

Land Protection Plan

*Options for the protection
of fish and wildlife habitats*



Yukon Flats
National Wildlife Refuge

Land Protection Plan

for

*Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge
Fairbanks, Alaska*



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

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Introduction

The Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge was established on December 2, 1980, with the passage of Public Law 96-487, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The Refuge encompasses approximately 11.2 million acres and surrounds a vast wetland basin known as the "Yukon Flats". The refuge provides one of the greatest waterfowl breeding areas in North America and is one of the most consistent waterfowl production areas on the continent.

The refuge is located in east central Alaska south of the Brooks Range and north of the White Mountains. The refuge extends about 220 miles east to west along the Arctic Circle and about 120 miles north to south. The refuge is bounded by the Dalton Highway and the Trans Alaska Pipeline to the west and extends to within 30 miles of the Canada border to the east. The predominant feature is the Yukon River and associated floodplain which occupies the majority of the refuge.

*The Yukon Flats
Refuge is a
productive
waterfowl breeding
area.*



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for managing the land and wildlife resources of the Yukon Flats Refuge to benefit people, now and in the future. The Service does not, however, own or have management authority over all of the land within the administrative boundary of the refuge. Private landowners have title or claims to approximately 2,712,846 acres or about 24 percent of these lands (Table 1).

Table 1. Land ownership on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge as of March 1997.

Current Ownership	Acres¹
Federal	8,456,795
Native Corporation (conveyed)	1,674,223
Native Corporation (selections)	820,146
Incorporated Native Village Lands	166,750
Native Allotments (conveyed/selected)	50,158
State of Alaska	2
Other patents ²	1,569
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Total acreage inside administrative boundary	11,169,643

¹Acreage 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. Overselections are included in these estimates since the Service has no means of deciding which are valid selections.

²Other patents include ownership categories such as homesteads and trade and manufacturing sites, etc.

Interspersed Federal and private landownership complicates refuge management.

The Service protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on refuge lands but is also concerned that important wildlife habitat be protected on non-Federal lands within refuge boundaries. Activities on private lands can affect resources on adjacent refuge lands. We would like to work with landowners to preserve the resource integrity of the Yukon Flats Refuge. We are particularly interested in working with owners of land with high fish and wildlife habitat values.

Generally, this can be done through agreements with the landowners to manage land in a manner consistent with the purposes of the refuge, or through acquisition. An acquisition can be a partial interest in the land, such as a conservation easement, or outright purchase of all interests in the land.

The goal of the Service in developing a land protection plan is to help protect and preserve the high quality wildlife habitat found on private lands within the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The plan is intended to guide the refuge's land protection activities and provide a framework for refuge and private landowner cooperation. The purpose of this document is to address the following objectives:

*Objectives of the
Land Protection
Plan.*

1. Identify the private lands in the Yukon Flats Refuge.
2. Identify fish and wildlife habitats that are of high value.
3. Identify the resource protection methods available to the Service.
4. Identify the Service's priorities for resource protection on the Yukon Flats Refuge.
5. Discuss the alternative means of land and resource protection.
6. Determine the impacts of implementing this plan on landowners and others.

The land protection plan does not obligate either the refuge or landowners to undertake any of the land protection measures identified. Any course of action requires mutual consent. The refuge must consider its management goals, priorities, and the availability of funds when approached with land protection proposals from private landowners.