

RECORD OF DECISION

I. INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) approves the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) proposal to manage the public lands within the Glennallen Field Office's jurisdiction as presented in the attached Resource Management Plan (RMP). This RMP was described as Alternative D in the June 2006 Proposed East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDI-BLM 2006). This ROD provides the background on development of the plan and rationale for approving the proposed decisions contained in Alternative D, and describes clarifications and/or modifications made to address protests received on the plan. The attached RMP (referred to as the Approved Plan) describes the decisions themselves.

The planning area extends from the southern slopes of the Alaska Range to the Chugach Mountains, from the Talkeetna Mountains to the Wrangell Mountains, and includes an extensive area of coastline in Prince William Sound. The area is bisected by the Glenn, Richardson and Denali Highways, and is accessible by Alaska standards. The area is also bisected by the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which runs north to south and roughly parallels the Richardson Highway.

Located at the core of the planning area, the Copper River Basin is rural in nature, with small communities and villages scattered throughout the area. The 2000 Census reported a population of 3,120 in the Copper River Basin. The larger communities of Cordova and Valdez are within the planning area on Prince William Sound. Cordova is located near the mouth of the Copper River. Residents of the cities of Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla, and Fairbanks utilize the area heavily for recreation as well as for sport and subsistence hunting and fishing.

Of the approximately 30,908,000 acres within the planning area, decisions in the Approved Plan will apply to 7,056,000 acres, classified as follows:

- BLM: These are lands that will most likely be retained in long-term Federal ownership. They are not selected by the State or by Native corporations or villages. These lands constitute approximately 5 percent of the planning area.
- State-selected: These are formerly unappropriated and unreserved public lands that were selected by the State of Alaska as part of the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958 and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980. Until conveyance, State-selected lands not falling within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve or Chugach National Forest will continue to be managed by the Glennallen Field Office. ANILCA, which amended the Statehood Act,

allowed for overselection by the State by as much as 25 percent of the entitlement (sec. 906 (f)). Therefore, some State-selected lands may eventually be retained in long-term Federal ownership. State-selected lands constitute approximately 10 percent of the planning area.

- Native-selected: The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 gave Alaska Natives an entitlement of 44,000,000 acres to be selected from a pool of public lands specifically defined and withdrawn by the Act for that purpose. As ANILCA provided for overselection by the State, ANCSA provided for the Natives to overselect lands (sec. 12); some of these lands will therefore be retained in long-term Federal ownership. Native-selected lands constitute approximately 1 percent of the planning area.
- Dual-selected: These are lands that have been selected by both the State and Natives. Again, because of overselection, some of these lands could be retained in long-term Federal ownership. Dual-selected lands constitute approximately 7 percent of the planning area.
- Mineral estate: All subsurface mineral estate lying beneath BLM lands is BLM administered. In addition, BLM administers 12,874 acres of subsurface mineral estate beneath private surface within the planning area. No mineral development occurs on State or Native-selected lands until conveyance occurs. After conveyance, mineral estate goes to the State or the Native corporation.

Lands within the planning area to which decisions in the Approved Plan will not apply:

- State lands: These are lands that have already been conveyed to the State of Alaska. These lands constitute approximately 24 percent of the planning area.
- Native lands: These are lands already conveyed to Native allottees or village and regional corporations and are now private lands. These lands constitute approximately 4 percent of the planning area.
- National Park Service lands. These are lands within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and Denali National Park and Preserve. These lands constitute approximately 40 percent of the planning area.
- USDA Forest Service: These are lands managed by the Chugach National Forest. These lands constitute approximately 7 percent of the planning area.
- Private lands: These lands are privately owned, aside from Native corporations or villages. Most are located along the highway corridors. These lands constitute approximately 2 percent of the planning area.

Table 1 summarizes land status within the East Alaska Planning Area.

Table 1. Land Status within the East Alaska Planning Area

Land Category	Acres
BLM-administered lands	
BLM public lands	1,572,000
State-selected	3,397,000
Native-selected	44,000
Dual-selected	2,100,000
Military	3,000
Total	7,116,000
National Park Service-administered lands	
National Park Service lands	11,630,000
State-selected	6,000
Native-selected	800,000
Total	12,436,000
State of Alaska lands	
State lands	7,022,000
Total	7,022,000
Forest Service-administered lands	
Forest Service lands	1,891,000
Native-selected	342,000
Total	2,234,000
Native-owned	
Private	64,000
Total lands within planning area	30,908,000

Development of this RMP was formally initiated with publication of a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* in March of 2003. Over the next three years, BLM conducted extensive public outreach, and initiated a number of collaborative efforts involving diverse interests as part of plan development (these opportunities are summarized in the *Public Involvement* section below). BLM also provided standard public comment periods and an opportunity to protest the proposed decisions to the Director prior to approval of this ROD as required by the BLM planning regulations.

II. RESULTS OF PROTEST REVIEW AND GOVERNOR'S CONSISTENCY REVIEW

A. Protests

BLM received one protest letter during the 30-day protest period provided for the proposed land use plan decisions contained in the East Alaska RMP/Final EIS in accordance with 43 CFR Part 1610.5-2. This protest was filed by the Alaska Coalition. Two other protest letters were received, but not within the 30-day protest period. These two protests (from the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and the City

and Borough of Yakutat) were dismissed, but BLM responded to the points raised.

Main protest points of the Alaska Coalition protest pertained to inadequate resource protection to replace revocation of ANCSA 17(d)(1) withdrawals; inadequate cumulative impacts analysis; BLM's failure to adopt specific ACECs, revocation of too many ANCSA 17(d)(1) withdrawals; failure to assert sufficient proactive interim management on State and Native selected lands; inadequate range of alternatives; inadequate analysis of OHV impacts; inadequate analysis of climate change; and no consideration of new Wilderness Study Areas. The major points brought out by the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe and the City and Borough of Yakutat revolved around the recommended partial revocation of an existing ANCSA 17(d)(1) withdrawal within the Bering Glacier RNA and the effects of potential mining or resource development activity in that area.

The BLM Director addressed all protests without making significant changes to the Proposed Resource Management Plan, though minor adjustments and clarifications were made and have been explained in this ROD.

B. Governor's Consistency Review

BLM planning regulations in 43 CFR 1610.3-2 afford state Governors an opportunity to review an RMP/EIS to identify any known inconsistencies between the RMP and approved state or local plans, policies or programs. The East Alaska PRMP/FEIS was published on June 2, 2006, and made available for State review at that time. The Governor's Consistency Review (GCR), dated August 29, 2006, found the PRMP/FEIS to be inconsistent with state priorities, policies, and land use plans. This finding was based on the BLM's proposal to retain certain lands under Public Land Order 5150, which resulted in continued Federal management of portions of the pipeline/utility corridor.

The GCR recommend that the inconsistency be resolved as follows: "I request that PLO 5150 be revoked and State selections be made available for conveyance." In addition, the GCR requested clarification of certain technical and administrative points. BLM has clarified the technical and administrative points in a manner that meets the State's concerns (see **Clarifications**, pp. 9-10). However, BLM will maintain most of PLO 5150, as described on page 5 and in detail under **Specific Decisions and Management Considerations** on page 14. BLM responded to the GCR in a letter dated May 11, 2007, in which the State Director outlined the reasons for not accepting the State's recommendations regarding PLO 5150. The State has chosen not to appeal to the BLM Director.

III. DECISION

The decision is hereby made to approve the attached plan as the Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) for BLM-managed lands administered by the Glennallen Field Office. The Approved Plan replaces the Southcentral Management Framework Plan (MFP) approved in 1980 (USDI-BLM 1980).

This plan was prepared under the regulations (43 CFR Part 1600) implementing the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared for this RMP in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Management decisions and guidance for public lands under the jurisdiction of the Glennallen Field Office are presented in the Approved Plan attached to this ROD in the section titled *Management Decisions*.

All decisions covered by this ROD are land use planning decisions which were protestable under the land use planning regulations (43 CFR Part 1610) **with the exception of the route designations for motorized wheeled travel in the planning area**. The route designation decisions are implementation decisions which may be appealed under the Department of Interior's appeal regulations (43 CFR Part 4). Information on how to appeal the route designation decisions can be found in the *Implementation Decisions* section below.

A. What the Decision/RMP Provides

Land use plan decisions include:

- Goals
- Objectives (Desired Future Conditions)
- Land Use Allocations
- Management Actions

Goals are the broad statements of desired outcomes, and are usually not quantifiable. **Objectives** are specific desired conditions, usually quantifiable and measurable, and may have timeframes for achievement. **Land use allocations** specify locations within the planning area that are available or not for certain uses. These include decisions such as what lands are available for mineral material use, oil and gas leasing, and locatable mineral development; what lands may be available for disposal via sale, what withdrawals to maintain and which to revoke or modify, and what lands are open, closed, or limited to motorized travel. **Management actions** include those provisions that help in meeting the established goals and objectives and include measures that will be applied to guide day-to-day activities on public lands, including but not limited to stipulations, guidelines, and required operating procedures.

The primary management decisions in the Approved Plan are to:

- Manage resources to protect and enhance vegetative communities, fish and wildlife resources, natural, cultural, and geological resources, and recreational opportunities.
- Manage uses to protect and prevent damage to public land resources, and to enhance those resources where feasible.
- Recommend revocation of 84% of the existing ANCSA 17(d)(1) withdrawals.
- Recommend retention of 84% of PLO 5150 (the pipeline/utility corridor). BLM will recommend modification of PLO 5150 to allow 82,500 acres to be conveyed to the State of Alaska.
- Withdraw approximately 16,000 acres within the scenic portion of the Delta River Wild and Scenic river corridor from locatable mineral entry.
- Make approximately 5.6 million acres of public land available to mineral leasing, through revocation of existing ANCSA withdrawals. State-and Native-selected lands would not be open to mineral leasing until conveyance or relinquishment of selection.
- Make approximately 6.0 million acres of public land available to locatable mineral entry, through revocation of existing ANCSA withdrawals. State and Native selected lands would not be open to mineral entry until conveyance or relinquishment of selection.
- Land disposal would be used selectively in the Slana settlement area to resolve unauthorized use on failed claims.
- Isolated, unmanageable tracts resulting from highway realignment along the Richardson and Glenn Highways will be available for disposal.
- Designate 1,692,000 acres as “limited” to Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs), where trails will be designated. Specific trails will be designated under this RMP decision for the Gulkana and Delta Wild and Scenic River corridors and Tangle Lakes Archeological District (TLAD). Other areas (such as the Bering Glacier and portions of the pipeline/utility corridor) will have specific trails designated through subsequent implementation-level planning.
- Designate 5,320,000 acres as “limited” to OHVs, where OHVs will be encouraged to stay on existing trails. These lands consist mostly of State-selected lands and this policy is consistent with existing State statute 11 AAC 96.025. Interim management will emphasize education but citations will be issued if deliberate violations of these conditions result in resource damage.
- In order to maintain an existing non-motorized winter recreation experience in rugged, glaciated terrain, 44,000 acres in the Delta Mountains would be closed to snowmachine use, though snowmachine access to subsistence resources would be allowed. Seasonal closure would begin on October 15 or when there is 12 inches average snowfall or 6 inches of frost. Seasonal closure would run until May 15.
- Designate five Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs): Delta River, Gulkana River, Delta Range, Tiekel, and Denali Highway.

- Designate 827,000 acres as the Bering Glacier Research Natural Area, with objectives of protecting the unique ecological values associated with the glacier and continuing research activities in the area.
- Identify areas as a priority for habitat improvement through the use of wildland fire or mechanical treatment. Identify desired conditions for moose and caribou habitat.

This ROD serves as the final decision establishing the land use plan decisions outlined in the Approved Plan and is effective on the date it is signed. No further administrative remedies are available for these land use plan decisions.

B. What the Decision/RMP Does Not Provide

The Approved Plan does not contain decisions for the surface or mineral estates of land administered by the State of Alaska, the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, or private lands and minerals.

In addition, many decisions are not appropriate at this level of planning and are not included in the ROD. Examples of these types of decisions include:

Statutory requirements: The decision will not change the BLM's responsibility to comply with application laws and regulations.

National policy: The decision will not change the BLM's obligation to conform to current or future National policy.

Funding levels and budget allocations: These are determined annually at the National level and are beyond the control of the field office.

C. Implementation Decisions

While the designation of areas as open, closed, or limited to off-highway vehicle use is a land use planning decision, the proposed route designations for motorized travel in the planning area in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS are implementation decisions which are now appealable under the Department of Interior's appeal regulations (43 CFR Part 4). These procedures are summarized below.

The route designations described in the *Travel Management and OHV Use* section of the Approved RMP and identified on Maps 15 and 16 of the Approved Plan are effective upon issuance of this Record of Decision, unless a stay of the decision is granted. In accordance with 43 CFR Part 8342.3(b) public notice was provided with publication of a *Federal Register* Notice of Availability of the Proposed RMP/Final on June 30, 2006, and with publication of the *Federal*

Register notice announcing the availability of this Record of Decision and Approved Plan.

C-1: Appeal Procedures for Implementation Decisions

Any party adversely affected by the proposed route designations may appeal within 30 days of receipt of this decision in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR Part 4.4. The publication of the Notice of Availability of the ROD/Approved Plan will be considered the date the decision is received. The appeal should state the specific route(s) on which the decision is being appealed. The appeal must be filed with the Field Manager, at the following address:

Bureau of Land Management
Glennallen Field Office
P.O. Box 147
Glennallen, Alaska 99588

You may include a statement of reasons when the notice of appeal is filed, or you may file the statement of reasons within 30 days after filing the appeal. A copy of the appeal, statement of reasons, and all other supporting documents must also be sent to the Regional Solicitor, Alaska Region, 4230 University Drive, Suite 300, Anchorage, Alaska 99508 – 4626.

If the statement of reasons is filed separately, it must be sent to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 801 N. Quincy Street, Suite 300, Arlington, Virginia, 22203. It is suggested that any appeal be sent certified mail, return receipt requested.

C-2: Request for Stay

If you wish to request a stay of the decision pending the outcome of the appeal, the motion for stay must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at the time the appeal is filed and must show sufficient justification based on the following standards under 43 CRR Part 4.21:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

D. Notice of Modifications

As a result of protests on the Proposed Plan and continued internal review, BLM made two modifications to the Proposed Plan. These modifications are as follows:

- ROP-Water-b-4 will have the following language added (see **bold** text): Riparian areas located between a mined ore deposit and a water course will not be disturbed to serve as a buffer strip to protect integrity of stream banks, provide water temperature control, and provide filtration of sediment from surface runoff. All roads, bunkhouses, offices, equipment storage, and maintenance facilities will be sited in upland areas if possible. Overburden will be placed on the uplands if possible or on the upland side of the mine pit. Application of this ROP is not intended to preclude activities which, by nature, must occur within riparian areas, such as placer mining. **Exceptions to the ROP will need to be approved by the Authorized Officer, and any exceptions will be designed to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.**
- Required Operating Procedures (ROPs) and lease stipulations (stips), as developed during the planning process, will be included in the attached Approved Plan as Appendix A. The following will be added under section A (1) as a second paragraph: **Through adaptive management, the BLM will be mindful of impacts from thinning ice, melting permafrost, or other conditions accompanying climate change that affect the safety and environmental integrity of commercial permitted operations as well as recreational activities in the planning area. The BLM will take these considerations into account in environmental analyses associated with such operations and activities and, where appropriate, will modify ROPs and stips to account for such changes.**

E. Clarifications

The following clarifications and minor corrections made to the information included in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS are reflected in the attached Approved Plan:

- The following has been added to the attached Approved Plan, under the Lands & Realty section/Access/Management Actions (Access)/#6 (page 25): “Section 1110 of ANILCA allows the use of snowmachines, motorboats, airplanes, and non-motorized surface transportation for traditional activities and for travel to and from villages and homesites.”
- The following language will be used in the attached Approved Plan, under the Travel Management and OHV Use section/Travel Management Area Prescriptions (OHVs and Roads)/(3)(a), page 48: “Designation of trails is necessary in this Wild and Scenic River corridor to comply with Title XI of ANILCA **and Executive Order 11644** (as implemented by 43 CFR 36.11(g)) and to ensure management to protect outstandingly remarkable values.”
- The following sentence has been added to the attached Approved Plan, under the Lands & Realty section/Land Use Authorizations/Management Actions/FLPMA leases (page 19): “FLPMA leases and occupancy type

permits for trapping cabins will be issued consistent with 43 CFR 2920.1-1.”

- The following sentence has been added to the attached Approved Plan, under the Subsistence section/Allocations (page 43): “The State of Alaska regulates State subsistence fisheries and hunts on private lands and all state lands and waters.”
- This clarification is in response to the following point made in the Governor’s Consistency Review (August 29, 2006): “Please clarify how the conclusion in Appendix E that actions taken under Alternative B would significantly affect access to subsistence resources by the 26 communities that have a customary and traditional use of resources in Unit 13 was reached.” This conclusion was reached based on the two paragraphs in Chapter 4 on page 568 of the East Alaska Proposed RMP/Final EIS. This analysis assumes that all or most of the 26 communities that have a customary and traditional use of resources in Unit 13 are represented in the 3,000 permits annually issued to Federally-qualified subsistence users.

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives, including a No Action Alternative were analyzed in detail in the Draft RMP/EIS (USDI-BLM 2005a) and in the Proposed RMP/FEIS (USDI-BLM 2006a). The alternatives were developed to address major planning issues and to provide direction for resource programs influencing land management. All management under any of the alternatives would comply with state and Federal regulations, laws, standards, and policies.

Each alternative emphasizes a different combination of resource uses, allocations, and restoration measures to address issues and resolve conflicts among uses, so program goals are met in varying degrees across the alternatives. However, each alternative allows for some level of support of all resources present in the planning area. The alternatives differ in how fast the goal would be met, the degree to which it would be met, the emphasis placed on certain programs and activities, and whether active or passive management would occur. Management scenarios for programs not tied to major planning issues and/or mandated by law often contain few or no differences in management between alternatives.

A. Alternative Description

Alternative A is the No Action Alternative. This alternative would continue present management practices based on the existing Southcentral Management Framework Plan and other management direction documents. Valid decisions contained in the Southcentral Management Framework Plan would be implemented if not already completed. Direction contained in existing laws, regulations, and policies would also continue to be implemented, sometimes

superseding provisions in the Southcentral plan. The current levels, methods, and mix of multiple use management of public lands in the planning area would continue, and resource values would receive attention at present levels. In general, most activities would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis and few uses would be limited or excluded as long as they were consistent with State and Federal laws.

Alternative B lays the groundwork for active management to facilitate resource development. In this alternative, constraints to protect resource values or habitat would be implemented in very specific geographic areas rather than across the planning area or in special designations. Most stipulations and guidelines would be developed on a site-specific basis. With the exception of the Delta and Gulkana Wild and Scenic River corridors, all ANCSA d(1) withdrawals would be revoked on lands retained in long-term Federal ownership. Public Land Order 5150, which withdrew lands for the transportation and utility corridor, would be revoked to allow for conveyance of the corridor to the State of Alaska. These actions would allow increased potential for mineral exploration and development. This alternative includes the highest level of forest and woodland treatments. Travel and trail restrictions would be maintained at the current levels. Recreation management would focus on development of facilities to handle increasing uses. Management of Native- and State-selected lands would be mostly custodial.

Alternative C emphasizes active measures to protect and enhance resource values. Production of minerals and services would be more constrained than under Alternative B or D, and, in some cases and in some areas, uses would be excluded to protect sensitive resources. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs), and a Research Natural Area (RNA) are identified, and specific measures are proposed to protect or enhance values within these areas. All areas would be designated as limited or closed to off-highway vehicles (OHVs) to protect habitat, soil and vegetation resources, and recreation experiences. Some ANCSA d(1) withdrawals would be revoked, but others would be maintained to protect or maintain resource values.

Alternative D emphasizes a moderate level of protection, use, and enhancement of resources and services. Constraints to protect resources would be implemented, but would be less restrictive than those implemented under Alternative C. This alternative would designate one RNA and five SRMAs, but measures to protect resource values would be applied to other geographical areas that are also identified under Alternative C. This alternative would revoke many ANCSA d(1) withdrawals but would retain some withdrawals in areas where strong resource protection is needed. It would retain most of PLO 5150, maintaining a viable Federal subsistence hunting unit. This alternative describes interim and long-term management strategies for lands selected by the State or Native or Village Corporations.

Public input received throughout the planning process was considered in the development of the alternatives. Alternative A, continuation of current management, is based on existing planning decisions that remain valid, and current direction and policy. The remaining alternatives were developed with input received during scoping, with expertise from the interdisciplinary planning team, and with input from local, State, Federal and tribal governments. Alternative D was identified as the agency preferred alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS. This same alternative became the proposed alternative in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, but was modified based on the consideration of public comment received on the Draft.

During the early stages of the planning process a number of alternatives were considered, but dropped from detailed analysis for a variety of reasons. The following alternatives were eliminated from detailed study because they did not meet the purpose and need of the proposal or were outside of the technical or legal constraints of developing a land use plan for public lands and resources.

- Eureka Special Recreation Management Area
- Stuart Creek non-motorized area
- Clearwater Mountains non-motorized area
- Transfer of BLM-managed lands in the Bering Glacier area to the National Park Service
- Denali Highway Area of Critical Environmental Concern

Additional information can be found in Chapter 2, *Alternatives*, of both the Draft RMP/EIS and the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

B. The Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Alternative D, the agency Preferred Alternative and Proposed Action is considered the environmentally preferable alternative when taking into consideration the human (social and economic) environment as well as the natural environment. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has defined the environmentally preferable alternative as the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the NEPA. This section lists six broad policy goals for all Federal plans, programs, and policies:

1. Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
2. Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.
4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;

5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Based on these criteria, identification of the environmentally preferable alternative(s) involves balancing current and potential resource uses with the need to protect resources, as well as consideration of the human environment. Alternative B could be viewed the least environmentally preferable alternative, as it offers the most intensive, active management for use of the area, which may negatively impact other resource values the most. However, this alternative would provide the most economic benefit to the economy in the short term. Alternative D would be less environmentally preferable than alternative C, but more preferable than Alternatives A or B. This alternative would provide a balance between sustainable economic benefits and resource protection. Alternative C would be more protective of natural and biological values than Alternatives A, B, or D, but would provide for fewer or restricted uses.

V. MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING THE APPROVED PLAN

The BLM is tasked with the job of multiple use management, as mandated under FLPMA and numerous other laws and regulations that govern the management of public lands for various purposes and values. Due to the diversity of community needs and stakeholders affected by management of BLM lands, there has been both support and opposition to certain components of Alternative D. BLM's objective in choosing Alternative D as the preferred alternative and proposed plan was to address these diverse needs and concerns in a fair manner and provide a practical and workable framework for management of BLM public lands. The BLM is ultimately responsible for preparing a plan consistent with its legal mandates that reflects its collective professional judgment, incorporating the best from competing viewpoints and ideas. The Approved Plan (Alternative D as modified in consideration of public and agency comments and internal review) provides a balance between those reasonable measures necessary to protect the existing resource values and the continued public need for use of the BLM public lands within the planning area.

The quickness with which resource objectives are met was a factor in comparing the alternatives, as was the flexibility the management options provided. Recommendations received from the Alaska Resource Advisory Council (BLM's official advisory council) also played a role as proposed management alternatives were considered. Approval of a plan that provides a balance to meet both resource concerns and social and economic concerns in the planning area was also a major factor. Alternative D was selected because it proposed management that will improve and sustain properly functioning resource conditions while considering needs and demands for existing or potential

resource commodities and values. In the end, resource use is managed by integrating ecological, economic, and social principles in a manner that safeguards the long term sustainability, diversity and productivity of the land.

A primary consideration throughout the planning process has been the management of State and Native-selected lands. These lands make up 75% of the lands that the Glennallen Field Office is currently tasked with managing. Every effort was made during the planning process to coordinate and consult with the State of Alaska and with Native and village corporations within the planning area. As a result, decisions made in the Approved Plan affecting selected lands represent an interim management strategy that is generally consistent with State or Native Corporation land use planning documents that cover the same area. In general, decisions for selected lands avoid a major commitment of resources and are custodial in nature. Designations such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern or Special Recreation Management Areas are not made on selected lands, but site-specific measures are identified through Required Operating Procedures or stipulations that would protect resource values on selected lands.

A. Specific Decisions and Management Considerations

The Approved Plan recommends the Secretary of the Interior authorize the modification of PLO 5150 (the pipeline/utility corridor) to allow for conveyance to the State of approximately 82,500 acres. The remaining portions of the existing pipeline/utility corridor will be retained in Federal ownership for multiple resource management purposes including maintaining administration of the lands as Federal public lands and emphasizing their use as a transportation/utility corridor, as Special Recreation Management Areas, as a forestry emphasis area (for the Tielke block), and as an area available for subsistence.

Within the implementation period of this RMP, the BLM is committed to future negotiations with the State of Alaska regarding the pipeline/utility corridor. We will consider and recommend further modification of PLO 5150 to allow for the conveyance of additional lands within the pipeline/utility corridor as long as we are able to adequately meet our other management responsibilities, including management of the pipeline/utility corridor and subsistence resources and activities. Any recommended modifications subsequent to those described in this ROD would be subject to public participation and review, but a plan amendment would not be necessary. The views of those who use or rely on the lands within the withdrawal would be sought through public meetings in affected communities or villages.

The Approved Plan lays the groundwork for more intensive management of Off-Highway Vehicles. Within the Delta and Gulkana Wild and Scenic river corridors and the Tangle Lakes Archeological District, specific trails are designated for OHV use. In other areas of BLM public lands (unencumbered), specific trails will

be designated through implementation-level planning. Objectives of trail designation are and will continue to be to halt the unmanaged proliferation of unmanaged trails; to continue to provide access to public lands and resources; to minimize resource impacts; to comply with law and regulation; to maintain a diversity of recreation experiences; and to maintain access to subsistence opportunities and prevent impacts to subsistence resources. On State-selected lands or dual-selected lands, the Approved Plan implements management direction that encourages OHV users to utilize existing trails. Use of OHVs off of existing trails must not create resource impacts. Education regarding an existing State statute that is consistent with this management direction will be emphasized. These management strategies reflect a balance within a wide range of public opinion.

The Approved Plan provides for non-motorized opportunities by designating a specific area in the Delta Range as non-motorized during the winter months. This area is mountainous and glaciated terrain that has been traditionally utilized for backcountry mountaineering and skiing. This proposal was initiated through the Alaska Alpine Club and was supported throughout the planning process by public comment. It was also supported by the Alaska Resource Advisory Council. Additionally, non-motorized opportunities are available through management to maintain approximately 60 percent of the area in a primitive recreation opportunity spectrum class.

The Approved Plan recommends the revocation of ANCSA d(1) withdrawals on approximately 80 percent of the lands currently managed by BLM. The revocation of these withdrawals would potentially open them for mineral leasing or mineral entry. However, this would only apply on lands retained by BLM, not on State or Native-selected lands. This decision would replace large-scale prohibitions on these activities with site-specific Required Operating Procedures or stipulations to minimize resource impacts. Withdrawals are recommended for retention where strong resource protection is needed, such as the Bering Glacier Research Natural Area.

Concerns about specific resource values are addressed throughout the Approved Plan, and eliminated the need to designate some areas as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern since the proposed management provides adequate protection. Approximately 827,000 acres of the Bering glacier is designated as a Research Natural Area, in order to protect the unique ecological communities, wetlands, and subsistence resources associated with the glacier.

The Approved Plan specifies conditions for permitted activities such as communication uses, leases, permits, fluid mineral leasing, and other commercial uses as appropriate at the land use plan level to resolve concerns regarding impacts of commercial uses. Impacts on uses as a result of protective management were disclosed in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, and considered in conjunction with impacts to resource values, with Alternative D providing the best

balance in allowing for uses to occur while providing for protection of resource values and public health and safety.

The Approved Plan recognizes the role of fire in maintaining a diversity of community types and in maintaining desired conditions for wildlife habitat. It identifies 1.5 million acres of moose winter range for application of prescribed fire or wildland fire in order to rejuvenate late-seral stands of black spruce and encourage sprouting and younger age classes of willows and other browse. Existing proper functioning condition of riparian areas and excellent fisheries habitat is maintained through protective Required Operating Procedures. In addition, the Gulkana River, a major spawning river for Copper River sockeye and king salmon, will continue to be protected through management under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Consistency of the Approved Plan with other local, State, Tribal and Federal plans and policies (which sometimes conflict amongst themselves) was also considered as a factor in alternative selection. The Approved Plan is consistent with plans and policies of the Department of Interior and Bureau of Land Management, other Federal agencies, state government, and local governments (where they exist) to the extent that the guidance and local plans are also consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of Federal law and regulation applicable to public lands.

VI. MITIGATION MEASURES

Measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm were built into the Approved Plan where practicable. Many of the standard management provisions will minimize impacts when applied to activities proposed in the planning area. Required Operating Procedures and oil and gas stipulations (Appendix A, Approved Plan) will be applied for all permitted uses including forest activities, placer mining, oil and gas development, and Special Recreation Permits. Additional measures to mitigate environmental impacts may also be developed during subsequent NEPA analysis at the activity level planning and project stages.

VII. PLAN MONITORING

Monitoring is the repeated measurement of activities and conditions over time. BLM planning regulations (43 CFR Part 1610.4-9) call for monitoring resource management plans on a continual basis and establishing intervals and standards based on the sensitivity of the resource to the decisions involved. CEQ regulations implementing NEPA state that agencies may provide for monitoring to assure that their decisions are carried out and should do so in important cases (40 CFR Part 1505.2(c)).

The BLM will monitor the Approved Plan to determine whether the objectives set forth in this document are being met and if applying the land use plan direction is effective. Monitoring for each program area is outlined in the *Management Decision* section of the Approved Plan. If monitoring shows land use plan actions or best management practices are not effective, the BLM may modify or adjust management without amending or revising the plan as long as assumptions and impacts disclosed in the analysis remain valid and broadscale goals and objectives are not changed. Where the BLM considers taking or approving actions which will alter or not conform to overall direction of the plan, the BLM will prepare a plan amendment or revision and environmental analysis of appropriate scope.

VIII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

One of the BLM's primary objectives during development of the East Alaska RMP was to understand the views of various publics by providing opportunities for meaningful participation in the resource management planning process. To do this, the BLM went beyond the standard public involvement process required during preparation of an RMP and EIS.

During the scoping phase, the BLM conducted two public meetings in each town or village in the Copper Basin. The first meeting was used to identify issues and concerns with BLM management, the second was to explain how these issues would be addressed within the plan or if they were within the scope of the planning effort. We also conducted public meetings during alternative formulation to give the public a chance to review and comment on specific sets of proposed management actions and to suggest alternatives. During alternative development, meetings with specific user groups or village councils were held, as requested, in order to discuss specific issues in depth and solicit comments. The BLM also used newsletters, media news releases, and website postings to offer up-to-date information to groups, individuals and agencies. In-depth information on these efforts is included in both the Draft East Alaska RMP/EIS and East Alaska Proposed RMP/Final EIS in Chapter 5, *Consultation and Coordination*.

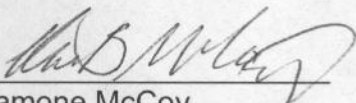
BLM will continue to actively seek the views of the public, using techniques such as news releases and mass mailings to ask for participation and inform the public of new and ongoing implementation planning, site-specific planning, and opportunities and timeframes for comment. Annual land use plan updates prepared to track and monitor progress of plan implementation will be made available to the public upon request. BLM will also continue to coordinate with the numerous state, Federal, tribal, and local agencies and officials interested and involved in the management of BLM lands in East Alaska.

IX. AVAILABILITY OF THE PLAN

Copies of the Record of Decision and the East Alaska Resource Management Plan are available by request from the following locations: BLM Glennallen Field Office, P.O. Box 147, Glennallen, Alaska 99588, (907) 822-3217, and on the Glennallen Field Office website at:
http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning/east_alaska.html

FIELD MANAGER RECOMMENDATION

Having considered a full range of reasonable alternatives, associated effects, and public input, I recommend adoption and implementation of the attached East Alaska Resource Management Plan.

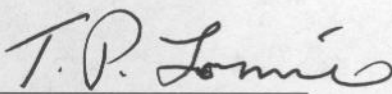


Ramone McCoy
Glennallen Field Manager

Sept 7, 2007
Date

APPROVAL

In consideration of the foregoing, I approve the East Alaska Resource Management Plan.



Thomas P. Lonnie
State Director

9-7-07
Date