



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Kenai National Wildlife Refuge



Planning News

December 2003

This is the first in a series of newsletters to update you on the revision of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. This newsletter announces the beginning of the revision process and asks for your help in identifying the issues that need to be addressed in the Revised Plan. The Comprehensive Conservation Plan provides overall direction for management of the Refuge.

About the Refuge

The Kenai National Moose Range was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on December 16, 1941. The purpose of the Refuge was to protect *“the natural breeding and feeding range of the giant Kenai moose on the Kenai Peninsula...”*

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) substantially affected the Moose Range by modifying its boundaries and broadening its purposes from moose conservation to protection and conservation of a broad array of fish, wildlife, habitats, other resources, and educational and recreational opportunities. ANILCA also changed the name of the Moose Range to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, added nearly a quarter of a million acres of land to it and designated 1.35 million acres as Wilderness.

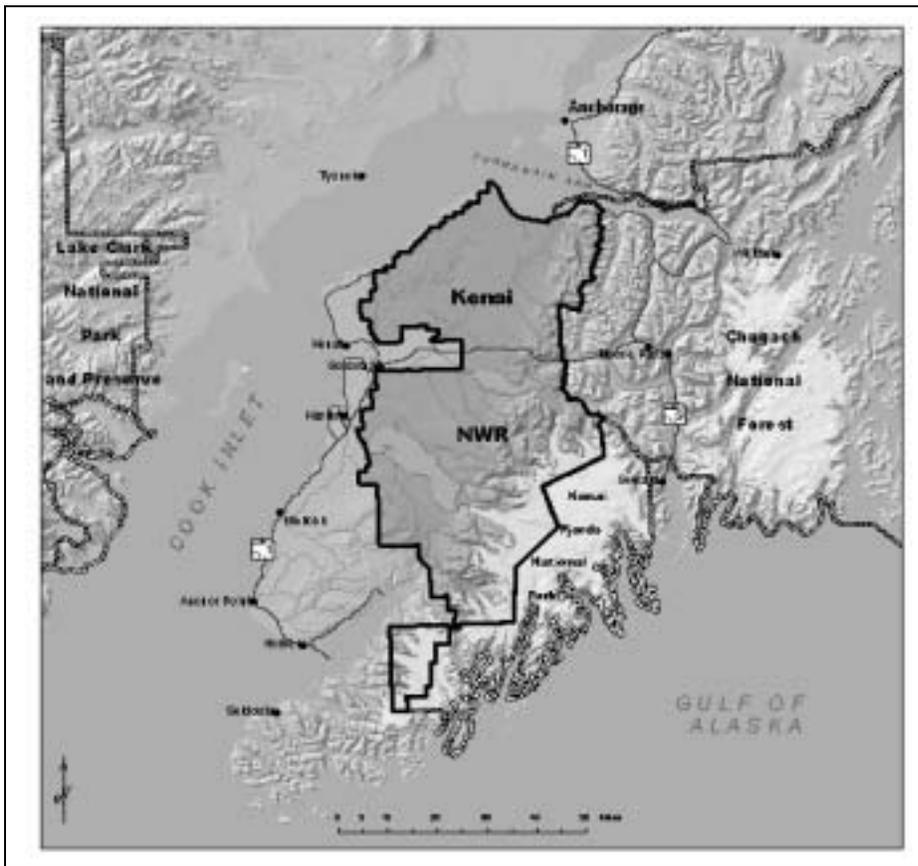
The purposes for which Kenai Refuge was established and shall be managed, as stated in ANILCA, include:

- To conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity;
- Fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;
- Ensure water quality and necessary water quantity within the Refuge;
- To provide opportunities for research, interpretation, environmental education, and land management training; and,
- To provide in a manner compatible with the purposes, opportunities for fish and wildlife-oriented recreation.



Kenai Refuge (see map) covers approximately 2 million acres, roughly equivalent to the states of Delaware and Rhode Island combined. It occupies much of the Kenai Peninsula and is readily accessible from Anchorage which contains 41.5% of the state's population.

The Kenai Refuge consists of the western slopes of the Kenai Mountains and forested lowlands bordering Cook Inlet. Ice and glaciers, which once covered the entire peninsula, melted from most of the peninsula only 10,000 - 14,000 years ago. The remnant of the once widespread ice sheet can still be observed today as the Harding Ice Field in the eastern Kenai Mountains. The Kenai Mountains, with their glaciers, rise to more than 6,500 feet. Treeless alpine and subalpine habitats are the home of mountain goats, Dall sheep, caribou, wolverine, marmots, and ptarmigan. Most of the lower elevations on the Refuge are covered by boreal forests which are composed of spruce and birch forests intermingled with hundreds of lakes. Boreal forests are home to moose, wolves, black and brown bears, lynx, snowshoe hares and numerous species of neotropical birds such as olive-sided flycatchers, myrtle warblers and ruby-crowned kinglets. At sea level, the Refuge encompasses the last remaining pristine major salt water estuary on



the Kenai Peninsula - the Chickaloon River Flats. The Flats provide a major migratory staging area for thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl in the spring and fall as well as nesting habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl in the summer. The Flats are also used as a haul-out area by harbor seals, and thousands of salmon migrate up the Chickaloon River system each year to spawn.

Where We've Been

ANILCA requires that Comprehensive Conservation Plans be prepared, and periodically revised, for each National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

These plans designate areas within the Refuge according to their resources and values; specify programs for conserving fish and wildlife and maintaining other special values of the Refuge; specify human activities which may be compatible with the major purposes of the Refuge; and identify opportunities for compatible fish and wildlife-oriented recreation.

Scoping for the Kenai Comprehensive Conservation Plan began in November 1980, the Draft Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released for public review in January 1984, and the Final Plan/EIS was released in January 1985. The Record of Decision adopting the plan was signed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director on June 27, 1985.

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan is the general management plan for the Refuge, setting overall guidance for management of public lands on the Refuge. A series of “step-down” plans provide more detailed guidance for specific resources or uses (e.g., a Fisheries Management Plan was completed in June 1995, a Land Protection Plan (focusing on private lands within the Refuge) was completed in October 1994, etc). The Refuge is currently working to develop a Cabin Use Management Plan.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife planning policy states that a full review and update of the Plan will occur every 15 years.

Plan Review

We began reviewing the Comprehensive Conservation Plan in June 2003. We found that although on-the-ground management actions are meeting Refuge objectives in most cases, some management direction needs to be updated. New and amended laws (such as the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act), new or revised regulations and policies, and other changes (such as Federal management of subsistence hunting on Alaska Refuges) need to be included in the management policies and guidelines for the Refuge.

Furthermore, additional lands have been acquired since the original Comprehensive Conservation Plan was completed. Management direction for these lands needs to be incorporated into the Plan as well.

Before we complete our review we would like to hear from you on the level of change in management, including land allocations, you would like to see in the Plan.

Where We Are Now

The Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan will be the primary source of management guidance and direction for the Refuge over the next 15 years. The revision process will be used to decide what the Refuge should be like in the future and how to get there. To do that, Refuge staff have identified several topics that could be addressed in the Revised Plan:

- **Access Related Issues** - Snowmobile Use, Motorized Boating Use, Bicycles and Wheeled Cart Use, Trail Conditions, Guiding Services on the Kenai River, and Wildlife Observation Opportunities
- **Remediation / Restoration Issues** - Existing Oil and Gas Fields and Related Infrastructure, Use of Prescribe Fire in Wilderness
- **Other Issues** - Collection of Natural Resources, Rest Stop Facilities and Maintenance



Refuge staff have also drafted a Vision Statement which reflects how they would like to develop the Refuge's management programs and goals:

"The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge will be a secure place for healthy populations of indigenous fish and wildlife and their habitats. The Refuge will be a model of excellence for Refuge management in the 21st Century, setting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service standard for capability, creativity, professionalism, and customer service."

Public Involvement

Public involvement is essential to the planning process. Everyone interested in the management of Kenai Refuge will have several opportunities to be involved.

This newsletter is one of the first steps in soliciting your views in revising the Comprehensive Conservation Plan. You will also have an opportunity to provide input on the revision at several public "open house" meetings to be held in communities on the Kenai Peninsula and the city of Anchorage this winter. The time and location of these meetings will be announced through the local media.

Once issues are identified, we will develop options to address the issues and prepare a Draft Plan/EIS. This document should be released for public review in 2005. After public review and comment on the draft document, including public meetings, a Final Plan/EIS will be prepared.

How You Can Help

- Stay on the mailing list! Or request that you be added to the mailing list if you are not already on it!
- Let us know what topics you think we should be addressing in the revision. What's working well? What should we consider changing? What's your reaction to our draft Vision Statement?
- Respond to the attached Issues Workbook.

Please write, fax, or email your comments to:

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For more information about the Refuge, please contact:

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Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

Issues Workbook

Getting Involved...

You can help us focus our planning effort on things that matter to you and your community. Your comments will assist us in identifying the best alternatives for long-term management of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

The following workbook will be mailed to everyone on our mailing list and handed out to everyone who attends Open House meetings. It provides an effective way for us to share background information and to hear your ideas and concerns on important issues affecting the Refuge. We have compiled a list of questions to provide a basis for comparing your comments with others we receive. Feel free to either add additional comments in the space provided, give us a call, email, or write us at the address provided.

Questions on Values

1. How many times do you visit the Kenai NWR each year?

_____ 0-5 _____ 6-10 _____ 11-15 _____ 16-20 _____ 20 +

2. What are your favorite activities to engage in while visiting the Kenai NWR?

3. What do you value most about the Kenai NWR?

4. Have there been changes, positive or negative, on the Refuge that affects you? Please describe.

5. What do you consider to be the most important problem, if any, facing the Kenai NWR?

Questions on Fish, Wildlife and Their Habitats

1. Are there specific areas within the Kenai NWR that, in your opinion, need special or additional management? If so, please list them here, and explain why you think they are important.

2. What are some issues or concerns regarding fish, wildlife and habitat that are important to you? Please provide specific examples or locations to help us better understand the issue.

3. If possible, please provide additional details on why you selected the above. In particular, we would be interested to know specific locations of concern.

Questions on Recreation, Education and Access

1. What are some issues or concerns on recreation related activities that are important to you? Please provide specific examples or locations to help us better understand the issue.

2. Please indicate how well each of the following kinds of Refuge facilities meets your needs by circling the appropriate number. If you do not use a particular kind of facility, circle zero indicating "not applicable."

	Does not meet my needs	Is sufficient for my needs	More than meets my needs	Not applicable
a. Number of restrooms	1	2	3	0
b. Condition of restrooms	1	2	3	0
c. Number of information/interpretive signs	1	2	3	0
d. Location of information/interpretive signs	1	2	3	0
e. Condition of hiking trails	1	2	3	0
f. Condition of canoe trails	1	2	3	0
g. Availability of public use cabins	1	2	3	0
h. Number of campgrounds	1	2	3	0
i. Condition of campgrounds	1	2	3	0
j. Overall quantity and condition of Refuge facilities	1	2	3	0

3. Please include here any additional comments on recreation, education, and public access (e.g., specifics regarding the number, condition and/or location of facilities listed in question #2 above).

That's it! Thank you for your time.

IMPORTANT: Now that you are done, please separate pages 6-8 of the Issues Workbook, fold, tape, and mail it back to us by **January 23, 2004**. We will let you know of the results of this workbook as soon as possible.

HOW TO BE INVOLVED

Do you want to be on the mailing list for the Kenai Comprehensive Conservation Plan revision?

No. Please remove my name from the mailing list.
Yes. I want to be added to the mailing list, or my address has changed.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____
(Only if you represent it in an official capacity)

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip Code: _____

Country: _____

If we do not hear from you, your name and address will remain on the mailing list.

KENAI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Place
Stamp
Here

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