

Central Yukon Resource Management Plan Public Scoping Summary Meeting Notes Galena * December 13, 2013



Planning Team

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Questions and Comments during the Presentation:

Land Ownership and Land Use

There's little use of BLM land in Galena. We're surrounded by Native Corp. and Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) land. I'm a big game guide. I think it would be fair to say I use it [BLM land] more than anybody.

I'm in favor [of the Road to Resources] to a certain extent. We all have to make money somehow, make a living. I'm not going to knock people for that. If there's something we need...to make a hole. We need our cell phones.

BLM asked if anyone was aware of the Air Force remains. It was cleaned-up 3 years ago. They hauled a lot of contaminated soil out there- PCBs. We just moved contaminated dirt from one place to the other. BLM: BLM hasn't verified it's cleaned-up enough to put it back in the public lands system. The way the withdrawal is written, neither Air Force nor BLM has a way to permit timber to get leased out of it.

Has anyone asked about Melozi Hot Springs [at other meetings]? Is BLM leasing it and what happened during clean-up? What buildings were removed? What sort of hazardous materials are there? *BLM: People are interested in leasing it for commercial operations again. But not until there's more cleanup done. We've got almost all the hazmat gone. There's just a lot of solid junk and unsafe buildings.*

The National Park Service might call Melozi Hot Springs a historic site. *BLM: We do look at eligibility.*

Related to commercial leasing of Melozi Hot Spring, I would like provisions for public access to it. If they fixed the airstrip, they shouldn't limit public access to it. Since that guy wrote that book about it- it's getting much more use, particularly in spring. I'd like to see the lodge left in a usable state and a couple of cabins for public use.

What are the current regulations for building cabins on BLM lands for subsistence use or trapping? USFWS has provisions that allow cabins for trapping. You guys kind of allow cabins for commercial activities; trapping. USFWS considers trapping subsistence. It would be helpful from a policy standpoint to get us aligned. We're both dealing with the Alaska National Lands Interest Conservation Act (ANILCA). That's probably why the State pushed you- for a lifestyle [criteria] because of the language in ANILCA talks about lifestyle. USFWS has a rural residency rule. The State says anyone in the state can do subsistence activities. The dollar amounts [in BLM's criteria] are challenging. There should be some other criteria. For people who are legitimate, there should be a path. It shouldn't be easy, but there should be a mechanism. *BLM: BLM never created rules to deal with ANILCA. They said, "we can do it with the rules we have".*

Special Areas

The ACECs are correct for a lot of that area [Nulato Hills], but it's overextended. I can't see how the Box River Study Area is an ACEC. I can't see anybody doing any work up there. If you were to do anything, it would be a waste of money.

Speaking of the ACECs I have a problem that they are overextended. I do subsistence trapping as well as guiding. Because of the [ACEC] designation, I can't put a cabin near the river. I have to be 200' away from the river. That puts me back in the flats. I need to be by the (Kateel) river like people have been historically. I'm pushing 60...pretty soon I won't be able to do that kind of work. So I'd like to be able to [put a cabin closer to the river] someday.

It was really upsetting when an operator out of here took some Argos right up the [Kateel] river. That was when the salmon was pretty much spawned, but the eggs were in the river. I wanted to [travel up-river] myself, but I wouldn't have done it that way. He found out after the fact, but he didn't know the rules. For stuff like that, we need it. Everybody knows our salmon situation, in terms of the kings, its critical.

I think the critical areas need to be shrunk down. What techniques do you use to identify the areas? Right now the areas [ACECs] encompass the whole drainage. The salmon aren't going to go up every creek up the mountain- I think it could be reduced.

Clearly the whole country is changing from when I first went up there [Nulato Hills] in the 60s. It was all open hillside, very little timber. Now you can't hardly go anywhere without it being forest. It's a totally different landscape; people don't realize it. That brings up the access issue. Right now we can still drive up there in snowmobiles. A lot of the old trails are still visible as the ones we used to use with sled dogs. So they're still kinda open and they're re-opening a lot of them, but I think in just a matter of time it's going to close-off. Even my main trail through the Refuge...if I miss one season working on the trail, it just grows over. If I miss it one year [clearing], I can't even find my trail! I got lost trying to get to my cabin on the Refuge. I hate to say it, but it's almost like- for people to have access, other than the river, you need some type of machinery. I'm saying run a CAT, I would dread the day...I didn't like the Argos on the river.

The people I talked to when I grew up...walked through a lot of that country; a lot of it was open. There were areas...for instance the Western Arctic Herd- they come down the Tag River and they flow over from the Huslia and the Kateel, the Gisasa. The old timers used to play "football" (soccer) for weeks waiting for the caribou to come. Of course that's not happening anymore. The guy that did the wrong thing with the Argos-

he didn't see anything wrong with running them up the ridges. But the heavy equipment, they make a mark. I couldn't really argue [with him]- it's not so much damage...they're not like a Caterpillar that makes the gouges. I don't want to see it, but it would provide access. I wouldn't want to see it on the Gisasa.

In terms of Wild and Scenic, [the Gisasa] is one river that I would really want to keep it that way. It's hard to access. It's swifter. It's not quite white water, but it's tough to navigate. Especially with USFWS controlling the lower part of it- it's really good to keep it accessible.

The lower end of that [Gisasa] River is on BLM land. The map says mining is restricted on the lower end, but open to mining on the upper end. From a personal perspective and the perspective of the USFWS, given that there's 100,000 chums spawning on that river, and a good year 120,000 kings (in a good year, not any more), fisheries seem like a good reason to close it. I don't know if there are claims on it...but these are some pretty robust resources.

A bunch of your ACECs are mentioned for salmon and sheefish. There are only five sheefish spawning areas in the whole state. The Gisasa is mentioned for sheefish spawning, but they're not there. There are no sheefish spawning on the Hogatzna, Indian River, Ingultalik, or the Kateel. You've got them listed on about ten rivers, but the only one that is a known sheefish spawning area is the Sulukna. *BLM: The sheefish spawning rivers were estimated in the 1980s when they wrote the existing RMP. It may have been known that fish fed in those rivers, but as it turns out they did not spawn in those rivers as indicated by more recent monitoring.*

It's all special for me, but the Gisasa River really stands out.

The Kateel River has a big salmon run on it which supports the bears. We did some studies of it for the State. I was impressed how many fish were in it. We flew [over the Gisasa River]. There were nine bears on it...in a day.

I heard a talk about seven years ago about the Box River Treeline RNA. Do you have the data from the research done there? Given the whole situation with climate change, it's a great place to document changes. USFWS can get BLM some data from there.

Wildlife & Wildlife Habitat

The US Fish and Wildlife Service have a lot of point data for stick nests; raptors and peregrine falcons might be in them.

Timber Management

The chunk of BLM land north of Galena should not be conveyed because it is the only piece of BLM land that is accessible from Galena to get firewood. I'm not the only person who would jump up and down about it. This piece of land needs to be protected.

Minerals Management

The Gisasa and Kateel drainages should be designated so that they are closed to mining. The Nulato Hills is some of the wildest land in the whole state. There are no 4-wheel trails, nothing. Especially the west side is important for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and muskox.

I'm against any kind of oil and gas development anywhere in the area...at least for now. Especially up the Upper Koyukuk, even though I don't live there.