



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
101 12th Avenue, Room 236
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701-6237



PUBLIC NOTICE

March 23, 2009

This notice invites the public to review and comment on the affects of proposed use of Kaktovik Inupiat Corporation lands on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge manager is preparing a compatibility determination for proposed activities associated with the Barter Island Airport Improvement project in Kaktovik, Alaska. In this compatibility determination the refuge manager will evaluate how this project will affect adjacent refuge lands, located less than two miles from the site of the proposed use.

What is the use? The use, as described by the applicant, would be, “A tracked drill rig will be mobilized to the mainland across the lagoon from Barter Island for the purpose of taking soil samples from nineteen locations.” The nineteen proposed borings will be approximately 45-feet in depth. Eleven borings are proposed near the existing material site and eight borings in an area approximately 3,000 feet west of the existing material site. If sufficient sources of gravel are located in this area, the extraction and transport of approximately 873,000 cubic yards to Barter Island would occur. This compatibility determination does not review the extraction and transport of gravel or site rehabilitation upon completion.

Where would the use occur? The proposed use would occur on 22(g) lands approximately four miles south of Kaktovik in and adjacent to an area where 14 borings have been drilled and gravel removed in the past. The proposed site is less than two miles north and within 1,000 feet of coastal shoreline and submerged lands under jurisdiction of the refuge. The transport of the drill rig over coastal shoreline and submerged lands under jurisdiction of the refuge is considered compatible by a determination made in 1994.

When would the use occur? The Borough’s request, dated 16 March 2009, seeks to start the core sampling on 23 March 2009 and conclude by 15 April 2009.

How would the use be conducted? A Geoprobe 66DT, tracked, drill rig would travel approximately four miles over land and sea ice from Kaktovik to the site to take the soil samples. The rig weighs approximately 5,000 pounds and is 48-inches wide and 94-inches long. Deep snow may necessitate some snow removal prior to drill rig mobilization across snow-covered, frozen tundra. The Geoprobe is a direct-push machine that utilizes static weight and percussion to advance a hollow, soil-coring rod. Continuous, undisturbed core samples will be collected in five-foot runs for the entire depth of the bore holes. Bore hole locations will be mapped using GIS.

Why is the use proposed? The North Slope Borough and the Federal Aviation Administration have released a *Final Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) Evaluation for Barter Island Airport Improvements – Kaktovik, Alaska*. This document describes the project, including the proposed use covered by the compatibility determination. To facilitate the airport improvement, the Borough has requested approval to conduct a “geotechnical investigation associated with the Barter Island Airport Improvements.”

Public comments must be in writing and received at the refuge headquarters by 6 April 2009 to be considered. Both U.S. Mail and e-mail comments will be accepted. The final compatibility determination on this use should be available 10 April 2009. Copies can be obtained from the refuge manager. Anyone providing comments will be notified of the final compatibility determination and provided a copy of the final compatibility determination. Because the project occurs on lands that have been conveyed to the Kaktovik Inupiat Corporation with patent restrictions imposed by Section 22(g) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA), a refuge compatibility determination is required. This determination will only evaluate the effects of the project on the adjacent refuge lands and focus on how the project would effect the ability of the refuge to achieve its purposes.

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 refuge’s ability to meet its mandated purposes. Refuge purposes include: preserving unique wildlife, wilderness and recreation values; 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 the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; 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. These lands were once refuge lands that were deeded to Alaska Native Village Corporations under the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Section 22(g) with specific restrictions, called covenants, on their use “...such lands remain subject to the laws and regulations governing use and development of such Refuge.” When making compatibility determinations on 22(g) lands refuge managers focus 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 22(g) lands that Congress provided in Section 22(g) of ANCSA.

For more information or to provide comments by 6 April 2009, 1) write to the address above; 2) call 907-456-0250 or 3) write to arctic_refuge@fws.gov.