

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: State of Alaska Management Activities

Refuge Name: Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges, King Salmon, Alaska

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies)

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the 1,157,000-acre Becharof National Wildlife Monument with Presidential Proclamation 4613. The monument was established from lands in the public domain to protect the area, notably the unique brown bear denning islands in the Island Arm area of Becharof Lake.

In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (§302) established the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge and changed the Becharof National Wildlife Monument into a national wildlife refuge as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. ANILCA (§303[1]) created the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge by redesignating 11 pre-existing refuges as units of the new refuge and by adding other public lands on islands, islets, rocks, reefs, spires, and designated capes and headlands in the coastal areas and adjacent seas of Alaska.

In 1983, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) decided to manage the Ugashik and Chignik units of Alaska Peninsula Refuge, the 9,900-acre Seal Cape area of Alaska Maritime Refuge, and Becharof Refuge as a “complex” because they shared resources and resource issues. Distance and weather create barriers to managing the Pavlof and North Creek units from the King Salmon office, and management of these units was shifted to the Izembek Refuge to be managed out of Cold Bay.

The Becharof Wilderness Area of the Becharof Refuge was designated in 1980 by ANILCA (§702 [4]).

Refuge Purpose(s)

ANILCA sets out the purposes for each refuge in Alaska. The purposes of the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges are described in Section 302(1)(B) and Section 302(2)(B). Purposes for the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge are described in Section 303(1)(B). The purposes identify the reasons why Congress established the Refuges and management priorities.

The ANILCA purposes are as follows (unless otherwise noted, the purposes apply to all units of the Refuges):

- to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to . . .
 - [Becharof] . . . brown bears, salmon, migratory birds, the Alaska Peninsula Caribou herd, and marine birds and mammals
 - [Alaska Peninsula] . . . brown bears, the Alaska Peninsula caribou herd, moose, sea otters and other marine mammals, shorebirds and other migratory birds, raptors, including bald eagles and peregrine falcons, and salmonids and other fish

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

- to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats
- to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth above, the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents
- [Alaska Maritime] to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth above, 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 above, water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge

[Supplemental Purposes of the Becharof Wilderness Area] The Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136 § 2a), defines supplemental purposes of all designated wilderness areas. These apply to the Becharof Wilderness Area and are as follows:

- to administer the wilderness for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave it unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, to provide for the protection of the area, for the preservation of its wilderness character, and for gathering and dissemination of information regarding its use and enjoyment as wilderness.

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” (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended [16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee]).

Description of Use(s)

This compatibility determination addresses routine management activities conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game that may not be encompassed by the Master Memorandum of Understanding between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Juneau, Alaska, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Anchorage, Alaska, signed March 13, 1982, and law enforcement activities conducted by Alaska Department of Public Safety Fish and Wildlife Protection Officers. This includes the following activities: fish and wildlife surveys conducted by boat, foot, or other means not restricted by regulation or policy; aircraft landings in support of aerial fish and wildlife surveys; vegetation and habitat classification and surveys; and law-enforcement activities. This compatibility determination does not address predator management, fish and wildlife control (with the exception of emergency removal of individual rogue animals), reintroduction of species, nonindigenous species management, pest management, disease prevention and control, fishery restoration, fishery enhancement, indigenous fish introductions, nonindigenous species introductions, construction of facilities, or any other nonpermitted activity that could alter Refuges’ ecosystems. Separate compatibility determinations addressing specific proposals will be required for those activities. All management and research activities conducted by the Alaska

Department of Fish and Game under a specific cooperative agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service to fulfill one or more purposes of the refuge or the National Wildlife Refuge System mission are not subject to a compatibility determination.

Potential means of access include fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter, motorboats, snowmachines, off-road vehicles, nonpowered boats, dogsled, foot, snowshoes, and cross-country skis. Potential lodging and facilities include tents, tent frames, tent platforms, weatherports, existing permitted cabins, and caches.

Availability of Resources

Adequate refuge personnel and base operational funds are available to manage activities at existing and projected levels. Administrative staff time (as many as 10 staff days annually) primarily involves phone conversations, written correspondence, and personal interaction with state personnel regarding ongoing activities. Field work associated with administering the program primarily involves monitoring (when applicable) the state's activities to ensure all activities are compatible with the Master Memorandum of Understanding.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use(s)

Because ADF&G and Public Safety personnel are trained professional, we anticipate that routine law-enforcement and fish and wildlife-monitoring and -management activities will have positive overall impacts on the wildlife resources, other refuge resources (such as water quality, soil, and vegetation), and refuge users. These positive impacts will support refuge purposes and goals and the Service mission.

For all projects proposed in the designated Becharof Wilderness Area, analysis of projects will be conducted to ensure compliance with the "minimum-requirement" philosophy to ensure that the project is essential to protect physical, biological, or experiential resources of the wilderness. In addition, "minimum-tool" analysis will be conducted to ensure that the methods and equipment have the least impact and are the least manipulative or restrictive means of achieving the project.

Public Review and Comment

The public was invited to comment on this compatibility determination and a number of other determinations during the public review period established for the draft revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Public notice of the availability of the draft conservation plan and draft determinations was published in the Federal Register. The draft determinations were also posted on the Region 7 Refuge Conservation Planning and Policy Web pages. No substantive public comments pertaining to this determination were received. Where appropriate, comments addressing elements of the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan revision that pertained to the specific uses evaluated in this determination were considered in preparing the final compatibility determination.

Determination

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility

A compatibility determination is not required for state activities on refuge lands where an established agreement is in place. Refuge staff will monitor state activities on the Refuges. Findings from these monitoring efforts will be used to determine what additional management actions, if any, are needed to ensure state activities remain compatible with refuge purposes and in compliance with established agreements.

Justification

Natural and social science information is necessary for the proper management of the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is the policy of the Service to encourage and support research and management studies in order to provide scientific data upon which decisions regarding management of units of the refuge system may be based.

This activity supports the refuge purposes and goals and the System mission. It will have favorable impacts on refuge resources and wildlife-dependent priority public uses.

Mandatory 10-Year Re-Evaluation Date (provide month and year for allowed uses only): January 2015

Mandatory 15-Year Re-Evaluation Date (for priority public uses): NA

NEPA Compliance for Refuge Use Decision

- Categorical Exclusion without Environmental Action Memorandum
- Categorical Exclusions and Environmental Action Memorandum
- Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact
- Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

Supporting Documents

- USFWS. 2004. Draft Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement: Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges. Anchorage, Alaska: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 7, Division of Refuge Planning and Policy.

Refuge Determination.

Prepared by: [Signature] (Signature) 1-31-05 (Date)

Refuge Manager / Project Leader Approval: [Signature] (Signature) 1-31-05 (Date)

Concurrence
Refuge Supervisor: [Signature] (Signature) 3/26/05 (Date)

Regional Chief,
National Wildlife
Refuge System: [Signature] (Signature) 4/18/05 (Date)