

# Alaska Lands Update

monthly updates on Federal management  
actions for the people of Alaska

Serpentine Bathhouse Iced up in Winter  
Photo Credit: NPS

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

## Serpentine Hot Springs Area Master Plan Comment Deadline November 30, 2012

The National Park Service (NPS) is currently developing a Master Plan for the Serpentine Hot Springs area of Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. This plan will provide updated direction for managing that area over the next 15 to 20 years. In the spring of 2012, the NPS held public meetings and collected ideas and concerns regarding stewardship of Serpentine. Taking this feedback into account, the NPS has developed three draft alternative concepts (plus one "no-action" alternative) for the Master Plan. During the next step of the planning process, these alternatives will be compared against a "no-action" alternative where management would continue without addressing future planning issues. The draft alternatives in this newsletter are guided by Bering Land Bridge National Preserve's legislated purpose, significance, and issues facing the park that require formal planning. The draft alternatives and the NPS's newsletter can be found online at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsOpenForReview.cfm?parkID=6&projectID=36603>.

Comments are being sought on whether this is an appropriate range of ideas for future management of the park, likes, dislikes, and other ideas. This feedback is essential for the NPS to formulate the future direction for Serpentine Hot Springs. After reviewing the draft alternatives, please share your comments in one of the following ways:

- mail the comment form to the park at: Bering Land Bridge National Preserve – Serpentine Master Plan, 240 W. 5th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99501;

- Email your comments to: [zachary\\_babb@nps.gov](mailto:zachary_babb@nps.gov);
- submit your comments electronically from the Planning Website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>;
- provide comments at one of the open houses. A full list of meetings can be found in the 'How to be Involved' section of this newsletter.

The planning team will review all comments submitted, however, comments received by November 30th will be most helpful for this phase of planning. Following this review, we will refine the draft alternatives and proceed with the National Environmental Policy Act evaluation. We appreciate your interest in the management of Serpentine Hot Springs and Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, and look forward to your continued involvement in this important planning process. ◆

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## Comment Deadline Reminders

- BLM Alaska **Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan** comment deadline extended pending the release of supplemental documents. Check BLM Alaska's website at <http://www.blm.gov/ak> for more information;
- Tongass National Forest Sustainable Cabin Management Program's **Recreational Cabin Removal/Conversion Environmental Assessment** comment deadline is Tuesday, November 13, 2012. **This is the only opportunity to comment**, more information at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=39863](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=39863).

## Documents expected out soon:

- **Izembek Land Exchange/Road Final Environmental Impact Statement and Public Interest Determination** from the US Fish and Wildlife Service is expected in November 2012;
- The **BLM-National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska** is anticipating release of the Final Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement in November 2012. The project website is: <http://www.blm.gov/ak>.
- The USFWS expects to release the final **Comprehensive Conservation Plan** for the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** this November. Keep track of that project at: <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/arctic/index.htm>.

### **Tongass National Forest Releases the Prince of Wales Outfitter and Guide Management Plan Decision**

The Prince of Wales (POW) Outfitter and Guide Management Plan Decision Notice has been released and it documents the Forest Services final decision on the Selected Alternative and the facts considered in reaching the decision. The 45-day comment period on this decision notice was published in the Ketchikan Daily News on October 9, 2012 making the comment deadline Friday, November 23, 2012. The Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice can be found online at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usdapop.php/?project=27974>; follow the link to documents. For more information, contact Sue Jennings, the project team leader, at the Petersburg Forest Service office at 907-772-5864 during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Anyone new, visiting, or unfamiliar with the POW area may seek the assistance to use and enjoy the Forest. Outfitters and guides can be hired to help visitors use the Forest. Guided visitors, in this decision, are those people visiting the Tongass who use the services of an outfitter or a guide. This decision sets the use levels for guided recreation visitors and describes how we will allocate (or distribute) the number of days available for recreation visitors on the Prince of Wales (POW) ranger districts. This decision does not set use levels for, nor regulate, unguided visitors.

Outfitting and guiding services are a permitted activity on National Forest System lands under a variety of laws established by Congress. In 2011, the Forest Service permitted POW outfitters and guides to use 19,827 service days (the number of days or parts of days on which an outfitter or guide provides services to a client).

As preparation for this project, a recreation visitor capacity was determined. Recreation visitor capacity is the number of recreation visitors that can be accommodated at a recreation location,

while balancing the need for a variety of visitor experiences and following resource protection direction. The calculated recreation visitor capacity for the known recreation use areas on Prince of Wales is 320,979 visitor days per year (see

EA Appendix B). This capacity sets an upper limit on the amount of recreation use that can occur in these areas with limited impact.

Ten comments on the EA were received via letters or documented conversations with twelve individuals or agencies during the 30-day comment period. All the alternatives and nearly every component of all alternatives received support and opposition. Some individuals supported higher use levels for outfitters and guides as a means of supporting business and economic opportunities on POW. Others felt the current level of outfitting and guiding was too high. One group would like to see more recreation use sites for guiding. Others wanted to see fewer areas for guides. The most common comments were about wildlife, fish, conflicts between users, and traditional use areas. A modified Alternative 3 was selected to allocate, or distribute, 85,194 service days per year for recreation outfitting and guiding on the Craig and Thorne Bay (Prince of Wales - POW) Ranger Districts. The documents found online explain how and why this decision was made. ◆

## *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.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/>





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[www.dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa](http://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.

<http://www.nps.gov/glba/historyculture/huna-tribal-house-project.htm>.

In October, 2010 the Hoonah Indian Association (HIA) hosted a ceremony to bless two large red cedar logs. This cultural blessing was a way to thank the trees for their contribution to a significant project. Four feet in diameter and 40 feet long, the massive logs will be used to create a carved house screen, the first component of a replica Tlingit plank house to be constructed in Glacier Bay National Park. Part of a long range design plan since 1998, the Huna Tribal House will be constructed along the waterfront of Bartlett Cove, providing the Huna Tlingit the first permanent plank house in their ancestral homeland since their village was destroyed by an advancing glacier over 250 years ago.

## TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST SUSTAINABLE CABIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Tongass National Forest is proposing to remove nine public recreation cabins and convert three to shelters due to poor condition, low use, and funding; and is planning to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Forest Sustainable Cabin Management Program.

The deadline to comment on the two Scoping alternatives for this proposed Environmental Assessment is Tuesday, November 13, 2012. The two alternatives are; a no action alternative, where all of the cabins proposed for removal or conversion remain and the proposed action, where the proposed cabins are removed or converted.

The Environmental Assessment has not been done yet and there will be no other opportunity to comment.

Based on public comment, the environmental assessment, and site-specific information, Forest Supervisor, Forrest Cole will determine which, if any, of the specified cabins

to remove or convert to three-sided shelters. They will not analyze or propose removal or conversion of any cabin not on the scoping list.

The scoping document and further information is available for public review online at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=39863](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=39863).

Copies of the scoping document are available upon request from Sue Jennings, either at [sjennings@fs.fed.us](mailto:sjennings@fs.fed.us) or 907 723-0477. ♦



## Huna Tribal House Environmental Assessment Available for Comment

The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the Hoonah Indian Association (HIA), is proposing to construct a 3,500 square foot Huna Tribal House on the Bartlett Cove waterfront in Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska. To learn more about this project look online at:

The design is based on accounts and photographs from the historical and ethnographic records. These ingenious buildings had gabled roofs held up by four interior posts that supported two massive horizontal beams upon which the rest of the roofing members rested. The walls and floors were of thick, adze finished planks. Inside were square pits, about 25 feet to a side and about 4 feet deep, where daily life circulated around a central hearth. They traditionally housed extended families and a cluster of houses would comprise a clan's winter village. Multiple clans would reside together, and legends tell us that the principal pre-Little Ice Age village of the four Huna clans was located in what is now Bartlett Cove.

The NPS is pleased to announce that the Huna Tribal House Environmental Assessment (EA) is ready for public review and comment. The EA analyzes the proposed action and alternatives and their impact on the environment. Your ideas and concerns about the EA are welcomed and encouraged. Comments can be shared at public meetings, sent by mail, submitted electronically or by calling the Project Leader directly. Comments must be received no later than Monday, November 19, 2012.

You may mail or fax your comment form or letters to: Mary Beth Moss, Project Leader, Huna Tribal House EA, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, PO Box 140, Gustavus, AK 99826; Fax: 907-697-2654; Email: from the project website.

If you wish to comment in person or to receive an individual copy of the EA, please contact Mary Beth Moss. ♦

## Yukon Delta recognized for importance to East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Millions of water birds breed each summer in the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, then leave this vast wetland cradle to migrate along flyways spanning the Americas. But about half a million migrate along a lesser-known route: the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

The East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (Partnership) was launched in 2006 as a framework for voluntary, international cooperation aimed at protecting migratory water birds and their habitat in eastern Asia and the south Pacific Ocean. The flyway extends from Russia and Alaska, through East and South-east Asia, to Australia and New Zealand, encompassing 22 countries. Migratory water birds share this flyway with 45% of the world's human population.

The Partnership recently recognized the international importance of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge by designating it as an East Asian-Australasian Flyway Network Site (EAAF). EAAF status is similar to that of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff members Brian McCaffery and Doug Alcorn (who also serves on the Pacific Coast Joint Venture board of directors) submitted the nomination for EAAF site recognition. "Identifying the Yukon Delta Refuge as an East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership Network Site demonstrates to our international partners that the United States is committed to conserving species that migrate beyond our borders by protecting habitat within our borders," says Alcorn.

EAAF initiatives include development of the Flyway Site Network for sites of international importance to migratory water birds, raising awareness of migratory water birds along the flyway, and building capacity for the sustainable management and conservation of migratory water bird habitat.

The entire area included within the new EAAF network site is administered by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Abundant and diverse wetlands are the dominant features of the refuge, which includes the combined deltas of Alaska's two largest rivers: the Yukon and the Kuskokwim. Grass-sedge meadows, estuaries, sea coast and an off-shore island add to this complex mosaic of habitats. It's a dynamic landscape, shaped by flooding, tidal action, frost-heaving, and riparian erosion and sedimentation. When the wetlands thaw in summer and autumn, they provide breeding and post-breeding habitat for millions of water birds.

"Although many migratory birds use these habitats for only a few months each year," says Doug Alcorn, "they are critical for the species' survival. In leading by example, we hope that other countries are able to follow a similar refuge model to protect habitat within their borders." More information: The Partnership for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway <http://eaaflyway.net/>; Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/yukondelta/index.htm>; Audubon Alaska video map showing the migration paths of Alaska's breeding birds <http://ak.audubon.org/videos/where-do-alaska-birds-go>. ◆



Bristle-thighed curlew  
Photo credit—USFWS

## Tongass National Forest's Big Thorne Project Promotes Economic Stability

The Tongass National Forest is proposing the Big Thorne timber sale project in response to the need to provide a stable timber supply in Southeast Alaska to support local sawmill operations and encourage investment in the wood products industry as it transitions to include more young-growth harvest and restoration activities.

The Forest's timber program has historically focused on harvesting old-growth timber in an effort to meet market demand, as directed by the Tongass Timber Reform Act, and to provide jobs in local communities. As a result, the forest products industry and infrastructure in Southeast Alaska is primarily scaled to handle large diameter wood. The alternatives in the Big Thorne Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement include a mix of old-growth and young-growth timber harvest to sustain the current industry and build a supply of young-growth timber for future operations.

"The Forest recognizes the importance of developing a sustainable, young-growth supported timber program," said Forest Supervisor Forrest Cole. "The Big Thorne Project is an important bridge to getting to that future."

Maintaining and diversifying the current Southeast Alaska timber industry is critical. It is also essential during the transition from predominantly old-growth to young-growth harvest that the existing workforce with local knowledge and experience is retained. History has shown that losing the skills and infrastructure of an existing forest products industry makes it very difficult for a new industry to emerge.

For more information find the project website online at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tongass/news-events/?cid=STELPRDB5396196>. ◆