DECISION DOCUMENT

YUKON FLATS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

ANNUAL FUNDING AGREEMENT WITH THE COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

It is my decision to sign an Annual Funding Agreement between Region 7, Alaska, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments to perform certain Activities of the Service on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska, during the period August 1, 2004 through July 31, 2005.

I based this decision on successful negotiations between the Service and the CATG which began in July 2003 and were completed by the end of the year, and subsequent public consultation and re-negotiation of the Agreement. The Service followed the regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations at 25 CFR Part 1000, which implements the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (Public Law 93-638), as amended, by the Tribal Self-Governance Act (P.L. 103-413). The Agreement adheres to the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended (16 USC 668dd et seq.), for management of national wildlife refuges. The activities identified in the Agreement are part of the routine operations, maintenance, and management of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The Service has found that routine operations, maintenance, and refuge management do not have a significant affect on the human environment and are categorically excluded from formal documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

After negotiating the Agreement the Service announced a 45-day public review and comment period, beginning February 13, 2004. We later extended the comment period an additional 15 days, to April 13, 2004. Public meetings were held in Fairbanks and Anchorage. We received a total of 147 comments from the public, including statements given at the public meetings. My staff and I were heartened by the many comments from conservation and outdoor organizations and from individuals with their strong support and concern for the National Wildlife Refuge System and our employees. We received several comments on how to improve the Agreement. In response to these public comments we re-negotiated the Agreement with the CATG on April 23, 2004. The Review of Public Comments by my staff is attached as supporting documentation.

/signed/ April 26, 2004

Rowan W. Gould Date

Attachment