



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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News

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For Immediate Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Doyon, Ltd. Announce Draft Land Exchange

Doyon, Limited, an Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Corporation, currently owns 1.25 million acres within the exterior boundary of Yukon Flats NWR. Negotiators for Doyon and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Region, have agreed in principle to provide Doyon title to some refuge lands that may hold developable oil and gas resources. In exchange, the Service will receive habitat currently owned by Doyon within the refuge boundary. This will consist of wetlands previously identified by the Service as quality fish and wildlife habitat.

The key elements of this agreement are as follows:

- Phase 1 of this agreement will result in Doyon receiving lands with prospects for oil and gas, while the refuge will gain an estimated net increase of 98,000 acres of quality fish and wildlife habitat; acreage that will also be available for recreation and subsistence use. The estimated net increase of 98,000 acres is calculated as: the estimated 150,000 acres to be received by FWS in the exchange *minus* the 110,000 acres of surface/subsurface conveyed to Doyon in the exchange *plus* 58,000 acres of 12(b) entitlement that will not be taken within the refuge. Doyon will also take title to approximately 96,000 acres of subsurface oil and gas interests in a “halo” of lands around the core lands and other Doyon holdings within the refuge. If marketable oil and gas resources are discovered, Doyon will be able to access their halo land interests only by directional drilling from their adjacent surface holdings. No surface occupancy or surface construction will be permitted on these 96,000 acres.
- If development goes forward and Phase 2 is implemented, Doyon will profit from developing the oil and gas acquired in Phase 1. Doyon will pay into an “Alaska NWR Land Acquisition and Facility Account” a production payment of 1.25% of resource value at the wellhead for all oil and gas extracted from lands and interests acquired through this agreement. The Service will be able to use these funds to purchase an additional 120,000 acres of quality fish and wildlife habitat within the borders of Yukon Flats NWR that will also be available for recreation and subsistence use. The Service could then continue to use such funds, as available, to purchase other private lands from willing sellers within other national wildlife refuges in Alaska and, as a second priority, construct needed facilities.
- The parties to this agreement believe that implementing its provisions are in the public interest. As a result of the agreement, there would be less privately-held land within Yukon Flats NWR boundaries. The Service believes that, when all elements of the agreement are viewed in aggregate, the agreement will benefit the Yukon Flats refuge, the refuge system and the Service’s trust responsibilities to fish and wildlife resources.

- Benefits to Doyon shareholders are more speculative, but could be significant under the most positive scenarios, including job training and long term employment for residents of an economically disadvantaged part of rural Alaska.

This agreement in principle will next be presented to:

- FWS and Department leadership for further policy and legal review.
- Once the agreement is finalized by FWS and DOI, the Service will conduct a review of the biological resources impacted by the agreement. The results of this review, and the final agreement itself, will be presented to the public for review and comment. This public input will take the form of public meetings, a posting of the agreement and related materials on the Service's website, and a public comment period.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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