Kodiak
National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update No. 2

This is the second in a series of planning updates to inform you of progress on revision of the comprehensive conservation plan for Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. This update describes where we are in the process, what happens next, and how you can help. The comprehensive conservation plan provides overall direction for management of the refuge.

Where We Are

We are in the process of revising management direction for Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. Much has changed since the original direction was published in 1987. It is time to make sure that refuge management responds to today's needs. Because this is a revision–not a new plan– we are trying to focus on what needs fixing, rather than starting from scratch.

Our first update, published in May 1999, provided information about the plan revision process, presented a set of goals for the refuge, and identified several topics that could be addressed in the revised plan. We asked for your ideas about how the refuge was being managed - what you like about the way the refuge is currently managed and what you think should be changed. This update summarizes the comments received so far, identifies those issues we believe to be significant planning issues, and presents four preliminary options, including no action, for dealing with those issues. We would like to hear what you think about these options and your suggestions for other management options we should consider.

In addition, this update provides information on what designation of refuge lands and waters as Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers would mean to management and use of Kodiak Refuge.

Wilderness/Wild and Scenic Rivers Designations

As part of the revision process, we are reevaluating existing recommendations for Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers designations. Currently, there is no designated Wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers on Kodiak Refuge.

The original CCP did recommend that approximately 1,091,000 acres of the refuge be designated as Wilderness. To date, this recommendation has not been forwarded to Congress for action. Congress must pass a law to actually create new Wilderness.

The Wilderness Act specifies that Wilderness areas are managed to retain their primeval character and influence. Natural systems in Wilderness are allowed to function unimpeded, except to respond to human-caused damage.

No rivers on the refuge are currently included in the Wild and Scenic River system and no rivers were recommended for designation in the original CCP. Like Wilderness, rivers (or segments of rivers) on the refuge can only be added to the system by an act of Congress.

Designation as a Wild and Scenic River keeps a river in its free-flowing state and maintains the outstanding values that qualified the river for designation. The goal essentially is to keep the river, including an average corridor of a ½ mile on each side of the river, like it is today.

On page 6 you will find answers to some frequently asked questions about how Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River designations affect public use.

What We Heard

In the spring of 1999, the refuge met with village residents in Akhiok, Karluk, Larsen Bay, Old Harbor, Ouzinkie, and Port Lions to discuss a number of refuge issues, including the revision of the CCP. Public scoping meetings were held in Kodiak and Anchorage. In May of 1999, a planning update was distributed to some 1,100 people and organizations nationwide, and to all box holders in the above communities. This update asked for comments about refuge values and potential issues that should be addressed in the revision of the CCP.

We received approximately 80 responses to our request for feedback on refuge values and potential issues. We also received a petition signed by 131 residents of Kodiak Island. Over 50% of the responses came from Alaskan residents, but we also received comments from residents of states throughout the country.

The five most commonly identified values of the refuge were its wilderness characteristics, brown bears, other fish, wildlife and plant communities, overall resource protection and sport hunting and fishing. We reviewed each response and recorded over 300 comments on potential issues facing the refuge. The issues covered a broad spectrum of topics from the availability of cabins to law enforcement. We grouped your comments into the following 14 categories: Access, Brown Bears, Current Management, Concessionaires/Outfitter Guides, Wilderness Designations, Hunting, Land Acquisition, Subsistence, Consumptive/Extractive Uses, Special Use Permits, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Introduced Species, Commercial Fishing and Miscellaneous topics.

In analyzing the comments received from the public, the two issues raised most frequently focused on access to the refuge and on brown bear viewing opportunities. For access, comments ranged from supporting continued or expanded access opportunities, equal access for all, to restricting access or limiting the number of people who can access the refuge. People's comments on the Kodiak brown bear focused on providing new viewing opportunities, and on how hunting should be managed near viewing areas.

Other issues that were identified frequently include:

- concessionaires/outfitter-guides/special use permits - focusing on whether commercial uses should be permitted or receive priority over independent users, costs of commercial activities, limiting amount of use, and enforcement of permits;
- Wilderness/Wild & Scenic River designations - most comments supported designating refuge lands, but others were concerned about how designation would effect access to the refuge;
- hunting - support for continued hunting on the refuge as well as for banning all hunting was expressed; and
- land acquisition - several comments supported continue acquisition of private inholdings.

Fewer comments were received on other topics including subsistence use of the refuge, consumptive and extractive uses on the refuge (such as mining), the effects of introduced species on native flora and fauna, the refuge role in the commercial fishing industry, and the need for increased law enforcement on the refuge.

The planning team reviewed these issues, with the management concerns identified by the Refuge staff, in order to identify the planning issues which will be addressed in the alternatives developed for analysis in the comprehensive conservation plan/environmental impact statement.

Although all issues identified during the scoping process will be addressed in the revised plan, only three issues (or combination of issues) were identified as issues that can be addressed by using different actions in different alternatives. Most issues, such as the need for increased coordination between agencies, will be addressed as part of the management guidelines and policies discussion. Most of these will have management direction which is common to all potential management alternatives.

Key Planning Issues and Preliminary Alternatives

The three key planning issues we identified are listed below. Under each issue we briefly describe the range of comments that we have received, followed by a short description of possible actions we think could be taken to address each issue. Some of these actions came from public comments, some from refuge staff. The following table arranges these actions into possible alternatives.

When you read the issues and look at the alternatives, we'd like you to keep several questions in mind. Have we interpreted your comments accurately? Are there other actions you would like to see considered?

Issue 1. What special designations (e.g. Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers, Research Natural Areas, etc.) should be applied to lands and waters within Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge?

What we heard: In evaluating the comments, it is obvious that people feel strongly about this issue. Some people stated that the entire refuge should be designated as Wilderness. Others felt that Wilderness or other special designations would limit opportunities for people to use the refuge and wanted no additional special designations.

Two special designations areas are located on the Refuge. The Russian Site at Three Saint's Bay is a National Historic Landmark. Approximately 88,000 acres is designated as the Mt. Glotoff Research Natural Area. Although managed under the same regulations as the remainder of the refuge, the intent of the designation is to establish areas in which natural features and processes are preserved with minimal human intervention for research and educational purposes.

Possible Options: We identified several opportunities for special designations on the refuge. This update provides information about Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers designations (pages 1 and 6). We could also designate additional Research Natural Areas and Wild Fish Sanctuaries. Wild Fish Sanctuaries are watersheds used by fish populations with unique characteristics. In these areas no enhancement (hatchery stocking) would be allowed. This designation would not affect the legal harvest of fish within or outside of the sanctuary. These areas will ensure maintenance of the natural genetic diversity within and among these populations and could provide broodstock for enhancement programs outside of these areas.

Issue 2. Given increasing demands by the public for use of the refuge and a limited number of access opportunities, how should the refuge manage public use activities in order to continue providing opportunities for appropriate uses while preventing significant impacts to the natural resources of the refuge and the quality of the experience?

What we heard: We received comments from people who were interested in seeing no change in opportunities on the refuge, to people who advocated prohibiting motorized vehicles or other activities in some areas. Some people were concerned about conflicts between people participating in different activities. In general, most people commented that the refuge should manage access to protect resources. Many residents in Kodiak commented that access to hunting, fishing and other activities should be maintained.

Possible Options: There is a wide variety of ways to address this issue. Some options would directly control use levels in certain areas; other options would increase use opportunities while addressing resource and experience concerns through other actions. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) provides direction on access to refuges in Alaska. All actions that we propose must be consistent with ANILCA.

Issue 3. What type of bear viewing opportunities should be available on Kodiak Refuge and how should the refuge make these opportunities available?

What we heard: Discussions about bear viewing and bear hunting dominated these comments. Over half of the comments received on this issue were in support of providing new bear viewing opportunities on the refuge. However, people differed on their views on how hunting should be managed near bear viewing areas. Comments ranged from the importance of continuing opportunities for bear hunting, to those who felt that all hunting should be banned.

Possible Options: We identified several options for bear viewing on the refuge. Some of these options, such as an organized bear viewing program, may require some limitations on hunting bears on and around these sites. Other options should not require any change in hunting opportunities. ANILCA guarantees that hunting will be allowed on refuges in Alaska; we can only consider closing or restricting specific areas to hunting to protect the resource.

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Preliminary Alternatives, January 2000

Management Action	**Alternative 1 (Existing management direction)**	**Alternative 2**	**Alternative 3**	**Alternative 4**
Special Designations				
Wilderness	No designated Wilderness on the refuge; 1,091,049 acres recommended for designation (57.2% of current refuge acreage as of September 30, 1998)	All refuge acreage that qualifies for wilderness designation	All refuge acreage that qualifies for wilderness designation except for existing state weir lease sites, existing set net sites, lands being considered for sale or exchange, and appropriate buffer areas	0 acres
Wild Fish Sanctuaries	No Wild Fish Sanctuaries have been designated at this time.	Designate the Ayakulik and Sturgeon rivers; evaluate all other refuge rivers and designate those found suitable	Same as Alternative 2	Same as Alternative 2
Research Natural Areas	Mt. Glotoff Research Natural Area (88,000 acres)	No additional Research Natural Areas	Designate new Research Natural Areas - Kodiak Refugium; Ban Island/Red Peak Sitka Spruce Forest	Same as Alternative 2
Wild & Scenic Rivers	No rivers currently designated or recommended for designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers	Recommend Karluk River drainage (refuge segment) for designation; work with landowner on lower river to designate entire drainage	Same as Alternative 1	Recommend the Karluk, Dog Salmon, Ayakulik, Sturgeon, Uganik, and Spiridon river drainages and Humpy Creek drainage
Access/Public Use				
Unguided Use	O'Malley River area closed (6/25-9/30); Connecticut Creek (7/15-8/31), Humpy Creek (7/15-9/15), and Seven Rivers (7/15-9/15) closed (pending regulations); Red Lake River and shoreline (7/1-8/31), Upper Thumb River (7/1-8/31), Southeast Creek (Red Lake) (7/15-8/31), Little River Lake lakeshore (7/15-8/31), and Deadman Bay Creek (8/15-9/30) restricted to day use only (pending regulations); no permits required	Same as Alternative 1 except require all unguided refuge visitors (including subsistence users) to obtain a free refuge access permit to monitor visitor use; no limits on the number of permits available; close Lower Dog Salmon Falls area (6/25-8/31)	Same as Alternative 1 except establish a refuge access permit system for the Ayakulik drainage from 6/1-9/30; close Lower Dog Salmon Falls area (6/25-8/31)	Same as Alternative 1 except establish refuge access permit system at Ayakulik River, Fraser Fish Pass and Uganik Lake outlet and lower river, and other popular sites from 6/1-9/30; number of permits available could be limited when monitoring suggests that acceptable resource or quality of experience are at risk of being exceeded; close Lower Dog Salmon Falls areas (6/25-8/31)
Non-Commercial Campsite Management	No restrictions (time, location) on camping by the general public except near public use cabins and federal and state administrative facilities (pending regulations); bear-proof food containers provided to air taxi operators for use by clients (starting summer 2000); educational materials on minimal impact camping are distributed to public; pending regulation for disposal of fish offal on the Ayakulik	Same as Alternative 1	Same as Alternative 1 except identify and delineate specific camping areas (zones) in high public use sites (areas to consider include Ayakulik River and Uganik Lake outlet); require the public to follow specific guidelines for waste disposal.	Same as Alternative 1except identify and delineate specific camping areas in high public use areas needing hardened campsites (areas to consider include Ayakulik River and Uganik Lake outlet); require the public to follow specific guidelines for waste disposal.
Public Use Cabins	Eight public use cabins (nine currently authorized); number or location of cabins could change if use is determined incompatible with refuge purposes; abandoned cabins or cabins on newly acquired lands may be converted to public use cabins; cabins available for use by the general public through a reservation system; maximum stay is 7 days (5/16-12/31); 15 days (4/1-5/15); and 30 days (1/1-3/31)	No more than 8 public use cabins; if major repairs required, cabins may be removed; other cabins on refuge lands (current or acquired) will be removed unless required for administrative purposes, same reservation system and stay limits as Alternative 1	Nine public use cabins will be maintained; new cabin would be located at appropriate compatible site (possibly at Foul Bay or NE Arm of Uganik); other cabins on refuge lands (current or acquired) will be removed unless required for administrative purposes; same reservation system and stay limits as Alternative 1	Same as Alternative 3 except ten public use cabins will be maintained
Salmon Camp	Summer camp for local youth operated and funded by Refuge at the Coast Guard Beach House, in conjunction with a number of partners .	Same as Alternative 1; develop partnership(s) with village governments/ corporations or other partners to fund/ staff additional camp(s) at other locations.	Same as Alternative 1	Same as Alternative 1
Remote Bear Viewing Video Program	No remote bear viewing video program currently exists.	Develop a remote video program at the O'Malley site or other suitable location(s).	Same as Alternative 2	Same as Alternative 1
Bear Viewing Program				
Structured Onsite Viewing Opportunities	No structured bear viewing program, ran by either the Service or concessionaires, is currently in operation on refuge lands; Koniag, Inc. operates a viewing program on Lower Thumb River on corporation lands within the refuge	See unguided bear viewing (below); work with partner(s) to establish an additional daily or overnight structured bear viewing opportunity at an off-refuge (private lands) site	Develop organized overnight viewing program at O'Malley operated by Service or a concessionaire; close a 100 square mile area to bear hunting	Develop organized viewing program, daily (½ day viewing opportunities; multiple concessionaires) or overnight camp (operated by single concessionaire) at the Fraser Fish Pass site; restrict unguided viewing opportunities at this site
Dispersed, Guided Viewing Opportunities	No limit on number of commercial permits issued (17 in 1999); permits require bear viewing to occur "at-a-distance" (no displacement, no habituation) except at fish passes/weirs; operators must submit an operations plan (time, place, client numbers, method); all closures and restrictions apply	Same as Alternative 1 except client numbers may be restricted on some drainages	Same as Alternative 2	Same as Alternative 2
Unguided Bear Viewing	Unguided bear viewing is not restricted on the refuge, except at the O'Malley site; when pending closures/restricted use area regulations are in place, use of those sites also will be restricted.	Designate limited number of sites for "at-a-distance" bear viewing; provide range of opportunities, from easy to difficult access; sites and trails marked, but sites not developed; use monitored and limited if needed	Same as Alternative 1	Same as Alternative 1 except would be restricted at Fraser Fish Pass

What Would Wilderness and Wild & Scenic River Designation Mean to Users on Kodiak Refuge?

	Wilderness	Wild & Scenic Rivers
How would designation affect subsistence uses and hunting, fishing, and other activities?	Subsistence use, traditional access, hunting, fishing and other recreation, and traditional commercial activities (including guiding and outfitting) would be allowed to continue but use of some mechanized equipment could be restricted. For example, local residents engaged in subsistence activities may use chainsaws (but not other motorized and mechanized equipment unrelated to transportation, such as generators and water pumps).	All existing subsistence and recreational uses would continue as before. Recreational use could be limited or additional regulations imposed in the future if the river corridor's values were being damaged or were at risk.
What would the effects be on motorized public access?	Airplanes, snowmobiles, and motorboats are generally allowed in Wilderness in Alaska. Motorized and mechanized equipment is allowed for several purposes: access for subsistence; access for traditional activities and to and from villages and homesites; and access to State or privately owned lands (including subsurface rights).	There are no special provisions regulating use of motors; existing patterns of motorized uses would continue.
What activities would not be allowed?	Activities which would alter the wilderness character of the area are not allowed. Examples are large scale developments, oil, gas, and other mineral development, and most surface disturbing activities. Rights of way for roads or utilities would be difficult to obtain, but allowed.	Activities which would alter the free-flowing character of the river, such as dams or diversions. Other activities could be regulated. If the river is classified as Wild then mining would not be allowed in the river corridor.
How would state and private lands be affected if they lie within the designated areas?	State and private lands would not be affected by a wilderness designation. Access would still be assured.	Management of state and private lands is not subject to provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
How are areas recommended for designation managed until Congress acts?	Areas recommended for Wilderness would be managed the same as the other refuge lands. Management would not change unless Congress passed an act designating the areas Wilderness.	They would be managed to maintain their free-flowing character and to maintain their outstanding values.
What lands or waters qualify to even be considered for possible designation?	In general, the area must be affected primarily by the forces of nature, and provide opportunities for solitude. All of the refuge qualifies, although some areas meet these criteria better than others.	The river or segment must be free flowing and have one or more outstanding values or opportunities. Most refuge rivers meet these criteria, but a few stand out: Karluk, Dog Salmon, Ayakulik, Sturgeon, Uganik, Spiridon, and Humpy Creek drainage.

What Is Next

Once we receive your comments, we will finalize a range of alternatives to consider for the draft comprehensive conservation plan/environmental impact statement. We will assess the environmental effects that would result from implementing each alternative. When we send you the draft plan/EIS next fall we will ask for your input on the alternatives and environmental analysis. The management direction that is eventually chosen may be one of the alternatives presented in the draft plan, one of the alternatives modified by comments from the public, or a combination of the alternatives presented in the draft plan.

How You Can Help

We would like to get your suggestions on the approaches that we describe in preliminary alternatives. The enclosed work sheet can help you focus your responses, but you can respond in any way you choose. To be most helpful to us we would like to receive your comments by **March 20, 2000**. If you miss that date, please respond anyway because we want to hear from you. Your comments will be considered whenever they arrive. We will be holding meetings in Kodiak and Anchorage in early February to review the planning issues, discuss current management, present possible management options, and to receive your comments and suggestions. Please attend if you are in town!

Kodiak Meeting (**New** - Rescheduled Date)
Where: Cafeteria, Kodiak High School
When: 7 - 9:30 pm **March 8th**

Anchorage Meeting
Where: Public conference room, Loussac Library
When: 7 - 9 pm **February 10th**

How To Contact Us

In addition to sending in the enclosed work sheet, you can contact the planning team leader or refuge manager with comments or questions. You can reach us by email at:

FW7_Kodiak_Planning@fws.gov

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You can also find more information on refuge planning in Alaska at our new web site:

http://www.r7.fws.gov/planning/plan.html

The Fish and Wildlife Service

Part of the Department of the Interior, the Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for the benefit of people. It has responsibility for migratory birds and fish, endangered species, and certain marine mammals.

The Fish and Wildlife Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats.Today there are over 500 refuges spread from Alaska to Puerto Rico, from Maine to Hawaii. Varying in size from a half acre to thousands of square miles, they include over 90 million acres of the nation's best wildlife habitat. The vast majority of these lands are in Alaska.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Refuges - Mail Stop 231
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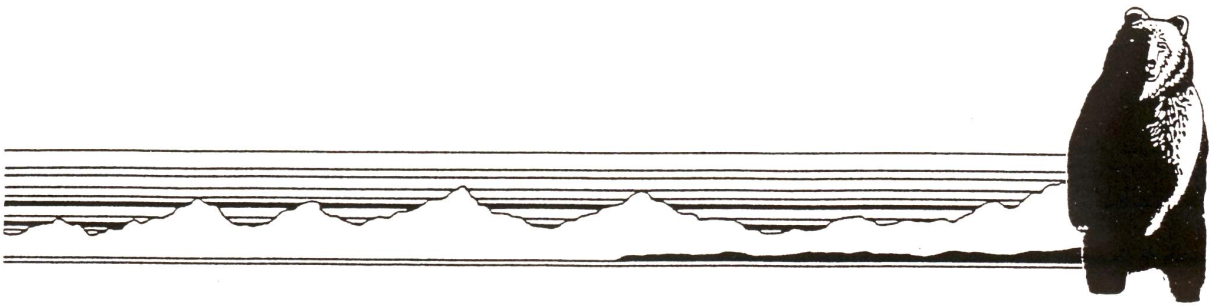
This is the second planning update on revision of the comprehensive conservation plan for Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. This update describes the preliminary alternatives being considered, and asks for your help in evaluating and revising them.

Kodiak Refuge: A Vision for the Future

Brown bear, fish, and other wildlife populations will continue to thrive on the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge in their natural diversity, living in pristine habitats. Refuge management will blend public and private partners in a dynamic alliance that fulfills the purposes and goals of Kodiak Refuge. The Refuge will provide a long and lasting legacy of stewardship of wilderness resources for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge



Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge
Plan Revision Response Sheet, January 2000

The January 2000 update asks for your comments on the preliminary alternatives we have developed, based on your comments on how we could address issues facing the refuge. You may use this response sheet to comment if you choose. To be most useful to us, ***please respond by February 25, 2000.*** *Thanks for your help!*

1. The update describes four preliminary alternatives--different approaches we could take to managing the refuge over the next 10-15 years (one of the four is the existing management direction). Do you have any suggestions for changes to any of the alternatives and how they address issues facing the refuge?

2. The alternatives contain a wide range of options for recommending that parts of the refuge be designated as special management areas (Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wild Fish Sanctuaries, or Research Natural Areas). Do you have any ideas about these recommendations and how they're described in the alternatives?

3. The alternatives contain several possible approaches to providing public access to the refuge, while maintaining a quality experience and avoiding damage to refuge resources. Do you have any ideas regarding these approaches? Other approaches we might consider?

4. The alternatives contain several possible approaches to providing opportunities for viewing bears on the refuge. Do you have any ideas regarding these approaches? Other approaches we might consider?

5. Do you have any other comments?

Please fold on the lines, tape, and mail

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."

Source: National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997

☐ Please remove me from your mailing list

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