

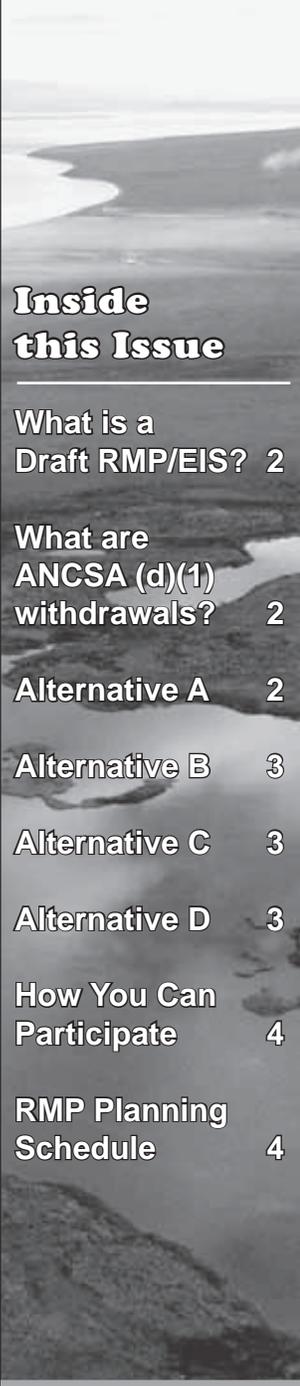


Newsletter of the **Kobuk-Seward Peninsula** Resource Management Plan

April 2006

BLM

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Shelly Jacobson



Gary Reimer

Dear Public Land Users:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Fairbanks has recently reorganized and I have taken the job as manager of the Central Yukon Field Office.

I am looking forward to the opportunities of my new position.

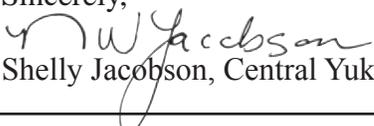
High on my list of priorities is

the successful completion of the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). While the planning area covers public lands in both the Anchorage Field Office and the Central Yukon Field Office, my office has been given the lead in developing the plan. Anchorage Field Office manager Gary Reimer and I have worked closely to ensure we have a comprehensive approach to the management of public lands in Northwest Alaska.

This is our second newsletter regarding the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP/EIS. I hope to use this newsletter and our Web site to keep you updated on the planning process. Unfortunately, due to security concerns, the Web site was not available to the public from April 2005 to January 2006. I'm happy to report that the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP/EIS Web site is up again and can be accessed at <http://www.ak.blm.gov/ksp>.

Since our last newsletter, the Planning Team has developed a Draft RMP/EIS. This preliminary document has gone through internal review and a public Draft RMP/EIS is almost ready. We anticipate that it will be published and mailed out in April 2006.

I encourage you to review and provide comments on the draft plan. These are public lands and we need to hear from the users to make sure we have adequately addressed your issues and concerns. We will schedule a round of public meetings this spring to discuss the management options contained in the Draft RMP. We would like to know how you are currently using, or would like to use, your BLM-managed lands. We look forward to hearing from you and know that with your help we can create a land use plan that serves us well in the future.

Sincerely,

Shelly Jacobson, Central Yukon Field Office Manager



Alaska

KOBUK-SEWARD PENINSULA RMP NEWS

This newsletter includes a short summary of what we have accomplished over the past year and what still needs to be done to finalize the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP. We appreciate your continued interest and participation in this planning effort.

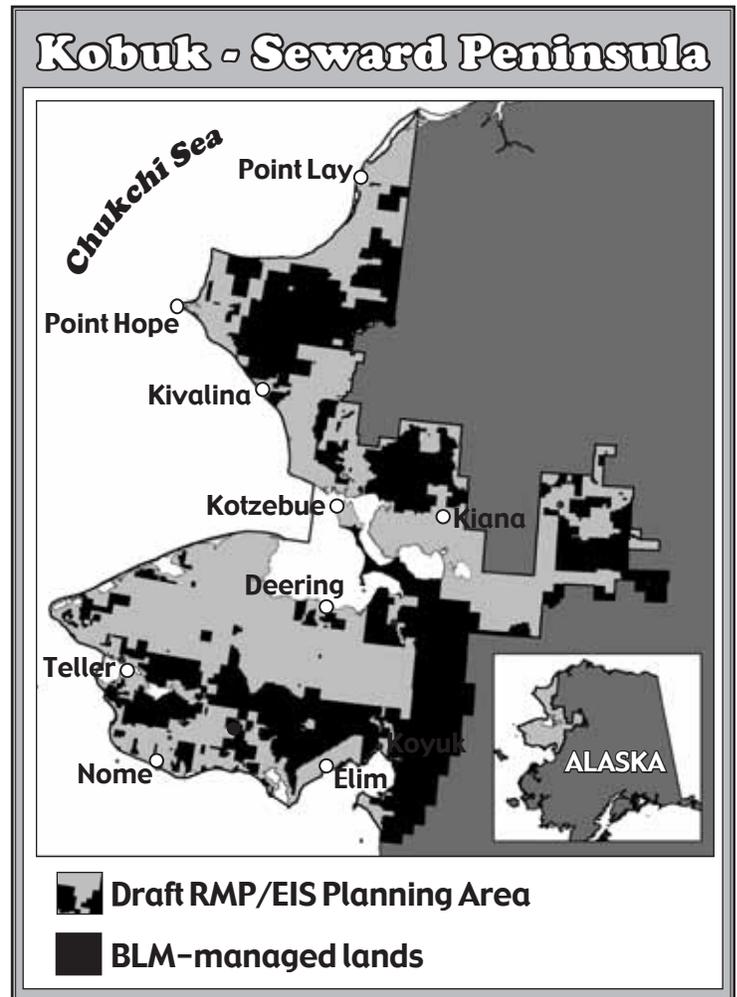
In our previous newsletter, we discussed the issues and management concerns identified by the public during the scoping process. Since then, we have developed a range of alternatives to address those issues and management concerns. The alternatives and the potential environmental impacts of implementing them will be published in the Draft Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP/EIS, which will be available for public review and comment during May to July 2006.

What is a Draft RMP/EIS?

A draft RMP is a document that provides a range of management alternatives to address the use of BLM-managed lands. The Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Draft RMP includes four alternatives: a No Action Alternative (Alternative A), Alternative B, Alternative C, and BLM's preferred alternative (Alternative D). The Draft EIS describes the existing environment in the planning area and the environmental impacts of the alternative management plans.

What are ANCSA (d)(1) withdrawals?

Millions of acres in the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula planning area are designated as (d)(1) withdrawals. These lands were initially withdrawn as a result of Public Land Orders (PLOs) issued by the Secretary of the Interior under the authority of Section 17(d)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The (d)(1) withdrawal designation allowed the BLM to temporarily close them to many resource uses, including mining and mineral leasing. The purpose of these withdrawals was to maintain the existing state of the lands while agencies inventoried and assessed their resources. The Draft RMP will include recommendations on what to do with the (d)(1) withdrawn lands.



Alternative A

Alternative A describes the existing BLM management of the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula area. It would continue the present management practices and levels of resource use based on the Northwest Management Framework Plan (MFP) (1982) and the Alaska Land Use Plan Amendment for Wildland Fire and Fuels Management (2005). Management decisions contained in the Northwest MFP would be implemented if not already completed. Management direction prescribed by existing laws, regulations and policies would also continue, and may supersede provisions in the Northwest MFP. Current levels and methods of multiple use management of BLM land in the planning area would continue. In general, few uses would be limited or excluded as long as they were consistent with State and Federal laws. Existing



withdrawals that close parts of the planning area to mineral entry would likely remain in place.

Alternative B

Alternative B lays the groundwork for management to facilitate resource development. In this alternative, constraints to protect resource values or habitat would be implemented on a project-by-project basis rather than across the planning area or by special designations. All ANCSA (d)(1) withdrawals would be revoked on lands retained in long-term BLM ownership, increasing the potential for mineral exploration and development. Stipulations for oil and gas leasing would be less restrictive than under other alternatives. Travel and trail restrictions would be minimized. The Squirrel River would be identified as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) to focus management on recreational use. In other recreation areas, the focus would be on management of permits. BLM management of lands selected by the State or Native Corporations would be mostly custodial.

Alternative C

Alternative C emphasizes the protection and enhancement of resource values. Mineral production would be more constrained than in Alternatives B or D. In some areas, uses would be excluded to protect sensitive resources. Several Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and SRMAs are identified, and specific management strategies are proposed to protect or enhance resource values within these areas. Several rivers are recommended as suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic

Rivers Act (WSRA). Off-highway vehicle use would be limited to existing or designated trails during summer months to protect habitat, soil and vegetation resources. Most of the (d)(1) withdrawals would be revoked, but some would be replaced with new withdrawals to protect or maintain resource values. This alternative treats lands selected by the State or by Native corporations as if they were to be retained in long-term Federal ownership.

Alternative D

Alternative D emphasizes a moderate level of protection, use and enhancement of resources and services. Constraints to protect resources would be implemented, but would be less restrictive than Alternative C. This alternative would designate some Research Natural Areas, ACECs and SRMAs. No rivers would be recommended as suitable for designation under the WSRA. This alternative would revoke most (d)(1) withdrawals and a few small areas would be withdrawn from mineral entry. This alternative describes interim and long-term management strategies for lands selected by the State or Native corporations.

Alternative D represents the variety of actions that the BLM believes best resolves the issues and management concerns in consideration of all values and programs, and is thus considered BLM's preferred alternative.

Commonly Used Acronyms

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ANCSA	Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
MFP	Management Framework Plan
PLO	Public Land Order
RMP	Resource Management Plan
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
WSRA	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act



How you can Participate

The next milestone is the publication of the Draft Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP/EIS in April 2006. This document will be available for a 90-day public comment period from May to July 2006. Several public meetings will be held during May through June 2006. You can e-mail your comments about the document to us at: **ksp_comments@blm.gov**

Individuals and groups receiving this newsletter will continue to be on the mailing list and will be sent a copy of the Draft RMP/EIS, unless you request that your name be removed. The document will be available on CD or as a paper copy.

Anyone wishing to be added or deleted from the list may do so by contacting:

Jeanie Cole

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Kobuk - Seward Peninsula RMP Planning Schedule

April 2006	Notice of Availability for the Draft RMP/EIS
April 2006	Draft Plan Published
May-June 2006	Public Meetings
May-July 2006	90-day Public Comment Period on Draft RMP/EIS
Summer 2006	Preparation of Proposed RMP/Final EIS
Fall 2006	Notice of Availability for the Final EIS and Proposed RMP
January 2007	Record of Decision and RMP Published

photo by Claudia Ihl