

Chapter I: Introduction

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Chapter I: Introduction

A. Background

On January 30, 2004, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register to prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP) and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for lands administered by the Northern Field Office (now known as the Fairbanks District Office).¹ As defined by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, as amended, public lands are those federally-owned lands and interests in lands (e.g., federally-owned mineral estate) that are administered by the Secretary of the Interior, specifically through the BLM. This includes lands selected, but not yet conveyed, to the State of Alaska and Native Corporations and villages.

The approved RMP will meet BLM statutory requirements for a land use plan as mandated by Section 202 of FLPMA, which specifies the need for comprehensive land use plans consistent with multiple-use and sustained yield objectives. The EIS will fulfill requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, to disclose and address environmental impacts of proposed major Federal actions through a process that includes public participation and cooperation with other agencies.

Due to BLM administrative boundary adjustments in January 2005, management of approximately 4.2 million acres of BLM-managed land in the Seward Peninsula area was transferred to the Anchorage Field Office. As this Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP had already been initiated before the boundary adjustment, the Fairbanks District Office will continue to prepare the RMP in close coordination with the Anchorage Field Office; once approved, the RMP will be implemented by both offices.

The BLM is the lead agency in preparing this Draft RMP/EIS. The BLM is coordinating closely with the State of Alaska and with Bering Strait Regional Corporation, NANA, and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, as well as with village councils located within the planning area. In addition, the BLM has coordinated with the National Park Service, Western Arctic Park Lands, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, in preparation of this document.

¹ In summer 2005, the Northern Field Office was renamed the Fairbanks District Office and reorganized with three new Field Offices: Arctic, Central Yukon, and Eastern Interior.

B. Purpose and Need for the Plan

Through the completion of an RMP/EIS, the BLM proposes to provide a comprehensive land use plan that will guide management of the public lands and interests administered by the Fairbanks District Office and the Anchorage Field Office. Most site-specific decisions and management actions, such as designation of specific trails, will occur through subsequent implementation plans.

Current management of these lands is guided by the Northwest Management Framework Plan (MFP) (BLM 1982). The MFP was amended in 2005 to be consistent with the National Fire Plan (BLM 2004b, 2005c). Since approval of the MFP in 1982, new regulations and policies have created additional considerations that affect the management of public lands. In addition, new issues and concerns have arisen over the past 20 years. Consequently, some of the decisions in the MFP are no longer valid or have been superseded by requirements that did not exist when the MFP was prepared. These new issues and changes in management policy drive the need for an inclusive, comprehensive plan that provides clear direction to both the BLM and the public.

C. Planning Area

1. *Land Ownership and Administration*

Map 1-1 at the end of the Planning Area section shows the location of the planning area within the State of Alaska and depicts the varying ownership and conveyance status within the planning area. Of the approximately 31 million acres within the planning area, decisions in the RMP/EIS will apply to 13 million acres, as described below and shown in Table 1-1 on page 1-6. Once conveyances are complete in 2009, somewhat less than 13 million acres will remain under BLM management within the planning area.

- **BLM:** These are lands that will most likely be retained in long-term Federal ownership. These lands, which constitute approximately 16 percent of the planning area, are not selected by the State or by Native corporations or villages.
- **State-selected:** These are formerly unappropriated and unreserved public lands that were selected by the State of Alaska as part of the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958 and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980. Until conveyance, State-selected lands outside of National Park system lands or National Wildlife refuges will continue to be managed by the BLM. ANILCA allowed for overselection by the State by up to 25 percent of the entitlement (sec. 906 (f)). Therefore, some State-selected lands will eventually be retained in long-term Federal ownership. State-selected lands constitute approximately 12 percent of the planning area.
- **Native-selected:** The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 gave Alaska Natives an entitlement of 44 million acres to be selected from a pool of public lands specifically defined and withdrawn by the Act for that purpose. Some ANCSA corporations filed selections in excess of their entitlements. Similar to overselections by the State, some of the Native-selected lands will not be conveyed and will be retained in federal ownership. Native-selected lands constitute approximately 15 percent of the planning area.

- **Dual-selected:** These are lands that have been selected by both the State and Natives. Because of overselection, some of these lands could be retained in long-term Federal ownership. Dual-selected lands constitute less than 1 percent of the planning area.
- **Mineral estate:** Alaska is a "split estate" property rights state in which there can be two distinct owners of a given parcel of land: the surface owner and the sub-surface owner. Federal split-estate lands are those on which the surface of the land has been patented, that is, transferred to private ownership, while the mineral interests are retained by the United States. Surface property owners, for example, include home owners and businesses. The rights of a surface owner generally do not include ownership of mineral resources such as oil, natural gas or coal. Under the appropriate provisions and authorities of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, individuals and companies can prospect for and develop coal, petroleum, natural gas and other minerals reserved by the Federal Government. All subsurface mineral estate lying beneath BLM lands is managed by the BLM. State and Native selections segregate the land and keep it closed to mineral entry, except on pre-existing, valid federal mining claims (locatable minerals) and issue of mineral material permits with the concurrence of the selecting entity (salable mineral materials). Conveyances made under ANCSA and the Statehood Act includes the mineral estate. In some cases, subsurface mineral estate is reserved to the Federal government through conveyance of Native Allotments. This reservation only occurs where information dictates that a particular mineral was prospectively valuable at the time of conveyance. Conveyances made under other land disposal laws, such as the Recreation and Public Purpose Act, do not include the mineral estate and it remains under BLM management when the surface is conveyed. Within the planning area, the BLM manages an estimated 80,000 acres of subsurface mineral estate.
- **Military lands:** These lands are under withdrawal to the military. If released and returned to BLM management during the life of the plan, direction contained in the RMP/EIS would apply. Military lands constitute less than 1 percent of the planning area.

Lands within the planning area that will not be covered by the RMP/EIS:

- **State of Alaska lands:** These are lands that have already been conveyed to the State of Alaska. These lands constitute approximately 17 percent of the planning area.
- **Native lands:** These are lands already conveyed to village and regional Native corporations and are now private lands. These lands constitute approximately 18 percent of the planning area, and are included with other private lands when calculated in Table 1-1 on page 1-6.
- **National Park Service lands:** These are lands within Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, Cape Krusenstern National Monument, Kobuk Valley National Park and Preserve, and Noatak National Preserve. These lands constitute approximately 43 percent of the planning area.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lands:** These are lands managed by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service within the Selawik and Alaska Maritime National Wildlife refuges. These lands constitute approximately 8 percent of the planning area.
- **Private lands:** These lands are privately owned, aside from Native corporations or villages and include Native allotments and other private land. These lands constitute less than 1 percent of the planning area.

2. Geographic and Social Setting

The Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Planning Area generally encompasses the area included in the Northwest Arctic Borough, the northern portion of the Bering Straits Region, and the western edge of the North Slope Borough. The planning area is bounded on the west and south by the Chukchi and Bering seas and on the east by the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), Noatak National Preserve, Kobuk-Valley National Park and Preserve, and the Yukon River watershed. The area is remote with no road access to interior Alaska. The only roads in the planning area are those associated with communities, the Red Dog Mine road, and about 200 miles of road out of Nome.

The two larger communities of Nome (population 3,505) and Kotzebue (population 3,082) serve as hubs for the area. There are 21 small villages with a combined population that ranges from 400 to 800 residents, and a few seasonal communities with no year-round residents.

Table 1-1. Land Status within the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Planning Area

Land Category	Acres	Percent of Planning Area
BLM-managed lands		
BLM public lands	4,970,000	16
State-selected	3,624,000	12
Native-selected	4,539,000	15
Dual-selected	108,000*	<1
BLM-managed lands subtotal	13,133,000	43
National Park Service	4,090,000	13
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	2,327,000	8
Military	5,000	<1
State of Alaska	5,296,000	17
Private**	5,576,000	19
Total lands within the planning area	30,427,000	100

Note: All acreage figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres to account for future updates to improve land status data. No warranty is made by the BLM as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data. For official land status and boundary information, refer to cadastral survey plats, master title plats, and land status case-files.

* Dual-selected acres are already included in the State- and Native-selected totals, and are not included in the total lands within the planning area acreage.

** Private lands include ANCSA lands, Native allotments, and all other privately owned lands. The vast majority of this acreage is comprised of Native corporation land.

INSERT 11x17 MAP
1_1_landstatus

D. Scoping and Issues

Early in the planning process, the public was invited to help the BLM identify planning issues and concerns relating to the management of BLM-managed lands and resources in the planning area. The formal 90-day scoping period began with publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on January 30, 2004. The scoping process included nine public meetings held in March and April 2004. Most of these meetings were held in small communities and villages within the planning area, although meetings were also held in Fairbanks and Anchorage. Concurrently, a Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP Web site was developed. This Web site contained the public meeting schedule, an explanation of the RMP process, and contact information. At the end of the scoping period, a scoping report was posted on the web pages and made available to the public (BLM 2004c). The Web site was available through April 2005, at which time all BLM Web sites nationwide were shut down for extensive system maintenance. On January 12, 2006, an updated version of the Web site was posted at <http://www.ak.blm.gov/ksp>. News releases and radio announcements were also used to notify the public of the planning process and how to become involved.

Identification of issues is the first step in the planning process. A planning issue is a controversy or dispute over resource management or uses on public lands that can be addressed in a variety of ways. During scoping, the BLM asked the public to provide issues or management concerns that needed to be addressed during plan development. After consideration of public comments, four planning issues were identified. Addressing these issues has resulted in a range of management options presented in three action alternatives and one no action alternative. While other management concerns are addressed in the RMP, management related to them may or may not change by alternative.

1. Issues Addressed

Issue Statement 1: How can recreational use of public lands be managed to reduce conflicts between sport and subsistence hunting and to prevent negative impacts on subsistence hunting opportunity?

Local residents are heavily engaged in subsistence activities and the public lands adjacent to communities throughout the planning area provide ideal opportunities for harvesting renewable resources. Except for Nome and Kotzebue, all communities within the planning area are small, isolated, predominantly Native communities that rely heavily upon subsistence harvests as a mainstay of livelihood. The population of the planning area is approximately 75 percent Alaska Native (Fried and Windisch-Cole 2005). Large tracts of BLM-managed lands within the planning area are critical to subsistence by providing largely undisturbed and uninhabited areas for wildlife populations to flourish.

Commercial and dispersed recreational use of public lands in the Squirrel River has been a concern of local residents for the last 10-15 years, when the number of non-resident hunters began to increase substantially. In other areas, recreation is an emerging concern as moose populations in the region decline and increased regulation of hunting in other parts of Alaska makes the planning area more attractive to guides and sport hunters. Local residents have

expressed concern about maintaining the availability of wildlife and fish for subsistence use. Some are concerned that increased recreational use may prove detrimental to wildlife populations. In particular, low-flying aircraft are believed to disturb migrating caribou and other wildlife which may subsequently affect the availability of wildlife in areas accessible by local subsistence hunters.

BLM guidelines for the number of special recreation permits issued in the various game management units established by the State of Alaska have not been established. There is currently no limit to the number of special recreation permits that could potentially be authorized. Transporters and air taxi operations that transport unguided sport hunters into remote areas are currently not regulated by the BLM. This plan considers designation of special recreation management areas which will better allow the BLM to address this issue. Limitations may be placed on the number of special recreational use permits authorized or the number of visitors permitted.

Issue Statement 2: Maintain and protect subsistence opportunities. Determine how the management actions, guidelines, and allowable uses prescribed in response to the other issues will affect both subsistence opportunities and resources and the social and economic environment.

Subsistence opportunities and resources are an important part of rural Alaskan lifestyles. ANILCA requires that rural residents have a priority over other users to take fish and wildlife for subsistence on Federal public lands where a recognized consistent and traditional pattern of use exists. When it is necessary to restrict the taking of fish and wildlife on these lands, subsistence uses are given preference over other consumptive uses.

Resource development, increasing recreational activities, increased off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and an increasing number of sport hunters all have the potential to affect subsistence resources and access to subsistence resources. ANILCA mandates that the BLM consider the effects of proposed management on subsistence resources.

Issue Statement 3: Determine which areas should be made available for mineral exploration and development.

Under the authority of 17(d)(1) of ANCSA millions of acres of public lands were withdrawn from mineral entry, location, and leasing for the purposes of study and classification. This planning process will assess the continued need for withdrawals on selected and unselected lands, balancing the need for mineral development and production with protection of resource values.

Public Land Order (PLO) 6477 was issued in 1983 in response to the Seward 1008 Study (BLM 1983). This PLO modified the 17(d)(1) withdrawals and opened parts of the planning area to mineral location and mineral leasing.

There are no active Federal oil and gas leases in the planning area. Parts of three oil and gas basins are located within the planning area, and a total of five exploration wells have been drilled within the planning area boundaries. All or parts of five coal fields are also found in the planning area, and there are currently two preferential right coal leases in the planning area. Both are 10-year leases that were issued in 1999, but at present neither lease is producing coal.

There are just over 300 known locatable mineral occurrences located on BLM-managed lands within the planning area. Most of these occurrences are located on the southern Seward

Peninsula, with a smaller number occurring in the Cosmos Hills region of the Kobuk River Valley. Known mineral deposits within the planning area that have seen active mining include numerous deposits of placer gold, placer tin, placer nephrite (Alaskan jade), lode gold, lode lead-silver, lode copper, and zinc. In addition, there are numerous known deposits that have never seen mineral production, including deposits of lode tin, fluorspar, and nickel/platinum group elements (PGE).

Issue Statement 4: Provide access to BLM-managed lands for various purposes, including recreation, subsistence activities, and general enjoyment of public lands, while protecting natural and cultural resources.

The planning area is comprised of a checkerboard pattern of mixed land status. As lands are conveyed from public management to private ownership (in the case of Native selections), some access routes to public lands are in danger of being lost if easements are not reserved as part of the conveyance process. Section 17(b) of ANCSA provided for the reservation of easements across lands being conveyed to Native regional and village corporations primarily to provide access to isolated public lands. In some cases, easements were reserved as a result of a paperwork exercise using maps without being field-checked. The locations of some easements were not field verified or marked for public use. As a result, easements are often unusable due to terrain or land ownership patterns. Additionally, many easement reservations were effectively nullified by later conveyance of Native allotments across the easement, thereby making them discontinuous. Some 17(b) easement trails are nearly impassible due to wet or unstable surface conditions, resulting in trespass on Native land when users travel off the trail (and off the easement) to get around bad spots. Some members of the public use 17(b) easements for uses that are not allowed as specified by the BLM in the conveyance document or regulations.

The vast majority of the planning area is roadless. The State has recently developed a Northwest Alaska Transportation Plan, which covers many of the acres in the planning area (ADOT&PF 2004). There may be a need for rights-of-way across BLM-managed lands if and when projects in the transportation plan are developed. Access may also be needed across BLM-managed lands for development of mineral resources and other commercial uses.

2. Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed

During scoping, several concerns were raised that were beyond the scope of the plan, represented questions about how the BLM would go about the planning process, or do not meet current policy (see the Planning Process section beginning on page 1-15 for more information). The issues and concerns that will not be analyzed further are summarized below.

a) Wilderness Inventory and Management

In 1964, Congress enacted the Wilderness Act “. . . to assure that an increasing population . . . does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States . . . , leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” The statutory criteria used to identify lands with wilderness character have been in effect since passage of the Wilderness Act over 40 years ago.

Alaska lands were inventoried, reviewed, and studied for their wilderness values under the Wilderness Act criteria beginning in 1971 when Congress enacted ANCSA. For eight years

thereafter, the Department evaluated national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, and other lands for potential designation as wilderness.

Subsequently, Congress passed ANILCA, which preserved more than 150 million acres in specially protected conservation units. This represents more than 40 percent of the land area of the State of Alaska, and about 60 percent of the Federal land in Alaska. Pursuant to ANILCA, more than one-third of the lands preserved in conservation units, or 57 million acres, were formally designated as wilderness.

In recognition of the sensitive and protracted negotiations that resulted in the designation of large amounts of wilderness and the limitations wilderness designations impose on the multiple use of those lands, Congress did not mandate further wilderness inventory, review, or study of BLM lands in Alaska with one exception. Section 1001 of ANILCA mandated a study of Federal lands north of 68 degrees latitude and east of the western boundary of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. These lands are not within the planning area.

Rather than mandating further wilderness inventory, review, or study, Congress granted the Secretary the discretion to undertake additional wilderness study of BLM lands but, per section 1326 (b) of ANILCA, precluded further study of any Department lands in the State of Alaska “. . . for the single purpose of considering the establishment of a conservation system unit, national recreation area, national conservation area, or for related or similar purposes” absent Congressional direction.

Shortly after the passage of ANILCA, the Secretary exercised this discretion to adopt a policy to not conduct further wilderness inventory, review, or study (outside of ANILCA) as part of the BLM planning process in Alaska. This policy was in effect for approximately 20 years. On January 18, 2001, Secretary Babbitt adopted another approach that deviated from this long-term policy.

Clearly, Congress may direct the BLM to undertake further wilderness study in Alaska in future legislation. However, in the absence of further legislation, Congress has granted the Secretary the discretion to determine whether further wilderness inventory, review and study of BLM lands in Alaska is warranted. The current Secretary, in a letter dated April 11, 2003, has instructed the BLM to “. . . consider specific wilderness study proposals in Alaska, as part of any new or revised resource management planning effort, if the proposals have broad support among the State and Federal elected officials representing Alaska. Absent this broad support, wilderness should not be considered in these resource management plans” (DOI 2003).

The State of Alaska has asked the BLM to adhere to this directive in this RMP, stating, “[a]t this time it is clear that there is a lack of broad support for further wilderness proposals” (ADNR 2004). Therefore, wilderness inventory was not conducted as part of this planning process and wilderness areas are not considered in any of the alternatives.

There are no BLM-managed wilderness areas or wilderness study areas within the planning area. There are areas that possess opportunities for a primitive recreation experience, solitude, and naturalness. These areas are described in the Wilderness Characteristics section in Chapter III. These will not be recommended for congressional designation as wilderness areas.

b) Land Conveyance

Decisions made in the RMP will not affect or speed up the land conveyance process, nor will the RMP affect the recently-passed Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act (2004). The RMP does not attempt to influence prioritization of selections by either the State or Native or village corporations.

c) Commercial Activities

Comments were received regarding the fee structure and permitting of commercial activities such as special recreation use permits and grazing permits. These activities are governed by BLM regulation. Decisions made in the RMP will not affect existing BLM regulations.

d) Hunting and Fishing Regulations

There were numerous comments about changing hunting regulations to protect subsistence resources. The BLM manages wildlife and fisheries habitat; the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) manages wildlife and fish populations and issues fishing and hunting regulations. The Alaska Board of Game and Board of Fisheries create the regulations. In addition, the Federal Subsistence Board develops hunting and fishing regulations for federal public lands (as defined by Sec. 102 of ANILCA) which are closely coordinated with ADF&G. Decisions made in the RMP will not affect State or Federal fishing or hunting regulations. Any actions that might affect hunting and fishing will be coordinated with ADF&G consistent with 43 CFR Part 24, the Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Policy (which clarifies the Department's relationship with State fish and wildlife management agencies) and the Master Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies.

e) State of Alaska Administration of Guides, Outfitters, and Transporters

There were numerous comments about the State of Alaska's administration of guides, outfitters, and transporters. A State Commercial Services Board was recently reestablished to make recommendations to the State on how to better manage guides, outfitters, and transporters. Decisions in the RMP will not affect State administration of guides, outfitters, and transporters. Limits on the number of special recreational use permits issued by the BLM for activities on BLM-managed lands, however, may be instituted in special recreation management areas. See the Recreation Management section of Chapter II for more information on potential permitting limits in selected alternatives.

f) Federal Subsistence Program

Decisions made in the RMP will not change administration of this program; it will continue to be conducted through the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) and the Federal Subsistence Board, with input from the general public, ADF&G, and Federal staff. Implementation of the federal subsistence program within federal conservation units and other affected federal lands will continue to be administered through the respective federal land management agency. The RMP will, however, consider impacts and access to subsistence resources and subsistence opportunities from proposed actions associated with the alternatives considered in the EIS.

E. Planning Criteria and Legislative Constraints

FLPMA is the primary authority for the BLM's management of public lands. FLPMA consolidates and articulates the BLM's management responsibilities. It provides overarching policy by which public lands will be managed and establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition and disposition, administration, range management, rights-of-way, designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. NEPA requires the consideration and public availability of information regarding the environmental impacts of major Federal actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. In Alaska, public land management is further directed by ANILCA, ANCSA, and the Alaska Statehood Act, particularly in regard to land and realty issues, as well as access and subsistence. Additional laws, regulations, and policies guide management of public lands.

Planning criteria are standards, rules, and guidelines that help guide data collection, alternative formulation, and alternative selection during the planning process. In conjunction with planning issues, criteria assure that the planning process is focused. The criteria also help guide the final plan selection and provide a basis for judging the responsiveness of the planning options. The following planning criteria were developed by the BLM and were reviewed by the public as part of the scoping process.

- Opportunities for public participation will be encouraged throughout the RMP process.
- Valid existing rights will be recognized and protected.
- Subsistence uses and needs will be considered and adverse impacts minimized to the extent possible in accordance with ANILCA Section 810.
- The Planning Team will work cooperatively with the State of Alaska, Native corporations, municipal governments, other Federal agencies, interested groups, and individuals.
- Wildlife habitat management will be consistent with ADF&G objectives and/or the Federal Subsistence Board requirements or mandates.
- The RMP will be consistent with the mandates of FLPMA, NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and other Federal laws, regulations, and policies as required by law. The planning process will include an EIS that will comply with NEPA standards.
- The BLM will meet the requirements in Section 810 of ANILCA.
- OHV designations for all public lands within the planning area will be completed in accordance with 43 CFR 8342.
- Areas proposed for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern designation will meet the criteria contained in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.
- Review and classification of waterways as eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System will follow the criteria contained in 43 CFR 8351.

- The RMP will address all lands within the planning area that are currently administered by the BLM.
- The plan will be consistent with the Iditarod National Historic Trail: Seward to Nome Route Comprehensive Management Plan (BLM 1986).
- The BLM will not conduct a wilderness review or make wilderness area recommendations as part of this planning process per Secretarial direction (see the Wilderness Inventory and Management section on page 1-11).
- The BLM will characterize existing social and economic conditions and trends for local communities.
- The BLM will characterize impacts to existing social and economic conditions and trends.
- The BLM will incorporate environmental justice considerations in land use planning alternatives to adequately respond to environmental justice issues and problems facing minority populations, low-income communities, and Tribes living near public lands and using public land resources. The BLM will determine if its proposed actions will adversely and disproportionately impact minority populations, low-income communities, and Tribes (Executive Order No. 12898, Environmental Justice).
- The Alaska Land Health Standards and Guidelines will be incorporated into the RMP.

F. Planning Process

An RMP is an overall plan that guides management of public lands within a defined planning area. An approved RMP establishes the following items:

- Resource goals and objectives,
- Allowable resource uses,
- Areas to be managed for limited, restricted, or exclusive resource uses or for transfer from BLM management,
- Program constraints and general management practices and protocols,
- General implementation schedules, and
- Intervals and standards for monitoring the RMP.

The nine major steps in preparation of an RMP are outlined in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2. Steps in the BLM Land Use Planning Process

Step	Description
1: Identification of issues	This step is designed to identify major problems, concerns, or opportunities associated with the management of public land in the planning area. Issues are identified by the public, the BLM, and other governmental entities. The planning process is then focused on resolving the planning issues.
2: Develop planning criteria	Planning criteria are identified to guide development of the RMP and prevent the collection of unnecessary information and data.
3: Collect and compile inventory data	This planning step involves the collation and collection of various kinds of environmental, social, economic, resource, and institutional data. In most cases, this process is limited to information needed to address the issues. The data required for land use planning decisions is usually at a broader scale than data required in implementation level planning and analysis.
4: Analysis of the management situation	This step calls for the deliberate assessment of the current situation. It identifies the way lands and activities are currently managed in the planning area, describes conditions and trends across the planning area, identifies problems and concerns resulting from the current management, and identifies opportunities to manage these lands differently.
5: Formulate alternatives	During this step, the BLM formulates a reasonable range of alternatives for managing resources in the planning area. Alternatives include a combination of a current management (no action) alternative and other alternatives that strive to resolve the major planning issues while emphasizing different management scenarios. Alternatives usually vary by the amounts of resource production or protection that would be allowed, or in the emphasis of one program area over another.
6: Estimation of effects	This step involves estimating the physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative in order to provide a comparative evaluation of impacts in compliance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500).
7: Selection of preferred alternative	Based on the information resulting from the estimation of effects, the BLM identifies a Preferred Alternative. The Draft RMP/EIS is then prepared for printing and distributed for public review.
8: Selection of RMP	Following review and analysis of public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, the BLM makes adjustments as warranted and selects a proposed RMP. The Proposed RMP and a final EIS is then published. A final decision is made after a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review and a 30-day public protest period are completed. The BLM then publishes the Record of Decision (ROD) and prepares the Approved RMP.
9: Monitoring and evaluation	This step involves the collection and analysis of resource condition and trend data to determine the effectiveness of the plan in resolving the identified issues and achieving desired results. Implementation of decisions requiring subsequent action is also monitored. Monitoring continues from the time the RMP is adopted until changing conditions require revision of the whole plan or any portion of it.

1. Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs

The following BLM plans relate to or otherwise govern management in the planning area:

- Northwest Management Framework Plan (BLM 1982),
- Seward 1008 Study (BLM 1983),
- Land Use Plan Amendment for Wildland Fire and Fuels Management for Alaska (BLM 2004b, 2005c), and
- Alaska Land Health Standards and Guidelines (BLM 2004a).

2. Collaboration

Collaboration is often described as interaction with a wide range of external and internal working relationships. A variety of strategies have been implemented throughout the planning process to foster a collaborative approach, improve communication, and develop understanding of the issues and the process in development of the RMP/EIS (BLM 2004c). Some of these strategies are widely accepted outreach tools, while others have been implemented based on suggestions made by the public as to how they wanted to collaborate with the BLM in development of the plan.

To promote scoping participation, the BLM mailed letters to the boroughs, Native corporations, cities, and other entities listed below. The letters explained the RMP process, stressed the need for cooperation and consultation, and invited participation. A similar letter providing background material for the meeting was sent to all the Village Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) councils where scoping meetings were scheduled.

- Bering Straits Native Corporation, Nome
- Cities within the Bering Straits Region
 - City of Brevig Mission
 - City of Buckland
 - City of Deering
 - City of Elim
 - City of Golovin
 - City of Koyuk
 - City of Nome
 - City of Shaktoolik
 - City of Shishmaref
 - City of Teller
 - City of Wales
 - City of White Mountain
- Kawerak Incorporated, Nome
- Kawerak Reindeer Herders Association, Nome
- NANA Regional Corporation, Kotzebue
- Northwest Arctic Borough
- Cities within the Northwest Arctic Borough
 - City of Ambler
 - City of Kotzebue
 - City of Kiana
 - City of Kivalina
 - City of Kobuk
 - City of Noorvik
 - City of Selawik
 - City of Shungnak
- Maniilaq Association, Kotzebue
- Arctic Slope Regional Corporation
- Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope
- North Slope Borough
- City of Point Hope (the only city within the North Slope Borough that is also within the planning area)

a) Intergovernmental, Interagency, and Tribal Relationships

During scoping, the BLM initiated government-to-government consultation with 25 tribes located within the planning area. As mentioned in the previous section, letters providing background information were also sent to several Native corporations and Tribal entities, particularly in those communities where public meetings were scheduled. Follow-up calls and/or faxes to all the tribes reminding them of the comment period were distributed in late April 2004.

A joint BLM-State of Alaska position has been created, with that person acting as liaison between the State of Alaska and the BLM in this planning process and for all other RMPs being prepared by the BLM across the state. This has been effective in facilitating information exchange and review of draft materials by State personnel. The BLM requested State input into the scoping process by contacting the State of Alaska liaison office by letter on February 5, 2004. On May 7, 2004, consolidated scoping comments were received.

b) Other Stakeholder Relationships

The BLM has sought involvement in the planning process by a variety of stakeholders outside of government and agency groups. Scoping comments were received from several individuals and organizations representing a range of interests including environmental concerns, mineral exploration and development, subsistence hunting, wildlife management, fisheries, and commercial ventures. Stakeholders were kept informed of progress on the RMP through a semi-annual newsletter, the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP/EIS Web site, and opportunistically at meetings held by various groups such as the Northwest Arctic and Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory Councils, Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, Alaska Miners Association, and Kawerak Reindeer Herders Association.

The BLM-Alaska Resource Advisory Council (RAC) is a 15-member advisory panel that provides advice and recommendations to the BLM on resource and land management issues. Members include Alaskans from around the state representing energy, tourism, commercial recreation, environmental interests, and archeological interests. Members also include elected officials, Alaska Native organizations, and the public-at-large. A subcommittee of the RAC was assigned to keep abreast of the planning process. The RAC as a whole was kept informed of progress on the plan through updates at its quarterly meetings. Members on the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula subcommittee were kept informed through email and newsletters. All RAC members were given an opportunity to review the preliminary alternatives before development of this Draft RMP/EIS.

3. Relationship between the RMP and EIS

This document actually contains two documents: A Draft RMP and a Draft EIS. As part of the EIS, the RMP is not a stand-alone document; rather, it consists of the text, data, and maps found in Chapter II. Chapter II describes four alternatives for the RMP and explains the differences between these alternatives as they relate to the planning issues. Each of the four alternatives represents a different RMP that would address the issues in different ways, though some decisions may be common to more than one alternative. Chapter II is also a required component of an EIS, written to compare and analyze the effects of implementation of each of the alternatives.

After public comments on the Draft EIS have been analyzed, a Final EIS and Proposed RMP will be prepared. The Final EIS will be very similar in content to the Draft EIS but will include responses to all public comments. Any errors or corrections identified through the comment process or through internal review will also be addressed in the Final EIS and Proposed RMP through modifications to the proposed plan or alternatives, development and evaluation of alternatives not previously considered, corrections to the document, and/or improved, supplemented, or modified analyses.

No earlier than 30 days after the Final EIS/Proposed RMP document is issued, a Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved RMP will be approved and published in a single document. The Approved RMP may be different from the preferred alternative identified in the Final EIS and Proposed RMP if the deciding official elects to combine elements of multiple alternatives into the Approved RMP. The RMP will describe the goals, objectives, and actions for fulfilling the direction and vision developed throughout the planning process. The ROD and Approved RMP will function as a stand-alone document to guide future land management decisions.

4. Implementation of the RMP

RMPs provide broad, general direction for management of BLM-managed lands. After an RMP is approved, many of the decisions made in the RMP become effective immediately. Other decisions will only be effective after additional action. For example, a decision to withdraw lands from mineral entry would not be effective until after formal action at the Secretarial level.

Before specific projects can be implemented on the ground, an implementation plan must be completed, and all implementation plans must tier to and be in compliance with the affected area's RMP. All implementation-level planning will be tiered to the management framework established in the RMP. For example, the RMP will describe what areas will be available for land disposal. The implementation level plan would describe under what conditions the lands would be made available and other conditions necessary to facilitate land disposal (appraisal, fair market value determination, access, etc.).

G. Related Plans

Plans formulated by Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments that relate to the management of lands and resources were reviewed and considered during development of this Draft RMP/EIS. BLM planning regulations require that BLM plans be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource related plans of other Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments to the extent that those plans are consistent with Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands.

Management of Federal and State lands immediately adjacent to public land administered by the BLM will be considered to the extent possible in the formulation of alternative management scenarios and land use allocations. The main planning documents of other Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments to be considered in development of the RMP include:

- Northwest Area Plan for State Lands – Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR 1989)

- Northwest Area Transportation Plan – Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF 2004)
- Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area Coastal Management Plan – Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP 1989)
- Northwest Arctic Borough Coastal Management Program: Enforceable and Administrative Policies (ACMP 1998)
- Northwest Arctic Borough Coastal Management Plan Public Review Draft (ACMP 2004)
- North Slope Borough Coastal Management Program: Enforceable Policies (ACMP 1988)
- Northwest Arctic Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (Northwest Arctic Borough 2004)
- Bering Straits Native Corporation Land Use Policy (BSNC 1999)

H. Policy

The following policies and legislation are outside the scope of the plan but may influence decisions or constrain alternatives.

A 2003 memo from the Secretary of the Interior established the current policy on consideration of wilderness during BLM planning efforts in Alaska. The Secretary instructed BLM to “. . . consider specific wilderness study proposals in Alaska, as part of any new or revised resource management planning effort, if the proposals have broad support among the State and Federal elected officials representing Alaska. Absent this broad support, wilderness should not be considered in these resource management plans” (DOI 2003). As described above in the Wilderness Inventory and Management section beginning on page 1-11, the State of Alaska does not support further wilderness proposals; therefore, neither a wilderness inventory or wilderness area recommendations are included as part of this planning process.

Under the Statehood Act, the Federal government allowed the State of Alaska to select 104 million acres of Federal land. Approximately 28 percent of the BLM-managed lands in the planning area is State-selected. ANCSA requires the transfer of 44 million acres of public land to Alaska Native corporations. Approximately 38 percent of the BLM-managed lands in the planning area is Native-selected. Conveyance of State- and Native-selected lands within the planning area is ongoing. Implementation of planning decisions on selected lands may be delayed until conveyances are complete and final ownership is determined. Other decisions may be precluded because the lands in question may ultimately pass from BLM management.

Although Federal lands, including lands within the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Planning Area, are excluded from the coastal zone (16 USC 1453[1]), the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 as amended (PL 92-583), directs Federal agencies conducting activities within the coastal zone or that may affect any land or water use or natural resources of the coastal zone to conduct these activities in a manner that is consistent “to the maximum extent practicable” with approved State management programs.²

The Alaska Coastal Zone Management Act of 1977, as amended, and the subsequent Alaska Coastal Management Program and Final Environmental Impact Statement (1979) establish

² “To the maximum extent practicable” means to the fullest degree permitted by existing law (15 CFR Sec. 930.32).

policy guidance and standards for review of projects within or potentially affecting Alaska's coastal zone. In addition, specific policies have been developed for activities and uses of coastal lands and water resources within regional coastal resource districts. Most incorporated cities, municipalities, and boroughs as well as unincorporated areas (coastal resource service areas) within the coastal zone now have State-approved coastal management programs.

Although State and coastal district program policies guide consistency determinations, more restrictive Federal agency standards may be applied. Federal regulations state that "(when) Federal agency standards are more restrictive than standards or requirements contained in the State's management program the Federal agency may continue to apply its stricter standards..." (15 CFR Sec. 930.39 [d]).

Certain Federal actions may require a Federal Consistency Determination. The BLM will contact the ADNR Alaska Coastal Management Program for program applicability before beginning a project that may affect a coastal zone.

