

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, State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources
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NOAA Extends Comment Period on Beluga Habitat Designation

On January 12, 2010 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced a 30 day extension of the public comment period on the proposed designation of critical habitat for the Cook Inlet beluga whale. **The comment period closes on March 3, 2010.** In addition, the agency has indicated that it will hold public hearings in several communities during February. Locations include Anchorage, Wasilla, Homer, and Soldotna. Notice of the dates, locations and times of the hearings will be published in local newspapers or can be found at <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/newsreleases/2010/cookinletbeluga.htm>.

NMFS is proposing to designate some 3000 square miles in Cook Inlet as critical habitat for the Cook Inlet beluga whales. This population of whales was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in October 2008. Section 7 of the ESA

(Beluga Habitat continued on page 3)

Noatak National Preserve Transporter Applications Available

Applications for Commercial Use Authorizations (CUA) to offer big game hunter transporter and incidental transporter services in the Noatak National Preserve are now available from the National Park Service (NPS). A CUA is required by all companies transporting big game hunters into the preserve and a maximum of eight CUAs will be issued for 2010-2011.

Applications are due by 4:00 PM on February 11, 2010 and can be found at:

<http://www.nps.gov/noat/index.htm>

Hard copies are available upon request. For more information, contact:

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First Issue of Alaska Lands Update, Feedback Requested

Notes from the Executive Director, Stan Leaphart

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Alaska Lands Update, a newsletter compiled by the staff of the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas. Through this publication we hope to keep people throughout Alaska informed about current planning activities, regulation changes, management decisions and legislation affecting federal public lands in Alaska. Because this is our first issue, we are asking our readers to help us out by providing feedback on content, format, accuracy of information and any suggestions you might have for improvements. We want this newsletter to be useful and informative, so let us know what you think. Also, if you have a relevant item or subject that you think people need to know about, please send it our way and we'll try to include it in the next issue. For our agency readers, if you would like us to help get the word out about anything, we would be glad to assist with that.

Our plan is to produce this newsletter monthly. That way we should be able to provide timely notice of most agency actions and proposals, comment deadlines, along with any meeting locations and dates. We hope you will take the time to look this over. If you find it worthwhile, please forward it to someone you think will be interested. And, please let us know what you think.

Alaska Sustainable Recreation Workshop

The U.S. Forest Service is holding a collaborative workshop on the future of outdoor recreation and tourism in the Alaska Region from February 22-25, 2010 in Juneau. The goal of the Alaska Region Sustainable Recreation Workshop is to build relationships between partners, communities, non-profits and the Forest Service, to help sustain outdoor recreation environments, to connect people with nature and to build healthy communities. The USFS is meeting with the leadership of groups and organizations to develop a sustainable recreation and tourism strategy for Alaska.

If you have any questions about the workshop or suggestions for topics that should be covered, contact Neil Hagadorn. Neil is the Recreation and

Tourism Program Leader for the Forest Service and can be contacted at:

nthagadorn@fs.fed.us or 907-586-9336

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*For more information, visit our
website:*

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa/index.htm>

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.



Aghileen Pinnacles
Photo Credit: John Sarvis, USFWS

(Beluga Habitat cont. from page 1)

requires federal agencies ensure their actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species. Section 7 also requires federal agencies to ensure they do not fund, authorize or carry out any actions that will destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for a listed species.

The agency has identified a number of specific categories of activities and economic sectors that may affect beluga critical habitat and which would be subject to ESA Section 7's adverse modification requirements. These include: fishing (commercial, sport, personal-use, and subsistence), marine transportation, energy development, tourism/recreation, cultural and social, large-scale infrastructure, public education/science, national defense, and water quality management.

The agency has identified a variety of activities which could affect critical habitat and, when carried out, funded, or authorized by a Federal agency, require consultation under section 7 of the ESA. Such activities include: coastal development; pollutant discharge; navigational projects (dredging); bridge construction; marine tidal generation projects; marine geophysical research; oil and gas exploration, development, and production; Department of Defense activities; and hydroelectric development.

NMFS has also identified four species of salmon- king, sockeye, chum and coho - as primary prey species for the Beluga and is proposing to designate the four as "primary constituent elements" essential to the conservation of Belugas. Eulachon, Pacific cod, walleye Pollock,

saffron cod and yellowfin sole are also included on that list of prey species.

Additional information, including a draft Regulatory Impact review, can be found at:

<http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov>



Beluga Whale
Photo Credit - Luca Galuzzi

Forest Service Reinstates 2000 Planning Regulations Announces Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement



Tongass National Forest
Photo Credit: USFS, Greg Killinger

The U.S. Forest Service, on December 18, 2009, announced the reinstatement of the National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning regulations originally adopted in November 2000. This action complies with a recent Federal District Court order and a decision invalidating regulations adopted in 2008. The agency also announced it will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to document the environmental analysis for new planning regulations at 36 CFR Part 219.

The agency is soliciting public comment on the scope of the proposed regulations, the alternatives to be considered and the physical, biological, social and economic effects that should be analyzed in the draft EIS. **Comments on the scope of the analysis must be received by February 16, 2010.** The draft EIS is expected to be published in December 2010 and a final is expected in October 2011.

To view the December *Federal Register* notices, the history of Forest Service planning and the planning regulations and other information go to:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule/>

Alaska Federal Lands Long Range Transportation Plan

As part of a collaborative effort to set statewide transportation priorities, the Federal land management agencies in Alaska are teaming up with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to develop a multi-agency long range transportation plan. The

intent of this process is to develop a guide to facilitate decision-making and assist agencies in prioritization of projects. In addition, it will promote collaboration between agencies with similar objectives. Although the end result will not identify specific projects or suggest changes to current management, it will guide agencies on how to work together, help identify top areas of concern and make sound funding decisions.

The team intends on creating several outreach opportunities for the people of Alaska. Outreach strategies include:

- Distribution of a newsletter and e-blasts at key milestones in the planning process

- Stakeholder meetings
- Presentations at agency and community meetings
- Creating a website
- Public and key stakeholder review and comment on draft documents
- Comments posted on the process through the website

For more information, contact:

Roxanne Bash
Federal Highway Administration
Transportation Planner
Project Manager
360-619-7558

Additional Contacts can be found at this [link](#).



Kodiak Island
Photo Credit: USFWS, E.P. Haddor

Comment Period Open for Changes to Park Service Compendiums

The National Park Service Compendiums are compilations of designations, closures, permit requirements and other restrictions or conditions imposed under discretionary authority found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Regulations for national parks are in 36 CFR and 43 CFR. These compendiums are reviewed and updated at minimum, annually. The 2010 Draft Compendiums have been released and are now available to the public.

The public has an opportunity to comment on the recently issued documents from January 1-February 15, 2010. These comments, along with other information gathered, will be considered when completing a final draft. Comments can be sent via mail or email address found on the NPS Compendium website.

<http://www.nps.gov/akso/compendium/2010CompendiumPro.htm>

Several of the Alaska National Parks did NOT have changes proposed in the 2010 Compendiums. Those **with** proposed changes include: Alagnak Wild River, Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, and Katmai National Park and Preserve; Denali National Park and Preserve; Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve; Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve; Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, and Wrangell-St.Elias National Park and Preserve.

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
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/>

Bureau of Land Management
<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en.html>

Department of Interior
<http://www.doi.gov/>

Park Foundation Statements Released

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and Kenai Fjords National Park recently released draft Foundation Statements. These statements articulate purposes for park establishment and identify the core mission, which is based on legislation that created the park in the first place. Ultimately, they serve as guidance for park planning and management and will remain relatively consistent over time. If new scientific information becomes available, a revision may be warranted.

Any comments are due by February 8 and February 17, 2010 for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and Kenai Fjords National Park, respectively. Foundation statements can be found at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/Plans.cfm>.



Denali Park Road Planning Document

The Denali Park Road Planning Workbook is available for public comment until March 1, 2010. The National Park Service is in the process of developing an Environmental Impact Statement for the Denali Park Vehicle Management Plan and planners are requesting feedback on current proposals prior to proceeding with composition of alternatives.

Visitation has steadily increased since seasonal vehicle limits were set by the 1986 General Management Plan. The 10,512 vehicle limit will likely be reached in the near future. This, as well as quality of the visitor experience are being addressed in this plan. A Planning Workbook with attached questionnaire is available for public review and comment at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/Plans.cfm>.

Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas Meeting

The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas (CACFA) will meet on February 19–20, 2010 in Juneau. This meeting is open to the public and will have designated public comment periods on both days. Agenda items include a discussion with a representative from the National Marine Fisheries Service on beluga whale habitat designations and a discussion with a U.S. Forest Service Representative on the Alaska Federal Lands Long Range Transportation Plan. For a complete agenda or if you have any questions, please contact the CACFA staff via phone or email. Contact information is on page 2.

Members of the Commission

Governor's Appointees:

Mark Fish, Anchorage
Susan Smith, Chitina
Ken Kreitzer, Juneau
Alex Tarnai, Tanana
Charlie Lean, Nome
Frank Woods, Dillingham

Senate President Appointees:

Rod Arno, Willow
Senator Linda Menard, Wasilla

Speaker of the House Appointees:

Rick Schikora, Fairbanks
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Rep. Wes Keller, Wasilla