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## BLM Requesting Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Nominations

By THEA CARD

The Bureau of Land Management is seeking nominations for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern in a huge swath of western Alaskan until August. These nominations are intended to bring attention to lands of historical, cultural and scenic importance.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern are public lands that are managed in order to protect the area's character.

There are five ACEC's within the Bering-Sea Western Interior planning area including Anvik River, North River, Unalakleet River, and Kuskokwim River Raptor Nesting Habitat. The BLM manages 10.6 million acres of land and is set to review the existing ACEC's to make sure they should be maintained as protected lands. However, after extensive meetings with local villages, Bering Sea-Western Interior Resource Management Plan team lead Jorjena Daly says the BLM is ready for additions to the list.

*"So we already went through and did public scoping meetings in many villages among the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers last fall, and public scoping closed in January. We received some helpful comments regarding areas of critical environmental concern but we wanted to open up this nomination period to really encourage specific input regarding our existing five areas of critical environmental concern as well as any new areas that people may want to propose."*

There are requirements that an area must meet before it can be considered for an ACEC nomination.

*"We go thru a process where we go through the relevance criteria and the importance criteria of the value."*

For an ACEC nominee to be considered relevant, it must be a significant historic, cultural or scenic value, a fish and wildlife resource, a natural process system, or a natural hazard. An ACEC must also prove its importance by either having more than local significance, having qualities that make it fragile or having been previously ordained protected.

*"We are looking for input from the communities and the people who live close to the BLM lands along the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers that might be aware of some special values that they would like to have considered for special protection."*

The deadline for ACEC nominations is August 29th, 2014. For details and applications, visit the BLM website at [www.blm.gov/ak](http://www.blm.gov/ak) (<http://www.blm.gov/ak>).

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