

Public Notice of Compatibility Determination (being prepared)

Comments on a Proposed Singauruk Bridge

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) is requesting public comments regarding the compatibility of the construction and use of a semipermanent bridge across the Singauruk River, Alaska.

The Northwest Arctic Borough (Borough) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Selawik National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), as partners, propose to construct and manage a semipermanent bridge across the Singauruk River (known locally as the Singiagruk River) in Alaska. The purpose of this project is to replace a temporary seasonal bridge used by Refuge staff and the public for winter trail crossings of the Singauruk River. The temporary bridge was constructed by Noorvik Search and Rescue volunteers with materials purchased by the Refuge. The bridge is currently, and will continue to be, restricted to winter snowmobile traffic only. The bridge would be located between the villages of Noorvik and Selawik, Alaska, on a trail within the Refuge boundaries.

In reviewing the proposed project, the Service is required to determine whether the proposed activity is compatible with the purposes for which the Refuge was established and with the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This review process is being conducted simultaneously with the public comment period on an environmental assessment of the proposed project. Comments on the entire project, including compatibility with Refuge purposes, may be submitted to Lee Anne Ayres, Selawik Refuge Manager, P.O. Box 270, Kotzebue, AK 99752, and must be postmarked no later than June 15, 2004. Electronic comments sent to the Refuge manager at Leeanne_Ayres@fws.gov will also be accepted during this period.

Contact the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, Refuge manager at (907) 442-3799 or by e-mail at Leeanne_Ayres@fws.gov if you have questions about the compatibility determination process or to request a copy of the draft environmental assessment and draft compatibility determination. Information on the process of determining compatibility is available at <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/compdeter.htm>

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) identifies the purposes for which each refuge in Alaska was established. The following purposes of the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge are described in Section 302(7)(B):

- ... (i) To conserve the fish and wildlife populations and habitat in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, the Western Arctic caribou herd (including participation in coordinated ecological studies and management of these caribou), waterfowl, shorebirds and other migratory birds, and salmon and sheefish.
- (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 uses 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. 94 Stat. 2387, dated Dec. 2, 1980 (ANILCA)

The National Wildlife Refuge System mission 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. The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of

1966, as amended, requires that proposed uses of refuge lands must be found compatible with the mandated purposes and with the National Wildlife Refuge System mission to be permitted.

The Service will complete a compatibility determination on the proposed project following the public comment period. Comments addressing the compatibility issue should specifically articulate how the proposed project would, or would not, materially interfere with or detract from the Refuge purposes or System mission.