

Bering Sea–Western Interior RMP Scoping Meeting

Bethel Issue Summary

Bethel, Alaska November 20, 2013

These Issue summaries are created by the BLM after each community meeting. These documents summarize what was shared and are provided to each community for verification or revisions before being considered final.

Attendance:

8 people attended the Bethel community scoping meeting. 5 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

Issues and concerns raised:

BLM Land

- BLM lands east of Bethel: important for moose, caribou, trapping wolves, lynx; important for trapping in general, not so important for waterfowl
- Trail marked between Holy Cross and Aniak
- Lower Kusko villages are interested in water-fowl, berries, timber, fur-bearing animal trapping all available on BLM lands upriver

Fish-related

- Interest in watershed impacts to salmon spawning areas (e.g., potential consideration for ACEC)
- There is nothing ACEC-like that protects salmon spawning, where do the salmon spawn? Are there areas on BLM lands that might be good for an ACEC?
- Smelt – Lower Kusko residents rely heavily upon the smelt that spawn all the way upriver toward and maybe past Kalskag, but never really too far beyond Kalskag. Nobody knows where the smelt go to spawn (Pike Lake) or, if they are river spawners?

Wildlife-related

- River traffic from Lower Kuskokwim villages is common very far upriver, above Bethel, for moose hunting
- Travel occurs by river from Bethel to McGrath to hunt moose as far up as McGrath. Kongiginak, Napaskiak folks boat upriver (September) in fall to McGrath
- BLM lands between Marshall and Russian Mission along the Yukon are important sources of firewood and moose
- State management efforts for predator control have hit roadblocks against federal rules
- To ensure access for subsistence, subsistence users would like some federal intervention/engagement in predator control even though BLM doesn't manage game.

Mineral Potential

- Industry vs. subsistence users
- There is likely to be a cumulative increase in interest in mining as a result of Donlin
- Leave all withdrawals as they are until after we've heard how everything else pans out, to allow for more input from the various user groups
- Answer to the question about the patenting of mining claims: BLM has had a moratorium on the patenting of mining claims since 1994.

Timber and Forest Products

- BLM lands between Marshall and Russian Mission along the Yukon are important sources of firewood and moose
- Berry picking - Lower Kusko villages won't travel terribly far for berries (ample resources nearby)

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- People float logs from Stony River area to lower Kuskokwim in June and July before weather changes (between high water, but before winds), they bring lumber from McGrath to lower communities
- Logging has benefits, but has potential to affect spawning grounds, for example, the runoff from cleared areas

Other

- Lower Kuskokwim villages are ‘greatly affected’ by this effort, they too rely on BLM lands upriver.
- The Lower Kuskokwim is where the population base is. Attendees in Bethel questioned why BLM seemed to approach more, smaller upriver communities.
- Don’t overfocus on upper Kuskokwim at the expense of the lower villages
- “Not enough time” for scoping and providing scoping comments, communities have not been asked what works best for them (timing-wise). March through May, before breakup, are “ideal” for meeting
- AVCP Convention held in October, mid-year meeting in March – good for BLM to attend these.

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