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Mr. Robert Gilmore
Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Mr. Gilmore:

The State has completed its review of the "review final" Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), Environmental Impact Statement and Wilderness Review for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). These comments follow-up our May 7, 1984 comments on the previous draft. We appreciate that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has made significant improvements in this document. However, we wish to emphasize the need for coordination and cooperation on a variety of management issues which involve the statutory responsibilities of State agencies. Further, we have identified a number of apparent inconsistencies within the document.

Our comments are divided into the following major sections: Interagency Coordination, Fish and Wildlife Management, Timber Harvest/Habitat Manipulation, Recreation, Air and Water Quality, Subsurface Development, and Management Planning.

In most cases we are providing specific alternate language for adoption by the FWS in the Record of Decision. These specific comments are restricted to the FWS preferred alternative (C) only and are underlined for emphasis. With adequate consideration of these comments, the State will be able to support implementation of this plan (Alternative C).

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

The Plan acknowledges the need to coordinate refuge planning and management with other agencies (page 110). However, no specifics are listed about how this will occur and no mention is made of State planning and management efforts currently ongoing in the Kenai Peninsula area. We request that specifics of any coordination efforts, when known, be acknowledged and identified in the plan. Most of the following concerns are based on this need to acknowledge and address adequate cooperation and coordination with State agencies.

Kenai River Special Management Area

The plan should acknowledge the State's efforts to plan for the Kenai River area, as well as FWS' intention to continue its cooperation in the development and implementation of subsequent recommendations. We suggest that the following paragraph be included on page 110.

"In 1984 the Alaska State Legislature passed legislation establishing the Kenai River Special Management Area and designated the area as a unit of the Alaska State Park System. The Act mandated that the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, develop a comprehensive management plan for the Kenai River Special Management Area. This planning effort is currently underway. A 19 member advisory board has been appointed by the Governor to advise the State throughout the planning period. This planning effort, of which FWS is a part, will, among other things, recommend cooperative management agreements with other agencies for unified management of the river corridor. The FWS intends to actively work with the State throughout the planning effort to develop cooperative management agreements for affected refuge land."

In addition to the need to acknowledge this plan, we are concerned that FWS may be limiting the flexibility of this cooperative planning effort. The Skilak Loop Special Management Area, except for the road system and developed facilities, is classified as either Traditional Management or Moderate Management. Both classifications prohibit the development of recreational facilities such as campgrounds, boat launches or access roads. The refuge staff is already engaged in more detailed "step-down" planning for the Skilak Loop Special Management Area. This planning will presumably examine the need for recreational facilities in addition to those already in existence. Yet the classifications applied to the Kenai River and Skilak Lake shorelines appear to prevent even the consideration of additional facilities.

For example, the Kenai River outlet into Skilak Lake is proposed for Traditional Management which prevents development of a boating take-out point (page 105). This is ironic in view of the plans, additional recommendation that the upper Kenai River be closed to power boats to encourage floating and other low-impact activities (page 172). At present, floaters must paddle/motor five miles across Skilak Lake or backpack their equipment up a two-mile foot trail.

The State does not have a specific proposal concerning facility development in this area at this time but does wish to retain the option through the cooperative planning effort presently underway for the Kenai River Special Management Area, if it is determined that facilities are necessary. We request that the Kenai River corridor and the northern shore of Skilak Lake be

classified as Intensive Management. That classification, of course, does not compel the FWS to construct additional facilities, but it does provide for development if recommended by subsequent management plans and if consistent with refuge purposes. Uses and developments in the Kenai River and Skilak Loop areas should be compatible and responsive to the intense public interest as well as protection of the resources.

Kachemak Bay State Park and State Wilderness

The Kachemack Bay State Park and State Wilderness abut the refuge in the south. The plan should acknowledge this and outline that it is the intent of the FWS to cooperate with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, DNR when managing activities that may affect the adjoining lands.

Revised Statute (RS) 2477 Rights-of-Way

A section should be included under Management Directions Common to All Alternatives outlining the FWS's management objectives regarding RS 2477 Rights-of-Way. We will follow-up with appropriate FWS staff to seek some mutually acceptable language that can be included in all refuge plans.

Water Rights

Page 125, Management Directions, (MD), Paragraph 1 - We recommend that this paragraph be replaced with the following: "The Fish and Wildlife Service will work cooperatively with the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, to quantify and apply for reservations of minimum flows to support the values for which the refuge was designated."

Agency Access

We request that the plans acknowledge the need for appropriate access by State agencies within the refuge for management purposes. We have suggested appropriate language revisions to accomplish this (see supplemental specific comments). These revisions are consistent with p.110, Management Directions, paragraph 1 and with Alaska National Interst Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Section 304 (f) (2) (c).

Navigability

The State continues to assert ownership to all waterways and the beds of navigable waterbodies within the refuge, both in the pre-statehood Moose Range and the expanded Refuge (p. 126).

FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Specific management options and research projects outlined in the plan and interagency discussions with FWS representatives indicate that FWS apparently intends to restrict certain options and projects without adequate coordination with the Alaska

Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). These actions are not clearly stated in the plan and would be inconsistent with existing Memoranda of Understanding (MOU).

The plan also contains statements which suggest that ADF&G's management responsibility is limited to the establishment of harvest regulations. We request that these statements be revised to more accurately reflect the cooperative agreements currently in effect. We also suggest that provision be included in the plan for on-going cooperative resolution of varying interpretations of biological data when used by either agency in implementation management decisions. The following revisions would help clarify the State's role regarding management of fish and wildlife on refuge lands.

Page 113, MD, paragraph 1 - Add: "Cooperative studies with State agencies will be encouraged."

Page 113, MD, paragraph 2 - Rewrite the first sentence so that it reads: "The Service will work with the State to protect spawning areas and water..." After the last sentence add "Both the Service and the State will enforce the habitat protection provisions."

Page 115, MD, paragraph 3 - Rewrite this paragraph as follows: "Though the Service has final responsibility for protecting fish and wildlife resources in the refuge, the cooperative agreement with ADF&G and the Department of the Interior policy on state-federal relationships (published in the 3/18/83 Federal Register) vest primary authority for management of resident fish and wildlife populations with ADF&G. The state will continue to regulate the harvest of refuge populations. The Service will assist ADF&G in the management of populations on the refuge and adjacent areas. The Service will also review proposed ADF&G management projects to ensure that the refuge populations are maintained in their natural diversity."

Page 119, Environmental Consequences, (EC), paragraph 1 - Rewrite to read: "State and Federal regulations will continue to be necessary to ensure sustained harvests in highly accessible areas."

Fisheries Enhancement and Rehabilitation

The FWS' intent regarding fisheries enhancement and rehabilitation activities on the Kenai refuge remains ambiguous. In some cases, the intent is clear but inconsistent with existing cooperative agreements and programs. In other cases, statements of intent appear contradictory and do not clarify the effects on current ADF&G management activities.

Table 21 on page 102 indicates that "egg takes" will be permitted throughout the refuge but "fisheries enhancement"

(increases above historic levels) will only be permitted in Intensive and Moderate Management Areas (13% of refuge). Statements regarding management intent for fisheries in the Management Directions Common to All Alternatives section (pp. 114, 115) imply that existing fisheries management and projects will continue and remain under the authority of ADF&G with cooperation from FWS. However, the Management Directions and Environmental Consequences for Alternative C (pp. 164, 165) contain statements which, upon thorough review, imply that FWS intends to implement independent management actions which would eliminate most existing management and research programs upon completion of current projects except in the 13% of the refuge described above.

The above scenario contradicts not only the existing cooperative management regime and previous statements, but also the evaluations in Table 35. This table indicates on page 220 that a "moderate opportunity" to engage in fisheries enhancement will exist with the preferred alternative and on page 222 that wilderness designation will be "moderately restrictive" of enhancement activities. However, the proposed prohibition of such activities may force closure of the Crooked Creek Hatchery with subsequent impacts on the upper Cook Inlet commercial fisheries. It would mean elimination of the Tustumena Lake stocking program which is a cooperative FWS/ADF&G project currently in experimental and evaluation stages. This project is currently located in a designated Wilderness area under Special Use Permit.

To resolve the above conflicts and assist cooperative efforts, we suggest the following changes consistent with FWS decisions for other refuges:

Page 102, Table 21, Fisheries Enhancement - Change all categories to: "Permitted in special situations with cooperative agreements." This would indicate that fisheries enhancement may be permitted in the refuge under Special Use Permit.

Page 165, EC, paragraph 1 - Add to the third sentence, which refers to sockeye stocking, "...would continue until the Service and ADF&G jointly determine that these projects have been completed or no longer achieve their stated objectives. The stocking project in Tustumena Lake currently provides an off-refuge harvest of approximately 235,000 salmon each year at a value to commercial fishermen of \$1.4 million annually." Since the type of fishery management described in the management direction would alleviate any "significant impacts" on the fishery, delete the sentence, "Short-term increases in fishing demand could be met but a significant long-term increase probably would not without having a significant impact on refuge resources and the quality of the fishing experience."

Page 110, Interagency Coordination - Note an intent to establish an interagency forum to: 1) resolve biological concerns regarding fisheries stocking on refuges state-wide; 2) cooperatively evaluate individual project results prior to issuance or denial of Special Use Permits; and 3) provide for cooperative clarification of "historic levels" in differentiating enhancement and rehabilitation efforts.

Indicator/Representative Species

As noted in our previous comments, we remain concerned about the application of this concept in the management of Kenai NWR, particularly the following aspects: 1) actual selection of representative species, 2) undefined limitations on the range of management options, 3) lack of population monitoring, and 4) future techniques for reevaluating the indicator value. To be consistent with the level of detail included in the discussions of representative species, the plan should also include explanations of how the selected species will be monitored including sampling design, field census techniques and cost estimates. To be of value as guidelines, the population estimates listed in Table 26 need confidence limits or ranges of numbers provided with the estimates. The plan should also include: descriptions of available management actions which respond to changes in species numbers; how natural fluctuations are to be evaluated; and how management options will be evaluated while remaining consistent with management directions for other priorities in the plan.

We continue to believe that there are biological reasons for revising several of the selected fish and wildlife representative species. Beyond our disagreement with specific FWS selected species, we are concerned that supporting biological information is lacking which could be improved through cooperative evaluation and monitoring efforts. In order to keep the plan responsive to needed changes in management actions and updated species information, we suggest that FWS modify the section (beginning on page 37) to indicate that these are proposed representative species.

We suggest that the plan endorse establishment of a forum composed of qualified biologists to: evaluate habitats and related management options; attempt to finalize selection of representative species; establish a study design and monitoring program and procedures for assessment of impacts; and to provide management recommendations regarding representative species. Such a forum could include organizations whose assistance in field censuses and monitoring would encourage public participation and understanding.

"Genetic" versus "Natural" Diversity

One of the more complex and indefinite provisions of the plan pertains to maintenance of genetic diversity and viability of

indigenous wildlife populations. As written, it requires refuge planners and wildlife managers to determine what constitutes viable populations, genetic diversity and viable population levels. Although some improvements have been made in the plan since the draft review, we remain concerned about appropriateness and potential application of these concepts.

Both ADF&G and FWS recognize the legal mandate to manage populations to maintain natural diversity, but differ in the application of genetic diversity. We suggest that FWS replace references to restrictive management based on genetic diversity with broader management options. A cooperative effort to acquire biological data and evaluate existing information on genetic and natural diversity would benefit both agencies and the resources. A cooperative effort should be addressed in the plan so that jurisdictional differences can be avoided in implementing subsequent cooperative recommendations.

The following are additional specific comments relating to fish and wildlife research and management.

Page 112, EC paragraph 2 - Delete second sentence. At end of paragraph add: "Because traditional, moderate and intensive management areas are subject to a greater diversity and amount of human use, these areas will be actively managed to assure continued natural diversity."

Page 114, MD, paragraph 1 - Delete this paragraph since it is duplicative of page 112, MD, paragraph 2.

Page 114, MD, paragraph 3 - Rewrite this paragraph so that it reads: "Populations of high public interest will continue to receive management and research emphasis, especially those in the most highly accessible locations."

Page 114, EC, last two paragraphs and Page 115, EC, paragraph 2. Rewrite and combine these 3 paragraphs to read: "A better understanding of these populations will increase management efficiency in improving habitat and maintaining healthy populations. The substantial recreational and commercial benefits (hunting, fishing, observation, study, guiding, and commercial fishing) associated with species such as moose, wolves, trumpeter swans and salmon will continue. The high cost associated with intensive management of these species will continue to be funded."

Page 115, MD, paragraph 1 - Change to: "Studies of species particularly sensitive to human activity (such as bald eagles, brown bears and swans) will continue."

Page 115, MD, paragraph 2 and EC paragraph 2 - Delete these paragraphs since they are duplicative of the combined paragraph rewrites on page 114 (see above).

- Page 115, EC, paragraph 3 - Rewrite the fourth sentence as follows: "Refuge populations would continue to be managed to maintain their natural diversity."
- Page 116, EC, last paragraph - Change the first sentence to: "Access for activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing and wildlife viewing will be maintained."
- Page 118, EC, paragraph 1 - Change the last phrase to: "...on legal uses of refuge resources."
- Page 118, EC, paragraph 2 - Rewrite the first sentence so that it reads: "School groups will have increased opportunity to learn about local fish and wildlife resources and the role of national wildlife refuges."
- Page 119, MD, paragraph continued from page 118 - Delete the last sentence as it is duplicative of p. 114, MD, paragraph 3 as rewritten.
- Page 122, EC, paragraph 2 - Change "...caribou herd and a remnant goat population)" to "...caribou herd and a goat population)". Delete last sentence, "This will preserve a broad range of future management options for this area." This sentence is not consistent with the intent of the minimal management category.
- Page 164, MD, paragraph 2 - Rewrite this paragraph as follows: "Fish and wildlife populations on the refuge would be managed for a variety of consumptive and nonconsumptive uses." Delete the next sentence since it is duplicative of page 112, MD, paragraph 2.
- Page 164, EC, paragraph 2 - Delete this paragraph. It is duplicative of page 112, EC, paragraph 2.
- Page 164, EC, paragraph 3 - Delete the first sentence. Add "... in manipulated areas." to the second sentence.
- Page 164, EC, last paragraph - Change the first sentence to: "Trapping will continue on the refuge and will be regulated in a manner which will prevent overexploitation of furbearer populations."
- Page 166, EC, paragraph 1 - Change "Bull/cow ratios probably would rise reaching 30 bulls per 100 cows..." to "Bull/cow ratios would be managed to exceed 15 bulls per 100 cows and may rise to 30 bulls per 100 cows..." Change the last sentence to: "The moose population would be managed for the benefit of wildlife viewers and hunters and appropriate harvest levels maintained through sound management."

Subsistence

The ANILCA Section 802 states in part that it is the policy of Congress "(1) consistent with...the purposes for each unit...to provide the opportunity for rural residents engaged in a subsistence way of life to do so; (2) nonwasteful subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and other renewable resources shall be the priority consumptive uses of all such resources on the public lands..; and (3)...Federal land managing agencies, in managing subsistence activities..., shall cooperate with...appropriate State and Federal agencies, and other Nations." The purposes listed in ANILCA for each unit were recognized by Congress as not all inclusive. Although ANILCA Section 304 does not list subsistence uses of resources as a purpose of the Kenai Refuge, subsistence is consistent and compatible with the listed purposes. The plan as written only provides acknowledgement of ADF&G studies and a limiting definition of all present hunting and fishing activities as recreational.

Further, Title VIII mandates that subsistence uses be the priority consumptive use of resources on public lands (except where excluded such as Kenai Fjords National Park). The State is implementing the Title VIII provisions for the subsistence use priority throughout Alaska in its management and regulatory procedures in a manner approved by the Department of Interior. The State recognizes subsistence uses and the subsistence priority statewide even though uses differ in various parts of the State. It is important that FWS cooperate with the State in these efforts and confirm their intentions in this plan.

Although FWS intends to comply with ANILCA and to cooperate with the State in the implementation of Title VIII, the plan as written is inconsistent with this objective. The following revisions correct these inconsistencies.

Page 13, paragraph 1 - Change the last sentence to "Second, Kenai is the only refuge for which provision of subsistence use opportunities is not specifically listed as a major purpose."

Page 79, paragraph 1 - Rewrite this paragraph as follows:
"Although the Service considers hunting and fishing to be primarily recreational activities on the refuge and subsistence was not specifically identified as a purpose for the refuge in ANILCA, Title VIII of the Act established subsistence as a priority use on all Federal lands in Alaska. The State is implementing these subsistence provisions in its management and regulatory procedures in a manner approved by the Department of Interior. The ADF&G Division of Subsistence conducted research on harvests of fish and wildlife for local use in Kenai, Ninilchik and Homer in 1982 and 1983. The results of this research were made available early in 1984. As these and other studies reveal data on subsistence use of the refuge, the Service will

abide by the provisions of ANILCA Section 810 and will cooperate with the State in accommodating those uses."

Page 162, EC, paragraph 1 - Add: "when necessary and consistent with ANILCA Title XI procedures," to "Seasonal restrictions would be imposed on certain uses in sensitive habitats."

TIMBER HARVESTING/HABITAT MANIPULATION

The State supports the statement on p. 163 that timber harvesting is a viable option that should be considered for habitat manipulation. Assuming that the intent of the FWS is to consider timber harvest in this manner, ambiguous wording in other sections of the plan needs to be revised and brought into line with this objective.

Page 83-84, Timber Harvest - As written, the section gives the impression that commercial timber cutting is not profitable and therefore is not a management option for habitat manipulation. The DNR Division of Forestry has had sales for fuelwood, house-logs and sawlogs in the area. Local timber purchases have shown interest in these sales and have likely made a profit or would not be staying in business. We feel that managers should consider timber harvest as a viable management option wherever possible and we offer the following alternative language for inclusion in the plan:

"The forest of the Kenai Refuge has some potential for harvest for various timber products. The dominant timber tree is white spruce. The stands with the highest potential for harvest are north of the Kenai River. A few local operators have shown an interest in these areas. If the price of wood products rises and supplies on other more accessible off-refuge land decrease, harvesting wood products may become a significant commercial activity on the refuge. Furthermore, there is a strong and increasing demand for firewood by local residents. For these reasons, commercial and personal use timber cutting may become an important management tool in the refuge."

Page 113, EC, paragraph 1 - Rewrite paragraph as follows: "Better knowledge of the refuge and various forest habitats will increase management's options for the habitats, including techniques for restoration or improvement by manipulation."

Page 122, MD, paragraph 3 - For clarity change the last sentence to: "In wilderness areas habitat will be manipulated (i.e. prescribed burns) only to protect adjacent private lands."

The Environmental Consequences section for this management direction should also clarify how prescribed burns will protect adjacent private lands.

Page 163, EC, paragraph 2 - Rewrite this paragraph as follows: "The amount of land available for manipulation would be second only to that available in Alternative B. Wildlife viewers and hunters would benefit from the relatively stable and large moose population in these areas. Much of the accessible forest habitat now in early successional stages (less than 50 years) would be managed so that it remains in those stages. Although populations of species dependent on old-growth forests would be displaced from some areas north of the Kenai River, refuge-wide these populations probably would increase."

Page 163, EC, paragraph 3 - Rewrite this paragraph as follows: "Refuge-wide the primary method of habitat manipulation would be prescribed burning, although other techniques would also be used. In some areas (e.g. near developments, for the development of firebreaks, in areas where the use of fire is impractical) mechanical tree crushers will be used. Timber harvesting for commercial and for personal use could occur in areas of marketable timber. Such harvesting would help reduce the costs associated with habitat manipulation and could benefit the local economy. The scenic quality and associated recreational values would be affected, however, manipulated habitats in accessible areas would provide opportunities for public interpretation sites explaining the role of habitat manipulation in wildlife management."

Page 173, EC, Paragraph 4 - The plan should consider the salvage of insect killed timber, particularly in the eastern portion of the unit. We recommend the following sentence be added: "The feasibility of salvaging insect killed timber will be evaluated in areas open to timber harvesting."

Page 214, Timber Harvest - The plan states that timber harvest is an effective means of habitat management for moose (pp. 163, 173-4), yet this paragraph concludes that the alternative with the most land available for timber harvest (Alternative B) has the greatest potential to manage habitats and populations. We recommend that this relationship be clarified by acknowledging that Alternative B has the greatest potential to manage habitat for certain species, such as moose.

Page 103, The Mechanical Manipulation section should be renamed Habitat Manipulation and the following sentence should be added: "Timber harvest is also a viable means for wildlife habitat enhancement and is one of the management options to consider for an area."

RECREATION

Recreational Development and Access

Considering that the Kenai Peninsula and its unique resources are a primary destination of Alaska residents as well as tourists arriving from all over the globe, the plan understates the significance of demands which have been and will be placed on the refuge. For example, page 118, EC, paragraph 3, states that "Maintaining current recreational facilities will satisfy existing use...."

The "Southcentral Water Resources Study", Level B Report, Sept., 1981 (selected pages attached) states: "The Recreation Work Group estimated that more than 12,000 camping and picnic units would have to be developed [in Southcentral Alaska] by the year 2000" (p. 46). Much of this demand is associated with the Kenai Peninsula. The final draft plan acknowledges that "Recreational use of the Kenai Peninsula appears to be increasing at an annual rate of about 2.4%....The Service estimates that by 1993, the refuge will attract over 800,000 recreational visitors per year with about 20% associated with developed recreational areas" (p. 79). Additionally, the plan states: "First, Kenai is the only refuge for which opportunities for compatible fish and wildlife oriented recreation is a major purpose" (p. 13).

Despite the acknowledged heavy and increasing recreational demands, needs and opportunities for recreational facilities and public access are not well described and have not been effectively addressed, including secondary requirements for sewage and solid waste/litter disposal. The plan also fails to adequately identify methods for accommodating these increased recreational demands while protecting fish and wildlife resources. Further, the affects of management directions on public use are often ambiguous.

Existing facilities for recreational use on or near the refuge, including trails and camping areas, are often over capacity resulting in spillover into undeveloped areas. Referencing page 46 of the Southcentral Level B study, "Overcrowding at recreation sites and boat launch areas is occurring...on the Kenai Peninsula....This has resulted in environmental degradation and pollution, sanitation problems, public safety problems, excessive littering, noise, and a degraded recreational experience for some users. Continued overuse of sites can results in loss of vegetation and can lead to accelerated erosion and visual blight and possibly degradation or disruption of fish and wildlife populations." We are concerned that inadequate attention to the provision for recreational facilities and public access on refuge lands will result in public/resource conflicts and spillover uses which need continual mitigation on the refuge as well as on adjacent lands.

The State recognizes that the task of providing adequate

recreational opportunities and facilities on the Kenai Peninsula is not solely the responsibility of the FWS. However, FWS should avoid the implication that it is ignoring the problem. The challenge can best be met through coordinated planning and management of visitor use demands. To address these and other concerns, we suggest the following specific revisions/additions to the document:

- Page 21, Significant Problems - Add language which acknowledges the heavy and increasing demands of the refuge and the Kenai Peninsula in general.
- Page 117, Recreation - Include a statement indicating that the FWS will cooperate with other agencies responsible for meeting recreational needs through participation in a coordinated facility development planning program for the area. (The planning efforts currently underway for the Kenai River and the Skilak Loop Areas are the most immediate expressions of such coordination).
- Page 117, MD, paragraph 3 - Specific examples of non-wildlife oriented recreation would clarify this paragraph.
- Page 117, EC, last paragraph - Specific examples would help clarify what few recreational opportunities will be seasonally restricted.
- Page 118, MD, paragraph 2 - In the first sentence, delete the word "primarily" so that it reads: "Funds for recreational facilities will continue to be expended to maintain existing facilities. Also, "Mystery Creek Road" should be cited as an area which currently receives heavy use.
- Page 118, EC, paragraph 3 - Delete the first sentence. At the end of the paragraph, add a statement such as the following quoted from page 20 of the Southcentral Level B report:
- " . . . although recreation facilities are all provided for the same public, they are funded and managed by a variety of agencies which operate under different sets of objectives. With limited financial resources available, and ever increasing demand by the public, and the multiplicity of demands being placed on the water resources, coordinating management of recreational facilities is essential to both the managers and the users".
- Page 119, EC, paragraph 3 - Rewrite the first sentence: "This will enhance the refuge's ability to meet public recreational needs and minimize adverse effects of recreational use on the natural resources and minimize conflicts between recreational users.

Page 170, MD, last paragraph (and continuing on to next page) -
Break the first sentence into two sentences by deleting the
"and" preceding the phrase "in the Skilak Loop..."

Wilderness and Minimal Management Areas

Although the plan explains wilderness and minimal management categories, we are still uncertain as to the administrative differences. In particular, the distinctions between revisable management decisions and permanent management constraints remain unclear, as well as subsequent impacts on management activities. The plan notes that some provisions for aircraft and power boats are more restrictive in the proposed management directions for Wilderness than under Minimal Management. If the Minimal Management areas proposed for wilderness consideration are designated by Congress, will the more restrictive requirements take effect? We suggest the following revision.

Page 169, MD, paragraph 1 - In both this section and the Environmental Consequences section FWS should indicate their management intent with regard to aircraft and powerboat access on minimal management lands and what changes would occur if those lands were designated as Wilderness by Congress.

Chickaloon Flats

We are appreciative of the FWS response to our previous request that Chickaloon Flats be designated as a special management area. However, we are unclear how the proposed wilderness recommendations will affect adjacent State lands and the overall management of the area.

The State has management authority over all tidelands within and adjacent to the area proposed for Wilderness designation. We request that the plan acknowledge that activities on State tidelands and estuaries will require State permits, and that there is a need to cooperatively develop a management strategy for the area. Cooperative management of Chickaloon Flats was the purpose of the 1972 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between FWS, ADF&G, DNR, and the Forest Service (attached). Although there have been some administrative changes since that MOU was signed, the State supports its still valid intent to coordinate and cooperate in managing the area for its "valuable waterfowl habitat", and as a "prime recreational hunting area." We request that FWS indicate a commitment to this concept in the plan and work with the State prior to formally recommending Wilderness designation for the area. We suggest this could be accomplished by updating the 1972 MOU, or by initiating a more detailed planning effort such as that for the Skilak Loop Special Management Area.

AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Water Quality

Under the preferred alternative, the environmental consequences of commercial oil and gas activities do not adequately reflect the potential for water pollution nor is there any mention of oil/fuel spill contingency planning (p. 173). This is a major oversight considering the difficulties the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is encountering regarding the manner of disposal of drilling muds and fluids on wetlands in the refuge. Because of the potential toxicities associated with drill muds and fluids disposal, DEC is now developing uniform procedures for such disposal on all active drilling sites throughout the State ("Survey of Drilling Mud Use and Disposal, DEC, Sept. 1984). To address these concerns, we suggest the following revisions:

Page 110, EC, Paragraph 1 - Reference DEC as a cooperating agency vis-a-vis oil and gas leasing.

Page 121, EC, Paragraph 2 - Change "occasional water pollution will continue" to read "some potentially significant water pollution could occur."

Page 121, MD - Add the following paragraph: "The Service will give special attention to the potential for surface and ground water pollution from wastes associated with oil and gas drilling activities and will cooperatively pursue with the State and other federal agencies the application of generic and site specific disposal procedures and stipulations for all such waste disposals."

Air Quality

Page 125, EC, Paragraph 1 - This paragraph indicates that the protection of refuge air and water quality could cause restrictions on industry beyond the refuge boundaries. We request that the following sentence be added. "Such enforcement of air and water quality standards outside the refuge would be administered by DEC. However, a formal administrative agreement could be entered into between the State and the Service concerning water quality parameters."

Kenai Wetlands

Concerning the emphasis given to providing opportunities for commercial oil and gas exploration and development in the preferred alternative (p. 173), there is inadequate attention given to the sensitivity of the Kenai wetlands. We suggest the following additional paragraph be added to the discussion "Special Values of the Kenai Refuge" on pp. 19-20.

Kenai Wetlands Habitat

A considerable portion of the Kenai bench lands is a

wetlands area, providing both an excellent moose and waterfowl habitat and watershed recharge area. In the sub-Arctic environment, this terrain is highly sensitive to disruption, and because of the surficial geology, there is often direct communication between surface and ground waters. Thus, overuse or abuse of the wetlands habitat or contamination of ground waters via surface pollution, may take many years to recover if at all.

SUBSURFACE DEVELOPMENT

Page 23, Paragraph 5 - We are concerned about a change that was made to the Draft Plan concerning Oil and Gas. The final plan contains the following statement: "Innovative and costly management actions will be needed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts of these industrial development." The word "will" should be replaced by the word "may", as was used previously in the Draft Plan. Use of the word "will" does not account for existing measures and methods which may be the best solution to a problem, and it seemingly suggests that the only solutions to problems are expensive solutions. The wording used in the draft edition allows for the best solution to a problem, whether expensive or inexpensive, whether innovative or tried and true.

Page 116, EC, paragraph 5 - Rewrite the first sentence to read: "Oil, gas, coal and mineral development will have impacts on the environment." In the third sentence, delete the word "mineral" so that it reads: "In order to minimize impacts, monitoring expenditures will have to increase in proportion to development."

Page 121, MD, paragraph 4 - Change to: "The Service will continue to seek funds from industry, to conduct studies on the impacts of development such as oil and gas on fish, wildlife, habitat, and public use of the refuge."

Page 121, EC, paragraph 5 - Change the first sentence to: "This allows industry to express its commitment to resource protection and monitoring during exploration and development of resources."

Page 127, EC, paragraph 1 - add "mineral management" to third sentence so that it reads: "; oil and gas management; mineral management; water resource..."

MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Page 127, Management Plans - This discussion (and that on page 16, paragraph 3) should indicate a commitment to public involvement during development of appropriate management plans (Chapter 4 RM 3.19, Refuge Manual).

ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC COMMENTS

- Page 30 and 31, Table 2 and Figure 4 - Delete. It is inappropriate to represent public comment as a "voting" process. Further, the compilation and interpretation of this information is highly subjective, especially that shown in Figure 4.
- Pages 67-69, The Department of Labor has provided more current population and personal income estimates and employment statistics for CY 1983. These statistics are being forwarded under separate cover. In future planning documents, we encourage FWS to use the most current information available.
- Page 111, MD, last paragraph. Change the last sentence so that it reads: "...permitting the Service and the State reasonable access to..."
- Page 112, EC, paragraph 1 - Change the second sentence so that it reads: "...but must allow refuge and State personnel access."
- Page 117, MD, paragraph 1 - Add the phrase: "...most appropriate means of access and motorized equipment..."
- Page 123, MD, paragraph 1 - Change to: "Motorized equipment (such as chain saws, generators, and portable pumps) will not be permitted in the Kenai wilderness except by management agencies or in life threatening situations."
- Page 123, MD, paragraph 2 - Change the phrase "...to be authorized use of the most appropriate motorized equipment (sic) ...", to "...to be authorized access and use of the most appropriate motorized equipment..."
- Page 162, EC, paragraph 2 - Change first sentence to "About first sentence to "About 13% (266,000 acres or 108,000 ha) of the refuge would be..." In the last sentence change "water quality would remain high" to "water quality is expected to remain high."
- Page 163, EC, paragraph 1 - Delete the phrase "of non-wilderness lands" in the second sentence.
- Page 168, EC, paragraph 1 - Change the last sentence to: "The Service and State agencies would continue to have access to these areas for routine management."
- Page 169, EC, paragraph 2 - Change the last sentence to: "The Service and State agencies would continue to use aircraft to reach most remote locations for routine management."
- Page 169, EC, paragraph 5 - Change the last sentence to: "The

Service and State agencies would continue to use snow-mobiles to reach remote locations for routine management.

Page 170, EC, paragraph 2 - Change the second sentence to:
"The Service and State agencies would continue to use motorboats to reach many remote locations for routine management."

Page 173, MD, paragraph 1 - Change the first sentence to:
"About 398,000 acres (161,000 ha) or 20% of the refuge would be subject to oil and gas leasing and associated activities."

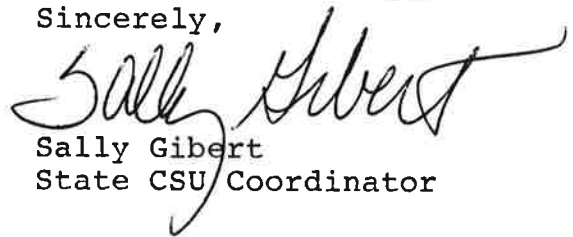
Page 173, EC, paragraph 4 - In the first sentence change to
"up to 14% (266,000 acres or 108,000 ha) of the refuge..."

Page 175, EC, last paragraph - Change "This would ensure that future management options are preserved for several areas of valuable wildlife habitat adjacent to the Kenai wilderness..." to "This would restrict development of several areas of valuable wildlife habitat adjacent to the Kenai wilderness..."

Land Status - We assume you have checked the land status of Section 36, Township 11 North, Range 7 West Seward Meridian which is shown as refuge land on the management alternative map. The State status plats show Section 36 as School Land (Sch-36), patented to the State under patent 50-65-0373.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this "review final". If we can be of any assistance in clarifying these comments, please contact this office.

Sincerely,



Sally Gibert
State CSU Coordinator

Attachment

cc: R. Davidge, DOI
R. McCoy, ALUC
M. Frankel, ALUC
J. Leask, AFN
S. Leaphart, CACFA
State CSU Contacts



Alaska Water Study Committee

SOUTHCENTRAL WATER RESOURCES STUDY (Level B)

P.O. Box 3276 DT
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Memorandum

To: Secretaries of Federal Agencies, Commissioners, State of
Alaska Agencies, Alaska Water Study Committee, Interested
Parties

From: Richard F. Dworsky, Study Manager

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard F. Dworsky".

Subject: 90-Day Review--Southcentral Alaska Water Resources Study

I have the pleasure to transmit to you for review and comment the Southcentral Alaska Water Resources Study. This is a 90-day review process and will lead to the final report. I am requesting that all comments be submitted by September 1, 1981.

After the receipt of comments, any unresolved issues will be addressed by the Alaska Water Study Committee. Then the report will be forwarded to the Governor of the State of Alaska; and the President and Congress via the U.S. Water Resources Council.

I will be happy to meet with you if you wish to discuss further, either the report or implementation actions. Please call (907) 271-4313 if you have any problems.

Enclosure 1

- Improved and increased data collection and resource inventories are necessary to enhance planning for potential agriculture, timber, and rangeland development.
- Attention needs to be focused on problems affecting watersheds and water supplies serving communities, unincorporated settlement areas, flood plains, fish and wildlife habitat, and wetlands.
- Native villages share a number of critical land and water management needs such as flood plain water supply, and water quality management. These could be partially met through agency assistance or coordination.

Electrical Power and Energy

Greater growth and economic development will mean increased demand for electrical power. Power demands, for example, increased in the Southcentral region by 270 percent between 1970 and 1977. Additional demands of equal size caliber might be expected or exceeded, depending upon the type of development Southcentral Alaska experiences.

The Southcentral region possesses significant energy resources, primarily hydroelectric, coal, gas, and oil.

A number of studies are directed toward feasibility, design, and possible development of promising hydroelectric potentials. The impacts of hydroelectric power on water supply, water quality, fish and wildlife, and other uses are being looked at in the feasibility studies and will have to be closely followed. It appears that renewable resource potential, if developed, could satisfy most of the demands for electric power.

Areas of concern regarding electric power and energy centers around alternative energy sources, the development of electrical energy and consumptive water use in rural areas and increasing practical knowledge of geothermal resources and their uses.

Recreation

The high-quality recreation potential of Southcentral Alaska could be adversely affected by continued growth. Water withdrawals or degraded water quality may cause shifts in use and increase overcrowding of some areas. Growth of water-related activities such as stream fishing will mean that new or additional access will be needed. The increased demand for boat ramps and mooring facilities could increase pollution from sediment, oil, and other sources. Additionally, although recreation facilities are all provided for the same public, they are funded and managed by a variety of agencies which operate under different sets of objectives. With limited financial resources available, an ever-increasing demand by the public, and the multiplicity of demands being placed on the water resources, coordinated management of recreational facilities is essential to both the managers and the users. Recreation concerns are as follows:

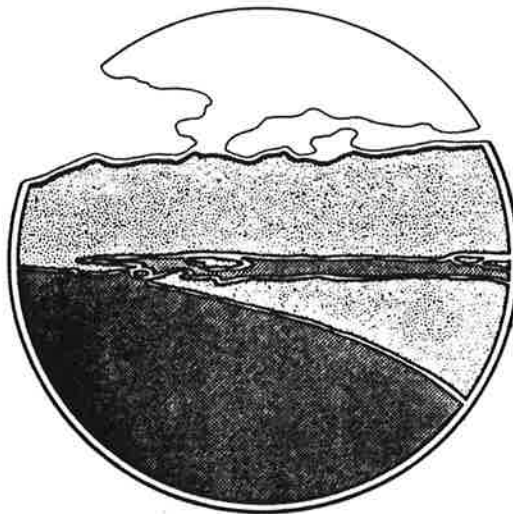
- Better rural/village recreational opportunities need to be developed.

- Recreation agencies need to improve coordination and management. Attention and action must be placed on solving the access problems.
- Additional recreational and commercial boat launching and mooring sites are needed.
- A greater demand will be placed on urban recreation facilities.

Navigation

Recent accelerated economic development of Alaska resources has placed increasing demands upon Southcentral region harbor and port facilities for both commercial and recreational vessels. Expansion of small boat harbors as well as ports is necessary and desirable, but little comprehensive planning has been completed. Specific navigation concerns are as follows:

- A priority system for port and harbor expansion is needed to achieve the State's development objectives.
- Future harbor needs for commercial and recreational vessels must be identified.
- Small boat harbor construction and port expansion must be accomplished.
- Data must be collected to facilitate planning and implementation of port and harbor development for the bottomfishing industry.
- Alternative strategies should be developed for identifying sites and conducting environmental studies to support a dredged material disposal program.
- The need for deep-draft navigation and port improvements should be evaluated at Kodiak, Anchorage, Whittier, and Seward.



RECREATION

Because of its relatively moderate climate, accessibility, modern facilities, and diverse recreational resources, Southcentral Alaska is the focal point for intensive recreation activities. Most recreational use in the region is concentrated along the major road systems, especially around developed facilities, and seasonally at salmon streams.

The Recreation Work Group developed projections that not only quantify needs for recreational development and facilities, but also point to the need for better, more coordinated management of recreation activities. Improved management is needed to ensure that recreational resources and values are not lost in efforts to meet projected increased demand in this area. However, it was determined that greater value could be obtained in relation to the capabilities of the study process if the group identified needs arising from critical broad issues not being addressed in other forums.

The following problems appear to be the most critical:

OVERCROWDING, LACK OF ACCESS TO SITES, AND LACK OF ALTERNATIVE SITES

Overcrowding at recreation sites and boat launch areas is occurring at such locations as the Anchor and Russian Rivers, Clam Gulch, and Homer Spit on the Kenai Peninsula and certain stream systems in the Matanuska-Susitna Valleys. This has resulted in environmental degradation and pollution, sanitation problems, public safety problems, excessive noise, littering, and a degraded recreational experience for some users. Continued overuse of sites can result in loss of vegetation and lead to accelerated erosion and visual blight and possibly degradation or disruption of fish and wildlife populations.

The Recreation Work Group estimated that more than 12,000 camping and picnic units would have to be developed by the year 2000. Concomitant with this demand is the need to provide water supplies and sanitation facilities.

An important consideration in alleviating overcrowding, dispersing recreational use, and opening new areas is integration of recreation planning with other planning, particularly habitat protection and transportation. Multimodal access to recreation areas diversifies recreational opportunities while using modes that are compatible with scenery, wildlife, or other resources.

MOTORIZED/NONMOTORIZED RECREATION

The inherent conflict between motorized and nonmotorized recreation is largely perceived rather than real. However, it is also generally recognized that public safety suffers where motorized and nonmotorized activities occur at the same time in the same place. Great differences in

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN THE

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME, ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES,

U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF

SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

CHICKALOON FLATS MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

OFFICE OF
MANAGEMENT & BUDGET

FEB 22 1985

GOVERNMENTAL
COORDINATION

This Memorandum of Understanding is made by and between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game hereinafter called Fish and Game, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, hereinafter called Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service hereinafter called Forest Service, and the Department of the Interior Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife hereinafter called Fish and Wildlife.

The Chickaloon Flats, as per the attached legal description and map involving forty-eight thousand acres, more or less, are recognized by the agreement participants as valuable waterfowl habitat and as a prime recreational hunting area. Therefore, wise management of the flats is needed to perpetuate this segment of natural habitat for thousands of waterfowl which annually utilize the marsh for nesting, feeding and resting. These uses will require formation of effective management guidelines which are best formulated through the coordinated and combined efforts of the participating agencies.

WHEREAS Fish and Game is responsible for administering the state program for the conservation and development of the state's commercial fisheries, sport fish, birds, game and fur-bearing animals, and

WHEREAS Natural Resources is responsible for administering the state program for the conservation and development of natural resources, including forests, parks, and recreational areas, lands, waters, agriculture, soil conservation and minerals (including petroleum and natural gas), but excluding commercial

fisheries, sport fish, game, and fur-bearing animals in their natural state, and

WHEREAS, Forest Service is responsible for the protection and management of National Forest Lands in the State of Alaska, and

WHEREAS, Fish and Wildlife is responsible for managing those lands within the Kenai National Moose Range, and the migratory birds on a national level and,

WHEREAS, the management and protection of fish and wildlife resources is closely tied to management of key habitat; now therefore, the above organizations agree as follows:

A. FISH AND GAME AGREES:

1. To recognize fish and wildlife as the primary resources of the area and provide for sound wildlife management practices and to recommend hunting regulations which will give the maximum hunting and recreational use compatible with the maintenance of wildlife and its habitat.

2. To cooperate with the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Natural Resources, in habitat studies and habitat improvement work mutually agreed feasible and necessary to maintain and enhance waterfowl and game populations of the area.

B. NATURAL RESOURCES AGREES:

1. To classify the lands of the area below mean high tide as Resource Management Lands.

2. To recognize wildlife as a primary resource on the state-owned tide-lands of the area, and prior to permitting other tide-land uses, take measures to coordinate such activities with the resource values of waterfowl and other wildlife habitat.

C. FOREST SERVICE AGREES:

1. To manage and protect the resting and feeding grounds of the waterfowl and other wildlife of the area under Forest Service control.

2. To recognize wildlife as the primary resource on the national forest lands of the area and prior to permitting any other land uses to take measures to prevent or mitigate damage, disturbance, deterioration, or misuse of waterfowl and other wildlife habitat resulting from such other land uses that may be permitted. These activities will be coordinated with the primary resource values of the area.

D. FISH AND WILDLIFE AGREES:

1. To manage and protect the resting and feeding grounds of the waterfowl and other wildlife of the area.

2. To recognize wildlife as the primary resource on the Refuge lands of the area and prior to permitting any other land uses to take measures to prevent or mitigate damage, disturbance, deterioration, or misuse of waterfowl and other wildlife habitat resulting from such other land uses that may be permitted. Those activities will be properly coordinated with the primary resource values of the area.

E. FISH AND GAME, NATURAL RESOURCES, FOREST SERVICE, AND FISH AND WILDLIFE MUTUALLY AGREE:

1. That the area described by the attached map and written description shall be designated as the Chickaloon Flats Management Area.

2. That the Forest Service, Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, will cooperate in the development, execution, maintenance, and periodic revision as necessary of a wildlife management plan.

3. To make no changes or departures from the wildlife management plan finally developed and agreed upon without the concurrence of all the parties to this agreement.

4. That the parties to this agreement will consult with each other prior to the issuance of any leases or permits.

5. That public and privately owned cabins or other improvements may be provided within the area if joint study and analysis show they are necessary and compatible with the management objectives.

6. That each and every provision of this Cooperative Agreement is subject to the laws of the State of Alaska and the laws of the United States.

7. To cooperate in planning and conducting wildlife restoration and management projects on the area as funds are available.

8. That nothing in this agreement shall be construed as obligating the participants in the expenditure of funds or for future payment of money in excess of appropriations authorized by law.

9. That no member of, or delegate to Congress, or resident commissioner shall be admitted to any share or part of this agreement, or to any benefit that may arise therefrom, but this provision shall not be construed to extend to this agreement if made for a corporation for its general benefit.

10. To meet within one (1) year of the signing of this Agreement to formulate an action plan.

11. Make this Agreement effective as soon as it has been signed by all parties and it shall be terminated only after one year written notice has been given by any party.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

By *E. Huggins*
(Commissioner)

Date 4/5/72

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

By *Walter F. Roberts*
(Commissioner)

Date 4/1/72

U. S. FOREST SERVICE

By *B.L. Yates*
(Regional Forester)

Date 4/21/72

BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

By *John Crocker*
(Regional Director)

Date 4/6/77

CHICKALOON MANAGEMENT AREA LEGAL DESCRIPTION

SEWARD MERIDIAN

T 9N, R 4W, Sec. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22,
T 9N, R ⁵4W, Sec. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24
T 10N, R 4W, Sec. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34
35, 36
T 10N, R 5W, Sec. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34,
35, 36
T 10N, R 6W, Sec. 13, 24, 25, ³26

Approximate Acreage -- 48,000

Those Sections underlined contain tide and submerged lands.

CHICKALOOK NAT

