5. Evaluation of the Alternatives

5.1 Evaluation Criteria

The alternatives were evaluated against five criteria based on existing policy and law. These criteria were selected as the most important factors to be used in selecting the preferred alternative. Following are these criteria, in order of importance.

- How well does the alternative satisfy the purposes of the Togiak Refuge and Alaska Maritime Refuge (Refuge) and other provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)?
- How well does the alternative satisfy the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System?
- How well does the alternative contribute to meeting the goals of the Refuge?
- How does the alternative address the issues?
- How well does the alternative maintain biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health at the Refuge- and ecosystem-scale and contribute to managing the Refuge as part of an ecosystem?

The differences between the alternatives are relatively small. Scoping did not identify any major issues that would result in significant changes in management direction for the Refuge.

Chapter 4 describes the physical, biological, and socioeconomic impacts of each of the alternatives and provides a summary of the projected changes.

5.2 Response to Refuge Purposes

Both alternatives will accomplish the following:

- conserve fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats in their natural diversity
- fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats
- provide a program of national and international scientific research on marine resources of the Hagemeister Island portion of Alaska Maritime Refuge
- provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents

- ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, water quality and necessary water quantity with the Refuge
- preserve the wilderness character of the Togiak Wilderness Area

5.3 Response to National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

Both alternatives were developed with the Refuge System Mission in mind and contribute to fulfilling that mission. The Refuge plays a part in supporting waterfowl, shorebirds, and other migratory birds; salmon; and marine mammals that migrate far from the Refuge and from the state. Many other species use the Refuge for part of the year and migrate to other areas seasonally.

5.4 Response to Refuge Goals

Proposed goals for the Refuge are found in Section 2.2.1 of this plan as a part of Alternative A (the preferred alternative). Alternative B (no action) does not identify management goals for the refuge. Alternative A (the preferred alternative) provides more effective management direction by identifying refuge goals than does Alternative B (no action).

5.5 Response to Issue

5.5.1 Effects of management changes on Activities and Uses of the Refuge

Classification of non-Wilderness lands near Cape Peirce under Alternative 1 (proposed action) would change the classification of lands near Cape Peirce from Cooperative Management to Minimal Management, a management category used widely on refuge lands within Alaska. Alternative 2 (no action) would maintain the Cooperative Management category on those lands.

5.6 Biological Integrity and Ecosystem Management

Each of the alternatives provides management direction that maintains the biotic and abiotic conditions on the Refuge within historic ranges. In general, both alternatives maintain the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge and integrate scientific knowledge into the management of the Refuge. Natural processes are the dominant force at work within the Refuge.

Human activities are predominantly related to hunting and fishing, managed by state regulations and Federal Subsistence Board regulations.