

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

Arctic Refuge Draft Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan Now Available

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (the Refuge) released its draft revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public review and comment on August 15, 2011. The CCP is the document that guides long-term management of the Refuge.

The Refuge's current CCP is more than 20 years old, and much has changed since then. The draft revised CCP/EIS incorporates new scientific information and changes in laws, policies, and Refuge conditions that

have occurred since the original plan was completed in 1988. The draft also includes a vision statement, a set of management goals and objectives, revised management guidelines, a set of six alternatives, a wilderness review, and a wild and scenic river review. Alternatives focus on potential wilderness and wild river recommendations and management of the Kongakut River.

While the draft plan would make numerous changes to existing management, day-to-day public use of the Refuge would not incur substantial changes. Public access and uses would remain essentially the same as now, and the Refuge's ecological processes would continue to receive a high degree of protection.

Public comments are now being accepted about the draft revised CCP/EIS. The most useful comments will be about specific content in the CCP and important points that were missed. Public comments must be received by November 15, 2011.

To provide comments, and for more information, visit the Refuge website: <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>. Comments may also be submitted to ArcticRefugeCCP@fws.gov, or to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arctic NWR – Sharon Seim, 101 12th Avenue, Room 236, Fairbanks, AK 99701.



2011 Meeting Dates

Fairbanks (open house)	Aug 24
Venetie	Sept 1
Anchorage (open house)	Sept 20
Anchorage (public hearing)	Sept 21
Arctic Village	Oct 4
Fairbanks (public hearing)	Oct 19
Kaktovik	Oct 25
Fort Yukon	Oct 28

Check the web (<http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>) for meeting dates and locations. Meetings will also be announced in each community

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Final EIS on Nabesna Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan

The Department of Interior, National Parks Service (NPS) published a notice in the Federal Registry on Tuesday, August 23, 2011 announcing the release of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management in the Nabesna District of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The FEIS evaluates the environmental impacts of a preferred alternative and four action alternatives for management of off-road vehicles in the Nabesna District. The purpose is to consider opportunities for appropriate and reasonable access to wilderness and backcountry recreational activities, which also accommodates subsistence and access to in-holdings; while protecting scenic quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and other park resource values. This notice officially begins the 30-day waiting period before the Record of Decision can be is-

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The Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) Modernization and Enhancement Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Commission Members

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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.

Wilderness

President Obama hereby proclaims
September 2011 as

National Wilderness Month

"...inviting all Americans to visit and enjoy
our wilderness areas..."

For more information find Proclamation 8704, dated September 1,
2011, as published in the Federal Register / Vol. 76, No. 173, on
Wednesday, 9/7.

Month

The EIS Timeline

Opportunities for Public Involvement

Where We Are Now

Notice of Intent to Prepare JPARC Modernization and Enhancement EIS Published in Federal Register December 10, 2010

3-Month JPARC Scoping Period December 10, 2010 - March 4, 2011

Preparation of Draft JPARC Modernization and Enhancement EIS 2010 - 2011/2012

45-day JPARC Modernization and Enhancement EIS Public Comment Period March 30 - May 15, 2012

Preparation of Final JPARC Modernization and Enhancement EIS 2012 - 2013

Notice of Availability of Final JPARC Modernization and Enhancement EIS 2013

30-day JPARC EIS Waiting Period prior to Record of Decision followed by Formal Airspace Request to FAA 2013/2014

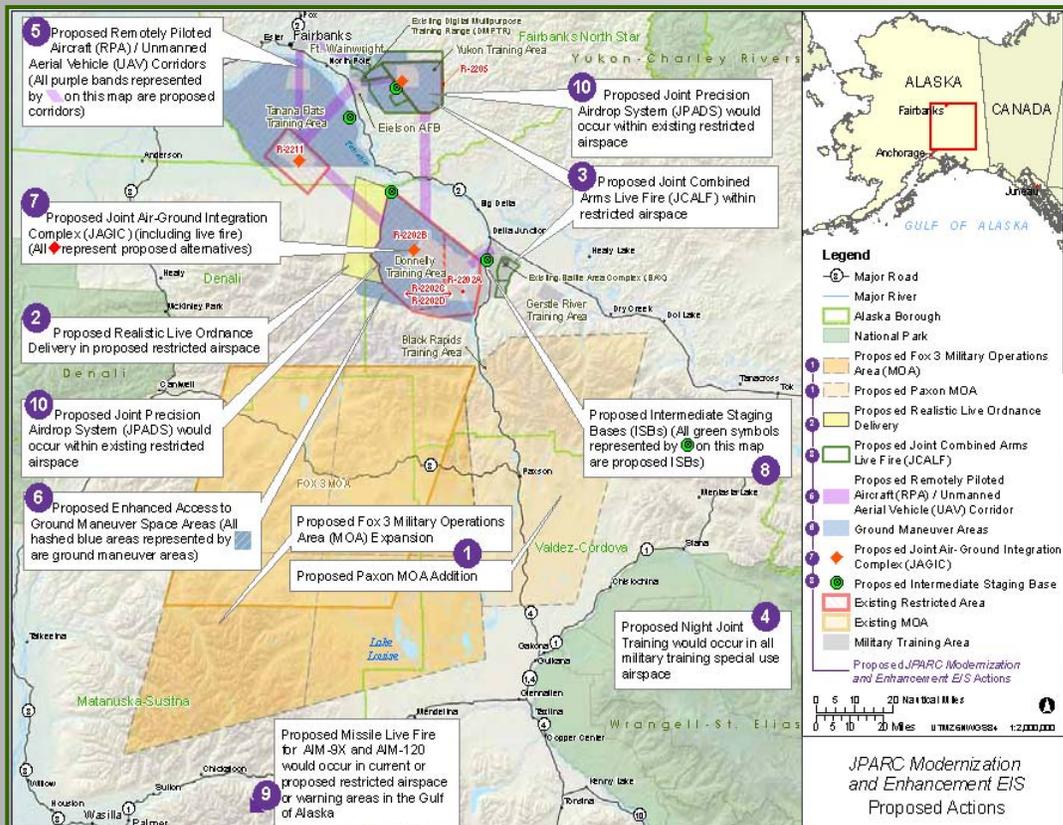
The JPARC consists of all land, air, and sea training areas used by the Army, Navy, and Air Force in Alaska. The military uses the JPARC to conduct testing, training, and to support joint exercises and mission rehearsals. The proposed JPARC enhancements and expansions would:

1. Enable realistic joint training and testing to support emerging technologies,
2. Respond to recent battlefield experiences, and
3. Enable the Services to train with tactics and new weapons systems to meet combat and national security needs so military personnel can succeed in their mutually supportive combat roles when exposed to situations faced in actual combat.

There are 10 proposed actions, see map below, that involve expanding existing areas and/or establishing new Military Operations Areas, restricted airspace, airspace corridors, expanding access to training areas, and developing new ranges and facilities to provide adequate resources to conduct training and testing under realistic and varied conditions. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Army and Air Force is currently in the process of preparing a Draft EIS. In preparation for the Draft EIS, the Alaskan Command conducted a series of public scoping meetings to bring the public into the decision making process, determine the scope of the issues to be addressed and identify the major issues related to the proposed actions. Based on this analysis, modifications have been made to the original alternatives of each proposed action. These modifications are further explained at www.jpargcis.com, follow the link in the upper left to "August 2011 ALCOM Newsletter".

Publication of the Draft EIS is expected in Early 2012. Release of the Draft will initiate a 45-day Public Comment Period. During this time frame, Alaskan Command will conduct public meetings and hearings as another way to solicit comments. For more information, contact Alaskan Command Public Affairs at 907-552-2341 or visit their website www.jpargcis.com.

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Final EIS on Nabesna Off-Road Vehicle Management

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sued.

The nine trails under evaluation were in existence at the time the 13.2-million-acre park and preserve was established in 1980. The use of ORVs was determined to be traditionally employed for subsistence activities in the 1986 General Management Plan. The park issued permits for recreational ORV use of these established trails, in accordance with applicable code. The park issues 200 recreational ORV permits per year on average. The trails also provide for subsistence ORV use and access to in holdings. In 2006 the NPS was sued challenging that the NPS



failed to make the required finding that recreational ORV use is compatible with the purposes and values of the Park and Preserve. As a part of the settlement agreement the NPS agreed to endeavor to complete an EIS, Record of Decision (ROD) and compatibility determination by December 31, 2011. During this time recreational use of ORVs on the Suslota Lake Trail, Tanada Lake Trail, and a portion of the Copper Lake Trail has been permitted only when the ground is frozen.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was published in August 2010. During the 90-day public comment period the NPS received 153 comments. In response to public comment, the FEIS analyzed a sixth preferred alternative that combines elements of two alternatives from the DEIS. This alternative (6) is the NPS preferred alternative and would call for all trails to be improved to at least a maintainable condition. After trail improvement, recreational ORV use would be permitted on trails in the National Preserve but not on trails in the National Park. Subsistence ORV use would continue to be subject to monitoring and adaptive management steps and would be confined to designated trails in park wilderness.

Copies of the FEIS will be available for public review at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/wrst>. Hard copies are available at park headquarters, located at Milepost 106.8 on the Richardson Highway, or may be requested from the Project Manager.

For further information contact the Project Manager, Bruce Rogers, Wrangell-St. Elias NPP, PO Box 439, Copper Center, Alaska 99573; phone 907-822-7276.



Comment Period Extended for Draft Denali Park Road Vehicle Mgmt Plan

In response to numerous requests, the National Park Service is extending the public comment period for the Draft Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) through Monday, October 31, 2011. The extension will ensure that the public has adequate time to comment on the draft alternatives for managing vehicle use on the 92 mile long Denali Park Road for the next 15-20 years.

For more information on the plan contact Miriam Valentine at (907) 733-9102 or at Miriam_Valentine@nps.nps.gov. Comments may be submitted online at <http://planning.nps.gov>, by fax at (907) 733-1465, or by mail at: Denali National Park and Preserve, ATTN: Vehicle Management Plan, P.O. Box 588, Talkeetna, AK 99676.

Volunteer Activities on the Copper Lake Trail, Wrangell-St. Elias NP

Approximately 20 volunteers gathered on the weekend of August 27 & 28, 2011 to install 'GeoBlock' on the Copper Lake Trail. GeoBlock is a geotextile used to harden trail surfaces in wet areas. Bruce Rogers, NPS Planner for the Wrangell-St. Elias said, "We finished the project, hardening one wet meadow. The outlook for funding for next year is positive. We already have commitment for about \$300,000 and will use it to do the Soda Lake re-route and continue on the Copper Lake trail."



Example of GeoBlock material used in trail maintenance.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan

The Department of the Interior, US Fish and Wildlife Service published a notice in the Federal Register, Thursday, August 25, 2011 announcing the availability of the draft North American Waterfowl Management Plan Revision (the draft Plan Revision) for public review. The draft Plan Revision, which was developed in close consultation with the waterfowl management community, provides a framework for waterfowl management in the 21st century. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, first signed in 1986, has remained a leading model for other international conservation plans. In large measure, this is because it is a living and evolving document that is updated periodically with engagement of the broad waterfowl conservation community. This important work is under way again, with a target date of mid-2012 for completion.

For further information contact Michael J. Johnson by phone at 703-358-1784, or by email at mike.j.johnson@fws.gov.



Comments should be submitted on or before September 26, 2011 using the <http://www.nawmprevision.org> Web site, via email to info@nawmprevision.org, or by U.S. Mail to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Division of Bird Habitat Conservation, Attn: Draft NAWMP Revision, 4401 North Fairfax Drive MS4075, Arlington, VA 22203.

The Citizen's Advisory Commission on Federal Areas will be meeting in
Anchorage on October 27 and 28, 2011 at the
Legislative Information Office,
716 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 200, ph - 907-269-0111

Other items of interest

Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission to meet in Northway and Tanacross

contact Barbara Cellarius by ph 907-822-7236 or email barbara_cellareius@nps.gov

2010 Resources Planning Act Assessment Draft

View and comment on the document at <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/rpa/> before 9/30/2011

Denali National Park and Preserve to Increase Mountaineering Use Fee

Denali National Park and Preserve recently concluded a multi-year public process focused on a proposed increase to the Special Use Fee that directly supports management of climbing activities on Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker. After a lengthy analysis of many contributing factors including the input collected during the public process, the National Park Service will implement an increase in the Mountaineering Use Fee from \$200 to \$350, as well as a discounted fee of \$250 for all climbers age 24 and younger. The fee increase will go into



effect for the 2012 mountaineering season. In future years, fees will be adjusted periodically based on actual costs.

Denali National Park's mountaineering special use fee was established in 1995 when the National Park Service (NPS) was charged with developing a program to reduce the accident rate and loss of human life on Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker. At that time, an NPS regulatory notice announced that a \$150 fee per climber would be used to

"help offset mountaineering administrative costs associated with prepositioning and maintaining the high-altitude ranger camp at 14,200-feet on the West Buttress route, mountaineering patrol salaries, education materials aimed at reducing the number of accidents, transportation of supplies." Over the years, the fee has also enabled the park to start and sustain effective human waste and garbage management programs on Mt. McKinley.

Despite a 2005 increase in the fee from \$150 to \$200, fee revenue covered only 17% of the cost of this specialized program in 2010, whereas the fee initially covered approximately 30% of the cost. Climber numbers over the past decade have remained essentially flat, as has NPS staffing. Excluding costs of the high altitude helicopter portion of the program, operational expenses have gone up significantly, due mainly to inflation.

The public was invited to comment on the proposal last year during a formal public

comment period. During that period, five public open houses were held in Alaska, Washington, and Colorado as a forum for park staff to present information on the program and answer questions. Almost 500 public comments were submitted, the majority of which indicated they would support some aspect of a climbing fee increase, as long as the increase was reasonable and equitable. Other comments submitted called for the elimination of the use fee altogether, while at the opposite end of the spectrum, several comments suggested full cost recovery including a fee increase up to \$1,500 per climber.

According to Park Superintendent Paul Anderson, "Mountain climbing represents a longstanding tradition at Denali National Park dating back to the first ascent of Mt. McKinley in 1913. Climbing fulfills one of our park's fundamental purposes. As such, we are committed to sharing in the cost of the program and continuing to allocate appropriate levels of the park's base funding to the climbing program."

For additional information on the mountaineering program or cost recovery special use fee visit the park website at www.nps.gov/dena/. Contact South District Ranger John Leonard for questions about the fee at (907) 733-9105 or john_leonard@nps.gov.

White Sulphur Springs Cabin, Bathhouse, and Trail

The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Sitka Ranger District has released an environmental assessment and decision documents on the White Sulphur Springs cabin, bathhouse and trail project.

The purpose of this project is to update facilities, to address safety and deferred maintenance concerns using the minimum tool approach at the White Sulphur Springs site, approximately 65 miles north of Sitka in the West Chichagof-Yakobii Wilderness Area. The site is accessible by boat with the closest community of Pelican 23 miles to the northeast. The cabin is rented, on the average, 86 nights per year. As much as 50 percent of the renters are from southeast Alaska. White Sulphur is the 9th highest use cabin out of 25 cabins on Sitka Ranger District. The bathhouse at White Sulphur is used by people renting the cabin, fishermen, kayakers, campers, and boaters from Pelican and other locations visiting for a bath. An estimated

900 people per year use the bathhouse. During calm weather bathers may beach their boats close to the bathhouse; otherwise they anchor at Mirror Harbor and hike the one-mile trail to the cabin and bathhouse site.

The following is a brief summary of actions to be taken at White Sulphur;

The existing cabin, outhouse, and woodshed will be removed. A new cabin will be constructed slightly (30 feet or less) uphill from the current location to provide additional privacy for cabin users. The replacement cabin will be larger than the existing 12' x 14' cabin; the extra space is required to make it an Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) accessible structure. The woodshed will be reconstructed between the warm spring and the cabin to provide screening and a place to keep clothes dry for pool users. The outhouse will be reconstructed. The existing bathhouse walls, roof, and holding tank will be removed, creating an

outdoor soaking pool. Stone or wood decking will be built around the pool for access. Thirty feet or less of new trail will be added to access the new cabin. Trail reconstruction in the Selected Alternative will use local native materials such as Alaska yellow cedar, mineral soil or gravel/rock from above mean



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, Alaska

<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/>

high tide where possible depending on availability onsite. The resulting trail will contain no boardwalk.

The USFS has determined that under its wilderness management policies the bathhouse is a convenience and its removal is intended to enhance the "undeveloped" quality of the wilderness area. More information can be found at the following project website http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/projects/nepa_project.shtml?project=19743