

Bay Resource Management Plan

Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office

May 2008
Planning Bulletin Three

BLM



Dear Bay Plan Participant:

Thank you for your continued participation in the Bay plan. I realize the planning schedule may have occurred at undesirable times, yet many of you provided the BLM with valuable information through your written letters, oral comments at public meetings and hearings, and during government-to-government consultation meetings throughout the planning process.

The Bay Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) was released for public review on December 7, 2007. With the publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*, the 30-day protest period began December 14, 2007, and ended January 14, 2008.

During this period, the BLM received five protest letters cumulatively containing approximately 50 issues. Issue topics included revocation of ANCSA 17(d)(1) land withdrawals, Wild and Scenic River designation, analysis of subsistence impacts, effectiveness of Required Operating Procedures and Stipulations, and substantive comment determinations.

In addition to the protests, other participants in the Bay planning process expressed concerns about how the BLM determines whether comments are **substantive or non-substantive**. The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook and the BLM National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Handbook provide specific guidance for making this determination. You'll find detailed information about this topic in Appendix I of the Bay Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

An example of a substantive comment in the Bay planning process is information that helped the BLM confirm the location of nesting grounds for specific species of waterfowl, geese, and shore birds. Examples of non-substantive comments include statements that the Bristol Bay and Goodnews Bay regions should be preserved as "ecological treasures," resources should not be "locked up," or "I support Alternative C."

Some participants also had concerns about how we use information determined to be non-substantive. While non-substantive comments do not require a response in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, all comments are reviewed by the planning team and brought to the attention of the manager responsible for preparing the EIS.

I'm aware of the concerns expressed in your oral and written comments. These concerns have indeed influenced the way we developed the Bay plan and, in particular, the way we crafted the Required Operating Procedures and Stipulations that will guide future land use activities in the Bay planning area.

Over the next few months, the BLM will work toward completing the Bay planning process. First, we'll respond to issues received through protest letters. The BLM gives serious consideration to the issues raised in protest letters.

Coffee Creek and tundra ponds (tributary of the Kvichak River, in the Alagnak planning block)

--Continued on page 2



Anchorage Field Office



--Continued from page 1

We're working with our national program leads and solicitors to appropriately address these issues. The protest resolution process, though sometimes lengthy, serves to develop a land use plan that best satisfies public concerns and meets Bureau policy. We appreciate your patience as we complete this important step in the planning process.

Upon resolution of protest responses, we'll prepare the **Bay Record of Decision** and **Approved Resource Management Plan**. Modifications to the Approved RMP and clarifications identified from protest issues will be summarized in the Record of Decision. The anticipated release date of these documents is summer 2008. We'll publish a Notice in the *Federal Register* and send participants on the Bay mail list a post card with information about how to view the Record of Decision and the Approved RMP.

As we move toward implementing the Bay plan, the BLM is committed to maintaining the relationships fostered during the Bay planning process. You'll see me or my staff at various times in villages, at agency meetings, and in the field monitoring land use activities. We'll continue to look for ways to engage residents of the region and the public land user as we implement the decisions in the Bay plan.

Thank you for your continued interest and participation in the Bay planning process and your public lands.



Gary Reimer, Anchorage District Manager

You may access the Bay Proposed RMP/Final EIS at www.blm.gov/ak. For more information about the Bay plan, contact the BLM Anchorage Field Office at (800) 478-1263.

What are "substantive comments"?

Non-substantive and substantive comments are defined in the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook as follows:

- Non-substantive comments include "opinions, assertions, and unsubstantiated claims."
- Substantive comments "reveal new information, missing information, or flawed analysis that would substantially change conclusions" in the draft plan.

The BLM's NEPA Handbook further clarifies that comments which express "personal preferences or opinions" on the proposal do not require a response in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. While these comments may not affect the environmental analysis, all comments are considered by the planning team and may influence the agency's decision.

The Bay planning area included 3.6 million acres of BLM-administered public lands at the start of the planning process (December 2004). Due to land transfer, BLM lands totaled 1.9 million acres when the proposed RMP was released in December 2007.

BLM-managed lands in the Bay planning area should total approximately 1.5 million acres when the land transfer program is completed.



Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Elmore Road
Anchorage, AK 99507

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

FIRST CLASS
POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PERMIT NO. G-76