

# Compatibility Determination

July 26, 2002

**Use:** Conduct one landing of a helicopter within Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to collect salmon tissue samples.

**Refuge Name:** Izembek National Wildlife Refuge.

## **Establishing and Acquisition Authority:**

In December 1980, Congress enacted the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA; 94 Stat. 2371). This act redesignated the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, which was originally established by Public Land Order No. 2216 as the Izembek National Wildlife Range on December 6, 1960 by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

From the Wilderness Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 892), ANILCA, Section 702(6) designates "Proposed Wilderness" as wilderness. It states, "Izembek Wilderness of approximately three hundred thousand acres as generally depicted on a map entitled "Izembek Wilderness", dated October 1978."

## **Refuge purposes:**

As designated by ANILCA, Section 303(3)(B):

- (i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, waterfowl, shorebirds and other migratory birds, brown bears and salmonoids;
- (ii) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;
- (iii) to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; and
- (iv) to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge.

As designated by Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136), Section 2.(a):

"For this purpose there is hereby established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be composed of federally owned areas designated by the Congress as "wilderness areas," and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness..."

## **National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:**

The mission of the National Wildlife 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.

### **Description of Use:**

#### **(a) What is the use?**

The Gene Conservation Laboratory, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has requested a special use permit to land a helicopter along a braided stream to collect tissue samples from 100 juvenile salmon for the purposes of genetic comparison to other river systems. The study is entitled, *The Use of Genetic Stock Identification to Determine the Distribution, Migration, Early Marine Survival, and Relative Stock Abundance of Western Alaska Sockeye Salmon.*

#### **(b) Where would the use be conducted?**

The salmon to be sampled will be located the day of the sampling. The intended stream is the Joshua Green River, located within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Area.

#### **(c) When would the use be conducted?**

The sampling would be accomplished in one day on or about July 30, 2002. This is a one-time event that will require only one landing of the helicopter.

#### **(d) How would the use be conducted?**

The stream will be flown over to locate the juvenile salmon and then the helicopter will land and the 100 specimens collected.

#### **(e) Why is the use being proposed?**

Genetic markers have proven to be effective tools for studies of ecology and management of salmonids. These markers can be used to discriminate populations in mixed aggregations, and a considerable statistical framework (mixed-stock analysis, or MSA) based on maximum likelihood estimates (MLE) has been developed to estimate composition of mixtures. Stock identification using gene markers has been especially successful with sockeye salmon because of the discrete populations that result from accurate homing of adults to natal spawning areas.

This project will fill gaps in baseline data for the Alaska Peninsula and western Alaska sockeye salmon stocks; these data are necessary for the finer scale resolution required in the near-shore surveys. This work will help the Refuge Managers for the Izembek State Game Refuge and Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to manage and conserve refuge fishery stocks.

**Availability of resources:**

This activity will not result in an increase of costs for the refuge staff to administer or manage.

**Anticipated impacts of the use:**

Anticipated impacts to the land or wildlife resources from this activity are expected to be temporary and short-term. Likewise, any impacts to users in the area are expected to be temporary and short-term. This activity meets the "minimum tool requirements" for accessing this wilderness area in the most efficient and least intrusive method to accomplish this project. This justification is primarily based on the fact that the area is inaccessible by other means that would reasonably meet the requirements of locating the fish and collecting 100 samples in a reasonable time frame.

**Public review and comment:**

This compatibility determination was posted in the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge office and Cold Bay Post Office for at least 24 hours beginning July 26, 2002.

**Comments Received**

The Program Manager State/Federal Issues, ANILCA, and Navigable Waters Commissioner's Office, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) felt that the existing Master Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ADF&G and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Supplemental MOU for the management of Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and the Izembek State Game Refuge adequately provide for the cooperative research and helicopter access.

**Use is Compatible or Not Compatible:**

I find this use COMPATIBLE, based on my personal experience, knowledge of the refuge, the best science available, principles of fish and wildlife management and administration, and other applicable laws. This use will not materially interfere with or materially detract from fulfilling the purposes of the refuge.

In my professional judgement, the need for this information justifies an exception to the CCP direction for managing access and that this points out the need to address helicopter access for research and inventory work by State and other Federal agencies.

**Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:**

The Special Use Permit authorizing this activity includes these stipulations: 1) Only one helicopter landing will occur on Refuge lands; 2) the pilot shall avoid any wildlife or visitors observed to the extent possible to minimize disturbance; 3) the pilot shall take the most direct safe route to/from the site and maintain a minimum distance of 500 feet AGL where practical.

**Justification:**

The current Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Izembek National Wildlife Refuge prohibits helicopter landings. A minimum tool analysis has been accomplished and one landing along this river system to collect valuable scientific data, that will provide wide ranging information regarding salmon, is appropriate. In the spirit of cooperative State and Federal research, this project and resultant one helicopter landing along the braided stream bed of the Joshua Green River is compatible with the purposes for which this refuge was established.

**Signature:**

Refuge Manager: Rick D. Peltier  
(Signature)

Date: 7/26/02

**Concurrence:**

Alaska Regional Chief of Refuges: [Signature]  
(Signature)

Date: 7/30/02

**Mandatory 10 Year Reevaluation Date:** N/A, this is a one-time activity.