BLM ALASKA
FRONTIERS
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News about BLM-managed public lands in Alaska

Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act passes Congress, signed by president

Land Transfers Shifting into High Gear

If you walk through BLM's Conveyance division these days, you'll notice a subtle change: the steady hum of adjudicators working at record pace.

BLM has set an ambitious goal: of completing the bulk of land transfers by the year 2009. And now BLM was just handed a handsome set of tools to help it get there. The Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act (S. 1466), sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, passed the Senate in October and got a swift stamp of approval from the House in November. The president signed it into law in early December.

BLM Alaska State Director Henri Bisson couldn't be more pleased. "Our folks worked very hard with Sen. Murkowski's staff to craft a bill that gives us some much-needed tools to speed up the conveyance process," Bisson said. "We're grateful to Sen. Murkowski for sponsoring the legislation, and for working with both sides of Congress to get the bill through."

Bisson is pleased about the bill and says it's now up to BLM to roll up its sleeves and work the provisions of the bill to get the job done.

S. 1466 is designed to accelerate land transfer from the federal government to the State of Alaska, Native corporations and individual Alaskans with the goal of substantial completion of all transfers by 2009, the 50th anniversary of statehood.

"It's been 45 years since Statehood and 33 years since the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act," said Sen. Murkowski following passage of the bill. "Yet under current law and procedures, we were at least 20 years from seeing these conveyances completed and, by some estimates, maybe 85 years or longer away from Alaskans gaining the land that is rightfully theirs."

So the Department of the Interior worked closely with the Alaska delegation to find ways to expedite the conveyance process. The result is S. 1466, which was modified extensively to address concerns raised by Alaskans during a field hearing last year.

Some of the key provisions of the

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Floods? Insect outbreaks? Invasive Weeds? Find out what's in store for Alaska this spring—and what can be done—following the worst fire season in state history... AFTERSHOCKS, page 3.

Land transfers,
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final bill include:

-- BLM is processing about 2,000 **Native allotment applications**, many of which require it to first recover title from the state or Native corporations. The bill provides efficient alternatives for accelerating this process.

-- The bill sets up a timetable for the State and Native corporations to submit **final conveyance priorities**. The bill also includes a number of technical changes to allow BLM to finish Native corporation entitlements and surveys more quickly and cost effectively.

-- The bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to establish a **field office in Alaska** dedicated to **deciding appeals** from land transfer decisions. The office would also take on probate work so Native allotment claims could be completed faster.

-- Another provision allows **miners** to convert their federal mining claims to **state claims**, without jeopardizing ongoing mining operations.

-- Millions of acres of BLM-managed public lands remain closed to many public land laws as a result of land orders from the early 1970s. S. 1466 directs BLM to prepare a report and make recommendations to **open** these **lands** to more uses. The report, to be submitted to Congress within 18 months of enactment, will focus on lands identified by Alaskans through a public notice and comment process.

Legislation is one part of a three-pronged effort to accelerate land transfer. The other parts of this very complex effort involve key administrative and process changes at BLM, including effective outreach to land transfer customers and partner agencies.

Increased funding for survey is the third critical ingredient to meeting the 2009 goal. The fiscal year 2005 appropriations bill that funds Department of the Interior activities is expected to contain a sizeable increase for conveyance-related tasks.

BLM is looking at how best to implement the provisions of S. 1466. But because the timeframe for completing the land transfer program is short and because employees have closely followed the bill as it moved through Congress, Bisson expects that BLM will have these new tools out of the box, fully assembled, and operational before the new year.

—Linda Resseguie and Teresa McPherson

Juneau Minerals Center Expands Tours

This year, for the first time, a stop at the Juneau —John Rishel Mineral Information Center (JRMIC) was added as part of the sightseeing bus tour for some of the cruise ship passengers visiting Juneau. JRMIC hosted as many as 50-60 tourists a day, and even extended the museum hours to include being open on Saturdays during summer to accommodate the interest and allow more opportunities for local residents to visit. Also, with much of the staff in the field during summer, it's an ideal time to accommodate additional visitors.

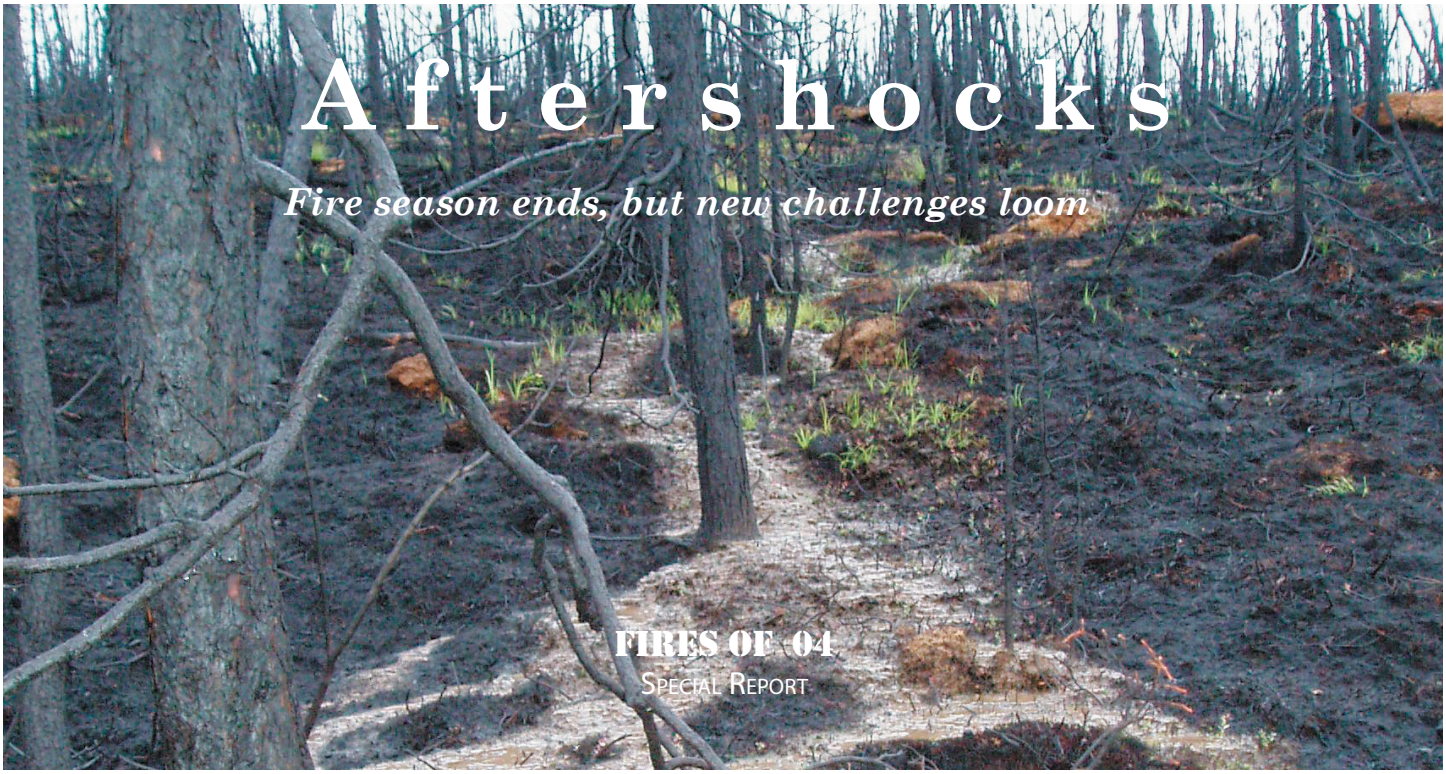
The museum has been expanded and now displays hundreds of rock and mineral specimens, historical photos, antique geologist tools, mining artifacts, and more. Visitors can even try their hand at operating a stamp mill.

"We answered questions about local mining history, mineral resources in Alaska, and Juneau-area geology and collecting locations. One of the visitors commented that our museum has the most comprehensive display of Alaska minerals that they had ever seen," said supervisory physical scientist Chris DeWitt.

Whenever possible, the staff at JRMIC was also able to share with the public, information about the facility, the library, and the free classes offered by DeWitt to all ages about mineral identification and geology.

"In addition to the cruise ship passengers, visits from people in the Juneau area increased about three-fold. A special thanks goes out to the entire staff at JRMIC who all pitched in when they could to answer questions and guide tours as needed. In addition to the specimens on display, the large relief map of Alaska, the view of Juneau, and Mayflower Island itself were very popular," said DeWitt.

–Barbara Corona



Aftershocks

Fire season ends, but new challenges loom

Some fires were still burning this fall while attention began shifting to dealing with the aftermath of the worst fire season in Alaska history. "Now what?" was on the minds of Alaskans and land managers alike.

Would villagers now have to face the specter of reduced wildlife populations available for subsistence harvest? What about potential mudslides, insect outbreaks, unsafe bridges, and even invasive weeds?

To help find out what should be done to deal with the aftermath of the fires, land managers and resource specialists from state, federal and Alaska Native organizations joined together to participate in a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team.

The team hit the ground hard in September to determine what could and should be done. The bottom line statistics were sobering: more than 6.7 million acres burned from 736 fires. Direct suppression costs exceed $100 million and are climbing as the bills are still being totaled.

Resource specialists on the team quickly got on the ground even as an early snowfall was under way. Satellite imagery was also used to map the extent of the fires. In all the team was able to evaluate 4.8 million acres in three weeks, leaving about 1.6 million more to be studied next spring.

The team conducted its assessment in coordination with local, state and federal agencies, the Tanana Chiefs Conference and other organizations. In addition, public meetings were held in eight villages most affected by the fires. The team is making recommendations in three categories: emergency stabilization, resource rehabilitation, and "non-specific" recommendations needing special funding.

A resource-by-resource evaluation shows there are some daunting tasks ahead (see page 4). But some findings were a bit surprising and revealed hope for the future. Less than 5 percent of the land assessed was classified as severely burned and about 22 percent was moderately burned. The balance, about 75 percent, was classified as low, very low, unburned, water, or unknown.

"The whole idea is to rehabilitate those lands unlikely to recover naturally. We want to restore and establish healthy ecosystems in the burned area," said team leader Erv Gasser.

Emergency stabilization objectives are to:

—locate and stabilize severely burned conditions that pose a direct threat to human life, property, or critically important cultural and natural resources

—recommend post-fire emergency stabilization actions that prevent irreversible loss of natural and cultural resources,

—conduct immediate post-burn reconnaissance for fire suppression-related impacts to threatened and

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Fire acreage by land ownership assessed

	acres (in millions)	percent
BLM	1.863	38.8
State	1.578	32.8
FWS	.770	16.0
Native	.565	11.7
Native allotments	.005	

Preliminary team findings by resource

(read the entire report at www.ak.blm.gov)

(top) **Black spruce blowdown has little potential for salvage.**

(below) **Moose take advantage of new vegetation.**

Forestry
Interior spruce forests are characterized by shallow root systems and thin soils. Burned trees can remain standing after a fire only to fall later as wind and erosion takes a toll. Even green trees can be affected and become a hazard. While the obvious trees blocking access routes are cleared quickly, winds can unexpectedly topple seemingly healthy trees in exposed areas.

Some trees killed by the fires can be salvaged, particularly white spruce and hardwoods. Most of these trees are on state-managed lands. Harvest must occur in the first season following the fire to get any timber suitable for dimensional lumber and house logs; after that, sap rot and insects diminish the value of the trees. Some salvage operations would likely be done in winter when the ground is frozen to minimize damage to permafrost. Insects such as bark beetles will increase in downed timber unless it is removed.

Subsistence
A major impact on subsistence is the displacement of caribou herds. Some herds will undoubtedly have to relocate until browse returns, forcing villagers to travel farther to hunt them. Both harvest levels and harvest areas will change in some locations. Access routes are blocked in areas and will need to be cleared of snags and other hazards. Winter caribou habitat could change for decades in areas where lichens were totally destroyed; this key, slow-growing but highly-flammable species could take 50 years or more to return to productive caribou habitat.

Some people are also concerned that erosion could affect salmon habitat in important tributary streams of the Yukon River; any reduced commercial or subsistence harvest could affect villages for a number of years.

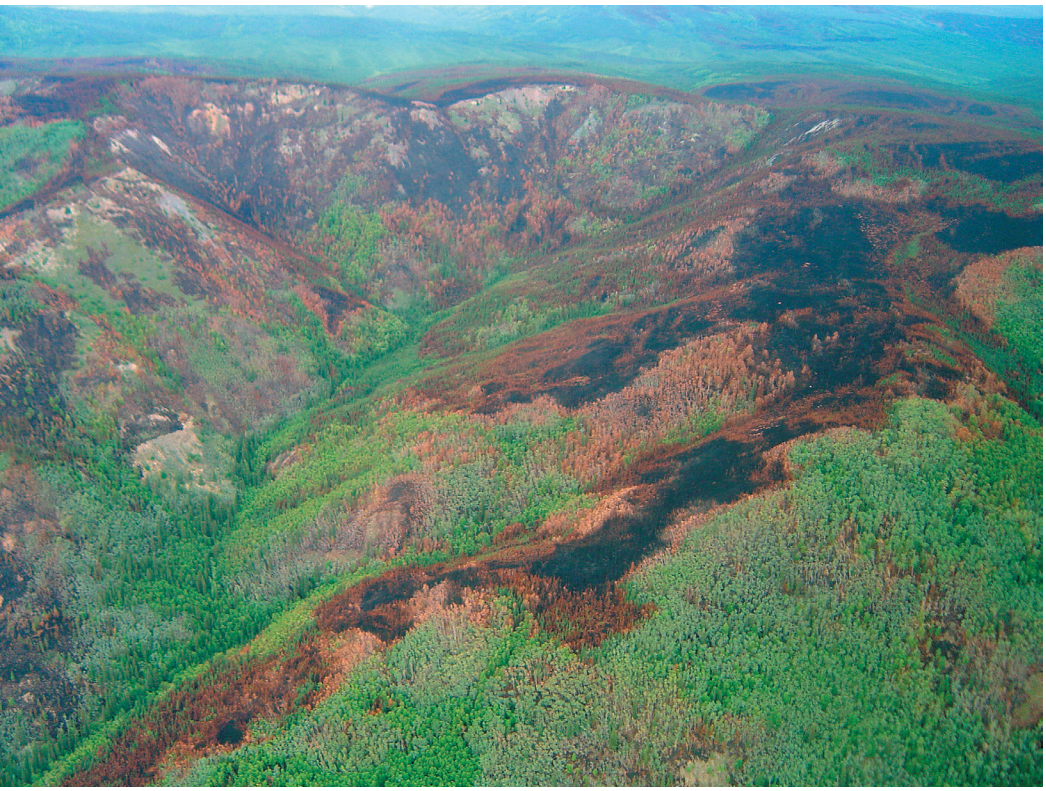
Soil and Water
Loss of tree cover could affect sediment loads in streams and then affect highways, particularly if culverts are clogged with debris, impounding water. Debris such as large trees can wrap around bridge abutments, stressing the structure, or actually block the entire highway if there is a landslide. Bolgen Creek had lots of debris with water crossing the highway.

Cultural resources
The support structures of the water pipe at the historic Davidson Ditch on the Steese Highway were partially burned and possibly weakened. More than 100 historic and prehistoric sites are known to exist in burned areas, some of which are now exposed to erosion.

Trails
More than 150 miles of primarily winter trails will need to have obstructions removed.

Vegetation
Noxious and invasive plant species often colonize disturbed soils, particularly along dozer line and roads. These will need to be controlled.

Wildlife
Small mammals such as voles benefit and flourish in early seral (vegetation) stages; predators such as hawks, owls, fox and marten will follow. Moose generally benefit from fires because the plants, shrubs and saplings on which moose feed increase following the fire. In “low burn” areas, willows, aspen and birch quickly grow new shoots.



Aftershocks,

continued from page 3

endangered species and cultural sites,

—document relative effectiveness of the stabilization treatments and determine whether additional treatments are necessary.

"About $4.6 million of federal funding has been planned to cover projects for the next three years. Approximately $1.8 million will be available this fiscal year," said Dave Howell, BLM's acting Branch Chief for Resources and Planning. There are conditions. Emergency stabilization treatments must be installed within one year and monitoring and maintenance can continue for an additional two years. Funds are not directly approved for use on State or private lands.

This May the team will evaluate the remaining acres that were not surveyed in the fall. It will also seek additional comments from state and federal agencies, Native corporations and from the public at meetings to be held throughout the state.

BLM expects to name a project implementation leader and assemble a separate, smaller core team of resource specialists in the spring to award and monitor contracts for those projects selected for funding.

Burn severity for acres assessed to date*

	acres	percent
High	215,872	4.5
Moderate	1,040,114	21.7
Low	847,460	17.7
Very low or unburned	780,390	16.3
No imagery or water	1,912,975	39.9

*the balance of the burned acres will be surveyed next spring

(above left) **Although more than 6 million acres of Alaska were considered burned this summer, a closer look at the patterns of fire behavior shows that fires create a mosaic pattern on the ground. Only 4 percent of the acres surveyed to date have been classified as highly burned.** (below) **A firefighter constructing a line hits permafrost. Firelines were quickly covered to avoid exposing the permafrost to the sun as the subsequent melting could accelerate erosion.**

BLM commemorates Tlingit and Russian history

Donna Redding

In 1799 Alekandr Baranov settled an area seven miles north of Novoarkangelsk (New Archangel, present-day Sitka). The Russians constructed a stockade and eventually built three Russian blockhouses to protect the settlement following the battles of Sitka in 1802 and 1804. The Tlingits abandoned the site after the battles but returned in the mid-1820s. Today, BLM manages the land that one of the Russian blockhouses occupied.

In September, BLM employees installed four interpretive panels highlighting the rich Russian and Tlingit history. Two panels interpreting the blockhouse are on BLM land; the other two panels (one highlighting the church built into the stockade and one highlighting Orthodox Priest St. Yakov) are located nearby on Orthodox church land.

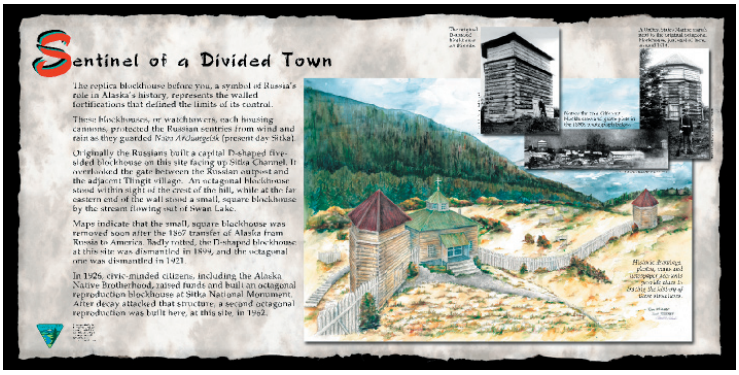
The blockhouse is a replica representing the historic Russian military stockade and its system of watch towers. The site looks down onto the old Tlingit community along Katlian Street and on the other side looks down upon the site of the old Russian barracks and parade ground that is now occupied by the Alaska Pioneers Home.

During the project, the BLM worked with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, St. Michael's Orthodox Church, and the City and Borough of Sitka.

The BLM has duplicates of the four interpretive panels and will display them in Anchorage at a time and place to be announced.

—Donna Gindle

Donna Redding



(above) **The new interpretive site and its scenic Sitka setting.** (right, center) **Gene Ervine and Ken Higgins put the final touches on an interpretive panel** (right).

Perseverance Pays Off

Joe Labay

Three generations of Solomon residents received final land patents on Oct. 16, 2004. Solomon elders Garfield and Franklin Okitkon (front row)**; RoseAnn Timbers** (second row)**, President of Solomon Native Corporation, and Solomon board members; Matt Ganley** (top right)**, land manager at BSNC; and BLM's Tom Sparks and Ramona Chinn.**

The Alaska land transfer program achieved another milestone in October when BLM presented Solomon Native Corporation with final land patents.

Solomon is a small village with a rich mining history near Nome. It's the first of 17 village corporations in the Bering Straits region to receive its full entitlement of lands under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Solomon Native Corporation received 67,243 acres, or about 1,800 acres for each of Solomon's original 37 shareholders.

Tom Sparks is BLM's lone employee in Nome, 30 miles west of Solomon. Sparks is former vice president of land and resources for Bering Straits Native Corporation, so he's keenly aware of what it means to villages to receive that final patent:

"For Solomon, it's the culmination of a generation of work. It means they can get on with long-range objectives, like developing an economic plan for the area."

One facet of that plan may include ecotourism, since birding enthusiasts flock to the area each spring to catch a glimpse of Bluethroats, a type of Asian thrush. According to BLM biologist Bruce Seppi, the Nome area is a great place to spot Bluethroats during their annual spring migration from Siberia.

Before a village corporation can focus on long-range plans such as ecotourism, it must first get final patent for its lands. About a decade ago, BLM, Bering Straits Native Corporation and the region's village corporations developed a plan to work toward full entitlement under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. During that time, Sparks worked closely with longtime BLM land transfer and survey specialists Joe Labay and Craig Frichtl to help village corporations prioritize their remaining entitlements. Those efforts are now bearing fruit as BLM moves closer to presenting more and more village corporations with final patent documents.

Oct. 16, 2004, marked that milestone for Solomon Native Corporation. On that day, BLM presented Solomon with certified copies of all land patents issued to the village over a 20-year period and laminated maps of Solomon's land base. The package also included a data CD with digital GIS (geographic information systems) maps that will assist Solomon and Bering Straits Native Corporation with future land use decisions.

"Over the years, a lot of work has gone into getting villages like Solomon closer to full entitlement," said Sparks. "It's good to see that work paying off now."

BLM hopes to present final patents to four more village corporations in the Bering Straits region in 2005 in an accelerated effort designed to complete the land transfer program by 2009.

— Teresa McPherson

Meet Tom Sparks

Some BLM employees work in large offices surrounded by co-workers. Tom Sparks isn't one of them.

Sparks is the lone public servant at one of BLM's smallest offices in the country. He's been with BLM about one year, but has lived and worked in the Bering Straits region for nearly 25 years. He now staffs BLM's Nome Field Station, located on Front Street in Nome. His actual title is natural resources program coordinator and, in federal jargon, that means he does just about whatever is necessary to help BLM's customers in the Bering Straits region. He works with ANCSA village corporations on conveyance issues, handles special recreation permits for the area, and manages a campground at Salmon Lake 40 miles north of Nome.

If you need help with BLM issues in his neck of the woods, give Sparks a call at 907-443-2177, or you can reach him at Tom_Sparks@ak.blm.gov.

Resource management plans underway statewide

BLM-Alaska has never been busier, updating its resource management plans in all corners of the state. Here is the status on major plans and an advance look at what is coming up next. For recent developments and plan updates, check BLM-Alaska's website, www.ak.blm.gov. Some plans have specific, active websites.

National Petroleum Reserve

Assistant Secretary Rebecca Watson signed the Record of Decision for the Alpine Satellites Development Plan in October. The plan, along with other permits from state and federal agencies, will help pave the way for ConocoPhillips to develop five new oil production well pads and associated transportation systems to connect with the Alpine Production Facility near Nuiqsut. To date, the remaining permit(s) have not been issued and the company has yet to make a final decision to proceed. However, BLM's role in the process is complete for this phase.

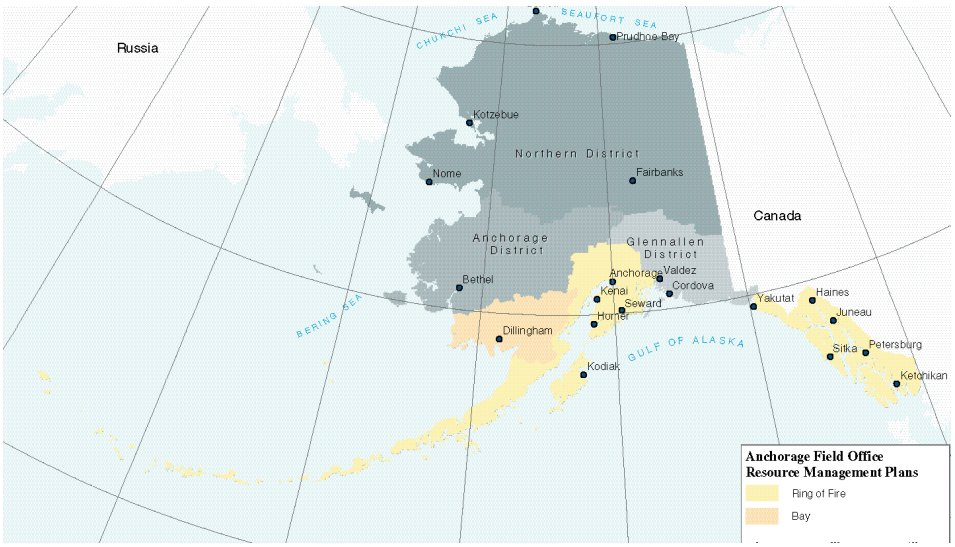
BLM is putting the final touches on its recommended course of action for the Northeast NPR-A Plan Amendment. More than 200,000 comments were received on the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) which outlined several courses of action that could amend the existing 1998 plan for 4.5 million acres including Teshekpuk Lake, allowing some additional resource development under various terms and conditions. BLM is consulting with other federal and state agencies and the and local government in the North Slope Borough. The final EIS is currently expected to be released in late January, 2005. Monitor progress at http://nenpra.ensr.com

The Bay

BLM expects to publish a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register in the near future to announce the start of resource planning for 3.6 million acres of BLM-administered land in southwestern Alaska near Bristol Bay and Goodnews Bay. Following this announcement, the public will have 90 days to help BLM identify issues needing analysis in thie plan. A complete list of public meetings will be announced as soon as possible. A project website can be reached through www.anchorage.ak.blm.gov.

White Mountains

The Northern Field Office will soon publish a Notice of Intent to prepare a plan amendment for the 1986 White Mountains National Recreation Area Resource Management Plan. The lands affected include about 1 million acres 60 miles north of Fairbanks. The plan will focus on off-highway vehicles, trail use, fire management and other issues.



Copper River Valley

The Glennallen Field Office is in the final stages of preparing alternatives for the East Alaska Resource Management Plan (EARMP). These alternatives will be analyzed in a draft environmental impact statement (EIS), scheduled to be released by the end of January, 2005 with a 90-day comment period to follow. The draft EIS was originally scheduled for release in late December, 2004, but has been extended one month to provide additional review and consultation with local Alaska Native corporations, the State of Alaska, and other stakeholders.

Special efforts have been made to obtain information on areas of cultural and historical concern to village and tribal members who live in areas affected by the plan. Dena'Inaq' Titaztunt was contracted to gather information that will allow BLM to consult on local Alaska Native issues in the EARMP and in future projects.

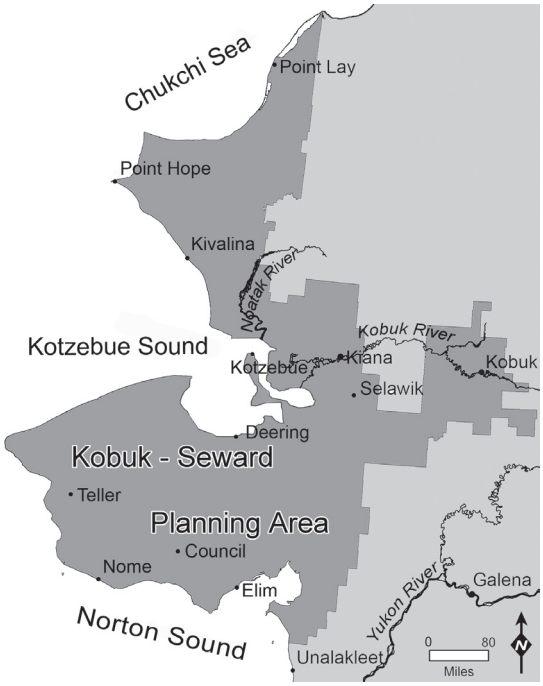
Consultations continue to improve communication between BLM and Alaska Native villages and corporations. This has generated opportunities for future shared efforts which may include mapping collaboration, archaeological research partnerships and resource monitoring cooperation.

The final EIS and resource management plan are scheduled for completion by next fall. For more information, visit the project website: www.glennallen.ak.blm.gov.

Northwest Al;aska

The Kobuk-Seward Resource Management Plan will cover 13 million acres of BLM-managed public lands on the Seward Peninsula, Nulato Hills and the Squirrel and Kobuk valleys. Currently, all but 5 million acres are either State or Native selected.

Public scoping meetings identified five primary issues for the plan to address including subsistence, management of the Western Arctic caribou herd habitat and migration routes, access,



and mineral withdrawals. The team is drafting management options to be analyzed in the draft EIS that is scheduled to be released for public comment in the fall of 2005.

For more information, check the project website at http://aurora.ak. blm.gov.

Ring of Fire

Anchorage Field Office is writing the Ring of Fire Resource Management Plan to cover 1.3 million acres of BLM-managed public lands scattered in a vast area stretching from the Aleutian Islands to Southeast. Issues identified by the planning team or by the public at scoping meetings held in the fall include: wild and scenic river designations, land ownership changes, off-highway vehicle use, recreation, wildfire and fuel management, and several minerals issues. The draft plan is expected bo be published in March, 2005. Monitor the team website at: www.alaskaringoffire.com.

Pipeline office gets international attention from far, far away

Rhea DoBosh

Two of Mongollia's highest officials recently visited the Joint Pipeline Office, Second Secretary Sukhbaatah Altantsetseg (left) **and Ambassador Ravdan Bold** (center)**.**

Ask any Alaskan how our state is like Mongolia and you will probably get a blank look. But a recent visit by the Mongollian Ambassador to the US, his excellency Ravdan Bold, gave staff at the Joint Pipeline Office (JPO) not only a lesson in geography, but also a chance to show their stuff.

The Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs hosted the ambassador's two-day visit to Alaska so he could meet with state officials and community leaders. JPO apparently now has an international reputation. While in Anchorage, the ambassador specifically requested a visit to the JPO.

JPO staff briefed Ambassador Bold, along with his assistant, Second Secretary Sukhbaatah Altantsetseg, on the processes used to issue rights-of-way and permits, environmental protection, pipeline operations, and oversight. The Mongolian visitors were particularly interested in what JPO could tell them about seismic studies, pipeline design, and measures taken to protect infrasturcture during earthquakes.

The exchange was mutually beneficial and JPO staff learned that there are a number of similarities between Mongolia and Alaska including climate, terrain, natural resources, and earthquake hazards.

Mongolia has oil, gas, and mineral resources as well as a pro-development political environment heavily dependent on international investment. This young democracy is caught between a once predominate nomadic culture, which had no need for infrastructure, and an increasing urban drift. Like Alaska, there are very few roads, the population is sparse, the climate is harsh, and there is one large dominant city. "Mongolia is land-locked and snuggled between Russia and China. They are currently developing what could be one of the largest copper and gold finds in the world in a remote region of the Gobi Desert," said Nolan Heath, JPO's deputy authorized officer.

The Ambassador and Second Secretary also toured the JPO Records Section. Records, record location, and document retention are challenging for many offices and/or countries. The Ambassador was very interested in the JPO map room and records system, both hard and electronic copies. "While Mongolian legislation related to petroleum operations now comprises just one small handbook, they recognize the importance of establishing a records system for the future," said Heath.

—Rhea DoBosh

FRONTIER FLASHES

late breaking news from around Alaska

Biofuels one step closer

BLM-Alaska has become one of several partners cooperating in a statewide agreement exploring the development of biofuels projects in Alaska. BLM, along with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, the State of Alaska and the University of Alaska, will help assess grant proposals submitted to the Alaska Energy Authority to promote the use of biomass wood products (such as logging slash and wood chips) for fuel.

More recordable disclaimers

On Nov. 9, BLM Alaska State Director signed two Recordable Disclaimers of Interest for Klutina River and Lake as well as disclaimers for Kvichak River and Iliamna Lake.

Fish hatchery lease

The Glennallen Field Office is proposing to issue a 20-year renewable lease to the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game for a fish hatchery on public lands. The hatchery would enhance king salmon stocks in the Copper River watershed.

Alaskans help hurricane victim

The Alaska Type 1 Interagency Incident management Team mobilized in September to assist the State of Alabama in the aftermath of Hurrican Ivan. The team assisted the logistics and planning sections of the Alabama Emergency Operations Center and coordinated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The team also provided liaisons between the impacted counties in southern Alabama and the respective Local Emergency Management Coordinators to provide tracking of key supplies such as water, ice, meals, tarps and generators.

Timber salvage planned along Egerton Highway

BLM's Glennallen Field Office awarded a contract to locally-owned Regal Enterprises for timber salvage along the Tonsina River bluff near MP 12, Edgerton Highway. The 101-acre salvage targets a dense population of dead and dying white spruce and will provide approximately 106,000 board feet of sawlogs and about 154 cords of fuel wood. "The salvage serves four purposes, all of equal importance," explained BLM natural resource specialist Travis Calderwood. "These include improving forest health, improving wildlife habitat (specifically moose browse), salvaging dead and dying timber for community use, and reducing the current and future fuel load of white spruce," said Calderwood. A 300-foot buffer will be kept along the Tonsina River Trail. The salvage must meet BLM's requirements such as frozen ground with 8 inches of snow cover. Work will likely begin in January. Reforestation will occur by planting willow seedlings as well as natural regeneration of willow.

Winter Trails Day Coming. If you've ever wanted to learn to skate ski or try your hand at the latest GPS adventure craze called geocaching, mark your calendar for Winter Trails Day 2005 on Saturday, Feb. 12 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage. Enjoy the day outdoors with snowshoes courtesy of REI, watch a skijoring demonstration and a championship dogsled race or even learn how to build a snowshelter. Several community partners from last winter's inaugural event (which attracted about 200 people) are teaming up with the science center again for this free day of activties for the whole family. For more information, call the center at (907) 267-1247.

Agencies brief public on fire season, policies

This fall, the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG), a group of state, federal and Native land managers, sponsored a series of public meetings throughout Alaska following the record setting 2004 fire season. Meetings were held in Two Rivers, Central, Fairbanks, Venetie, Delta Junction, Eagle, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Northway, Tok, Anchorage, and Chatanika. Representatives from the state, federal and Native organizations presented a short program on the 2004 fire season and the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan, then answered questions from the public.

Some common concerns raised at the meetings included the lack of timely public information early in the fire season, smoke issues, incident management team performance and rotation, rehabilitation of trails that were damaged by the fire or the suppression actions, the state's structure protection policy and the Bureau of Land Management's mining claim permit stipulations. These concerns will be taken under advisement by the land managers and may result in the review of agency policies and procedures and potential changes.

Comments were taken at the meetings and will be accepted by mail. To obtain a comment card, contact the Alaska Fire Service at 907-356-5500 or the Alaska Department of Natural Resources at 907-451-2660. Public comments will be posted on the Department of Natural Resources and the Alaska Fire Service websites. A written report outlining the common concerns and issues and what the agencies plan on doing to address them will also be prepared and should be available on the websites by February 2004. Other communities that would like to host a public meeting on this topic should contact their local state, federal, or Native organization fire management office to schedule one.

OUR FEATURED WEBSITE

Minerals data bibliography now on-line

The Minerals Data and Information Rescue in Alaska (MDIRA) project has an interagency bibliography of minerals-related publications now available on the internet at: http://www.bib.akgeology.info/

This bibliography provides citations to publications issued by the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys, BLM, U. S. Geological Survey, USDA Forest Service, and the U.S. Bureau of Mines.

The goal of the MDIRA is to recover and make easily available the full body of Alaska mineral information through a coordinated system that provides efficient access or indices to all minerals-related files, documents and physical samples held in the public domain. This includes geologic data now out of print as well as data collections from agency and private-sector geologists that were never published, geophysical data, state and federal mining claim information, geochemical data sets, and academic dissertations on Alaska geology that exist in the obscurity of university libraries across the nation.

Frontier People

Julia Dougan is the new BLM-Alaska Associate State Director. Her 25-year career spans line management positions in Colorado, California and Oregon. In early February Dougan will transfer from her current position as district manager at BLM's Eugene (Oregon) District Office.

Lenore Heppler, recreation planner at the Northern Field Office in Fairbanks, received national recognition for her efforts to develop the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot. She received the BLM's Excellence in Interpretation and Environmental Education Award at the annual meeting of the National Association of Interpretive Naturalists.

Campbell Tract "spruced up"

An aspen regeneration project on the Campbell Tract in Anchorage will reestablish aspen trees by thinning overmature and dying stands, transplanting spruce trees to revegetate and visually screen old taxiways, and removing approximately 400 trees of dead spruce. Removing dead, beetle-killed spruce will reduce the potential hazard for falling trees, insect infestation and wildfire. Dead spruce trees are being cut and removed by a contractor and about 50 cords of firewood are expected to be sold to help recover the cost of the other treatments.

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