

**Draft Revised
Comprehensive
Conservation Plan and
Environmental Assessment**

*Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
and Hagemeister Island*

1. Introduction

This document is the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and the Draft Revised Public Use Management Plan for the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. It also includes the Draft Environmental Assessment for those plans. For the purposes of these plans, the Togiak Refuge includes both the 4.7-million acre Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and the 73,860 acre Hagemeister Island portion of Alaska Maritime Refuge, located in southwestern Alaska. This document represents the combined effort and input of the State of Alaska, local residents, the general public, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) staff.

This document is divided into two main sections: the Comprehensive Conservation Plan Revision and the Public Use Management Plan Revision. The Affected Environment (Chapter 3) applies to both plans. The Comprehensive Conservation Plan Revision provides management direction for the refuge as a whole, including goals and objectives and management guidelines. The Public Use Management Plan Revision deals with specific issues of public use on the major river systems and at Cape Peirce.

Chapter 1 of this Plan describes the purpose for the Comprehensive Plan revision, various mandates considered in its writing, and how the process was carried out. Chapter 2 describes the alternative courses of action for future overall management of the Refuge, including the preferred management alternative.

Chapter 3 describes the physical characteristics of the Refuge, its fish, wildlife, wilderness, cultural and archaeological resources, the local economy and its relationship to the Refuge, the public use and recreation on the Refuge, and how these resources and their uses have changed since 1985.

Chapter 4 describes how each of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan alternatives is anticipated to affect the environment if it is implemented. Chapter 5 provides a summary evaluation of the alternatives proposed in this Plan.

Chapter 6 describes how the Comprehensive Plan and the preferred alternative will be implemented.

Following the Comprehensive Conservation Plan Revision, the reader will find the Public Use Management Plan, as well as a number of appendices that provide additional information on the refuge and this planning effort.

1.1 Purpose and Need

The 1987 Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Togiak Refuge and the 1988 Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Alaska Maritime Refuge provide broad policy guidance for Service management of the Refuge. Those plans are dynamic documents that must be reviewed and updated periodically.

In 1980, the Refuge was established under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). Part 304(g)(1) of ANILCA requires that a comprehensive conservation plan be prepared and, from time to time, revised. The purpose of this CCP is to help the Refuge achieve its purposes; help fulfill the National Wildlife Refuge System mission; and establish goals and objectives that will help maintain and, where appropriate, restore the biological integrity, diversity, and the environmental health of the Refuge.

In general, a Comprehensive Conservation Plan serves to do the following:

- Ensure the purposes of the Refuge and the Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System are being fulfilled
- Ensure that national policy direction is incorporated into the management of the Refuge
- Ensure that opportunities are available for interested parties to participate in the development of management direction
- Provide a systematic process for making and documenting decisions affecting the Refuge
- Establish broad management strategies for refuge management programs and activities
- Provide continuity in the management of the Refuge
- Provide a basis for budget requests
- Provide a basis for evaluating accomplishments

In 1987, a record of decision was issued based upon the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Togiak Refuge. The record of decision for the Alaska Maritime Refuge was signed in 1988. Since the implementation of the original Plan, studies have been completed, data have been collected, wildlife populations have changed, and public use of the Refuge has changed. Because these plans were written more than 10 years ago and because of the numerous changes on the Togiak Refuge, it was decided that a revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan be written.

This document represents a combination of a revision of the 1987 Togiak Refuge Conservation Plan and that portion of the 1988 Alaska Maritime Comprehensive Conservation Plan

affecting Hagemeister Island. This Plan will provide management direction for Hagemeister Island, which remains part of Alaska Maritime Refuge but is administered by the Togiak Refuge. Unless otherwise stated, management direction in this Plan applies to both the Togiak Refuge and Hagemeister Island. This document will serve as a management plan for the Refuge for the next 15 years or until a significant action or event occurs that would require the Plan be revised. This document should not be considered an unchangeable plan. Instead, it will be modified as changes occur, and other more specific plans will be written to address specific resources and uses of the Refuge.

This document includes an Environmental Assessment of the Togiak Refuge Comprehensive Plan.

1.2 Planning Context

The Refuge is part of a great assemblage of refuges across the nation. The management of the Refuge reflects the National Wildlife Refuge System (System) mission and direction provided for managing the System. The revised Plan for the Refuge will reflect how meeting the purposes of the Refuge contributes to meeting the overall System mission and goals.

1.2.1 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System comprises more than 93.8 million acres of Federal lands that are incorporated within more than 540 refuges, 3,000 waterfowl production areas, and 50 coordination areas located in all 50 states and the territories of the United States. The System was created to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitat, while at the same time providing opportunities for Americans to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.

There are 16 national wildlife refuges in Alaska (see Figure 1-1). They are made up of a wide range of habitats with varied terrain that includes mountains, glaciers, tundra, grasslands, wetlands, lakes, woodlands, and rivers. Together, the 16 refuges span nearly 83 million acres and make up more than 82 percent of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

1.2.1.1 Service and System Missions

Certain basic principles are fundamental to the management of national wildlife refuges. The missions of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System are the cornerstones of these principles.

1.2.1.2 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mission

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

1.2.1.3 National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

1.2.2 Principles of Refuge Management

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended, states that each refuge shall be managed to fulfill both the mission of the Refuge System and the purposes for which the individual refuge was established. It also requires that any use of a refuge be compatible with refuge purposes. Therefore, any use of a refuge will not materially interfere with nor detract from fulfillment of the mission of the System or the purposes of the refuge.

The 1997 amendments to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act identified a number of principles to guide management of the Refuge System. They include the following:

- Conserve fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the System
- Maintain the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the System
- Coordinate, interact, and cooperate with adjacent landowners and state fish and wildlife agencies
- Maintain adequate water quantity and water quality to meet refuge and System purposes and acquire necessary water rights
- Maintain hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, interpretation, and environmental education as the priority general public uses of the System
- Provide opportunities for compatible priority wildlife-dependant public uses within the System



Figure 1-1. National wildlife refuges in Alaska

- Provide enhanced consideration for priority wildlife-dependant public uses over other general public uses in planning and management
- Provide increased opportunities for families to experience priority general public uses, especially traditional outdoor activities such as fishing and hunting
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge

In order to maintain the health of individual refuges and the National Wildlife Refuge System as a whole, managers must anticipate future conditions. Managers must endeavor to avoid adverse impacts and take positive actions to conserve and protect refuge resources. National wildlife refuges exist within larger ecological systems and land-ownership patterns. Effective management depends on acknowledging these larger systems and resource relationships. Refuge managers will work together with partners—including other refuges, Federal and state agencies, tribal and other governments, Native organizations and entities, and nongovernmental organizations and groups—to protect, conserve, enhance, or restore all native fish, wildlife (including invertebrates), plants, and their habitats whenever possible.

1.3 Refuge Establishment

Prior to 1969, the area that is now the Togiak Refuge was part of the public domain. On January 20, 1969, the Secretary of the Interior issued Public Land Order (PLO) 4583, withdrawing approximately 249,022 acres to establish Cape Newenham National Wildlife Refuge. With this order, the Service assumed its first refuge management responsibilities in the area: to protect and preserve Cape Newenham’s outstanding wildlife values, including bird colonies and important habitat for other terrestrial and marine wildlife.

The area that was combined with the Cape Newenham National Wildlife Refuge to form the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge was first withdrawn by PLO 5179, signed March 9, 1972 (Section 17(d)(2) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). In addition, PLO 5180, signed March 9, 1972 (Section 17(d)(1) of ANCSA), withdrew additional land “for study to determine the proper classification of lands under section 17(d)(1) of ANCSA.”

On November 16, 1978, PLO 5653 withdrew approximately 110 million acres of land from the public domain, in an Emergency Withdrawal (Section 204(e) Federal Land Policy and

Management Act (FLPMA) (90 Stat. 2743, 2753), “to protect resource values that would otherwise be lost.” PLO 5653 was amended one day later (November 17, 1978) with clarification language in PLO 5654, which included legal descriptions of land withdrawn. Two years later, on February 11, 1980, PLO 5703 established the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge under Section 204(c) of FLPMA; thus, the area became part of the National Wildlife Refuge System under the management by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In December 1980, Congress enacted the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA; 94 Stat. 2371). Among other things, this act rescinded PLO 5703 and redesignated the withdrawn lands as part of the Togiak Refuge. It also incorporated Cape Newenham Refuge as a unit of the Togiak Refuge and designated 2,381,095 acres of the refuge as Wilderness. Section 303(1) of ANILCA created the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge by redesignating 11 pre-existing refuges as units of the new refuge and adding other public lands on islands (including Hagemeister Island), islets, rocks, reefs, spires, and designated capes and headlands in the coastal areas and adjacent seas of Alaska. Today, the Togiak and Alaska Maritime refuges are two of 16 national wildlife refuges in Alaska. Management of Hagemeister Island has been transferred administratively to the Togiak Refuge, which shares similar resources.

This plan applies to the Togiak Refuge and Hagemeister Island of the Alaska Maritime Refuge. In this document, the two units will be referred to as Togiak Refuge or the Refuge. Management direction discussed in this plan will be applied only to lands under the jurisdiction of the Service within the boundaries of Togiak Refuge and Hagemeister Island.

1.4 Legal and Policy Guidance and State Coordination

Management of the Refuge is dictated, in large part, by the legislation that created the unit and by the purposes and goals described later in this chapter. However, other laws, regulations, policies, and agreements with the State of Alaska also guide the management of the Refuge. This section identifies the acts and policy guidance that are integral in the development of this Plan.

1.4.1 Legal Guidance

Operation and management of the Refuge is influenced by a wide array of laws, treaties, and executive orders. Among the most important are the National Wildlife Refuge System

Administration Act, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, the Refuge Recreation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Wilderness Act. These acts are described briefly in Appendix A along with other acts and legal guidance that influence management of the Refuge. For the national wildlife refuges in Alaska, ANILCA, as amended, provides key management direction. ANILCA sets forth the purposes for the Refuges; defines provisions for planning and management, and authorizes studies and programs related to wildlife and wildland resources, subsistence opportunities, and recreational and economic uses. ANILCA also provides specific direction for the management of designated Wilderness Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers in the State of Alaska beyond the direction provided in the Wilderness Act and in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. How ANILCA influences management of the Refuge is described throughout this Plan.

1.4.2 Policy Guidance

Programmatic guidance and policy documents provide additional direction for the management of national wildlife refuges throughout the System. These documents include the following:

- Fish and Wildlife Service Manual chapters
- Director's orders
- National policy issuances
- Handbooks
- Director's memoranda
- Regional directives

1.4.3 State of Alaska Coordination

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has responsibility for managing resident fish and wildlife populations in Alaska. On refuge lands, the Fish and Wildlife Service and ADF&G share the responsibility for conservation of fish and wildlife resources and their habitats, and both are engaged in extensive fish and wildlife conservation, management, and protection programs. In 1982, the Fish and Wildlife Service and ADF&G signed a Master Memorandum of Understanding that defines the cooperative management roles of each agency (see Appendix C). This memorandum sets the framework for cooperation between the two agencies.

At the direction of the Boards of Fisheries and Game, the State of Alaska establishes fishing, hunting, and trapping regulations throughout the state. These regulations apply to Federal public lands unless superseded by refuge specific regulations or Federal subsistence regulations. The state is divided into 26

game management units (GMUs); most of these are further divided into subunits. Management objectives are developed for populations within the GMUs. The Refuge overlaps with parts of GMUs 17B, 17C, 18Z, and almost all of unit 17A. Management objectives are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and its subdivisions are also key management partners. DNR manages all state-owned land, water, and surface and subsurface resources except for fish and game. The DNR Division of Mining, Land, and Water manages the state's water and land interests within and adjacent to the Refuge. Management direction for these lands and waters will be reviewed as part of this Plan and considered in the range of alternatives. State management direction is included in Appendix C.

Further discussion of coordination with the State of Alaska is included in Appendix C.

1.5 Refuge Purposes, Vision, and Goals

1.5.1 *Refuge Purposes*

That portion of the Refuge designated as the Cape Newenham National Wildlife Refuge in 1969 was given the broad purpose “. . . for the protection of wildlife and their habitat . . .” in Public Land Order 4583, dated Jan. 23, 1969. In addition, Sections 303(1)(B) and 303(6)(B) of ANILCA set forth the purposes for which Alaska Maritime and Togiak Refuge (including the former Cape Newenham Refuge) were established and shall be managed, including the following:

(i) To conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, including the following:

[Togiak Refuge] salmonids, marine birds and mammals, migratory birds, and large mammals (including their restoration to historic levels)

[Alaska Maritime Refuge] marine mammals, marine birds and other migratory birds, the marine resources upon which they rely, bears, caribou, and other mammals

(ii) To fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats

(iii) To provide, in a manner consistent with purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents

(iv) [Alaska Maritime Refuge] To provide, in a manner consistent with subparagraphs (i) and (ii), a program of national and international scientific research on marine resources

To ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity within the Refuge

[Togiak Wilderness Area] To secure an enduring resource of wilderness, to protect and preserve the wilderness character of areas within the National Wilderness Resource Preservation System, and to administer this wilderness for the use and enjoyment of the American people in a way that will leave it unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness

1.5.2 Vision Statement

The Togiak Refuge will continue to be a healthy functioning ecosystem where fish and wildlife populations and their habitats exist in an environment primarily affected by the forces of nature. Current and future generations will have opportunities to participate in a variety of fish- and wildlife-dependent activities that emphasize self-reliance, solitude, and a close relationship with the environment. The public will gain an understanding of the Refuge on natural, cultural, and scientific levels in order to appreciate the importance of its protection and preservation for future generations.

1.5.3 Refuge Goals

Goals are broad descriptive statements of desired future conditions that convey a purpose but do not define measurable units. Goals for the Refuge will direct work at carrying out its mandates and achieving the purposes defined by ANILCA and the Wilderness Act.

The Refuge developed the following goals to guide management toward meeting the vision statement and purposes of the Refuge.

Goal 1. Manage refuge habitats and wildlife to ensure the health and integrity of native ecosystems by developing a long-term ecological inventory and monitoring programs and a collaborative research program.

Goal 2. Provide quality fish and wildlife oriented recreation, subsistence, interpretive, and educational opportunities that promote stewardship of southwest Alaska wildlife and their habitats.

Goal 3. Protect the integrity of the natural process and cultural resources of the refuge.

Goal 4. Maintain the wilderness character of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Area.

Goal 5. Develop and maintain support mechanisms and infrastructure to achieve management goals.

Goal 6. Maintain a leadership role in the management of native ecosystems in southwest Alaska.

1.6 Refuge Overview

1.6.1 Physical Environment

The Togiak Refuge is located in southwest Alaska, approximately 400 air miles from Anchorage. The Refuge is bordered to the south by Bristol Bay, to the west by Kuskokwim Bay, to the north by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, and to the east by the Wood-Tikchik State Park. Of those 4.7 million acres within the boundary, about 11.36 percent is under private title or claim, leaving 4.24 million acres administered by the Service. The Ahklun Mountain Range creates the division between the Bristol Bay drainages and the Kuskokwim Bay drainages within the refuge. This range is characterized by high, steep rocky peaks, glacial valleys, and mountain lakes. Three major watersheds that dominate the refuge are drained by the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Togiak rivers. The coastal areas of the Refuge vary from sandy beaches to steep rocky cliffs. Much of the lowland tundra contains shallow lakes and ponds. (See **Error! Reference source not found.**) Areas near the Refuge hold mineral resources, including gold and platinum.

1.6.2 Biological Resources

Togiak Refuge is home to at least 283 species of wildlife, including 33 species of fish, 201 species of birds, 31 species of land mammals, 17 species of marine mammals, and 1 amphibian. The fish species of greatest importance to people are rainbow trout, Arctic char, Dolly Varden, round whitefish, northern pike, and five Pacific salmon species (Chinook, coho, chum, pink, and sockeye). Mammals include Pacific walrus, harbor seal, Steller sea lions, caribou, brown bear, moose, lynx, wolves and other furbearers. Numerous species of seabirds, shorebirds, landbirds, migratory waterfowl, and raptors are also found within the Refuge, along with the wood frog. (See Appendix F for a complete list of animal species found on the Refuge.)

More than 500 species of plants grow on the Refuge in a variety of habitats that include fresh and saltwater wetlands,

open water, meadows, mountains, tundra, and forests of spruce and cottonwood. Many plants found on the Refuge are important to the local people as sources of food and medicine. Wood used for household purposes is also a resource important to local communities.

1.6.3 Human Uses

Lands administered by the Togiak Refuge have been inhabited by Alaska Native peoples for thousands of years. Today subsistence use of the Refuge remains the most important human use. The salmon runs are the driving force for the region's ecosystem and the basis for both commercial and recreational fishing industries. More recently, the Refuge has become known around the world for outstanding angling and wildlife-viewing opportunities in a wilderness setting.

1.6.4 Special Values of the Refuge

From the 5,026-foot Mt. Waskey to the broad coastal plains of the Kanektok and Arolik rivers, the Refuge is remarkable in its diversity of terrain, scenery, and wildlife. Perhaps the most important value of the Refuge is the amount and quality of fishery habitat. There are several large river and lake systems located within the Refuge that provide spawning and rearing habitat each year for millions of salmon. This habitat is the foundation of an ecological system that includes a variety of other fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats. These salmon runs are crucial to ecological processes, local people, and to the local economy. In addition, fisheries' resources provide recreational fishing opportunities found few other places in the world.

The Togiak Wilderness Area is the second largest Wilderness Area managed by the Service, covering about half of the refuge. It consists of pristine rivers, clear mountain lakes, and steep sloped mountains. It provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. The rugged Ahklun and Wood River Mountains, partly within the Wilderness area, are noteworthy for their scenic values.

These are steep-walled mountains with sharp summits, sometimes with needle-like slate-gray pinnacles. Broad U-shaped glacial valleys separate the mountains. The Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission recognized the Ahklun Mountains/Wood-Tikchik area as one of the outstanding scenic areas of the state (Gordon and Shaine 1978). Young and Walters (1982) also proposed the Wood-Tikchik area, including the eastern part of the Togiak Wilderness, as an ecological natural landmark. This outstanding wilderness setting, coupled with world class fishing opportunities, provides a truly exceptional experience for the refuge visitor.

Cape Peirce and Cape Newenham are unique and special places within the Refuge. Because of abundant marine wildlife and migratory waterfowl, these capes, located at the southwestern tip of the Togiak Refuge (see Figure 1.2) have an important cultural role dating back thousands of years. Cape Peirce represents one of the few coastal areas in the United States where Pacific walrus consistently haul out. These areas also provide nesting habitat for some of the largest mainland-nesting seabird colonies in Alaska and continue to provide important habitat for a variety of shorebirds, waterfowl, and other wildlife.

Chagvan and Nanvak bays and their associated habitats are also special values of the Togiak Refuge. These bays provide important staging and feeding habitat for many migrating waterfowl, seabirds, shorebirds, anadromous fish, and marine mammals. The state of Alaska has designated Chagvan Bay as a State Game Refuge.

The Refuge is part of a much larger region that has its own special history. Much of the Refuge's character is defined by the Yup'ik Eskimos, Russian trappers, and later settlers whose descendants still live throughout the region and depend upon the Refuge for their livelihoods.

1.7 The Planning Process

The process used to develop this draft Plan and EIS is consistent with the planning requirements in ANILCA (Section 304[g]); the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended; the Service's planning policy (602 FW 1); National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C.4321-4347); and the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). The process being used to revise the plans includes eight major steps:

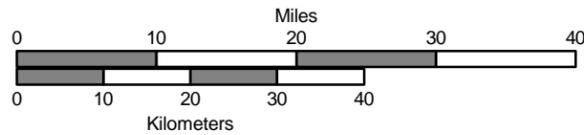
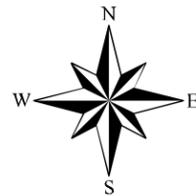
- 1) Design the planning process
- 2) Initiate public involvement and scoping
- 3) Determine significant issues
- 4) Develop and analyze alternatives
- 5) Prepare draft Plan and environmental impact statement
- 6) Prepare and adopt a final Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
- 7) Implement Plan, monitor, and evaluate
- 8) Review and revise Plan

Figure 1-2.

Togiak National Wildlife Refuge



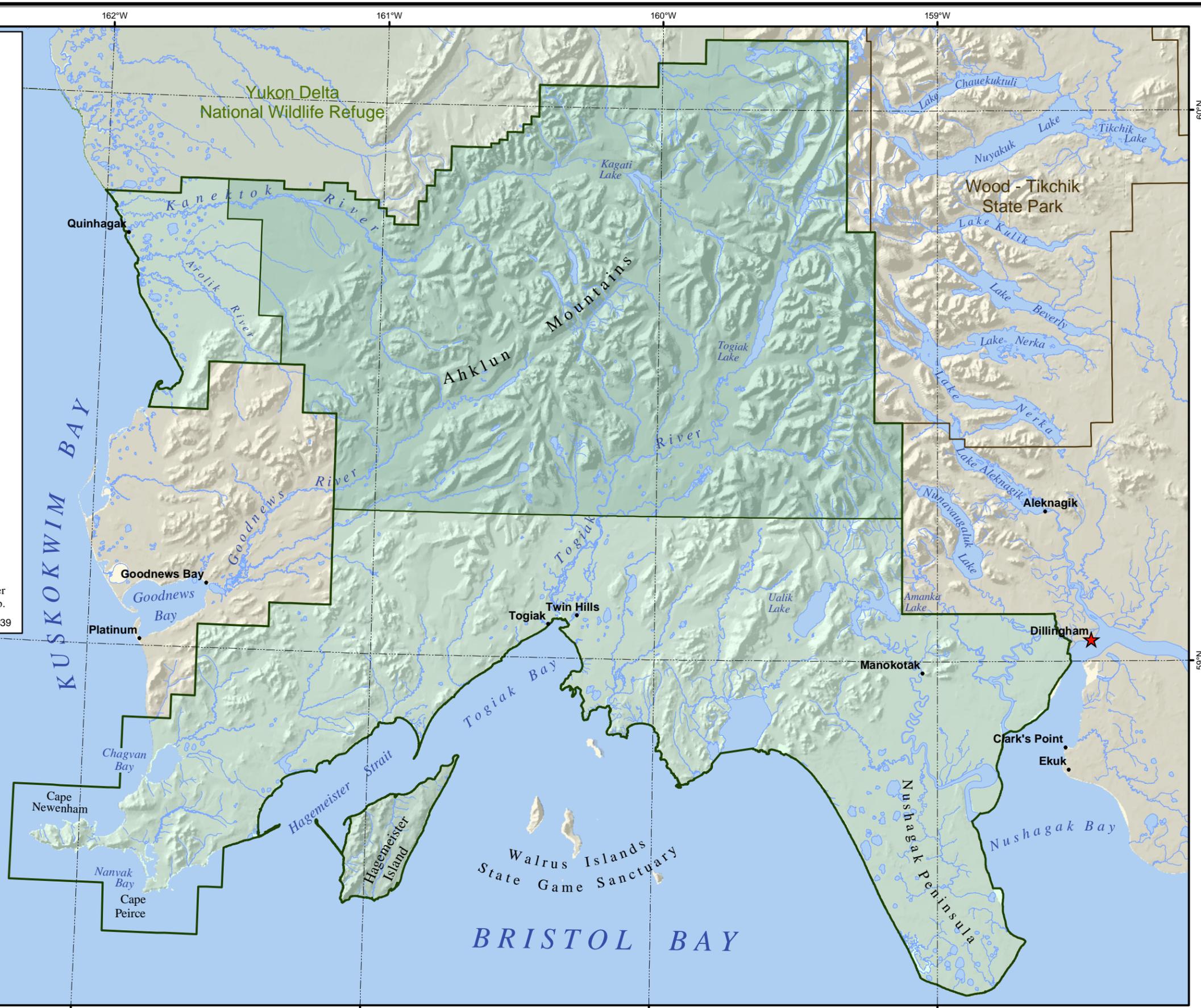
-  Togiak Refuge
-  Togiak Refuge - Designated Wilderness
-  Other refuge lands
-  Refuge Headquarters



Universal Transverse Mercator Projection - Zone 4. 1927 North American Datum.

The Togiak Refuge management area is comprised of Togiak NWR and Hagemeister Island (Alaska Maritime NWR). Land ownership is not shown on this map.

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The publication of this Draft Plan and EIS is part of Step 5. The rest of this section describes what has been done at each step and what is anticipated to finish the Plan.

1.7.1 Design the Planning Process

In 1999, the Service determined that the existing Comprehensive Conservation Plan should be revised. Some of the management direction in the plan was out of date because of changes in laws, regulations, and circumstances. The Togiak Refuge had begun to revise its Public Use Management Plan but had not yet released a draft. To minimize the impact of two separate consecutive planning efforts, the Service chose to combine them. Therefore, this document includes a Comprehensive Conservation Plan; a Public Use Management Plan; and a State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources plan for state lands, tidelands, and shorelands within the Refuge.

The Service wanted residents of the local communities and the State of Alaska to have meaningful roles while developing this Plan. Six local tribes were invited to participate, as were two departments within the state government. Thus, five tribal representatives and two state representatives sat on the Core Planning Team with Refuge management and staff representatives.

The Core Planning Team was responsible for:

- Reviewing public scoping comments and identifying issues to be dealt with in the plan
- Assisting with public involvement efforts throughout the planning effort
- Developing the conceptual framework for alternatives

In addition, tribal and state representatives were asked to do the following:

- Represent the views, concerns, and policies of their government entities
- Act as liaisons and pathways of information between their government entities and the Core Planning Team

The Technical Planning Team consists of Refuge and other Service employees. Their responsibilities included the following:

- Gathering and presenting data to the core team
- Proposing appropriate details to the conceptual alternatives
- Analyzing the potential impacts of implementing each alternative
- Writing, editing, and publishing the Plan

Technical Planning Team members researched the relevant laws, regulations, policies, and other direction that needed to be considered during Plan development. They also reviewed previous planning documents and files to help identify other planning issues.

1.7.2 Initiate Public Involvement and Scoping

The purpose of this step was to let people know the Plan-revision process was beginning and to solicit ideas on what issues should be addressed in the revision of the plans. Formal scoping began with publication in the Federal Register on May 13, 1999 (Volume 64, Number 92), of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS.

In December 1999, more than 2,000 newsletters were sent to people throughout Alaska, the United States, and the world. The newsletter explained the planning process, requested information about issues that should be addressed in the Plan, and asked what people value about the Refuge. In response, we received 72 letters: 64 from individuals, three from local or state government, three from professional guides, and two from organizations. Eleven of the written comments were from local residents, 11 from non-local Alaskans, and 47 from the rest of the nation.

In addition, we held meetings in local communities and Anchorage, at which a number of comments were received from the 67 people who attended. Eleven people attended the meeting in Goodnews Bay, 19 in Quinhagak, 12 in Togiak, 12 in Manokotak, two in Bethel, six in Dillingham, and five in Anchorage.

Newsletter responses and public meeting comments indicate what people value about the Refuge. Following are the values people identified:

- Wilderness character and environment (24)
- Fish and fishing opportunities (18)
- Ecosystem protection (15)
- Wildlife (13)
- Subsistence resources and uses (3)
- Continued motorized access (3)

People were also asked what they perceived as threats to those values. Their responses were as follows:

- Increasing human use and crowding (16)
- Conflicts between and among recreational and subsistence users (11)
- Recreational hunting and fishing (9)

- Guiding and commercialism (6)
- Water pollution and human waste (5)
- Motorized uses (5)
- Catch-and-release fishing (3)
- General or no specific threats mentioned (3)
- Litter (3)
- Offshore fishery (2)
- Lack of education or knowledge about nature (2)
- Development on adjacent lands (1)

1.7.3 Determine Significant Issues

During this step, we analyzed the comments we received and the concerns of the Service. We identified the issues for both the Comprehensive Conservation Plan Revision and the Public Use Management Plan Revision.

In June 2001, we mailed a second newsletter to more than 2,500 individuals and organizations. This update described the main issue areas that we had determined from the initial scoping process. We analyzed these issues, looking at a number of factors, including our legal authorities, available data, needed data, the significance of the concern, and possible solutions. This information allowed us to understand the issues better and provided us with background to decide which issues would be addressed in the Plan (See section 1.8 for a discussion of the issues).

1.7.4 Develop and Analyze Alternatives

In this step, the Core Planning Team considered each issue and brainstormed ideas for solutions. We referred to these as “building blocks for alternatives.” In cases where there was only one clear approach, or one element would be implemented regardless of alternative, those actions were included in Actions Common to All Alternatives (see section 2.2.4 of the Public Use Management Plan).

The Core Planning Team then arranged the building blocks into preliminary alternatives. Alternatives must meet the purposes and goals for the Refuge and must comply with the missions of the Refuge System and the Service.

Preliminary alternatives were sent to more than 2,300 individuals and organizations in the Fall 2001 newsletter, which was also posted on the Service’s Alaska regional planning Internet Web site. Thirty-nine people provided written comments on the preliminary alternatives listed in the newsletter. The alternatives were adjusted to ensure that actions within an alternative were not contradictory.

Refinements were also made to give each alternative a more consistent approach to clarify an action or address a specific comment. In each case, the Service attempted to keep a full range of options present within the alternatives. The State of Alaska and tribal representatives declined to identify a preferred alternative.

1.7.5 Prepare Draft Plan and Environmental Assessment

During this phase, the Service made the decision to separate the issues and alternatives for the Comprehensive plan from those of the Public Use Management Plan. This was done to provide the public with a clearer understanding of the actions being considered. The Public Use Management Plan revision is presented separately in this document.

The Comprehensive Plan revision describes two alternatives including current management. It includes an analysis of the potential impacts of implementing each alternative and describes how the Service determined its preferred alternative (see chapter 4). A public review and comment period of no less than 90 days is now underway. During this period, the Service will hold public meetings in Anchorage, Dillingham, and other communities near the Refuge as necessary.

1.7.6 Prepare and Adopt a Final Plan

The Service will review and analyze all of the comments received on the Draft Plan and Environmental Assessment, modify the Draft as needed, including refining the preferred alternative, and publish a Final Plan. Following a 30-day period for additional public response, the Regional Director will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact, if appropriate, that will describe the management alternative to be implemented. The Service plans to publish the Final Revised Togiak Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan after that decision is made.

1.7.7 Implement Plan, Monitor, and Evaluate

After the Comprehensive plan revision and Record of Decision are finalized, the Refuge staff will initiate any management changes called for in the revised plan. A critical component of management is monitoring resource and social conditions to make sure that progress is being made toward fulfilling goals and meeting objectives. Monitoring also detects new concerns and opportunities that should be addressed. The Refuge will use information gained from monitoring to evaluate and, as needed, to modify objectives for the Refuge.

1.7.8 Review and Revise Plan

Agency policy directs that the Refuge review the Plan annually to assess the need for change. We revise the Plan when significant new information becomes available, when ecological conditions change, or when the need to do so is identified during the review. If major changes are proposed, public meetings may be held and new environmental assessments and environmental impact statements may be necessary. Consultation with appropriate state agencies, tribal governments, and the public would occur during any future revisions. Full review and revision of the Comprehensive Plan will occur every 10 to 15 years or more often if necessary. We continue informing and involving the public throughout implementation of the Plan by holding regular meetings in local villages at least annually and by publishing Refuge Updates.

1.8 Planning Issues

1.8.1 Issues Considered But Not Addressed in the Alternatives

This plan revision is focused on changes proposed to management categories and activities. The issues involved were identified primarily from within the Service, especially by Refuge staff. (Public comments focused on public use issues and are addressed in the Public Use plan.)

Certain issues have been identified that will not be addressed in detail in this plan. This may be because the issue is addressed by existing laws, regulations, policies or management actions, the issue is or will be addressed in the same manner regardless of alternative selected, or the issue is outside of the scope of this planning effort.

Following is a brief discussion of issues which will not be addressed in this plan.

1.8.1.1 Additional Areas for Wilderness Designation or Rivers for Inclusion in the National System of Wild and Scenic Rivers

After reviewing the requirements for Wilderness and for Wild and Scenic river reviews, we determined that the comprehensive planning requirements of Section 304(g) of ANILCA were best satisfied by honoring the Wilderness recommendations of the current plan and focusing our efforts on describing the wilderness values of the Refuge and providing better direction for how the Refuge could be managed to protect those values. A similar approach was taken for wild and scenic river values.

Wilderness values and river-related values are discussed in chapter 3 and in section 1.6 of this Plan. Programs and actions

to protect all refuge-related values are discussed in the alternatives section and in management direction sections of chapter 2.

1.8.1.2 Hardened Campsites

The 1987 Comprehensive Plan states that the refuge would not provide hardened campsites in Minimal, Special River, or Wilderness management areas. Current management direction in Alaska allows hardened campsites consistent with the management category. Direction for Minimal, Wild River, and Wilderness management could allow hardening of campsites, but the application of those techniques would be very rare.

1.8.1.3 All Weather Roads

The 1987 Comprehensive Plan states that all weather roads would not be provided for public use. Current management direction would allow such roads in Intensive and Moderate management areas. These categories do not occur and are not proposed on the refuge.

1.8.2 Significant Planning Issues Addressed in this Plan

Throughout the scoping process, public comments focused on management concerns with the three major rivers within the Refuge. Issues that were identified specific to management of these river systems are listed in chapter 1 of the Public Use Management Plan portion of this document.

The only issue identified for the revision of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan is the effect of management on activities and uses within the Refuge.

1.9 References Cited

- Gordon, R.J. and B. Shaine. 1978. "Alaska Natural Landscapes." Commission Study No. 33. Anchorage, Alaska: Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska.
- Young, S.B. and J.C. Walters. 1982. "Proposed Geological and Ecological Natural Landmarks in Interior and Western Alaska." Center for Northern Studies. Wolcott, VT. 2 vol. 647 pp.