

FWS Interpretive Panels

Introduction

The Fish and Wildlife Service, Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge has filed an application proposing to install two (2) interpretive panels at mile posts 106 and 135 on the Dalton Highway.

Summary

The proposal would include the installation of two (2) interpretive panels at two different locations to increase awareness of safety risks involved in using the Jim and Kanuti Rivers to access the Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge.

Alternatives Considered

The No Alternative Option is the only alternative considered and was not selected as it would not allow for the installation of the interpretive panels which are detrimental the safety of the public.

Decision

I have decided to authorize a twenty year (20) year right-of-way for the installation and maintenance of two (2) interpretive panels at two locations — mile post 106 and 135 of the Dalton Highway. The installation of these panels would increase awareness of safety risks involved in using the Jim and Kanuti Rivers to access the Kanuti Wildlife Refuge.

Management Considerations

Management considered the Utility Corridor Management Plan

Public Involvement

Due to the remoteness of this area it was determined that the general public would not be impacted.

Appeal or Protest Opportunities:

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4 and DOI Form 1842-1. The notice of appeal must be filed in the Bureau of Land Management, Central Yukon Field Office, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709 within 30 days from receipt of this decision. If you decide to file an appeal, you must carefully follow the procedure described on the enclosed form 1842-1. If you don't file your appeal at the locations specified on the form within 30 days, the Board may dismiss your appeal as untimely without considering its merits. Be sure to send a copy of your notice of appeal to each party named in this decision and to all of the addresses on the enclosed form 1842-1. You may also ask the Board to stay or suspend the effect of this decision while your appeal is pending. If you desire a stay, you must enclose your request for a stay with your notice of appeal. You have the burden of showing a stay is justified. The Board will grant a stay only if you provide sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the Board grants or denies the stay,
2. The likelihood of the success of your appeal on its merits,
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the Board does not grant the stay, and;
4. Whether the public interest favors granting a stay.

Approval from Authorized Official:

Field Office Manager Recommendation

Having considered a full range of alternatives, associated impacts, public and agency input, I recommend the adoption and implementation of the attached Approved Plan in conformance with the Utility Corridor Management Plan.

Robert R. Karlen
Signature
for Nichelle W. Jacobson
Field Manager
Central Yukon Field Office

December 30, 2013
Date

— Essential Fish Habitat Assessment

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F03–2014–0004–CX, USFWS Interpretive Panels

Prepared by: David G Parker

Date: 12/11/2013

The proposed action lies within the general range of Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*); arctic char (*S. alpinus*); Lake Trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*); burbot (*Lota lota*); and whitefish (Coregonid spp.). Arctic grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*) and slimey sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*) are ubiquitous throughout the region (ADF&G 1978). The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recognizes fresh waters cataloged (ADF&G 2012) as being used by salmon under AS 41.14.870 (*Catalog of Waters Important for the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes*) as essential fish habitat (EFH).

The closest EFH to the Kanuti River boat launch is approximately 90 river miles downstream where the Kanuti Kilolitna River (anadromous stream catalog number 334-40-11000-2125-3600-4100) joins the Kanuti River. The Jim River is listed as anadromous stream catalog number 334-40-11000-2125-3740-4080 and has documented King and chum salmon spawning habitat, and juvenile King salmon rearing habitat in the vicinity of the boat launch. Because the proposed action described in this Categorical Exclusion is not expected to create any stream bank disturbance, there should be no effect on EFH.

Essential Fish Habitat Finding: No adverse effect. EFH consultation with NMFS is not required.

References:

State of Alaska, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 1978. Alaska's Fisheries Atlas. Volume 2. Edited by R. McLean and K. Delaney. Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

State of Alaska, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 2012. An Atlas to the Catalog of Waters Important for Spawning, Rearing, or Migration of Anadromous Fishes, Resource Management Region V. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Habitat and Restoration Division.

<http://extra.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/FishResourceMonitor/?mode=awc>

— Wilderness Characteristics Assessment

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F030–2014–0004CX

Case File/Serial No.: F-96702

Applicant(s): Fish and Wildlife Service, Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge

Location: Mile posts 106 and 135 on the Dalton Highway more particularly described as Sec. 30, T. 19 N, R. 14 W., and Sec. 26, T. 23 N., R. 15 W., Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska.

Prepared by: Lisa Shon Jodwalis

Date: 9 December 2013

Proposed Action

The Fish and Wildlife Service, Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge proposes to install two (2) permanent interpretive panels at two different locations in the spring of 2014. The interpretive panels will be similar to existing panels already installed along the Dalton Highway. One location for installation would be milepost 106 on the Dalton Highway next to the Kanuti River boat launch and the second set of panels would be installed at mile post 135 of the Dalton Highway at the Jim River boat launch at the end of the old Prospect Creek Road. Each panel would be 36" wide by 24" tall ½" thick and would be mounted on low metal bases. Panels will require minimal maintenance which would be completed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The installation of these panels would increase awareness of safety risks involved in using the Kanuti and Jim Rivers to access the Kanuti Wildlife Refuge. They have applied for a State of Alaska permit as well for the Kanuti River panel which lies within their right-of-way. These two sites were chosen for installation as they are the most visited sites.

Evaluation

The basis for this evaluation is BLM Manual 6310-Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands, and BLM Manual 6320 - Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process, which direct offices to conduct and maintain inventories regarding the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics, and to consider identified Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) in land use plans and when analyzing projects under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Effects on wilderness characteristics on BLM lands within the Utility Corridor are evaluated according to the Nonwilderness Assessment, a special project approved by the BLM Director and conducted by the BLM along portions of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) corridor in 1980. This assessment identified lands under BLM administration that were considered lacking in the wilderness characteristics as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964. The assessment was conducted in a manner that met the requirements of Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

The action being considered is located within the Prospect Segment of the Nonwilderness Assessment, which covered approximately 555,000 acres total in 1980. Portions of these segments meet the 5,000 acre minimum size. However it was determined that the lands where the proposed action will occur did not meet the standards for naturalness due to roads, camps,

airfields, pipelines, material sites and associated facilities. These disturbances bisect the entire length of the segment.

FINDING

The proposed action will occur on lands identified as lacking wilderness characteristics and therefore will not affect wilderness characteristics.

Type of Assessment/Sources

U.S. Department of Interior, BLM, 1980. Nonwilderness Assessment: The Alaska Natural Gas Transportation System, Final Decision. Anchorage, Alaska

USGS topographic maps, GIS data, Google Earth images

Personal knowledge of the sites and 2013 aerial survey

— Section 810 Analysis

NEPA Document No.: DOI-BLM-AK-F030–2014–0004CX

Applicant(s): Fish and Wildlife Service, Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge

Case File/Serial No.: F-96702

Proposed Action: The FWS, Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge proposes to install two (2) interpretive panels at the two locations described above. These panels would increase awareness by the public of safety risks involved in using the Jim and Kanuti Rivers to access the Kanuti Refuge.

Location: Mile posts 106 and 135 on the Dalton Highway

Township/Range: Sec. 30, T. 19 N, R. 14 W., and Sec. 26, T. 23 N., R. 15 W., Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska

Evaluation by: Erin Julianus and David Parker

Date: 12/11/2013

Type of Assessment/Sources:

Effect of the proposal on subsistence uses and needs

Fisheries: The proposed action is installation of two interpretive panels at popular boat launches to inform users of potential safety risks on the Kanuti and Jim rivers. The installation of the panels should not disturb stream bank vegetation or otherwise adversely affect fish resources, and it is not expected to significantly reduce harvestable fisheries resources that are available for subsistence use. The proposed action would not alter the distribution, migration, or location of harvestable fisheries resources. Approved mitigation measures would prevent degradation of adjacent water sources and fisheries habitat. The proposed action will not create any legal or physical barriers that would limit access by subsistence users of the fisheries resource.

Wildlife: The proposed installation of the two interpretive panels at the Kanuti and Jim River boat launches may result in temporarily displacing some animals that are used for subsistence from its immediate vicinity. However, this activity would not appreciably reduce harvestable wildlife resources that are available for subsistence taking on BLM administered lands, and would not alter their distribution, migration or locations for two reasons: 1) no new habitat will be altered by this proposed action, and 2) the area is located adjacent to areas where human activity has been ongoing for decades.

Other resources:

The proposed action would not appreciably impact any other harvestable resources such as wood, water, berries or vegetation. The storage area is located far from local villages and traditional gathering areas tend to be on Native-owned and selected lands near villages.

Expected reduction, if any, in the availability of resources due to alteration in resource distribution, migration, or location:

This activity is not expected to reduce the availability of resources due to alternation in resource distribution, migration, or location.

Expected limitation, if any, in the access of subsistence users resulting from the proposal:

This activity is not expected to limit subsistence user access to subsistence resources.

Availability of other lands, if any, for the purpose sought to be achieved:

The request is to install interpretive panels at specific river crossings. Therefore, no other lands were considered.

Other alternatives, if any, which would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands needed for subsistence purposes:

The no action alternative would require BLM to reject the permit application. There is no substantial evidence that would indicate a significant negative impact would result from the proposed action. Therefore, no other alternatives were evaluated.

Findings:

The proposed action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses. No reasonably foreseeable and significant decrease in the abundance of harvestable resources or in the distribution of harvestable resources, and no reasonably foreseeable limitations on harvester access have been forecasted to emerge as a function of the action that is analyzed in this document.

References