

## **Appendix C**

### **Other Planning Efforts**



## **C. Other Planning Efforts**

### **C.1 Introduction**

This appendix contains information about known, concurrent statewide and/or Arctic region planning efforts. Included are discussions about the potential effects these other planning efforts might have on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's (Arctic Refuge, Refuge) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Plan, Revised Plan), and vice versa.

### **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. Still in its early stages of development, 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, 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. 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. However, any future "dropdown" plan(s) developed by the Service will need to be reviewed to determine how their objectives may or may not conflict with the Arctic Refuge Revised Plan. In addition, it is anticipated that the Revised Plan will not affect the Long Range Transportation Plan.

#### ***C.2.2 Denali-Alaska Gas Pipeline Project***

In 2008, British Petroleum and ConocoPhillips launched the Denali-Alaska Gas Pipeline Project (Denali Project). The proposed development is in position to be the largest private construction project in North America. Natural gas extraction is the focus of this project, with an estimated extraction of 4.5 billion cubic feet per day. The development site would consist of a gas treatment plant located on the North Slope near Prudhoe Bay. The gas extraction would occur at the Point Thomson field site. Once treated, the gas would be delivered into a pipeline approximately 1,700 miles long that will terminate in Alberta, Canada. The pipeline would follow the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System route in the Dalton Highway corridor until it reaches Delta Junction. From there, it would diverge from the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System route to continue southeast into Canada. The pipeline is expected to be 48 inches in diameter and would be buried underground. Mitigation measures are proposed to reduce permafrost thaw near the underground pipeline. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is scheduled to begin early in 2011. At this time, the Denali Project is not anticipated to adversely affect Arctic Refuge management goals or objectives, nor is it anticipated that the Arctic Refuge Plan would affect the Denali Project. Should the pipeline be developed, construction activities in the

Dalton Highway corridor near Arctic Refuge's western boundary could affect visitor experience and wilderness character during the construction phase of the project.

### ***C.2.3 Alaska Pipeline Project***

The Alaska Pipeline Project began in 2008. Similar to the Denali-Alaska Pipeline Project, it too is 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 is it anticipated that the Arctic Refuge Plan would affect the Alaska Pipeline Project. Should the pipeline be developed, construction activities in the Dalton Highway corridor near the Refuge's western boundary could affect visitor experience and wilderness character during the construction phase of the project.

### ***C.2.4 Point Thomson Project Environmental Impact Statement***

In December 2009, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers filed a Notice of Intent to prepare a draft EIS for the proposed Point Thomson Project. ExxonMobil is the project's permit applicant. The project would be located on the North Slope of Alaska just 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, an airstrip, and a gravel mine. Two of the drilling pads would be located close to 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 final EIS is scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2011.

The proximity of the drilling pads to the Refuge, especially the Canning River, is cause for concern. The Refuge recently completed a wild and scenic river review for select Refuge rivers, and the Canning River was determined to have river-related fish, wildlife, and cultural values. Development associated with the Point Thomson Project could adversely affect wilderness character, disturb or displace wildlife in the lower Canning River corridor, or alter habitat quality in the northwest corner of the Refuge.

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. Visitors to the Refuge expect minimal to no evidence of human activity, and the construction of a drilling pad two miles from the boundary may compromise scenic values and feelings of solitude. Other noise concerns center on the effects

to marine mammals, such as polar bear and bowhead whale. Air and water quality concerns were also raised. To minimize these impacts, the Corps of Engineers has recognized a need for further data collection and analysis, such as conducting a visual impact assessment to determine the anticipated pre- and post-development appearance of the project from several viewpoints.

### ***C.2.5 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 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, it is not anticipated that the Revised Plan will affect the General Management Plan. The two ongoing planning processes do 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.

### ***C.2.6 Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative***

The Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) is a new management-science partnership developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife 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 within 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. The Arctic National Wildlife 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 is to increase and share expertise and capacity to achieve common landscape conservation goals. 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.2.7 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. In addition, the Revised Plan is not expected to affect Vuntut National Park's management plan.

### ***C.2.8 National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Integrated Activity Plan and Environmental Impact Statement***

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 and its name changed to National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The reserve is approximately 22 million acres in size, encompassing several Inupiat villages. Since the late 1990s, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has written plans for the northeastern and northwestern portions of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, leaving approximately nine million acres of land without a land use plan. The Integrated Activity Plan and EIS will produce a comprehensive plan that replaces existing plans and spans the entire reserve. In July 2010, a Notice of Intent was filed to begin the scoping process for the Integrated Activity Plan and EIS. The new plan will incorporate the most current information and lay out management goals, objectives, and actions across the entire National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. Other issues the plan will consider are climate change, invasive species, raptor habitat, and the recent listing of polar bears as a threatened and endangered species. The Final Integrated Activity Plan and EIS is scheduled to be completed by late 2012 or early 2013. Because of the nearly 100 miles that separates Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from the reserve, 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 that actions in the 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, so the Service and BLM will continue to coordinate their respective planning efforts.

### ***C.2.9 Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan***

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is developing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for their Eastern Interior Planning Area. The RMP 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 National Wildlife 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 RMP 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 RMP is expected to be released for public comment in the fall of 2011. The proposed final plan should be released late in calendar year 2012, and the record of decision should follow in 2013. It is not anticipated that the Revised Plan will affect the RMP or vice versa. However, the Service and the BLM will continue to coordinate their respective planning efforts, specifically because: 1) the RMP is still under development, 2) the range of management alternatives for the RMP has yet to be published, and 3) the two planning processes overlap in their analyses of cumulative effects across the Interior Yukon River Basin.

### ***C.2.10 Poker Flat Research Range Environmental Impact Statement***

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is currently preparing an EIS of its Sounding Rocket 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 Rocket Program.

Since the late 1960s, NASA has been using the Poker Flat Research Range to launch suborbital rockets as 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, more than 350 rocket launches have occurred at the Poker Flat Research Range; 41 of these launches have been conducted within 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 by the Service, BLM, State of Alaska, Native Alaska organizations, and individuals are within these flight zones; portions of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are within these zones.

The EIS will assess the impacts of the Sounding Rocket Program, including the effects of recovery versus abandonment of spent rocket parts, payloads, and other equipment. NASA is hoping to obtain the issuance of limited authorizations for the Poker Flat Research Range Sounding Rocket Program so that it may continue the program.

### ***C.2.11 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 within

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 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.

### ***C.2.12 Polar Bear Conservation Plan***

The Service is in the preplanning stage of developing the Polar Bear Conservation Plan. The intent of the plan is to guide management and research activities now and into the future; it is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2011. It is not anticipated that the Polar Bear Conservation Plan will adversely affect Arctic Refuge's Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan; it may actually help strengthen conservation efforts of the polar bear on Arctic Refuge land. In addition, the Refuge Revised Plan is not anticipated to adversely affect the Polar Bear Conservation Plan.

### ***C.2.13 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.

It is not thought that Alaska Clean Seas will adversely affect Arctic Refuge Plan management goals and objectives. It may actually benefit the Refuge by providing oil spill response to its members (e.g., ExxonMobil) that propose developments near Refuge boundaries. In addition, it is not thought that the Revised Plan will adversely affect Alaska Clean Seas.

### ***C.2.14 Foothills West Transportation Access***

The Foothills West Transportation Access Project (Foothills Project) proposes to construct a road from the Dalton Highway to Umiat. 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 within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The road would provide exploration and development opportunities for the area, as well as facilitate a more economically feasible National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska development. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities proposes to finish the road by 2013. There is nothing in the Revised Plan that would affect the Foothills Project, nor would the Foothills Project affect the Revised Plan.

### ***C.2.15 Barter Island Airport Improvements***

The existing Barter Island Airport is within 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 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.

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 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 adversely affect the airport project.