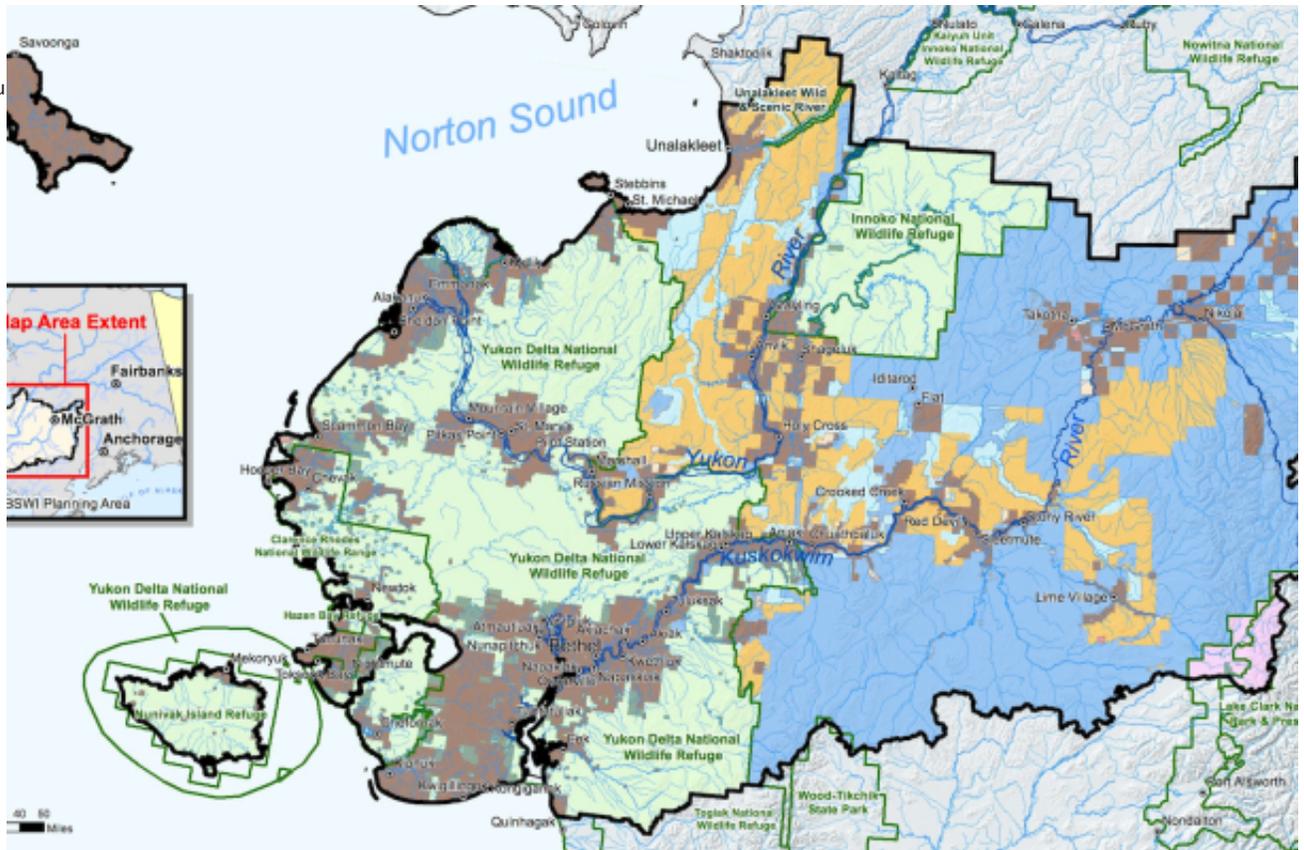


## BLM Asks Lower Yukon-area Residents to Name ‘Critical’ Resources

By Matthew F. Smith (<http://www.knom.org/wp/blog/author/mfsmith/>), May 6, 2014

Image: Map of the Bering Sea-Western Interior Planning Area by the Bureau of Land Management.



a federal agency drafting plans for 10.6 million acres of land along the Lower Yukon is seeking input from residents on natural and cultural resources of “critical” importance.

The Bureau of Land Management is building a new land use plan for millions of acres in its [Bering Sea and Western Interior planning area](https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=renderDefaultPlanOrProjectSite&projectId=36665) (<https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=renderDefaultPlanOrProjectSite&projectId=36665>), which includes lands in and around communities like Unalakleet, Shageluk and Aniak.

“It’d be helpful for us to get information from some of those communities about what they think is important nowadays,” said the bureau’s project coordinator Jorjena Daly, “and whether or not those original reasons for designation still have meaning today.”

The BLM’s existing plans date back to the 1980s, and identify five critical habitat areas—including salmon and sheefish spawning grounds near Unalakleet; one of the largest spawning areas for chum salmon in the Yukon River in the Anvik River; a large population of “trophy class” grizzly brown bears also near the Anvik River; and Peregrine falcon nesting habitat along the lower Yukon.

Daly said some of those “critical” areas may be outdated—while new “critical” areas should be added—to the plan BLM will use in determining how federal lands in the area will be used over the next 20 years.

“We might determine there are certain areas of BLM land where we would want to discourage a utility corridor, or a right a way of some sort, due to some resource concern that we might have in the area,” Daly said.

On the other hand, she said, “we might come up with areas where we would recommend development, that sort of thing.”

Daly said other areas that may need the “critical” designation can include more than just land use and subsistence concerns.

“There could also be cultural areas of significance to people locally, and that’s another reason to make a recommendation,” she added.

Meetings last summer helped shape the current draft, which Daly said now incorporates projects already in the works, like GCP's Terra Southwest network. The outreach has helped the bureau learn of other projects in the management area as well.

"Many of the communities told us about this proposed road from the Yukon River to the Kuskokwim that's been in discussion for quite a while," Daly said. "Even though that road won't be constructed on BLM land, that's an example of a development project we learned about through the meetings that we would want to take into consideration."

Submissions for new areas of critical environmental concern opened May 1, and can be proposed through August 29.

Residents living within the BLM's Bering Sea-Western Interior planning area can [submit proposals for new or revised "areas of critical environmental concern"](http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/newsroom/2014/may/BLM_Seeks_Nominations_for_Areas_of_Enviro_Concern_for_Bering_Sea-Western_Interior_planning_area_05012014.html) ([http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/newsroom/2014/may/BLM\\_Seeks\\_Nominations\\_for\\_Areas\\_of\\_Enviro\\_Concern\\_for\\_Bering\\_Sea-Western\\_Interior\\_planning\\_area\\_05012014.html](http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/newsroom/2014/may/BLM_Seeks_Nominations_for_Areas_of_Enviro_Concern_for_Bering_Sea-Western_Interior_planning_area_05012014.html)) at the BLM's website.

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