Alaska Lands Update

Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, Department of Natural Resources, State of Alaska
3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709

Photo Credit — Angoon Waterfront 2012 (DCCED, Community Photo Library)

Summit Snapshot, What's Next?

The Summit in Anchorage on August 12 and 13, 2013 was a great success. There were more than 25 PRESENTATIONS on the two-day AGENDA. Over 175 individuals registered to attend and many more watched via live-stream video. Governor Parnell began the Summit with an address to the group by videoconference. Presentations by the Alaska Departments of Law and Natural Resources followed to provide a State perspective of the issues. There was an in depth review of the history of Alaska land ownership, background on the State's relationship with the Federal government and Alaska specific legislation defining Alaska's working relationship with the Federal agencies who manage some 60% of the lands in the State. Additional topics discussed included: navigable waters, R.S.2477 rights of way, access and natural resource development such as minerals, timber harvest, and management of fish and wildlife. The second day opened with a Washington DC perspective on the issues from Senators Murkowski and Begich and Congressman Young. The presentations continued with additional discussions on fish and wildlife management and concerns over development of access and infrastructure. The issues and recommendations included in the presentations were then summarized for participants and attendees. The remainder of the second day was dedicated to a round table discussion to further define and prioritize the issues or problems and to help CACFA develop possible strategies for resolution and improving the State of Alaska's relationship with Federal land and resource management agencies.

From the Summit - Ernest Prax, Janet Ogan, Rep. Keller and Stan Leaphart

The next phase of the Summit will continue with CACFA's fall meeting on October 3, 4 and 5, 2013 in Anchorage. In order to provide CACFA with additional and essential perspectives on the issues raised at the August summit, the Federal land and resource management agencies, the Alaska Federation of Natives, the 12 ANCSA Regional Corporations and other members of the Native community have been invited to participate in this meeting. Those perspectives will be a critical element in developing reasonable and implementable recommendations. ♦

CACFA to Meet at the Anchorage LIO on October 3, 4, & 5

Along with regular business, this meeting will serve as the second in a series of meetings to examine Alaska's relationship with Federal land and natural resource managers in the state. In order to provide CACFA with additional and essential perspectives on the issues identified at the August Summit, Federal agencies, including the BLM, U.S. F&WS, NPS, and the USFS will participate in the meeting. Additionally, the Alaska Federation of Natives, all ANCSA Regional Corporations and representatives from the Regional Native Associations have been invited to participate. The perspectives of these agencies and organizations will be a critical element in developing appropriate and implementable recommendations that will be forwarded to the Governor, the Alaska Legislature and the Congressional delegation. There will be opportunities each day for the public to comment.

Visit the CACFA webpage at: www.dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa for more information, agenda items and contacts.

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Deadlines and Reminders

- **BLM—Bering Sea Western Interior Resource Management Plan** has opened public scoping though December 16, 2013. More information and to submit comments visit the project website at: http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning/bering_sea_western.html;
- **Central Yukon Planning Area Scoping Comment Period through December 11, 2013**. For information at: www.blm.gov/ak or email the project Manager at j05cole@blm.gov;
- **Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas (CACFA) meeting in Anchorage, October 3, 4 & 5, 2013**. Along with regular business, this Commission meeting will also serve as the second in a series of meeting to discuss issues related to the State of Alaska's relationship with Federal land and natural resource managers. Invited guests for this session include Federal land and resource management agencies, ANCSA Corporations, Alaska Federation of Natives and members of the Native community. More information along with an agenda will be posted on CACFA's website as it becomes available, visit at: http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa/. Phone 907-451-2035 or 374-3737; Email at: dnr.cacfa@alaska.gov;
- The **Chugach National Forest Plan Revision Phase I - Assessment** is underway. There is a series of public meetings scheduled for September 2013. Visit the planning website at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5408185 for more information;
- The National Park Service is requesting comments on an **Environmental Assessment** addressing **Programmatic Fire Hazardous Fuels Management Plans** for Katmai NPP, Lake Clark NPP, Wrangell-St.Elias NPP, Yukon-Charley NP, Gates of the Arctic NPP, Bering Land Bridge NP, Cape Krusenstern NM, Noatak NP and Kobuk Valley NP. Comments will be accepted until September 20, 2013. For more information visit the project website at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/AlaskaHFMP ;
- The USFS proposes to issue a permanent **Ecological Restoration Policy** in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2020 and is accepting comments until **November 12, 2013**. For more information visit the project website at: http://www.fs.fed.us/restoration;

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/

The **Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) Modernization and Enhancement Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD),** is now available to the public at: http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-08-20/pdf/2013-20232.pdf.

The ROD details the lead agencies' final decision as well as any required mitigation of the proposed actions. The JPARC EIS ROD is available for download from the internet at: http://www.jber.af.mil/jparc.asp.

This announcement was made from the Office of Alaskan Command Public Affairs, 9480 Pease Avenue, Suite 120, JBER, AK 99506-2101, phone: (907) 552-2341, E-mail: v3ALCOM.J08@us.af.mil.

National Park Service Programmatic Fire Hazardous Fuels Management Plan EA Open for 30-day Public Comment

The National Park Service (NPS) has released for public review an environmental assessment (EA) that addresses new protocols for protecting life and infrastructure within Alaska National Park System area boundaries by managing hazardous vegetation, also known as fuels. Areas covered in the proposed plan include: Katmai National Park and Preserve, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, Cape Krusenstern National Monument, Noatak National Preserve and Kobuk Valley National Park. The analysis does not include areas in Southeast Alaska, Kenai Fjords National Park, and Denali National Park and Preserve.

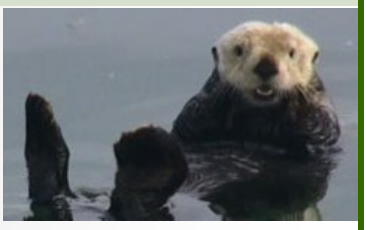
Each affected NPS area has an approved fire management plan (FMP) and fuels management plan. The plans were designed to protect visitors, employees, firefighters and infrastructure in the event of a wildfire. FMPs are reviewed annually and undergo a comprehensive review and update every five years. Most of the EAs associated with the original FMPs were completed 8-12 years ago. The original plans emphasize wildfire response and include fuel reduction techniques such as mechanical and prescribed fire. They were developed at a time when the magnitude of the hazardous fuels program was not fully developed and do not address hazardous fuels build up mitigation actions – a critical component of a proactive fuels reduction program. They also do not address potential environmental impacts of specific fuel reduction prescriptions. That level of detail was beyond the scope of the original FMPs and EAs and the fire management program has since evolved to accommodate an increased need to protect NPS and community assets.

The EA comment period will extend 30 days, beginning August 21, 2013 and ending Sept. 20, 2013. Please post comments to the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) program at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/AlaskaHFMP.

The EA is available for download at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/HFMPEA.

For more information or to request a hard copy or CD-ROM of the EA, please contact Bud Rice, Environmental Protection Specialist at 907.644.3530, william_rice@nps.gov or Dan Warthin, Regional Wildland Fire Management Officer at 907.644.3409, dan_warthin@nps.gov. ◆

Southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment of the Northern Sea Otter: Availability of Recovery Plan



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of our recovery plan for the southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the northern sea otter, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The recovery plan describes the status, current management, recovery objectives and criteria, and specific actions needed to enable us to delist the southwest Alaska DPS of the northern sea otter.

Copies of the recovery plan are available by request from the Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS–341, Anchorage, AK 99503; telephone (907) 786–3800; facsimile (907) 786–3816. An electronic copy of the draft recovery plan is also available at:http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/seaotters/recovery.htm. ◆

Commission Members

Representative Wes Keller, Wasilla
Chairman - (H)
Mark Fish, Anchorage
Vice Chairman - (G)
Rod Arno, Palmer (S)
Executive Committee
Charlie Lean, Nome (G)
Executive Committee
Senator John Coghill, Fairbanks (G)
Teresa Hanson, Fairbanks (G)
Kathleen Liska, Anchorage (G)
Mike Meekin, Palmer (H)
Warren Olson, Anchorage (S)
Ron Somerville, Juneau (H)
Susan Smith, Chokosna (G)
Frank Woods, Dillingham (G)
(S) Senate Appointment
(H) House Appointment
(G) Governor's Appointment

BLM-Alaska Issues Patents for over 379,000 Acres

On August 30, 2013, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued patents for just over 379,758 acres. BLM-Alaska State Director Bud Cribley said, "BLM-Alaska is committed to the efficient transfer of lands in order to complete the land transfer program in Alaska." BLM transferred these lands out of the public domain under the provisions of the Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Patents issued on 8/30 included:

- 182,289.98 acres to the State of Alaska east of the Kuskokwim River in western Alaska;
- 127.549.47 acres to Kugkaktlik Limited, the ANCSA corporation for the village of Kipnuk in the vicinity of Kuskokwim Bay;
- 60,670.33 acres to NANA Regional Corporation, Inc. in northwest Alaska;

9,248.52 acres to The Kuskokwim Corporation south of the Kuskokwim River in western Alaska.

BLM-Alaska surveys and conveys lands in Alaska mainly under three statutes: the Native Allotment Act of 1906; the Alaska Statehood Act, and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The work being done to implement these laws is collectively called the Alaska Land Transfer Program. When completed, over 150 million acres, approximately 42% of the land area in Alaska, will have been transferred from federal to state and private ownership.

For more information on this program contact Erin Curtis, 907-271-4418, ecurtis@blm.gov or KJ Mushovic, 907-271-3322, kjmushovic@blm.gov. ◆

2013 National Public Lands Day Chitina Area Clean-up Success

Over 50 volunteers and partner staff came together to clean the banks of the Copper River Saturday, August 3, 2013 in Chitina, Alaska. This effort was part of the 20th Anniversary of National Public Lands Day where volunteers across America put forth "Helping Hands for America's Lands."

Volunteers removed junked appliances, couches, chairs, broken vehicle parts, and heaping piles of twisted metal, tin and wood resulting in several pick-up and large trailer loads of metal debris and trash. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Youth Conservation Corp students, Chitina Village youth, and several non-profit partner volunteers cleaned 240 feet of the river front and adjacent roadway at the Copper River Bridge and an additional 2,685 feet of roadway in Chitina. Signs were also posted asking visitors, dip netters, and fish wheel operators to "pack out trash" in hopes of encouraging everyone to be stewards of this great Alaskan landscape.

Volunteers were treated to a lunch funded by Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, the Public Lands Foundation, and Copper Country Alliance which featured local raised beef from Van Wyhe Farms and local produce from Flint Family Farms and the Copper River Red Spud Company. The lunch was catered by Gilpatrick's Hotel Chitina.

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer effort for public lands. For the rest of the nation, 2013's 20th Anniversary of National Public Lands Day will be held on Saturday, Sept. 28. Events in Alaska are often held early to avoid the possibility of snow. NPLD began in 1994 with three sites and 700 volunteers. It proved to be a huge success and became a yearly tradition. In 2012, about 175,000 volunteers worked at 2,206 sites in every state, the District of Columbia and in many U.S. territories. 2012 was the biggest NPLD in the history of the event. National sponsors of the event this year are Toyota, REI, and Northrup Grumman.

For more information contact Marnie Graham at: 907-822-7325 or mgraham@blm.gov. ◆

Ecological Restoration Policy

The Forest Service proposes to issue a permanent Ecological Restoration Policy in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2020. The proposed directive would provide broad direction for restoring National Forest System lands and associated resources to achieve sustainable management and ecological integrity.

Restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of ecosystems that have been damaged, degraded, or destroyed. The need for ecological restoration of many areas in the National Forest System is widely recognized, and the Forest Service has conducted restoration-related activities through many resource management programs for decades. An internal agency study in 2006 identified that the concept of ecological restoration has not been well understood nor consistently implemented within the agency. Therefore, the intent of this directive is to provide a clear, comprehensive, and science-based restoration policy to guide achievement of sustainable management and ecological integrity under changing environmental conditions, such as those driven by a changing climate and increasing human uses. This policy would recognize the adaptive capacity of ecosystems, the role of natural disturbances, and uncertainty related to climate and other environmental change. On September 22, 2008, the Forest Service issued an interim directive, FSM 2020 Ecological Restoration and Resilience. The interim directive was reissued on March 3, 2010, a third time on August 30, 2011, and a fourth time on May 13, 2013, and is now proposed as permanent policy.

For more information visit the Forest Service website on restoration at: *http://www.fs.fed.us/restoration;* to comment, visit the *Federal Register* notice online at: *http://www.regulations.gov* , docket **RIN 0596–AC82.** Comments must be received in writing by November 12, 2013.◆

NEPA: Categorical Exclusions for Soil and Water Restoration Activities

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, effective September 12, 2013, of the revised procedures for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act and Council on Environmental Quality regulations. These final implementing procedures are being issued in regulations concerning National Environmental Policy Act Compliance, which describes categorical exclusions. Categorical exclusions (CE) are categories of actions that normally will not result in individual or cumulative significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and, therefore, do not require analysis or documentation in either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. The revision adds three new categorical exclusions for activities that restore lands negatively impacted by water control structures, disturbance events, and roads and trails. Activities that restore lands occupied by National Forest System Roads and National Forest System Trails are excluded from this final rule. These will allow the Forest Service to more efficiently analyze and document the potential environmental effects of soil and water restoration projects that are intended to restore the flow of waters into natural channels and floodplains by removing water control structures, such as dikes, ditches, culverts, and pipes; restore lands and habitat to pre-disturbance conditions, to the extent practicable, by removing debris and sediment following disturbance events; and restore lands occupied by roads and trails to natural conditions.

These categorical exclusions will not apply where resource conditions related to the potential effect of a proposed action constitute an extraordinary circumstance. Activities conducted under these categorical exclusions must be consistent with Agency procedures and applicable land management plans and must comply with all applicable Federal and State laws for protecting the environment.

The road and trail restoration category will be used for restoring lands impacted by roads and trails that are not needed, not maintained, and/or where public access is prohibited. This category will not be used to make access decisions about which roads and trails are to be designated for public use.

The Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act procedures, including its list of categorical exclusions, are set out in Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 220, which is available online at: *http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html*. Additional information and analysis can be found at *http://www/fs/fed/us/emc/nepa*. ♦

Chugach Forest Plan Revision – Phase I - Assessment

The Chugach National Forest has begun the first phase of a 3-year planning process to revise the 2002 forest plan under the 2012 National Forest System Planning Rule. During Phase I, the Chugach National Forest prepares an assessment or "snapshot" of existing conditions, issues, and trends that will help identify a need for change from the 2002 Forest Plan and will be considered during Phase II – Revision. It is important to note that the report generated during Phase I is not a decision document. It is a compilation of information from the public, land owners, agencies, tribes, and Forest employees that will help the Forest understand the most important information to consider in the next phase.

The Forest Service will be conducting a series of public meetings to present their latest findings and trends from the developing the Phase I Assessment Report.

Public Meeting Schedule

Monday 9/23 – Valdez 6-9pm - PWS Community College, Room 117
Tuesday 9/24 – Cooper Landing/Moose Pass 6-9pm - Cooper Landing Community Center
Wednesday 9/25 – Soldotna 5:30-8:30pm - Soldotna Sports Center
Thursday 9/26 – Seward 6-9pm - Seward Public Library and Museum
Monday 9/30 – Cordova 6-9pm - Masonic Hall
Wednesday 10/2 – Girdwood/Whittier 6-9pm - Girdwood Community Center
Thursday 10/3 – Anchorage 6-9pm - Chugach National Forest Supervisor's Office, 161 E. 1st. Avenue, Door 8

For more information, to learn more about the plan revision, the Phase I Assessment, timelines, and getting involved visit the planning website at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5408185. An online fill-in form is available to submit comment on the Phase I – Assessment, it can be found at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5411726.pdf. Instructions for submission are on the form. ♦

National Park Service Helps Teachers Make Learning Fun & Relevant

Teachers across Alaska have a new tool to help them engage their students in classroom and place-based learning. On September 12, 2013 the National Park Service launched an online service for teachers that brings America's national parks, including those spread across Alaska, into neighborhood classrooms. The new "Teachers" of the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/teachers provides a one-stop shop for curriculum-based lesson plans, traveling trunks, maps, activities, distance learning, and other resources. All of the materials draw from the spectacular natural landscapes and authentic places preserved in America's national parks.

"Alaska's national parks and our visitor centers in Anchorage and Fairbanks have long welcomed students on site," said Sue Masica, the NPS regional director for Alaska. "But we know that parks are often a long distance from a student's home. Now, through the new "Teachers" website, Alaska's parks and their spectacular resources are a little closer for teachers and students to learn about America's natural and cultural heritage."

The national site is searchable by location, keyword, and more than 125 subjects, from archeology, to biology, to constitutional law. Teachers will, for the first time, be able to rate NPS-provided content. In addition to park-created content, the site also features educational materials created by NPS national programs like the National Register of Historic Places and it's award-winning *"Teaching with Historic Places"* series of 147 lesson plans.

The NPS is working with partners, including Alaska Geographic, to expand programs and encourage the use of parks as places of learning. The NPS has partnered with the Department of Education to integrate national park resources into core curriculums. Each summer, teachers across the country are hired to work in parks to develop curriculum-based programs based on park resources through the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program. ♦

Alaska's national park-based curriculum and other teacher resources are substantial and varied, and include:

Distance Learning: Glacier Bay National Park's "Visiting Glacier Bay" provides an opportunity for a virtual visit to this Southeast Alaska gem. http://www.nps.gov/glba/forteachers/learning/visiting-glacier-bay.htm;

Curriculum: Denali National Park's "Denali Rocks!" focuses on geology and provides eight lessons matched to Alaska State Standards for 6th to 8th grade science. http://www.nps.gov/dena/forteachers/classrooms/curricula-geology.htm; Aleutian WWII National Historic Site features "Attu: The North American Battleground of WWII" http://www.nps.gov/aleu/forteachers/classrooms/attu-na-battleground.htm;

Field Trips: Sitka National Historical Park offers "Traditional Cooking with a Bentwood Box" field trip http://www.nps.gov/sitk/forteachers/classrooms/traditional-cooking-with-a-bentwood-box.htm;