

# Central Yukon Resource Management Plan Public Scoping Summary Meeting Notes Nenana \* November 4, 2013

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## Planning Team

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## Questions and Comments during the Presentation:

### Land Ownership and Land Use

Is there any chance during this process that the BLM may relinquish control of some of that land? Is it necessary for BLM to have that much acreage in the state of Alaska? We are talking about one unit at 16,000,000 acres. How many units in the land does BLM have?

Are there are 105 million acres left in this planning area that the State of Alaska can select or is that the total allotment for the entire state? *BLM: that is the allotment for the entire state.*

Is there an opportunity for the State of Alaska to manage BLM lands?

When I look at an atlas and I add up everything that is federally controlled in the state, its two thirds of the state. In truth, we are just two thirds a territory. We only have a third of the state that is actually a State. I think most Alaskans kind of resent that.

I guess the only way to limit or reduce the size of BLM land is through a Congressional action.

We have more BLM designated lands in the State of Alaska than other states and that is ridiculous.

Part of what really bothers me, is that we have someone 5,000 miles away that controls the land in our back yard. I think the State of Alaska should have more control.

Subsistence should be a priority in regards to federal lands. That's how people feed themselves and take care of their families and the BLM should keep their nose out and get out of the way. Subsistence rights are identified under the State Constitution.

It seems that BLM and the government has structured all their laws toward tourism. People with [gold mining claims] don't even live in this state. I would like to see more land opened to mining (whether it is federal or state land) for Alaska residents instead of having all these tourist traps, State Parks, and Scenic Rivers.

If BLM does convey some of the existing mining areas, would those claims transfer over to the State and still be valid?

What exactly is right-of-way avoidance area? This right-of-way avoidance thing is bothering me. If you want to go west to the Yukon River and then down into the Kuskokwim where there are awesome mineral deposits, you have to get to Ruby and their road. There is NO way that you can get a right-of-way because it's all owned by the Park Service, Wildlife Refuge, or BLM. There is no way you can get a road into Hughes because it's all locked up. If you look, they have effectively shut-off so there is no way to expand. You can't expand the railway; you can't expand the highway system...it's all locked up. The plan should make it easier to get rights-of-way for people.

As an outdoor person, I like to hunt, fish, berry pick and prospect. I would like to have none of the lands locked up by BLM and have lands made available for personal use.

How about the pipeline corridor near the Wiseman and Coldfoot area? Why can't that area be opened to mining? I'd like to see that area opened to mining.

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

It bothers me that the federal government feels that they need to have some type of control of fish and game and wildlife resources in Alaska.

I think the title of this presentation more accurately should be "Central Yukon *People* Management Plan". My analogy is that it really seems like a group fleas sitting on a Saint Bernard's back all discussing how they are going to manage the Saint Bernard and if all the fleas agree then, that's how it's going to happen. I guess that's ok, but really, it's just a minor irritation to the Saint Bernard. It's not really "managing".

In your management area, at least half of land area is not federal lands. From Delta Junction over to (Stampede Trail) past that to the National Wildlife Refuge, there is this huge chunk that's down in the Southeast corner, there are almost zero federal lands. You could literally redraw the boundary here and chop off a fifth of your entire map here. There are no existing federal lands in the southeast corner, why that area is even in your management area. I am assuming that the whole state is divided into management areas. So why would existing State Lands be in a Federal Management Area? When I look at a boundary I am a bit paranoid to see it all labeled [as if it is all owned and managed by BLM].

The whole chunk by the Stampede Trail [needs to] be taken out of the Central Yukon Planning Area. Stampede Trail, I think someone tried to get an [highway] exit into Denali National Park and it as a big fight [and access was denied].

### **NEPA/EIS Process**

The existing plans have been in effect since the 1980s and another one from the 1990s, but they are the same plan? Were there time frames on the plans before? Will something really happen at the end of the four years and is there a timeframe until something does happen?

Is BLM going to be doing an Environment Impact Statement (EIS) on the entire planning area? Where is the EIS once it is finished? Will it come out all at once or in pieces?

What is the most effective way to make comments and be heard?

How much of the plan is affected by public comments?

Related to the validity of submitting a comment... How does the decision get made? Is there a panel? Is there a group of people? Is it one person?

Did you say when the comment period is over?

Will you be coming back to Nenana? You'll be coming back to Nenana for each milestone?

Our community [Nenana] works really well with our Tribe and the city. I think our community as a whole should be involved.

More notification needs to be given for these public meetings. We were given enough notice of tonight's meeting. You would have had more attendees if we had had more than four days' notice.

There are a lot of people in this area who feel that we want to make decisions regarding this area and what affects us. We don't want these decisions made by agencies [with staff who live] far away and we don't want our voice overwhelmed by all the people in Fairbanks. Nenana is a subunit and its residents are concerned about being heard.

### **Government to Government Consultation**

Will BLM be doing consultation with the tribes? BLM needs to consult with the tribes.

### **Minerals Management**

BLM has enough regulations governing mining. They cover everything from recreation to getting a drink of water from a creek. I don't see why there needs to be anymore regulations added.

If the stipulations and required operating procedures pertaining to mining detailed in the new plan, will they apply to all claims evenly or would the claimants have valid prior rights that would exempt them from the new requirements?

### **Utility Corridor**

The Dalton Highway Corridor is a really narrow strip; it looks to me like a strategic suppression of economic wealth. Trying to keep what's up here from getting down here without the State of Alaska controlling it.

The presentation contained the question, "Should we allow the State to select parts of the utility corridor?" The answer is Yes.

Obviously the community of Nenana is interested in opening-up the area west of us. We would like to have State control or local control as much as possible and minimal federal control. Something that should be looked-at is a corridor from Nenana straight across to the Yukon and out to other parts of the state to expand mining, rural access, hunting access, fishing access, etc. Whether the lands go back to the State or stay under federal management, I would still like to have that latitude of consideration given for this corridor.

### **Special Areas**

It was in the late 1970s or early 1980s when the Federal Government selected their "(d2)" Lands [ANSCA] Conservation System Units. They spent three years flying in helicopters going over every rock and every mountain in Alaska and they took the best and left the rest. That's why it all locked up in Parks and Preserves.

This all goes back to the whole federal government overview of Alaska. Between National Parks, Preserves, Wildlife Reserves, Scenic Rivers, Scenic Corridors, you keep going on and on and on blocking, blocking, blocking more [land].

There should be no more Scenic Rivers designated in the State of Alaska. My experience in the past with scenic rivers is the people getting professional (guide licenses) are generally park service employees or previous park service employees and nobody else is allowed in there. That's my experience.

We have enough National Parks and Preserves in this State. You do not need to put another one or two million or twelve million acres into a wilderness study area. Just fifty miles [from any BLM parcel] and you're in a Park or Preserve. You're blocking up way to much land.

The Areas of Critical and Environmental Concern (ACECs) are fish habitats and wildlife resources. I believe that the State would be much better qualified to manage its resources than the federal government.

ACECs should be eliminated. Any questions where BLM asks, "Should the Bureau of Land management retain or modify or eliminate things?", I think they should eliminate them and give as much control as possible to the State and to the people of Alaska and allow more freedom.

You brought up the "Wild and Scenic Rivers Act" and said that BLM is doing river inventories to see if rivers are eligible. We live right by the Nenana River and to me the Nenana River is part of the soul of Nenana. I went down to the Park (Denali) a few years ago for a vacation experience and the way the Nenana River is handled down there by the Park (Denali), I felt like I was going into Nazi Germany or something. You could not touch a rock without signing a permit almost. So what I want to know...is the BLM planning or considering expanding how our rivers will be under this Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and is it the Nenana River from this area right here to just outside the Park, is that up as an option? Or are you willing to relinquish any of the rivers that are under the control of BLM right now? The reason I ask this is because State Representative Alan Dick, one of the reasons he got elected recently, is because there was an elderly native couple, I believe it was a native couple from the north who were harassed by federal agents on the river and it was outside the federal jurisdictions in State waters. They were hand cuffed in very dangerous rapids of

the river and the elder woman got a broken rib. We have seen a history up here of the federal government not only legally, but illegally going beyond their jurisdictions and invading space here especially in the waters.

I don't believe that any of the rivers should be listed as "wild or scenic".

### **Water Resources**

We want free access to our own water. Water is forecasted to be the next "blue gold". They are making water pipelines from Canada going to the Lower 48. I am concerned about the federal government brokering deals with out of state corporations to buy up water leases to sell our water and make money off of it by piping it someplace else and not letting us have access to it. This is a problem happening in the Lower 48 with the bottled water companies coming into communities where no one from the corporations actually lives there and they cut a dirty deal with the city, state, or county governments to buy up lease rights to public waters, put it into a bottle and send it across the country. I want Alaska to maintain control of its waters and if there is any money to be made off of Alaska waters, that it ends up in the pockets of Alaskans not Princess Cruise Lines or the Swiss or something like that. So my question is, is there a plan to expand the federal control over State waters?