

PUBLIC HEARING

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces public hearings to provide notice of management actions within the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area (Skilak Loop Management Area) of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). Specifically, notice is given of the intent to continue, under Federal regulation and consistent with refuge management plans, restrictions on hunting and trapping within the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area that have been in effect under State of Alaska regulations. First designated under the Refuge's 1985 Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area is managed with a primary objective of providing enhanced opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography and environmental education and interpretation. The Fish and Wildlife Service reaffirmed its management direction for the area under its 2007 Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area Final Management Plan and its 2009 revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Refuge. Prior to 2013, the area has been closed to hunting and trapping under State of Alaska regulations, with the exception of archery and falconry hunting for small game, youth-only firearms hunting for small game in a portion thereof, and moose hunting by permit. Under this new Federal restriction, to be issued pursuant to 50 CFR 36.42(e), the area will remain closed to hunting and trapping with the exception of archery and falconry hunting for small game, youth-only firearms hunting for small game in a portion thereof, and moose hunting by permit. All other hunting will be prohibited.

The public hearings will be held in Soldotna on July 31 at the Gilman River Center, 514 Funny River Road, and in Anchorage on August 1 at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Office, 1011 East Tudor Road. The public may provide written or oral comments in person between 6 and 9pm at the hearings. In addition, written comments will be accepted until August 16, 2013. Written comments may be submitted by mail to: Refuge Manager, P.O. Box 2139, Soldotna, AK 99669; by fax to 907-262-3599 (attention Refuge Manager), or by email to kenai@fws.gov. For additional information, contact the Refuge at 907-262-7021.