

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)

Eastern Interior Draft Resource Management Plan



Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)

What is an ACEC?

- A BLM administrative designation done through land use planning.
- An area where special management attention is required to protect historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources; or other natural systems or processes.
- May be nominated by the public or internally by the BLM during planning.

Are there any existing ACECs?

- Currently there are four Research Natural Areas, a type of ACEC, in the Steese and White Mountains subunits. These were designated in 1986. All four RNAs are proposed to be maintained in all alternatives.

Were any ACECs nominated during this planning process?

- The public nominated the Upper Black River watershed as an ACEC during scoping for the Eastern Interior RMP.
- The public recommended reviewing the existing Research Natural Areas to determine whether they are large enough to protect the values for which they were designated.
- The BLM internally nominated several areas for consideration as ACECs that also addressed needs identified in the public nominations.

Proposed ACEC

Fortymile/Steese/White Mountains:

- Purpose: To ensure protection of high-value caribou calving and postcalving habitats and Dall sheep habitats.
- The Fortymile Caribou Herd is an important subsistence and sport hunting resource. The most critical caribou habitats are those used during calving and postcalving. The more concentrated calving/postcalving areas have been proposed for designation as ACECs.
- In this area Dall sheep often use lower-elevation habitats with limited escape terrain. This makes sheep especially sensitive to human disturbance. Sheep habitats occur mostly within areas delineated as caribou calving/postcalving habitat.
- Mineral licks – small areas of very heavy use by caribou, Dall sheep, and moose – are considered critical habitats.

Salmon Fork Black River ACEC:

- Purpose: To ensure protection of the high-value fisheries and habitat within the Salmon Fork Black River watershed and minimize adverse impacts to these resources and habitats.
- Fish and aquatic resources are an important subsistence resource for local communities, are of high quality and diversity, and include critical spawning and rearing habitat for resident and anadromous fish species.
- Important subsistence wildlife resources in the ACEC include winter habitat for the Porcupine Caribou Herd, an international herd subject to an agreement with Canada.
- The ACEC supports a unique high-latitude nesting population of bald eagles and a number of rare plants.

ACECs



Mineral lick and Dall sheep near Mt. Prindle



Salmon Fork Black River



Fortymile caribou near Birch Creek



Subsistence fishing – Salmon Fork

Management Fortymile and Steese ACECs (Alternative C)

- Manage allowed uses to maintain caribou and Dall sheep habitat. Applicants proposing surface-disturbing (or other intensive) activities in ACECs may need to assess impacts and describe mitigation, and reclamation will be required to meet performance standards.
- Permanent roads generally not allowed or open to public.
- The extent of habitat to be disturbed will be minimized through project planning.
- Permitted aircraft will fly above 1,500 ft. above ground level.
- Summer OHV use, where allowed, would be confined to existing or designated trails.
- In summer, use (that requires a permit) of areas within a mile of designated ungulate mineral licks would not reduce ungulate use of the licks. Within one mile of designated ungulate mineral licks, limit all permitted uses to activities which would not reduce ungulate use of licks.

Management Salmon Fork ACEC (Alts B, C, and D)

- Protect bald eagle nesting habitat, priority fish habitat, and rare plants.
- Maintain water quality to support nesting bald eagles and salmon habitat.
- Manage limestone habitats and steep south-facing slopes and bluffs to minimize impacts on rare flora.
- Maintain and provide stream channel integrity, ensure riparian proper functioning condition, and achieve desired future conditions for the high value fish and aquatic resources, yet allow for surfacing-disturbing activities.
- Mining-specific requirements: applicant provides baseline hydrological data characterizing flow patterns and discharge; and reclamation will focus on active revegetation and streambank stabilization techniques which will accelerate the rehabilitation of habitats.
- Coordinate with the Government of Canada prior to development affecting caribou habitat, as required.
- Manage to allow caribou to continue to use winter habitats. Avoid or minimize the size, extent, duration, and level of activities in concentrated seasonal use areas.

Comparison of Alternatives

Subunit	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Fortymile (Fortymile ACEC)	No designated ACECs	ACEC: 732,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Closed Leasable Minerals: Closed	ACEC: 547,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Core calving area closed Leasable Minerals: Core calving area closed	ACEC: 546,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Open Leasable Minerals: Open
Steese (Steese ACEC)	3,000 acres Research Natural Areas*	ACEC: 927,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Closed Leasable Minerals: Closed	ACEC: 460,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Closed Leasable Minerals: Closed	ACEC: 193,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Closed Leasable Minerals: Closed
Upper Black River (Salmon Fork ACEC)	No designated ACECs	ACEC: 621,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Closed Leasable Minerals: Closed	ACEC: 621,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Open Leasable Minerals: Closed	ACEC: 621,000 acres Locatable Minerals: Open Leasable Minerals: Open
White Mountains (White Mountains ACEC)	*12,600 acres Research Natural Areas	ACEC: 589,000 acres Locatable Minerals: closed Leasable Minerals: closed	No ACEC. However, a 427,000 acre Wildlife Conservation Area with similar management is identified. Locatable Minerals: closed Leasable Minerals: closed	No ACEC. However, a 185,000 acre Wildlife Conservation Area with similar management is identified. Locatable Minerals: closed Leasable Minerals: closed

* Existing Research Natural Areas would be retained in all Alternatives. Research Natural Areas are considered a type of ACEC.