

# Central Yukon Resource Management Plan Public Scoping Meeting Notes Wiseman \* October 31, 2013

---



## Planning Team

Shelly Jacobson, BLM Central Yukon Field Manager  
Jeanie Cole, BLM Permitting & Environmental Coordinator  
Steve Hartmann, BLM District Manager  
Stacey Fritz, BLM Anthropologist

Kim Varner Wetzel, URS  
Seth McMillan, BLM Ranger  
Cal Westcott, BLM Outdoor Recreation  
Planner

---

## **Questions and Comments during the Presentation**

### **NEPA/EIS Process**

The National Park Service Subsistence Resource Commission and the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council should receive presentations from BLM at their meetings the week of November 4th.

I did not know about this meeting. I live in Coldfoot and should have gotten a notice. There are people living in Coldfoot without phone or internet that should be notified. Some of us don't have computers so that cannot be the only way to communicate. I suggest putting a notice at the truck stop in Coldfoot.

How can we access the Scoping Report? We would like three hard copies in Wiseman and three in Coldfoot.

What is the Governor's Consistency Review of the RMP?

What is your public outreach goal?

I appreciate face to face meetings with BLM. It is easier to communicate and discuss. We do not hear from Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF). We appreciate hearing from BLM!

### **Utility Corridor**

Do you anticipate losing the northern portion of the Nigu Wilderness block (Central Arctic Wilderness Study Area) since it is State selected? *BLM: It is available for selection, but we will probably retain the Nigu block.*

Would the utility corridor nodes be unavailable if they become state lands? Why would the State be interested in the corridor nodes? Would it close these nodes to hunting?

I am highly opposed to opening public land order (PLO 5150) lands which would allow the State to select the Utility Corridor.

PLO 5150 does not allow BLM to give-away lands [to the State] that are highly valuable to the public. I don't think it is legal. FLPMA (Federal Land Policy and Management Act) specifically prohibits this as does ANILCA (Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act). ANILCA gave the State 25 years to select lands; the State just came up with this selection idea two years ago. Being non-valid selections, the BLM must also consider the considerable impacts to subsistence under Section 810 of ANILCA. All three state selections within the transportation corridor are high value to subsistence users.

Another reason that BLM should not transfer the corridor node property [to the state] is that the only means to access Gates of the Arctic National Park is through BLM land. You couldn't transport game, etc. if it were to become state land. Therefore, we would be precluded from hunting moose near our homes.

In theory, if the state-selected transportation corridor nodes become state lands, it would limit mining access. However, the BLM has not approved mining claims in years anyways. For example, I showed my BLM mining permit to an ADNR representative. They said this application was one of the most complete they had seen, but BLM has not approved it yet.

The State already has one million acres and they want more? Does the expansion of their land include that proposed Umiat Road?

Everything is already locked-up except for the narrow transportation corridor that is over-managed.

### **Minerals Management**

Maybe there are millions of dollars of resources under these BLM lands (the state-selected transportation corridor nodes) but small-scale miners are not allowed access to them. Mining used to be considered a subsistence activity too. Our community exists originally because of mining.

It would be nice if the Dalton Highway corridor was managed for "real traditional uses- small mines and subsistence", at least through the Brooks Range in order to keep it the way it is. There needs to be happy medium for management. Small-time mines are part of the cultural. Big guiding and major mines are new; not what is traditional here. The Arctic can only sustain so much.

It would be a big boost to the local economy if mines of five acres were allowed.

There are gravel pits within Scenic Byways. Some lands are better suited for gravel pits than others. For example, Dietrick Pass is a good idea. It has good access; it is low-profile near the river. There should not be a gravel pit at Sukapak Mountain. The spot is right next to the road, ruining the character of the Scenic Byway. It is a really poor soil- already turned to muck.

As you can see, Alaska Department of transportation does not consult with us about gravel pit siting. We should look at alternatives for sand and gravel pit sites.

The new six inch cement is supposed to reduce the need for gravel, but these surfaces are only good for three years. Look at Jim River area. That area is already eroding.

### **Special Areas**

If the Toolik Lake Research Natural Area receives more land, it would prohibit access for subsistence activities. Toolik is the only place where you find caribou. People in Stevens Village would not want to lose access to those lands.

There are huge controversies between miners and the federal government over Fortymile River and Birch Creek [wild and scenic rivers]. Aren't there enough Wild and Scenic rivers already?

A criterion for Wild and Scenic Rivers should be "are there mining claims there already" so scenic rivers do not prohibit mining.

Where do these criteria [for wilderness characteristics] come from? Does anything on the Dalton Highway meet the criteria [for wilderness characteristics]? *BLM assessed lands in the Dalton Corridor 20 years ago and found that much of the corridor does not have wilderness characteristics, but that inventory was conducted over 20 years ago before our current criteria were established and the BLM plans to revisit the inventory.*

### **Recreation Management**

Is there some way to remove areas available for commercial guiding? Photographer/wildlife visitors are viewing hunters instead of wildlife. Wildlife is more valuable economically when it is alive than dead. There should be more road accessible lands withdrawn from commercial guides.

I would encourage BLM to create a guide selection process similar to the one the State is working on. In 2004, BLM said the RMP would contain a guide selection process to limit the number of guides in one area and the number of animals they could take (guide capacity). They were not, however, working on qualifications. The State process has a flaw because qualified guides can sell their permit to unqualified guides. A drawing for qualified guides is useful to consider.

Air taxis are not regulated. They can drop a hunter on top of a herd!

Hunter transporters were supposed to be part of the State's solution – is that part of BLM's solution?

Does BLM regulate the number of animals or hunters? I would like to see no guiding on the Dalton Highway corridor.

Could you regulate air traffic? The number of planes on the Wiseman and Coldfoot runways this summer was crazy.

I don't think the float pond concept [developing facilities to land float planes] is a desirable use of BLM lands.

I have observed from the Interagency Visitor Center that transporters are acting as guides. The hunters I meet have no idea where they're going; the transporters are "guiding" them to the right place to hunt. They have already destroyed Grayling Lake [by dropping too many hunters there].

There is nobody along the Dalton Highway to enforce hunting regulations. It is a huge area to enforce.

The more of these features you build, the more impacts you create. People are coming here to see undisturbed places, not disturbed pull-outs and waysides.

I observe hunters using pull-outs and waysides to stage their hunting activities. They are being trashed with hunting debris and cannot be used by non-hunters.

Don't bother with interpretive signs north of [inaudible]. It's all "Camo City". I'm just saying- plan for other user groups.

### **Subsistence and Traditional Way of Life**

The number of adult Dall sheep at Dietrich River is declining dramatically. However, ANILCA requires the management for "healthy resources". When there are no adult rams, bad things happen. Guides take food directly out of our mouths. They get \$20,000/sheep. That cannot go on forever. Permits should establish what sustainable harvest limits are.

We practice subsistence in Wiseman.

There are new subsistence studies for the Wiseman area due to the gas line. This is valuable data about our area that can be incorporated into the RMP.

People who make their living guiding should not be allowed to have subsistence permits.

Subsistence residency definitions should prevent people who live up here in the summers only, but have a house in the city from being qualified subsistence users.

### **Planning Area and Planning Process**

There is another document, the Dalton Highway Recreation Management Plan that should be re-visited because we have seen new issues like public resources used for commercial purposes since it was written.

Are you managing off of the old Dalton Highway Recreation Management Plan? I protested at the time of this Recreation Plan because they did not have a public meeting in Wiseman when developing the plan.

BLM should take the Dalton Highway Scenic Byway Plan into consideration. It is a pretty good plan. A lot of stakeholders were involved and a lot of time went into it.

The Dalton Highway Scenic Byway Plan almost prohibits all future mining roads. If BLM incorporates it, would you deny mining roads proposed to be attached to the haul road? If you are supposed to be consistent with adjacent plans "to the extent possible", it sounds like you would deny future mining access roads. I am opposed to this.

If you have three Department of Interior agencies with adjacent lands, you should try to complement each other's missions. For example, you should not build trails to Gates of the Arctic and National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) [through BLM land] if it defeats the purposes of the existence/mission of Gates and NPR-A.

### **Public Safety**

The BLM's Plan should reinforce a "no hunting within 2 miles of the road" rule. That would prevent people from leaving their trucks in the middle of the road because they have "buck fever". Safety is a good reason for this policy. Truckers say they observe private vehicles in the roadway abandoned by hunters.

Photographers/wildlife tourists are being "chased away" by hunters because they are interfering with hunting. It should be against the law to be run-off by another user because it is hard to say who was first or who is interfering with whom.

There should be a discussion about whether the corridor is for sport hunting.

I support the old "no hunting within a ¼ mile of the road" rule. Hunters should step into the tussocks, get their feet wet.

I have a salt lick next to my property that attracts moose. I find arrows in my building, but according to law I can't hunt this moose myself [with a different weapon]. *The State Trooper present at the meeting suggested that Fish and Game issues be brought to the attention of Advisory Boards.*

Ninety-eight percent of the Bed and Breakfast guests in Wiseman are low impact photographers or wildlife tourists. Their use of public lands should be respected and allowed.

### **Invasive Species**

I have figured-out how invasive plants move so rapidly up the road. I witness ADOT pushing the melting snow (that contains invasive seeds) north, along the entire route. The BLM should work with the State to prevent this. It is how the road is maintained that is propagating the invasive plants. Equipment should push snow south, away from the invasion, back to the origin.

Hydro-seeders are propagating invasive plants. I don't care what they say- those are not "natural" or "local seeds". If they did not reseed, we would see local plants reseed the disturbed areas quickly.

Has any invasive plant been successfully eradicated? The techniques to eradicate may be just as or more damaging than the invasive plants.

How much does invasive control cost? How high a priority is this program? The reason I ask is because my mining permit review is being delayed because I am told there is not enough BLM staff to process permits. Yet I see weed pull events that are using staff time.

ADOT is not burning the weeds that they pull. Animals open the bags stored in the back of the State Department of Transportation Building in Coldfoot and the weeds blow onto my property.

Don't use chemicals to kill the weeds. I would rather have sweet white clover than poisoned blueberries. I would hate to poison our water and plants to kill invasive plants.

Are you monitoring for impacts to local and migratory birds from herbicides? I do not want herbicides to impact wildlife.