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NEWS

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Changes to Public Use Regulations for Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

Rule aims to balance public use and safety with resource conservation

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published a proposed rule that maintains protections for the world-class natural resources of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge while supporting visitor experience and safety at one of Alaska's most accessible and enjoyed public landscapes.

“Over a million people travel through the Kenai Refuge each year on the Sterling Highway, and an estimated 300,000 visitors spend extended periods of time on the refuge,” said Refuge Manager Andy Loranger. “We want people to feel welcome and safe while ensuring that abundant plant, fish and wildlife populations are maintained into the future. These proposed changes help us achieve these goals.”

Among the proposed changes are new regulations that:

- Expand areas and time frames for airplane use, including the Chickaloon River Flats;
- Adopt motor horsepower and boat size restrictions for portions of the Kenai River within the refuge that would enhance consistency with existing state boating regulations;
- Require campers along the Kenai River to camp at least 100 yards away from the shorelines of the river, with the exception of a few designated sites;
- Reduce the risks of accidental wildfires and the introduction and spread of invasive plants;
- Codify the hunting restrictions and trapping closure for the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area established by the refuge in 2013, consistent with the 2007 Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area Management Plan;
- Reduce the potential for negative human-bear interactions in the area surrounding the confluence of the Kenai and Russian rivers by managing wildlife attractants, including food, refuse and retained fish;
- Prohibit the discharge of firearms in areas of high public use along the Kenai and Russian rivers, with exceptions for waterfowl and small game hunting;

- Clarify that hunting over bait is prohibited on the refuge, with an exception for hunting black bears over bait under terms of a Refuge special use permit.

The Service is seeking comments from the public for 60 days regarding information pertaining to the proposed rule. Please go to www.regulations.gov Docket No. FWS-R7-NWRS-2014-0003 for additional information. The proposed rule will publish in the *Federal Register* on May 21, 2015, comments must be received by July 20, 2015.

For more information about Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [Flickr](#).

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