



Arctic National Wildlife Refuge *Planning for its Future*

Planning Update 5 / 2015

Message from the Refuge Manager



It's been a long journey developing the Arctic Refuge's Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan. As we enter the final phase, I'm privileged to serve the team as refuge manager. Prior to his retirement, manager Richard Voss expressed his appreciation for the high level of public involvement in the planning process. I'd like to echo his comments. Your interest and input has indeed been very valuable.

I look forward to implementing the Revised Plan and working with you on a wide array of management concerns for Arctic Refuge.

**Brian Glaspell
Refuge Manager**

The process to develop the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Plan, Revised Plan) has been lengthy and involved, and the Plan has generated a high level of national interest and controversy. We are excited to now release the Revised Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

This Planning Update describes key features of the Revised Plan and Final EIS, as well as the Plan's Preferred Alternative (see page 16). One major change is that, after 40 years of public service, refuge manager Richard Voss retired in December 2012. We greatly appreciate his involvement in Arctic Refuge's planning efforts. We are pleased to introduce Brian Glaspell—manager at Arctic National Wildlife Refuge since April 2013. Brian came to the Refuge from the U.S. Forest Service and previous work in the Alaska Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Plan Summary

The public was first contacted regarding the Revised Plan (at scoping) in April 2010. The planning process will conclude with the Plan's Record of Decision. This booklet summarizes the key decisions and changes we made in response to public comments on the draft Revised Plan and draft EIS.

Here are some of the decisions we think you will be most interested in:

- We did not add an alternative focused on oil and gas development
- The proposed requirement that Refuge users apply for and receive a Special Use Permit for temporary facilities related to the taking of fish and wildlife in designated Wilderness was removed
- Two of the alternatives (B and C) include an interim cap on commercial recreational guides operating on the Kongakut River
- We will pursue regulations to ban pack goats, sheep, and llamas throughout the Refuge because of disease-transmission concerns to wildlife, especially Dall's sheep
- Acreage values in the Plan were revised and may not agree with previously published acreages, including those in the draft Plan/EIS

We invite you to read through this booklet to learn more about what is in the Revised Plan and Final EIS. The full text, along with all the maps and appendices, is available in four volumes at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>. Please keep in mind that this overview cannot go into the details provided in the full Plan. We encourage you to look at the full Plan for an in-depth review of specific topics, and to that end, we cross-referenced this booklet to the different chapters and sections in the full Plan.

Some key sections of the full Revised Plan and Final EIS include:

- Chapter 1: Introduction, Refuge Overview, Purpose and Need for Action, Vision Statement
- Chapter 2: Goals and Objectives, Management Policies and Guidelines
- Chapter 3: Issues and Alternatives
- Chapter 4: Description of the Refuge Environment
- Chapter 5: Effects of the Proposed Alternatives
- Appendix H: Wilderness Review
- Appendix I: Wild and Scenic River Review
- Volume 3: Responses to Public Comments
- Volume 4: Sample of Public Comments



Primrose - USFWS

General Overview

During the fall of 2011, the public provided us with a tremendous number of comments on the draft Plan/EIS. Refuge staff have now read through and evaluated all of those comments. Many of the comments resulted in changes to the Plan/EIS. Changes range from minor edits and clarifications to major additions or revisions to the content of the Plan, including text, tables, maps, and figures. Some of the changes apply across the entire Plan, including the following:

Wilderness Terminology

We added a “Note about Wilderness Terminology” to the front pages of Volumes 1, 2, and 3 to explain how we use wilderness-related terms throughout the Revised Plan. “Wilderness” (with a capital “W”) refers to designated Wilderness lands, and “wilderness” (not capitalized) is used as an adjective to describe wilderness-related qualities across the Refuge, including in Minimal Management areas.

Acreages

Many of the acreages listed in the Revised Plan and final EIS differ from those published elsewhere, including the draft Plan/EIS. While the boundaries have not changed, our ability to accurately measure the land area has improved. For example, in 1980 ANILCA stated eight million acres of Wilderness were designated in the Refuge; however, newer technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), estimate the size of the designated Wilderness area as 7.16 million acres. Another example is that the size of the Refuge was previously published as 19.3 million acres but is listed in the Revised Plan as 19.64 million acres. We added a “Note About Acreages” to the front pages of Volumes 1, 2, and 3 to more completely explain our approach.

ANILCA

ANILCA 1004 does not apply to Arctic Refuge, and all references to it were removed from the Plan/EIS.

NASA

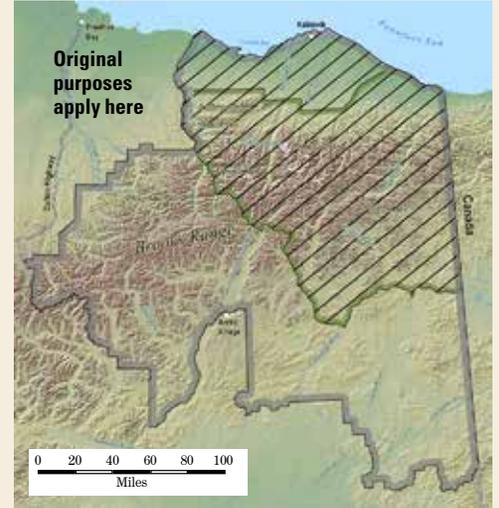
Since the Draft Plan was released, we welcomed the National Aeronautics

Original Purposes

The Arctic Refuge was established in 1960 as the Arctic National Wildlife Range:

“For the purpose of preserving unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values...”

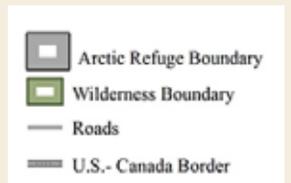
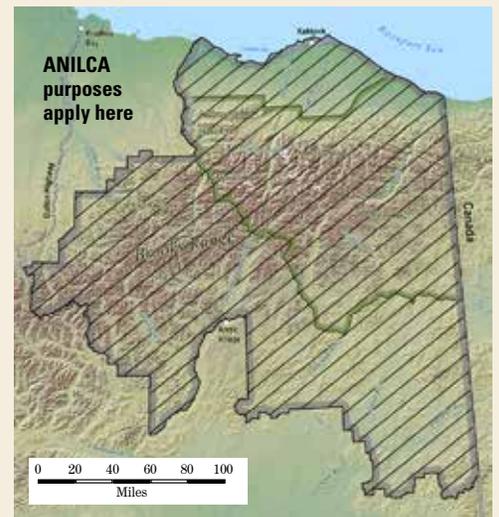
These purposes continue to apply to all lands and waters in the original Arctic Range.



ANILCA Purposes

In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) redesignated the Range as part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, designated 7.16 million acres of it as Wilderness, designated three Wild Rivers, and set four purposes for the entire Refuge:

- (i) To conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity;**
- (ii) To fulfill the international fish and wildlife treaty obligations of the United States;**
- (iii) To provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents, and**
- (iv) To ensure water quality and necessary water quantity within the Refuge.**



and Space Administration (NASA) as a cooperating agency.

Refuge Purposes

Since publishing the draft Revised Plan and EIS, we received clarification about how the establishing Refuge purposes guide management. Established in 1960, the Arctic National Wildlife Range (Range) was created “for the purpose of preserving unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values.” In

1980, ANILCA re-designated the Range as part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and provided four purposes that guide management of the entire Refuge. Under the provisions of Section 305 of ANILCA, the Range purposes from 1960 remain in force and effect on the lands and waters in the original Range to the extent they are consistent with ANILCA. ANILCA purposes apply to the entire Refuge.

Goals and Objectives (Chapter 2, Section 2.1)

We made changes to several of the goals and objectives in response to public comments on the draft Plan/EIS. Most changes were editorial in nature, but in some instances we changed the meaning of a goal or objective.

Goals and objectives are considered to be the heart of the Revised Plan. Goals are descriptive, open-ended, and broad statements that convey how Refuge management will meet Refuge purposes and achieve the management vision. Objectives are concise statements of what the Refuge wants to achieve; how, when, and where to achieve it; and who is responsible for the work. Together, the goals and objectives outline the programs and projects Refuge staff will work on for the next 15 years.

Goal 1 (Section 2.1.1)

Goal 1 and its objectives focus on the inventory and monitoring of biological resources in the Refuge. Although Goal 1 was revised since the draft Plan, it retained its original meaning. Changes to the objectives include: 1) prioritizing the Refuge Inventory and Monitoring step-down plan to begin immediately upon approval of the Revised Plan rather than waiting two years; 2) including tribes and local communities as important partners for many of the programs identified in the objectives; and 3) moving objectives pertaining to the study of water resources to Goal 3.

Goal 1 now states: **Ecological processes continue to shape the Refuge, and to the greatest degree possible, these processes remain free of the intent to alter the natural order, including the dynamics of fish and wildlife populations and their relationships with natural habitats.**

Objectives include:

- manage the Refuge to support biological integrity, environmental health, and wildness
- revise the Ecological Inventory and Monitoring Plan
- prepare a research plan
- conduct an Ecological Review of the Refuge's biological program
- maintain a fire management program
- participate in State of Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game and the Federal Subsistence Board processes

- prepare a land protection plan
- identify and determine the status of rare species
- conduct long-term ecological monitoring

Goal 2 (Section 2.1.2)

Goal 2 and its objectives address the management of wilderness characteristics across the Refuge, including in designated Wilderness. The goal itself was reworded, but it retains its original meaning. Changes to the objectives include: 1) explaining which objectives apply Refuge-wide and which apply only to designated Wilderness; 2) adding a new objective on restoring and rehabilitating degraded and/or impaired sites; 3) rewording the objective on monitoring to clarify its intent; and 4) prioritizing the Wilderness Stewardship Plan to begin immediately upon approval of the Revised Plan.

Goal 2 now states: **The Refuge preserves its wilderness values and characteristics, maintains its natural state in unaltered condition, and designated Wilderness is managed consistent with the intent of the Wilderness Act and ANILCA.**

Objectives include:

- integrate Wilderness management provisions into all Refuge activities in designated Wilderness
- complete a Minimum Requirement Analysis for Refuge management activities in designated Wilderness
- provide Wilderness training for staff
- develop a Wilderness Stewardship Plan
- analyze whether to remove one or more buildings at Lake Peters
- monitor characteristics commonly associated with designated Wilderness and other wild lands
- restore wilderness characteristics to sites that have been impaired or degraded

Goal 3 (Section 2.1.3)

Goal 3 was completely revised to encompass all the Refuge's waters, not just wild and scenic rivers. Changes to the objectives include: 1) adding a

new objective on water inventory and assessment activities; 2) adding a new objective for managing the Refuge's Marine Protected Area; 3) removing the objective requiring the sharing of information about the Refuge's wild rivers; and 4) moving wild river outreach to Goal 9.

Goal 3 now states: **The ecological functions and natural flow regimes of the Refuge's aquatic ecosystems, including headwater streams, rivers, springs, wetlands, lakes, and lagoons, are documented and protected, and designated Wild Rivers and the Marine Protected Area are managed in a manner consistent with their special designations.**

Objectives include:

- study and manage the Refuge's Marine Protected Area and enhance public awareness of it
- establish legal protection for water quality and quantity
- complete a water resource inventory and assessment
- monitor water quality and quantity
- assess baseline resources and complete Comprehensive River Management Plans for designated wild rivers

Goal 4 (Section 2.1.4)

Goal 4 was extensively revised. It was broadened from a subsistence-focused goal to one that recognizes the need to consult with tribes, Native corporations, Native organizations, and local residents on a wide range of environmental, biological, cultural, and subsistence issues and concerns. Changes to the objectives include: 1) adding a new objective on formal tribal consultation; and 2) changing one of the objectives to emphasize our commitment to provide opportunities for continued subsistence uses essential to the physical, economic, traditional, cultural, and social existence of federally qualified rural residents.

Goal 4 now states: **The Refuge, in consultation with appropriate parties, addresses concerns about proposed actions that may substantially or directly affect subsistence or cultural resources, rural subsistence or cultural uses, or the rights of tribes.**

(Continued on page 4)

(Goals and Objectives continued from page 3)

Objectives include:

- consult with Alaska Native tribes and Native corporations
- provide opportunities for continued subsistence uses
- continue and expand the Refuge Information Technician program
- develop harvest monitoring programs in partnership with local communities
- establish a network of compiled historical and contemporary subsistence use data
- cooperatively conduct a historical access study

Goal 5 (Section 2.1.5)

Goal 5 and its objectives focus on the management of visitor use. The goal itself was modified, but it is similar to what was in the draft Plan/EIS. While some text shifted between the objectives, the overall content of the objectives is similar to that in the draft Plan/EIS. Changes to the objectives include: 1) adding a new objective to ensure the Refuge continues to provide access for a range of visitor use opportunities; 2) deleting the visitor use management objective and instead incorporating its concepts into the Visitor Use Management Plan objective; and 3) prioritizing the Visitor Use Management Plan to begin immediately upon approval of the Revised Plan, rather than within two years after approval of the Revised Plan.

Goal 5 now states: **The Refuge provides a range of opportunities for wildlife-dependent and wilderness-associated recreational activities that emphasize adventure, independence, self-reliance, exploration, and solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation while protecting the Refuge's natural conditions and special values.**

Objectives include:

- continue to provide access for compatible recreational activities
- staff will minimize on-site contacts with visitors
- minimize placement of recreational facilities on Refuge lands
- develop a Visitor Use Management Plan
- continue to authorize commercial visitor services

- coordinate visitor management with neighboring land owners
- strengthen and unify law enforcement efforts through coordination
- maintain a long-term dataset about visitor experience
- implement strategies to address aircraft landing impacts to vegetation

Goal 6 (Section 2.1.6)

Goal 6 and its objectives focus on the study of climate change and its effects on resources in the Refuge. The goal and objectives are substantially the same as presented in the draft Plan. However, we included a new objective that states the Refuge will avoid actions aimed at resisting the effects of climate change on wildlife and ecosystems and will allow natural systems to adapt and evolve in response to changing climatic conditions.

Goal 6 now states: **The effects of climate change on Refuge resources are evaluated through research, monitoring, and local traditional knowledge, and these effects are considered in Refuge management decisions.**

Objectives include:

- evaluate potential effects of climate change on Refuge resources
- consider stressors when making management decisions
- collaborate with others on studying the effects of climate change
- avoid actions that resist the effects of climate change
- monitor biological components vulnerable to climate change

Goal 7 (Section 2.1.7)

Goal 7 was not edited. Its objectives address the scientific importance of the Refuge and remain substantially the same as presented in the draft Plan. The objective pertaining to water quality studies was moved to Goal 3.

Goal 7 continues to state: **Refuge staff and partners conduct research and monitoring in support of the Refuge's role as an internationally recognized benchmark for naturally functioning arctic and subarctic ecosystems.**

Objectives include:

- participate in collaborative research
- work with international partners
- develop research protocols and encourage scientific research by cooperators

Goal 8 (Section 2.1.8)

Goal 8 and its associated objectives focus on managing cultural resources. The goal itself was edited, but is similar to that in the draft Plan/EIS. Changes to the objectives include: 1) combining two objectives into one that focuses on collaboration, partnerships, and traditional knowledge; 2) strengthening the objectives about cultural resource management and partnering to improve resource protections; 3) re-prioritizing the Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan to be completed several years after the Revised Plan (although internal planning would still start within two years of the Revised Plan's approval); and 4) formally consulting with Tribes and engaging in partnerships with Native organizations regarding the collection, storage, and management of cultural resource information.

Goal 8 now states: **In consultation with appropriate parties, the Refuge documents, conserves, and protects cultural resources, both historic and prehistoric, to allow visitors and community members to appreciate the interconnectedness of the people of the region and their environment.**

Objectives include:

- in partnership, collect traditional knowledge about past and present conditions
- protect cultural resources and monitor at risk sites
- prepare an Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan
- improve management of cultural resources by conducting surveys and compiling a comprehensive cultural resources atlas and archive
- create a comprehensive cultural inventory of the Refuge

Management Policies and Guidelines (Chapter 2, Sections 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4)

Goal 9 (Section 2.1.9)

Goal 9 and its objectives address how we inform various audiences about Arctic Refuge. The eight objectives presented in the draft Plan/EIS were consolidated into four objectives: 1) working with distant audiences; 2) working with people who use the Refuge; 3) working with gateway communities; and 4) understanding national interest in Arctic Refuge.

Goal 9 now states: **Refuge staff provides outreach information to distant audiences, individuals who enter the Refuge, and people in gateway communities, to enhance their understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of Refuge lands and resources.**

Objectives include:

- use modern media technologies to provide information to the public
- provide information to the public about traveling to and in the Refuge
- collaboratively provide outreach information in communities near the Refuge
- perform a National Interest Study every 15 years

The Refuge's Management Policies and Guidelines (Guidelines) provide management direction for Refuge staff. Modifications made to the Guidelines should enable managers to more effectively manage the Refuge to meet its purposes, perpetuate its special values, and continue its role and function in the larger National Wildlife Refuge System. Key changes since the draft Plan include:

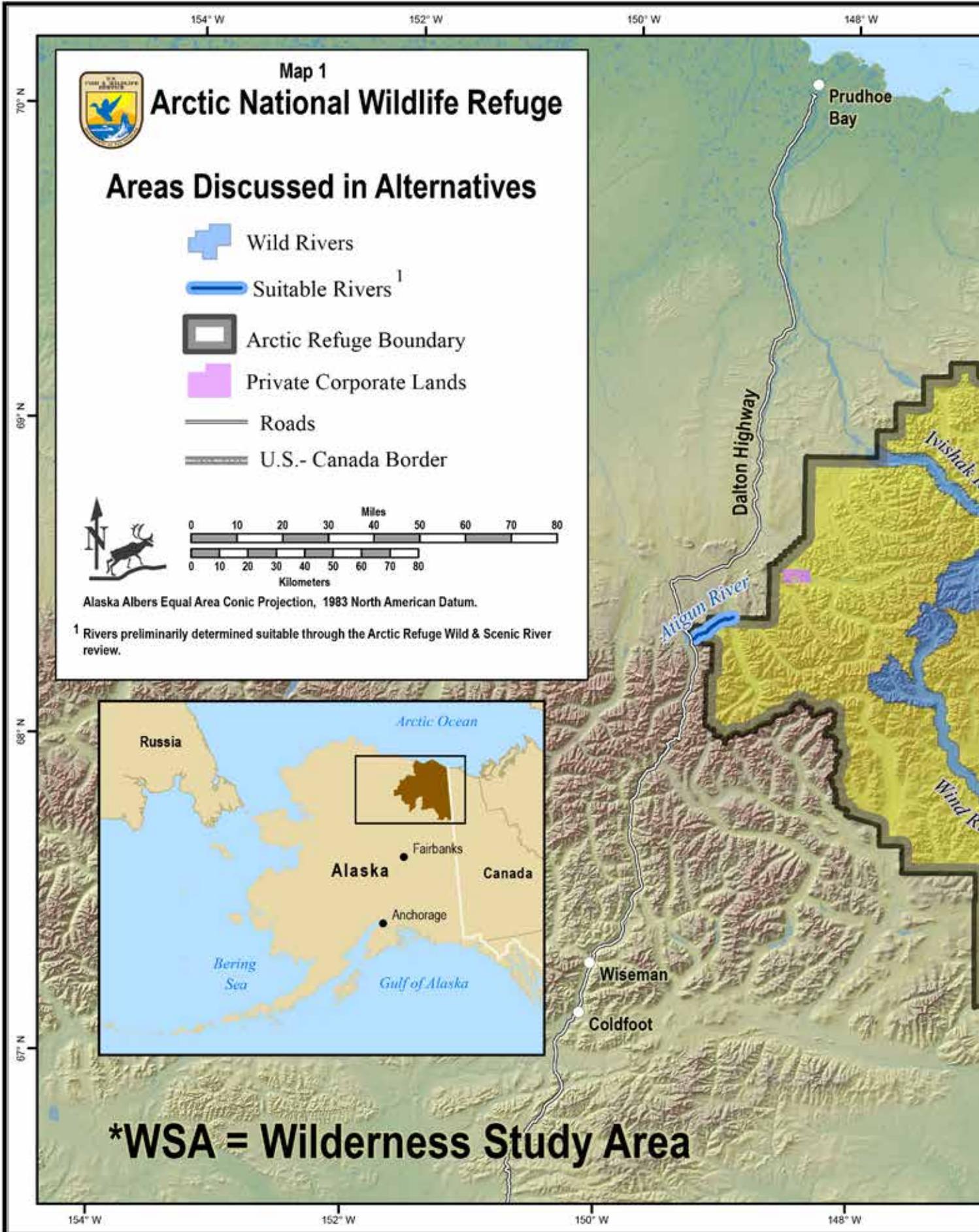
- The introduction to the Guidelines (Section 2.2) was rewritten to better explain how the Guidelines were developed to best meet the needs of Arctic Refuge
- The section on human safety and management emergencies was expanded to include threats to Refuge resources (Section 2.4.2)
- The proposed permit and fees for temporary facilities (such as lean-tos, fish racks, and caches) in designated Wilderness were removed from the Plan. Temporary facilities will be managed the same in Wilderness and Minimal Management, and they will continue to be managed as they have since the 1988 Plan was implemented. The Refuge may issue special use permits for the commercial use of tent platforms placed for more than 12 months on Refuge lands (Section 2.4.16.2)
- Fishery Enhancement is not allowed under any management category

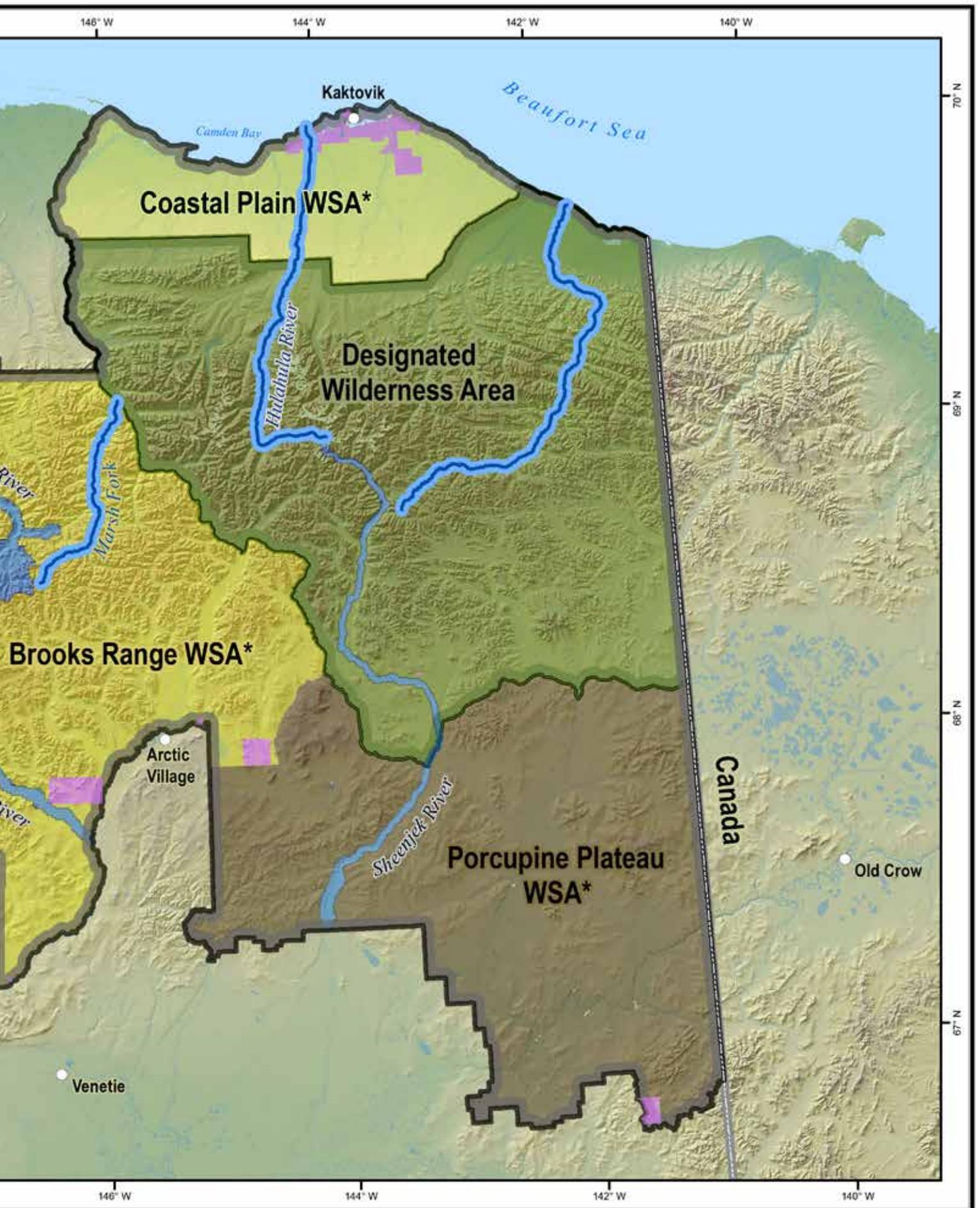
- Domestic animal restrictions apply to sheep, goats, and camelids (e.g., llamas and alpacas), and are intended to prevent the transmission of disease, especially to Dall's sheep. Regulations will be promulgated by the Refuge for non-commercial uses (Section 2.4.12.9)
- To reduce the potential introduction or spread of invasive plants, pelletized weed-free feed is the only allowable food for pack animals, and straw and hay is prohibited as bedding for dogs (Section 2.4.12.8)
- Boat docks are not allowed in Wilderness or Minimal Management categories (Section 2.4.16)

The following clarifications were made to the Guidelines:

- The authority of the State of Alaska and the Service in managing fish and wildlife was clarified for each respective agency (Section 2.4.12)
- A brief history and expanded explanation of the U.S. government relationship with tribal governments was added to Section 2.4.9.2, and we updated the Guidelines to reflect current policy on government-to-government consultation
- We clarified our intent to generally refrain from activities intended to resist the effects of climate change (Section 2.4.10.1)







Alternatives (Chapter 3)

[For a description of each Alternative see the table on pages 10-11 of this booklet. A map showing the areas discussed in the Alternatives appears on pages 6-7. To the right are six maps, one for each Alternative.]

We received a large number of comments on the alternatives published in the draft Plan/EIS. Many comments referenced ANILCA Section 1002, ANILCA's "No More" clauses, our projected budget, and the options we presented for Kongakut River visitor use management. Although a large number of commenters requested it, we did not add an alternative for oil and gas development. We retained the same six alternatives published in the draft Plan/EIS, but with some notable modifications (see the table on pages 10-11 and the maps to the right and on pages 6-7 in this booklet). For a complete description of all the management provisions under each of the alternatives, see Chapter 3, Section 3.2, and Table 3-1 of the full Plan.

Budget

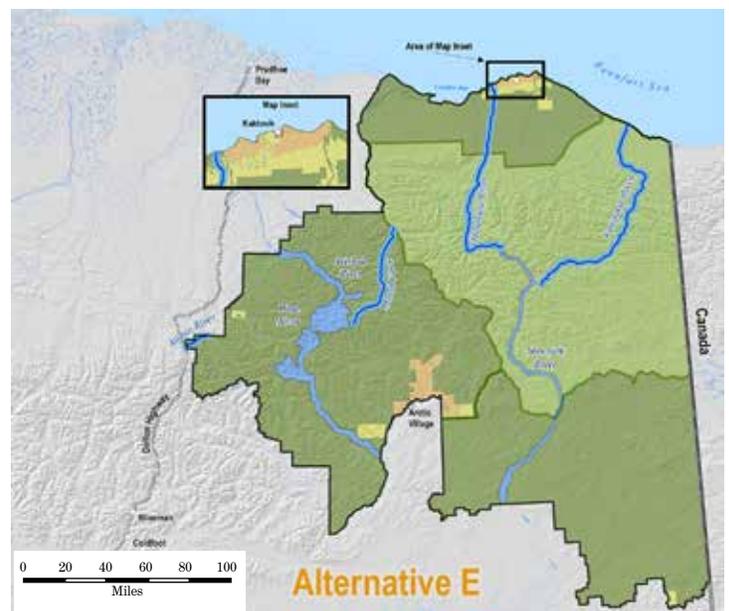
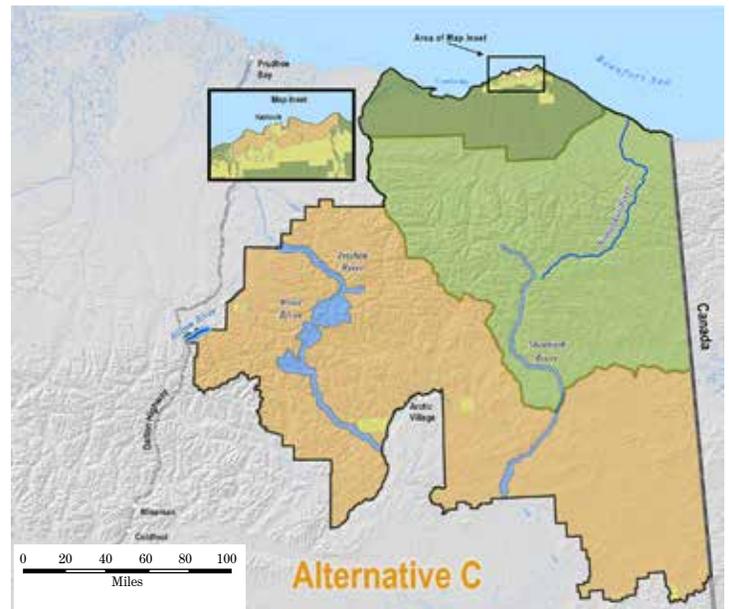
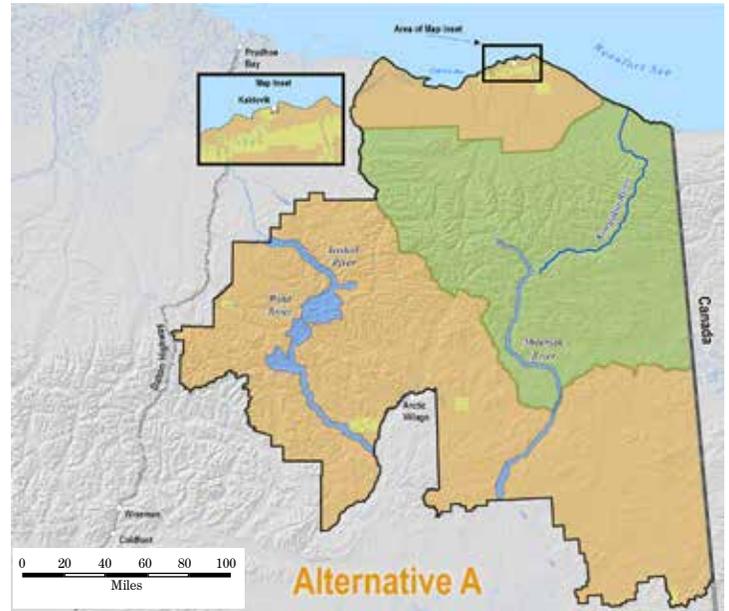
The projected budget to implement each of the alternatives was revised and is now lower than that which was published in the draft Plan. We accomplished this through strategic use of personnel, critically assessing the upcoming requirements outlined in the Plan, and reducing costs where possible.

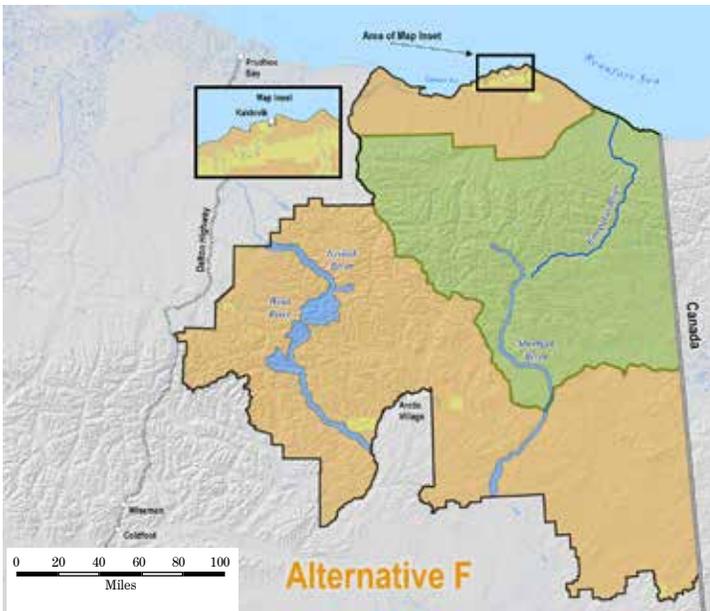
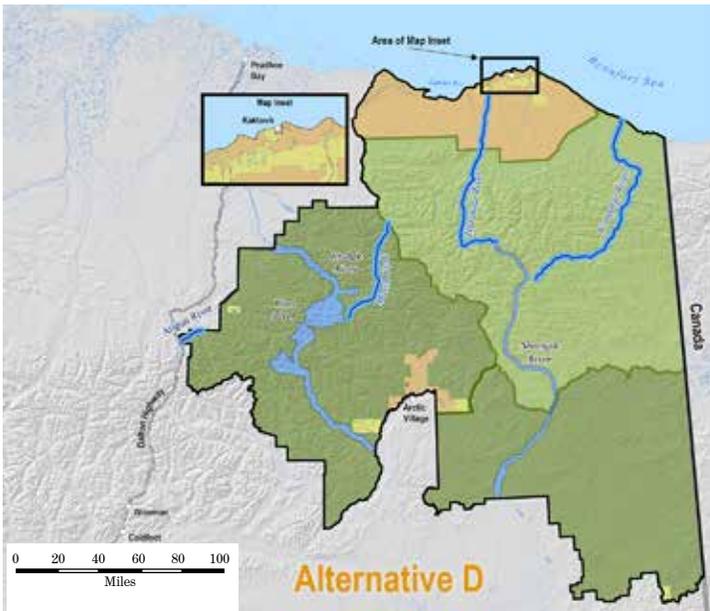
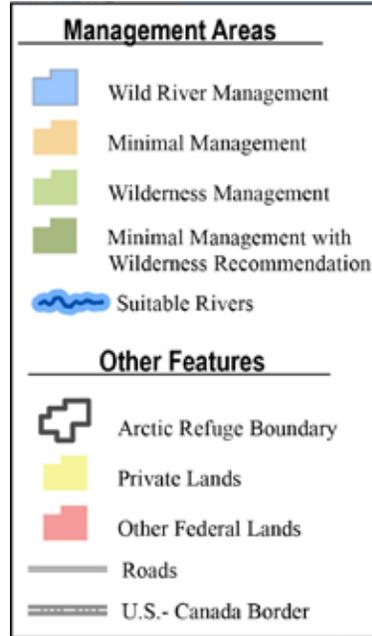
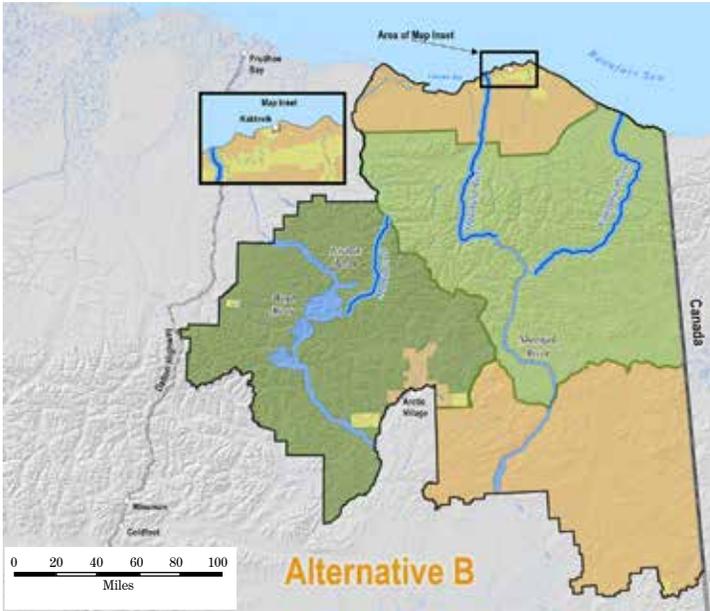
Kongakut River Visitor Use Management

As in the draft Plan/EIS, a Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP) would be completed under alternatives B-F. The VUMP would start immediately following approval of the Revised Plan, instead of two years later as we had in the draft Plan. For alternatives B-F, we clarified that all the proposed visitor management provisions would be interim management actions until the VUMP is completed. For alternatives B and C, we added an interim cap on recreation guides for 2013 to 2016 [see "Important Note about Dates" on page 9], or until the VUMP is completed, whichever comes first. Under Alternative A, we added a requirement to complete a Public Use Management Plan, as was called for in the 1988 Plan.

Maps

Maps depicting the alternatives were revised to more clearly show the areas near Arctic Village and Kaktovik that are not suitable for wilderness recommendation.



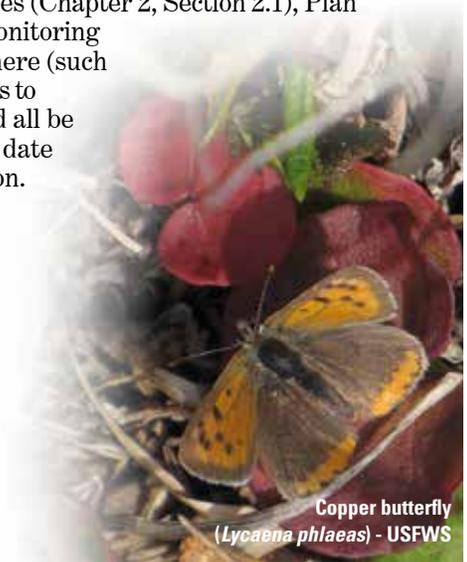


Important Note about Dates in the Revised Plan

Throughout the text of the Revised Plan, and all references to that text in this Planning Update (pages 8, 10, and 13), “2013” is given as the year to begin Refuge management actions and activities. However, the actual dates to begin, and complete, such efforts will be relative to the date the Record of Decision is signed for the Revised Plan, and should be adjusted accordingly.

For example, the Visitor Use Management Plan, Wilderness Stewardship Plan, and Ecological Inventory and Monitoring Plan may begin upon the signed approval of the Revised Plan. These step-down plans will be developed based on future staffing levels and funding.

Similarly, throughout the text of the Revised Plan, dates identified in the Goals and Objectives (Chapter 2, Section 2.1), Plan Implementation and Monitoring (Chapter 6), and elsewhere (such as in Volume 3, Responses to Public Comments) should all be adjusted relative to the date of the Record of Decision.



Management Alternatives

(Article about Alternatives is on page 8. Maps are on pages 6-9.)



Frosted Bearberry - USFWS

Issues	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B
Issue 1: Wilderness		
Should additional Wilderness Study Areas be recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and if so, which areas?	No new Wilderness recommended.	Recommend the Brooks Range Wilderness Study Area.
Issue 2: Wild and Scenic Rivers		
Should additional rivers be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS), and if so, which rivers?	No rivers recommended. Use existing management tools to maintain values on the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning rivers.	Recommend the Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning rivers. Use existing management tools to maintain values on the Atigun River.
Issue 3: Kongakut River Visitor Use		
How will the Refuge manage Kongakut River visitor use to protect natural resources and visitor experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Group size limits exist for guided groups (7 hikers, 10 floaters) ■ No group size limits for non-guided visitors ■ Information on minimum impact camping, etc., available on Refuge web site ■ Commercial service providers have Special Use Permits (SUPs) with occasional compliance checks ■ Monitoring of physical and social conditions occurs occasionally ■ Visitor impacts monitored periodically ■ On-site permit compliance checks done infrequently ■ In Kongakut valley, air operator permit holders required to land on non-vegetated surfaces and asked to follow all FAA advisories during flight operations ■ Prepare a Public Use Management Plan (as required by the 1988 Plan) 	<p>Same as Alternative A, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Step-down plans (VUMP/WSP*) initiated immediately ■ Issues addressed in step-down plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crowding and resource impacts - site rehabilitation - early communication to visitors ■ Interim measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand monitoring of degradation - Work with guides to reduce visitor volume - Work to disperse flights - Develop new outreach materials - Publish a launch schedule - Enforce permit conditions and Refuge regulations - Identify and repair degraded sites ■ Set an interim cap on commercial recreational guides from 2013* thru 2016, pending VUMP/WSP ■ Specifics of the cap: each year of the interim period recreational guides restricted to the average number of client use days they reported for 2007-2011 operating years

Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Recommend the Coastal Plain Wilderness Study Area.	Recommend the Brooks Range and Porcupine Plateau Wilderness Study Areas.	Recommend the Brooks Range, Porcupine Plateau, and Coastal Plain Wilderness Study Areas.	Same as Alternative A.
Recommend the Atigun River. Use existing management tools to maintain values on the Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning rivers.	Recommend the Atigun, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning rivers, and those portions of the Hulahula River managed by the Refuge.	Recommend the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning rivers.	Same as Alternative A.
<p data-bbox="66 835 440 867">Same as Alternative B.</p> <p data-bbox="66 1713 440 1770">* See important note about dates on page 9.</p> <p data-bbox="66 1835 440 1969">* VUMP = Visitor Use Management Plan WSP = Wilderness Stewardship Plan</p>	<p data-bbox="440 835 813 867">Same as Alternative B, except:</p> <ul data-bbox="440 898 813 989" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="440 898 813 989">■ No interim cap on commercial recreational guides 	<p data-bbox="813 835 1182 867">Same as Alternative D.</p>	<p data-bbox="1182 835 1555 867">Same as Alternative D.</p>

Public Comments (Volumes 3 and 4)

Public Input

On August 15, 2011, after months of considering public and internal scoping comments, identifying issues, and developing alternatives, the Service presented the public with a draft of the Revised Plan. The response we received during the following 90-day comment period was nothing short of overwhelming.

We received approximately 612,285 individual communications (an individual piece of mail, website submission, form letter, statement at a public hearing etc.). Of these communications, 1,988 were original statements (36% from Alaska). Twenty-six groups developed 39 form letter campaigns, resulting in 610,297 form letter submissions. Of these, 115,466 (19%) were edited or customized in some way by the sender. We received communications from 102 different communities in Alaska, from all 50 United States, and from 142 different countries.

Public Hearings and community meetings on the draft Revised Plan were held in six locations: Anchorage, Arctic Village, Fairbanks, Fort Yukon, Kaktovik and Venetie. We documented 584 attendees at the meetings, 197 of which provided oral comments. An additional 196 communications were submitted at the meetings in the form of letters, documents, handwritten materials, staff notes, and flip chart notes. We received a total of 393 communications of all types through community meetings and public hearings.

Content of Comments

The public commented on a wide variety of topics. The majority of the communications we received expressed opinions on oil and gas concerns, wilderness values, and whether the coastal plain of the Refuge (known as the 1002 Area) should or should not be opened for oil and gas development or exploration.

We also received communications expressing preference for a particular alternative; alternatives A, C, and E were mentioned most often. Other comment topics included: the lack of an oil and gas alternative; compliance with ANILCA and NEPA; predator control; traditional trails and cultural sites; soundscapes and visual resources; hunting and wildlife population issues; the impacts of climate change; public use; and many others. We provided the public with a snap-shot of public comments in our last planning update, available at http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Region_7/NWRS/Zone_1/Arctic/PDF/ccp/ccp4b.pdf.

How Your Comments were Used

All the communications we received were reviewed for sections, paragraphs, and sentences that would require a response from the Service. Such a section or paragraph is known as a “substantive comment.” In accordance with NEPA regulations, we defined substantive comments as those that:

- question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of the information in the EIS;

- question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis;
- present new information relevant to the analysis;
- present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the EIS, or new ideas for the alternatives; and/or
- cause changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives.

We identified a total of 1,305 comments that required a response from the Service.

Volumes 3 and 4 of the Revised Plan

Volume 3 of the Revised Plan presents all the comments identified as requiring a response from the Service, the Service’s responses, and summary statistics for all the communications we received. In many instances, the Revised Plan was modified to address the comment. In other cases, we wrote an explanation of why we did not make a recommended change.

Volume 4 contains indices to help the reader navigate through Volume 3. Volume 4 also contains full text samples of the communications we received, sorted into four appendices: form letters; communications from governments, agencies and tribes; communications from non-government organizations; and communications from individuals and other sources. In both Volumes 3 and 4, we accommodated people’s privacy where requested.



Porcupine River - USFWS

Step-Down Plans (Chapter 6, Sections 6.2 and 6.3)

Based on public comments and internal discussions, the step-down plans presented in the Plan were reprioritized (see Table at right). The Visitor Use Management Plan and the Wilderness Stewardship Plan are the highest priorities. They will be developed concurrently, and they may be combined into a single planning effort. Due to their complexity, their estimated completion date is later than that of other step-down plans.

Step-down plans deal with specific management topics. They describe strategies, schedules, and the details necessary to implement the goals and objectives in the Revised Plan and final EIS. Step-down planning will follow National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, including appropriate public involvement.

Timeline for start and completion of future Arctic Refuge step-down plans:

Future Step-Down Plans	Priority	Start Date	Estimated Completion Date
Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP) ¹	1	2013 ³	2018
Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP) ¹	1	2013	2018
Ecological Inventory and Monitoring Plan (I&M Plan) and Research Plan ²	2	2013	2017
Land Protection Plan (LPP)	3	2013	2016
Comprehensive River Management Plans (CRMPs)	4	2017	2020
Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP)	5	2015	2018

¹ These plans will be done concurrently and could be combined into a single planning effort.

² The Research Plan is an appendix to the I&M Plan and not a separate planning effort.

³ See important note about dates on page 9.



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Other Parts of the Plan

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 outlines the laws and regulations affecting comprehensive conservation planning and Refuge management; describes the purpose and need for the Plan; provides a brief history of the Refuge and its purposes; describes the Refuge's special values; and outlines the planning process. Most of the changes to Chapter 1 since the draft Plan/EIS are editorial in nature, but there are a few important changes that deserve mention:

- The chapter was expanded to include more encompassing discussions of ANILCA as it relates to comprehensive conservation planning and Arctic Refuge.
- The chapter was updated with details about the public comment period on the draft Plan/EIS (see Section 1.8.5).
- A new section called “Concerns Regarding Fish, Wildlife, and Habitats” was added to Chapter 1, in compliance with ANILCA Section 304(g)(2)(E)

Chapter 4: Affected Environment

This chapter describes current knowledge and understanding of the Refuge's biological, physical, and human environments. It also includes discussions on the Refuge's geographic setting, staffing and budgets, and Refuge infrastructure. Most of the changes to Chapter 4 were relatively minor; but here are some of the more important changes:

- Section 4.2.9 on Water Resources was extensively revised
- A new section on Soundscape was added (see Section 4.2.10)
- A section on the impacts of climate change was added to each of the following topic areas: vegetation (Sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4), fish (Section 4.3.5.4), birds (Section 4.3.6.10), and mammals (scattered across the various species descriptions in Section 4.3.7)
- Parts of the Mammals section (4.3.7) were rewritten to add or correct information, including an update to the caribou discussion using 2010 survey data
- The discussion of archaeological and historical information (Section 4.4.1) was updated and inaccurate information removed
- A section on cabins was added (Section 4.4.1.4)
- Socioeconomic data (Section 4.4.3) were updated with 2010 Census data, where available
- The Refuge budget was updated with Fiscal Year 2011 data, and the economic impact of Refuge management activities was reanalyzed (see Section 4.4.3.7)
- The section on subsistence uses was substantially revised based on public comments from local residents
- A new section describing the Poker Flat Research Range was added (see Section 4.6)

Chapter 5: Environmental Consequences

The Environmental Consequences chapter is where we disclose the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects for each of the proposed alternatives. Chapter 5 is similar to that published in the draft Plan/EIS; however, we added a few key sections and worked to provide more consistency throughout the chapter:

- The chapter now considers the effects of each of the proposed actions on the Poker Flat Research Range Sounding Rockets Program
- Because the options considered for addressing Kongakut River visitor management changed, we analyzed and disclosed the effects of these management actions under the corresponding alternatives
- A description of the reasonably foreseeable future actions considered in the cumulative effects analysis was added (Section 5.1.3)
- We added a section describing the effects of the goals and objectives on a range of resources in the biophysical and human environments (Section 5.2.2)
- ANILCA Section 810 requires an evaluation of the effects of each alternative on subsistence uses and needs. The 810 Analysis published in the draft Revised Plan was revised and updated (see Section 5.10)
- The sections on irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources (Section 5.12) and unavoidable adverse effects (Section 5.14) were revised to be consistent with the analyzed and disclosed effects

Chapter 6: Implementing and Monitoring the Plan

In chapter 6, we reprioritized step-down planning (see “Step-Down Plans” above) and we updated our list of Refuge partners (Section 6.4).

Volume 2: Appendices

Appendix B, Consultation and Coordination: Endangered species consultation was completed

Appendix C, Other Planning: The appendix was reorganized and updated with the most current information about other projects and plans in the vicinity of Arctic Refuge

Appendix G, Compatibility Determinations: The compatibility determinations were finalized and signed. Each determination has a new section summarizing the public comments we received on the activity, and changes, if any, we made in the final compatibility determination.

Appendix H, Wilderness Review: The discussions titled “Achieving Refuge Purposes” under the analysis of each of three Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) were modified to address Refuge purposes appropriately (see “Refuge Purposes” on page 2, and WSA locations on pages 6-7).

Appendix I, Wild and Scenic River Review: We combined the eligibility and suitability studies into a single report, which now contains additional information about the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and its management implications (Appendix I, Section 4.5). The Recreational outstandingly remarkable value (Value) was reworked in its entirety, including how it is defined and analyzed. One additional river now has a Recreational Value – the Canning River. Additional data were used to reanalyze the Fish Value; however, no new rivers were found to have a Fish Value. There are no changes to the rivers preliminarily recommended as suitable.

Appendix M, Glossary: The definitions of select words and phrases were changed to help the reader better understand how we use terms throughout the Plan.

Preferred Alternative

The Service selected Alternative E as the Preferred Alternative for the Revised Plan for Arctic Refuge. Alternative E addresses the key issues and concerns identified during the planning process, will best achieve the purposes of the Refuge and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and will maintain the Refuge's special values. The Preferred Alternative complies with all laws and regulations pertaining to Refuge management, including the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). A map of Alternative E is available on page 8 of Planning Update 5.

Arctic Refuge serves a distinctive function in the National Wildlife Refuge System as a landscape that is essentially unaltered and free-functioning, contains outstanding natural diversity, and provides a benchmark for wilderness qualities and for perpetuating biological integrity, diversity, and environmental

health. Alternative E provides assurance that the Refuge's special values and distinctive function will be protected and perpetuated for future generations.

- **Wilderness:** Alternative E recommends the qualified and suitable lands and waters in three Wilderness Study Areas (nearly 12.28 million acres) for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Until Congress makes a decision regarding this recommendation, the Wilderness Study Areas will continue to be managed under Minimal Management.
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers:** Four rivers are recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System: the Atigun, Marsh Fork Canning, Hulahula, and Kongakut rivers. The Refuge will implement the interim management prescriptions described in the Revised

Plan (Appendix I) to maintain the outstandingly remarkable and other values of these rivers until Congress makes a decision regarding the recommendation.

- **Kongakut River Visitor Management:** The Refuge will implement interim management measures (not including a cap on commercial recreation guides) to better manage visitor use of the Kongakut River pending completion of a Refuge-wide Visitor Use Management Plan.
- **Goals, Objectives, Management Policies, and Guidelines:** Alternative E adopts the management goals and objectives and revised management policies and guidelines included in Chapter 2 of the Revised Plan.

What's Next

This is your opportunity to review the Revised Plan and final EIS, including our responses to public comments. We are not soliciting comments at this time; this is a review period only, and not a commenting period.

At the end of the public review period, the Record of Decision will be signed by the Alaska Regional Director no sooner than 30 days after the publication of the Arctic Refuge Revised Plan and Final EIS. We will notify the public when the Record of Decision is signed. Once the decision is signed, the Service will implement those actions in the Plan that are under Service jurisdiction.



Contact Information

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