

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

Comment Sought on Katmai Hunting Environmental Assessment

The National Park Service has prepared an environmental assessment analyzing three alternatives for managing guided hunting services in Katmai National Preserve; and the assessment is open for a 30-day public comment period. Comments must be received by Monday, July 23, 2012.



Guided hunting has occurred in the preserve since before its establishment as a national preserve in 1980. The proposed action would continue guided hunter concession contracts, with an expectation of issuing 10-year contracts beginning with the Fall 2013 hunt. The preferred alternative proposes revisions to the existing guide area boundaries and annual client limits for each of

two guide contracts. The NPS believes the revised boundaries provide a more equitable distribution of business opportunities and a reasonable apportionment of clients to guide area resources, while maintaining other purposes and values for which the area was established.

Guided hunting services are considered to be an appropriate and necessary means to provide hunting opportunities for both Alaska resident and non-resident hunters within national preserves. Alaska state law requires non-resident brown bear hunters to be either accompanied by a licensed guide or a close relative over 19 years old who is an Alaska resident; foreign citizens must have a licensed guide to hunt any big game species.

The environmental assessment is posted on the National Park Service's planning web site, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>. The document may be downloaded from there, and comments may be sent through a link on the same site. Paper copies of the plan may be requested from Katmai National Park, P.O. Box 7, King Salmon, AK 99613, or by phone from (907) 246-3305. Written comments on the plan may be sent to the same mail address by July 23, 2012.

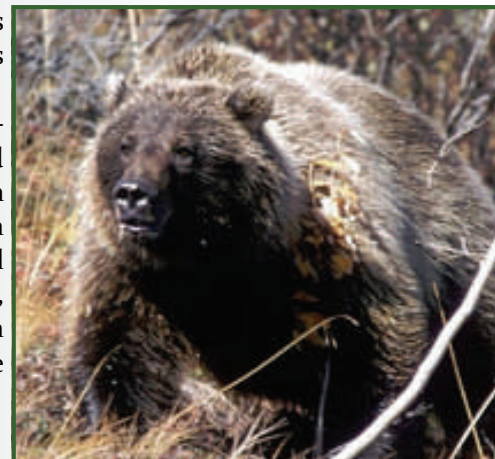
IN THIS ISSUE:

Comment Sought on Katmai Hunting EA - 1

Denali Park Road Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment Available for Public Comment - 2

Final Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan Available - 3

Plan for National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Receives 400,000 Comment - 3
Katmai NP Considers Bridge Options at Brooks Camp -



Comment Deadline Reminders

- BLM Alaska Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan comment deadline July 23, website <http://www.blm.gov/ak>;
- Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex Modernization and Enhancement Draft Environmental Impact Statement comment period has been extended to July 9, 2012, website - www.iparceis.com.

Denali Park Road Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment Available for Public Comment

The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, is considering a road rehabilitation project on two sections of the Denali Park Road in Denali National Park and Preserve, at mile 4.5 and between Mile 24.3 and 25.0 (Sanctuary Saddle).

The NPS is proposing to address drainage issues and soil movement from the back slope above the road at Sanctuary Saddle and if approved, the project would also add gravel to the road surface, replace ageing culverts, and reshape the road so that the dimensions do not exceed the standard for maximum road width. At Mile 4.5 the NPS



proposes to complete a road rehabilitation project begun in 2008. The back slope would be stabilized by spreading rock across the surface. This project, if approved, would take place during the summer of 2013.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluates two action alternatives. Under Alternative 2, the preferred alternative, the NPS would install an additional 1,256

linear feet of rock at Mile 4.5. At the Sanctuary Saddle, the NPS would install about 300 feet of ditch and approximately 1,450 linear feet of rock on the back slope.

Under both action alternatives, the Sanctuary Saddle section of road would be standardized to a width of 26 feet, additional gravel would be added to the road surface, and the road would be smoothed.

The NPS has published an (EA) for this project entitled "Rehabilitation of the Park Road in the Sanctuary Saddle and 4.5 Mile Areas." It is available on the NPS planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=9&projectID=39928&documentID=48184>

The EA analyzes the impacts of the "No Action" alternative and the two action alternatives.

Comments on the EA may be submitted through Monday, July 23, 2012, preferably via the web site above. Comments may also be mailed to: Superintendent, Attn: Sanctuary EA, Denali National Park and Preserve, P.O. Box 9, Denali Park, AK 99755 or faxed to 907-683-9612.

For questions or paper copies of the EA, please contact Steve Carwile at 907-644-3612 or steve_carwile@nps.gov.

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Commission Staff

Stan Leaphart
Executive Director
907-374-3737
stanley.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.

Final Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan Available

The National Park Service has announced the availability of the Final Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan, which is available for review through July 30, 2012. The final plan represents the culmination of a four year planning process that determined a preferred alternative for managing vehicle use on the 92-mile Denali Park Road for the next 15 to 20 years.

The final document is available online at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/VMP_Denali.

For additional information on the plan, or to request a hard copy of the document, contact Miriam Valentine at (907) 733-9102 or at Miriam_Valentine@nps.gov.

National Petroleum Reserve Alaska Plan Receives 400,000 Comments

The comment period for the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Draft Integrated Activity Plan and Environmental Impact Statement ended June 15, 2012. During the comment period, the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska received nearly 400,000. These comments received will be considered in preparation of the Final EIS/IAP, which is expected to be completed in November 2012.

“This plan is an important step in our efforts to facilitate the development of oil and gas, while protecting multiple surface resources in the Reserve and honoring Native Alaskans’ subsistence rights,” said BLM-Alaska State Director Bud Cribley. “We have conducted a robust and extensive public outreach program to educate the public about the NPR-A, and to gather comments from people who have a stake in its future. We will fully consider this input in developing the preferred alternative for the NPR-A.”

“Key issues that will be addressed in the plan are oil and gas leasing decisions and the protection of surface resources, including protections for caribou and waterfowl and their habitats near Teshekpuk Lake, and habitat for caribou of the Western Arctic Herd in the Utokok River uplands in the southwestern NPR-A,” said Cribley. “The plan will also consider and establish ground rules for onshore infrastructure, including the potential for a pipeline across the NPR-A.”

“In addition to our efforts to solicit comments on the plan, we tried some creative approaches to educate the public about the significance of the NPR-A, from a resource perspective,” said Cribley. “For example, we hosted a special series of lectures at the BLM-Alaska Campbell Creek Science Center that highlighted the people, the land and the resources found within the NPR-A. We worked with Alaska Public Radio to record and broadcast the lectures and to make them available online.” As part of the outreach for the NPR-A plan, the BLM staff hosted a total of eight public meetings over two weeks from May 14, 2012, through May 24, 2012, in North Slope villages and other locations, including a second meeting in Point Lay for resident involved in subsistence whaling during the first meeting could attend. The BLM also extended the comment period by two weeks.

BLM-Alaska Arctic Field Office Archaeologist Stacy McIntosh’s talk about “People, Land, & Resources of the NPR-A” is available on the Alaska Public Radio website and can be accessed at: <http://www.alaskapublic.org/2012/05/30/people-land-and-resources-in-the-national-petroleum-reserve-alaska/>. Another segment in the series, Arctic Field Office Archaeologist Mike Kunz’s talk on the “Prehistory of the NPR-A,” will be available at a later date.



Bridge Options at Brooks Camp, Katmai Available for Review

The floating bridge connects the facilities at Brooks Camp with trails, bear viewing platforms, park operations buildings and a road leading to the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. The bridge is installed annually in the spring, and is removed as the facilities are closed each September. The Brooks River area sees more than 12,000 visitors each summer, making it the most -visited part of the 4 million acre park in Southwest Alaska. Brown bears frequent the area of the bridge, which is at the outlet of the Brooks River at Naknek Lake. Bears often walk on the bridge, nap along the access trails, or catch salmon adjacent to the bridge – all of which can lead to “bear jams,” or temporary closures of the bridge and trails.

This project is an outgrowth of a 1996 planning effort that resulted in a strategy to relocate the aging Brooks Camp facilities and also proposes changes to the earlier plan, including maintaining current float plane access locations instead of building a new landing/docking area. A draft environmental impact statement analyzing the access options is open for public comment through Monday, August 20, 2012. It contains four bridge replacement alternatives seeking to reduce the risk of human-bear conflicts, provide more dependable access across the river and make easier the eventual relocation of many of the Brooks Camp facilities to less problematic locations. Use of the bridge would be shared by a small number of utility vehicles. The Park Service has identified a preferred alternative which calls for a 350-foot bridge and about 1,200 feet of boardwalk. The bridge is anticipated to be at least 10 feet above the river. The boardwalk would include viewing areas and pullouts. The preferred alternative also calls for the relocation of an existing barge landing about 2,000 feet south of its existing location, farther from the mouth of the river and away from high visitor and bear use areas.

Public comment on the draft EIS is being accepted through August 20, 2012. The document may be downloaded at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=24254>. The website also allows comments to be sent electronically. Requests for paper copies of the document and comments may also be sent to Glen Yankus, NPS, 240 W. 5th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501.

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/>