



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of Natural Resources

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION ON
FEDERAL AREAS
Stan Leaphart, Executive Director

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December 12, 2012

Jeanette Pomrenke
Superintendent
Bering Land Bridge National Preserve
P.O. Box 220
Nome, AK 99762

Dear Superintendent Pomrenke:

The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas (CACFA) has reviewed the *Bering Land Bridge National Preserve Sport Hunting Guide Concessions Environmental Assessment (EA)*. The Commission also had the opportunity to discuss the hunting guide proposals in the EA with Bud Rice at our meeting in Anchorage on November 28, 2012. We appreciate his participation and found his presentation very helpful in understanding the issues for each of the alternatives. We offer the following comments for your consideration in selecting a final alternative.

The Commission is pleased to note that the National Park Service recognizes that guided sport services are an appropriate and necessary means to provide hunting opportunities for both Alaska resident and nonresident hunters within Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. Section 1313 of ANILCA authorizes the taking of wildlife for sport purposes in a national preserve under applicable State and Federal law and regulation.

After considering the three alternatives, the Commission decided to support Alternative C, the National Park Service preferred alternative. Under this alternative, up to 3 sport hunting guide concessions would be licensed for separate guide areas within the preserve. Members felt that separate guide areas would provide the best opportunity for applicants. Additionally, they felt that separate areas are preferred by most guides, as it allows them to better manage their hunting activity. Members also recommended that the National Park Service consult closely with the State of Alaska Big Game Commercial Services Board in deciding on guide use area assignments.

Alternative C would set client limits for one guide use area at 10 per year and a combined total of 10 clients per year for the other guide use areas. This would allow a maximum of 200 clients over the expected ten year life of the concession contracts. In the description of the alternatives,

the EA (pg. 9) states that these limits could be adjusted annually by the Superintendent “depending on wildlife populations and their distributions.” This appears to indicate that the per year limit could be adjusted up or down, but the 10 year maximum limit would still be set at 200 clients for the assigned guide areas. While this approach gives year to year flexibility in making adjustments based on wildlife populations and distributions, it might actually limit flexibility and client opportunities over the 10 year contract life. Another approach might be to set the 10 year 200 client limit as a general target, but consider further adjustments to the maximum limit after 5 years.

Regardless of the approach taken for establishing and/or adjusting client limits, the Commission strongly recommends the National Park Service work closely with the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). These proposed client limits represent an indirect allocation of wildlife resources. Consequently, it is essential that the NPS works closely with the ADF&G to determine harvestable surplus of those resources and to meet biological objectives under the State’s sustained yield principles.

The EA (pp. 8-9) references the 1986 General Management Plan (GMP) for the preserve which states that no temporary facilities other than tents have been used on preserve lands and are not needed in the future. It goes on to state that no long-term facilities or structures would be authorized and are not needed in the future. While recognizing the provisions of ANILCA Section 1316 which allows, subject to reasonable regulation, the use and construction of temporary facilities “directly and necessarily related” to the harvest of fish and game, the GMP did make the determination that new temporary facilities would not be allowed. However, it did not rule out the possibility that prohibition could change.

“In the future, if changing use patterns and further analysis indicate that provisions for temporary facilities are necessary, the National Park Service may propose, with adequate public notice and opportunity to comment, to allow for temporary facilities. In developing such proposals, the Park Service will consider whether adequate alternative means are readily available and whether there may be a potential for adverse impacts on preserve resources and uses, including subsistence.” (GMP pg. 109)

The Commission is not advocating for the establishment of temporary shelters, but suggests that the option remain available, consistent with the GMP for the preserve.

The EA (pg. 54) states: *“The possibility of establishing camps within the Preserve on Native allotments was also mentioned, though it was not clear whether this would be permitted within the Preserve boundaries.”*

We are unaware of any NPS authority that would prevent an allotment owner from entering into a rental or lease agreement with a guide or any other person, even if the allotment is located within the boundary of a national park unit. All certificated Native allotments are private lands and under the provisions of ANILCA Section 103(c) are not subject to the regulations that apply to preserve lands. The sale or lease of a Native allotment in most instances requires approval by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but does not require any approval by the NPS.

From the description in the EA and our discussion with Bud Rice, it appears that the NPS has gone to considerable lengths to consult with and involve local communities and landowners in developing this proposal. We encourage you to continue that consultation as you make your final decisions on authorizing guided hunting in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. That consultation will help ensure that the interests of the local communities and subsistence users are met while also providing for sport hunting activity for other Alaskan hunters and visitors. The Commission is pleased to see the NPS provide this opportunity for guided hunting on the preserve and the positive economic impacts which will result.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment. Please contact our office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stan Leaphart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stan Leaphart
Executive Director

cc: Sue Magee- ANILCA Program Coordinator
Bud Rice – NPS Alaska Regional Office