

# Summary

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The Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Created by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980, this Refuge was set aside primarily to protect the wetlands and waterfowl of the Kanuti Basin. However, management of other migratory birds, caribou, moose and furbearers, fulfillment of international treaties, maintaining opportunities for subsistence use, and protecting water quantity and quality were also identified in the law as purposes of the Refuge.

Managing Refuge lands is our primary focus, but the Service is also concerned that where possible, important wildlife habitats be protected on privately owned lands within the Refuge Boundary. The Kanuti Land Protection Plan identifies the private lands within the Refuge, describes some of the key resource protection threats and concerns, and explains methods interested landowners can use to further protect wildlife resources on their lands.

The Land Protection Plan ranks private lands as high, medium or low priority for additional protection, based on their relative importance to key fish and wildlife species, and the potential for land use to damage important habitats and resources. Although this plan identifies areas we



*Kanuti Lake*

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consider important for additional protection, this plan does not require either the landowners or the Service to take any action. Instead, it serves as a guide to help landowners who may want to work with us to further protect resources on their lands.

There are a number of ways interested landowners can work with us to benefit wildlife species and habitats. We may be able to develop a cooperative management agreement, buy a conservation easement, or trade lands. In some cases, we may be willing to buy key lands from people who wish to sell. However, we work only with willing landowners. It is also important to understand that many private lands are already sufficiently protected and provide good quality habitats for wildlife. In these cases we would usually not recommend taking additional actions.

Service policy requires that a Land Protection Plan be prepared for each refuge. However, this plan does not obligate the Service or the landowner to act on any land protection recommendations. Instead, this plan serves as a management tool to guide land protection activities on the Refuge, and provide a framework for cooperation between private landowners and the Refuge staff.



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*Greater White-fronted Geese*

**Land Protection Plan  
for  
Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge  
Fairbanks, Alaska**



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

December, 2002

**If you have questions or comments about the Kanuti Land Protection Plan, please contact us at one of the following locations.**

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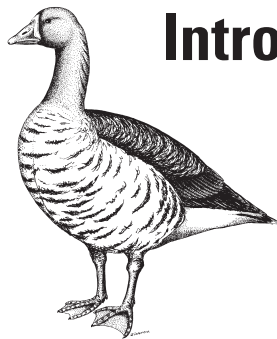
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## Introduction

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The Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge lies on the Arctic Circle, south of the Brooks Range, approximately 130 miles northwest of Fairbanks. The Refuge is not accessible by road, but the Dalton Highway and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline share a corridor a few miles to the east. Four communities lie just outside the Refuge boundary; Bettles and Evansville to the north, Allakaket and Alatna to the west.

Established in 1980 by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), the Kanuti Refuge was created primarily to protect the Kanuti Basin wetlands which support large waterfowl populations. Congress outlined four purposes for the Kanuti Refuge in §302(4)(B) (ANILCA):

*“(i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, white-fronted geese and other waterfowl and migratory birds, moose, caribou (including participation in coordinated ecological studies and management of the Western Arctic caribou herd), and furbearers;*

*(ii) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;*

*(iii) to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for continued subsistence uses for by local residents; and*

*(iv) to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge.”*

*Our mission is to conserve and manage the fish, wildlife, and plant resources of the Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge for the benefit of present and future generations.*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is charged with conserving and managing the fish, wildlife, and plant resources of the Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge for the benefit of present and future generations. This mission is complicated because we do not manage all of the land within the Refuge boundary. Of the 1.6 million acres within Kanuti Refuge, private landowners have title to or claim about 21% (343,649 acres) of these lands (Table 1).

Refuge lands are managed to conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats in their natural diversity. However, fish and wildlife range freely between the Refuge and adjacent private lands, relying on the health of the entire ecosystem. Management actions on Service lands can affect private landowners, but actions on private lands also affect our ability to conserve wildlife. We want and need to work with neighboring landowners to improve management of the Kanuti Refuge, and to preserve the ecological integrity of the Upper Koyukuk region. Our success depends on forging effective

*A Land Protection Plan provides guidance, helping us work with interested landowners, but it does not require the Service or other landowners to take any actions.*

partnerships with private landowners. We are particularly interested in working with people whose lands have high fish and wildlife habitat values.

This Land Protection Plan (LPP) is the only report that focuses on private lands within the boundary of the Kanuti Refuge. It identifies key wildlife resources on private lands, and provides an opportunity to communicate with private landowners about Refuge issues and ways we can work together to protect fish and wildlife resources.

The goal of the Kanuti LPP is to identify opportunities for interested landowners to help us conserve key fish and wildlife resources on private lands in the Upper Koyukuk region. It is also intended to guide land protection activities on the Refuge, providing a framework for cooperation between interested landowners and the Service. The objectives of this document are to:

1. Identify private lands within the Refuge.
2. Identify the key natural resources we need to protect, and show how they are affected by adjacent private lands.
3. Describe the various methods available for resource protection.
4. Describe how the Service sets priorities for natural resource protection.
5. Identify the resource protection priorities for Kanuti Refuge, and recommend protection measures.
6. Evaluate the effects these protection measures may have on landowners and other Refuge users.