

Eastern Interior RMP News

Eastern Interior Field Office, Bureau of Land Management

February 2009

BLM

I would like to thank all of you who helped the BLM start a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the public lands in the Eastern Interior Planning Area through your participation in our scoping process.

We conducted meetings in eight communities and heard the concerns and visions of dozens of people. This is the first step in developing a plan that will answer these questions:

- How can the BLM accommodate potentially competing interests?
- What types of constraints should be placed on resource uses?
- What areas will be designated as open, closed, or limited to off-highway vehicle use?
- What are the desired resource conditions (vegetation, soils, water quality, etc.) in the planning area?
- Which lands should be available for mineral entry and leasing?
- Which lands should be available for disposal through sale or exchange?



Lenore Heppler
Field Manager

When completed, this plan will guide the BLM in managing these public lands for the next 15 to 20 years. Comments you provided at the meetings or by letter or e-mail included several recurring themes:

- Concern about how off-highway vehicle use will be managed.
- Concern about how we will incorporate climate change into the plan.
- Concern about which areas we should or shouldn't open to the location of new mining claims.

Inside This Issue

What is an RMP?	2
Description of Planning Area	2
What is Scoping?	2
How We Are Using Your Comments	3
Issues Identified During Scoping	3
Other Management Concerns	3
Planning Timeline	3
What's Next?	4
How You Can Participate	4

The RMP we are preparing will address these concerns and many others you raised during the scoping process. Our scoping process happened to coincide with another process that will greatly affect public use of the lands in the planning area. Doyon Incorporated has submitted its final priorities for selection of lands under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, including thousands of acres in the Fortymile country. The State of Alaska has also made final selection for lands under the Statehood Act. The State has prioritized lands in the Fortymile country, but not in the upper Black River area.

As the BLM processes these selections and conveys land to Doyon, Inc. and the State, a new land pattern—one with less BLM-managed public lands—will emerge. We will be publishing further information about the changing land status as it becomes available.

We value the input you have provided so far, and we look forward to working closely with you as we continue to develop the Eastern Interior RMP.

You can keep informed of the latest developments through these newsletters or through our website at: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en.html>



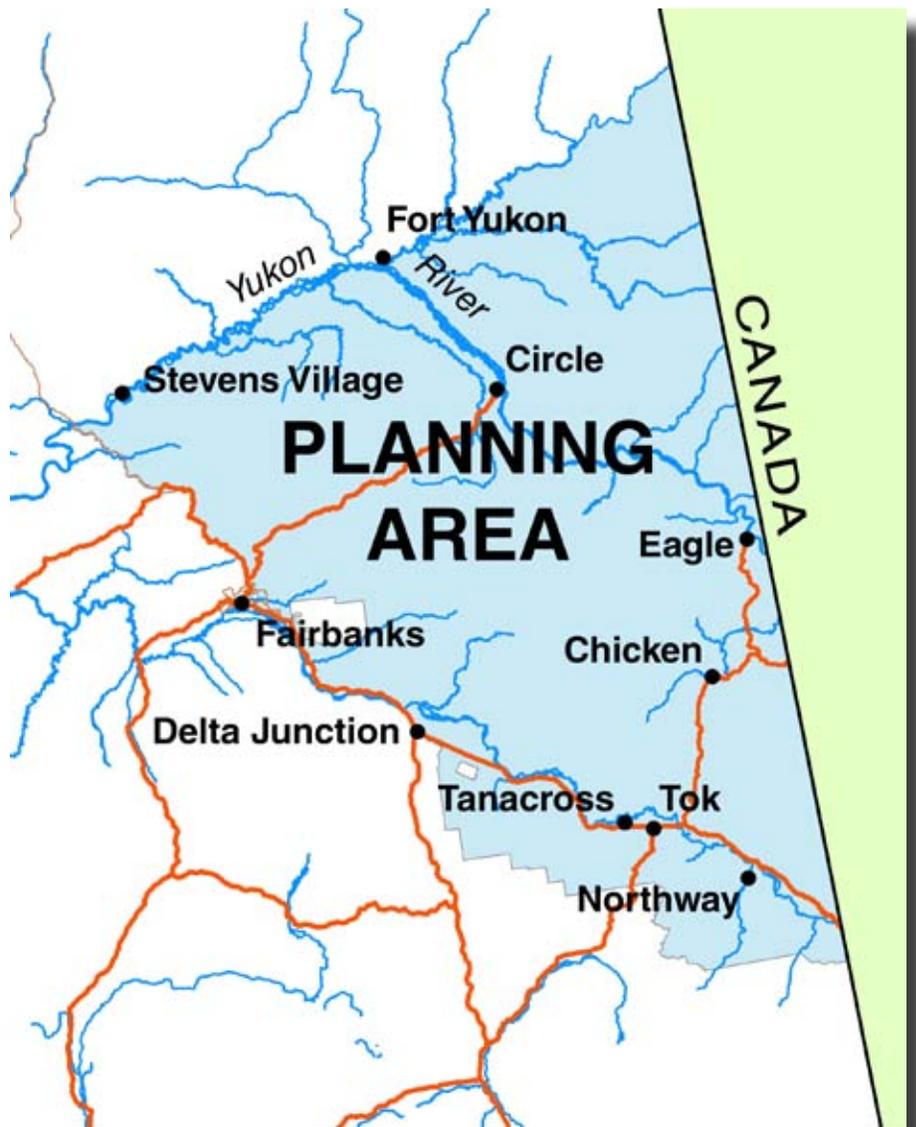
What is a Resource Management Plan?

A resource management plan (RMP) provides comprehensive, long-term direction concerning the use and management of resources managed by the BLM. The RMP will establish goals and objectives for management of resources and the measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives. It will identify lands that are available for certain uses, including any restrictions on those uses, as well as lands that are closed to certain uses. When the BLM develops an RMP, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is also required. The EIS will analyze the environmental effects of the proposed management actions.

Description of Planning Area

The Eastern Interior Planning Area is located east of Fairbanks and north of the Alaska Highway. It includes several special areas including the Steese National Conservation Area, White Mountains National Recreation Area, the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail and the Fortymile, Beaver Creek, and Birch Creek national wild rivers. Additionally, there are four research natural areas that were designated under the existing RMPs. Large blocks of BLM-managed lands are found in the Steese/White Mountains area, the upper Black River watershed, and the Fortymile River watershed. Although the planning area boundary includes land managed by other Federal agencies, the State, and private land, decisions in the RMP will only apply to lands administered by the BLM.

BLM-administered public lands in the planning area offer dispersed recreational opportunities to residents



and surrounding communities including Fairbanks. Residents of Anchorage also hunt and recreate in the area, particularly along the Taylor Highway.

What is Scoping?

Public involvement is an important part of developing a new resource management plan. Scoping is a process where the BLM asks for input from the public and interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the RMP. The formal scoping period began with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register February 29, 2008, and ended

August 15, 2008. During the formal scoping period, public meetings were held in eight communities throughout the planning area and a scoping letter was sent to tribal governments, tribal organizations, and State and Federal agencies. Approximately 122 people attended the public meetings, with one person attending several meetings. The structure of the meetings varied depending on the location, but generally included both an open-house and a formal presentation. This open-house format allowed the BLM staff to interact with the public in a casual environment, while the formal part of the



Issues Identified During Scoping

During the scoping period, we received 67 letters and many comments at scoping meetings. From your comments, we identified the following planning issues. Issues are matters of controversy or dispute over resource management activities or land use.

Issues

- **Climate change**
- **Fisheries Management**
- **Minerals Management**
- **Recreation and Visitor Services**
- **Right-of-way Management**
- **Subsistence**
- **Travel Management**
- **Water Quality**
- **Wilderness characteristics**
- **Wildlife Management**

Other Management Concerns

You also helped us identify many management concerns during scoping. Generally, a management concern matters to fewer individuals than a planning issue. Many of these concerns will be addressed in the plan but do not have a high enough level of controversy to be considered an issue.

In addition to management concerns raised by the public, the BLM has identified several areas where management direction may need to be changed to meet current laws, regulations, policies, or to address changed conditions. For example:

- **Management of vegetation including noxious and invasive species**
- **Management of cultural resources**
- **Management of cave and karst resources**
- **Wilderness characteristics**
- **Changes in land ownership patterns**

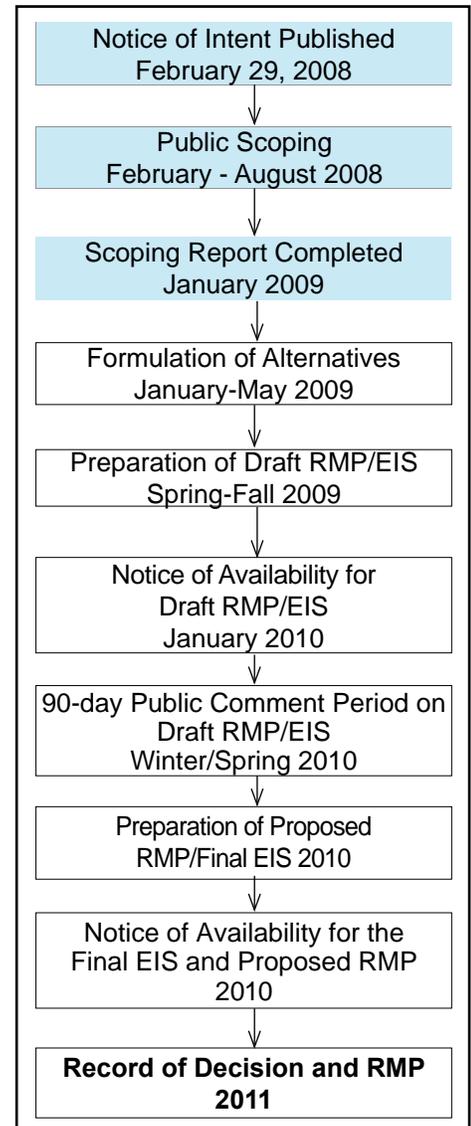
meeting allowed for group discussion and for attendees to make oral public comment. Comments were solicited at the meetings through preprinted comment forms or oral testimony. Attendees were encouraged to submit written comments after the meetings via e-mail or the US Postal Service. Approximately 67 pieces of correspondence were received during the formal scoping period.

How We Are Using Your Comments

Upon completion of the scoping period, we analyzed your comments to identify relevant issues to address in the Eastern Interior RMP. After analysis of the comments, we published a scoping report which is available on our website or by request from our office. The scoping report will help us ensure that the RMP and EIS address those issues important to the people who live in the region or who may be affected by the BLM's decisions. The scoping report does not make decisions or set forth policies. It does summarize the comments received by the BLM through September 30, 2008, and identifies issues to be addressed by the plan. Comments received after completion of the scoping report will be considered in the next steps of the planning process.

Planning Timeline

This timeline shows the entire planning process. The shaded boxes indicate steps that have already been completed.





Official Business

Bureau of Land Management
Fairbanks District Office
1150 University Ave.
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844

FIRST CLASS
POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PERMIT NO. G-76

What's Next?

The Planning Team will be working to identify goals, objectives, desired resource conditions, and management strategies for BLM lands. These various objectives and management strategies will be presented as a range of alternatives in the draft plan.

How You Can Participate

Although the formal scoping period is closed, we invite you to continue to participate in the planning process. The progress of the RMP can be followed on-line at the RMP web site:

http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning/east_int_rmp.html

The web site will be updated with information and new documents as they are completed.

When we complete the Draft RMP/EIS, tentatively scheduled for January 2010, we will contact the public to announce the document's availability for review and comment. At that time we will also inform you of upcoming public meetings where you can learn more about the Draft RMP/EIS and provide oral and written comments.

Individuals and groups receiving this newsletter will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added or deleted from the list may do so

by contacting Jeanie Cole at the address or phone number listed below.

Contact Us

**Bureau of Land Management
Eastern Interior Field Office
1150 University Ave.
Fairbanks, AK 99709
1-800-437-7021**

Jeanie Cole, Planner
Phone: 907-474-2340
e-mail: jeanie_cole@blm.gov
Lenore Heppler, Field Manager
Phone: 907-474-2320
e-mail: lenore_heppler@blm.gov

BLM/AK/GI-09/003+8011+020