

# Alaska Lands Update

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

## BLM Holds Its First Meeting for New Central Yukon Land Plan and Extends Comment Period Deadline

The Bureau of Land Management announced the start of its public meeting series for the scoping period for the Central Yukon Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement. The first meeting was held at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center in Fairbanks on Monday, Oct. 28 and will continue as follows:

Community	Date/Time/Location
Koyukuk	Tues. Oct. 29, 1:30 p.m., Community Center
Wiseman	Thurs. Oct. 31, 2 p.m., Community Center
Nenana	Mon. Nov. 4, TBD
Nulato	Tues. Nov. 5, TBD
Stevens Village	Wed. Nov. 6, TBD
Ruby	Thurs. Nov. 7* (tentative) TBD
Lake Minchumina	Mon. Nov. 18, 2 p.m., Library
Anchorage	Week of Dec. 2, Campbell tract Science Center

Meetings in another six communities, as well as specific meeting places and times, will be posted on the BLM's

website at [www.blm.gov/ak](http://www.blm.gov/ak) as this information becomes available.

During the scoping period for this plan, the BLM is seeking input from the public and interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the RMP, which will provide future direction for approximately 16 million acres of BLM-administered public land in central and northern Alaska. This includes the Dalton Highway Corridor, BLM-managed lands in the central Yukon River watershed, and the Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Study Area. Development of the plan will take several years.

There is also a new date for the close of the scoping period for this plan. The BLM initially scheduled 180 days for scoping, and the original date for the close of the scoping period was December 11, 2013. Due to the lapse in appropriations and the resulting Federal government shutdown, the documents were not available on the BLM website from October 1 through October 16, 2013. Accordingly, the new date for the close of the scoping period for the Central Yukon RMP/EIS is January 17, 2014.

Public involvement is an essential and required part of the planning process, and comments submitted by January 17, 2014 will be included in the BLM's scoping report for the RMP.

For more information on the plan, the process and how to provide comment, visit the BLM planning website at: [www.blm.gov/ak/planning](http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning). ♦

### Rural Determination Process Rulemaking Comment Period Extended

Collectively, the US Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service have announced in the *Federal Register* an extension of the comment period for a proposed rulemaking on the rural determination process. The Federal Subsistence Board is extending the comment period through December 2, 2013, on its earlier request for comments. The Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, through the Board, has rescheduled public meetings to receive comments and make recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board.

Comments may be submitted electronically to [subsistence@fws.gov](mailto:subsistence@fws.gov)

To review the announcement in the Federal Register visit: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)  
Search Docket ID: FS\_FRDOC\_0001-1693

### New Date for the Close of Scoping Comments for the Bering Sea—Western Interior Plan as a result of the Federal Government Shutdown

The Bureau of Land Management announced on October 25 the new date for the close of the public scoping comment period for the Bering Sea Western Interior Resource Management Plan (BSWI RMP). The BLM initially scheduled for the close of the public scoping comments to be December 16, 2013, but due to the lapse in appropriations and the resulting Federal government shutdown, the documents were not available to the public on the BLM website during that time. Therefore, the deadline has been extended to January 17, 2014.

Public involvement is an essential and required part of the planning process, and comments submitted by January 17, 2014 will be included in the Scoping Report.

Comments may be submitted to [BSWI\\_RMP\\_Comment@blm.gov](mailto:BSWI_RMP_Comment@blm.gov). For more information, visit our website at [www.blm.gov/ak/planning](http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning). ♦

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## Deadlines and Reminders

- **BLM—Bering Sea Western Interior Resource Management Plan** has opened public scoping though **January 17, 2014**. More information and to submit comments visit the project website at: [http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning/bering\\_sea\\_western.html](http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning/bering_sea_western.html);
- **Central Yukon Planning Area Scoping Comment Period through January 17, 2014**. For information at: [www.blm.gov/ak](http://www.blm.gov/ak) or email the project Manager at [j05cole@blm.gov](mailto:j05cole@blm.gov);
- The **Chugach National Forest Plan Revision Phase I - Assessment** is well underway. Planning Meetings have been rescheduled for these communities: **Girdwood & Whittier combo meeting: Wednesday November 13, 6:00-9:00 pm** at the Girdwood Community Center; **Anchorage: Wednesday, November 20, 6:00-9:00 pm** at the Chugach National Forest 161 E. 1st Avenue, Door 8. For more information visit the planning website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/chugach/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5408185>;
- 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/>;
- **ANILCA TRAININGS** conducted by the Institute of the North—a twice annual training “...at the request of Congress, the Institute of the North created a detailed and in-depth training curriculum on the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980. The curriculum illuminates the Alaska context for this sweeping and historic lands act and explains, in detail, its unique aspects.” This is a **two-day course, in Anchorage, on March 5-6, 2014**. For more information, visit the Institute of the North online at: <https://www.institutenorth.org/programs/alaska-commons/anilca-training/>;
- **“In Hovercraft case, Judge Rules Park Rules Apply Across Nation -- Including Alaska”**; *Alaska Dispatch*, November 3, 2013; online post at: <http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/20131103/hovercraft-case-judge-rules-park-rules-apply-across-nation-including-alaska>;
- State of Alaska—DNR’s new Land Records Site: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/landrecords/>.

## 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/>

### BLM-Alaska Travel and Transportation Planning To hold Agency Meeting to Discuss BLM’s Process

BLM-Alaska invites the public and agencies to attend a discussion opportunity focusing on the BLM Travel and Transportation Planning process and access to and across BLM-managed lands.

This meeting will be at the BLM Anchorage District Office located at Campbell Tract off Elmwood Road on November 21, 2013 1-4pm. This discussion is open to the public but seating is limited. You should consider attending if you are interested in learning about how BLM plans for

access to across its lands,

The discussion will cover the basics of BLM Travel Management Planning, focusing on:

- An overview of the BLM Travel and Transportation Management policy;
- The BLM Travel and Transportation Planning process;
- The distinction between land use planning and implementation level decisions;
- The scope of public, local, and administrative use that is evaluated during the Travel Management Planning Process, and;
- The discussion will not cover specific or individual property issues but Staff will be on hand after the discussion;

For more information, please contact Mr. Randy Goodwin, Alaska Travel Management & OHV Coordinator at: (907) 474-2369 or by email: [rgoodwin@blm.gov](mailto:rgoodwin@blm.gov). ♦

**RECENT CACFA meetings have been streamed LIVE, in real time, on Alaska Legislative Television: [www.akl.tv](http://www.akl.tv). Thank you very much to the State of Alaska Staff that make this available and to ‘360North’ and ‘GavelALASKA’ who manage the archive for CACFA at: <http://www.360north.org/gavel-archives/?category=Citizens+Advisory+Commission+Federal+Areas>. Thank you!** ♦

### BLM fulfills final ANCSA entitlement for Oceanside Corporation

The Bureau of Land Management announced on October 28 that it had made an important land transfer to Oceanside Corporation, completing the corporation’s land entitlement under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). Oceanside Corporation was formed under ANCSA to represent the Alaska Native village of Perryville.

The signing ceremony was held in Anchorage. Oceanside’s corporate board was present, as well as attorney Sam Fortier and Francisca Demoski from Bristol Bay regional corporation. BLM-Alaska State Director Bud C. Cribley signed the final patent for 6,880 acres.

Oceanside Corporation received its first conveyances under ANCSA from BLM in February, 1978. With this patent, Oceanside Corporation received just over 93,926 acres of land in the vicinity of Perryville on the Alaska Peninsula.

### State of Alaska Requests U.S. Supreme Court Review of Federal Reserved Water Rights Case

On November 4, 2013, the State of Alaska filed a petition for writ of certiorari with the United States Supreme Court in *State v. Jewell*. The petition requests review of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals’ decision extending control over fishing and hunting to the federal government on state-owned navigable waters not only in, but also adjacent to federal lands.

The case involves fundamental questions of control and authority over navigable waters in the state. When Alaska became a state, it was granted the same sovereign rights as all other states, including title to the lands underlying navigable waterways within its borders, and the right to control those navigable waters and the resources in them. This right applies regardless of whether the waterway goes through federal land.

According to Attorney General Michael Geraghty, “This decision not only threatens the principle that Alaskans should manage their own fish and game, which was the impetus for Alaska statehood, but also the ability of the State to conserve its resources for future generations.”

A federal regulation promulgated in 1999 took away control of navigable waters from the State and placed them under the authority of the federal government. Relying on an unprecedented extension of the federal reserved water rights doctrine, the Ninth Circuit upheld the regulation extending federal subsistence jurisdiction to navigable waterways not only in, but adjacent to federal lands under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). This has led to conflicts and confusion about whether federal or state laws relating to fishing, hunting, and resource conservation apply on state-owned navigable waterways.

“Confusion and uncertainty for user groups do not serve Alaskans. That confusion, and the potential for future conflicts and litigation, will only increase,” stated Attorney General Geraghty, in explaining why the State is seeking appellate review. To review the State’s petition visit: [http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell\\_media/resources\\_files/petition110413.pdf](http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell_media/resources_files/petition110413.pdf). ♦

## Commission Members

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(S) SENATE APPOINTMENT

(H) HOUSE APPOINTMENT

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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.

## The Changing Face of Visitation on the Tongass National Forest: Cabin Program

The changing face of visitation on the Tongass National Forest, along with the reality of shrinking budgets, has prompted Tongass managers to begin strategically planning for the future of the forest's 152 recreation cabins. Increasing costs and declining funding resulted in a \$600,000 budget shortfall in the forest's cabin program this year. In the strategic plan, managers aim to identify cabins that are underused, dilapidated, or otherwise unsustainable, and explore how the forest can refocus available funding on those cabins which are most heavily used and valued by the public. Another goal is to build partnerships with Tongass cabin users to sustain more cabins through volunteer work projects and philanthropy.

"Cabins on the Tongass are some of the forest's most unique and popular visitor destinations, and they are a valued part of our recreation offerings," says Forest Supervisor Forrest Cole. "Public recreation cabins on the Tongass are important to all of us in Southeast Alaska, because we use them for family recreation, hunting, fishing, and sometimes for emergency shelter. Unfortunately, we are faced with the challenge of sustaining a program we cannot afford."

The forest's most popular cabins—generally those on or near the road system, such as the Starrigavan cabin in Sitka or the John Muir cabin in Juneau, are often booked 100 to 270 nights per year. However, some cabins are used far less often—particularly those accessible only by floatplane or helicopter, as rising fuel prices have made charter flights increasingly costly. Of the 152 cabins managed by the Tongass, 21 of those saw less than 10 nights of use in 2012.



...due to sequestration and other reductions, federal funding received by the Tongass for recreation facilities has dropped nearly 50%, from a late-2000s average of \$2.1 million per year to just \$1.1 million this past year. Further reductions are projected in 2014 and beyond, therefore the forest is planning to adjust to these financial constraints while supporting as many facilities as feasible. Declining funding has already constrained the forest's ability to keep up with deferred cabin maintenance, meaning that little-used cabins have been allowed to deteriorate. Many cabins are already considered to be in "poor" or "very poor" condition and need significant rehabilitation or even reconstruction to remain safe for use. Rather than exposing the public to unsafe facility conditions, the plan is intended to develop a smaller, sustainable cabin program.

More details will be provided as they become available. For more information, contact Hans von Rekowski, Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Staff Officer at 907-747-4217 or e-mail at [hvonrekowski@fs.fed.us](mailto:hvonrekowski@fs.fed.us). For more information on Tongass National Forest cabins, go to <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/Tongass/Cabins>. To rent a cabin, go to <http://www.recreation.gov>. ♦

### The White Sulphur Springs Bathhouse is Complete

The staff on the Tongass is very proud to announce that the bathhouse at White Sulphur Hot Springs has been completed and is absolutely beautiful. The site is open for business (see pictures above.) We agree, the building is spectacular and worthy of a visit. Thank you! ♦

## Forest Service Considers Closure of Twelve Public-Use Cabins - Some Volunteers Frustrated by Regulations

Faced with a shrinking budget and low usage numbers in remote locations, the Forest Service is evaluating the removal of 12 of its 152 cabins in summer 2014, converting three of the 12 into three-sided shelters. Even after the cabins' removal, however, the organization will continue to face challenges related to funding. Meanwhile, rule changes involving chainsaws have driven away the Territorial Sportsmen, a Juneau-based organization which built and maintained cabins on Admiralty Island for more than 50 years for free.

Michelle Putz, Team Leader for the Tongass National Forest Sustainable Cabin Management Project, said the Forest Service plans to release an environmental assessment (EA) within the next month evaluating the 12 cabins along three alternatives: first, doing nothing; second, the "proposed action," on which the service received comments in fall of 2012; and third, an alternative based on those comments and internal discussion.

The cabins slated for removal under the "proposed

action" are Beaver Camp, Binkley Slough, Checats Lake, De Boer Lake, Maksoutof Lake, McGilvery, Red Alders, Rezanof Lake and Square Lake. They're near Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka, Thorne Bay, Wrangell and Yakutat. Those slated for conversion to a three-sided shelter are Big Goat (Ketchikan), Distin Lake (Admiralty) and Harvey Lake (Petersburg). Each cabin slated for removal has different circumstances, she said. (For a full description of the cabins involved and the circumstances behind removal visit:

(continue on page 5.)

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Issues Emergency Closure of Brown Bear Sport Hunting on Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

The Service announced on October 25 there would be an emergency closure of sport hunting of brown bears on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge effective October 26, 2013 at 12:01 am. The emergency closure is issued pursuant to federal regulations at 50 CFR 36.42.

Operating under the assumption of lagging indicators, the known human-caused brown bear mortalities on the Kenai Peninsula in 2013 now total at least 66 bears. This includes a minimum of 43 brown bears taken during spring and fall hunting seasons, and 23 bears killed through defense of life and property takings, illegal takings, agency kills of problem bears, and vehicle collisions. Total mortalities now represent more than 10 percent of the best available estimate of a total Kenai Peninsula brown bear population, numbering 624 bears.



“This level of mortality is not scientifically sustainable,” said Refuge Manager Andy

Loranger in announcing the Refuge emergency closure.

In addition to the total number of mortalities, a high number of reproductive-age female bears have been killed. Prior to 2013, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game limited the annual number of human-caused mortalities of adult female brown bears at 10. At least 22 adult females, or 33 per cent of all known mortalities, have been killed so far this year, more than double the previously established limits.

The Service believes that this level of mortality, which includes a high rate of loss of adult female bears, will result in a substantial reduction in the Kenai Peninsula’s brown bear population. This would create a conservation concern for this population, which in turn would negatively impact hunters and many other Refuge visitors who value and enjoy viewing and photographing bears.” Actual human-caused mortalities are higher than the documented number. “Unreported human-caused mortalities are also occurring at an unknown rate, and must be considered when identifying sustainable harvest levels,” said Morton.

While this emergency closure is only temporary under applicable regulations and will last for 30 days, the Service intends to develop and implement a longer term brown bear harvest management strategy on the Refuge.

“As it has in previous years, the Service envisions developing and eventually implementing harvest parameters after appropriate public input and review, in an effort to ensure that harvests remain sustainable, and which focus on adequately protecting adult female bears for the healthy reproduction of the brown bear population on the Kenai Peninsula,” Morton said.

The Service will hold public hearings in the near future at which this strategy will be presented to the public. Hearing dates will be released at a later date.

“We do not take this closure lightly and will work with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to develop a strategy to collaboratively manage brown bear populations that is consistent with the mandates of both agencies,” said Loranger.

For additional information, please contact the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge office during regular business hours at (907) 262-7021. ♦

### State Disappointed with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Decision to Close Brown Bear Hunting on the Kenai Peninsula

The State of Alaska released a statement on October 25, 2013 stating its disappointment with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services decision to use emergency authority to close national wildlife refuge lands on the Kenai Peninsula to the taking of brown bears.

“This action is an unnecessary and unjustified preemption of state hunting regulations,” said Doug Vincent-Lang, Director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation. “The state regulations were developed by the Alaska Board of Game in an open public process and addressed increasing numbers of bears, public concerns over increased human-bear interactions, and

are consistent with the state constitution’s requirement for sustainable populations.” Vincent-Lang added, “The current harvest of bears this year is not unexpected and does not represent a viability concern. Once again we are faced with overreach by the federal government into the management of Alaska’s wildlife.”

Because viability of bears is not a concern, non-refuge lands on the Kenai Peninsula normally open to hunting will remain open to brown bear harvest.

For more information or to reach Mr. Vincent-Lang in Anchorage, call: 907-267-2339. ♦

### State of Alaska Does Good, Sustainable Work in Managing Kenai Brown Bears

In an Oct. 30 Compass piece, former governor Tony Knowles and Dr. John Schoen inaccurately insinuate that the Alaska Board of Game and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game are mis-managing brown bears on the Kenai Peninsula and putting their long-term conservation at risk. This is simply not true.

At its meeting in Kenai last spring, the Alaska Board of Game heard from the Department that brown bear numbers on the Kenai Peninsula have increased substantially over the past decade and are continuing to increase. They also heard testimony from many people, a majority of whom stated that this is causing increased human-bear interactions and safety concerns. Indeed, there have been some serious bear encounters on the Peninsula and the number of bears killed in defense of life and property is significant. In response, the Board of Game chose to temporarily increase brown bear harvest opportunities for a year or two to stabilize bear numbers and allow legal harvest of the bears most likely to be causing problems. Using an economic analogy, this could be viewed as a "market correction" in bear numbers. The Department reviewed the Board's proposed approach at the meeting, and concurred that this short-term strategy would have no adverse impact on long-term viability of the brown bear population. If there were concerns, the Department would have stepped in to prevent over-harvest. Also, the Department of Fish and Game retains the authority to restrict hunting at any time if our biologists believe it is neces-

sary to ensure conservation. Simply put, our professional biologists agree that there is no long-term conservation concern with the number of bears killed this year.

The Department is constitutionally bound to actively manage our wildlife to provide for the maximum benefit to Alaskans while maintaining sustainability. We practice active ecosystem management, which recognizes that humans are a significant part of the ecosystem, with the ultimate goal of providing economic opportunity, recreational benefits and food security while keeping wildlife populations healthy.

In contrast, national Refuge and Park lands within Alaska are managed using a passive management approach. Under the Federal system, "natural diversity" is paramount and wildlife numbers are allowed to fluctuate widely. To give you a real life example of this management



philosophy put into practice, the Fish and Wildlife Service considers it acceptable for an entire caribou herd to die out on Unimak Island, eliminating an important food source for subsistence users. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game's mandates don't allow for populations to

(continue on page 6)

## USFS Cabin Closures...(continued from page 3.)

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the Juneau Empire at [www.juneauempire.com](http://www.juneauempire.com). Footnote citation provided)

To volunteer or not to volunteer; Putz said they would "love" to have volunteers working on their cabins, but many cabin locations are remote and expensive to get to. There are other obstacles, as well. Volunteers are essentially considered employees, and are required to have the same training as employees. "We have a lot of rules and regulations on safety... just making sure people have all the training they need to go out in the woods with brown bears, to be on top of ladders, to use power tools," Putz said. "It's not easy to get through the red tape that protects us."

Forest Service Supervisor Forrest Cole said training isn't a "rigorous process." Aviation safety training, for example, is required for everyone on a Forest Service flight, from the Chief of the Forest Service, to a volunteer, to, recently, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, he said. He said that particular training takes between 30 minutes and an hour. A larger issue for at least one volunteer group is that, several years ago, the Forest Service disallowed the use of chainsaws in designated wilderness areas. "They fired us," said Tom Donek, who was in charge of the group's Admiralty Island cabin maintenance. We used to go out and maintain the cabins. They decided a few years ago that they no longer wanted us to cut firewood, and they took our chainsaws away. They told us if we wanted to continue... we'd have to use misery whips [a two-man cross-cut saw.] Quite frankly, I couldn't get any volunteers, so we basically had to quit." Donek said the Territorial Sportsmen maintained every cabin on Admiralty Island at one time or another.

In the earlier days, the group provided "everything" — transportation, food, supplies, and labor. Later, the Forest Service would sometimes provide one aspect of the project — transportation, for example — and the Territorial Sportsmen would provide everything else, depending on the project.

"Gambier Cabin, in Gambier Bay... some of the last times we did it we'd take our own boats down there and work off our boats," Donek said. "We provided basically everything." The group did complete some training, but Donek said the Forest Service "avoided" others. "Having a 20-year-old kid tell somebody who's been running a chainsaw for the last 30 years how to run a chainsaw just didn't seem like something they wanted to take on," he said.

The Territorial Sportsmen are now working with the state, something member Jack Manning is in charge of. "We put our energy where it was welcome," he said. Cole said when he became supervisor about 10 years ago; there was a variety of regulations and allowances regarding chainsaws. Sometimes they could be used for firewood, sometimes not; sometimes volunteers could use them, sometimes not. "We had the same folks volunteering or doing work on one district they couldn't do on another," he said.

When assessing disparities, they realized the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (passed in 1980) and the Wilderness Act (passed in 1964) say chainsaws need authorization, he said.

So they disallowed it for firewood, in part because cabins with wood-stoves were developing widening clear-cut areas around them. They also converted several cabins from wood stoves to oil.

"For the sake of consistency, and resource damage around the cabins, we basically curtailed it [in wilderness areas]," he said. The Forest Service now allows some motor usage and disallows others on a case-by-case, site-specific basis. Cole said he expects volunteers will take a bigger and bigger role as the Forest

Service's budget shrinks. According to Forest Service calculations, from Oct. 1, 2012 to Sept. 30, 2013, 365 volunteers and interns worked 36,277 hours valued at \$803,171.

Manning said the Territorial Sportsmen aren't against working with the Forest Service. He added, however, that disallowing power tools "is how you kill a cabin. Nobody can work on it; there's no wood; people stop using it."

Recreation Program Manager for the Juneau Ranger District Ed Grossman said even the least popular cabins in the area are used frequently enough that he anticipates they'll stay above the threshold for closure and removal. Many Juneau cabins got more use last year, which Grossman attributes to cabin and trail upgrades, "getting the word out," and rising fuel prices. "The cost of getting to more remote cabins has gone up, so more and more people are enjoying our walk-in cabins," he said. Several Juneau cabins set use records last year. Dan Moller set what Grossman believes is a Tongass-wide record at 280 booked nights. Eagle Glacier exceeded 200 for the first time, John Muir was rented 250 nights, and Peterson Lake set a new record at 198 nights. The district's lowest use cabin, East Turner Lake, saw 26 rented nights. West Turner Lake, which is maintained on the same trip, saw 73 nights.

Despite high use, Grossman said the district may need to reconsider some of the amenities it provides. At five high-use cabins — Dan Moller, John Muir, Peterson Lake, Windfall Lake and Eagle Glacier — the Forest Service provides propane and, every two to three years, flies out human waste.

"I'm not sure how we could handle (waste) any differently because of the volumes involved, but it is a very expensive service offered," he said. "In cabins near lakes or in the alpine, you can't have 1,000 people doing their thing every year and not expect a long term impact."

The Juneau Ranger District isn't a designated wilderness area, so there's no ban on power tools, but training requirements for much of the work can be an impediment to finding volunteers, said Grossman. Some of the work that requires less training is more "unpalatable," like pumping outhouses.

Given a still-declining budget, Grossman said the only options left are to raise fees or remove amenities like propane heat. "I don't know what the future bears for that," he said. "People would be pretty disap-

pointed not having a heat source in a cabin, but it could be we have to go to where you have to take a sweater. I don't know how we're going to deal with it, but somehow we're going to have to deal with it."

Emergency use is one concern some people mention: they've heard stories of people using a cabin during an emergency. "We understand some of the time people use these cabins because they're in a fix, and they need somewhere to stay that's going to keep them safe, warm, and dry," Putz said. She's been in that situation herself: she and her husband once ended up using a cabin "when we didn't intend to take a dip in the water, and the water intended for us to take a dip in it," she said.

Friends of Admiralty Island President K.J. Metcalf, who spoke on a personal level since the organization hadn't yet received detailed information, said he can't think of a specific instance where someone has used a cabin during a "desperate" situation, but said he knows it has happened, particularly on ocean-front cabins. "There's the recreational aspect and also the fact that it could be a matter of life or death if somebody were in real need of shelter," he said.

The Territorial Sportsmen's 2006 letter also referenced cabins' importance "in uncounted emergency situations." The Territorial Sportsmen also took issue with the Forest Service's switch from wood stoves to oil stoves, as people can gather wood, but not oil, in an emergency, Manning said.

Putz said the upcoming environmental assessment will provide more information about estimated costs of removal versus maintenance, among other things. She said people can help make sure the Forest Service's other 140 cabins remain by helping with upkeep and spreading the word about them. They can also help by conserving firewood at remote locations, bringing their own firewood, packing out trash and paying for reservations.

"We don't have estimates... we just know colloquially that it happens," she said of cabin "poaching." "We use the cabins too, with our families, for recreation, hunting, fishing, safety... and we are sad, too, that we are in this dilemma."

(Martin, Mary Catharine. "Forest Service Considers Closure of 12 Public Use Cabin; Some volunteers frustrated by Regulations." *Juneau Empire* [Juneau, AK] 8 11 2013, n. pag. Web. 8 Nov. 2013. <<http://juneauempire.com/local/2013-11-08/forest-service-considers-closure-12-public-use-cabins>>.) ♦



## State Does Good - Continued from page 4

disappear in the name of "natural diversity."

Returning to the Kenai brown bear, under this passive management philosophy, no human influence can be allowed on wildlife that would alter their natural variation. Thus, the State's strategy to address human-wildlife conflicts and provide harvest opportunity while reducing or stabilizing bear numbers is unacceptable to the Fish and Wildlife Service. **Interestingly, despite their stated conservation concerns, federally managed brown bear hunts remain open on the refuge. Only state-managed hunting opportunities have been foreclosed.**

Alaskans should be concerned with a movement toward passive management. Alaskans depend on the state to actively manage its wildlife and habitats for harvest opportunities to feed their families and for economic opportunity. Providing for these uses requires active, engaged management that recognizes humans as a part of the ecosystem. This is especially critical in our rural areas where wildlife provides for subsistence, and where we have been strongly encouraged by residents to actively manage Alaska's wildlife. It is why the Department conducts programs such as habitat enhancement, predation control and harvest management. Interestingly, these tools are all allowed for use under existing federal policies and are commonly used on federally managed lands in the Lower-48 but go largely unused in Alaska.

Understanding that the current Kenai brown bear hunting regulations are intended as a temporary "market adjustment," the Department and board are developing a long-term harvest strategy for brown bears. This strategy will ensure the long-term conservation of brown bears in a manner that addresses human and ecosystem considerations on the Kenai Peninsula as well as meeting the needs of its residents.

Written by Ted Spraker, Chair of the Alaska Board of Game; and Doug Vincent-Lang is director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as published in the Compass—Anchorage Daily News on November 1, 2013. The article can be found online at: <http://www.adn.com/2013/11/01/3153773/compass-state-does-good-sustainable.html>. ♦



## Hawadax Island recovery exceeding expectations: The Rat Island makeover more than just a name change

"When I first landed on what was Rat Island in 2007, it was an eerily silent place. A typical Aleutian island is teeming with wildlife, swirling with noisy, pungent birds. Not this place. It was crisscrossed with rat trails, littered with rat scat, scavenged bird bones, it even smelled...wrong," reports Stacey Buckelew, an Island Conservation biologist. Buckelew first visited the island to help document centuries of damage to native birds and plant species from introduced invasive Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*).

Flash forward to today—five years after the successful removal of invasive Norway rats by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service), The Nature Conservancy (The Conservancy) and Island Conservation (IC). Much has changed. "The island is hardly recognizable among the cacophony of birds calling everywhere; it's alive with bird fledglings—teals, eiders, wrens, sparrows, eagles, peregrine falcons, gulls, sandpipers. The island is transforming," says Buckelew, who has just returned from the now renamed Hawadax Island where she is helping document early stages of an extraordinary recovery.

For the first time ever, breeding tufted puffins (*Fratercula cirrhata*) have been documented on the island in the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Species thought to have been extirpated because of the rats, such as Leach's storm-petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) and fork-tailed storm-petrels (*Oceanodroma furcata*), have been recorded on-island. Ground-nesting and shorebird numbers are increasing as well. A 2008 survey documented 9 glaucous-winged gull (*Larus glaucescens*) nests. This summer, an identical survey discovered 28 nests, a three-fold increase. Black oystercatchers (*Haematopus bachmani*) and rock sandpiper (*Calidris ptilocnemis*) nests have also increased significantly.

Song sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) thought to be near extirpated by rats and snow buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) also decimated by rats are rebounding as well. "During monitoring surveys in 2007 and 2008, we didn't record a single song sparrow. This summer, hardly 3 minutes would pass without hearing a sparrow," said Buckelew. "The return of bird life to Hawadax Island is an inspiring example of what we can accomplish when we work together to fix a longstanding problem. It's a win for people, and it's a win for nature," said Randy Hagenstein, Alaska state director for The Nature Conservancy.

Norway rats were spilled onto the island's rocky shores in a 1780's shipwreck. Since then the rats had decimated native bird species by eating eggs, chicks, and adult birds and by ravaging habitat. In early October, 2008, after many years of intensive planning the project partners successfully removed the rats using rodenticide bait.

For several years leading up to implementation, project partners collected pre-removal baseline data on the island's bird, plant and intertidal species. Since the removal of rats, partners have been back several times to monitor these same species. These early increases in native bird populations are expected to lead to more ecosystem recovery. Seabirds drive the vegetation communities on rat-free islands by delivering marine based nutrients to the soil. As seabirds increase on Hawadax, scientists expect plant communities to return to this natural state.

"What a joy it was to visit Hawadax Island this summer," said Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Manager Steve Delehanty. "There were birds everywhere. There is no more valuable action we can take on a National Wildlife Refuge than making it once again a haven for wildlife."

To read more, visit: <http://seabirdrestoration.org/>. For more information, contact: Heath Packard, Island Conservation, 360-584-3051; Dustin Solberg, The Nature Conservancy in Alaska, 907-424-5101; Steve Delehanty and Poppy Benson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 907-235-6546. ♦



Photo Credit - Rat Island, Aleutians Island, 2008 USFWS National Digital Library

## Science Center Back in Business

There was an odd silence at the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center during the government shutdown between Oct. 1 and Oct. 16. There were no sounds of children. As a result of the shutdown, 19 school programs and 6 meetings were canceled, affecting nearly 1,200 students, teachers, parents, and community members. Those affected included:

- 850 school children, teachers, and parent chaperones who had been scheduled to come for field trips, after-school programs, and weekend family days on energy, ecosystems, Alaska animals and plants, and other outdoor topics;
- 350 community members planning to use the Science Center rooms for trail and club meetings, leadership development training, nonprofit meetings, government training, chickadee research, and a public lecture series;

"The government shutdown was a reminder to us of how many people value the Campbell Creek Science Center and how many citizens benefit from the amazing education programs offered by the BLM," says Amanda Smith, president of the Friends of the Campbell Creek Science Center. "Hundreds of students were not able to explore hands-on science education during some of the most beautiful weeks of the year."

The Bureau of Land Management provides the salaries of three full-time employees as well as maintenance of the Science Center facility. Visitor fees and Friends group sup-

port provide critical additional funds to pay for intermittent instructors for the 900 annual programs serving nearly 37,000 annual visitors. The shutdown resulted in lost revenues of nearly \$12,500 from program fees and rentals.

"Unlike full-time federal employees, our 9 intermittent science instructors did not receive any back pay," said Jeff Brune, manager of the Science Center. "These hard-working, talented staff took a real hit to their income."

Efforts are being made to reschedule as many of the school programs as possible in the already packed calendar of field trips and events. "It is so wonderful to hear the laughter of children again," says Brune. "We're thrilled to be back in business – helping to connect kids and adults to the natural world around us!"

For more information or to contact Mr. Brune, call: 907-267-1241; or email: [jbrune@blm.gov](mailto:jbrune@blm.gov). ♦

## GREAT INFORMATIONAL SITE FOR BLM PLANNING!

Visit: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning.html>, for a complete BLM Planning and NEPA Schedule, Area Boundaries and an Overview of the BLM Planning Process. There are LINKS to ongoing planning efforts and Planning Documents