

Land Protection Plan

*Options for the protection
of fish and wildlife habitats*



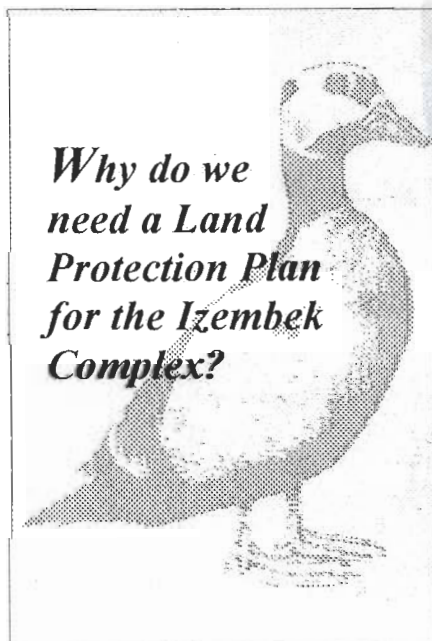
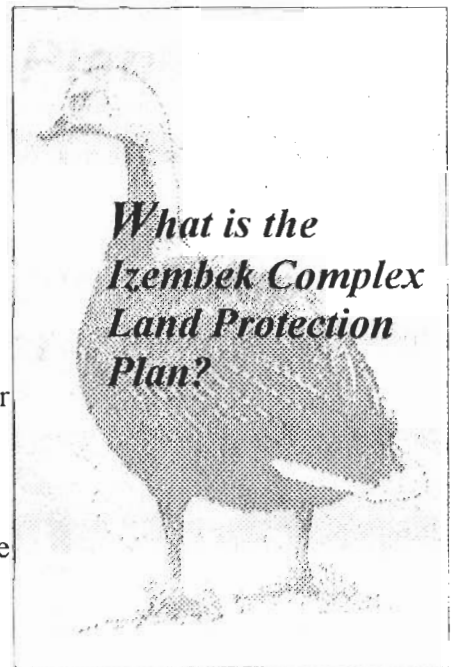
Izembek

National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Summary

The Izembek Land Protection Plan (LPP) identifies which privately-owned lands within the refuge boundaries contain valuable fish and wildlife habitat. These lands are ranked as high, medium or low priority (Figure 5, page 49) depending on their relative value to fish and wildlife.

In some cases, we may want to buy some of these lands, **but only from people who wish to sell**. Some landowners may be interested in preserving the natural state of their lands even though they are not interested in selling. The LPP identifies ways that we can work together with the landowner to help conserve wildlife habitats on these privately-owned lands. For instance we may buy a conservation easement, enter into a cooperative management agreement, or propose a land trade. In many cases, privately-owned fish and wildlife habitats may already be sufficiently protected and no additional action would be recommended by the Service.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's refuge system was created to maintain and restore fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing use and benefit of the public. The **Izembek Complex** contains important habitat for waterfowl, **salmon, brown bears** and many other species and was set **aside for the conservation** of these species and their habitats. We want to maintain these wildlife populations so that people can enjoy them now and in the future.

We are also concerned that habitats be conserved on privately-owned lands within the refuge boundary. The focus of this plan is on these private or State-owned lands within the refuge. The LPP sets priorities for land acquisition based on the resource value of these lands. However, the LPP does not obligate the Service or the landowner to implement any land protection measure. Rather, it is a management tool that guides refuge land protection activities and provides the framework for refuge and private landowner cooperation.

Land Protection Plan

for

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Complex Cold Bay, Alaska



U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 7
Anchorage, Alaska

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Introduction

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is responsible for managing the land, fish and wildlife of Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex). However, this task is complicated by the fact that the Service does not own or have management authority over all of the land within the Complex boundaries. The 2.9 million acre Complex includes Izembek Refuge, the Pavlof and North Creek Units of Alaska Peninsula Refuge, and Unimak Island of Alaska Maritime Refuge. Of the 2.5 million acres of surface lands, private landowners have title or claims to approximately 989,267 acres, or about 39% (Table 1).

Table 1. Land ownership (surface lands) on the Izembek Complex¹ as of November 1997.

Current Ownership	Acres¹
Federal ²	1,526,549
Native Corporation (conveyed)	374,586
Native Corporation (selected ³)	533,633
Native Allotments (conveyed/selected)	1,316
State of Alaska	79,316
Other patents ⁴	416
Total land acreage⁵ inside administrative boundary	2,515,816

¹Includes all lands managed as part of Izembek Refuge, including the Pavlof and North Creek Units of Alaska Peninsula Refuge and Unimak Island of Alaska Maritime Refuge. Acreage figures are approximate and subject to change. Land status acreage figures in Alaska will not be finalized until conflicting claims are adjudicated by the Bureau of Land Management and all inholdings are surveyed.

²Excludes Federal lands selected by Native Corporations.

³A total of 81,928 acres are selected by more than one Native Corporation.

⁴Other patents include ownership categories such as homesites, homesteads, trade and manufacturing sites, etc.

⁵There are an additional 366,363 acres of submerged lands within the refuge boundaries.

Refuge management is complicated when refuge lands are interspersed with private lands.

The Service protects wildlife on refuge lands but is also concerned that wildlife be conserved on non-Federal lands within refuge boundaries. Wildlife are not constrained by human-imposed boundaries, but are **dependent on the health and integrity** of the entire ecosystem. **Activities on private lands can affect** resources on adjacent refuge lands and complicate management. Therefore, we want, and need, to work with willing landowners to preserve the ecological integrity of the Izembek Complex and ease management difficulties.

We are particularly interested in working with owners of land having high fish and wildlife habitat values. In some cases, the landowner may approach the Service with an offer to sell all interests in the land (fee title). Funding for land acquisition is extremely limited, however, and Alaskan refuges face fierce competition from refuges nationwide for the funds available. Occasionally, non-profit organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy or The Conservation Fund, may provide the funding to buy ecologically significant land on behalf of the Service. However, in many cases our success depends less on purchasing valuable habitats than on forging partnerships with landowners. Through cooperative agreements or conservation easements, the land is managed to preserve the natural abundance and diversity of wildlife, yet the landowner retains title to the land.

The goal of the Izembek Land Protection Plan is to identify and conserve high quality habitat found on privately owned lands within the refuge boundary. The plan is intended to guide the refuge's land protection activities and provide a framework for refuge and private landowner cooperation. The objectives of this document are to answer the following questions:

Objectives of the Land Protection Plan

1. Where are the private lands within the Izembek Refuge Complex?
2. What resources are we trying to protect?
3. What methods do we have for resource protection?
4. How does the Service set priorities for resource protection and what are these priorities?
5. What land protection measures do we recommend?

6. How might our protection priorities affect landowners and others?

The Service desires to work together with landowners to ensure that the quality of the wildlife resources within Izembek Refuge Complex are protected. **However, any course of action requires mutual consent. The land protection plan does not obligate either the refuge or landowners to undertake any of the land protection measures identified.** The refuge must consider its management goals, priorities, and the availability of funds when approached with land protection proposals from private landowners.



John Sarvis

Hundreds of thousands of waterfowl stage on the Izembek Complex during spring and fall migrations.