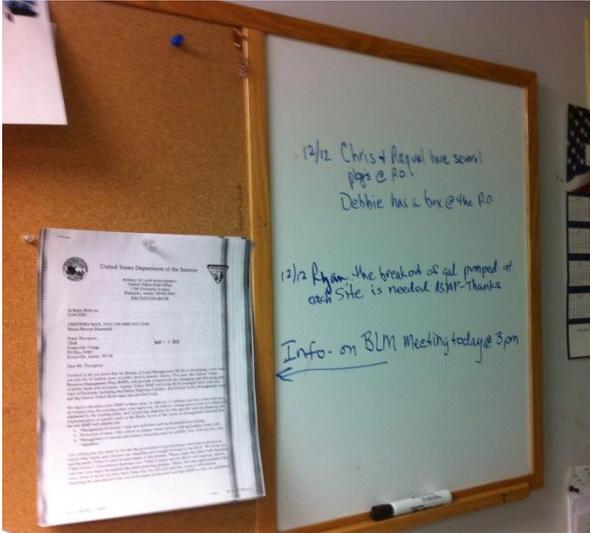


Central Yukon Resource Management Plan Public Scoping Summary Meeting Notes Bettles-Evansville * December 12, 2013



Planning Team

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Questions and Comments:

Planning Area and Planning Process

How were those [Central Yukon Resource Management Plan] boundaries determined? *BLM: They follow old planning boundaries set-up at least 30 years ago.*

Because of the geography of the watershed and its proximity to the village corporation land, Bettles should be in the Dalton planning Subunit.

What is the Governor's Consistency Review? *BLM: That is in our regulations. When we write a plan, we have to let the Governor have 60 days to make sure it [the CY RMP] is consistent with State programs and policies. So this is in addition to their role as a cooperator? BLM: Yes. They get this regardless of whether they are a cooperating agency or not.*

The [existing CY RMP] has been in place for quite a while. A lot has changed since then. When the plan is in place and BLM is managing it, how is it monitored? Because of the vast area [that would be difficult]. *BLM:*

Explained its resource program areas and permit monitoring. But there's all that other land mixed in? The land is checker-boarded. BLM: Explained that the plan is re-evaluated every five years to see if any amendments are needed.

Land Ownership and Land Use

The City of Bettles and the Subsistence Resource Committee would like to see the lands (the possible conveyance lands from Wiseman, south of Kanuti) left the way they are to protect that area so they can be used the way they are [being used] now.

The winter road- we don't want to be subject to some big fight about the winter road. So far it has seemed to work out well and we're happy of that. We're fearful that that could change.

I don't want to see any degradation in access to Federal land, compared to what we have now. When I was working with BLM in setting up the right-of-way for the ice road, BLM was easy to work with. You wanted us to stay a half mile from the bear dens...the bears were in their den because its winter! So we weren't harassing them.

I don't want to invite a whole bunch of people from Anchorage and Fairbanks to hunt up here. We've seen what that does. We'd like you to leave things as close to the way you can.

I don't know how that [mineral/gravel requests to BLM] impacts what is going on with the Road to Amber. They told me a year ago they were going to have it built 4-5 years. They're not even going to start on it for 10 [more years] If they're going to build. Yeah, they were looking at gravel sources...spent a lot of money on helicopters, but progress on getting it done? Way back when I first got here [Bettles], the founding fathers of this city were all about, "how are we going to keep this place [Bettles] going? What's going to happen when all the elders pass-on?" We lost the school 7 years ago. How do we get 16 kids? We need jobs for family-supporting wages. Is the lodge going to afford that? Brooks Range Aviation? Maybe with winter operations, they could support 1 or 2 couples. We can't count on that. So what are we doing to do? When I first came, there were 90 people in the village that wintered over; 70 people the next winter. How many people are here right now? [Discussion that there are only 10-12 year round residents in Evansville and 23 total between Evansville and Bettles.] When I was city clerk, I was asked to keep the city going. I tried to do that. I got mixed-up in the road thing and people got really mad at me. Mayor George Nicholson and I went down to Juneau. In 1983, we lobbied Congress for a Road to Bettles. We found out the opposition had real arguments, not just a bunch of craziness. The issues haven't gone away- they have to be mitigated. A [year round] road might still be a good idea. If we get a year-round road with maintenance and a year-round trooper, it might get us three families. The road by itself is not going to sustain a community. We have to do more. If I'm the only one who stands up and says we need to do this, I'll put my foot in my mouth. But there are a lot of people who are passionate this road. I won't object to that. But if we don't have the ice road, even I can't afford to live here. The costs have just gone up that much. A flight to Fairbanks was \$130 and now it's \$340 on Wrights. Air freight has gone from \$0.28/pound to \$0.85/pound. It's \$0.90 now. I'll fill up my pickup four times to bring supplies up for the year. The fuel costs more than the bird seed- that's the first thing I'll cut.

When there are a great number of people, the land is changed forever more. Some of the things include the spread of invasive species. Climate change increase effluents and eutrophication factor goes up, in

conjunction with warmer water which affects not just salmon, but sheefish in the Koyukuk. That is why we want the [BLM] lands to stay in federal hands.

Invasive Species

There are some ecological things that need to be addressed. The invasive weeds are a big one. We don't want it [invasive plants] in the Refuge and we don't want it here either.

Utility Corridor

The federal government manages to have a more responsive relationship to the Tribal and local governments. It is a better process. The State does not recognize the Tribal Government villages within the state. Their whole overall [objectives] is for everyone in Alaska. When it's looked at that way- they look at population. For a community our size, we can't compete with Anchorage about a say about what happens to us. I object to the State's proposal to obtain more land in the corridor.

Why is the State interested in trying to get the Yukon Crossing area [of the Dalton Highway]? Do they want to develop it? *BLM: I can't speak for the State, but their letter implies that as long as it's in federal ownership, they claim it prevents access into the Gray Mountains where there are rare earth minerals that they're interested in developing. Federal ownership doesn't prevent access, but it makes access more cumbersome than it would be if the State owned it. I can't speak for them, but I think it has to do with access for development.*

When they were putting together the Dalton Highway Management Plan (1993), there was an interagency federal working group. The rare earth minerals were brought up. You need those for your cell phones. 90 percent of the supply is in China. Yukon Crossing is one of the development nodes along the Dalton. If what they're [the State] looking at is making easier access, they're going to have to do it carefully. They're going to have to create their own ice road [to get to the Gray Mountains].

Minerals Management

Mineral rights- Some kind of process to where gravel pits can be approved is needed. Between here and there, there isn't anything [of value] except gravel and swamp, but to get that gravel, there needs to be a process to approve [that request] with minimal damage.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

We have a hard time with the moose population. We used to have moose in the streets. They [moose] used to get on the road. You couldn't get past them. The moose got used to cars and pistols and just defy you if you want to get back. We had some guys from Fort Wainwright and took 17 moose up the Wild River during one spring subsistence hunt and we haven't seen them since. I haven't been back to the Wild River in a while, but I don't think the moose are up there. Moose don't just migrate. They don't move unless they get pushed. There's moose on the Henshaw Creek, but that's a long ride on a boat.

Those air boats are so loud (coming down from Coldfoot) that they scare away everything.

Fire Management

We've had a lot of fires the last five years. Some of them have been fought, some of them have not. They should have fought the Evansville Fire (which was the right thing to do). Last summer a big fire occurred...I

know it burned over the ice road. I know the community is going to have a lot of [snow] drifting problems because there won't be vegetation to catch the snow. And they're going to have a lot more snags fall over the road. There are not a lot of villagers available to cut snags. We're probably going to need some help with that. Is there some way to have an increase in the fire suppression around the ice road? *BLM: The Fire Suppression Plan is the place to do that. I'll pass that suggestion back to our Fire Management Officer. The biggest factor is the cost of suppression and resources to do that. Anytime we elevate the suppression level in an area, you elevate the cost.*

Now the damage is done. Half the ice road area is burnt. The part that burned was BLM land. *BLM: Only the first 13 miles are BLM land... on the Native Corporation or State land- they make the decisions on fire suppression.*