



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Kanuti

## National Wildlife Refuge

### Planning News - Spring 2005

Find out more on the Kanuti Refuge Plan at <http://www.r7.fws.gov/planning/plan.html>

E-mail the Kanuti Refuge Planning Team at [fw7\\_kanuti\\_planning@fws.gov](mailto:fw7_kanuti_planning@fws.gov)

*... crystal shimmering water... spruce trees,  
black in shadow and emerald in the light, willows  
full of purple shades and alive with gossiping  
redpolls... more lovely than I have ever seen...*  
—Margaret E. Murie  
Two In the Far North



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### Planning News - Spring 2005

*This is the second in a series of planning updates about the Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge and the revision of its Comprehensive Conservation Plan. We are in the process of revising the 1987 plan and ask for your help in identifying important concerns or issues that we should address. The revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan will guide management for the next 15 years or until another review is necessary.*

#### **What is a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?**

*In general, a comprehensive conservation plan does the following:*

- *Makes sure that the purposes for which the Refuge was established and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System are being fulfilled*
- *Makes certain that national policy direction is included in the management of the Refuge*
- *Provides an opportunity for the public to participate in development of management guidance*
- *Provides a step-by-step process for making and recording refuge decisions*
- *Establishes a broad management approach, based on a vision statement, for refuge programs and activities*
- *Provides a way to evaluate accomplishments over time*



*Kanuti Lake—looking south toward Ray Mountains, USFWS*

#### **Public Comment Meeting Status**

Last winter, Refuge staff met twice with residents of Allakaket, Alatna, Bettles, Evansville, and members of the Fairbanks community, and once with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss concerns, threats, and issues involving the Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge.

These meetings were an opportunity for those interested in the management of the Refuge to provide their viewpoints to the planning staff. These meetings showed that many people are interested in how the Refuge is managed. Many people took the time to attend and express their views.

The staff heard a variety of concerns and viewpoints ranging from ones we will be able to address in this plan, to some viewpoints that are already covered by existing laws and regulations. A summary of comments we heard are included in this planning update.



**The Mission of the 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 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.*



**Refuge Purposes**

The Kanuti Refuge was established by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980 to do the following:

1. conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, white-fronted geese and other waterfowl and migratory birds, moose, caribou (including participation in coordinated ecological studies and management of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd), and furbearers
2. fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats
3. provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in above subparagraphs, the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents
4. provide, 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.



Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

**Refuge Vision Statement (Draft)**

*Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge will be managed for its natural unaltered character, biological integrity, and scientific values as driven by biological and physical processes throughout time. Stewardship of Kanuti Refuge will strive to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitat in their natural diversity by maintaining ecosystem integrity, while providing for subsistence opportunities. Management will foster partnerships with, but not limited to, government agencies, Tribes, organizations, and the public, including local communities. The Refuge will facilitate compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation. Inventory and monitoring of wildlife populations and habitats important to Alaska, the United States, and the world will be the focal points of research and management efforts. Studies will focus on the physical and biological components of the boreal forest region, their ecological relationships, and their response to human activity.*

**Steps of the Planning Process**

What should we consider?

*Identify Issues*



How can we act on the issues?

*Develop alternatives (We are at this step.)*



How well would each alternative work?

*Analyze alternatives*



Which would work best?

*Select an alternative*



Public is asked to review and comment.

*Publish draft plan*



Another chance for the public to review.

*Publish final plan*



Final decision made public.

*Publish record of decision*

**The Next Step**

It is time to develop ways to deal with the issues discussed during the public meetings. Refuge staff are now tasked with developing a set of management alternatives to provide different approaches for managing the Refuge for the next 15 years. Two or three management alternatives will be developed, ranging from managing the Refuge with a hands-off approach, to managing the Refuge using a combination of approaches (e.g., more intense activity in some areas and hands-off management in other areas). The Draft Plan will contain an analysis of how each alternative, including the Service's preferred alternative, could affect the Refuge resources. After people have an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Plan, a Final Plan revision and Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared. From this Final Plan, an official "record of decision" will be developed to guide management of the Refuge for the next 15 years.

**Public Involvement**

Your involvement is important to this planning process. There will be additional opportunities for those interested in the management of the Refuge to get involved. Another round of public meetings to discuss the alternatives will happen this fall. Times and locations will be announced.

**How You Can Help**

- Stay on the mailing list so you can receive future mailings. If you are not already on it, ask to be added! Write or call the Refuge.
- Your comments are always welcome. Feel free to write, fax, call, or e-mail your comments to one of the contacts listed below.
- You are always welcome to stop by our office in Fairbanks. We are located on the second floor of the Federal Building.
- You may view plans and newsletters online at <http://www.r7.fws.gov/planning>

**For information about the plan or to submit comments, please write, fax, or e-mail either of the following:**

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**Issues**

Throughout the comment process, Refuge staff heard a variety of concerns and comments from village residents and others interested in the management of the Refuge. We grouped these comments into specific issues, some of which we will be able to address in the Conservation Plan revision, and some of which are either addressed by existing laws or are outside the scope of the plan.

- Classification 1.  
This issue is addressed by existing laws, regulations, or policies and will not be addressed during revision of the Plan.



Scoping meeting at Allakaket



Discussion at Allakaket Scoping Meeting

- Classification 2.  
This issue is outside the scope of this Conservation Plan and will not be addressed during the revision of the Plan.
- Classification 3.  
This issue is or will be addressed in the same manner regardless of the management alternative selected. Management direction for this issue will be common to all alternatives.
- Classification 4.  
This issue will be considered during selection of management alternatives and will be addressed in very specific ways during discussions of activities, public uses, commercial uses, and facilities allowed under each management alternative considered for Kanuti Refuge.

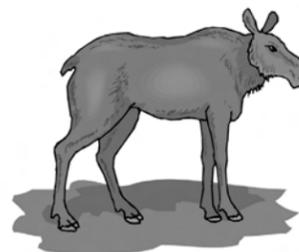
**You identified the following issues . . .**



**Wild Character of the Refuge**

*Classification 4: This issue will be considered during selection of management alternatives and will be addressed in very specific ways during discussions of activities, public uses, commercial uses, and facilities allowed under each management alternative considered for Kanuti Refuge.*

The strongest message heard at meetings with village residents and members of the Fairbanks community was the need to keep Kanuti Refuge wild. Many felt the Refuge is still an intact ecosystem and they would like to see it stay that way. The 25 comments related to maintaining the wild character of Kanuti Refuge ranged from requests for a *hands-off* management approach to including the Refuge in the Wilderness System. However, one comment was received that asked Refuge staff to manage with a hands-on approach to balance uncontrolled change elsewhere.



**Low Moose Numbers**

*Classification 3: This issue is or will be addressed in the same manner regardless of the management alternative selected.*

Two comments focused on declining moose populations and efforts to provide for subsistence hunting. Five comments opposed management that favors one species over another.



**User Conflicts**

*Classification 3: This issue is or will be addressed in the same manner regardless of the management alternative selected.*

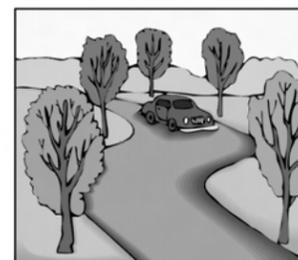
Twelve comments mentioned conflicts between subsistence and recreational users on Refuge lands. Most of these comments focused on competition for game between user groups. Other user conflict comments addressed the proposed Senate Bill 85 to lift the ban on off-road vehicles within the five-mile corridor of the Dalton Highway (Haul Road). Many were concerned that this bill would result in increased conflict in the Kanuti area.



**Sustainable Resources Use**

*Classification 3: This issue is already being addressed or will be addressed similarly regardless of the management alternative selected.*

Five comments addressed concern for subsistence harvests beyond sustainable levels. These comments were directed at white-fronted geese, caribou, fish, and harvest of white spruce logs for home building.



**Right-Of-Way Assertions, Including RS-2477 Corridors**

*Classification 3: This issue is already being addressed or will be addressed similarly regardless of the management alternative selected.*

Thirteen comments opposed any development of right-of-way corridors on Kanuti Refuge. Two comments supported limiting access to Bettles via the Winter (Ice) Road, while two additional comments supported development of the road.



**Introduction of Nonnative Species**

*Classification 3: This issue is already being addressed or will be addressed similarly regardless of the management alternative selected.*

Four comments expressed concern for the possible introduction of nonnative species. Three of these comments were directed at the transport of invasive plants from the Dalton Highway onto the Refuge. One comment warned of the introduction of domestic dogs and cats onto Refuge lands.

### Increased Use of the Dalton Highway (Haul Road)

*Classification 1: This issue is addressed by existing laws, regulations, or policies and will not be addressed during revision of the Plan.*



Two comments on this issue were received from the public. The first expressed concerns about illegal bow hunting from the highway and the hazards associated with hunters blocking the road. The second comment focused on use of the Dalton to access the Bettles Winter (Ice) Road and complaints that hunters are parking on the road near Gordon's Gulch, blocking the road, and hunting before leaving the five-mile management corridor of the Dalton Highway.



### Development of Private Lands within the Refuge

*Classification 2: This issue is outside the scope of this Conservation Plan and will not be addressed during the revision of the Plan.*

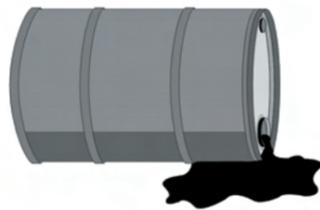
Two comments were received expressing the desire to limit development on private inholdings within the Refuge.



### Use of Signs on the Dalton Highway (Haul Road)

*Classification 3: This issue is or will be addressed in the same manner regardless of the management alternative selected.*

One comment suggested that signs be posted near popular river access sites along the Dalton Highway to alert people of the possible spread of invasive species by unwashed trailers and boats. Another individual remarked that promoting the Dalton Highway as a scenic highway will pose a threat to the Refuge because of the spread of invasive species in areas where people explore river crossings.



### Chemical or Oil Spill within Dalton Highway Corridor

*Classification 3: This issue is or will be addressed in the same manner regardless of the management alternative selected.*

Four comments were received on this issue. All questioned the adequacy of the Interior Alaska Oil and Hazardous Substance Contingency Plan (June 2000).



### Lack of Baseline Information on Refuge Resources

*Classification 3: This issue is or will be addressed in the same manner regardless of the management alternative selected.*

Five comments addressed the need to collect baseline information on the Refuge in order to understand key ecosystem processes and the natural biodiversity of the Refuge.

### Refuge Goals (DRAFT)

Refuge goals identify and direct management priorities, provide rationale for decisions, and offer a link between management actions, refuge purposes, Service policy, and the Service and National Wildlife Refuge System mission statements.

- Goal 1: Conserve the Refuge's diversity of wildlife, fish, and habitats, while allowing natural processes, including wildland fire, to shape the environment
- Goal 2: Maintain the water quality and quantity to conserve wetland and riparian habitats
- Goal 3: Provide opportunities for local rural residents to pursue their subsistence lifestyle
- Goal 4: Provide opportunities for high-quality public use and enjoyment of the Refuge resources through compatible wildlife-dependent recreation activities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography
- Goal 5: Provide outreach, environmental education, and interpretive programs that develop and increase a sense of stewardship for wildlife, cultural resources, and the environment and that enhance and facilitate visitor experiences on the Refuge
- Goal 6: Organize all cultural and historical resource information to determine cultural and archaeological resource needs for the Refuge

Wetland on Refuge, USFWS

