

## **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge CCP and Wilderness Reviews for Alaska NWRs**

### **Questions and Answers**

#### **Q1: What is the purpose of a comprehensive conservation plan?**

A1: A comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) is the result of a mandatory planning process that guides stewardship of a national wildlife refuge. Development and revision of CCPs for national wildlife refuges in Alaska are governed by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act.

#### **Q2: Why is the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) revising the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's CCP?**

A2: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), an agency within the Department of Interior, has authority to administer national wildlife refuges. ANILCA directs the Secretary of the Interior to “prepare, and, from time to time, revise, a comprehensive conservation plan for each refuge.” Service policy states, “We will revise the CCP every 15 years thereafter or earlier . . .” The existing CCP for Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was signed on 12 September 1988.

#### **Q3: How long will the process take?**

A3: The process will take approximately two years. Preplanning was begun in the fall of 2009. The Service received public comments in Spring 2010, and is currently developing and analyzing a range of management alternatives. The release of the draft CCP/EIS will be in Spring 2011. Public involvement in any necessary revision of the draft will occur in summer 2011 and the final CCP will be released in Spring 2012. An EIS with Record of Decision is expected to be completed by April 30, 2012.

#### **Q4: Who is involved in development of the CCP?**

A4: The planning process began with public discussions about issues and future goals for stewardship of the Arctic Refuge in Spring 2010. The Service received comments from the public via email, the web, mail, and from meetings in Washington DC, Anchorage, Arctic Village, Fairbanks, Fort Yukon, Kaktovik, and Venetie. The comments are helping the Service identify issues and draft management alternatives for future stewardship of the refuge. The Service will release a draft CCP for public review and comment in Spring 2011. After an additional opportunity for public comment, the Service will issue a record of decision in April 2012. Additional information about the planning process for Arctic Refuge is posted at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>.

#### **Q5: How does the CCP affect the public?**

A5: The CCP will provide long-range guidance and management direction for the refuge for the next 15 years or until the CCP is revised. Legal mandates and Service policies require public

involvement in the planning process. In addition, public engagement will serve to improve the CCP and will lead to public ownership of its provisions.

**Q6: Will the CCP make any decision regarding oil development on the Arctic Refuge?**

A6: No. Only Congress has the authority to decide whether or not the refuge's coastal plain (the 1002 Area) should be made available for oil and gas development.

**Q7: Will the CCP change hunting and fishing or subsistence rules?**

A7: No. The CCP will not change harvest regulations. Regulations concerning sport harvest of fish and game are governed by the State of Alaska, and harvest of subsistence resources are governed by the Federal Subsistence Board.

**Q8: Can the Service designate wilderness areas through the CCP revision process?**

A8: No. Only Congress can designate wilderness. The Service may forward a wilderness recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior for consideration. If he chooses, the Secretary of the Interior may forward the recommendation to the President who may then transmit the proposal to Congress.

**Q9: What is the purpose of congressionally-designated wilderness?**

A9: The purposes of congressionally-designated wilderness are to: a) protect and preserve the wilderness character of areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System; and b) administer the System for the use and enjoyment of the American people in a way that will leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.

**Q10: What is the Service policy for conducting a wilderness review?**

A10: The national wilderness stewardship policy, completed in November 2008, mandates wilderness reviews for refuges outside of Alaska and makes such reviews optional for refuges within Alaska. Given this option, the Service has decided to conduct wilderness reviews of suitable areas within Alaska Refuges.

**Q11: If the Service recommends wilderness to the Secretary, how does it affect refuge management?**

A11: The Service manages recommended wilderness in a way that protects the wilderness character of the area. The legal requirements of the Wilderness Act do not apply until Congress makes a formal designation.

**Q12: Is a wild and scenic river review part of the CCP revision process?**

A12: Yes. The Service will inventory, study and possibly propose rivers eligible and/or suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Designation of a Wild and Scenic River requires an act of Congress.

**Q13: Are all areas of Arctic Refuge not currently designated as wilderness considered in the wilderness review?**

A13: Yes. The Refuge will conduct wilderness reviews for all three Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), which encompass all non-wilderness refuge lands. A review of any Wilderness Study Area can only result in a recommendation to designate or to not designate. Should there be a recommendation to designate, the area can only be designated wilderness through an act of Congress. Please see our press release for more information.

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Region, September 2010*