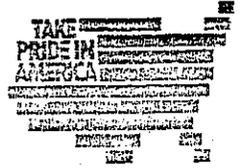




United States Department of the Interior



IN REPLY REFER TO:

RS/1107K

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1011 E. TUDOR RD.
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503

NOV 10 1988

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your information is the Record of Decision for the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, Wilderness Review, and Wild River Plans (Plan) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska. This Plan was prepared pursuant to Sections 304(g), 605, 1008, and 1317 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, Section 3(d) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, and Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

I have selected Alternative A, the Preferred Alternative, as described in the final Plan and the enclosed Record of Decision. The Record of Decision and attached appendices clarify certain aspects of the final Arctic Refuge Plan.

Sincerely,

Walter D. Stiglitz

Regional Director

Enclosure

RECORD OF DECISION
ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Comprehensive Conservation Plan,
Environmental Impact Statement,
Wilderness Review, and Wild River Plans

This Record of Decision is based on the Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, Wilderness Review, and Wild River Plans (Plan) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge dated September 1988. It also considers comments from the public received during the public review period for the draft Plan and comments received on the final Plan. The Plan describes seven alternatives for managing Arctic Refuge and the effects of implementing each of these alternatives. An alternative reflecting current management is included as one of the management strategies (Alternative A, the Current Situation). The other alternatives reflect a broad spectrum of management emphasis.

It is my decision to select Alternative A, the Preferred Alternative, as described in the final Plan, for implementation with the attached changes. This alternative does not include a wilderness proposal.

The determination of impacts on subsistence is found in the Environmental Consequences chapter of the Plan, and is in accordance with Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. In order to implement some aspects of this Record of Decision, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may prepare regulations governing resource protection in Arctic Refuge for public review. If this occurs, the regulations will be published in a proposed form and public hearings will be conducted in the vicinity of the refuge to solicit public comment prior to regulation finalization.

On August 16, 1988, the President signed the Alaska Submerged Lands Act (Public Law 100-395) which amended the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. Section 301 of the Submerged Lands Act added 325,000 acres--a former proposed utility and transportation corridor managed by the Bureau of Land Management--to the Arctic Refuge. Until it is necessary to revise the Plan this area will be managed in minimal management, as are adjacent non-wilderness refuge lands.

11/10/88

Date

Walter D. Stieglitz

Regional Director

Attachments

APPENDIX A
To the Record of Decision
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
Comprehensive Conservation Plan

The Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes and appreciates the comments received from the Alaska Federation of Natives (Federation) in their October 13, 1988, letter on the final Arctic Plan. To address concerns raised by the Federation, the following statement is hereby made a part of the Arctic Record of Decision. The statement replaces the text found in the Final Plan on pages 186 and 187.

When Congress enacted the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (Native Claims Act) in 1971, it allowed village corporations to select and obtain title to the surface estate of land within established national wildlife refuges (i.e., the Arctic National Wildlife Range) to satisfy their entitlements under the Act. This private land has a unique status under federal law. Congress attempted to protect the real economic and social needs of Alaska Natives acquiring refuge land against those values of the National Wildlife Refuge system. Under Section 22 (g) of the Native Claims Act, requirements were enacted to ensure that the Native corporations' use and enjoyment of their land would not materially impair the purposes for which the wildlife refuges had been established. Although Native village corporation land is privately owned and no longer part of the refuge, the Service retains an oversight function on the use and development of the land conveyed to village corporations under the Native Claims Act.

The Service is concerned with protecting the important resource values of these private lands, while also enabling Native landowners to derive economic benefits from their land. To ensure that resource values are protected, the Service has entered into negotiations with 22(g) landowners in an attempt to establish a mutually acceptable process for 22(g) implementation. The Service will work together with the Native corporations to ensure that Native and federal interests on 22(g) land are protected.

APPENDIX B
To the Record of Decision
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
Comprehensive Conservation Plan

The Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes and appreciates the comments received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Agency) in their October 24, 1988, letter on the final Arctic Plan. To address concerns raised by the Agency, the following statement is hereby made a part of the Arctic Record of Decision.

The Fish and Wildlife Service fully intends to increase the budget and staffing on the Arctic Refuge and is taking steps toward those ends at this time. Due to shrinking budgets and regional priorities among the 16 Alaskan refuges, however, it may take some years to fill both staff positions and increase the refuge's operating budget to the desired level. Additional cutbacks in federal spending, such as those necessitated by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, could delay increases in both refuge staffing and budgets.