



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Central Yukon Field Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844
<http://www.blm.gov/ak>

In Reply Refer to:
1610 (030)

MAY 1 2014

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as part of its Central Yukon Resource Management Plan (RMP), is seeking nominations for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The BLM will accept nominations until August 29, 2014.

ACEC designations highlight areas of BLM-managed public land where special management attention is needed to protect important historical, cultural, and scenic values; fish or wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes; or human life and safety from natural hazards.

Twenty-five designated ACECs and 9 Research Natural Areas (RNAs) currently exist within the Central Yukon planning area. These are listed in the attached tables. Additionally there is a map of existing ACECs online at: www.blm.gov/ak/cyrmp. The BLM will review the existing ACECs and RNAs to determine whether they should be maintained, modified, or dropped. The BLM will also consider new ACECs.

The BLM appreciates the active role that tribes, organizations, and individual members of the public play during land use planning. I invite you to consider whether you have information about existing ACECs or RNAs that could help the BLM in our analysis. I also invite you to consider whether you wish to nominate new areas for ACEC designation. I have enclosed a fact sheet about the process of designating ACECs as part of the planning effort.

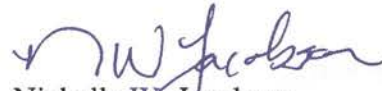
If you wish to nominate ACECs in the Central Yukon Planning Area, we ask that you provide as much information as possible with your nomination. The following will help our interdisciplinary team evaluate nominations:

- Name and location of nominated area (legal land description, if possible)
- Map of nominated ACEC area with well-defined boundaries
- Reason or basis for nomination
- Reference material or online sources where the BLM can obtain additional information or data about the area

The ACEC nomination form and additional information about how to prepare a nomination are enclosed. These documents are also available online at www.blm.gov/ak/cyrmp. Submit nominations to CentralYukon@blm.gov or BLM Fairbanks District Office, 1150 University Ave, Fairbanks, 99709.

The Central Yukon RMP will guide management of BLM-administered public land for the next 15-20 years. For additional information, contact Project Manager Jeanie Cole at j05cole@blm.gov or (907) 474-2340.

Sincerely,



Nichelle W. Jacobson
Field Manager

Enclosures (3)

1. Tables of existing ACECs and RNAs
2. BLM ACEC Guidance fact sheet
3. ACEC Nomination Form

Attachment 1

Table 1: Existing Research Natural Areas in the Central Yukon Planning Area

Land Use Plan	Research Natural Area (RNA) Name	Values Cited for Designation
Central Yukon RMP	Arms Lake RNA	Sand dune complex and associated vegetation; Limnologic characteristics
	Box River Treeline RNA	Vegetation complex representing western treeline limit in Alaska; Permafrost features
	Ishtalitna Creek Hot Springs RNA	Low gradient hot springs system
	South Todatonten Summit RNA	Open system pingos
	Spooky Valley RNA	Geologic, physiographic, vegetation, and scenic
	Redlands Lake RNA	Remnant lake and sand dune complex
	McQuesten Creek RNA	Mid elevation slope and valley ecosystems and vegetation. Small low grade hot springs system.
	Lake Todatonten Pingos RNA	Open system pingos
Utility Corridor RMP	Toolik Lake RNA	Research activities, cultural

Table 2: Existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern in the Central Yukon Planning Area

Land Use Plan	ACEC Name	Values Cited for Designation
Central Yukon RMP	Dulbi-Kaiyuh Mountains Subunit ACEC	Crucial peregrine falcon habitat
	Galena Mountain ACEC	Crucial peregrine falcon habitat
	Gisasa River ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	Hogatza River Tributaries ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	Indian River ACEC	Chinook and chum salmon spawning habitat
	Inglutalik River (CY) ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	Kateel River ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	North River ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	Nulato Hills (CY) ACEC	Crucial peregrine falcon habitat
	Shaktoolik River (CY) ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	Sulukna River ACEC	Salmon and sheefish (inconnu) spawning habitat
	Tozitna River ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	Tozitna Subunit North ACEC	Crucial caribou calving habitat
	Tozitna Subunit South ACEC	Crucial caribou calving habitat
	Unalakleet River ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
	Ungalik River (CY) ACEC	Salmon spawning habitat
Utility Corridor RMP	Galbraith Lake ACEC	Cultural, rare plants, scenic, and lambing areas
	Jim River ACEC	Fishery, recreation, cultural
	Kanuti Hot Springs ACEC	Hot spring
	Nigu-Iteriak ACEC	Geology, cultural
	Nugget Creek ACEC	Dall sheep lambing areas, mineral lick
	Poss Mountain ACEC	Dall sheep lambing areas, mineral lick
	Snowden Mountain ACEC	Dall sheep lambing areas, mineral lick
	Sukapak Mountain ACEC	Scenic, geology
	West Fork Atigun River ACEC	Dall sheep lambing areas, mineral lick

Attachment 2

Evaluation of Relevance and Importance Criteria for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

BLM Guidance: Manual 1613: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

1613.02: Objectives: ACEC designations highlight areas where special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, and scenic values, fish, or wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes; or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. The ACEC designation indicates to the public that the BLM recognizes that an area has significant values and has established special management measures to protect those values. In addition designation also serves as a reminder that significant value(s) or resource(s) exist which must be accommodated when future management actions and land use proposals are considered near or within an ACEC. Designation may also support a funding priority.

Evaluating ACECs is a two-part process that involves determining whether or not proposed areas meet relevance and importance criteria to be considered as an ACEC in at least one of the RMP alternatives. To be considered as a potential ACEC and analyzed in RMP alternatives, an area must meet at least one criterion for both relevance and importance.

- 1) **Relevance.** An area must meet one or more of the following criterion:
 - a. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).
 - b. A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintain species diversity).
 - c. A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plan species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).
 - d. Natural hazards (including but not limited to acres of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the RMP process that it has become part of a natural process.
- 2) **Importance.** The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance and values in order to satisfy the "importance" criteria. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:
 - a. Has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
 - b. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.
 - c. Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.

- d. Has qualities which warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.
- e. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

All ACECs meeting at least one relevance criteria **and** at least one importance criteria **must be considered** as potential ACECs under at least one alternative in the RMP. Some things to keep in mind:

- If it is determined that only a portion of a proposed ACEC meets at least one relevance criteria *and* at least one importance criteria, then only that portion needs to be considered.
- The BLM can modify the boundary of the ACEC throughout the Alternatives.
- Don't give modified boundaries different names (e.g., don't call an ACEC Kate Wynant ACEC under Alternative X and Kate Wynant ACEC Expansion under Alternative Y). There's no need and only causes confusion.
- ACECs under a particular alternative should not overlap.
- ACECs can overlap other special management areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, special recreation management areas, etc. However management should be thought of *independently* of these areas. Think of it this way... If the wilderness study area (or other area) were not there, how would we manage the ACEC?

Special Management Attention

To be designated as an ACEC, an area must require special management attention to protect the important and relevant values (43 CFR 1601.0-5(a)). "Special management attention" refers to management prescriptions developed during preparation of an RMP expressly to protect the important and relevant values of an area from the potential effects of actions permitted by the RMP. These are management actions that would not be necessary if the relevant and important values were not present.

Document, Document, Document

- If a proposed area does NOT meet either the relevance or the importance, the BLM must document why.
- During alternatives development, if an area meeting relevance and importance is not included in at least one alternative in the Draft RMP, the BLM must provide rationale.

Research Natural Areas

The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 states that Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are considered a type of ACEC. The BLM will use the same criteria described above to evaluate existing or proposed new RNAs.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Nomination

Name:	_____
Address:	_____
Email:	_____

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Describe the Area to be Nominated

General location description:

Acreage:

Values considered:

To be considered as a potential ACEC and analyzed in RMP alternatives, an area must meet at least one relevance criteria **and** at least one importance criteria as established in BLM Guidance 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

I) RELEVANCE CRITERIA

Relevance Criteria: There shall be present a “significant” historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:

Relevance Value	Yes/No	Describe Rationale
1) a. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).		
1) b. A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species; or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).		
1) c. A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relict plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).		

1) d. Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.		
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2) IMPORTANCE CRITERIA

Importance Criteria: The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance and values to satisfy the "importance" criteria. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property.

Importance Value	Yes/No	Rationale for Determination
2) a. Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.		
2) b. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.		
2) c. Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.		
2) d. Has qualities that warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.		
2) e. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.		

Please attach a map depicting the BLM lands being recommended. Please attach additional pages as necessary. Alternatively, please download form online and complete electronically (www.blm.gov/ak/cyrmmp).