



News Release

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BLM-Alaska Releases Draft NPR-A Plan

Anchorage—The Bureau of Land Management has released the Draft Integrated Activity Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. The five volume document, available online at www.blm.gov/ak, proposes several alternative future management strategies for the nearly 23-million acres of federal lands in the NPR-A on Alaska's North Slope. The public comment period will run from March 30 through June 1.

This important planning step comes as part of BLM's ongoing efforts to facilitate the responsible development of the abundant resources in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, honor Native Alaskans' subsistence rights, and provide for the stewardship of millions of migratory birds and caribou in the Teshekpuk Lake area.

"The remarkable resources in the NPR-A call for a sound plan, which fully considers the input of local communities and Alaska Natives, and enables the nation to harness these domestic energy supplies with the right safeguards in place," said Bud Cribley, BLM-Alaska State Director. "We need the public's input to ensure the best management plan is put in place for this area."

The draft plan proposes several alternative future management strategies for the NPR-A. This plan is the first plan that covers the entire NPR-A, including BLM-managed lands in the southwest area of the NPR-A which were not included in previous plans. Decisions to be made as part of this plan include oil and gas leasing availability, surface protections, Wild and Scenic River recommendations and Special Area designations. The NPR-A IAP/EIS presents four alternative approaches for the planning effort:

- Alternative A is the No Action Alternative and reflects current management of NPR-A established in the 2004 and 2008 Records of Decision for the Northwest and Northeast NPR-A, respectively, and the Colville River Special Area Management Plan of 2008.
- Alternative B describes future management that emphasizes the protection of the surface resources of NPR-A with substantial increases in areas designated as Special Areas, designation of extensive areas that would be unavailable for leasing around Teshekpuk Lake, in coastal bays and lagoons, and in the southwestern part of the Reserve with important caribou habitat and important primitive recreation values, and recommendation for designation of twelve Wild and Scenic Rivers, while still offering opportunities for oil and gas leasing on nearly half of the Reserve.
- Alternative C provides for smaller additions to Special Areas than Alternative B, withholds from leasing the most remote part of NPR-A that has the greatest potential for providing a primitive recreation experience, provides for leasing with extensive surface protection stipulations near Teshekpuk Lake, and recommends three rivers for

designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers, while offering opportunity to lease oil and gas resources in more than three-quarters of the Reserve.

- Alternative D would allow BLM to offer all of the NPR-A for oil and gas leasing, while protecting surface values with a collection of protection measures.

“From key oil and gas reserves, to the Teshekpuk and Western Arctic caribou herds, to the world-class breeding and nesting ground for numerous species of waterfowl, the NPR-A contains resources that must be considered and balanced in a way that will best meet the present and future needs of our nation, Alaska, and the local residents who depend on these lands for their subsistence way of life,” said BLM-Alaska State Director Bud Cribley. “This plan will guide decisions that will affect some of our nation’s most significant and important resources, and I hope the public will take advantage of this opportunity to provide input as we move forward.”

On May 14, 2011, President Obama [directed](#) DOI to conduct annual oil and gas lease sales in the NPR-A, emphasizing the need to protect sensitive areas while providing development opportunities. In response, the BLM held an oil and gas sale in the NPR-A on Dec. 7, 2011. The sale generated winning bids totaling \$3,637,477 and covering 17 tracts on about 141,739 acres, and demonstrated industry interest in areas with high resource potential adjacent to State of Alaska lease tracts along the Colville River on the North Slope.

A *Federal Register* Notice of Availability for the plan will be published on March 30 and will launch the official public comment period, March 30 through June 1. The public is invited to provide comments about the draft plan and its alternatives. Comments must be received by June 1, 2012 to be considered. There are five ways to submit comments:

- Online by accessing the BLM’s website at www.blm.gov/ak
- By mail to: NPR-A IAP/EIS Comments, AECOM Project Office, 1835 South Bragaw Street, Suite 490, Anchorage, AK 99508.
- By fax to: (866) 611-9420 or (907) 268-4224.
- By hand-delivering your comments to AECOM at their Anchorage address listed above or to BLM’s Public Information Center in the Federal Building, 222 W. 7th Ave., Anchorage.
- By speaking at public meetings on the Draft IAP/EIS that will be held in May in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the North Slope communities of Anaktuvuk Pass, Atqasuk, Barrow, Nuiqsut, Point Lay, and Wainwright.

If you have questions about the public comment process, please call Jim Ducker, BLM-Alaska Project Lead at (907) 271-3130.

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The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land – the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, recreational and other activities on BLM-managed land contributed more than \$130 billion to the U.S. economy and supported more than 600,000 American jobs. The Bureau is also one of a handful of agencies that collects more revenue than it spends. In FY 2012, nearly \$5.7 billion will be generated on lands managed by the BLM, which operates on a \$1.1 billion budget. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.