

Bering Sea–Western Interior Resource Management Plan Scoping Meeting Summaries by Community

This document summarizes oral comments from community meetings held during the Bering Sea–Western Interior Public Scoping Period. The community meeting summaries are listed in chronological sequence by date of meeting.

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Lower Kalskag, November 8, 2013

Attendance:

25 residents attended the Lower Kalskag community scoping meeting. 5 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

Issues and concerns raised:

“Where there was more, there is less and where there was less, there is more”

- This comment was expressed in relation to changes that elders and community members have noticed over time in regard to weather, fish, and wildlife.

BLM Land

- BLM land to the north of the community is rarely utilized at present, with the exception of Pike Lake, but its future availability is important for future subsistence use as local competition increases, especially if the AVCP proposed Yukon-Kuskokwim road is constructed.
- BLM land is important to our future generations.
- The community is interested in long-term viability of the lands and not short-term development and gain. The land is important to future generations.

Fish-related

- Lakes located northeast of the village on BLM land referred to as “Pike Lake” are important late winter/early spring fishery to some in the community. Usually travel there in snowmachines.
- Concern was expressed over locally harvested fish that, when dissected, had odd greenish and glowing colors. Community members expressed concern over possible contaminants related to the Fukushima Nuclear plant in Japan.
- Beaver population has increased and it has decreased the spawning habitat

Wildlife-related

- Support the reintroduction of Wood Bison and Muskox
- Mulchatna caribou migration patterns have changed and moved farther away from community to the south. There is wolf and hunting pressure on the herd. The herd has not been seen in many years in the Whitefish Lake area (south of town on USFWS land).
- Moose management: all the moose in the village can be a safety hazard to the children.
- Beaver trapping and range expansion: trappers farther west are seeing beavers where they didn't see them before.
- Trail use: Increased trail use and the GMU boundary is not aligned with the trail.
- Grizzly bear populations have increased.

Water-related

- Concerns were raised over the health of the river and watersheds if activities are allowed on the land that could harm their water.

Other

- Proposed Road - concerns raised over the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)-proposed road from Kalskag to the Yukon River Paimut Slough. Community members were told that only business traffic would use the road and it would be closed to other travel, though they are concerned that it will not be patrolled and that has the potential to increase local fishing and hunting pressure. The community members desire access to the road, if built, for subsistence purposes.
- Reindeer herding occurred historically in the area and there is interest in future opportunities.
- Community members are interested in offering guided tours to visitors/tourists to visit a village and learn about rural village life, offer tours of the surroundings, to see wildlife and birds, possibly

developing some type of ecotourism that would likely occur on lands close to the village (Native Corporation-owned or Fish and Wildlife Service-owned).

- Community members shared general information about burial grounds close to town and likely on Native Corporation lands but no specific location.
- Concerns were raised about air quality with local wildfires if they are managed to let the fire burn. A past fire was not suppressed and the community air quality was really bad.

Aniak, November 19, 2013

Attendance:

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

Issues and concerns raised:

“We look to the future in a positive way, but we are concerned about losing our past way of life.”

BLM Land

- Kolmakof River - important moose hunting; especially important for folks who didn't get a Tier II permit
- Trail between Holy Cross and Aniak – to Paimute Slough (on Fish and Wildlife Service land) travel on BLM land to get to Paimute Slough to hunt north towards Holy Cross (ptarmigan, moose, bear) and to go fishing (Pike). Trail from Aniak to Holy Cross used by both snowmachines and ATVs almost year-round.
- Oskowalik River - important for all the same reasons, moose hunting in the fall
- Pike Lake - important for lake fishing (pike), some float plane access, berry picking, spring and fall waterfowl, moose hunting, ptarmigan hunting,
- BLM lands south of Aniak – important for trapping and Mulchatna Caribou Herd
- Owhat River NE of Aniak - recent transfer of lands in area between TKC and Calista
- Many of the lands along the river banks are TKC lands and are open only to TKC shareholders unless by special permit; makes the BLM lands that much more valuable
- How much potential is there for energy development?
- BLM lands are very important to non-TKC shareholders. (The Kuskokwim Corporation)
- Keep withdrawals closed (to mining), benefits moose and habitat for other animals

Fish-related

- Concern was expressed about mercury in the Kuskokwim River.
- Pike fishing is important at Pike Lake

Wildlife-related

- Winter Moose Hunts - cannot hunt within 1/2mile of Yukon River according to Subsistence Regulations. Makes getting a moose more difficult.
- Supportive of wolf-hunting/predator hunting on BLM lands
- easy access to black bear, too many black bear
- Kilbuck Mountains - Kilbuck herd converging with Mulchatna herd
- Beaver populations have spiked, get into subsistence nets
- Tribal members living in cities are denied subsistence permits
- Currently, outfitters and guides operate in the area; they take from the communities but don't return to the communities; don't hire local, compete for resources

- BLM lands south of Aniak – important for trapping and Mulchatna Caribou Herd
- Will there be any changes in subsistence and tribal members’ rights?
- Map Suggestion: missing a creek that flows north from the Kuskokwim between Upper Kalskag and Aniak onto BLM lands. This creek is used during high water years to access moose on BLM lands.

Public Safety-Hazardous Materials

- Ongoing abandoned mine investigations – Is BLM continuing to look for AML?
- Still old CAT trails across the landscape from mining heydeys.
- Concerns about Red Devil; use lessons learned to inform stipulations, terms, and conditions on future mining activities; avoid Red Devils in the future
- Ensure independent 3rd party testers/remediation specialists are involved in mining reclamation

Mineral Potential

- Why isn’t Oskowalik listed as high potential? Rare earth mineral maps show area as ‘high.’
- Granite/hard-rock potential north of or near-to Aniak - Need for river rip-rap, roads, dikes, etc.
- Is Donlin mine in a Mining District? If so, which one? How much of that District is on BLM lands? (Dave Cannon)
- How much more development related to mining is expected or could occur on BLM lands?

Timber and Forest Products

- Berry picking - folks travel as far as Napaimute (upriver) for berries
- Has BLM completed any timber stand assessments in this area?
- White spruce and balsam poplar
- Firewood up the Holitna River, is quality enough for milling dimensional lumber and could it power barges with sawmill byproduct from milled lumber? Timber potential good, byproducts of processing dimensional lumber could be effectively used for biomass/pellets
- BLM lands on either side of the Kuskokwim at Stony River are important sources of dimensional wood and firewood. Many harvest timber upriver around Stony River and make log rafts to transport wood downriver, as far as Bethel sometimes.
- Lime Village (up Stony River) also has some higher quality timber with potential for milling.
- There is potential for a mill, use AVCP as model
- No major fire in a long time, has resulted in even-aged stands
- Energy costs + TKC rules have resulted in high-water harvest phenomenon (since no one owns the high-water). During high water, people will go cut timber right on the banks of the river – in addition to gathering the timber that has been washed downriver and is lying on the banks or islands.

Cultural

- Historic native campsites on west side of Pike Lake

Other

- BLM lands also used for photography
- Aniak = highest kilowatt hour costs in the nation
- Comm sites, towers, and turbines typically don’t interfere with access to historical trails/access
- Map Suggestions: modify legend to show Withdrawals on BLM-unencumbered with orange/gold background. Add Napaimute to map. Missing a creek that flows north from the Kuskokwim between Upper Kalskag and Aniak onto BLM lands. This creek is used during high water years to access moose on BLM lands.
- Several corridors are proposed (roads, pipelines) and these could benefit the communities, but we also like things the way they are now. (dilemma, torn about it)
- The proposed road between the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers would have an associated pipeline to transfer heating fuel, concern expressed over the hazards of fuel transport. Hazards associated with above-ground pipeline (vandalism)

- Supportive of local filming that would bring income and awareness of the area.

Bethel, November 20, 2013

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)

- 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.

Chuathbaluk, November 21, 2013

Attendance:

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

Issues and concerns raised:

BLM Land

- “Government Cabin” area along the Kuskokwim refers to area close to or, on BLM land upriver from Chuathbaluk, off the north bank of the river, across from Veahna Creek on the south bank
- Up Aniak Slough to “Big Lake” for “egging” (collecting bird eggs)
- BLM land block east of Chuathbaluk – caribou there
- Map suggestions: creek missing on map (same area upriver of Aniak on north bank into BLM lands toward Pike Lake), also Cobalt Creek = called Mission Creek locally?, add historic Crow Village to map
- BLM land north of Crow Village: trapping is important (20-mile loop)
- BLM land across the river from Chuathbaluk/south and east of Chuathbaluk: wood gathering is VERY important there “100%” of Chuathbaluk gets wood in this area, dead standing swamp kill; trapping is also important in this area
- BLM land north of Chuathbaluk: Hunting + Berries important to Chuathbaluk

Fish-related

- Smelt spawning grounds unknown, they come up to Crow Village, not far beyond
- Pike Lake important for winter use
- Napaimute fishes up on Native-selected on the Hologuk (Ski Creek area)
- Keep development from occurring near rivers/creeks

Wildlife-related

- Primary subsistence resources = bear, moose, berries
- Muskox, moose, bears primary species
- Trapping:
 - has doubled in the village in the last 5-10 years due to declining incomes

- Too much beaver now, trapped only for personal consumption/use
- Marten in river valleys, Black marten more valuable than red; Chuathbaluk traps for income
- Tommy Tom has trapped all the way from Crooked Creek to Flat, Oskowalik; via dog team mushing
- Concerned that the game will move upland in response to increased barge traffic/disturbance
- People travel far downriver to the Kuskokwim Delta to hunt waterfowl and trap muskrats.
- Buckstop Pass - Holitna Pass: caribou until 15 years ago, caribou used to come with 6-7 miles of Chuathbaluk
- Many reindeer herds/herders in the region before (Lisa found reindeer collar bell in her Crow Village garden)
- Reindeer herders just stopped herding them, domestic animals left to mingle in with wild herds
- Caribou used to travel the Holitna River-west towards Tuluksak, the Tikchik folks hunted there - "Kilbuck herd"
- BLM land block east of Chuathbaluk – caribou there
- Lime Village (Lime Hills) caribou have been back for several years
- Approx. 6-8 muskox in mountains behind Chuathbaluk
- Some believe there are local Peregrine falcons registered, Numbered/tagged?
- Three-step Mountain (on Fish & Wildlife Service lands) has some caribou
- Ray Peterson did many local subsistence studies in the past for an agency

Cultural-related

- Traditional use patterns are dynamic, not static. Plan needs to reflect this into the future because even though we may not hunt caribou or moose in an area now; if they migrate to a new area in the future – we will hunt there. The RMP needs to consider future movement of the animals and that we will follow where the animals go.
- Many hunt alone (solo)
- Ray Peterson subsistence studies
- Dry portage "old trail" - cross to Aniak, winter trail Aniak to Russian Mission, Crow Village to Paimiut slough, trails are on Smithsonian records
- Old trade route; traders came over from the Yukon to trade at Kalskag = "wet route"
- Elder Lucy (seasonal migrations in childhood): spring camp from Chuathbaluk to Kalskag via dog team, one portage. Spring camp for "Parky squirrels" (squirrels for making parkas) 300 squirrels needed for a parka. NYAC mine area hot springs, Crow Village people would go to NYAC Area for spring camp. Then move west to tundra for waterfowl and muskrat in summer – then move upriver with the Salmon to Aniak River for fall camp. Had rains in August.
- Historic travel direction for resource gathering: Crow Village/Chuathbaluk folks moved south, Aniak folks moved north.
- Elder Candy's (80) family lived subsistence - father told by territorial government to put the kids in school or go to jail.

Mineral Potential

- Faulkners live near NYAC/hot springs year-round
- Abandoned mines; cinnabar, quicksilver, gold, arsenic in water
- Need to know where the impacts have been in the past; important for cumulative effects
- Joe Kaninsky Mine (gold) 12 miles off the river, Mission Creek
- Old cinnabar on "left" hand side (west of Owhat River) of mountains behind Chuathbaluk, one old mine in the base of the mountains up in the bowl
- What is going on in the two blocks north of Chuathbaluk (re: W/Ds - overlapping)? Maps show both green and black hatches.

- Chuathbaluk recommends to retain the W/Ds south of the river (these blocks are especially important for subsistence activities)
- Keep development from occurring near rivers/creeks
- (Elder Candy) Mixed feelings on mining - young people need jobs, leaning more towards development; if done right, watched and monitored. The young people today do not have access to the same resources we used to have and they need the income more.

Timber and Forest Products

- Go berry picking downriver toward Bethel for salmonberries and blueberries.
- Get wood upriver, above Stony River
- Logging by Sleetmute and Red Devil, float down in rafts to Chuathbaluk
- There is a mill across the river from Chuathbaluk, on the south side of the river. Elder Garry (82) used to operate the mill with wood harvested from upriver. Garry supplied all the villages between Stony River and Kalskag w/ lumber, he supplied firewood and lumber “slabs.” The mill is now run by “Nelson Brothers Enterprises.” Garry supplied the slabs for all smokehouses on the river.

Unalakleet, November 22, 2013

Attendance:

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

Issues and concerns raised:

General

- What is the status of Ryan cabin?
- Can we apply to construct a shelter cabin up the headwaters of the North River (tributary of Unalakleet) where we go caribou hunting?
- Concerns expressed on behalf of Stebbins and St. Michaels residents who have even less economic opportunity than is available in Unalakleet, there are no jobs there and they really rely on BLM lands.
- What are the reasons behind the State of Alaska-selected land that runs north-south in a corridor as far north as Shaktoolik to the Anvik River south?
- What are the reasons behind the State of Alaska-selected land that runs east-west north of the Unalakleet River and an area of medium mineral potential?
- There is a lack of easements across Corporation-owned land to BLM land.
- The 17b easements need to be signed on the ground.
- What is the status/priority of the state-selected land conveyances along the Chirosky River watershed?
- We need clean water and clean air to support subsistence resources.
- About 99 allotments exist along the Unalakleet River. Concern was expressed for potential management agreement between the State of Alaska and the BLM over river/water management. The BLM and state should manage the river in partnership. The Native Village of Unalakleet indicated they would be willing to be part of any future management agreement.

Iditarod Trail

- Iditarod Trail use is occurring across native allotments and some allottees don’t want the events that occur on the trail to cross their allotments.

- Requested that the BLM install BLM easement signs on the approved easements along the Iditarod Trail.
- The Iditarod Trail needs accurate trail marking to prevent trespass on Corporation-owned land, the current marking is inadequate.

BLM Land

- Need more law enforcement on the trail during the sled dog race

Fish-related

- Can BLM do stream channel studies and research so we can learn where the upwelling and downwellings are located on the Unalakleet and tributaries that support the fish species that rely on each stream feature for spawning? (in context of similar project occurring on South River tributary of Unalakleet River) Interested in potential chinook spawning habitat enhancement sites.
- Subsistence residents are penalized by ocean-based commercial fish harvesting, especially by-catch.
- Q: What is the status of the water rights on the Unalakleet? A: The BLM installed stream gauges on the Main Unalakleet River in the past to document stream flow and apply for the minimum flow water right for maintaining spawning fish habitat and the values for which the river was designated as “wild.” Permit status with the SoA currently unknown.

Wildlife-related

- The moose hunt starts August 15 and it’s too warm, it should start later.
- Many depend upon moose to get through the winter for family and extended family. Sport and guided hunters fly-over and take moose and leave less for locals.
- We had a past, voluntary, 5-year moratorium on moose hunting.
- Concerns expressed on behalf of Stebbins and St. Michaels residents who have even less than is available in Unalakleet, there are no jobs there and they really rely on BLM lands. Someone from outside had taken 5 moose in this area.
- Concerns expressed over Office of Subsistence Management / State decisions on subsistence harvests (moose).
- Increased climate/weather pressures impacting subsistence species and prices are always increasing for fuel, etc. – makes subsistence difficult
- Caribou were historically in the Unalakleet-area and well to the south of town.
- Kingmetolik River is current southern boundary of Western Arctic Caribou Herd migration.
- Western Arctic Caribou Herd does not travel as far south as it used to, now we must travel to Granite Mountain and use snowmachines. We have to travel a greater distance and it is more expensive to hunt.
- Reindeer grazing opportunities are desired, very supportive of reindeer grazing. “Bring it on” “Reindeer are delicious”
 - Historic herding occurred up Egavik Creek, North River (trib of Unk), South River (trib of Unk), Chirosky River (trib of Unk), and Klikatereq area.
 - Egavik Creek area used to have a reindeer processing plant circa 1930’s.

Cultural-related

- All Norton Sound villages have always cooperated and shared resources.
- There are numerous abandoned villages all along the coast.
- Many “hilltops” are culturally significant in the planning area.

Mineral Potential

- Concern expressed over who benefits from development of natural resources when developed (mining), the companies benefit from the development, not the locals. Even our scenic resources are hurt.

- Concern expressed about the sale of native allotments/fee-simple lands for development to private interests or development and what BLM could do about it?

ACECs

- There are no sheefish, except for at the mouth of the Unalakleet River, up the North River ACEC or far up the Unalakleet River ACEC.
- Both the North River ACEC and the Unalakleet River ACEC are very important for salmon and chinook salmon
- The most important resource in the Unalakleet River and all its tributaries/watershed is the fresh clean water because it supports all life forms. “It provides clean water and clean land” that support fish, berry, bear, and firewood resources.
- Unalakleet River ACEC is critical for chinook salmon spawning.
- North River ACEC is valuable for caribou hunting that is reliable every year
- North River ACEC headwaters is very important for chinook salmon spawning
- Desire to protect Kingmetolik River area (due east of Shaktoolik) and the North River ACEC for future caribou herd migration

Anchorage, December 4, 2013

This Issue summary was created by a contractor after the Anchorage combined Central Yukon (CY) RMP and Bering Sea-Western Interior (BSWI) RMP meeting and is intended to summarize questions, issues, and concerns shared at the meeting. Some of the comments below apply to one plan, some to both plans; as indicated in parentheses.

Attendance:

52 people were in attendance at the Anchorage scoping meeting, 4 of whom joined over the phone.

Issues and concerns raised:

NEPA/Purpose & Need

(Manzer – BSWI) There is an absence of “minerals” from your “issues to consider” in both plans. You have “soil” and “management of resources- mining” in the BSWI plan, but there is an absence of minerals from both plans. Minerals are a federal/BLM resource. I find this oversight egregious. Both of these areas have a long and storied mining history with a lot of potential development too. I hope it doesn’t speak to lack of cognizance of the importance of minerals and mining in these areas.

(Warden – both plans) This may be the first time people are hearing this information. One of the things we can do as the public is to develop our own alternatives and submit them to BLM for consideration. Can we submit Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) or Wild and Scenic River designation suggestions? If the Scoping deadline is Jan 17, many of us couldn’t put something together by January 17, when would you be willing to take those types of information from us after the scoping comment deadline? *BLM: By Jan 17 we would like to get as much as we can about the scope of issues from the public. There are several other opportunities for review and involvement in our process. Particularly if you are partnering with us, you can be involved in team meetings and discussions that we’re working on in our office. Even if you’re not a partnering agency, as a member of the public, there are intervals...draft stages in the process...where you can still express your ideas and opinions and it’s possible they can be*

incorporated throughout the process. It's never too late to contribute good ideas, but certain times are better than others. Scoping is the time period for BLM to get the breadth of issues. Development of the range of alternatives is the next step.

(Miller – both plans) We have a crisis of Yukon River Salmon. Chinook salmon had their worst year ever in 2012. This should be a major focus of each plan: the Central Yukon, Eastern Interior, and I'm going to call it the Bering Sea Plan. I can't speak for the villages, but I can speak for the watershed and this is our state's most remarkable fishery and it is in trouble.

(Miller – BSWI) The “bizwop” [*Bering Sea-Western Interior = BSWI*]? The planning area acronym does not mean anything to the places we care about. I would urge you not to use the acronyms among anyone in public.

(Little – both plans) I would encourage you to standardize the types of maps that you put up so that each planning area has similar map opportunities online. Some of the maps available for BSWI are not available for the Central Yukon (CY) Plan. The RMP materials should use the same kinds of terminology. It seems there are several types of terminology used in the CY, BSWI, and Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan (RMPs) for the mining withdrawals under [ANSCA]d1 designations and mining designations. *BLM: When I use the term “leasing” as opposed to “mining”, I am referring to “leasable materials” such as oil, gas, coal, and geothermal resources. I think you’ll continue to hear that term throughout the BSWI planning process. What we’re working on in regards to “leasing” is what we have for “locatable and salable mineral resources”, which will be a report. The BSWI has a Locatable and Salable Mineral Potential Resources Report that is available online. That study and technical report was completed in 2010. It outlines all the potential for locatable and salable minerals in the BSWI planning area. Salable minerals were the gravel pits that Shelly was talking about. When roads are constructed-gravel pits, mineral material permits, that sort of thing. That’s what we call salable minerals. Locatable we generally think of as our lode and placer mining operations that occur on BLM lands. In BSWI there is a lot of gold potential there. There is a forthcoming report that will address oil, gas, geothermal and coal. That’s how we explain the difference between the two. I think the confusion maybe came from the Eastern Interior RMP which may have referred to mining as “leasable”. BLM produced a poster handout [available online- www.blm.gov/ak/planning] that tries to explain it. What Eastern Interior was doing may have been new to BLM, but not new to the State, which was to lease a locatable material. In other words, Eastern Interior RMP wants to lease a locatable resource...like gold. To the State of Alaska, those claims can be leased. I think that was possibly being proposed- offering the opportunity to lease a locatable mineral.*

[ANILCA allows for leasing of locatable minerals in the White Mountains National Recreation Area (code of federal regulations 43 CFR3585). The White Mountains is one of only a few places where the BLM can issue leases for locatable minerals. BLM considered this as an alternative in the Supplement to the Draft Eastern Interior RMP.]

[Walker – both plans] Thank you for your efforts with this plan. The people involved in scoping care about the process and the results. This is a great opportunity.

(Miller – both plans) I would really recommend that there be a translation from BLM regulatory language to common usage of terms, e.g. oil, gas, coal, coal bed methane, specific minerals, etc. Each map should say oil, gas... There should be a key that has more detail. People really don't understand your terms. It's great, you're really ahead of the last plan [Eastern Interior RMP] having these maps at

scoping, but they're meaningless when you don't know what a "mineral" is. They're too general. You need people to see what's in their front yard, backyard, upstream, downstream.

Government to Government Consultation

(Wassilie- both plans) I did not see a Tribal liaison contact or Tribal advisory council on your presentation contacts. Tribes should advise management decisions that would affect subsistence resources and the water resources of subsistence resources. There are 67 western Tribes and 15 central Tribes in your two RMP planning areas. The President came out with [Executive Order] 13175 and Title 8 really recommends Tribal liaisons in this planning aspect. *BLM: All Tribes have been offered the opportunity for Government to Government consultation. Many have taken up the offer. And they can do it at any time too.*

(Thomas – BSWI) We have been bombarded by agencies and organizations that want to hear from Crooked Creek or speak on behalf of Crooked Creek because we are 12 air miles south of the [proposed] Donlin Mine. In my lifetime, our village has never received this level of scrutiny. Our Tribe has been angered by outside agencies and organizations telling us things and telling us that we don't know what we're doing. We speak for ourselves; do not take anyone else's comments when it comes to Crooked Creek.

(Salmon – Eastern Interior/both plans) Chalkyitsit is a village over on the eastern interior under the Eastern Management Plan. I would like to comment on Government to Government relationship with BLM. I don't think Tribes are in a leadership position. BLM just reads off everything they are going to do. I don't think the Tribes even know what the outcome will be with the plans.

(Thomas – BSWI) I am a little bit concerned about this process here. I feel like decisions have already been made and there is a plan in the process of being finalized, but we didn't have a chance to say anything. President Clinton signed EO 13175 and that resulted in a Tribal Consultation Policy. I served on that Board as an alternate. It took 2.5 years to write it. I felt that Alaska was not represented properly. They only put two of us on it; one from Southeast and me, from Southwestern Alaska. It's like I tell someone in Florida how to behave. I felt we should have more input from Alaska; our Tribes should have been better presented. We needed someone from the north, south, west and interior. I just feel like this [RMP] is already a done deal. I feel like the plan is already made. You're doing this because you're required by this order to do it. A lot of people, people in the cities, seem well aware of what is coming. People like us who are on the front lines, it's like we don't have a chance to stand up and be counted. This will affect us, very, very much so.

(Ahtangard – both plans) We need to have effective communication from Tribal membership. We need to have our recommendations at a level where we are going to be effective in affecting the "boxes" that are being put on the map. The fragmentation of the process requires us to go to many different meetings when resources like caribou and fish are regional in scale. We're only allowed to have continued micromanagement of our lands.

Climate Change

(Wassilie – both plans) Is there a climate change adaption plan within the RMP? Climate Change Adaptation Plans should be a priority due to the changes we are seeing including erosion of villages. Would your Climate Change Adaption Plan account for the massive seasonal changes we are experiencing? *BLM: Thank you and maybe we can answer your questions afterwards if you have time, but a short answer- it might not be the same thing that you call it, but we do consider climate change in*

the plans...not only what the future might be in several different scenarios, but how things within our management control might contribute to or how to balance those things given that we don't exactly know what the future holds. So... I could talk to you a little bit afterwards [about this topic].

Land Use

(Wassilie- both plans) We are concerned about the impact to water resources from mining and new access roads to new mining sites including the road to Ambler.

(Manzer – BSWI) I would advocate for the concept of multiple use. It appears that BLM's recent practices are straying away from this, e.g. in establishing FLPMA. I think you can safely have both. Natural resource development projects provide jobs and opportunities; for people not only in remote areas, but here [in Anchorage].

(Thomas – BSWI) Historic contamination from Red Devil does not seem to have impacted subsistence practices (picking berries, hunting, trapping, and fishing) of Crooked Creek residents as demonstrated by the hair samples collected by Yukon Kuskokwim Tribal Health Corporation. None of us have dangerous amounts of mercury in our system. However, when there was a test hole dug at Red Devil, there was a spike in mercury in our river. As long as you leave it alone, we don't have a spike.

(Warden – BSWI) I don't understand the concept of withdrawals and their corresponding land orders. I need more clarity. *BLM provided a detailed explanation to this question. In summary, there are two major withdrawals in the BSWI: Public Land Order (PLO) 5180 that comprises 4 million acres of public land and PLO 5184 that comprises 2 million acres. PLO 5180 (4m acres) where it occurs on top of unencumbered BLM land is open to mining and where it occurs over state or native – selected lands (encumbered with a selection) is closed to mining. PLO 5184 (2m acres) is all closed to mining.*

(Frankevich – both plans): Could you clarify the quantity of conservation system units (CSUs) that BLM manages? A gentleman made a guess that 60% of federal lands are CSUs. I think CSUs are about 50% of federal lands and BLM manages 30% of those. Can anybody clarify? *BLM: I'm certain there's someone here who can say, but it's not me. The BLM does manage some CSUs, but definitely that is not the majority of our lands. None of the Central Yukon Field Office lands are considered CSUs. I also appreciated his comment about the remaining federal lands that are not designated CSUs are governed by FILPMA for multiple-use.*

(Miller – both plans) This is a huge plan and the threshold decisions that are going to be made in these plans...are the vast acres of withdrawals are lifted or not? If they are lifted, under ANILCA, it is very difficult to put back...the withdrawals for mining and oil and gas. So that is one of the most important decisions. But look at this plan- how is BLM going to manage? There is a proposal to open...I don't know... say 3 or 6 million acres in the Eastern Interior Plan. How are they going to have enough staff to monitor, plan, manage, and do compliance? It's unrealistic. Those kinds of considerations are important when you look at the scope of what we have today and what we have in the future- and the pace of lifting these withdrawals...especially when you see the [Native] corporations don't have their full entitlements yet.

(Miller – CY) In reference to the Utility Corridor Plan- we're got a lot of oil and gas pipelines that may yet come through that corridor. There are still a lot of plans that would go through that area, so it should still be managed as a utility corridor. There shouldn't be new roads [in the corridor]; it is a very important region.

(Manzer – both plans) I think there has been some mischaracterization of the purpose of these withdrawals-5180 and 5184. The purpose of the withdrawals was not to close the lands to locatables or leasing; the purpose was to close the lands for ANSCA selection and to not encumber those lands should they become selected by ANSCA corporations. That is an important distinction. Those lands were not enacted just to close those lands to mining; it was to make them available for ANSCA selection. Since many ANSCA corporations, especially those out along in the Calista region are nearing entitlement; the reason for the withdrawals has become mute.

Cultural Resources

(Wassilie- BSWI) How would cultural resources be impacted? How would the Iditarod National historic Trail be impacted by the pipeline to the proposed Donlin Gold project?

Special Designations

(Olsen- both plans) Does the passage of an RMP result in a formal recommendation to Congress that a wilderness area be designated? *BLM: BLM is precluded by law from recommending Wilderness, but other people can.*

(Manzer – both plans) We are fortunate to have so many spectacular, protected wilderness areas. There are enough wilderness areas within Federal lands. I think 60 percent of all federal land in the State is located within Conservation System Units.

(Miller – both plans) Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are great. Keep them. Manage them well. Expand them if it is necessary in order to achieve their purpose. The public and the Tribes may have new ones that are relevant today that weren't relevant 20 years ago. Have the ACECs mean something. Have people outline the areas they care about.

(Miller – both plans) ACECs should not be open to mining and oil and gas. Then you're setting yourself up for hard fights forever.

Water Resources

(Shepherd- both plans) I haven't heard any specific discussion about water rights. I note that the BLM or the federal government potentially contains federal reserve water rights that haven't been adjudicated. I believe ANILCA provisions require or authorize the federal government to pursue in-stream flows on behalf of Tribal governments. Is there going to be a discussion on that in the plan? *BLM: I don't know if it's necessarily an RMP-level planning decision. BLM does have a program to establish water rights in certain streams. It's an on-going inventory and monitoring program. We monitoring several streams right now- we collect data for about 5 years and then we move forward was a water rights applications. If you have certain streams where you think we should be doing that, we would take your comments.*

Traditional Way of Life

(Ahangard – both plans) Many regions of our State have concerns about changes to our lands and waters. I am concerned about what this would do to our traditional ways of life; our migratory routes that we depend upon for feeding our families. Although some of these maps are a thousand miles away from where I live currently, our animals migrate through these areas and it's going to be affecting them. The health and well-being of our Tribal people who will be staying in these areas, surrounded by these changes, will be affected by these changes. It's going to affect whether any efforts to get these minerals. Our animals will be affected by these changes. Any changes to the quality of our air and water will affect

our animals. When you take out the minerals, it will put chemicals into our animals which will go into our bodies, our breasts, into our kidneys, into our livers, in to our future generations. That's the most important part about what's going on here today. It's not about putting boxes on a map, it's changing the way that we live in our lands and waters and the animals that we depend upon to feed our families. Some of these other areas have other resources to consider, but some communities don't have a lot of [subsistence] resources so it takes a lot of money to get food from other areas to our areas. You can see from the Yukon how it has been devastated by poor planning efforts and poor management efforts. These concerns are increasing in quantification the further you go from our centralized areas of population into the rural areas. It is impacting our way of life; it is very concerning. We have resolutions throughout the state that support some of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd [working group] recommendations. We have resolutions to protect our Arctic Ocean. We have about 20 so far and we've only been working on it a few months. But the biological diversity of our ocean and the migratory routes of our foods are really important for the health and well-being for future generations. It is the cumulative effects of these types of efforts to change the lands and waters that are causing the most concentrated impacts.

Grayling, December 17, 2013

Attendance:

28 residents attended the Grayling community scoping meeting. 4 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

Issues and concerns raised:

BLM Land

- There is a connection between Grayling and the "Holichuck" area up the Innoko River (Fish & Wildlife Service lands). Many from Grayling travel up the Innoko for fishing and hunting (on FWS lands).
- If there are any gravel or rock resources on BLM land, we would be very interested in it.
- BLM land right behind Grayling:
 - It is important because it is our watershed, there is Native Corp. land and BLM land is the upper watershed.
 - We go berry picking on that land.
- BLM land west of Grayling:
 - Is important for trapping, mostly east of the Yukon River.
- North & Northwest of Grayling
 - Is important for berry-picking.
 - Is important for future potential caribou hunting if the caribou ever migrate back this way (Western Arctic Caribou Herd).
- BLM land east of Grayling:
 - Is important for waterfowl hunting areas trapping.
- TRAIL Use – frequently travel trails between Grayling – Shageluk – Holichuk – Anvik.

Fish-related

- There used to be a commercial fishery for Chum Salmon roe, the last one was around 1996. No market anymore for chum salmon roe because SE Alaska has the market now. That used to give us some income/employment, but it gave a lot of jobs mostly to the people of Anvik.

- We don't really use the Chum that much, but they are very important to maintain if our other Salmon are depleted and we need it as a future resource.
- It would be better for our subsistence if there were a longer opening for fishing and a bigger net mesh size allowed.

Wildlife-related

- We wish that there was only our federal hunt in our area; no additional hunts or hunters.
- The guided hunters take our camps. Guided hunters only take large trophy animals that are important for breeding.
- We aren't that interested in getting meat from trophy hunters because they don't take good care of their meat and it usually hangs for too long.
- We would like to propose to get rid of the value of moose antlers by requiring they have to be cut in half to remove the trophy hunting that occurs here.
- We are very interested in seeing the bison reintroduction even though we would probably never be able to hunt the population, it would be important to our future generations who could hunt these animals for food.
- There has been a decline in the duck population. What effect does the pike or beaver have this decline? Could BLM propose a study to help understand the lower duck numbers?
- We trap all over Flat, Innoko River, Innoko Wildlife Refuge (FWS land), Anvik River, and all along the Yukon River.

Anvik River & Peregrine Falcon ACECs

- The river is very important to the people of Anvik.
- There are some people outside of Anvik who may do some trapping or moose hunting near the Anvik River.
- There used to be a commercial fishery for Chum Salmon roe, the last one was around 1996. No market anymore for chum salmon roe because SE Alaska has the market now. That used to give us some income/employment, but it gave a lot of jobs mostly to the people of Anvik.
- We don't see as many falcons anymore but they may come back, just like ducks – numbers go up and down. Should keep the Falcon ACEC in case they come back. They also said that the locations of the Falcon ACECs are identified correctly on the map.

Other

- We see evidence of climate change around with all the flooding and damming problems, though some of that is also related to all the beaver population and beaver dams.
- We would be interested in any logging opportunities. We get all of our logs/wood from the river and river banks, which is non-BLM land. If there is BLM land close to the river, we would be interested in logging. There are about 7 sawmills in town.
- We would be interested in Biomass production, though we likely would not get wood from BLM lands.
- Our natural resources are more important than risking the damage that may be caused to the resource by mining.
- A resident expressed interest in whether a water study has ever been conducted on the streams flowing from the Flat-area toward the Innoko River?
- Potential mineral resource: Along the river is an area known locally as "Eli's Nose" which may have some mineral potential (our maps did not identify that area). It may be on Native Corporation land, but would require access across BLM lands.
- Proposed AVCP road from Paimute Slough to Kalskag: the residents of Grayling are worried about the increase of guides taking game in an area that has already been stretched thin.

Holy Cross, December 18, 2013

Attendance:

17 residents attended the Holy Cross community scoping meeting. 6 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

Issues and concerns raised:

BLM Land

- We access BLM lands using “Owl slough” (across the river from HC)
- Owl Slough provides access to land farther away from the Yukon for moose hunting.
- The “Old Mail Trail” to Flat is VERY important to us. It has historic significance, we have used this trail for generations. It is how we get around. We don’t want anything to happen to this important trail. We use this trail to get to McGrath if other routes are cut off. We use the trail for trapping. (possible ACEC consideration...)
- The proposed AVCP road would not cross BLM land, but attendees felt confusion over the purpose of the road, like they were not well informed and were frustrated that since the road might be on state land, villagers had no say in the process.
- There was confusion over allowable subsistence cabins and Outfitter-Guide cabins on BLM lands.
- The BLM received questions about how BLM manages and makes decisions on state-selected lands and the BLM explained that any proposed actions on BLM state-selected lands were also reviewed by the state for concurrence.
- The residents are supportive of cell towers on BLM land because they enhance public safety.

Fish-related

- Ice fishing and Pike fishing lakes important to us:
 - Reindeer Lake (across the Yukon River; mostly Native Corp. land) on the trail to Shageluk.
 - Layman Lake on the trail to Shageluk.
 - Alberts Lake located near Layman’s Lake.
 - Pike Lake (on BLM land, due north of Aniak, east/southeast of HC)
 - Stanchen Lake unsure of location
- Indicated that some of these lakes dry out in the winter, more research needed to confirm this.

ACEC-related

- There is a peregrine nesting site on the beach across the river at Holy Cross. Peregrine numbers fluctuate, like duck and geese. They do well on their own.

Wildlife-related

- Maintain the federal subsistence hunt for moose.
- We do a lot of hunting off the Innoko River for moose and ducks, mostly on Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) lands, not BLM land.
- Concerned about the closure of the Innoko National Wildlife Refuge office. Will the BLM still do animal surveys with the FWS in the future? Will there be enough refuge law enforcement if McGrath offices close?
- Historically, people from the Kuskokwim area have traditionally only hunted as far as Pike Lake area. More recently, they have expanded as far as Paimute Slough and closer to us competing for resources with us.
- People from the Bethel area have more employment opportunity and a better economy due to the

size of Bethel, therefore; people from that area have more money to afford better equipment to reach lands much farther away. They compete for our resources here and we don't have the same opportunities to afford the type of equipment they have to travel as far. We can't get as far on the land or rivers as those folks, yet they come very far and compete for our resources. People used to respect hunting boundaries of other villages and it's not that way today.

- We would like to suggest to the Office of Subsistence Management an 8-moose DRAW-style hunt where people draw for 8 tags – versus the current 8-moose LIMIT-style hunt that is currently available. We don't believe everyone reports their kill and that more than 8 moose are taken. If it were a draw hunt, there would only be 8 tags for 8 moose and this would decrease the incidence of non-reported kills and too many moose being taken.
- Trapping
 - East of HC, we use the old mail trail to Flat and we go up the Innoko River.
 - We trap toward the Iditarod trail (southern route).
 - West of HC, we make a big, clockwise circle – follow the Yukon River to the South and East (along BLM lands), then up the Stuyahok River (BLM lands), and following BLM lands make a big circle up and around back to Holy Cross.

Russian Mission, December 19, 2013

Attendance:

12 residents attended the Russian Mission community scoping meeting. 5 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

Issues and concerns raised:

"There are 12 of us here at this meeting and what we share with you may not represent how everyone in our community feels."

BLM Land

- BLM lands west of Russian Mission (RM)
 - Use the lands for: berry picking; wood cutting; trapping marten and beaver; hunting moose, bear, wolf; travel the trail to Marshall in the winter.
- Not supportive of mining on BLM lands close to RM as the toxicity can disorient the fish and the runoff from mining lands would reach the Yukon River.

Fish-related

- We use Mountain Creek for Pike fishing.
- We fish Pike Lake.
- Concern was expressed about beaver dams preventing fish from spawning.

Wildlife-related

- Get some of our moose over in Paimute Slough, Unit 21e
- Trapping
 - Up Stuyahok Creek, up Mountain Creek, west of RM.
- Caribou
 - We go way north across BLM land to Needle Mountain (on FWS land) for caribou.
 - There were caribou at Whitefish Lake as recently as 4 years ago.
 - We mostly go north.
- We see Supercubs land in town with big moose racks tied to the plane and no meat to pass to the

village. Those Supercubs go back and land on BLM lands behind RM.

- Moose
 - We go near Pike Lake
 - We go up the Anvik River
 - Up Mountain Creek
- Residents asked how BLM monitors BLM land for illegal activities that occur by outfitter guides.
- It is hard to know where State/Native/Federal land boundaries are when you are hunting.

ACEC-related

- Peregrine Falcon ACEC
 - There are many raptors and eagles in the area of RM.
 - There are falcons right in front of the village.
 - There are raptors and eagles where the red dot is on the map for the Peregrine Falcon ACEC.
 - The Audubon Society brings people out here every couple of years and they photograph the cliffs and birds, they don't come to our village and visit. It is important to protect those areas so that those birders would still continue to come and visit.

Trails

- We travel over to Pike Lake (Pike L. on BLM land)
- We travel down to Aniak (cross BLM land)
- Travel to Kako Mine (no land on BLM)
- Travel the trail from RM to Marshall in the wintertime.
- There is a historic mining route that went from Marshall to Kako Mine. The trail is overgrown. Don't know if Marshall might still use that historic trail. (don't know if it is a 17b easement or not? Unsure whether there is interest in the trail or restoring the trail) Some expressed interest in trail restoration for use as road or ATV trail.
- Kako Mine owners have a ROW from mine down to the landing on the river (over Native corporation lands).
- 17b easements across Native corporation lands are important for access to State lands and BLM lands.
- Trail overland from RM – to Paimute Slough (FWS land); we get moose over there (unit 21E).
- Old CAT trail up to Stuyahok Mine that goes from the landing on the river, across some Native Corporation land, FWS land, then over BLM and BLM state-selected lands to the mine site.
 - There are gas tanks on the landing near the river with no containment and they are leaking (likely on Native Corp or FWS lands).

Mountain Creek Area

- Located up the Yukon River from RM, past Kako Creek and past Stuyahok Creek. Mountain Creek is the next drainage upriver from Stuyahok Creek and it joins the Yukon on Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) land, then the rest of it is on BLM unencumbered and state-selected BLM (not labelled on the map).
- We go there for: Pike fishing; duck and geese hunting; moose hunting; youth cultural camps in September; and for trapping.
- The Mountain Creek area is important for us and our children culturally.
- We have problems with the sunken barge there. The barge was delivering materials back in the 1920's to Stuyahok and it sunk (up Mountain Creek). It is a safety hazard. Boaters hit the sunken barge in lower water and ruin their boats.
- This area is important at the end of spring for waterfowl hunting
- The people of Holy Cross also use this area

Other

- There is a possible timber harvest area upriver, but not on BLM land.

McGrath, January 9, 2014

Attendance:

26 people attended the McGrath community scoping meeting. 6 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

Issues and concerns raised:

BLM Land

- Block of BLM land SE of McGrath
 - Important wintering area for caribou from the Alaska Range, portions of the Mulchatna herd.
 - People from both McGrath and Nikolai use a lot of this land for trapping.
 - There isn't much firewood on this land.
 - People from both McGrath and Nikolai go up the Salmon River and Bear Creek for salmon in the summertime and traplines during the winter.
- Blocks of BLM land south of McGrath (all state-selected and Native-selected)
 - Attendees wanted to know why these separate, random blocks of BLM land were located in these areas when it is mostly state and Native corporation all around.
 - These blocks of BLM-managed land are close to Wiggins Lake and Wilson Slough, which are important for trapping, hunting, and fishing.

Fish-related

- The George River is important to McGrath for salmon fishing.
- Pike fishing is really important subsistence species for our community.
- Wiggins Lake and Wilson Slough is important for pike fishing (south of town).
- Many of the whitefish species are very important for subsistence.
 - Locally, whitefish are important and they consist of the following species: sheefish; broad whitefish; round whitefish; humpback whitefish; least cisco; and Bering cisco.
- The Big River is the primary spawning area for sheefish, also known as incoonu, for the entire Kuskokwim. It is very important for the entire Kuskokwim River for the sheefish population. Many studies have been done and ADF&G would have these studies. A large portion of the Big River is on BLM land.
- The South Fork of the Kuskokwim River is very important for cisco and sheefish.
- Upstream of Nikolai is the only place that Bering cisco spawn for the entire Kuskokwim watershed.

Wildlife-related

- We do a lot of trapping all over game management units 19D and 19C.
- The BLM lands are unique because there are no roads on them and it enables wildlife to move through the area more easily.
- A proposed pipeline (Donlin) will go right through the area that the bison Farewell bison herd occupy.

Mineral Potential

- These withdrawals that close entire areas to mining are foolish when a site-specific study is what needs to be done to determine the viability of each deposit and the methods of mining that would occur locally. This commenter received a copy of the Mineral Potential report that demonstrated an analysis of mineral deposits in the area.

Trail-related

- Interest was expressed in developing a new safety shelter cabin along the Iditarod trail between McGrath and Nikolai, though there is no BLM land in the suggested area.
- The old trail to Flat goes from McGrath up the Takotna River and down the George River toward Flat. Right now, the trail is not used much even though a cat has been driven on it. If more mining is developed in the future in Flat, that trail would become more important again and it crosses BLM land in places.
- The Cheeneetuk (lower-portion crosses BLM, upper on State land) and the Tatlawiksuk (small portion of lower and headwaters on BLM) are also very important for fishing.
- We travel the Iditarod Trail(s) to go all the way to Rohn from McGrath for fun. The conditions determine whether we take the race route or portions of the historic route.

Pipeline-related

- In relation to pipelines or future corridors, preserve the wildlife and caribou corridors – especially along the Big River. These are important lands for wildlife migration routes. Study where migrations have occurred in the past and consider future migration routes when considering utility corridors. We are concerned about the migration corridors.
- Any pipeline corridor will provide access to ATVs and increase our hunting pressure.
- There are a lot of Guides that guide in Windy Pass area near the proposed pipeline (Donlin).

Other

- In the winter, people from McGrath travel down the Kuskokwim and at Devil's elbow, go overland to some hot springs on the Chuilnuk River on BLM land. If they cannot go overland from Devil's Elbow, they travel further downriver and go all the way up the Tatlawiksuk to get to the hot springs.