

# Anchorage District Office



Gary Reimer, District Manager

## The Anchorage District Office is comprised of the Anchorage and Glennallen field offices.

Anchorage District lands include approximately 25 million acres—roughly 10 percent of the Bureau’s total lands. These lands extend some 2,500 linear miles east to west, and 800 miles north to south. The **Anchorage Field Office** (AFO) manages 19 million acres of public lands located throughout southcentral, southeast, southwest, and western Alaska. The **Glennallen Field Office** (GFO) manages 6.25 million acres of public lands in the eastern part of southcentral Alaska.

## Anchorage Field Office news

### Welcome to the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center!

Anchorage District Manager Gary Reimer signed the “Anchorage Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights,” along with then Mayor Mark Begich and other federal, state and nonprofit partners during the December “**Get Outdoors, Anchorage!**” working summit at the Dena’ina Center. The summit and the resulting pledge by the BLM and other organizations promote opportunities for children and families to get outdoors and reconnect with nature.



The BLM Campbell Creek Science Center is now fully booked with school programs for the 2008-2009 school year. In addition, the center is packed during holiday breaks and throughout the summer with outdoor education programs for youth through its partnership with Trailside Discovery Camp. The center also offers building rentals, as well as a variety of evening and weekend programs and activities for adults and youth throughout the year.



While day-to-day education programs at the Science Center continue to expand, the center is also seeing record numbers at its many annual special events. More than 1,300 participants came out for the 6<sup>th</sup> annual **Winter Trails Day** on Feb. 14, 2009. This annual event promotes safe, responsible outdoor winter sports and recreation. It also provides families a fun, affordable way to enjoy the outdoors with REI offering free demo use of a variety of winter recreation equipment.

### Land use planning

The BLM released the **Bay Record of Decision and Approved Management Plan** on Nov. 14, 2008. The approved RMP recommends revocation of all Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Section 17(d)(1) land withdrawals, and includes protective measures should future mining activity occur following revocation. The plan also establishes a 36,220-acre Area of Critical Environmental Concern at Carter Spit in the Goodnews Bay area to protect Steller’s eider habitat.



Next, the BLM will prepare detailed land records paperwork for (d)(1) withdrawals in the Bay and other planning areas where approved plans recommend revocation. The RMP/EIS provides the NEPA analysis for any such Secretarial action.

AFO is preparing to conduct public scoping for the Haines planning block of the **Ring of Fire** planning area. The Ring of Fire Record of Decision and Approved Plan released in March 2008 called for the BLM to reconsider the importance criteria for potential ACEC designation of the Haines block. AFO will publish a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* shortly, which will kick off a 60-day scoping period. AFO will hold public scoping meetings in Haines, Skagway and Anchorage to identify issues and concerns in the Haines planning block related to recreation, wildlife, travel management, and special designations.

AFO will initiate a revision of the 1988 **Campbell Tract management plan** later this year. Steady increases in visitation and competing recreational uses would be considered during the revision.



### Iditarod National Historic Trail Centennial

From 2008 through 2012, the BLM, our Iditarod partner agencies and organizations, and a host of Iditarod fans are commemorating the Centennial of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

Governor Sarah Palin signed an Executive Proclamation designating Dec. 25, 2008, **Iditarod Gold Discovery Day**. The proclamation encouraged Alaskans to “reflect on the contributions of individuals in our past, the role of gold mining in Alaska’s history, and the importance of transportation and the Iditarod Trail in the development of Alaska.” Prospectors discovered gold on Otter Creek, a tributary of the Iditarod River, on Dec. 25, 1908. The discovery sparked the beginning of America’s last great gold rush.

**Public Radio International** spotlighted the Iditarod National Historic Trail in the Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of PRI’s “The World,” a one-hour weekday news magazine. BLM Iditarod Trail Administrator Kevin Keeler introduced listeners to the rich history of the Iditarod Trail, including the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christmas Day gold strike. The broadcast is available via podcast for two years ([www.theworld.org](http://www.theworld.org)).

Lastly, Anchorage RAC members are invited to join the BLM on March 7 for a special public viewing opportunity during the ceremonial start in Anchorage of the **Iditarod Sled Dog Race**. We’ll provide a safe designated viewing area near the Campbell Creek Science Center as the dog teams arrive at the Campbell Tract. Visitors can warm up with hot cocoa inside the Science Center and visit with other Iditarod fans. Please join us!

### Reindeer grazing programmatic EA

AFO completed a programmatic EA to guide reindeer grazing over the next decade on BLM-administered lands in western Alaska. Anchorage Field Manager Jim Fincher signed the Decision Record on Dec. 30, 2008. The EA identifies land health standards and adaptive management tools appropriate to reindeer grazing in the northern Alaska tundra environment, and seeks to maintain a balance between range health and a sustainable and economically viable reindeer industry.

Authorizing ten-year permits encourages the continued development of traditional reindeer husbandry among the indigenous peoples of western Alaska. Reindeer grazing on federal public lands in Alaska is authorized under the Reindeer Industry Act of 1937.

### Red Devil Mine remediation

AFO has begun a new remedial investigation of the Red Devil Mine, an abandoned cinnabar (mercury) mine located on the banks of the Kuskokwim River. The Red Devil Mine conducted large scale cinnabar mining and mercury processing on and off from the mid-1930s until 1971. The objective of this investigation is to



determine what continuing impact the abandoned mine site may have on groundwater, the Kuskokwim River, and surrounding lands following cleanup work BLM previously conducted there. Contaminants of concern are mercury, arsenic, antimony, and lead from the cinnabar mining processes, and petroleum contamination from the mine's fuel tanks. The investigation is being conducted in close cooperation with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.



### Meet Brian Bourdon

BLM's Nome Field Station is now a staff of two. In December, **Brian Bourdon** (left) joined BLM Nome representative Tom Sparks. Previously, Bourdon was resource conservation and development coordinator with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Nome. Bourdon will now assist with BLM realty and recreation work in Nome and western Alaska. He holds a BA in rural development from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

## Glennallen Field Office news

### Delta River management plan update

Public scoping for the Delta River Management Plan concluded in September 2008. The Glennallen Field Office analyzed comments and published a scoping report in December. GFO then met with the Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources and Dept. of Fish and Game in January to discuss opportunities for cooperatively developing the proposed management actions and alternatives.

Next, GFO will prepare the initial draft of the proposed action and alternatives, which will be reviewed by the State. The affected environment and environmental consequences portion of the EA will then be prepared. A draft EA will follow and is tentatively scheduled to be available for public review this summer.

Concurrently, the BLM will make a navigability determination for the Delta River. It is anticipated this determination will be completed in late February. Depending on the outcome of this determination, some of the proposed management actions in the draft EA could be affected, requiring further review and analysis. Once the public review process is completed for the draft EA, GFO will prepare an EA. (Above right: canoeing the lower Delta River with views of the Alaska Range)



### Unauthorized use

GFO is in the process of resolving unauthorized occupancy on public lands. Through helicopter support, several cases of unauthorized use were posted for removal in remote areas of the Glennallen Field Office management boundary over the past 3 years. These unauthorized use sites include tent platforms, abandoned vehicles, fuel caches, dilapidated and abandoned structures, and a few maintained and well-used cabins.

These sites are now being prioritized for removal or mitigated to clear unauthorized occupancy before the State of Alaska takes title to the lands as part of the State's entitlement under the Statehood Act. GFO has worked with DNR on a case-by-case basis to determine any options available to authorize the use under State regulations. Extensive efforts were made to encourage people to come forward to help find solutions to resolve the unauthorized use.

(Above: abandoned Nodwell track vehicle on GFO-managed public lands)



After reviewing all cases, two cabins will be accepted by DNR in the conveyance process under their trapping cabin program. GFO will mitigate and remove the remaining 42 cases of unauthorized use this summer. The BLM will contract services to mitigate 18 of the sites, including any required hazmat mitigation. The remaining 24 sites will be removed or mitigated by GFO staff. There are 39 additional sites GFO will review this summer to determine what measures are required to mitigate the unauthorized use. Three summer seasonal staff will be hired to assist with the workload.

### Tribal consultation

GFO is conducting annual consultation meetings with federally recognized tribes during February and March of 2009. These face-to-face meetings are part of ongoing efforts to foster communication and cooperation between the BLM and tribes. GFO will seek tribal input on implementation level planning under the East Alaska Resource Management Plan and meet annual consultation requirements and goals set forth in Memorandums of Understanding with these tribes.



Of primary concern to Ahtna area tribes are education and management of ANCSA 17(b) easements that are highway accessible and heavily used by the public, maintaining a federal subsistence hunting area, federal employment opportunities, and protection of cultural resources. (Above right: face-to-face consultation helps foster tribal participation during BLM planning efforts.)

### Bering Glacier Research Natural Area

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and the BLM have been partners since the 1990s on several research projects conducted at the Bering Glacier Research Natural Area. Last summer the BLM and UAA entered into a five-year Memorandum of Understanding formalizing the partnership and the responsibilities of each regarding the camp. The BLM is working to formalize partnerships with other key university partners at the glacier, including Michigan Technological Institute and Southern University. This summer Alaska Pacific University will be the newest participant at the glacier.

Bering Glacier is the largest and longest glacier in continental North America and is also the largest surging glacier in America. Bering Glacier alone covers more than 6 percent of the glacier-covered area of Alaska and may contain 15-20 percent of Alaska's total glacier ice.

The BLM operates the Bering Glacier field camp each summer. Partnerships with an increasing number of universities engaged in climate change research help fund the camp. The BLM is currently transitioning the field camp to a cost reimbursable operation.

