



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
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Dear Reader:

This Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Plan, Revised Plan) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Arctic Refuge, Refuge) is being made available for your review. The Plan revises the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service's) original comprehensive conservation plan for Arctic Refuge, which was approved in 1988.

Contents of the Plan

The Revised Plan presents goals and objectives and the management policies and guidelines that we will use to manage the Refuge for the next 15-20 years (Chapter 2). The Plan describes six management alternatives, including the Service's Preferred Alternative (Chapter 3), to address management issues raised by the public and the agency, and the Plan presents the Service's evaluation of the environmental consequences associated with implementing each alternative (Chapter 5). The Plan includes a Wilderness Review (Appendix H) and a Wild and Scenic River Review (Appendix I). It also includes signed compatibility determinations that assess the compatibility of Refuge uses with Refuge purposes (Appendix G). The Revised Plan and Final EIS was developed after reviewing and considering all the comments we received during the public review period of the draft Plan, August 15 to November 15, 2011.

This Plan is published in four volumes. Volume 1 contains background, issues, alternatives, and analyses (Chapters 1-6), and Volume 2 contains appendices associated with Volume 1. At the end of Volume 2, we included a subject matter index for the Plan's first two volumes. Volume 3 presents the substantive comments we received during the public review period of the draft Plan along with the Service's responses. Volume 4 contains full text samples of the communications we received and includes two indices to help the reader navigate through Volumes 3 and 4. Please refer to the errata sheet on the enclosed compact disc as you read the CCP to ensure that you are getting the most accurate information.

Key Decisions

Here are some of the decisions and changes we made in response to public comments. Additional decisions and changes between the draft and final Plan/EIS are described in the planning update booklet that accompanies this Revised Plan:

- We did not add an alternative focused on oil and gas development

- We removed 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
- We will pursue regulations to ban domestic goats, sheep, and llamas throughout the Refuge because of disease-transmission concerns to wildlife, especially Dall's sheep
- Two of the alternatives (B and C) include an interim cap on commercial recreational guides operating on the Kongakut River
- The step-down plans presented in the draft Plan were reprioritized, and the Visitor Use Management and the Wilderness Stewardship step-down plans will begin immediately upon approval of this Revised 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 and will best achieve the purposes of the Refuge, the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and maintain the Refuge's special values. Alternative E complies with all laws and regulations pertaining to Refuge management, including the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

- 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. If Congress were to designate these acres as Wilderness, nearly the entire Refuge would be managed to preserve Wilderness character while providing for the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use. Wilderness Act purposes would be within and supplemental, i.e. additional, to the purposes of the Refuge. Wilderness designation would provide statutory protection for resources in the Refuge and represents a more permanent commitment to perpetuating the Refuge's natural conditions, ecological processes, and wilderness-associated recreational opportunities. 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. If Congress were to designate these four rivers, the Refuge would prepare a Comprehensive River Management Plan specific to each of the four rivers. These plans would: describe the existing resource conditions in the river corridor; define the goals and desired conditions for protecting river values; address the types and amounts of public use the river area can sustain (i.e., user capacities); address water quality issues and instream flow requirements; and include a monitoring strategy to maintain desired conditions.
- 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. These interim measures include: working with guides to reduce visitor volume and to

disperse flights; publishing a launch schedule; developing new outreach materials with targeted messages; increasing enforcement of permit conditions and Refuge regulations; and identifying and repairing degraded sites.

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. This alternative adopts the management goals and objectives and revised management policies and guidelines (Chapter 2). Implementation of Alternative E will occur over the next 15 to 20 years, depending on future staffing levels and funding.

What's Next in the Planning Process

We are releasing this Revised Plan and Final EIS for a 30-day public review period. We are not soliciting public comments at this time. Following conclusion of the review period, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed, and it will disclose the Service's final decision and any conditions of approval. Availability of the ROD will be announced through the Federal Register, a press release, the Refuge's web site, and communications with those on our planning mailing list.

You may view this Revised Plan and Final EIS, and a planning update summarizing key differences between the draft and final Plans, online at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>. You may also use the website to request a hard copy of the planning update or a compact disc containing complete texts of the planning update and all four volumes of the Revised Plan and Final EIS.

Contact Information

Requests for compact discs, planning updates, and further information about the planning process should be directed to:

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For Information about Arctic Refuge go to:

web: <http://arctic.fws.gov/>
facebook: [facebook.com/arcticnationalwildliferefuge](https://www.facebook.com/arcticnationalwildliferefuge)
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Thank you for participating in our planning process!