



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



PUBLIC NOTICE

February 6, 2006

The Refuge Manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge invites public comment on a compatibility determination for the proposed expansion and resurfacing of the airport runway at Atka, Alaska. In this compatibility determination the refuge manager will evaluate how the proposed project and associated operating impacts would affect adjacent refuge lands, located approximately four miles from the runway. The characteristics of the project are defined in the (Draft) Atka Airport Runway Extension and Resurfacing Project Environmental Assessment; Project No. 55291. The airport expansion project would affect approximately 14.5 acres of wetlands in the vicinity of the airport. Mitigation is proposed to offset these impacts. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2007 and continue into 2008. For more information about the report or the project, contact Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Project Manager, Don Baxter at 907 269-0590.

In 1971, Congress enacted ANCSA to settle aboriginal land claims of Alaska's Natives by providing land and money in exchange for extinguishment of their land claims. Section 22(g) of the Act made National Wildlife Refuge lands available for selection by Native Village Corporations, but it also contained a provision that "...such lands remain subject to the laws and regulations governing use and development of such Refuge." This means that the refuge laws and regulations requiring that we determine the compatibility of proposed refuge uses applies to the village lands in national wildlife refuges in Alaska withdrawn under Section 22(g) of ANCSA. These lands were deeded to Alaska Native Corporations with specific restrictions, called covenants, on their sale and use. On 22(g) lands refuge managers focus their compatibility determination on how the impacts of the proposed use would affect adjacent refuge lands and the degree that the proposed use would materially interfere with the refuge's ability to achieve its legally mandated purposes. This is the fundamental protection provided to the parent refuges from the effects of uses of lands that Congress provided in Section 22(g) of ANCSA.

We invite the public to provide relevant information and express their views on whether or not this project will materially interfere with or detract from the refuge's ability to meet its mandated purposes. Refuge purposes include: conserving fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity; fulfilling international treaty obligations with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats; providing for continued subsistence uses by local residents; providing a program of national and international scientific research on marine resources; and ensuring water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge. The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act requires the Refuge Manager to determine whether any proposed or existing public use will "materially interfere with or detract from" the refuge's conservation mandates before it is permitted or allowed to continue. All compatibility determinations must be made in writing and follow uniform procedures that include providing notice to the public and inviting comment on pending determinations.

Comments must be received by February 22, 2006 to be considered. Comments may be mailed to: Refuge Manager, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, 95 Sterling Highway, Suite 1, Homer, AK 99603; or by fax to (907) 235-7783 (attention refuge manager); or by email to alaskamaritime@fws.gov. To find out the results of the compatibility determination, or obtain a copy, contact the refuge manager after February 28, 2006. For additional information on the compatibility determination process please contact the Refuge at the above address or call (907) 235-6546.

