

# Bering Sea - Western Interior

## Resource Management Plan



### Newsletter #1 - May 2014

This is the first of several newsletters that will provide you with information about the Bering Sea-Western Interior (BSWI) Resource Management Plan. We hope these newsletters and the website will keep you informed of important steps throughout the planning process.

The BSWI planning process began with publication of a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* in July 2013. This notice started the public scoping process to identify issues and concerns about the resources of the planning area.

In November and December of 2013, the BLM visited nine communities in the planning area to talk with local residents about how they use BLM lands in their region. Participants shared issues and concerns on a variety of topics that gave the planning team a better vision of what the nearby BLM lands mean to local residents. The BLM also held a scoping meeting in Anchorage.

More than 200 people attended the ten BSWI scoping meetings. Participants expressed a broad range of issues and concerns. Major themes we heard during scoping include:

- Subsistence resources, including access to resources and competition for resources
- Mineral exploration and development, including hardrock mining and oil and gas
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Section 17(d)(1) land withdrawals
- Recreation and visitor services, including commercial hunting and guiding and off-highway vehicle access
- Special management area designations, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

### Planning Timeline



The BSWI Resource Management Plan will address many of the concerns you raised during scoping and, when completed, will guide the management of BLM lands in the region for the next 15-20 years. We appreciate your help in this effort, and look forward to your continued interest and participation. Specific opportunities for future public participation are included in this newsletter.

Please stay informed and remain involved in this planning effort. Together, we'll craft a land use plan that serves us all well into the future.

Alan Bittner, Anchorage Field Manager

## What is an RMP?

To ensure the best balance of uses and resource protections for Alaska's public lands, the BLM undertakes extensive land use planning using a collaborative approach with local, state and tribal governments, Alaska Native corporations, the public, and stakeholder groups.

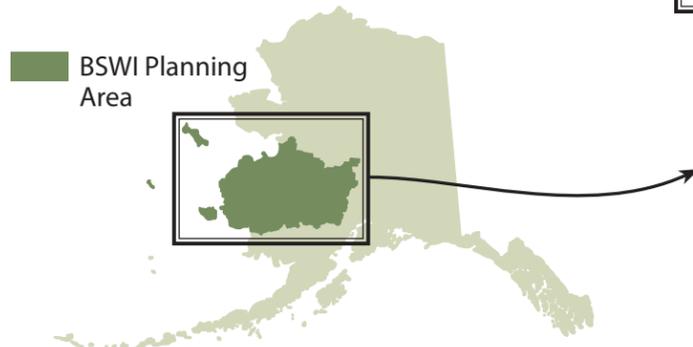
The result is a Resource Management Plan (RMP) that establishes goals and objectives for resource management and the measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives. The RMP provides a framework to guide decisions for every action and approved use of BLM lands in the planning area. Issues and management concerns the new RMP will address include:

- Management of human uses and activities, such as recreation and mining;
- Protection of areas with critical or unique values, such as wild and scenic rivers; and
- Management of natural and cultural resources, such as fish, wildlife and cultural sites.

## BSWI planning area

The BSWI planning area encompasses approximately 62 million acres of land, including 10.6 million acres managed by the BLM. The planning area includes lands south of the Central Yukon watershed to the southern boundary of the Kuskokwim River watershed, and lands west of Denali National Park and Preserve to the Bering Sea (see planning area map).

BLM-managed public lands range from small isolated parcels to large contiguous areas. To ensure all BLM lands are addressed by land use plans, the BLM established planning area boundaries for the entire state. BLM land use plans address only the BLM-managed lands within each planning area. However, the BLM considers existing plans and policies of adjacent landowners during land use planning.



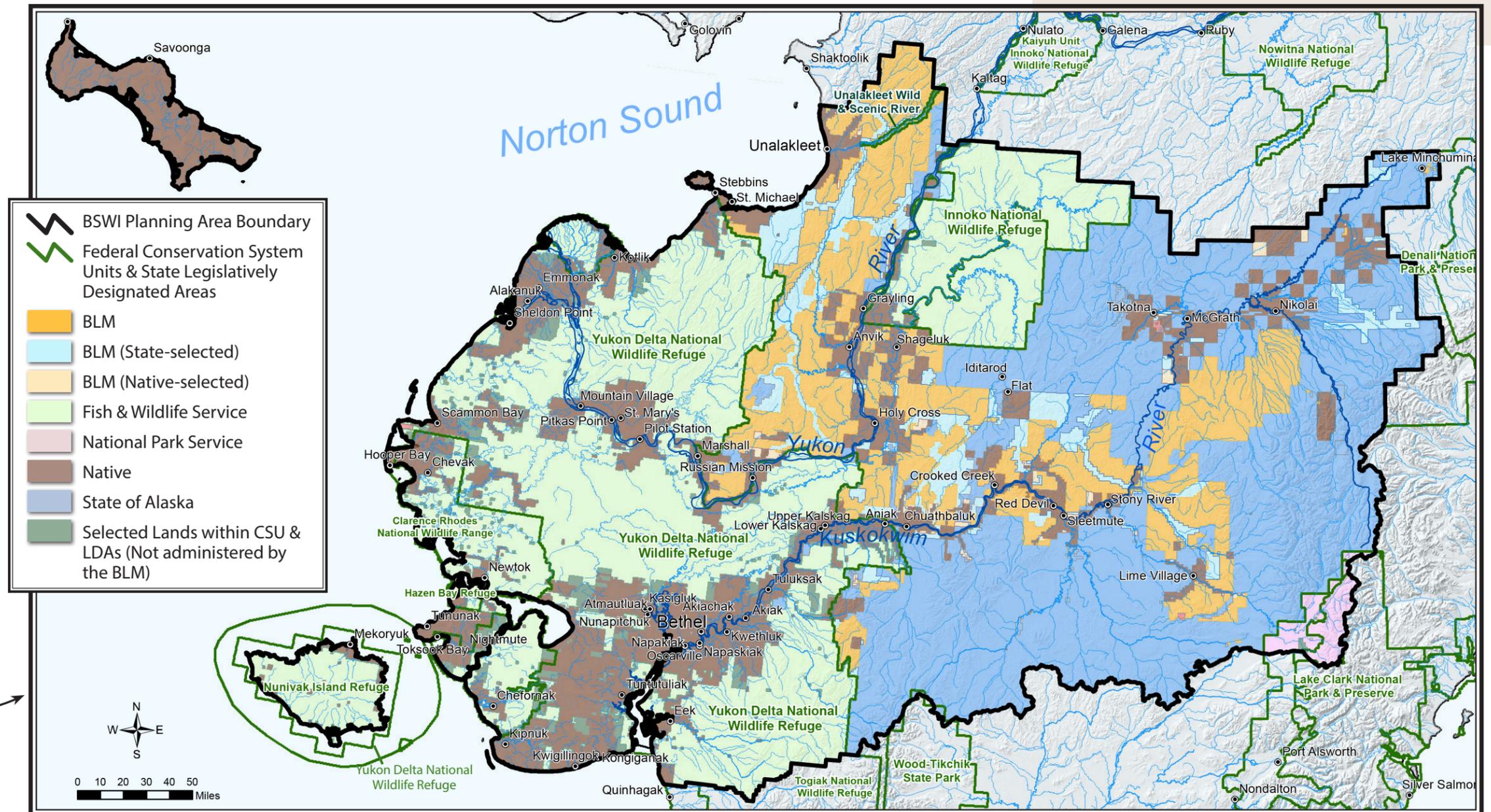
## How BLM will use your comments

Public involvement is an important part of developing a new RMP. Scoping is a process where the BLM asks for input from the public and interested agencies about the scope of issues and impacts to be addressed in the RMP.

The public scoping period for the BSWI RMP began in July 2013 and concluded in January 2014. The BLM received 47 written comment submissions and 60 form letters during the public scoping period. We also heard many oral comments during community scoping meetings in the planning area.

The BLM then analyzed your comments and identified relevant issues to be addressed in the BSWI RMP. **We are currently preparing a scoping summary report, which will be available on the project website shortly.** The scoping report will help us ensure that the RMP and the associated Environmental Impact Statement address the issues important to people who live in the region or who may be affected by the BLM's decisions. The scoping report does not make decisions. Rather, it summarizes the comments received during scoping and identifies issues to be addressed in the RMP.

Comments received after the scoping report is complete will be considered in the next steps of the planning process.



## BLM seeks ACEC nominations

As part of the BSWI RMP process, the BLM is seeking nominations for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. ACECs highlight areas where special management attention is needed to protect resource values.

There are five existing ACECs in the planning area that will be reviewed. The BLM will also consider new ACECs. If you wish to nominate an ACEC, please provide as much information as possible to help us evaluate your nomination. A nomination form and additional information is available on the BSWI website. The BLM will accept nominations until August 29, 2014.



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## Stay involved

Although the formal scoping period is closed, we hope you will continue to participate in the BSWI planning process. Visit the project website often to stay informed of where we are in the process and the next opportunity for public involvement. We'll update the website with information and new documents as they are completed, starting with the scoping report later this spring. We'll also post a report when completed that describes the leasable mineral (oil and gas, coal) occurrence and development potential.

The BLM plans to host workshops in interested communities in the spring of 2015 to discuss a range of alternatives for the Draft RMP. These workshops will give local communities the opportunity to help the BLM craft management alternatives that reflect local needs and concerns. Please consider if your community would like to participate in the workshops.

If your tribe, organization or community would like the BLM to meet with you during any phase of the BSWI planning process, please contact us. We want to hear from YOU.



*Lower Kalskag is one of 26 communities located near BLM lands in the BSWI planning area.*

## How to contact us

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