

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT RECORD EASTERN INTERIOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Meeting Location: Tok School, Tok, Alaska

Meeting Date: April 16, 2008

Purpose: Identify public issues and concerns with BLM managed lands in the Eastern Interior Planning Area.

Number of public in attendance: 11

BLM personnel in attendance: Lenore Heppler (Manager), Jeanie Cole (Planning), Collin Cogley (Recreation), Larry Jackson (Minerals), and Ruth Gronquist (Wildlife).

Meeting format:

3-6 pm: Open house with maps and other information on display. BLM staff discussed maps with the public and answered questions. The public had the opportunity to review maps of land status, PLO locations (mineral entry), Recreation opportunity spectrum, and OHV designation in the Steese and White Mountain subunits, current fire management options, and wildlife habitat and game management units.

6-8 pm: Attendees were introduced to why we are doing a new RMP, what an RMP does, and given examples of decisions that might come out of an RMP through a power point presentation. BLM staff answered questions. Participants were asked to express their concerns and issues with BLM-managed public lands.

Handouts: An Interested Party letter explaining the types of decisions made in the RMP and giving an overview of the initial steps in planning was available. In addition, a small map of the planning area, copies of the existing RMPs for the Steese, White Mountains and Fortymile, and brochures on the Fortymile management unit were available. A scoping comment sheet that could either be filled out at the meeting or returned to BLM at a later date was also available.

Issues/Questions/Concerns:

Access:

- Ensure access across native land to public land through 17b easements.
- Consider 17b site easements for airstrips. Two airstrips of concern are Molly Creek and Joseph Creek. ADF&G uses these strips for wildlife work and private individuals also use these airstrips.
- Can you store fuel on 17b easements? May be a need to cache fuel in places for air based survey work.

- Mineralized area near Eagle on Native Corporation Land. Rumor that there is legal access through Yukon Charlie National Preserve and that a road will be built but no evidence of this in the record. No easement here on the map.
- Ensure access across public land to private land for mineral or other development through right-of-way or other appropriate authority.

Withdrawals and Mining:

- Do not open too much of the area to mining. There are already lots of negative impacts to the land from climate change. Manage conservatively. Keep the Steese and White Mountains in conservation status.
- Does BLM have a policy of full reclamation on mining sites? It may not be possible to achieve full reclamation. Does BLM have a policy that provides for mineral development and that recognizes that land will eventually return to a reclaimed state?

Process:

- The RMP covers a broad variety of topics. What will be the priorities in the RMP?
- If a small operator applies for a right-of-way or mining permit. Do they have to pay for the cost of the Environmental Assessment? Restrictions and cost recovery should not be such to preclude small operators. BLM should let the applicant know the cost up front, before they do work on the Environmental Assessment.
- How did BLM advertise the meeting in Tok? BLM needs to make a better effort to get the word out about meetings. Important to get ad in the Mukluk News. Mukluk News claims they did not get a press release for this meeting. Most of the people getting notice are those involved in some organized group like Alaska Outdoor Council or Sierra Club. Need better notice to individuals. Mini-Mart in Tok is a good place to advertise meetings. Most public radio stations will post public service announcements for meetings.

School Lands:

- Will there be any provisions for school lands in the RMP? BLM needs to consider school lands in conveyances. Sections 16 and 36 of each township were designated by the federal government to be set aside for school purposes. State was in litigation over school trust lands a few years ago. Some of it was consolidated to the coal land down by Healy.

Selected lands and conveyance:

- When will Doyon's selection priorities be determined (Due June 10, 2008) and how soon and where can the public access this information?
- How quickly will the land be conveyed? Once these June 10 priorities are conveyed, will the process be finished?
- How much BLM land will be left around Tok for public use?

Energy

- Will the RMP look at local energy sources and renewable energy? Proposal in Tok area to get a grant from the State to look at use of biomass for energy generation.
- Is there potential for coal in the planning area?

Forestry and Woodland Products

- Does BLM give out permits for firewood harvest?