interior—Steese Highway

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-Alaska to Host Meetings on a Supplement to the Eastern Interior Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eastern Interior Field Office has announced the initial schedule of public meetings for a Supplement to the Eastern Interior Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). The Supplement amends Alternative D of the Draft RMP/EIS to address hardrock mineral leasing in the White Mountains National Recreation Area. The Supplement and the full Draft RMP/EIS are both available for public comment through **April 11, 2013**.



The BLM is holding public meetings to help familiarize the public with the Supplement and to gather public comments. The field office has announced additional meetings in other communities.

Community	Location	Date	Time
Fairbanks	Morris Thompson Cultural Center	March 5	Open House: 3-7 pm Public Meeting: 7-9 pm
Fort Yukon	Tribal Hall	March 6	Open House: 5-6 pm Public Meeting: 6-8 pm
Eagle	Eagle School	March 11	Public Meeting: 4-7 pm
Eagle Village	Tribal Hall	March 12	Public Meeting: 2-5 pm
Chalkyitsik	Community Hall	March 19	Open House: 5-6 pm Meeting/Hearing: 6-8 pm

(rescheduled from March 1)

For more information, visit the Eastern Interior RMP Home Page at www.blm.gov/ak or contact Jeanie Cole, Planning Team Leader, Eastern Interior Field Office at (907) 474-2340 or (800) 437-7021. ♦

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Comment Deadline Reminders

- BLM Alaska **Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan** supplemental documents on hard rock mining were released on January 11, 2013. A 90-day public comment period for both the Draft RMP/EIS and the Supplement began on that date and will close on April 11, 2013. The project can be found at: <http://www.blm.gov/ak>;
- USF&W Service has extended the comment deadline for its Draft Technical Guidance for selecting **Surrogate Species** in their **Strategic Habitat Conservation** concept until March 29, 2013. The project website can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/landscape-conservation/draft-guidance.html>;
- **BLM Alaska Ring of Fire RMP and Haines Planning Area Amendment** March 14, 2013. The project website is http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning/ring_of_fire_plan/Haines_Block_Supp_EIS_Amend.html;
- The **Tongass National Forest 2008 Land and Resource Management Plan 5-Year Review** is now open for public comment period until June 30, 2013. The documents can be found online at www.fs.usda.gov/main/Tongass/landmanagement/planning;
- **Katmai National Preserve, Brooks River Visitor Access Final Environmental Impact Statement** has been released on Wednesday, February 6, 2013, the project website can be found at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BrooksVisitorAccess>;
- **Izembek Land Exchange/Road Final Environmental Impact Statement and Public Interest Determination** is available for review at: <http://izembek.fws.gov/eis.htm>, public review of the document is open until March 8, 2013;
- **Proposed Wood Bison Reintroduction Project** seeks comments on a proposed rule and draft EA by March 19, 2013. More project information can be found at: <http://alaska.fws.gov/>;
- **USFWS Final Polar Bear Special Rule** was published February 20, 2013. It will take effect on March 22, 2013. To learn more visit: <http://alaska.fws.gov/>;

Documents expected out soon:

- The **Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan** for the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** is still pending Secretary approval. There is no projected release date at this time.

Preferred Alternative Announced for Lake Clark GMP Amendment

The National Park Service is currently developing a general management plan (GMP) amendment for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, which will provide updated direction for managing the park over the next 15 to 20 years. Also, at this time, the National Park Service is updating the wilderness eligibility status for two sections of land in the eastern portion of the park. The NPS newsletter, will also share information about the preferred alternative. The planning team is currently preparing the GMP Amendment/ Environmental Assessment and anticipates releasing the plan to the public for review during the summer of 2013.

The newsletter describes the preferred alternative as well as a timetable for completing the GMP Amendment/EA. The preferred alternative would expand opportunities for a diversity of visitor activities and would protect and maintain wilderness and park resources. This alternative would provide for more prescriptive management in areas that receive higher visitor use, such as in the preserve, near Lake Clark, and in some coastal areas. Other changes would include opening several existing cabins for public use, expanded interpretive services and commercial activities, backcountry hiking trails, and water routes. A range of management actions would be available to protect the resources in high-use destination areas. A modest approach to improved infrastructure would be provided. The Public Comment period is open from **2/19/2013 to 3/19/2013**. For more information visit: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>.

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.usda.gov/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/>



Secretary Salazar Finalizes Plan for NPR-A

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar signed the Record of Decision for the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska on February 21, 2013. The final action allows for the development of 72 percent of the estimated economically recoverable oil in the nearly 23-million-acre Reserve, while protecting the vital subsistence resources of Alaska Natives and the habitat of world-class wildlife populations. For more information visit <http://www.blm.gov/ak/>.

Commission Members

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Alex Tarnai, Tanana (G)

Frank Woods, Dillingham (G)

(S) SENATE APPOINTMENT

(H) HOUSE APPOINTMENT

(G) GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENT

Tongass National Forest Wrangell – Petersburg Weed Management Project Scoping Report

The US Forest Service is seeking additional public input as preparations are made to write the Wrangell – Petersburg Weed Management Project environmental assessment and decision notice planned for completion this coming May.

Please review the February 2013 scoping report online <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=37523>. The report includes the updated proposed action and project description. Comments on this project can be submitted electronically at comments-alaska-tongass-petersburg@fs.fed.us or mailed to the address provided below.

The purpose of this comment period is to provide the public an opportunity for early and meaningful participation on this proposed action prior to a decision by the Responsible Officials. Individuals or non-federal organizations who submit written comments or otherwise express interest in this particular action during the comment periods will be eligible to appeal the decision as specified at 36 CFR 215.6.

Additional information regarding this action can be obtained from: Carey Case, Team Leader USDA Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Petersburg Ranger District; PO Box 1328; 12 N. Nordic Drive; Petersburg, AK 99833; (907) 772-3871

Those who submit written comments or otherwise express interest in this particular action during the comment periods will be eligible to appeal the decision as specified at 36 CFR 215.6.

We look forward to your participation. Your input and ideas will help ensure a successful assessment. ♦

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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.



Angoon Airport EIS News and Updates

The FAA is pleased to announce that they have posted a Project Update for February on their Angoon Airport project website located at

www.angoonairporteis.com.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the EIS Project Manager, Leslie Grey at (907) 271-5453 or by e-mail at Leslie.Grey@faa.gov. ♦

Federal Road Decision Threatens King Cove

On February 5, 2013, Governor Sean Parnell expressed deep frustration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) selection of a "no action" alternative in the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the King Cove to Cold Bay access project.

"I cannot fathom why the Fish and Wildlife Service prioritized a perceived risk to birds over an existing threat to human life," Governor Parnell said. "After years of good faith efforts by the State of Alaska, the Alaska Legislature, the Aleutians East Borough, the City of King Cove, the King Cove Corporation, the Agdaagux Tribe, the Belkofski Tribe, and local residents to work with the federal government, the USFWS chose to deny King Cove residents access to basic services, like all-weather medical evacuation."

The road alternatives in the EIS require roughly 200 acres of federal land for a nine-mile road corridor to complete a 25-mile link between King Cove and Cold Bay. In a land exchange that depends on a road being built, the state and King

Cove Corporation offered approximately 56,000 acres to be added to the Izembek and Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge.

The road alternatives would complete a 25-mile link between King Cove and Cold Bay's all-weather airport. The community of King Cove and the Aleutians East Borough have sought the road for many years as an alternative to a weather-dependent hovercraft. Operation of the hovercraft has proven very expensive and unreliable in bad weather. A road link is particularly important when residents of King Cove have medical emergencies and need to be evacuated by air ambulance.

"The weather in that region is some of the most dangerous in the world," Governor Parnell added. "The residents need and deserve a safe, reliable transportation option. A road will save lives, and is the only workable long-term solution."

The state urges the USFWS to reconsider the selection of the "no action" alternative before they complete the record of decision. ♦

Iditarod Ceremonial Start Viewing

Come view the Ceremonial Start of the 2013 Iditarod Sled Dog Race with other mushing enthusiasts!

Saturday, March 2, 2013 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.; Race viewing at the BLM Campbell Tract 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Exhibits, activities, hot cocoa & more at the Science Center BLM Campbell Tract Facility, Anchorage (off 68th Avenue & Elmore Road). Download Ceremonial Start Visitor Brochure with parking map and bus routes at the website below.

The first mushers and dogsled teams will leave downtown Anchorage at 10 a.m. and take approximately 45 minutes to reach the Campbell Tract.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you enjoy the Iditarod Sled Dog Race Ceremonial Start:

- Parking is available at the BLM office building, Kasuun Elementary and Abbott Loop Community Park. No parking on Science Center Road or at the Science Center.
- Free shuttle buses are available between parking lots and race viewing areas.
- For your safety and the safety of sled dogs, please stay on designated viewing trails.
- Pets must be leashed at all times. Better yet, leave the family dog home on this day to avoid conflicts with sled dogs.



The Science Center will be open. Come in to warm up, enjoy refreshments, use the restrooms, and mingle with other Iditarod fans. Be sure to check out the Iditarod National Historic Trail website for exhibits and activities inside the center.

For more information about viewing the Iditarod Sled Dog Race Ceremonial Start at the BLM Campbell Tract, contact the Science Center at 267-1247, website: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/nlcs/iditarod.html>. ♦

BLM Seeks Nominations to BLM-Alaska Resource Advisory Council

The Bureau of Land Management in Alaska is inviting Alaskans to apply or nominate others to serve in one of five open positions on its 15-member Resource Advisory Council (RAC). The RAC receives updates on agency activities and advises BLM-Alaska on public land issues. Involved Alaskans benefit public land management by helping reduce conflict, improve public understanding, and assist managers assess public attitudes on issues, land use plans, and programs.

"I value the insight and recommendations provided to BLM-Alaska by our Resource Advisory Council members," says Alaska State Director Bud Cribley. "We have new resource management plans in progress and discussion with our RAC members enhances our agency's ability to manage the public lands for multiple uses while preserving these resources for future generations to enjoy."

The deadline for applications and nominations is March 14, 2013. Applicants and nominees must be residents of Alaska and may apply directly or nominate others to serve. Selection criteria include training, education, and knowledge of the RAC's geographical area. A completed background information form, letter(s) of reference from represented interests or organizations and other related information are required. Members are selected for their expertise and interest in natural resource issues.

The updated application/nomination packet is available on the BLM-Alaska website at: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/res/rac.html>. ♦

Environmental Assessment on Plowing of Denali Park Road Available for Public Comment

An EA evaluating draft alternatives for plowing the Denali Park Road beyond park headquarters during the winter is now available for public comment. The National Park Service (NPS) is considering plowing the road as far as the Mountain Vista Rest Area (Mile 12) in order to provide vehicle access to an additional nine miles of the road. Goals of each of the three action alternatives evaluated in the EA include increasing the range of recreational opportunities available to winter visitors and providing winter visitors opportunities to potentially view Mt. McKinley from within the park.

Commercial vehicles would be allowed to travel this portion of the road during periods when park concession transportation is not available.

The NPS has developed a range of three action alternatives and one no action alternative for consideration:

- Alternative 1 – No Action – No plowing beyond Park Headquarters (Mile 3). During the winter months snow on one lane of the Park Road would be packed from Mile 3 to Mile 7 to mitigate the buildup of overflow ice on the road. This section of the road would continue to be a designated backcountry hiker area during winter months.
- Alternative 2 – Plow road for full winter season. The NPS would keep the Denali Park Road open to the Mountain Vista Rest Area year round. The Spring Trail would be improved to provide safer access, which would include rerouting up to 1000 feet of the trail. Some minor improvements to the rest area would also be necessary. The section of road between Mile 3 to Mile 12 would no longer be part of the winter backcountry hiker area as designated in the Backcountry Management Plan. Implementation of this alternative may include a phased approach with a trial period

as outlined in Alternative 4, followed by opening the road in mid-January as outlined in Alternative 3 prior to opening the road for the entire winter in the future.

- Alternative 3 – Plow road for partial winter season beginning mid-January. The NPS would open the Park Road for vehicle use in mid-January to the Mountain Vista Rest Area. Components of this alternative include minor work on the Spring Trail and minimal improvements to the rest area. The road from Mile 3 to Mile 12 would not be a winter backcountry hiker area during these months. Implementation of this alternative may include a phased approach with a trial period as outlined in Alternative 4.
- Alternative 4 – Plow road on a trial basis for 3-5 years beginning mid-February (NPS preferred). The NPS would open the Park Road to the Mountain Vista Rest Area for vehicle use in mid-February for a three – five year trial period. No improvements to the Spring Trail or rest area are included in this alternative.

The NPS has published a draft EA entitled "Winter Road Plowing". It is available at the NPS planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Comments on the EA may be submitted through Saturday, March 16, 2013, preferably via the website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Comments may also be faxed to (907) 683-9612, or mailed to the address below:

Superintendent; Denali National Park and Preserve ATTN: Winter Road Plowing EA; P.O. Box 9; Denali Park, AK 99755. For more information or questions about the EA, please contact Paula Homan, Project Planning Lead, at 907- 683-6223 or paula_homan@nps.gov. ♦

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Final Polar Bear Special Rule

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has completed a Special Rule establishing how activities that may harm the threatened polar bear will be managed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Final Special Rule effectively maintains the management and conservation framework that has been in effect for the polar bear since it was first protected under the ESA in 2008.

The Final Special Rule, issued under Section 4(d) of the ESA, avoids redundant regulation under the ESA by adopting the longstanding and more stringent protections of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as the primary regulatory provisions for this threatened species.

"This rule effectively continues management of polar bears under the same guidelines that have been in place since the original listing in 2008," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Alaska Regional Director Geoff Haskett. "By maintaining the stricter MMPA incidental take prohibition, which include provisions stricter than those imposed by the ESA, we can assure protection of this iconic species while continuing to allow those who live and work in polar bear habitat to employ practices that will reduce bear/human interactions for the benefit of both polar bears and people."

The Final Special Rule does not affect the continued subsistence harvest or the production and sale of polar bear handicrafts by Alaska Natives. Those activities are already exempted under the ESA and the MMPA. The rule does enable the continued noncommercial export of Native handicrafts made from polar bear parts and cultural exchange that would otherwise require an ESA permit as a result of the polar bear listing.

The Final Special Rule was published in the Federal Register on February 20, 2013. To download a copy of the Final Special Rule, final EA and learn about other issues on polar bear conservation, please visit <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/polarbear/esa.htm>.

For further information contact Charles Hamilton, Marine Mammals Management Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 7, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 341, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, telephone 907-786-3800. ♦

Tongass Forest Plan Comment Period Extended

The Tongass National Forest has extended the comment period for its main guiding document, the 2008 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The Forest is looking for feedback from the public on whether the plan is working or if changes are needed.

The public comment period is now open until **June 30, 2013**. The Tongass has and will continue to solicit comments through public and stakeholders meetings, government-to-government consultation with Southeast Alaska tribes, and written comments. Comments can be submitted online at www.tnf-5yearreview.com or by mail addresses to: Tongass National Forest/ TNF 5-Year Review/ 648 Mission Street/ Ketchikan, Alaska 99901-6591. For more information about the 5-year Tongass Plan review go to the Tongass website at www.fs.usda.gov/main/Tongass/landmanagement/planning.

To receive updates and notifications regarding this project, join the Tongass National Forest 5 Year Review Mailing List by clicking the link on the project website above.

To discuss the five-year review of the Tongass Forest Plan, contact Sue Jennings at comments-alaska-tongass@fs.fed.us (907) 772-5864. ♦

Shoreline II Outfitter and Guide Management Plan Public Meetings

Learn about and share your thoughts on outfitting and guide recreational use on National Forest System lands on the Hoonah, Juneau, and Sitka Ranger Districts and Admiralty National Monument.

Angoon: Wednesday, March 27, 6-9 p.m., at the Angoon Community Association;

Juneau: Thursday, March 14, 4-7 p.m., at the Juneau Ranger District Office;

Sitka: Thursday, March 14, 5-7 p.m., Harrigan Centennial Hall;

Other communities to be determined.

For more information on this project, check out go.usa.gov/Pzi or contact Lorelei Haukness, the Project team leader, at 907-228-4102. ♦



Clarification of Select Terms under the Marine Mammal Protection Act with Regard to Sea Otters

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Alaska released on March 1, 2013, a draft document for public review clarifying the interpretation of the terms "significantly altered from their natural form," "coastal dwelling," and "mass produced" as they apply to Alaska Native handicrafts and clothing made from sea otter parts under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Comments on this draft document are being accepted until May 17, 2013. To view the document or offer comments, please go to <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/current.htm>.

Draft Peer Review Plan Completed for the Proposed Wood Bison Introduction Project

On February 26, 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it has completed a draft Peer Review Plan for the Proposed Reintroduction of a Nonessential Experimental Population (NEP) of Wood Bison in Alaska. The plan is available for review and comment through March 19, 2013. The nomination of potential peer reviewers will consider the following criteria:

- Is the reviewer an expert on wood bison or similar species biology?
- The potential reviewer should not be employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or any State fish and game agency in states within the NEP area (Alaska).
- Is the reviewer recognized by his or her peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful? In addition, the reviewer should be comfortable sharing his or her knowledge and perspectives and openly identifying his or her knowledge gaps.
- Is there a Conflict of Interest? The reviewer should not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair his or her objectivity or create an unfair competitive advantage.

The USFWS will solicit reviews from at least three qualified experts. Public comments on the proposed rule are being accepted until March 19, 2013. Comments on the draft peer review plan are also being accepted on or before March 19, 2013 and can be submitted via email to Rebecca Toland, email rebecca_toland@fws.gov include "Wood Bison Draft Peer Review Plan Comment" in the subject line.