

Bering Sea - Western Interior

Resource Management Plan



Newsletter #2 - February 2015

This is the second in a series of newsletters about the Bering Sea-Western Interior (BSWI) Resource Management Plan. We hope these newsletters and the project website will continue to 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. During the scoping process, the BLM visited a number of communities, held an Anchorage meeting, and offered presentations to Tribes and organizations to talk with local residents about how they use BLM-managed public lands in their region. 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 included subsistence, mineral exploration and development, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Section 17(d)(1) land withdrawals, commercial hunting and guiding, off-highway vehicle access, and special management area designations, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

The BLM captured these comments in a scoping summary report, available on our project website. This 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 BLM is now developing Preliminary Alternatives for the Draft RMP. These alternatives will propose varying levels of resource use and conservation. In February and March 2015, the BLM will visit interested communities in the planning area to present the

Planning Timeline



2017 - Implementation of Final RMP/EIS

Preliminary Alternatives and invite public input. This and other specific opportunities for future public participation are included in this newsletter.

When completed, the BSWI Resource Management Plan will guide the management of BLM-managed public lands in the region for the next 15-20 years. Please stay informed and remain involved in this planning effort. Your voice matters.

Alan Bittner
Anchorage Field Manager

BSWI Vision

In 2014 the BSWI RMP Team, including our state, federal and tribal cooperators, developed the following vision statement for this planning effort:

The Anchorage Field Office vision for the Bering Sea-Western Interior planning area is to sustain the diverse and intact ecosystems that support traditional subsistence lifestyles while recognizing the importance of BLM-managed public lands to rural economies.

BSWI planning area revision

In January 2015, the BLM adjusted the boundaries of the Anchorage and Central Yukon field offices. The adjustment creates a contiguous management block of land in Western Alaska and will provide for improved landscape management of key habitats.

As a result of the field office boundary adjustment, the BSWI and Central Yukon planning boundaries will also be adjusted. The eastern portion of Nulato Hills, lands that were formerly in the Central Yukon planning area, will become part of the BSWI planning area. The BLM is currently developing a notice of planning boundary changes for publication in the *Federal Register*.

The revised BSWI planning area boundary will encompass 62.3 million acres of land, including 13.4 million acres managed by the BLM (see revised planning area map on adjacent page).

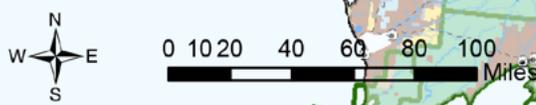
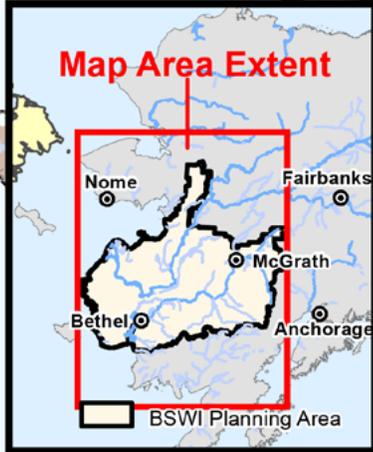
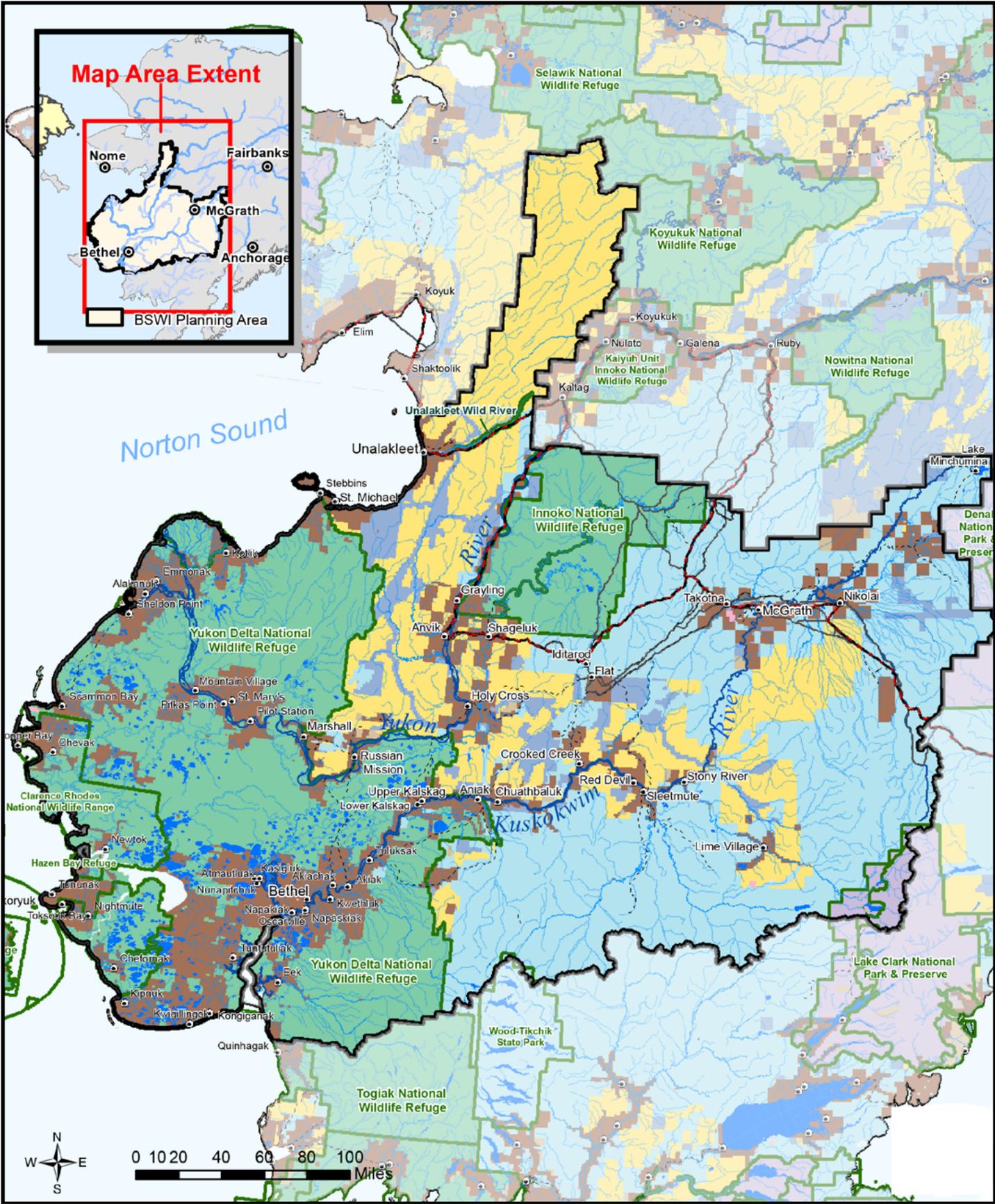
BSWI and subsistence

The majority of communities in the BSWI planning area are rural villages, so concerns about subsistence use of BLM-managed public lands in the planning area were a recurring theme during community scoping meetings. ANILCA defines subsistence as “the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools or transportation...”

The BLM Anchorage Field Office issues federal subsistence permits on non-selected, unencumbered BLM-managed public lands. In the BSWI planning area, this includes moose permits in Units 22A and 21E. The BLM also provides technical advice to the Federal Subsistence Program, coordinates with other federal and state agencies, and works to protect subsistence resources and provide access for subsistence activities.



The BSWI RMP Team and cooperators from Chuathbaluk Traditional Council discuss land use patterns in the BSWI planning area.



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|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| BSWI Planning Area Boundary | BLM | Fish & Wildlife Service | State of Alaska |
| Federal Conservation System Units & State Legislatively Designated Areas | BLM (State-selected) | National Park Service | Military |
| | BLM (Native-selected) | Native | |



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Stay involved

The next opportunity to participate in the BSWI planning process is the Preliminary Alternatives Outreach Open Houses the BLM will present in late February and March in interested communities in the planning area and in Anchorage. We're contacting communities now to develop the schedule and will announce meetings in the local press. We'll also update the project website as meetings are scheduled.

Can't attend a workshop? You may choose instead to learn about the Preliminary Alternatives through our Online Open House at the project website. The Preliminary Alternatives and all outreach materials will be posted for you to read and offer comments.

We recently posted the BSWI Leasable Mineral Occurrence and Development Potential Report. Soon a number of other reports will also be available online (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, wilderness characteristics and Wild and Scenic Rivers inventories, and more). So bookmark the BSWI website and drop by often to learn what's new.

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.

How to contact us

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