

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Issues and Planning Criteria
Central Yukon Draft Resource Management Plan
September 2013**

PREPARING OFFICE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Fairbanks District
Central Yukon Field Office





United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Central Yukon Field Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844
<http://www.blm.gov/ak>

In Reply Refer to:
1610 (030)

SEP 16 2013

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is a document that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared to encourage public participation as the agency revises its land use plan for 16 million acres of public land in Interior Alaska. The revised plan, the Central Yukon Resource Management Plan (RMP), will provide a framework for managing and allocating uses of public lands and resources. Central Yukon RMP will cover BLM-managed land north and west of Fairbanks including the Dalton Highway Corridor, the Central Arctic Management Area, and the Central Yukon River area (see map on page 3 of this document).

We published a notice of intent in the *Federal Register* on June 14, 2013 announcing the beginning of the scoping period for the Central Yukon RMP. During scoping, we are seeking public input on how the area is currently used and how it should be managed in the future. This phase of the planning process helps us understand all of the issues and management concerns that the public would like the RMP to address. Although not required by our planning regulations, we have developed this short document to help facilitate public comment. This summary highlights what the BLM believes are the major issues and describes guidelines, called planning criteria, that help determine what the BLM will or will not consider during development of the RMP. We would like to hear your ideas on these topics.

We welcome public comment at any time, but your comments must be received by December 11, 2013, to be included in the Scoping Report. You can submit comments in several ways:

- 1) In person at public meetings held in communities within the planning area. We will announce the meeting dates, times, and specific locations through news releases and on the Central Yukon RMP website at <http://www.blm.gov/ak>
- 2) By mailing written comments to the BLM Fairbanks District Office, Attn: Central Yukon RMP, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709.
- 3) By e-mailing written comments to CentralYukon@blm.gov.
- 4) By using the comment form attached to the interactive document online at https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/lup/lup_register.do.
- 5) By faxing written comments to (907) 474-2282, Attn: Jeanie Cole.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal

identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. If you wish us to withhold your personal information, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations and businesses, or from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of an organization or business, available for public inspection in their entirety.

We appreciate your help in this planning effort and we look forward to your continued interest and participation. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me or our planning and environmental coordinator, Jeanie Cole at: (907) 474-2200 or toll free at 1-800-437-7021. Our email address for the Central Yukon RMP planning project is CentralYukon@blm.gov. Additional information can be found on the BLM website at <http://www.blm.gov/ak>.

Sincerely,



Shelly Jacobson
Field Office Manager

Issues and Planning Criteria

Central Yukon Draft Resource Management Plan

September 2013

Table of Contents

1. Planning Area Description	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Planning Area Description	1
2. Issues and Planning Criteria	4
2.1. Planning Issues	5
2.1.1. Management of land use and activities	5
2.1.2. Special Areas	7
2.1.3. Management of Natural Resources	9
2.2. Planning Criteria	13

List of Tables

Table 1.1. Land Status within the Central Yukon Planning Area 2

Chapter 1. Planning Area Description

1.1. Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Central Yukon Field Office, Fairbanks, Alaska, intends to prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP) with an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central Yukon Planning Area. The BLM's RMPs form the basis for every action and approved use on the public lands. The BLM prepares RMPs for areas of public lands, called planning areas. Planning emphasizes a collaborative environment in which local, state, and tribal governments, the public, user groups, and industry work with the BLM to identify appropriate multiple uses of public lands. Plans are periodically revised as changing conditions and resource demands require.

The BLM has decided that revisions are needed to the existing Utility Corridor RMP (1991), Central Yukon RMP (1986), and Southwest Management Framework Plan (1986). The revised Central Yukon RMP will replace both the Utility Corridor and Central Yukon RMPs in their entirety and a small part of the Southwest Management Framework Plan. Additionally, the RMP will cover BLM-managed lands in the Fairbanks North Star Borough and south of the Richardson Highway that are currently not included in any management plan.

The BLM published a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* on June 14, 2013, announcing the beginning of the scoping process. Scoping is an open public comment period that starts the BLM's planning process. This stage of the planning process influences the scope or range of issues that the resource management plan (RMP) will seek to address. Public input during this phase of planning ensures that the BLM understands all of the issues that the public would like the RMP to address.

As part of the planning process, the BLM developed a Preparation Plan for the Central Yukon Resource Management Plan (BLM 2012), which is available on the Central Yukon RMP web page at www.blm.gov/ak. Among other things, the Preparation Plan outlined preliminary issues and management concerns. The Preparation Plan is 75 pages long. To facilitate public comment during the scoping period we have also developed this shorter document addressing only the issues and planning criteria. Although the BLM welcomes scoping comments at any time, the agency must receive comments by December 11, 2013, to be included in the Scoping Report.

1.2. Planning Area Description

The Central Yukon Planning Area is located in central and northern Alaska and encompasses approximately 16 million acres of BLM-managed public land. Of this area approximately 4.3 million acres are selected by the State of Alaska for conveyance under the Statehood Act and 712,000 acres are selected by Alaska Native corporations for conveyance under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The planning area encompasses the Dalton Highway Corridor, BLM-managed lands in the central Yukon River watershed, lands south and west of Fairbanks, and the Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Study Area.

The planning area includes portions of the Northwest Arctic Borough, the North Slope Borough, the Denali Borough, and the Fairbanks North Star Borough. However, the majority of the planning area does not fall within any borough boundary. The planning area boundary includes 24 remote villages, 15 of which have tribal entities, and three ANCSA regional Native corporation boundaries (Doyon Limited, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and NANA, Inc.). Other federal lands in or adjacent to the planning area include Gates of the Arctic and Denali National Parks and Preserves, the Koyukuk, Innoko Northern Unit, Nowitna, and Kanuti National Wildlife

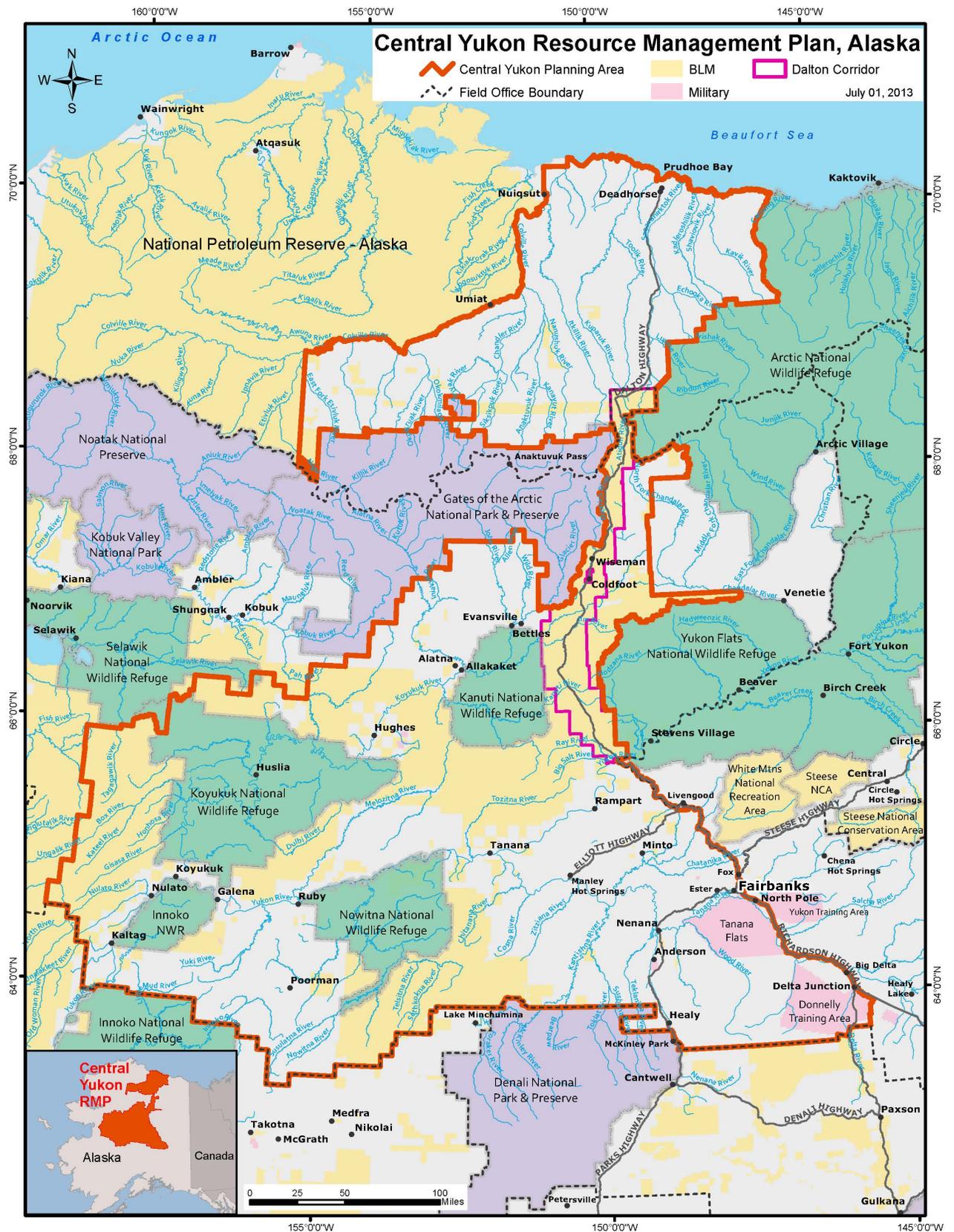
Refuges, the U.S. Army Tanana Flats and Donnelly training areas, and the U.S. Air Force Eielson and Clear Bases.

Most of the planning area is administered by the BLM's Central Yukon Field Office. Lands near Fairbanks are administered by the Eastern Interior Field Office and lands on the north slope are administered by the Arctic Field Office. BLM-managed lands are scattered and range from parcels of a few acres up to contiguous blocks of a million or more acres. In order to include all BLM-managed lands in the RMP, the planning area boundary is drawn on a large scale. Decisions in the Central Yukon RMP, however, *will only apply to BLM-managed public lands.*

Table 1.1. Land Status within the Central Yukon Planning Area

Land Category	Total Acres^a	Percentage
BLM Public Lands	11,059,000	19
State-selected	4,300,000	7
ANCSA Native-selected	712,000	1
Total BLM-Managed Lands	16,071,000	27
State of Alaska	26,206,000	45
US Fish and Wildlife	7,342,000	12.5
National Park Service	48,000	<1
Military	1,468,000	2.5
ANCSA Native Corporations	7,526,000	13
Other Private	38,000	<1
Total Other Lands	42,628,000	73
Total All Lands	58,699,000	

^aRounded to nearest 1,000 acres and based on generalized land status, which only categorizes lands to the nearest square mile.



Chapter 2. Issues and Planning Criteria

2.1. Planning Issues

Planning issues are resource management problems and opportunities that need to be addressed to make sure that the BLM is meeting its mission as defined by law and policy. Some of the major laws influencing management of BLM lands include the Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLMPA), Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), and National Environmental Policy Act.

Planning issues identify concerns that:

- Present unresolved questions regarding allocation of resources;
- Present major land use conflicts regarding management of a base resource or resource value; and
- Can be resolved by the BLM or the BLM in collaboration with partners.

Preliminary issues are discussed below. The issue titles (e.g., Issue A1) correspond to the issue numbers in the Preparation Plan, which describes issues and planning questions in greater detail. The BLM will refine these preliminary issues and develop additional issues based on comments received during the scoping period.

2.1.1. Management of land use and activities

Issue A1: Recreation

Recreational uses, demands, and impacts are increasing, especially along the Dalton Highway. Through the planning process, the BLM will identify recreation management areas and objectives for recreation management.

- What areas are important for recreation?
- What types of recreational opportunities should the BLM provide?
- Do you think BLM needs more recreational facilities and where should they be located?
- How does recreation impact natural resources?
- How can BLM best manage competing recreational and subsistence uses of resources?

Issue A2: Travel Management including management of off-highway vehicles

Through the planning process, the BLM will define what types of vehicles may be used in various parts of the planning area. Limitations may include limits on vehicle weight or width, seasonal restrictions, or limitations to existing or defined trails. Another limitation beyond the scope of this plan, is Alaska Statute (AS) 19.40.210, which prohibits the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) including 4-wheelers, Argos, tracked vehicles, and snowmachines within five miles of the Dalton Highway. BLM policy is to adopt state laws and regulations that are more restrictive than BLM regulations.

- Where and how should the BLM limit off-highway vehicle use?
- What are the effects of use off-highway vehicle use on natural resources?
- Where are existing trails located?

Issue A3: Mineral Management

Minerals management in the planning area occurs against a backdrop of increasing demand for lands open to mineral exploration and development. Part (estimated 5 to 6 million acres) of the planning area is currently closed to the staking of new mining claims, limiting where exploration for mineral deposits can occur. Placer mining, the predominate form of mining in the planning area, is impacting riparian and aquatic habitats.

Depletion of existing sand, rock, and gravel sources is increasing the need for pit expansion and sources particularly for maintenance of the Dalton Highway and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Future construction of a gas pipeline would require additional sources of material.

- Which lands should be open to mining or mineral leasing?
- Which lands should be closed to mining or mineral leasing?
- What terms, conditions, or other special considerations are needed to protect other resource values while conducting activities under the operation of the mining and mineral leasing laws?
- Where should future sand and gravel sites be allowed and how should they be managed?
- How should existing sand and gravel pits be managed?

Issue A4: Lands and Realty

Land conveyances to the State of Alaska and Native corporations have resulted in a mixed pattern of land ownership. Management of small, isolated parcels is difficult. Through the planning process, the BLM will determine which lands should be available for sale or exchange, or whether there are any lands the BLM should consider acquiring. Sales or exchanges may also be used to meet the economic and social needs of local communities. Numerous small, scattered parcels of BLM lands within the Fairbanks North Star Borough may be suitable for disposal.

- Which lands should the BLM should make available for sale or exchange?
- Are there any lands the BLM should consider acquiring?

A large portion of the Dalton Highway area is unavailable for state-selection due to a withdrawal by Public Land Order 5150. The State is interested in obtaining some of these lands as part of its entitlement under the Alaska Statehood Act and have indicated this interest through a process called top-filing. If Public Land Order 5150 was modified to allow for state-selection, this top-filing would become a valid state selection and the BLM could convey the land to the state.

- Should the BLM modify Public Land Order 5150 to allow conveyance of lands to the state?
- If the BLM modifies Public Land Order 5150, which areas and how many acres of State top-filed lands should be included?

The BLM authorizes new roads, transmission lines, and pipeline through right-of-way grants. The Dalton and Elliott highways run through the planning area, but there will likely be a future need for access from these highways to State or Native corporation lands. Through the planning process, the BLM may designate transportation or utility corridors to help prevent proliferation of rights-of-ways (or to consolidate these uses into a smaller area). Another possible planning decision is the designation of right-of-way avoidance or right-of-way exclusion areas.

- Where are the existing and potential right-of-way corridors?
- Are there any areas that should be avoided or excluded from rights-of-ways?
- What terms and conditions and/or best management practices should apply to rights-of-way or development areas?

Issue A5: Access

Access to public land is becoming more important as recreation and subsistence increase. Section 17(b) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) provided for the reservation of easements across lands being conveyed to Native regional and village corporations primarily to provide access to public lands. In many cases, easements were reserved to provide legal rather than physical access, with no ground truthing prior to the conveyance. These easements have not provided the physical access needed to reach federal land.

- How should existing and proposed rights-of-way, including the Dalton Highway and the Bettles Winter Road, be managed?
- What opportunities exist for cooperation and coordination with Native corporations in 17(b) easement management?
- Is there a need for additional easements for access to public lands?
- Is there a need to relocate existing 17(b) easements to provide physical access to public lands?

2.1.2. Conservation of Lands Having Special, Critical, or Unique Features or Resource Values

Issue B1: Special Designations

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designations highlight areas where special management is needed to protect important resources or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are established and maintained for the purpose of research and education and are considered a type of ACEC. The BLM gives priority to the designation and protection of ACECs in the development and revision of RMPs. The planning area contains 34 designated ACECs or RNAs. Land status in some ACECs has changed due to conveyance. Other ACECs may not be located in the best place to protect the resource for which they were initially created. Through the planning process the BLM will review all existing ACECs and RNAs to determine whether these designations are still appropriate. The public may also nominate additional areas for ACEC designation.

- Are the current ACEC designations meaningful and of the proper size and location? Should they be maintained, modified, or dropped?
- Are there any other areas in the planning area that should be considered for ACEC or RNA designation?

The Dalton Highway is currently a State of Alaska Scenic Byway. The BLM could consider designating the Dalton Highway as a National Scenic Byway through the planning process.

- Should the BLM consider designating the Dalton Highway as a National Scenic Byway?

Issue B2: Wild and Scenic Rivers

Potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System will be considered during this planning effort. The BLM was sued on the Utility Corridor RMP Record of Decision. A resulting lawsuit settlement agreement (8/30/1993) requires the BLM to complete a review for wild and scenic rivers in the Utility Corridor Planning Area. Additionally, BLM policy requires such a review during the planning process.

Determinations for each river include two steps: eligibility and suitability. Rivers that are free-flowing and have at least one outstandingly remarkable value are by definition eligible. All rivers in the planning area are free-flowing. Through the public scoping process and an internal review, the BLM will review rivers to determine whether they possess outstandingly remarkable values. Those with outstandingly remarkable values will then be identified as eligible rivers in the RMP.

This RMP/EIS will also decide on the suitability or non-suitability of rivers as additions to the national system. The suitability phase of the study evaluates whether designation into the national system would be the best way to manage eligible rivers. Suitability considerations include existing resource protection, land ownership, current uses, valid existing rights, ability to protect the outstandingly remarkable values, feasibility and timeliness of designation, costs, and other federal agency, local, tribal, state government, and local support for designation. Rivers that are found suitable may be recommended to Congress for designation.

- Which rivers in the planning area have outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural, or ecological values that would make them eligible for designation?
- What specifically are these values?
- Of these eligible rivers, are any suitable for addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, or are they better managed without designation?
- How should eligible rivers be managed?
- Is there support for designation from other federal agencies, local and state governments, Tribes, and the general public?

Issue B3: Wilderness Study Areas

The planning area includes the Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Study Area (WSA), commonly referred to as CAMA. Originally CAMA included more than 3 million acres. Title X of ANILCA directs the Secretary to conduct a wilderness study of lands within CAMA, but also states that designation as a WSA will not delay or otherwise affect selection and conveyance of lands under ANCSA and the Statehood Act. Currently about 250,000 acres of CAMA remain under BLM management. Of this, the BLM is likely to retain only 135,000 acres, including the Upper Nigu River block. CAMA lands will continue to be managed consistent with the BLM Manual 6330 Management of Wilderness Study Areas and ANILCA until Congress acts on the wilderness recommendation or releases these lands from consideration for designation.

- How will BLM ensure that the wilderness values of CAMA lands are maintained until Congress acts on the wilderness recommendation?
- How should the CAMA lands be managed if Congress releases them from wilderness consideration?

Issue B4: Iditarod National Historic Trail

A portion of the Iditarod National Historic Trail is located in the planning area. Most of the trail segments in the Central Yukon Planning Area are on State or private lands. There are, however, a few miles on BLM-managed lands.

- How should BLM manage those segments of the Iditarod National Historic Trail that are located on BLM-managed lands?

2.1.3. Management of Natural Resources

Issues C1 and C2: Soil, Water, and Air

The planning area includes many rivers and streams. Much of the area is underlain by permafrost. The BLM authorizes many types of land uses that occur on and along rivers and streams, as well as in permafrost areas. During the planning process, the BLM will develop best management practices or use restrictions that reduce impacts to soil, water and air resources.

- What restrictions should the BLM put on emission-generating activities to meet requirements under the Clean Air Act?
- Are any watersheds in the planning area in need of special protection?
- Are there any watersheds that are currently not in proper functioning condition or need restoration?
- What actions should the BLM take to make sure that water quality requirements are met?
- Are there areas of highly erodible or sensitive soils in the planning area in need of special protection?
- What restrictions or best management practices should the BLM require for surface-disturbing activities to protect soils?

Issues C3: Hazardous and Solid Waste

The Dalton Highway area has seen continual development since the late 1960s. The construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System created numerous locations where supplies were consolidated during construction. These sites may be of concern regarding contamination of the environment through improper solid or hazardous waste disposal.

- What restrictions should the BLM put on permits to prevent solid or hazardous waste contamination?
- Are there any existing contaminated sites that the BLM needs to be aware of?

Issues C4 and C5: Vegetation and Forest Products

Vegetation is a key ingredient in determining the health of the land because it influences the quantity and quality of water produced from the watershed. Vegetation also affects overland flows and soil movement, which can lead to erosion and loss of habitat. Important subsistence uses of vegetation include picking berries and greens, plus firewood and house log harvest. Invasive non-native plants exist and are spreading in some parts of the planning area.

- What is the extent of the spread of invasive non-native plants, and what control methods should be employed? Which areas and species are the highest priority for management?
- Where should the subsistence, commercial, and personal harvest of special forest products (mushrooms, berries, bark, etc.) be allowed and under what conditions?
- What best management practices or conditions should the BLM include in permits to protect vegetation or restore it after surface disturbance?

Issue C6: Special Status Species

Special status species include plants or animal that are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), proposed for listing as threatened or endangered, listed as a

candidate species, listed by the State of Alaska, or designated as sensitive by the BLM-Alaska State Director. The BLM has a legal mandate to conserve threatened and endangered species. The BLM's policy is to conserve all special status species to ensure that they do not require listing under the ESA and to manage BLM sensitive species and their habitats to minimize or eliminate threats affecting the status of the species or to improve the condition of the species habitat through a variety of management activities. Through the planning process, the BLM will identify strategies and decisions to conserve special status species.

Three listed species (polar bear, spectacled eider, and Steller's eider) occur on the Alaska's North Slope. None of these species are likely to occur on BLM-managed lands within the planning area. There is no designated critical polar bear habitat on BLM-managed lands in the planning area. The Yukon River Chinook salmon is a State-listed stock of concern. Some of the 24 BLM-Alaska sensitive animal species and 50 BLM-Alaska sensitive plant species likely occur in the planning area. Distribution and population information on most of these species is limited.

- Where do special status species exist within the planning area, what is the current condition of the populations, and what are the habitat needs of those species?
- What use restrictions are needed to conserve and recover special status species?
- What management actions will benefit and conserve special status species?
- Are there specific management plans (such as conservation strategies or recovery plans) that the BLM needs to consider during planning?
- How can the BLM work with partners and stakeholders to develop conservation strategies for special status species?

Issue C7: Fish and Wildlife

Both anadromous and resident species of fish inhabit the planning area. Habitat produces salmon that are harvested in downstream commercial fisheries. Subsistence and recreational fishers also place a demand on fish resources. Projected land development and increased user activities that may occur over the life of the plan have the potential to impact aquatic habitat and fisheries. The aquatic section of the RMP will identify priority fish species and develop conservation measures for key habitats and populations of fish.

- What fish should be identified as priority species? Where are the important habitats for these species located?
- What are desired habitat conditions and population levels for priority fish species?
- What specific actions or use restrictions should the BLM consider to protect fish habitats and achieve desired population levels?
- How will riparian and aquatic resources be protected from adverse effects of placer and mineral materials mining?

The planning area supports a wide variety of wildlife. Many of these species are important subsistence resources or are important for sport hunting or other recreational use such as wildlife viewing.

- Which animals should be identified as priority species? Where are the important habitats for these species located?
- What are desired habitat conditions and population levels for priority wildlife species?
- What specific actions or use restrictions should the BLM consider to protect wildlife habitats and achieve desired population levels?
- What are the desired habitat conditions for major habitat types that support a wide variety of game, non-game, and migratory bird species?

Issue C8: Subsistence

For thousands of years, Alaska Natives relied on fish, wildlife and other wild resources for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and trade. Today, many rural Alaskans continue to live off the land and waters, depending upon wild plants, fish and animals as reliable and economic sources of food. For many Alaskans, the ability to continue these subsistence activities is an important part of their cultural heritage. Title VIII of ANILCA ensures continued access to subsistence resources on federal land. Preservation and availability of subsistence resources is an issue of extreme importance to residents of the planning area. Additional management concerns regarding subsistence are listed under Issues A1 Recreation and C7 Fish and Wildlife.

- How can the BLM protect resources that are important to maintaining a subsistence lifestyle?
- Which areas are important subsistence use areas?
- Which areas are important for the maintenance of subsistence resources such as caribou, fish, or moose?
- How can the BLM reduce impacts to subsistence from land use activities it permits?
- How can the BLM maintain physical and legal access to subsistence resources?
- Is there traditional ecological knowledge the BLM should be aware of?

Issue C9: Cultural Resources

While known cultural sites exist in the planning area, there are vast areas with limited inventory. It is important to develop management strategies for the known sites in the area and to set priorities for future inventories.

- What traditional cultural properties exist within the planning area?
- What measures should be taken to pro-actively manage, protect, and use cultural resources, including traditional cultural properties?
- What additional data on cultural resources should the BLM consider during planning?

Issue C10: Paleontology

Hundreds of known occurrences of paleontological materials are located in the planning area. It is important to develop management strategies for the known sites in the area and to set priorities for future inventories in the planning area.

- What criteria or use restrictions are needed to make sure that areas containing, or likely to contain, vertebrate or noteworthy occurrences of invertebrate or plant fossils are identified and evaluated prior to authorizing surface-disturbing activities?
- What criteria or use restrictions are needed to ensure management that promotes the scientific, educational, and recreational uses of fossils?
- What threats to paleontological resources exist and how can they be mitigated?

Issue C11: Visual Resources

Many visitors are attracted to the visual qualities of the planning area. Visual resource management is a tool the BLM uses to help minimize the visual impacts associated with activities occurring on public land. Through the planning process, the BLM will complete a visual resource inventory and designate visual resource management classes.

- Are there locations where protection of visual resources should be a high priority?
- How can the BLM best reduce and mitigate impacts to visual resources?

Issue C12: Wildland Fire Management

Wildland fire commonly occurs throughout the planning area. It provides one of the most significant mechanisms for changes in the landscape. Without fire, large areas of the landscape will become dominated by black or white spruce, and some areas will have reduced value as habitat for some animals. The RMP will determine which areas would benefit from fire and which areas or resources may need protection from fire. The RMP will also examine the need for fuels manipulation to meet management objectives.

- What allowable uses and management actions would achieve the desired landscape-level fire management goals and objectives?
- What fire regime and condition classes are desired in the planning area?
- What fire management objectives will support the goals and objectives for vegetation, wildlife, and other resources?
- What areas are suitable and what areas are unsuitable for wildland fire use?
- What types of fuels management or vegetation treatments (mechanical, biological, chemical, or prescribed fire) would be implemented and where ?
- Where are restrictions on fire management practices needed to protect natural or cultural resource values?

Issue C13: Interpretation and Environmental Education

Traveling the Dalton Highway involves serious risks and challenges, as does accessing the roadless parts of the planning area. There is a continuing need to inform and educate visitors about these risks as well as about resource protection and regulations. Explaining the planning area's key natural and cultural resources is essential to public understanding of its special values, thus fostering appreciation and stewardship of public lands.

- What interpretive and environmental education goals should be identified?
- What significant resources or areas should be available for interpretation or environmental education?

Issue C14: Social Science and Environmental Justice Considerations

Executive Order (EO) 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," requires that each federal agency consider environmental justice to be part of its mission. Its intent is to promote fair treatment of people of all races, so no person or group of people bears a disproportionate share of the negative effects from the country's domestic and foreign programs. Specific to this planning process, the EO and BLM policy require the BLM is to identify and address as appropriate all actions that cause disproportionately high and adverse impacts to Indian Tribes, and minority and low-income populations.

Potential environmental justice issues include protection of subsistence resources, protection of and access to historic hunting, fishing, and trapping areas, and impacts of land use on subsistence users.

- What are economic, demographic, and social conditions and trends in the planning area?
- What changes in economic, demographic, and social conditions and trends are expected to result from planning decisions?

- If recreation activities and associated facilities change (quantity, character, etc.), what will be the economic benefit or cost?
- If the BLM changes the off-highway vehicle designations, what will be the economic effect in terms of facilities necessary to support public use?
- What are the economic or social effects if land is transferred to the State, and development occurs?
- What are the environmental justice populations in the planning area, and will there be any disproportionately high and adverse effects to these populations?

Issue C15: Wilderness Characteristics

Through the land use planning process the BLM will identify lands with wilderness characteristics (naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude, and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation), and when such lands are present, develop options for managing these lands. Given the remote and primarily pristine nature of the planning area, it is likely that more than 90 percent of the BLM-managed lands will be classified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

- Which areas should be managed to preserve wilderness characteristics, and what decisions are necessary to accomplish this?
- For authorized activities, what conditions of use are necessary to avoid or reduce impacts to wilderness characteristics?

Issue C16: Climate Change

Climate change and its effects on the lands and resources are of great concern to many Alaskans. Computer model predictions indicate that increases in temperature are likely to be accentuated at higher latitudes. Northern latitudes (above 24° north) have exhibited temperature increases of nearly 2.1 degrees F since 1900.

- How should the RMP address the impacts of climate change?
- What land management strategies could be developed to reduce impacts and allow for adaptive management to respond to changes over time?

2.2. Planning Criteria

During its initial internal planning sessions, the BLM's Central Yukon Field Office staff developed the preliminary planning criteria listed below. Planning criteria are the constraints, standards, and guidelines that determine what the BLM will or will not consider during its planning process. They establish parameters and help focus analysis. They also help to define the scope of the process and to estimate the extent of data collection and analysis required. The BLM is seeking public input on these criteria.

1. The primary purpose of the lands withdrawn by Public Land Order 5150 is the transportation of energy resources; therefore, the BLM will avoid proposing actions or activities with potential adverse impacts to existing and future energy transportation systems on these lands located within the corridor.
2. The BLM Central Yukon Field Office will encourage opportunities for public participation throughout the planning process.

3. The BLM will recognize and protect valid existing rights.
4. The BLM will consider subsistence uses and minimize adverse impacts in accordance with Section 810 of the ANILCA.
5. The BLM will work cooperatively with state and federal agencies, Native corporations, Tribes, and municipal governments.
6. The BLM will consider plans and policies of adjacent conservation system units, land owners, and local governments.
7. The BLM will consider Department of the Interior guidance, Alaska Department of Fish and Game objectives, and Federal Subsistence Board requirements and mandates in decisions related to wildlife management.
8. The RMP will be consistent with the Bureau's H-1601-1 Land Use Planning Handbook, Appendix C, Program-Specific and Resource-Specific Decision Guidance and applicable BLM manuals and handbooks.
9. The plan will be consistent with the standards and guidance set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality, Historic Preservation Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, ANILCA, and other Federal laws, regulations, and policies as required;
10. The plan will be consistent with the BLM-Alaska Land Health Standards;
11. The BLM will complete designations for off-highway vehicles for all BLM-managed lands within the planning area according to the regulations found in 43 CFR part 8342.
12. Within the Utility Corridor development nodes, the BLM will assess areas designated by BLM in the Utility Corridor RMP/ROD (1991) for future development (i.e., visitor facilities, restrooms, rest stops, etc.) regarding the location, size, boundaries, and appropriate uses, their long-range development, state or federal management, and affects on adjacent and nearby lands.
13. The plan will address public access needs.
14. The BLM will consider current and potentially new special designations, such as ACECs and Research Natural Areas (RNAs), using the criteria found in 43 CFR 1610.7-2 and 43 CFR part 8223.
15. Review and classification of waterways as eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System will be consistent with the guidance in BLM's 8351 Manual—Wild and Scenic Rivers.
16. The BLM will incorporate Environmental Justice (EJ) considerations in land use planning alternatives to adequately respond to EJ issues facing minority populations, low income communities, and Tribes living near public lands and using public land resources.
17. The plan will assess all BLM-managed lands in the planning area for wilderness characteristics using criteria established by BLM Manual 6310. The RMP will examine options for managing lands with wilderness characteristics and determine the most appropriate land use allocations for these lands. Considering wilderness characteristics in

the land use planning process may result in several outcomes, including, but not limited to:

- (1) Emphasizing other multiple uses as a priority over protecting wilderness characteristics.
- (2) emphasizing other multiple uses while applying management restrictions (conditions of use, mitigation measures) to reduce impacts to wilderness characteristics; and,
- (3) the protection of wilderness characteristics as a priority over other uses.

18. The BLM will manage the Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Study Area consistent with BLM Manual 6330 – Management of BLM Wilderness Study Areas, and ANILCA, until Congress acts on the wilderness recommendation.