

Alaska Lands Update

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

Hills in Summer, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; Photo Credit—USFWS

Draft Land Protection Plans Open for Comment

The National Park Service has released draft land protection plans for Lake Clark and Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserves. The plans will be open for public comment through July 10.

Land protection plans are required for all National Park System areas that contain private or nonfederal lands or interests within their boundary. The plan articulates what lands or interests in land the park may have and what means of protection are available to achieve the purposes for which the unit was created. A land protection plan is not an offer to purchase land, nor does it diminish the rights of non-federal landowners. The plan is intended to guide the park's land protection activities subject to the availability of funds and other constraints. Most Alaska parks developed a land protection plan in the mid-1980s as part of their broader general management plans, although Lake Clark did not have such a plan. Most Alaska parks, including Gates of the Arctic and Lake Clark,

have a significant amount of non-federal land within their boundaries. The non-federal lands are a mix of small Native allotments and individual holdings, and typically larger tracts of land owned by Native corporations or the State of Alaska.

Comments may be submitted by following the links to Lake Clark or Gates of the Arctic on the Planning, Environment and Public Comment website located at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/publicHome.cfm>.

For additional information on Land Protection Plans for Alaska's national parks, please contact Chuck Gilbert at 907-644-3426 or Joan Darnell at 907-644-3526. ♦

BLM-Alaska Announces New Deputy State Director for Resources

Steve Cohn has been named the new Deputy State Director for Resources for the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska. Cohn arrived in Alaska on May 30.

Cohn comes to Alaska from the BLM Washington Office, where he was the Division Chief of the National Landscape Conservation System. As the Director for Resources, Cohn will oversee the planning, renewable resources and energy and minerals branches. He will be responsible for projects including land use planning decisions, recreation and resource development, oil and gas resource development, and environmental cleanup projects on public lands. "Steven brings a wealth of expertise and we are excited to have him here," said BLM-Alaska State Director Bud Cribley. "His experience will be a great asset to public land management in Alaska." ♦

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Brown Bear in Summer
Photo Credit—USFWS

Deadlines and Reminders

- 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;
- The USF&W Service **Draft Revised Marine Mammal Stock Assessment Reports for the three stocks of northern sea otters and the Pacific walrus in Alaska** is open for public comment for 90-days after it has been published in the Federal Register. Access the reports at <http://www.regulations.gov> under Docket No. FWS-R7-ES-2012-0019 or by navigating to the species information pages at <http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/reports.htm>;
- **Draft land protection plans for Lake Clark National Park & Preserve, and Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve** are open for public comment through July 10; Find more information and to submit comments visit the NPS PEPC website located at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/publicHome.cfm> and follow the links;
- BLM-AK is accepting nominations and comments on the **2013 Oil and Gas sales in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska**; A map showing the available areas can be found at BLM-AK's website: <http://www.blm.gov/ak>; for more information contact Erin Curtis, 907-271-4418, ecurtis@blm.gov or Thom Jennings, 907-271-3335, tjennings@blm.gov;
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve EA on the **Shamrock Groups Mining Plan of Operations** is open for comments until July 3, 2013; For more information, to view the EA or submit a comment visit the project website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=21&projectID=44300&documentID=53789>; or call Bruce Rogers at 907-822-7276.

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/>

Service Publishes Incidental Take Regulations for Polar Bears and Walrus

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Region announced that on June 12, 2013, Incidental Take Regulations (ITRs) will be published in the *Federal Register* for the non-lethal, incidental take of small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walrus that may result from ongoing oil and gas activities in the Chukchi Sea and the adjacent western coast of Alaska. Similar regulations have been in place in the Chukchi Sea since 2008, and have been successful in minimizing the effects of industrial activities on polar bears and walrus,

while monitoring the levels of such interactions.

In Alaska, the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) is one of the laws that protect polar bears, Pacific walruses and sea otters by prohibiting "take" of these animals. The MMPA also provides for specific exceptions to the prohibition on taking, including a provision that allows U.S. citizens to take small numbers of marine mammals incidental to specified activities provid-

ed the Service has determined that any such taking would have no more than a negligible impact on the species and does not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species for subsistence uses. The oil and gas industry, through the Alaska Oil and Gas Association, petitioned the Service to develop these ITRs. The action is specified under Sections 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA, which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to allow, upon request, the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals (including polar bears, Pacific walruses and sea otters) by U.S. citizens who engage in a specified activity (other than commercial fishing) within a specified geographical region. Incidental Take Regulations can be issued for up to five years.

Through the ITRs, the Service also specifies monitoring and reporting requirements which provide a basis for evaluating potential impacts of current and future activities on polar bears and Pacific walruses. Without incidental take authorizations, commercial activities would still continue; however, the Service would have no formal means to require monitoring and mitigation of specific activities under the MMPA. Any form of resulting "take" would be a violation of the MMPA.

The regulations were proposed on January 9 of this year; a 30-day public comment period closed February 9, 2013. They will go into effect on June 12, 2013, and remain effective through June 12, 2018.

For more information about the Incidental Take Authorization under the MMPA, please visit http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/gen_itr_iha.htm, or contact Cathy Rezabeck, 907-786-3351 or Cathy_rezabeck@fws.gov. ♦



Walrus Haul-Out, Round Island
Photo Credit — USFWS

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Commission Staff

Stan Leaphart

Executive Director
907-374-3737

stan.leaphart@alaska.gov

Karrie Improte

Commission Assistant
907-451-2035

karrie.improte@alaska.gov

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.

Department of Interior Announces Nearly \$400 Million in 'Payment In Lieu of Taxes' Payments to Rural Communities

As Part of the Obama Administration's commitment to rural communities, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced on June 13, that about 1,900 local governments around the Nation are receiving a total of \$399.8 million under the 2013 Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. The PILT program compensates counties and local governments for non-taxable federal land in their jurisdictions. The 2013 authorized level is \$421.7 million, which was reduced by \$21.5 million due to sequestration. After administrative expenses, a total of \$399.8 million is allocated for payments to counties. A full list of funding by state and county is available at: <http://www.doi.gov/pilt>.

"Rural communities are a pillar of a strong America, contributing significantly to the nation's security, prosperity and economic strength," Secretary Jewell said. "President Obama has made job creation and opportunity in rural areas a top priority for his Administration and has fought for continuing the PILT program to compensate and support local governments."

"These PILT payments will help local governments carry out vital services, such as firefighting and police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search and rescue operations. They will keep essential public employees on the job," added Jewell. "President Obama has proposed to fully fund the PILT program in FY 2014, and we encourage Congress to take the required action to make sure this important program continues."

PILT program eligibility is reserved for local governments (mostly rural counties) that contain non-taxable federal lands and provide vital services, such as public safety, housing, social services and transportation. These jurisdictions provide significant support for national parks, wildlife refuges and recreation areas throughout the year. PILT seeks to compensate them for their support and foregoing tax revenue from these federal lands.

This year's PILT program is the last to be funded under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141), which reau-

thorized PILT for 2013 and funded full entitlement levels of the program. From 2008 through 2012, the program was funded under the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008. The President's fiscal year 2014 budget proposes to extend mandatory full funding for the program for another year while a sustainable long-term funding solution is developed for the PILT program.

The Interior Department collects about \$14 billion in revenue annually from commercial activities on federal lands, such as oil and gas leasing, livestock grazing and timber harvesting. A portion of these revenues are shared with states and counties in the form of revenue-sharing payments. The balance is

Deckhand, M/V Tiglax
Photo Credit— USFWS



deposited in the U.S. Treasury, which in turn pays for a broad array of federal activities, including PILT funding to counties.

Using a formula provided by statute, the annual PILT payments to local governments are computed based on the number of acres of federal entitlement land within each county or jurisdiction and the population of that county or jurisdiction. The lands include the National Forest and National Park Systems, the areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management, those affected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation water resource development projects, and others.

For more information contact: Jessica Kershaw, Department of the Interior, Washington DC, ph. 202-208-6416. ♦

FONSI for Hunting Guide Concessions in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, Alaska

The National Park Service has approved a decision to select Alternative C on the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve Sport Hunting Guide Concessions Environmental Assessment. Alternative C, the NPS preferred alternative, will award up to three guided hunting contracts for separate guide areas in the Preserve. Guided hunting operations will not be permitted within a designated area of about 44 square miles around the Serpentine Hot Springs. This restricted area may be re-evaluated in the future. Guide areas in the preserve will be based on four State Guide Use Areas (GUAs) that occur in the preserve. Client limits for

each contract will be apportioned according to GUAs and area big game resources available to each awardee. Guided sport hunting services are considered to be an appropriate and necessary means to provide hunting opportunities for both Alaska resident and nonresident hunters in Alaska national preserves. Alternative C enables the NPS to authorize guided hunting services within the preserve to provide an opportunity for all interested U.S. citizens to hunt brown bear and foreign hunters to hunt any big game animal in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve pursuant to federal and State of Alaska laws and regulation's. This alterna-

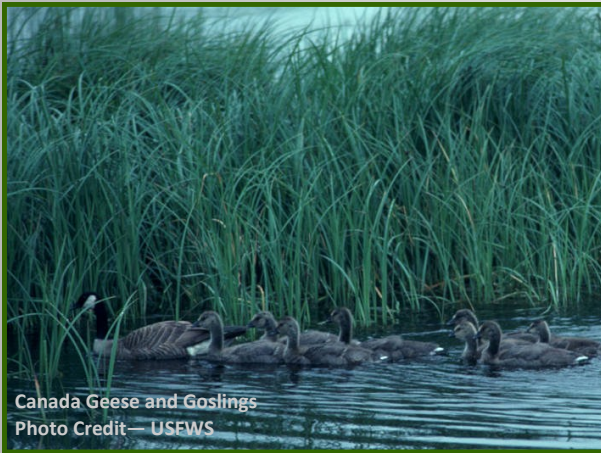
tive also minimizes conflicts with local subsistence hunters better than alternative A, the no-action alternative, and alternative B, with overlapping guide use areas, because it distributes up to 20 guided hunters over 2.5 million acres and farther from areas close to local rural communities.

For more information contact Jeanette Koelsch, Superintendent, 907-443-6101, or email at jeanette.koelsch@nps.gov. A copy of the FONSI can be found at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=6&projectID=38051&documentID=53922>. ♦

Interior Department to Hire Nearly 17,000 Young People to Work on Public Lands

In response to [President Obama's challenge](#) to expand employment opportunities for youth, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced \$4.2 million in grants to support conservation employment and mentoring opportunities for more than 600 young people ages 15-25 on public lands across the country. The grants, which support the Obama Administration's efforts to develop a [21st Century Conservation Service Corps \(21CSC\)](#), include \$1.27 million from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), which helped leverage \$2.65 million from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and \$275,000 from Wells Fargo. "This initiative is a model of how public-private partnerships can both conserve our land and provide opportunities for our young people to obtain jobs skills and broaden their horizons by connecting with the great outdoors," said Secretary Jewell. "Through the 21CSC, we hope to expand these partnerships that foster economic opportunities and create a connection with nature for young people that lasts a lifetime."

The [21st Century Conservation Service Corps](#) is a national collaborative effort to put America's youth and returning veterans to work protecting, restoring and enhancing America's great outdoors. This year, the Department plans to provide conservation employment opportunities to nearly 17,000 youth in national parks, wildlife refuges, and on oth-



Canada Geese and Goslings
Photo Credit— USEWS

er public lands.

The grants announced today, awarded through a competitive process, will support 22 projects on public lands throughout the West. They are funded through the [America's Great Outdoors: Developing the Next Generation of Conservationists](#) initiative. In addition to providing valuable conservation work experience, the grants will result in more than 1,000 volunteer opportunities to expose young people to the great outdoors.

Of 22 projects announced, one is in Alaska: **64 Degrees North Restoration:** The Salcha Delta Soil and Water Conservation District, housed in Delta Junction Alaska, is working with the BLM and other federal agencies in environmental stewardship programs to connect the land and people through technical guidance resource management assistance. This project will connect youth to the environment by hiring five rural Alaskan youth (ranging in age from 14 to 25) and one crew leader through an eight-week educational instruction and hands-on conservation program working with BLM field staff and wildlife biologists to develop skills for conservation careers. \$19,850 BLM; \$25,000 Wells Fargo; \$50,000 non-federal funds.

Additional details and a list all projects is available at: <http://www.doi.gov/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=0/vl8sgGUS&dl>. ♦

New Reports Detail Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources in America's National Parks

National Park Service scientists and managers are taking a close look at the overall condition of the national parks in their care and have begun to report their findings in a series of State of the Park reports.

"As the stewards of America's national parks, we want to make sure that future generations can enjoy parks that are in as good as or better shape as they are today," said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. "To succeed, we need to know the current condition of the parks, make management decisions to maintain or improve their condition, and keep the public informed as we proceed."

The State of the Parks project is one of 39 significant actions Jarvis laid out in *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement*. At least 50 national parks are expected to complete these in-depth condition assessments by 2016, the National Park Service's centennial.

Each park report has a "snapshot" of the status and trends in the condition of its most important resources and values; summarizes and communicates complex scientific, scholarly, and park operations information; highlights the stewardship efforts of park staff to maintain or improve the condition of park resources; and identifies key issues and challenges facing park managers.

State of the Park Reports for [Big Hole National Battlefield](#) (Mont.), [Cabrillo National Monument](#) (Calif.), [Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park](#) (Alaska), [Mississippi National River and Recreation Area](#) (Minn.), [Salem Maritime National Historic Site](#) (Boston), [Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site](#) (Boston), and [Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#) (Ariz.) are online at www.nps.gov/stateoftheparks/ and on each park's website. ♦

BLM Plan Outlines Aggressive, Flexible Legacy Well Clean-Up Priorities

As part of its continuing commitment to protect public safety and Alaska's environment, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Anchorage released a draft plan on May 8, 2013 outlining priorities and actions it will take in the near-term to plug and clean up legacy wells in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A). The BLM is releasing the draft plan to cooperators for review and has posted it online at <http://www.blm.gov/ak>.

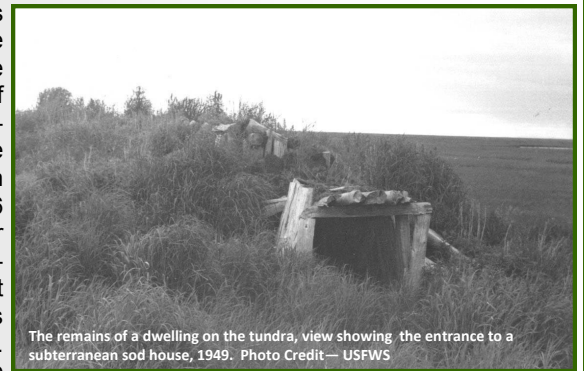
"We recognize the importance of cleaning up these well sites. This plan lays out an aggressive strategy to address some of the highest priority wells," said BLM Alaska State Director Bud Cribley. "Full remediation of the wells that the BLM has inherited will require tremendous resources over the coming years, but the BLM is committed to working with the state and villages to get the job done. I want to thank Senators Murkowski and Begich for their leadership in continuing to draw attention to this important issue."

The plan, titled the "2013 Legacy Wells Strategic Plan", is based on a thorough site-by-site assessment of each well site. Of the 136 wells drilled between 1944 and 1982 by the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), more than half require no further action because they have been remediated or pose no threat to the public or environment. An additional 18 wells are in use by the USGS as part of climate change monitoring in the Arctic. The remaining 50 wells will, according

to assessments conducted by the BLM, require various levels of additional clean-up work. The strategic plan also identifies 16 priority wells for clean-up, including some that pose high risks to the surface. Since 2002, the federal government has spent nearly \$86 million plugging 18 legacy wells and cleaning the surface at priority sites.

The exploratory wells were initially drilled by the U.S. Navy and the USGS to gather geologic data or to identify petroleum reserves. In 1982, the BLM inherited the responsibility to assess, and if necessary, plug and clean up wells and surface sites.

For more information contact Erin Curtis, 907-271-4418, ecurtis@blm.gov. ♦



The remains of a dwelling on the tundra, view showing the entrance to a subterranean sod house, 1949. Photo Credit— USFWS

BLM Requests Nominations and Comments for 2013 NPR-A Oil & Gas Lease Sale

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is calling for nominations and comments on available tracts to be considered for its scheduled November 2013 oil and gas lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A). This will be the third sale since President Obama directed the Department of the Interior to conduct annual oil and gas lease sales in the NPR-A.

The 'Call for Nominations and Comments', published in *Federal Register* on June 3, 2013, announced a 45-day period in which interested parties may nominate or comment on available tracts. The notice is the first step in the process leading up to the next oil and gas lease sale, which is tentatively scheduled for November

2013. BLM-Alaska must receive all nominations and comments on these tracts for consideration on or before July 18, 2013.

"With the new Record of Decision for the NPR-A Integrated Activity Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement in place, there is new interest in leasing in the NPR-A," said Bud Cribley, BLM-Alaska State Director. "This call for nominations and comments gives industry, conservation groups and other stakeholders the opportunity to provide input into which tracts should be included in or excluded from the sale."

To select which tracts will be available for the oil and gas lease sale, the BLM-Alaska State Director will consider the results from the Call for Nominations and

Comments, existing natural resource and environmental data, the location of existing leases, multiple use conflicts, resource potential, industry interest, and other available information. There are 894 tracts on approximately 10.3 million acres that will be available for nomination and comment under this lease sale. Currently there are 191 authorized oil and gas leases totaling 1,534,626 acres in the NPR-A.

A map showing the available areas can be found at BLM-AK's website: <http://www.blm.gov/ak>. For more information contact Erin Curtis, 907-271-4418, ecurtis@blm.gov or Thom Jennings, 907-271-3335, tjenning@blm.gov. ♦

Shamrock Group Mining Plan of Operations Environmental Assessment

Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve has released the public review version of the Shamrock Mining Plan of Operations and Environmental Assessment. The National Park Service (NPS) is considering approval of a mining plan of operations which was submitted by Thomas and Kathryn Lamal for the purpose of accessing and conducting a suction dredge placer gold mining operation on the Shamrock Group unpatented mining claims located in the Gold Hill area within the preserve of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The Lamal's, the claimant and operator of the claims, submitted a Mining Plan of Operations in November 2012 after consultation with NPS geologists, as required by Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 9A, Section 9.9, detailing their proposed means and methods.

The environmental assessment examines and analyzes the proposed mining operations and reasonable alternatives to ensure that it satisfies the National Park Service requirements, and would not injure or adversely affect federally owned land.

The EA has been prepared in ac-

cordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, regulations of the Council of Environmental Quality, the Mining in the Parks Act of 1976 and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 9A), as well as ANILCA 1110(b). The EA considers two alternatives, the environmental consequences from implementation of those alternatives and is available for public review and comment for one month. All comments must be submitted by July 3, 2013. Public comments will be addressed in the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) that will accompany the final Shamrock Mining Plan of Operations and Environmental Assessment.

For more information, view the EA or submit a comment visit the project website at:

[http://parkplanning.nps.gov/
document.cfm?](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?)

[parkID=21&projectID=44300&docu-
mentID=53789](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=21&projectID=44300&documentID=53789); or call Bruce Rogers at 907-822-7276. ♦

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dnr.alaska.gov/commission/cacfa/.

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