



Innoko

National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update

December 2006

This is the first in a series of updates about the Innoko National Wildlife Refuge and the revision of its comprehensive conservation plan. The revised comprehensive conservation plan will provide management guidance and direction for the refuge for the next 15 years.

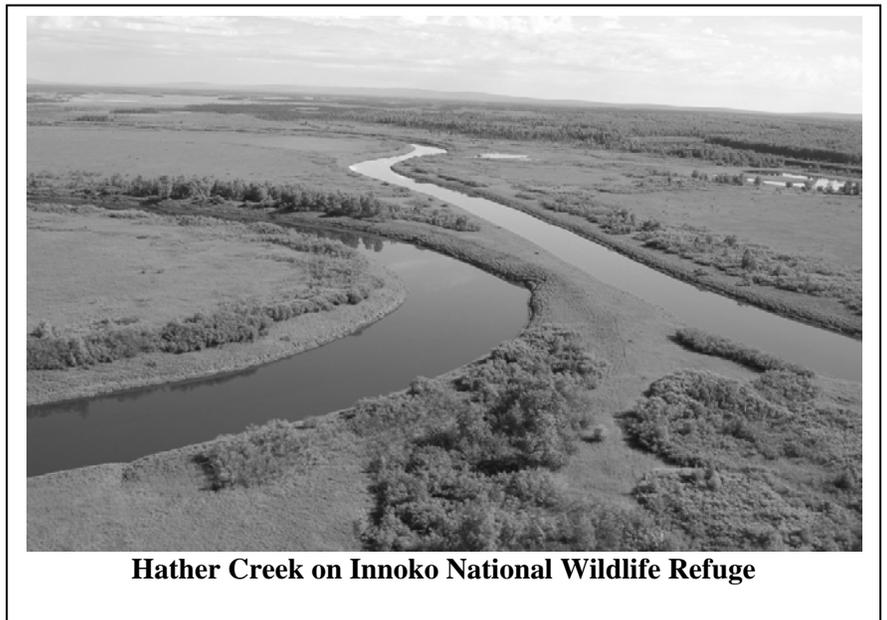
Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is starting to revise Innoko National Wildlife Refuge's long-term management plan, known as a comprehensive conservation plan. Originally prepared in 1987, this plan is almost 20 years old. The revised plan will provide overall guidance in managing Innoko Refuge for the next 15 years. Our intent is that the revised comprehensive conservation plan will:

- Provide a clear statement of the desired future condition of the refuge (vision and goals);
- Ensure that refuge management is consistent with the refuge purposes and with the National Wildlife Refuge System policies.
- Provide refuge visitors, neighbors, and partners with a clear understanding of the reasons for management actions.
- Provide long-term continuity in refuge management.

Getting Involved

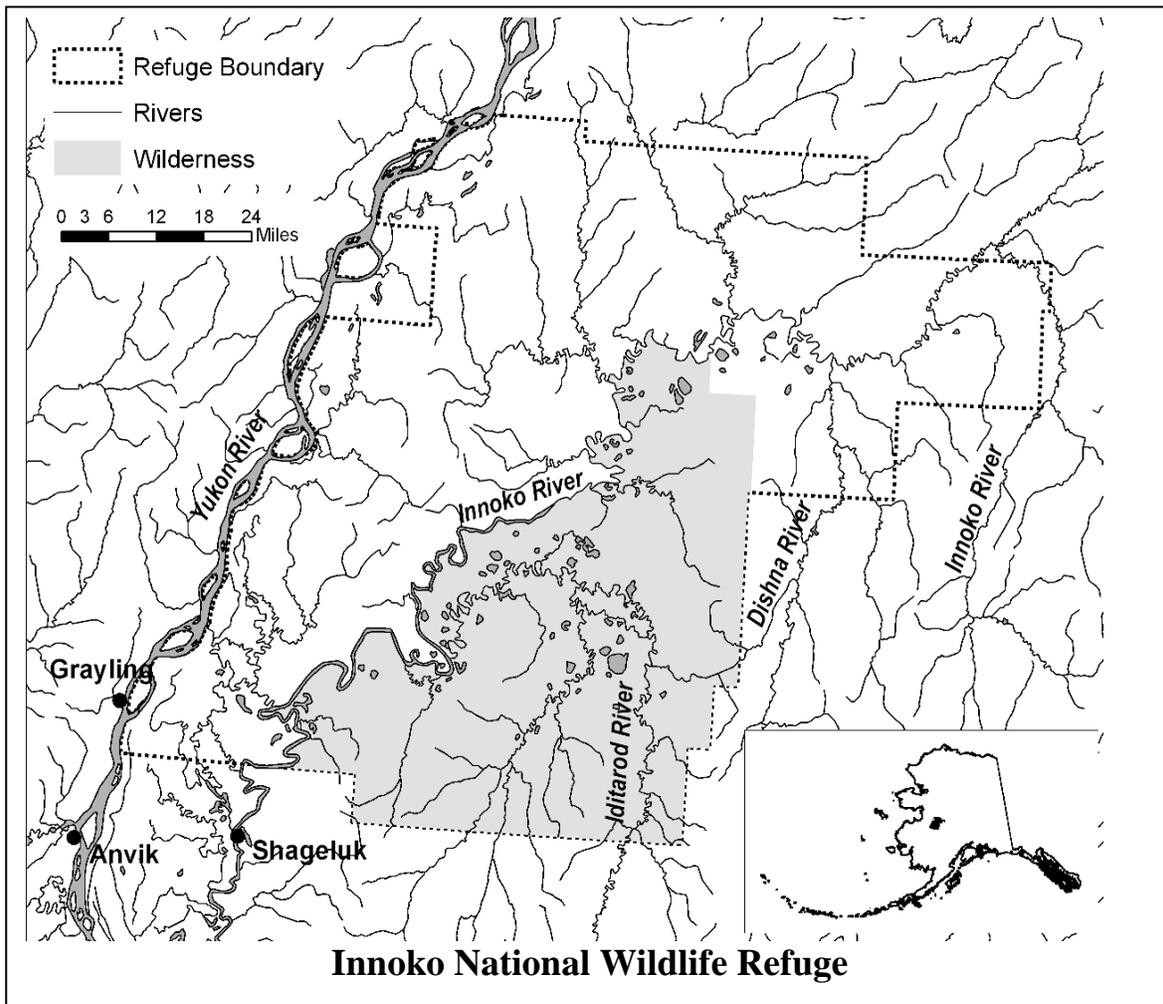
You can help us by sharing your thoughts and concerns related to Innoko National Wildlife Refuge. Your ideas will help us focus planning and ensure that we consider topics you care about. During the planning process, we will provide other opportunities for you to get involved.



Hather Creek on Innoko National Wildlife Refuge

For now, we would like to hear your thoughts and concerns. Please take a few moments to review the attached worksheet, write down your thoughts and submit them. Active participation by you and other interested individuals and groups is critical to success of the planning process.

In addition to this newsletter, we will be holding community meetings in Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk, Holy Cross, Kaltag, McGrath, and Takotna this winter. The draft revised plan should be released for public review in the fall of 2007 with additional meetings to be held at that time.



Innoko National Wildlife Refuge

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is:

Working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System of more than 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. Sixteen of these refuges are in Alaska.

The Service enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, and helps restore nationally significant fisheries.

National Wildlife Refuge System

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.

Innoko National Wildlife Refuge

Isolated even by Alaska standards, Innoko National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most important waterfowl areas in west central interior Alaska. It was established by ANILCA in 1980. Conservation of fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity is a focus of the refuge. The refuge covers some 3,850,000 acres. The Innoko Wilderness covers 1,240,000 acres in the southeastern part of the refuge, bordered by the

Innoko River on its western boundary and includes portions of the Iditarod and Big and Little Yetna Rivers.

The refuge can be roughly divided into two distinct habitat types. Approximately half the refuge consists of black spruce muskeg, wet meadows, and sedge or horsetail marshes, set with innumerable lakes and ponds of varying size. The remainder is marked by hills, most of which are less than one thousand feet in elevation.

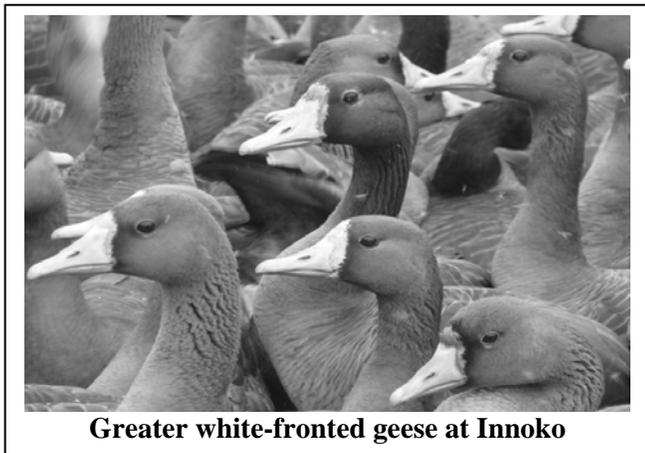
Purposes of Innoko National Wildlife Refuge

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) states purposes for which Innoko Refuge was established and shall be managed. They include:

- (i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, waterfowl, peregrine falcons, other migratory birds, black bear, moose, furbearers, and other mammals and salmon.
- (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 the purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for continued subsistence by local residents; and
- (iv) 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.

Innoko Refuge's Wildlife

Given the extensive wetlands it embraces, it's not surprising that Innoko boasts a wealth of bird life. It's estimated that 130 species of birds use these lands and



Greater white-fronted geese at Innoko

waters. More than 300,000 waterfowl and shorebirds nest on the refuge every spring. Innoko is an important nesting area for greater white-fronted and lesser Canada geese, pintail, wigeon, shovelers, red-necked grebes, and Hudsonian godwits.

Moose, black and grizzly bear, wolves, lynx, wolverine, river otter, beaver, fox, and occasionally caribou are the primary large land mammals found on the refuge. Smaller mammals include snowshoe hare, porcupine, red squirrel, marten, muskrat, weasel, mink, several species of shrews, voles and lemmings. The refuge only has one known amphibian, the wood frog. Fish on the refuge include large northern pike, Chinook, coho, and chum salmon, burbot, and several species of white fish, including sheefish.

Public Use at Innoko Refuge

Although remote, Innoko is used by the public for a variety of recreational and subsistence activities, including hunting, fishing, trapping and boating. The refuge supports a healthy moose population, which is sought by hunters from surrounding communities as well as from around the state, nation, and other countries.

A Draft Vision for Innoko's Future

Meeting in October 2006, the planning team drafted a vision statement and goals for the revised comprehensive conservation plan. Our draft vision for the refuge is:

The Innoko National Wildlife Refuge encompasses a largely unaltered ecosystem dominated by numerous rivers flowing among diverse habitats, including muskeg, tundra, and dense boreal forest. Remote even by Alaskan standards, the natural forces of fire and water, now apparently affected by climate change, dominate the landscape. The refuge is not accessible by road, and thus only the occasional visitor discovers the many opportunities to hunt, fish, and view wildlife. The refuge hosts hundreds of thousands of breeding and molting waterfowl, and is important rearing habitat for salmon and other species of fish. In addition, moose, black and grizzly bears, and furbearers are abundant. Refuge lands have been important to subsistence hunters for generations and the area has a rich gold-rush history. A main portion of the Historic Iditarod Trail, the overland winter route from Seward to the gold fields of Nome, crosses refuge land. The Innoko Refuge is a place to discover the vastness and diversity of interior Alaska, to reflect upon Native Alaskan and mining history, and to experience nature in solitude for generations to come.

Draft Goals for Innoko Refuge

Fish and Wildlife – Maintain healthy populations of indigenous fish and wildlife in their natural diversity.

Habitat – Perpetuate ecosystem processes that shape habitats within the natural range of variability.

Subsistence – Provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses of the refuge, consistent with the subsistence priority and with other refuge purposes.

Recreation/Public Use – Provide opportunities for quality wildlife-dependent recreation, emphasizing short-term, low density uses that require minimal facility development or habitat disturbance.

Wilderness – Preserve and enhance in perpetuity wilderness values of designated Wilderness.

Cultural Resources – Conserve cultural and archeological resources of the refuge.

Administrative – Provide and maintain the facilities and equipment necessary to ensure and administer a safe and secure environment for the visiting public and Service personnel.

The Planning Process

The diagram on the opposite column shows the sequence of steps we are following to revise the Innoko plan. It depicts a series of logical questions. We start by asking which issues need to be considered. This is the stage we're at now. Next, we develop alternatives that address those issues. Then we ask: Which of these alternatives would best meet Innoko's goals? We then select an alternative, publish it in the draft plan and invite the public to comment. Finally, the draft plan is revised based on the public's concerns, and a final plan published.



Innoko Refuge black bear

How to Contact Us

Please write, fax or email your comments or questions to

Rob Campellone, Planning Team Leader

Division of Planning & Policy

1011 East Tudor Road, MS-231

Anchorage, AK 99503

Telephone: (907) 786-3982; Fax: (907) 786-3965

E-mail: Innoko_plan@fws.gov

Or:

Bill Schaff, Refuge Manager

Innoko National Wildlife Refuge

P.O. Box 69, McGrath, AK 99627

Telephone: 907-524-3251; Fax: 907-524-3141

Toll Free: 888-601-7970

Visiting our Web Page:

<http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/innpol.htm>

Steps of the Planning Process



Innoko National Wildlife Refuge Comment Worksheet

You can help us focus our planning efforts on the things that matter to you and your family. We will use the comments you provide here to identify the best alternatives for long-term management of Innoko National Wildlife Refuge.

This worksheet is being sent to everyone on our mailing list and handed out to everyone who attends our open house meetings. It provides an efficient means for us to hear your ideas and concerns, and to assess those comments in the context of others we may receive. Thank you for getting involved!

Please take a moment to complete and return this worksheet no later than Feb 28, 2007

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1. Check the box that best represents your use of Innoko National Wildlife Refuge.

- I have never been to the Refuge
- I have visited the Refuge in the past, but I am not likely to go there again
- I have visited the Refuge in the past, and I am likely to go there again
- I live nearby and visit frequently

2. What do you value most about Innoko National Wildlife Refuge? *(Please explain briefly)*

3. Have there been any changes on the Refuge, positive or negative, that affect you personally?

4. Looking toward the future, what do you consider to be the most important issues facing Innoko National Wildlife Refuge? *(For example: moose, furbearers, waterfowl, guiding, air taxi use, mining, water quality, hunting, fishing, trapping.)*

Please use the space on the back of this sheet to provide any additional comments you may have.

Thank You For Your Time

Fold here, stamp and return

From

***place
stamp
here***

Rob Campellone, Planning Team Leader
Division of Planning & Policy
1011 East Tudor Road, MS-231
Anchorage, AK 99503