

Appendix C

Other Planning Efforts

C. Regional Planning Efforts and Considered Actions

C.1 Introduction

This appendix contains information about known, concurrent statewide and/or Arctic region planning efforts and relevant actions in the vicinity of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge, Arctic Refuge). Actions that were considered to be reasonably foreseeable future actions are included in the effects analysis of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Plan, Revised Plan) (see Chapter 5, Sections 5.1.4 and 5.2.5).

C.2 List of Plans

C.2.1 Alaska Federal Lands Long Range Transportation Plan

In 2009, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities launched a pioneering effort to develop a multi-agency transportation plan. The plan's objective is to identify and prioritize transportation improvements on Federal lands in the State of Alaska. Along with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the following Federal agencies are involved: National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, and the Federal Highway Administration's Western Federal Lands Highway Division. The plan will not seek to identify specific projects or suggest changes to Federal lands management. Instead, its intent is to serve as a tool to collectively engage agencies on how to work together and leverage funding. The Long Range Transportation Plan consists of two parts: 1) an overarching plan addressing common objectives among the agencies, and 2) "dropdown" plans specific to each agency to address individual transportation needs. The draft overarching plan and each agency's draft dropdown plans were made available for public comment in November 2011; the comment period ran through April 2012.

Because of its emphasis on cooperation and collaboration, combined with its efforts to develop agency-specific dropdown plans, the Long Range Transportation Plan is not anticipated to adversely affect Arctic Refuge management goals or objectives at this time, and it is not considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action. The Service's dropdown plan was developed in close collaboration with Region 7 Refuges program, and we do not expect the Arctic Refuge Revised Plan will affect the Long Range Transportation Plan.

C.2.2 Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, General Management Plan

In February 2010, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve filed a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for an amendment to its 1986 General Management Plan and to conduct a wilderness study. The establishing purposes for Gates of the Arctic are in Section 201 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA): "The purpose of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is to preserve the vast, wild, undeveloped character and environmental integrity of Alaska's central Brooks Range and to provide opportunities for wilderness recreation and traditional subsistence uses."

While still in its early stages of development, at this time the General Management Plan is not anticipated to adversely affect Arctic Refuge because both conservation system units operate

under the mandates of ANILCA and have similar management objectives. In addition, we do not anticipate the Revised Plan adversely affecting the General Management Plan. For those resources that are shared between the conservation system units, such as far-ranging wildlife populations, the Revised Plan's focus on perpetuating natural diversity and letting ecological systems prevail should be positive for the General Management Plan. It is possible that some commercial service providers could decide not to operate in Arctic Refuge in response to the Service's management policies, and they could be displaced to Gates of the Arctic. These effects would likely be negligible.

The two ongoing planning processes overlap in their analyses of cumulative effects across the Arctic Region, so the Service and National Park Service will continue to coordinate their respective planning efforts. The Gates of the Arctic General Management Plan is a reasonably foreseeable future action for the purposes of the Revised Plan and is considered in our analysis of cumulative effects (see Chapter 5).

C.2.3 Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative

The Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) is a new management-science partnership developed by the Service to identify strategies for understanding and responding to impacts from climate change at the landscape scale. The LCC seeks to coordinate discussion among its partners to identify shared conservation goals and prioritize science and information needs essential to achieve its goals. Partnerships include Federal, State and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, the academic community, and other entities in Arctic Alaska and northern Canada regions. The Arctic LCC is one cooperative in a national and future international network. The area includes the Arctic Plains and Mountains Bird Conservation Regions, which extend into Canada, the North Slope of Alaska, and adjacent marine areas of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. Arctic Refuge falls within the boundaries of the Arctic LCC. The goals of the Arctic LCC are not counter to the goals and objectives identified by Arctic Refuge. Instead, the overall goal of the Arctic LCC is to increase and share expertise and capacity to achieve common landscape conservation goals. The LCC is not considered a reasonably foreseeable future action. Arctic Refuge would likely benefit from the mission and work of the Arctic LCC. In addition, it is not anticipated that the Revised Plan will affect the Arctic LCC.

C.2.4 Parks Canada, Vuntut National Park, Five-year Management Plan and Review

In 2010, Parks Canada completed its five-year management plan and review for Vuntut National Park. The park is located in the northwestern region of the Yukon Territory in Canada. It shares a border with Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose of the park is, "To protect for all time a representative natural area of Canadian significance in the Northern Yukon Natural Region and to encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the area in a manner which leaves it unimpaired for future generations; and to recognize Vuntut Gwich'in history and culture and protect the traditional and current use of the park by the Vuntut Gwich'in." One major change to the 2004 management plan included wilderness declaration in the northern three-quarters of the park. This designation includes the portion of the park that shares a border with Arctic Refuge. Considering the additional wilderness designation combined with the Park's overall goals and objectives, it is not anticipated that the new management plan will adversely affect the Arctic Refuge Plan, and the Vuntut National

Park Five-year Management Plan is not considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action. The Revised Plan is not expected to affect Vuntut National Park's management plan.

C.2.5 National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan and EIS

The Naval Petroleum Reserve-Alaska was established in 1923 to reserve land for oil and gas development for naval defense purposes. In 1976, the jurisdiction on the Naval Petroleum Reserve-Alaska was transferred to the Department of the Interior (DOI) and its name changed to National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). The reserve is approximately 22 million acres in size, encompassing several Iñupiat villages. Since the late 1990s, the BLM has written plans for the northeastern and northwestern portions of the NPR-A, leaving approximately nine million acres of land without a land use plan.

On March 30, 2012, BLM released a draft Integrated Activity Plan and EIS for the entire reserve. This document updates and replaces current plans for the northeastern and northwestern part of the NPR-A and would, for the first time, provide a plan for the southernmost part of the area. The draft plan incorporates the most current information and lays out management goals, objectives, and actions across the entire NPR-A. Other issues the plan considered are climate change, invasive species, raptor habitat, and the recent listing of polar bears as a threatened and endangered species.

DOI announced the preferred alternative for the Integrated Activity Plan on August 14, 2012, about one month after the close of the public comment period on the draft plan. Under the preferred alternative, approximately 11.8 million acres of the reserve would be available for leasing, and areas such as Teshekpuk Lake, some coastal areas, Colville River raptor nesting areas, and areas important for subsistence would receive special protections from development. The Final Integrated Activity Plan and EIS are scheduled to be released in November 2012 with a record of decision (ROD) by the end of the calendar year.

Due to the distance to the Refuge, it is not anticipated that the Integrated Activity Plan and EIS will affect management goals and objectives in the Revised Plan. In addition, it is not anticipated the Revised Plan will affect the Integrated Activity Plan and EIS. However, the two planning efforts do overlap in their analyses of cumulative effects across the Arctic Region. The Integrated Activity Plan and EIS are considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action and are considered in our analysis of cumulative effects (see Chapter 5). The Service and BLM will continue to coordinate their respective planning efforts.

C.2.6 Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan

The BLM is developing a Resource Management Plan for their Eastern Interior Planning Area. The Resource Management Plan will provide future direction for 6.7 million acres of public land including the White Mountains National Recreation Area, the Steese National Conservation Area, and the Fortymile area near Chicken and Eagle, Alaska. In addition, it will cover public lands managed by the BLM in the upper Black River area, a portion of which borders Arctic Refuge. BLM lands in the upper Black River area are currently not included in any existing land use plan. The area is extremely remote and BLM receives few applications for the use of these lands.

Resource management plans provide the BLM with comprehensive, long-term direction concerning the use and management of resources on BLM-managed public lands. The Eastern

Interior Resource Management Plan will establish goals and objectives for managing resources, and it will outline the measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives. It will identify lands available for certain uses, along with any restrictions on those uses, and will identify lands closed to certain uses.

The draft Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan was released on February 24, 2012, with public review and comment analysis extending through the summer of 2012. BLM's preferred alternative is to open the Upper Black River Subunit, which includes BLM lands adjacent to the Refuge's southeastern boundary, to new mining claims and to open 74 percent of the subunit to oil and gas leasing. The Salmon Fork watershed, which would be designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, would be closed to mineral leasing and would be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. Thirteen watersheds would be identified as Riparian Conservation Areas, and the subunit would be managed for dispersed recreation. Off road vehicles would be limited by weight and width.

The proposed final plan release date has not been published, but the ROD should follow in 2013. At this time, the Resource Management Plan is not anticipated to adversely affect Arctic Refuge management goals or objectives, nor is it anticipated the Revised Plan would affect the Resource Management Plan. It is possible that some commercial service providers could decide not to operate in Arctic Refuge in response to the Service's management policies, and they could be displaced to Eastern Interior lands managed by BLM. These effects would likely be negligible. Should mineral and/or oil and gas development activities be applied for and authorized by the BLM, construction activities could affect visitor experience and wilderness characteristics near the southeastern boundary of the Refuge; however, such development activities are not considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action.

The Service and the BLM will continue to coordinate their respective planning efforts, specifically because: 1) the Resource Management Plan is still under development, 2) the range of management alternatives includes lands adjacent to Arctic Refuge, and 3) the two planning processes overlap in their analyses of cumulative effects across the Interior Yukon River Basin. The Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan is considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action and is considered in our analysis of cumulative effects (see Chapter 5).

C.2.7 Dalton Highway Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan

The Dalton Highway Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan was completed in March 2010. It is a comprehensive evaluation of the byway's intrinsic qualities; it also serves as a guide for management, protection, and enhancement of present and future intrinsic qualities. The plan was developed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) to designate the highway as a National Scenic Byway. Development of the plan included cooperation from local communities, organizations, businesses, and public agencies; they came together to fashion a local vision for the desired future of the byway. The Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan provides information on stakeholder concerns and describes how these concerns influence management and planning. ADNR hopes the plan will be used as a tool to educate others about stakeholder concerns and provide suggestions on how to mitigate for them. The overall mission of the plan is "to act as a collective voice for all byway stakeholders in order to address concerns relating to current and future uses, management actions, and developments in the Dalton Highway corridor and to preserve, protect, and enhance the byway's intrinsic qualities...for the benefit of current and future travelers." It is not anticipated that the Arctic Refuge Revised Plan would be adversely affected by the Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership

Plan or that the Revised Plan would affect the Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan. The Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan is not considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action.

C.2.8 Polar Bear Conservation Plan

The Service is in the early planning stage of developing the Polar Bear Conservation Plan. Polar bears were listed under the Endangered Species Act on May 15, 2008. The Endangered Species Act and the Marine mammal Protection Act (MMPA) require the Service to develop a recovery plan and a conservation plan, respectively, to identify and implement future conservation, management, and research activities. The Service has determined that the plan will identify threats to polar bears, identify action items to address those threats and involve partners in the process of development and implementation. The intent of the plan is to guide management and research activities now and into the future; it is scheduled to be completed in the fall/winter of 2013. It is not anticipated that the Polar Bear Conservation Plan will affect Arctic Refuge's Revised Plan; it may actually help supplement conservation efforts of the polar bear on Arctic Refuge. In addition, the Refuge Revised Plan is not anticipated to affect the Polar Bear Conservation Plan. The Polar Bear Conservation Plan was considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action and is considered in our analysis of cumulative effects (see Chapter 5).

C.2.9 Alaska Clean Seas North Slope Spill Response

Alaska Clean Seas was established in 1979 under the original name, Alaskan Beaufort Sea Oil Spill Response Body. Alaska Clean Seas is a nonprofit corporation that provides oil spill response efforts to its members; however, it can respond to non-member spills if authorization is given. Membership is voluntary and includes individuals from oil and pipeline companies that currently engage in or plan to engage in exploration, development, production, or pipeline transport activities. Originally, Alaska Clean Seas only provided offshore oil and gas exploration support; however, today the corporation provides support to onshore and offshore exploration, the northern section of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, as well as onshore production for the North Slope. Other areas of operation outside of the North Slope include the outer continental shelf of the State of Alaska, lands beneath Alaska navigable waters, adjacent beaches, harbors, inland waterways, and natural and artificial islands.

Alaska Clean Seas will not adversely affect the Arctic Refuge Revised Plan's management goals and objectives. It may actually benefit the Refuge by providing oil spill response to Alaska Clean Seas members (e.g., ExxonMobil) that propose developments near Refuge boundaries. In addition, it is not expected that the Revised Plan will adversely affect Alaska Clean Seas. There is no action associated with Alaska Clean Seas and it is not considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action.

C.3 List of Actions

C.3.1 *Alaska Pipeline Project*

The Alaska Pipeline Project began in 2008. This proposal is for a natural gas pipeline development project. The two partnering companies overseeing the project are TransCanada and ExxonMobil. The scope of the project would include a gas treatment plant near Prudhoe Bay, Alaska; a gas transmission pipeline that would connect the Point Thomson field (gas extraction location) to the gas treatment plant; and a transmission pipeline that would deliver the gas to market. This final transmission pipeline has two proposed routes. The first route would extend from Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope of Alaska along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System route to Delta Junction. From there, it would continue southeast into Canada. The second route would extend from Prudhoe Bay south to Valdez, Alaska, following the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System route in its entirety. In July 2010, the project completed its first open season to determine if a market exists for production and delivery of the gas resource. Approvals for the project are expected in 2014, and the first gas extraction is expected to commence in 2020.

At this time, the project is not anticipated to adversely affect Arctic Refuge management goals or objectives, nor do we anticipate the Revised Plan would affect the Alaska Pipeline Project. Should the pipeline be developed, construction activities in the Dalton Highway corridor near the Refuge's westernmost boundary (i.e., near the Atigun River) could affect visitor experience and wilderness characteristics during the construction phase of the project. The Alaska Pipeline Project is considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action and is considered in our analysis of cumulative effects (see Chapter 5).

C.3.2 *Point Thomson Project Environmental Impact Statement*

In July 2012, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) released a Final EIS for the proposed Point Thomson Oil and Gas Development Project. The project would be located on the North Slope of Alaska west of Arctic Refuge. The purpose of the project is to develop the Thomson Sand Reservoir to extract gas condensate and oil for the purpose of commercial production. The site would include three drilling pads, wells, infield roads, pipelines, a landing area, and a gravel mine. The drilling pads would be located two and five miles from the western boundary of the Refuge: the central pad would be located five miles from the Refuge boundary and eight miles from the Canning River; the east pad would be located two miles from the Refuge boundary and five miles from the Canning River. The Corps is withholding the preferred alternative for their ROD, which will be issued after public notice of a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit application by ExxonMobil.

The Refuge has some concerns relative to the proximity of the drilling pads to the Refuge, especially the Canning River. The Refuge recently completed a wild and scenic river review for selected rivers or river segments within the Refuge and the Canning River was determined to have river-related fish, wildlife, recreational, and cultural values. Development associated with the Point Thomson Project could adversely affect visitor experience, wilderness characteristics, disturb or displace wildlife in the lower Canning River corridor, or alter habitat quality in the northwest corner of the Refuge. Additionally, the development would occur in a known caribou subsistence area used by the people of Kaktovik.

The public raised several concerns during the scoping period for the Point Thomson Project in 2010. Some of the comments focused on visual and noise impacts, while others specifically referenced impacts to Arctic Refuge. Air and water quality concerns were also raised. To address these concerns, the Corps conducted detailed data collection and analysis, such as for a visual resource assessment and noise technical report, to determine anticipated pre- and post-development impacts of the project. The Point Thomson Project is considered in Chapter 5 of the Revised Plan as a reasonably foreseeable future action that may have an impact on the goals and objectives of the Revised Plan. The Revised Plan is not expected to impact the Point Thomson Project. The Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will continue to coordinate our respective planning efforts.

C.3.3 Poker Flat Research Range Environmental Impact Statement

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is currently preparing an EIS of its Sounding Rockets Program at the Poker Flat Research Range, which is owned and managed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks. NASA hopes to continue use of the Poker Flat Research Range and must seek authorization to do so from the Service and BLM because lands managed by those agencies are impacted by the Sounding Rockets Program. The Service is a cooperating agency for this EIS.

Since the late 1960s, NASA has been using the Poker Flat Research Range to launch suborbital rockets in part to conduct atmospheric research on the aurora, ozone layer, solar protons, Earth's electric and magnetic fields, and ultraviolet radiation.

Since the program began, approximately 219 NASA and 116 non-NASA rocket launches have occurred at the Poker Flat Research Range; 34 of these launches have been conducted by NASA in the past 10 years. Downrange flight zones are located to the north of the range. These zones are the areas over which rockets are launched and within which spent stages and payloads impact the ground. Lands owned or managed by the Service, BLM, State of Alaska, Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government, Native organizations, and individuals are in these flight zones; portions of Arctic Refuge are in these zones.

NASA's EIS will assess the impacts of the Sounding Rockets Program, including the effects of recovery versus abandonment of spent rocket parts, payloads, and other equipment. It will also discuss a variety of recovery initiatives. Once the EIS is completed, NASA is hoping the Service will issue limited authorizations for the Poker Flat Research Range Sounding Rockets Program so that it may continue. Additionally, in January 2012, NASA became a cooperating agency on the Revised Plan, providing specialized expertise on the Sounding Rockets Program and the alternatives under consideration in the Plan. The Poker Flat Research Range EIS was considered in Chapter 5 of the Revised Plan as a reasonably foreseeable future action that may have an impact on the goals and objectives of the Revised Plan. The wilderness issue in the Revised Plan could have major effects on the Poker Flat Sounding Rockets Program. Effects vary across alternatives and are fully described in Chapter 5.

C.3.4 Foothills West Transportation Access

The Foothills West Transportation Access Project (commonly referred to as the Foothills Project or Umiat Road Project) proposes to construct an all season gravel road from the Dalton Highway to Umiat, Alaska. The purpose of the Foothills Project is to provide access to

oil and gas resources both along the northwestern foothills of the Brooks Range, and in the NPR-A. The road would provide exploration and development opportunities for the area, as well as facilitate more economically feasible NPR-A development. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is currently developing an EIS for the proposed road to Umiat. The Corps published the final scoping report in February 2012, and expects to release the draft EIS in the fall of 2013; the ROD is expected to be published in winter 2014. The Umiat Road Project is a reasonably foreseeable action and is considered in our analysis of cumulative effects (see Chapter 5). The Service does not expect the project to impact the Revised Plan's goals, objectives, management policies, or guidelines. Additionally, we do not expect the Revised Plan to impact the Foothills Project.

C.3.5 Barter Island Airport Improvements

The existing Barter Island Airport is in Arctic Refuge and is located on a gravel spit extending from the northeast corner of Barter Island. The airport provides the only year-round access to the community of Kaktovik, Alaska. The runway is exposed to the Beaufort Sea and Kaktovik Lagoon on three sides, and is periodically submerged by floods from sea storms. Flooding has damaged airport infrastructure and interrupted air service and the delivery of supplies.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and North Slope Borough plan to relocate the airport to the south side of Barter Island, about one mile southwest of Kaktovik, onto lands owned by the Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation (KIC). The site is at the island's highest elevation and is therefore less susceptible to flooding. The new airport would be designed to meet the safety standards and aviation needs of Kaktovik for the next 20 years, while minimizing operational and maintenance costs. An environmental impact assessment was completed for this project in January 2009. Construction will begin late in 2012 after freeze-up; the project is expected to take three years to complete with most work occurring during winter months (K. Tabisola, FAA, project manager, pers.comm.).

Arctic Slope Regional Corporation owns the gravel that would be used to build the airport, and associated infrastructure. However, under the terms of a land exchange that granted Arctic Slope Regional Corporation the subsurface estate under KIC lands, the Refuge has input over the design and reclamation of the material sites to ensure development does not frustrate the purposes of the Refuge (see Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2.1). The Refuge will coordinate with FAA and the North Slope Borough as needed during the project construction phase.

The Barter Island Airport Improvement project is considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action and is considered in our analysis of cumulative effects (see Chapter 5). The Barter Island Airport Improvement project will not adversely affect management goals or objectives presented in the Revised Plan, nor would the project affect the conclusions drawn in the Plan's wilderness review (Appendix H). Similarly, the Revised Plan is not expected to affect the Barter Island Airport Improvement project.

C.3.6 Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Leases

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management released a Final Programmatic EIS and Proposed Final Program decision document on June 26, 2012. The Final Programmatic EIS analyzes six oil and gas lease planning areas for the leasing period of 2012-2017. The proposed action alternative involves a lease sale in 2017 for the Beaufort Sea Planning Area with proposed

subsistence deferment areas near Kaktovik and at the far western border of the planning area. Any sale that takes place in 2017 will require an EIS be provided to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management prior to any exploration activities in the lease area.

The Proposed Final Program would require the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to publish an annual progress report that includes an opportunity for stakeholders and the public to comment on the program's implementation. The progress reports would provide the public with an overview of activities occurring in the previous year, and the findings in each report could lead the Secretary of the Interior to revise the program by delaying, cancelling, or reducing the size of scheduled lease sales. Revisions, such as including new areas or adding more sales, could result in the preparation of a new program.

It is important to note that the sale of oil and gas leases in the Beaufort Sea does not mean that exploration and drilling activities are imminent. The sale authorizes the right to apply for certain activities, such as exploration and drilling. The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) requires an EIS be completed prior to the execution and approval of the sale.

The Beaufort Sea is outside the purview of the Revised Plan. While the lease sale is considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action, the sale would have no impact on the goals, objectives, management policies, or guidelines in the Revised Plan. Similarly, the Revised Plan would have no impact on the lease sale. We do not anticipate the Revised Plan affecting any future oil and gas exploration and development activities stemming from the leases. However, the Service will coordinate with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on any future NEPA analyses associated with proposed oil and gas exploration or development activities in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area, especially for any activity for which Arctic Refuge is included in the cumulative effects portion of the associated NEPA analysis.

C.3.7 State Notice of Sale of North Slope Leases

On December 7, 2011, ADNOR issued a Notice of Sale for 3,145 tracts of State land ranging in size from 640 to 5,760 acres in the Beaufort Sea, the North Slope, and the North Slope Foothills areas. These leases allow for the possibility of oil and gas exploration and development in the areas adjacent to Arctic Refuge. The sale resulted in a preliminary sale of 178 Tracts (334,969 total acres). Of those tracts sold, 34 (or 109,440 acres) were between the Refuge boundary and the existing Trans Alaska pipeline. Three tracts (734, 740, and 743) are adjacent to the Refuge boundary, and the Canning River constitutes the easternmost boundary of tract 743.

Before proceeding with any federally regulated activity resulting from lease sales on State or Federal lands, the lessee must meet the various requirements of NEPA. The Service will participate as a cooperating agency on any activities for which Arctic Refuge is included in the cumulative effects portion of the associated EIS.

For the purposes of the Revised Plan, the Notice of Sale issued by ADNOR is considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action; however, the sale of leases is not expected to have an impact on the Revised Plan. Additionally, the Revised Plan should not have an impact on lease sales. We do not anticipate the Revised Plan affecting any future oil and gas exploration and development activities stemming from the leases. However, the Service will coordinate with the State and any Federal regulatory agencies involved in any oil and gas exploration or development activities stemming from the lease sales to ensure these activities do not impact resources within Arctic Refuge.

C.3.8 Predator Control near Arctic Refuge

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) accepted amended proposal 130 of the intensive management section authorizing intensive management of brown bear in Game Management Unit (GMU) 26B in an attempt to lessen predatory pressure on the GMU's muskox population. The muskox population has stabilized at a population level lower than ADFG's target. GMU 26B contains both State owned land and a portion of Arctic Refuge. With the exception of Refuge lands, the proposal accepted by ADFG will allow 20 brown bears to be taken annually.

Proposal 130 identifies that intensive predator management is not authorized on Federal land, unless changes in Service policy occur. The impact of harvesting predators outside the Refuge was examined by Refuge staff during development of the Revised Plan. Because bears may wander widely, this action may impact wildlife populations on Arctic Refuge and could run contrary to the goals, objectives, management policies, and guidelines for the Refuge. Conversely, the Refuge's management approach of letting ecological systems prevail and generally avoiding responses to climate change could adversely affect the State's efforts to achieve target wildlife population levels.

Proposal 130 is considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action, and is included in Chapter 5 of the Revised Plan. The State of Alaska is our closest partner in wildlife management, and we will seek to work with them on any impacts, positive or negative, that might occur as a result of proposal 130 or the Revised Plan.