

**DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION**

**Use:** Trapping

This compatibility determination is a reevaluation of an existing public use:

- Trapping – trapping of furbearers or other species for non-subsistence and non-research purposes. This determination does not include trapping for predator control purposes. Trapping for subsistence purposes is addressed in a compatibility determination on subsistence activities.

**Supporting Uses:** The following activities are often done in support of or in conjunction with trapping: cabin use; camping; concession use; cross-country skiing; dog sledding & ski touring; fixed-wing aircraft use; fuel caches; hiking and backpacking; electronics use; snowmobile use; snowshoeing; and tree harvest – firewood.

**Refuge Name:** Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks, Alaska

**Establishing and Acquisition Authority**

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the 10.6 million-acre Yukon Flats National Wildlife Monument with Presidential Proclamation 4627. The monument was established from lands in the public domain. In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (Section 302) adjusted the boundary to 8.6 million acres, and established the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (Yukon Flats NWR) as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System).

**Refuge Purposes**

ANILCA sets out the purposes for each refuge in Alaska. The purposes of the Yukon Flats NWR as described in Section 302(9)(B), include:

- to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, canvasbacks and other migratory birds, Dall sheep, bears, moose, wolves, wolverines and other furbearers, caribou (including participation in coordinated ecological studies and management of the Porcupine and Fortymile caribou herds) and salmon
- to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats
- to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth above, the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents
- to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth above, water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge.

## **National Wildlife Refuge System Mission**

The mission of the Refuge System is “to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans” (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended [16 USC 668dd-668ee]).

## **Description of Use**

Trapping occurs throughout the refuge. Rural and non-rural residents have traditionally pursued wolf, wolverine, marten, mink, lynx, muskrat, beaver, weasel, fox, and otter on the refuge. Because neither the refuge nor the State of Alaska has a system of trapline registration, the number of trappers using the refuge is not known. However, a reasonable estimate is that between ten and twenty trappers have traplines on the refuge. The only definitive data are obtained via special use permits that are required for the use of trapping cabins on the refuge, but not all trappers have cabin permits.

The trapping harvest is well understood for furbearers that are required to be sealed (river otter, lynx, wolf, and wolverine). Sealing records from the State of Alaska indicate that harvest has been relatively constant, indicating fairly stable animal populations. Beaver, marten, muskrat, red fox, and mink are also considered important furbearers of the Yukon Flats, but because their hides are not sealed, harvest data are limited.

Common methods of access for trapping include fixed-wing aircraft, dog sleds, snowshoeing, snowmachines, and cross-country skiing.

This compatibility determination addresses the full spectrum of uses normally associated with the trapping of furbearers. It includes all means of access and other elements that would be included in a typical trapping activity. (The use of cabins and tent frames are evaluated in separate determinations.) Trapping that substantially differs in scope and purpose from the activities covered by this compatibility determination will require a separate determination for compatibility. The scope of this determination includes trapping conducted by all agencies or entities other than the Service. Trapping that is part of a collaborative or cooperative effort with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not subject to a formal compatibility determination.<sup>1</sup>

## **Availability of Resources**

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<sup>1</sup> Any action taken by the Service or Service-authorized agents including contractors, cooperating agencies, cooperating associations, refuge support groups, and volunteers is a refuge management activity, and thus is exempt from the compatibility determination process. 50 CFR 25.12 defines refuge management activities as any activity conducted by the Service or a Service-authorized agent to fulfill one or more purposes of the national wildlife refuge, or the National Wildlife Refuge System Mission.

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Adequate refuge personnel and base operational funds are available to manage this activity at perceived levels. Currently, staff time is no more than ten staff days per year, and primarily involves phone conversations, written correspondence, and entering activity information into a database. Field work associated with administering the program involves monitoring trapline activity.

### **Anticipated Impacts of the Use**

Trapping at estimated levels, in accordance with established state and federal regulations, does not appear to be resulting in significant long-term adverse impacts to natural resources. Recent information indicates that trapping-related furbearer harvest is stable, and is not negatively impacting furbearer populations. Frequency of this activity may rise in the next ten years as visitation of the refuge increases, and modes of access improve. This could lead to more concentrated activity and result in harm to furbearer populations or user conflicts at popular trapping areas. However, it appears that trapping effort has declined from historic levels, and it is just as likely that this declining trend will continue. In our opinion, impacts to natural resources from furbearer trapping at present levels are minimal.

### **Public Review and Comment**

Public involvement for this document includes: a public notice in the *Fairbanks Daily News Miner*; posting the draft on the Service's Alaska Region compatibility determination Web site, <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/index.htm>; posting a notice of availability at the Refuge headquarters in Fairbanks; and a 30-day public comment period.

Copies will be mailed or e-mailed upon request. Comments must be received by the refuge headquarters within the 30-day comment period to receive timely consideration. The period of public review and comment will commence on 16 April 2007, and end 16 May 2007.

Please send comments to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge  
Attn: Compatibility Determination Comments  
101 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 264, Box 14  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701  
(907)456-0440  
(907)456-0447 (fax)  
[yukonflats@fws.gov](mailto:yukonflats@fws.gov)

If you e-mail comments, please place the words, "Compatibility Comments," in the subject line and your comments in the body of the text. Please do not include attachments because they will not be opened due to the potential of computer viruses.

**Determination**

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible

**Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility**

A special use permit with stipulations is not required for legal trapping uses on refuge lands. Refuge staff will monitor trapping, and findings from these monitoring efforts will be used to determine what additional management actions, if any, are needed to ensure this use remains compatible with refuge purposes and in compliance with federal regulations.

**Justification**

Trapping is a traditional activity on the Yukon Flats NWR. Section 1316 of ANILCA states, “On all public lands where the taking of fish and wildlife is permitted in accordance with the provisions of this Act or other applicable State and Federal law the Secretary shall permit, subject to reasonable regulation to insure compatibility, the continuance of existing uses . . . .” After considering the impacts of this activity, as described in the anticipated impacts section, it is my determination that furbearer trapping does not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which the refuge was established or the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

**Mandatory 10-Year Reevaluation Date:** May 2017

This compatibility determination is a reevaluation of an existing use that facilitates wildlife-dependent, priority public uses and other refuge uses. The use is not recognized as a priority public use of the Refuge System, and after an opportunity for public comment, must be reevaluated if conditions under which the use is permitted change significantly or if there is significant new information regarding the effects of the use, but not less frequently than every ten years.

**NEPA Compliance for Refuge Use Decision**

Categorical Exclusion without Environmental Action Memorandum

Categorical Exclusions and Environmental Action Memorandum

Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

**Supporting Documents**

- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (as amended)
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (as amended)
- Alaska Region Fuel Storage Policy, US Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997

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- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (as amended)
- Compatibility Determination, Uses (includes aircraft landings, boating, camping, hiking and backpacking, snowmachine use, and trapping) allowed by the 1987 Yukon Flats NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan, 19 July 1994
- Compatibility Determination, Trapping Cabins, Yukon Flats NWR, 23 July 1994
- Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Environmental Impact Statement and Wilderness Review, Yukon Flats NWR, 29 December 1987
- National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (as amended)
- Refuge Manual, US Fish and Wildlife Service, 12 March 1982
- River Management Plan – Beaver Creek Wild River, December 1983
- Section 810 (ANILCA) Evaluations (Subsistence Cabins and Trapping Cabins), Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, 2004
- Subsistence Management for Federal Public Lands in Alaska, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision signed 2 April 1992

**Refuge Determination**

Refuge Manager /

Project Leader Approval: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Date)

Regional Chief,  
National Wildlife

Refuge System: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature) (Date)