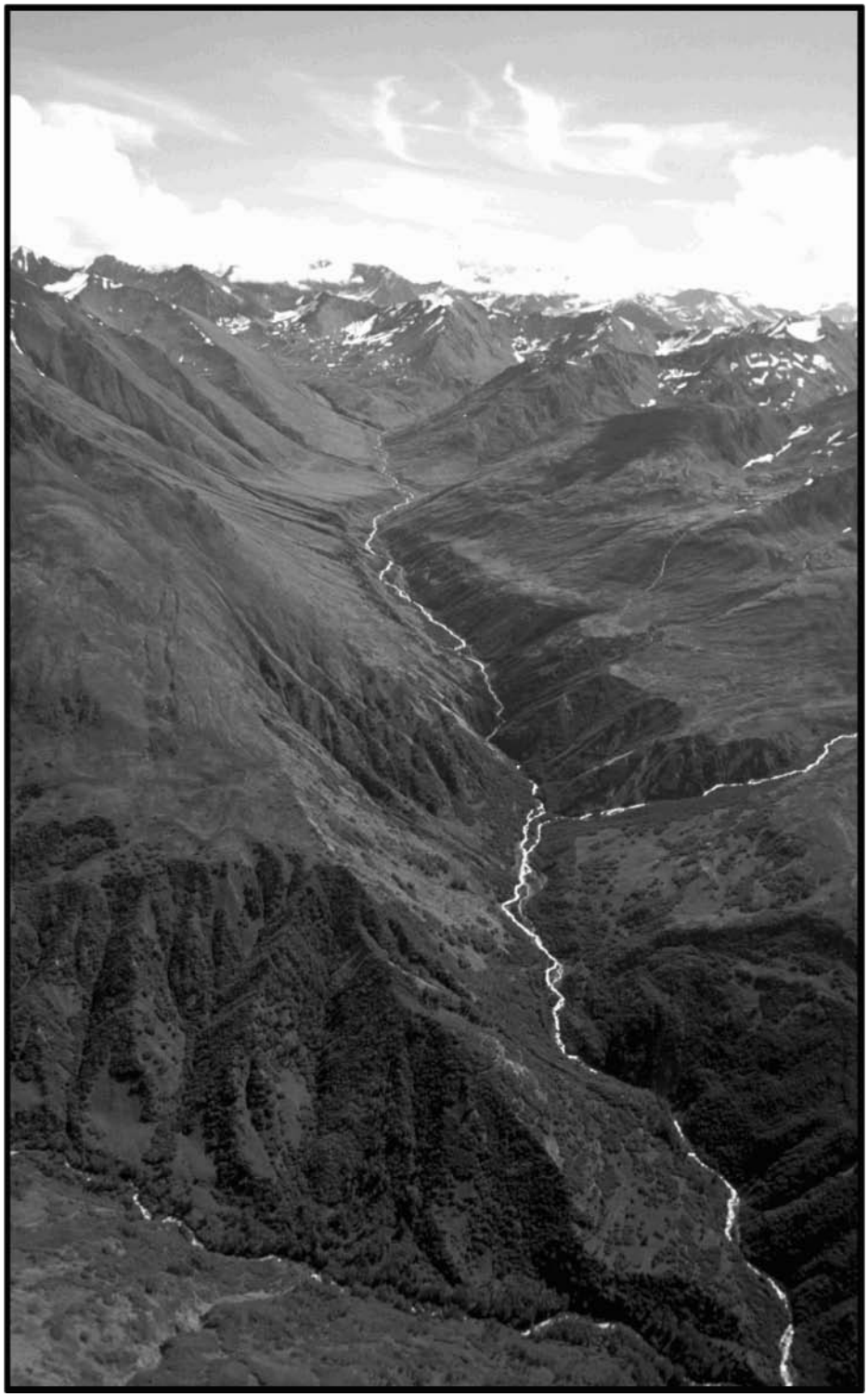
CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter establishes the purpose and need for the Ring of Fire Proposed Resource Management Plan (PRMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). It also contains background information on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) RMP planning process. Preparation of a PRMP/FEIS is required before taking specific resource management actions or pursuing additional planning. Under BLM guidelines, the planning process is integrated with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (1969). The information contained herein is intended to provide a broad analysis of management alternatives developed for the Ring of Fire planning area and helps set the stage for informed decision-making for future management actions. The overall organization of this document is outlined in Section 1.7.

1.1 Purpose and Need

The Ring of Fire PRMP/FEIS provides the basis for developing future site-specific implementation planning on 1.3 million acres of public land and the underlying subsurface estate of that land, as well as certain BLM managed subsurface estate in the planning area. BLM will follow the PRMP/FEIS when initiating subsequent implementation actions. Future permitting, leasing, and other activities on the lands, not specifically discussed and approved in this PRMP/FEIS, will be consistent with this document, and will be subject to appropriate analysis and NEPA compliance after the application is received or the proposed action is initiated.

BLM has not previously completed an RMP on these lands. The Southcentral Management Framework Plan (MFP) completed in 1980 addressed portions of the Ring of Fire planning area. Due to changing land status and the demands on resources, the MFP is in need of revision and updating. The approved RMP will meet the BLM statutory requirement for a master land use plan as mandated by Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (1976), which mandates a comprehensive land use plan consistent with multiple use and sustained yield objectives. The lands encompassed in this plan comprise a portion of the lands managed by BLM's Anchorage Field Office (AFO). The lands analyzed are described in Section 1.2.

The plan identifies specific parcels or other interests in land that have been determined to be appropriate for disposal. The plan also considers areas nominated by the BLM, the public, and others, as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), and makes the determination of whether each area meets the requirements for relevance, importance, and special management attention, to be designated as an ACEC. In addition, the plan considers the eligibility of rivers within the planning area for nomination to Congress as Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR). The plan also makes the final determination as to whether each eligible river is suitable for nomination. On April 11, 2003 Secretary Gale Norton instructed BLM to "consider specific wilderness study proposals in Alaska, as part of any new or revised resource management planning effort, if the proposals received 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." At this time there has been no indication of support from these parties for further wilderness proposals. Therefore, this plan does not consider wilderness designations. Beyond the specific decisions detailed above, the plan acts as the general guide for BLM management of lands in the planning area.

1.2 Description of the Planning Area

The Ring of Fire PRMP/FEIS addresses BLM's future management of certain public land and federal mineral estate managed by the AFO from just above the Dixon Entrance in southeast Alaska to Attu Island at the end of the Aleutian Chain (Figure 1.2-1). This planning area spans a linear distance of some 2,500 miles, longer than the distance from Seattle to Washington, D.C. The exterior boundaries of the planning area encompass 61.4 million acres, or twice the size of the State of New York. Within this vast area, the Ring of Fire PRMP/FEIS analyzes the future surface management of approximately 1.3 million acres currently managed by BLM, approximately two percent of the lands within the exterior boundaries of the planning area. Approximately 60,000 of the 1.3 million acres included in the plan are withdrawn for military purposes for Fort Richardson Army Base (FRAB) and Elmendorf Air Force Base (EAFB); BLM's management of these lands is circumscribed by the withdrawals. Of the remaining acres analyzed by the plan, nearly 486,000 acres are unselected BLM-managed lands and approximately 798,000 acres are selected by, but not yet conveyed by BLM, to the State of Alaska or Native corporations (see Chapter 3, Table 3.1-1) under the guidance provided in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA) and the Alaska Statehood Act of 1959 (see text box on page 1-3). Because of overselection, BLM will ultimately retain management of some of the selected lands. However, nothing in this plan encumbers State- or Native-selected lands following transfer of the title out of federal ownership.

The plan also addresses management of the subsurface estate held by BLM under privately owned surface lands and under components of the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System and the National Forest System. BLM is responsible for oil and gas leasing within these refuges and forests. Provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (Sections 304(b) and 1008) require that no leasing take place in refuges that the United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determines said leases are incompatible with the purposes of the refuges. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is required to analyze oil and gas leasing in the course of planning, and any leasing of oil and gas would be conducted by BLM only following authorization of such leasing by the USFS's Regional Forester (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 219 and 36 CFR 228).

The surface lands addressed in the plan include tracts of widely varying sizes, which are dispersed throughout the planning area (Figures 1.2-2 through 1.2-4). The largest tracts exceed 100,000 acres. These include two tracts of State-selected lands near Haines totaling 273,000 acres (Figure 1.2-4) and two roughly rectangular blocks of lands west of Cook Inlet in the Neacola Mountains north and south of Chakachamna Lake comprising 372,000 acres (Figure 1.2-3). The plan will also address selected and unselected tracts of lands of several thousand acres to several tens of thousands of acres scattered on the western half of the Alaska Peninsula; on Kodiak Island (Figure 1.2-2); and in lands west of Cook Inlet, and in the Susitna and Matanuska basins (Figure 1.2-3). Finally, there are many smaller parcels, too small to appear on the land ownership figures at the scale provided in this PRMP/FEIS. These tracts vary in size from several hundred acres to less than 10 acres. The smallest tracts result from numerous land actions, such as those that created mining claims of up to 20 acres each, realty actions that resulted in narrow slivers of land between some highways and private lands, and subsurface retained in federal ownership under homesteads, homesites, and Native allotments. The logistics and degree of accuracy required to identify all of these smaller parcels are limited by: complex land ownership, many land laws and transfers that affect these parcels (including those pursuant to the Alaska Statehood Act (1958)] and ANCSA (1971)] that have not

yet been completed); and the challenges of surveying in what by and large is a rugged, remote, and difficult to access area. Therefore, it is exceedingly difficult to identify with certainty all of these small parcels (for a more extensive discussion of land status, refer to Section 3.3.4).

What actions produced the major land ownership patterns in the Ring of Fire planning area?

The following actions removed large tracts of lands from BLM's management and created the major outlines of today's land ownership in the planning area.

Early Withdrawals—The first early withdrawal in Alaska established a Forest and Fish Culture Reserve on all of Afognak Island in 1892. In the following half-century, the government established the Tongass National Forest (TNF) and the Chugach National Forest (CNF) (1905 and 1909, respectively), Aleutian Islands Reservation (1913), Katmai and Glacier Bay National Monuments (1918 and 1925), Kenai National Moose Range (1941), and the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) (1941). Lands for Fort Richardson Army Post (FRAP) and Elmendorf Air Force Base (EAFB) were withdrawn for military purposes, and managed by the respective military branches.

Statehood Act—In granting Alaska statehood in 1959, the federal government allowed the new state to select over 100 million acres. The state has received ownership of much of the Susitna and Matanuska basins and large tracts elsewhere in the planning area.

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)—In 1971, ANCSA enabled corporations composed of Alaska Natives to select lands. These lands are generally located close to Native villages in the Ring of Fire planning area.

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act—ANILCA, passed in 1980, expanded some existing conservation system units, including the Glacier Bay and Katmai National Monuments, and the Alaska Maritime, Izembek, Kenai, and Kodiak NWRs; and established the Aniakchak National Monument, Kenai Fjords National Park, and the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof NWRs in the planning area (NPS 1999).

1.2.1 Planning Regions

The Ring of Fire planning area has been subdivided into four regions, which include: Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Chain, Kodiak, Southcentral, and Southeast regions. These regions represent physiographic provinces that are distinct from one another given the physical boundaries and characteristics of each area. Dividing the project area into these four regions also provides consistency, continuity, and a logical approach to management prescriptions discussed throughout this PRMP/FEIS. Following is a brief description of each region, highlighting the public lands whose future management is addressed in the plan. Figure 1.2-1 shows the boundaries of each of these regions and more detailed views of the lands are provided in Figures 1.2-2 through 1.2-4.

Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Chain Region

The Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Chain region holds little BLM surface estate. The USFWS has responsibility for managing nearly all surface lands on the chain and on the eastern side of the Alaska Peninsula, though some of that land has, or is in the process of being conveyed to Native corporations. Most of the lands on the west side of the Alaska Peninsula have been

conveyed to the State. BLM-managed lands in this area are limited to scattered parcels of Native- and State-selected lands on the western side of the peninsula, small inholdings excluded from the NWRs and State and Native corporation conveyances, and federal subsurface estate (Figure 1.2-2).

Kodiak Region

This region includes both Kodiak and nearby islands. The USFWS is the primary land manager in this region, though some lands have been conveyed to Native corporations and private individuals. Most BLM-managed lands on Kodiak and its surrounding islands are composed of Native-selected lands near the city of Kodiak. In addition, the planning area includes small surface inholdings for which BLM has management responsibility within lands managed by the USFWS, and BLM's subsurface estate under private, federal refuges, and forest surface estate (Figure 1.2-2).

Southcentral Region

The Southcentral region includes the Kenai Peninsula, parts of the Matanuska and Susitna basins, and other lands that drain into Cook Inlet. It includes Anchorage and other heavily populated areas. Major land holdings include those of the USFWS, USFS, National Park Service (NPS), State, and Native corporations. The region contains some of the planning area's largest unselected blocks of BLM-managed lands in the Neacola Mountains near Chakachamna Lake. BLM holds subsurface estate under private lands in the Matanuska and Susitna basins (Figure 1.2-3). The Knik Block also occurs in this region, and is Native-selected (Figure 2.3-5).

Southeast Region

The USFS is the major land manager in this part of the planning area. Native corporations have smaller, but substantial holdings. By far the largest blocks of BLM-managed lands in the area are State-selected lands near Haines. Other lands that BLM manages are small, including mining claims, powersite withdrawals, and subsurface estate (Figure 1.2-4).

1.3 Scoping, Public Comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, and Issues Analyzed

Scoping is an open process for determining the range of issues to be analyzed in the RMP/EIS process, and for identifying important issues related to the Ring of Fire planning area. Seven public scoping meetings were held to disseminate project information and to identify issues and concerns that: 1) should be addressed in the RMP/EIS; and 2) should be used to develop alternatives and select the best overall alternative to meet the project purpose and need. In addition, comments were received by letter and through the planning website. Issues were also developed through internal BLM meetings and through meetings with other agencies.

The Draft Ring of Fire RMP/EIS was released for public review and comment in September 2005. Seven public hearings were held to solicit comments on the Draft Ring of Fire RMP/EIS. The public could submit comments via email, fax, U.S. mail, in person, fax, or through oral testimony at the public hearings. Public comments submitted were analyzed, and responses to those comments were developed (see Chapter 6). Response to substantive comments were used to prepare the PRMP/FEIS, and are incorporated into the document where applicable.

1.3.1 Issues Addressed

Public and internal scoping identified several issues to be addressed in relevant to the Ring of Fire planning area. They are:

- **Haines Block**—Commercial recreation activities, specifically heli-skiing and helicopter-based tourism, have grown in the area for over a decade. The amount of helicopter use has raised concern for the potential effects to mountain goats, as well as being locally controversial because of the noise it creates.
- **Knik Block**—This block of land is convenient to Anchorage, Wasilla, and Palmer and receives very heavy recreational use. The primary use is for off-highway vehicles (OHVs), though boating, hunting, fishing, trapping, and off-airport plane landings occur. There is concern that the large number of users conducting different sorts of activities on the tract creates the potential for user conflicts. Moreover, degradation of natural resources has occurred, including effects to habitat for runs of red and silver salmon and for waterfowl. The area has witnessed considerable defacement and littering, such as vandalized automobiles left to rust.
- **Coalbed Natural Gas**—There are scattered, generally small parcels of privately owned surface in which BLM has retained federal ownership of the subsurface. This split estate is especially prevalent in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), an area that also holds potential for coalbed natural gas (CBNG) (i.e., coalbed methane) development. Development of CBNG is particularly controversial in the area because of concerns with effects to surface lands and their owners.
- **Land Tenure Adjustments**—The scattered small parcels under BLM's administration create management difficulties for both BLM and the managers of adjacent lands. This also complicates the permit processes for those who want to conduct an activity across administrative lines. Disposals, exchanges, and sales of lands can address these problems. Withdrawal orders issued under the authority of Section 17(d)(1) of ANCSA withdrew substantial lands within the planning area from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including mining and mineral leasing laws. These withdrawal orders close the land to mineral development and provide protection of resources, but also can restrict BLM from responding to the public to fully realize the multiple-use potential for lands it manages.

1.3.2 Issues Considered But Not Further Analyzed

A number of issues raised during scoping are either beyond the scope of this PRMP/FEIS, or relate to how BLM would implement this PRMP/FEIS. These are not be confused with alternatives to the proposed action that were considered but eliminated from being carried forward in the PRMP/FEIS document (see Section 2.2). The following list presents issues that will not be addressed in this document:

- Identify and recognize all right-of-ways (ROWs) in this planning effort and work with the State to pursue recordable disclaimer of interests on the part of BLM for the ROWs in this planning area.

  Identification of rights-of-way is outside the scope of this plan and ongoing efforts will not be impacted by this PRMP/FEIS.

- Prioritize access for transportation and utility infrastructure to mineralized areas and take into consideration the need for flexibility for implementation based on land ownership and physical characteristics.

  The identification of access corridors is outside the scope of this PRMP/FEIS. Specific requests relating to transportation corridors, like other applications for specific activities, will be subject to appropriate analysis, including compliance with NEPA requirements.

- Conduct a joint plan for winter surface (motorized) use in the CNF.

  The lands that share a common boundary between BLM and the CNF are minimal.

- Generate a plan for access by miners in Section 28 from Porcupine Road.

  Specific access issues are outside the scope of this PRMP/FEIS, and will be addressed when an application or permit request is filed with BLM.

- Consider connecting the Eklutna Water Line with the Abbott Reservation by way of Campbell Tract Facility.

  The Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility is utilizing another route for this line that does not involve BLM-managed lands.

- Resolve ownership of submerged lands.

  The determination of ownership of submerged lands is outside the scope of this plan.

- Resolve the access issue through the Dennis allotment, which is needed as an alternative route to access Chilkoot Lake and beyond.

  The Dennis allotment is a Native allotment that was adjudicated and certificated by the BLM. It is private land, not federal public land.

- Determine which ANCSA 17(b) easements will be maintained and which will be terminated.

  Determination of the status of 17(b) easements will be conducted as part of future land management activities. While such activities will be consistent with the PRMP/FEIS, the specific determinations are outside the scope of this PRMP/FEIS.

- Reevaluate and possibly terminate the Juneau Access Project.

  The ability to reevaluate and/or terminate this project is outside the scope of this plan.

- Consider wilderness designations.

  Alaska lands were exhaustively inventoried, reviewed, and studied for eight years during the 1970s to evaluate their wilderness values under the Wilderness Act criteria. Subsequently, Congress passed ANILCA (1980), which preserved more than 150 million acres in conservation units, including 57 million acres of designated wilderness. Alaska has a higher proportion of land in wilderness designation than any other state. ANILCA also removed the requirements for additional wilderness review under FLPMA and

granted the Secretary of the Interior discretion to identify additional wilderness for Congressional consideration. In 1981 the Secretary exercised that discretion to cease wilderness reviews. This decision was rescinded in 2001. However, on April 11, 2003 Secretary Gale Norton instructed BLM to "consider specific wilderness study proposals in Alaska, as part of any new or revised resource management planning effort, if the proposals received 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." At this time, there has been no indication of support from these parties for further wilderness proposals In accordance with all of the above, wilderness inventory is not being conducted as part of this planning effort, and wilderness areas designations are not considered in any of the alternatives.

1.4 Planning Criteria and Legislative Constraints

FLPMA (1976) is the primary authority for BLM's management of public lands. This law provides overarching policy by which public lands will be managed, and establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition and disposal, administration, range management, ROWs, designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. NEPA (1969) provides the basic national charter for environmental responsibility and requires the consideration and public availability of information regarding the environmental effects of major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. In Alaska, ANCSA (1971) and ANILCA (1980) add to the legal framework for lands and realty issues, as well as access and subsistence issues.

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help to guide data collection, alternative formulation, and alternative selection in the PRMP/FEIS development process. In conjunction with the planning issues, planning criteria assure that the planning process is focused. The criteria also help guide the selection of the PRMP and provide a basis for judging the responsiveness of the planning options.

The AFO has developed the following planning criteria:

1. Valid existing rights will be protected throughout the planning area.
2. Land tenure adjustments, disposals, and acquisitions will be analyzed when in the national interest. Land acquisition or disposal options will include land transfers, exchanges, and sales as allowed under FLPMA, the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) (1954), and other laws.
3. Plans and policies of adjacent federal conservation system units, landowners, and State and local governments will be considered, and the PRMP/FEIS decisions will be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans of other federal, State, local, and tribal governments to the extent those plans are consistent with federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands.
4. In regard to BLM's management of the subsurface estate in components of the NWR System and the National Forest System, the PRMP will be consistent with the plans of the surface managers.
5. BLM will encourage and participate in collaborative planning and management. BLM will provide opportunity for input from other federal agencies, the State of Alaska, local government, adjacent private landowners, local residents, and other affected and interested parties.

6. The plan will analyze the identification, designation, and protection of special management areas such as, research natural areas (RNAs), ACECs, outstanding natural areas (ONAs), and other special management designations, and where appropriate, analyze management alternatives and incorporate them in the PRMP/FEIS.
7. Plan actions will comply with laws, Executive Orders (EOs), and regulations.
8. A collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach will be used, where possible, to jointly determine the desired future condition of public lands.
9. Management of withdrawn lands will be consistent with the purpose for which the withdrawal was established, outlined in the withdrawal orders, and within agency plans, if any exist.
10. Management prescriptions will focus on the relative values of resources and not the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or economic output.
11. BLM's Alaska Statewide Land Health Standards issued in 2004 will apply to all activities and uses, as applicable.
12. The Visual Resource Management (VRM) class designations will be analyzed to reflect present conditions and future needs. Areas requiring modifications or restrictions for specific land uses to resolve conflicts will be identified.
13. Planning will include the preservation, conservation, and enhancement of important historic, cultural, paleontological, and natural components of public land resources.
14. Coordination will be maintained with Indian tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage.
15. In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BLM will undertake consultation with USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).
16. Determinations of WSR eligibility and suitability will be made in accordance with Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) and BLM Manual 8351.

1.5 Planning Process

This PRMP/FEIS is intended to be a flexible and adaptive management tool for public lands. It describes broad, multiple-use guidance for managing public lands and mineral estate administered by BLM. In Alaska, this means unencumbered, non-selected BLM lands, as well as lands selected by the State of Alaska and Native corporations, but not yet conveyed. PRMP/FEIS decisions are made on a broad scale and guide subsequent site-specific, day-to-day decisions. The plan highlights goals and objectives for resource management and establishes measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives. The PRMP/FEIS provides overall guidance for subsequent management decisions in a designated area. The plan identifies what public and commercial uses are appropriate, where they are appropriate, and under what conditions. Preparation of a PRMP/FEIS is a prerequisite to taking specific resource management actions and pursuing additional planning. The plan provides future direction for site-specific implementation planning. BLM will follow the PRMP/FEIS when initiating subsequent implementation actions and monitor the consistency of these actions with the PRMP/FEIS.

The planning process is integrated with the requirements of NEPA. The PRMP/FEIS is created through an open, public process, utilizing the input from those who live on or near the lands being planned, and those individuals and agencies that have an interest in these public lands. Given the large geographic extent of the planning area, it is not possible to hold public meetings

in all potentially affected communities. However, a range of opportunities for communications and participation are provided during the planning process, including formal scoping and a comment period on the Draft RMP/EIS, with associated public scoping and comment meetings, newsletters, and a project website. This website is currently unavailable due to unscheduled maintenance, but was available to the public through the first three years of the project. In addition, the AFO website has continued to provide current information on the status of the Ring of Fire planning process.

What is the relationship of an RMP and an EIS?

An RMP is developed in the context of an EIS. This approach satisfies BLM requirements in Section 202 of FLPMA to do comprehensive planning, and in NEPA to analyze the impacts of federal actions. While the entire document is commonly termed an RMP, the plan portion of the document is incorporated as part of Chapter 2. Each of the alternatives presented in Chapter 2 represents a different plan for the future management by BLM of lands under its responsibility in the Ring of Fire planning area. These alternatives also satisfy the requirements in NEPA that BLM consider alternative approaches to proposed federal actions. The Record of Decision (ROD) that will be issued at the end of the planning process will provide the approved RMP that will guide BLM's management in the Ring of Fire planning area.

The process of preparing a PRMP/FEIS identifies planning issues and concerns, develops and evaluates reasonable alternatives for the proposed action, describes the affected environment, assesses potential environmental consequences of the alternatives, and involves the potentially affected public in the process of preparing the PRMP/FEIS. The PRMP/FEIS has been prepared in compliance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA, FLPMA, and other relevant laws and regulations, including BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1600 and the BLM H-1601-1 Land Use Planning Handbook (BLM 2005t). Table 1.5-1 provides a summary of the nine basic steps in preparing an PRMP/FEIS.

1.5.1 Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs

BLM has developed a number of plans and policy statements that relate to or otherwise govern management in the planning area. These major plans and other major management guidance are listed below and provide a perspective of the many management considerations pertinent to the planning area.

- Southcentral MFP (BLM 2004m) (amended 1985, 1998, and 2005)
- A Management Plan for Public Use and Resource Management on the Bureau of Land Management Campbell Tract Facility (BLM 1988b)
- Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan (Alaska Department of Natural Resources [ADNR] et al.1998)
- Land Use Plan Amendment for Wildland Fire and Fuels Management – Environmental Assessment (BLM 2004l) Decision Record (BLM 2005)
- BLM's Alaska Statewide Land Health Standards (2004u)

In addition, this plan will comply with all applicable federal EOs, laws, and regulations (Appendix C).

Table 1.5-1. Steps in the BLM 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 lands in the planning area. The public, BLM, and other governmental entities identify issues. The planning process is then focused on resolving the planning issues.
2: Development of 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 management 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, BLM formulates a reasonable range of alternatives for managing resources in the planning area. Alternatives include a combination of current management (Alternative A – No Action) and other alternatives that strive to resolve the major planning issues while emphasizing different management scenarios. Alternatives usually vary by the amount of resource production or protection that would be allowed, or in the emphasis of one program area over another.
6: Evaluation of Potential Effects	This step involves assessing the physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative in order to provide a comparative evaluation of effects in compliance with CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508).
7: Selection of Preferred Alternative	Based on the information resulting from the evaluation of effects, BLM identifies a Preferred Alternative. The Draft RMP/EIS is then prepared for printing and distributed for public review.
8: Selection of the PRMP	Following review and analysis of public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, BLM makes adjustments as warranted and selects a PRMP. The PRMP/FEIS is then published. A final decision is made after a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review and a 30-day public protest period are complete. BLM then publishes the 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.

Notes: BLM: Bureau of Land Management
CEQ: Council on Environmental Quality
CFR: Code of Federal Regulations
EIS: Environmental Impact Statement
NEPA: National Environmental Protection Act
RMP: Resource Management Plan
ROD: Record of Decision

1.5.2 Collaboration

Collaboration is a cooperative process in which interested parties, often with widely varied interests, work together to seek solutions for managing public and other lands. The planning process recognizes respective roles of other agencies in managing lands and resources to integrate their relevant planning documents, and coordinate with programs and activities on adjacent or nearby lands. Sharing data, management decisions and issues of concern fosters a collaborative approach, improves communication, and develops an understanding of the subject matter and process in development of the PRMP/FEIS.

Collaboration With Alaska Native Governments

EO 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Government, signed by the President on November 6, 2000, and published November 9, 2000 (65 *Federal Register* [FR] 67249), is intended to establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration between federal agencies and Native tribal governments in the development of federal

regulatory practices that significantly or uniquely affect their communities. In preparing this PRMP/FEIS, BLM has established a government-to-government consultation process with affected Native communities.

Other Stakeholder Relationships

Successful completion of the Ring of Fire PRMP/FEIS depends on identifying and engaging key stakeholders and other parties that are potentially affected by the outcome of the planning process. Interested parties have been identified as having a concern in the project because of:

- jurisdictional responsibilities and review;
- proximity to the planning area;
- use of the planning area; and
- expressed interest.

These stakeholders have been contacted and are included in the mailing list. Parties identified as having potential interest in the project include: federal, State, and local agencies (including Alaska Department of Fish and Game [ADF&G]); elected and appointed officials; Alaska Coastal Management Districts; Alaska Native organizations such as ANCSA regional and village corporations, village and tribal councils, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council; interest organizations, including recreation/tourism, energy/development, and conservation; individual citizens; media; and the BLM Resource Advisory Council (RAC) a citizen body representing a wide spectrum of public interests.

The BLM and ADF&G Master Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

In 1983, ADF&G and BLM agreed to recognize their respective roles in managing fish and wildlife resources and their habitat (Appendix K). Through a MOU, ADF&G agreed to:

- Recognize BLM as the federal agency responsible for multiple use management of BLM lands including wildlife habitat in accordance with the FLPMA, ANILCA, and other applicable federal laws.
- Regulate and manage use of fish and wildlife populations on BLM lands in such a way as to improve the quality of fish and wildlife habitat and its productivity.
- Act as the primary agency responsible for the management of all uses of fish and wildlife on state and BLM lands, pursuant to applicable state and federal laws.

BLM agreed to:

- Recognize ADF&G as the primary agency responsible for management of use and conservation of fish and wildlife resources on BLM lands, pursuant to applicable state and federal laws.
- Incorporate ADF&G's fish and wildlife management objectives and guidelines in BLM land use plans unless such provisions are not consistent with multiple use management principles established by FLPMA, ANILCA, and applicable federal laws.

1.6 Related Plans

Plans formulated by federal, State, local, and tribal governments that relate to management of lands and resources are reviewed and considered as the PRMP/FEIS is developed. 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 those plans are consistent with federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Table 1.6-1 provides a list of major regional plans that have been reviewed as part of this PRMP/FEIS. The Ring of Fire planning area is equivalent to the linear distance between Boston and Seattle, and this list of plans should not be viewed as all-inclusive. In addition to those plans listed in Table 1.6-1, several comprehensive and coastal management plans for cities and boroughs within the planning area have also been examined.

Coastal Zone Consistency

The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 was passed in recognition of the increasing and conflicting uses that were causing irreparable harm to both the biological and physical systems associated with coastal areas (Bristol Bay Coastal Resources Service Area Board 1987). This act directed states to complete comprehensive coastal management programs. It mandated that once a state's plan received federal approval, that federal actions must be "consistent to the maximum extent practicable: with the state's plan."

The Alaska Coastal Zone Management Act of 1977, as amended, and the subsequent Alaska Coastal Management Program and Final EIS (1979) establish policy guidance and standards for the 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 as referenced above.

Certain federal actions may require a Federal Consistency Determination. BLM will consult the Alaska Department of Natural Resources' Coastal Management Program for program applicability before beginning a project that may affect the coastal zone.

Table 1.6-1. List of Land Management Plans Within the Planning Area

Management Plan	Agency
All Regions	
Alaska Recreational Trails Plan	ADNR (2000b)
Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Chain Region	
Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuge Complex Final Public Use Management Plan	USFWS (1994)
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan	USFWS (1985a)
Katmai National Park and Preserve General Management Plan, Land Protection Plan, and Wilderness Suitability Review	NPS (1985)
McNeil River State Game Refuge and Sanctuary Management Plan	ADF&G (1996)
Kodiak Region	
Kodiak Area Plan	ADNR (2003f)
Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Final Comprehensive Plan and Wilderness Review	USFWS (1987a)
Tugidak Island Critical Habitat Area Draft Management Plan	ADF&G (1994a)
Southcentral Region	
Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge Draft Management Plan	ADF&G (1991b)
Big Lake Community Comprehensive Plan	MSB (1996)
Bristol Bay Area Plan	ADNR, ADF&G, and ADEC (1984)
Fish Creek Management Plan	ADNR and MSB (1984)
Hatcher Pass Management Plan and Amendment	ADNR (1986)
Houston Comprehensive Plan	MSB (1999)
Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats Critical Habitat Areas Management Plan	ADF&G (1993)
Kashwitna Management Plan	ADNR, ADF&G, and MSB (1991)
Kenai Area Plan	ADNR (2001a)
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan	USFWS (1995)
Kenai River Comprehensive Management Plan	ADNR (1997a)
A Management Plan for Public Use and Resource Management on the BLM Campbell Tract Facility	BLM (2004m)
Matanuska-Susitna Borough Core Area Comprehensive Plan	HDR (1997)
Matanuska Valley Moose Range Management Plan	ADNR and ADF&G (1986)
Ninilchik/Deep Creek State Recreation Areas Management Plan	ADNR (2001c)
Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge Management Plan	ADF&G (2002b)
Prince William Sound Area Plan	ADNR and ADF&G (1988)
Revised Land and Resource Management Plan Chugach National Forest	USFS (2002a)
South Denali Implementation Plan	NPS (2006)
Susitna Area Plan	ADNR, ADF&G, and MSB (1985)
Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan	ADNR (1991)
Susitna Flats State Game Refuge Management Plan	ADF&G (1988)
Sutton Comprehensive Plan	MSB (2000)
Talkeetna Comprehensive Plan	MSB (1999)
Turnagain Arm Management Plan for State Lands	ADNR (1994)
U.S. Army Alaska Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan 2002-2006 Volume 2 Fort Richardson	U.S. Army Alaska (2002)
Southeast Region	
Caines Head State Recreation Area Management Plan	ADNR (1997d)
Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Management Plan	ADNR (2002b)
Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge Management Plan	ADF&G (1990)
Northern Southeast Area Plan	ADNR (2001b)
Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan	USFS (1997)

Notes: ADEC: Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G: Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR: Alaska Department of Natural Resources
BLM: Bureau of Land Management
MSB: Matanuska-Susitna Borough
NPS: National Park Service
USFS: United States Forest Service
USFWS: United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.7 Document Organization

Management of BLM lands within the Ring of Fire planning area is a large, complex program that must balance coordination of outside plans, ownership, and access, with the BLM mission to provide multiple use opportunities while sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of future generations. The PRMP/FEIS provides a means for informing the public about the alternatives for management, and the complex set of laws and regulations that apply to resource management. To meet its objectives, the document has been organized into a series of chapters and sections.

Chapter 1 establishes the purpose and need for the federal action supported by this PRMP/FEIS. It provides an overview of NEPA and its procedural requirements, history of this document including methods for conducting the NEPA scoping process, and issues identified by that process.

Chapter 2 presents the alternative RMPs that are the focus of this document. This chapter also identifies the proposed action, along with alternatives that were considered but eliminated from detailed study.

Chapter 3 describes the physical, biological, and socioeconomic resource components of the planning area. The objective of this chapter is to present a description of the current conditions of the resources and uses that will serve as the baseline for the analysis of the alternatives.

Chapter 4 discusses the effects of management under the different alternatives. The analysis examines the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of each of the potential RMPs. This chapter then builds on these analyses and presents conclusions regarding the overall effects of the policy alternatives.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of agency and government consultation and coordination and outreach to the public.

Chapter 6 presents the submissions and testimony received during public review of the Draft RMP/EIS, and allows commenters to track BLM responses incorporated into the PRMP/FEIS.

Chapter 7 lists the references utilized during the background research and analysis of effects.