



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Glennallen Field Office

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Dear Reviewer:

This letter describes the Glennallen Field Office proposed action for future management in Tangle Lakes Archeological District. This proposed action will be analyzed in an Environmental Assessment (EA). Your comments on the proposal will be used to identify issues and to develop alternatives to the proposal, which will also be analyzed in the EA.

### **BACKGROUND AND PLANNING PROCESS**

The Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD) is a 226,660 acre Archeological District listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which is a national list that contains most of the culturally and historically important places in the United States (see map). The TLAD was nominated to this list in 1971 because of its contributions, and ability to contribute further, to an understanding of central Alaska's and North America's prehistory. This Archaeological District is the largest in the North American subarctic and contains the densest grouping of early prehistoric archaeology in Alaska, with over 600 sites documented. The archaeology of the area is managed by two agencies: the BLM manages about 185,321 acres south of the Denali Highway and north of the Highway in the Delta Wild and Scenic River Corridor; while the State of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources manages about 41,339 acres north of the highway. BLM-managed lands outside of the Delta Wild and Scenic River Corridor are State-selected. In order to protect the high density of archaeological sites in the area, BLM has designated specific trails for Off-Highway vehicle (OHV) use since the early 1980's.

The Glennallen Field Office has recently completed their East Alaska Resource Management Plan (RMP). The RMP provides general guidance for management of Glennallen Field Office lands for the next 15 – 20 years. For the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District, the RMP prescribes the continuation of designated trails for OHVs and calls for the development of an implementation-level plan.

To prepare for development of the implementation plan, the Glennallen Field Office conducted a series of public meetings in the spring of 2006. The purpose of these meetings was to solicit comments from stakeholders who use the TLAD. Discussion at the meetings focused on how people used the area, their primary purpose for using the area, their opinions on desired future conditions for the area, and their opinions on management options. This information helped the Glennallen Field Office to develop the proposed action presented in this letter. Stakeholders included representatives

from hunting groups, local users, motorized groups, environmental groups, Native tribes and corporations, and other agencies.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

The following proposed action for management of the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District is presented for your review and comment. The intent of this letter is to solicit comments from you about the proposal. These comments will be used to develop alternatives to the proposed action. There will be additional opportunities for review and comment once the Draft Environmental Assessment is prepared. Please note that the following description applies only to BLM-managed lands within the TLAD. State-managed lands north of the Denali Highway will continue to be managed under the State's Tangle Lakes Archaeological District/Special Use Area Restrictions.

### **Current Management Practices that will remain unchanged:**

1. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) travel will be seasonally restricted to designated trails to protect cultural resources (this has been in place since the early 80's). The designated trails are Osar Lake, Landmark Gap South, Swede Lake, Dickey Lake, and Alphabet Hills. Between October 19<sup>th</sup> and May 17<sup>th</sup> the use of OHVs and snowmachines is unrestricted in areas where adequate snow cover or ground frost is present. Adequate snow cover is defined as snow greater than 12 inches in depth. Adequate ground frost is defined as 6 or more inches of ground frost.
2. Motorized off-trail travel for game retrieval is not permitted unless it is outside of the seasonal date restrictions.
3. Marketing of the TLAD as a destination point will not take place (by BLM). It was strongly vocalized by all stakeholders that this course of action is in the best interest of the users and the resources. This does not include the use of material for educational purposes.

### **Proposed Management Practices:**

1. Osar Lake and South Landmark Gap trail systems will be limited to vehicles with a curb weight not to exceed 1,500 lbs. between May 17<sup>th</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup>. Terrain features on the South Landmark Gap trail currently limits use by larger rigs. Outside of these dates there are no weight restrictions provided there is adequate snow/frost cover. Curb weight is the weight of the OHV with standard operating equipment, oil, lubricants, coolant, and fuel, *not* loaded with passengers.
2. Swede Lake, Dickey Lake, and Alphabet Hills trails are open to vehicles with a curb weight greater than 1,500 lbs. from July 20<sup>th</sup> to October 19<sup>th</sup>. Outside of these dates vehicles with a curb weight exceeding 1,500 lbs. are prohibited. The purpose of this restriction is to limit recreational use of the larger rigs and their associated resource impacts within the Gulkana Wild and Scenic River corridor, which is accessed by each of these three trails.
3. A law enforcement action plan will be drafted that increases law enforcement staff presence during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the caribou and moose hunting seasons. The implementation plan will emphasize education over enforcement and will strive to meet standards set in the **standards and monitoring** section of this proposed action.

### Proposed On Ground Actions:

1. Expand and improve the non-motorized hiking trail associated with Tangle Lakes Campground. It will be expanded within the Delta Wild and Scenic River Corridor, from Tangle Lakes Campground to Landmark Gap Creek.
2. Designate and open spur trails to motorized use that are linked to existing designated trails and that are not negatively impacting cultural or natural resources. This would amount to approximately two miles of spur trail to the west of the Swede Lake trail.
3. Connect the Osar Lake and South Landmark Gap trail systems.
4. Perform deferred maintenance on current designated and future designated trails consisting of installation of rolling dips and elevated grades, Geoblock installations, and mechanized rehabilitation. Maintenance will focus on wet areas, braided areas, and areas where resource damage is occurring. The intent is to limit Geoblock installation to damaged areas only and to maintain trails to reduce resource impacts.
5. Expand educational efforts at trailheads to supply current information relating archaeological significance of the TLAD to users as well as current trails conditions; maps of designated trails; and rules, regulations, and suggestions for best trail use practices.
6. Consider the need for new designated routes through the construction of new trails, as visitor use in TLAD increases. New trails would be planned and constructed to minimize resource impacts, avoid cultural sites, and disperse use over a large area. New trail designations will be limited to thresholds as defined in **standards and monitoring** section of this proposed action.

### Standards and Monitoring

1. **Motorized impact zone:** One-half mile of either side of an existing designated motorized route will be defined as having impacts due to motorized use. These include impacts to visual resources, natural quiet, and resource damage. Currently, 25,000 acres fall within the motorized impact zone in TLAD. Construction of any new routes to be designated for motorized travel will not exceed a threshold of 56,000 acres (or 30 percent) within the motorized impact zone in the BLM-managed portion of TLAD. The table below displays the amount of acreage within the motorized impact zone currently; as it will be upon completion of **Proposed On Ground Actions**; and as will be considered in future designations.

<i>Current situation (14% of overall acreage)</i>	25,000 acres in motorized impact zone (out of 185,000 total)
<i>Upon completion of Proposed On Ground Actions (23% of overall acreage)</i>	42,000 acres in motorized impact zone (out of 185,000 total)
<i>Allowable within TLAD (not to exceed 30% of overall acreage)</i>	56,000 acres in motorized impact zone (out of 185,000 total)

2. Heightened presence of law enforcement and BLM staff during known high use periods such as 4<sup>th</sup> of July and during certain hunting seasons are an important facet of this plan. Contacts will focus on education rather than enforcement and will be conducted by law enforcement staff and BLM trails staff. Contacts will be recorded and documented to achieve the

following standard: By 2010, achieve a compliance rate of 98 percent. Compliance rate is defined as the percentage of users contacted who are on designated routes. In other words, by 2010, only 2 percent of contacted users would be on non-designated routes.

3. Monitoring of trails within the TLAD will continue and expand with this plan. Currently, user counters are placed at various trailheads to estimate annual visitor use. Additionally, the following is proposed:
  - Photo points will be taken to document and record soil disturbance, bare ground, and vegetation regeneration in rehabilitated areas. In addition to providing photo documentation to track trends, this technique will allow BLM staff to determine what maintenance techniques are working in different areas.
  - Trail segments deemed as critical need areas through the BLM trail inventory process will be measured to track and record overall area with the intent to demonstrate reduced footprints in segments that are rehabilitated.

### **HOW TO MAKE COMMENTS**

Please submit your comments on this proposal to: Bureau of Land Management, ATTN: Bruce Rogers, P.O. Box 147, Glennallen, AK 99588. Comments should be submitted by December 20, 2006. Your comments will be used to identify issues and to develop alternatives to the proposed action, which will be analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. The Draft Environmental Assessment will be available for review by mid-February, 2007.

If you have any questions regarding the proposed action or planning process, please contact Cory Larson or Bruce Rogers at (907)-822-3217.

Sincerely,

Ramone McCoy  
Field Manager