



Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Proposed Land Exchange

Environmental Impact Statement Newsletter

Issue No. 1 - Prescoping, February 2006

Introduction

In 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Doyon, Limited (Doyon), an Alaska Native Regional Corporation, agreed in principle to the terms of a proposed land exchange within the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The proposed exchange would give Doyon title to some Refuge lands with oil and gas potential. In exchange, the Service would receive an equal-value amount of quality fish and wildlife habitats owned by Doyon.

The Service is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address the potential environmental, cultural, and socio-economic impacts (both positive and negative) that could result from the proposed land exchange and other alternatives. The EIS process will help us decide whether or not to proceed with an exchange. As part of the process, the Service is inviting the public to provide input throughout preparation of the EIS. The initial opportunity for public input is during the scoping process, which will close on April 15, 2006. This newsletter is the first in a series of newsletters that will be issued periodically to keep the public informed about the EIS preparation and project development. This first issue offers information about the scoping process to encourage public participation and input. The Service looks forward to your involvement!

What is Being Proposed? The Agreement in Principle

The Agreement in Principle (Agreement) between Doyon and the Service would provide Doyon title to lands within the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge that may hold developable oil and gas resources. In exchange, the Service would receive lands characterized as quality habitat for fish and wildlife. Under the terms of the Agreement, the proposed exchange would proceed in two Phases. Key features of each Phase of the Agreement are listed below:

Phase 1:

- ◆ Doyon would receive 110,000 acres (surface and subsurface) that may have developable oil and gas resources (core lands).
- ◆ Doyon would receive 97,000 acres of subsurface oil and gas interests (halo lands) that surround the core lands. No surface occupancy for oil and gas development would be allowed.
- ◆ The Service would receive an equal-value amount of land (estimated at 150,000 acres) with quality fish and wildlife habitats.
- ◆ Doyon would reallocate their remaining ANCSA 12(b) selections or lands (56,517 acres) outside Refuge boundaries.
- ◆ Doyon would retain a subsistence easement on lands conveyed to the Service.
- ◆ The Service would receive segments of the Beaver Creek corridor and a 1-mile-wide public use easement to protect public access.
- ◆ Both parties would exchange additional lands to consolidate ownerships.

Phase 2:

If Doyon locates and produces oil and/or gas resources on the lands acquired in Phase 1, then:

- ◆ The Service would receive production payments generated from Doyon's oil and gas production. These funds could be used to buy additional land or to construct Refuge facilities.
- ◆ Doyon would sell more of its land holdings in the Refuge (up to 120,000 acres) to the Service. The Service would protect fish and wildlife habitats on these lands for present and future generations.
- ◆ Doyon would file an application either with the Bureau of Land Management or the Service for a right-of-way (ROW) to construct a pipeline to connect with the trans-Alaska pipeline. If a ROW were granted across Refuge land, Doyon would convey to the Service 640 acres of land for every linear mile of ROW crossing the Refuge.



Tips for Providing Effective Comments

Your participation is an important part of the decision-making process!

Information received from the public and agencies during the scoping period will help us define the scope of analysis in the EIS. Therefore, we are interested in your comments on the proposed Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange project. The following tips should help guide you to make effective comments that become part of the decision-making process.

- ◆ *Submit your comments on potential impacts and ideas on proposed project alternatives.*
- ◆ *Review project websites, listen to the radio, monitor local newspapers, attend public meetings, and become familiar with the proposed project development.*
- ◆ *Provide substantive and concise written or verbal comments.*
- ◆ *Learn about the NEPA process and when in the process agencies will receive comments.*
- ◆ *Keep your comments focused on the proposed project being analyzed.*
- ◆ *Know who the Federal agency decision-makers are.*
- ◆ *Submit your comments within the timeframes announced. This helps the agencies include all concerns in the NEPA documents.*
- ◆ *Make sure that you are on the EIS mailing list to receive notification of public meetings or project information, or both.*

What is Scoping?

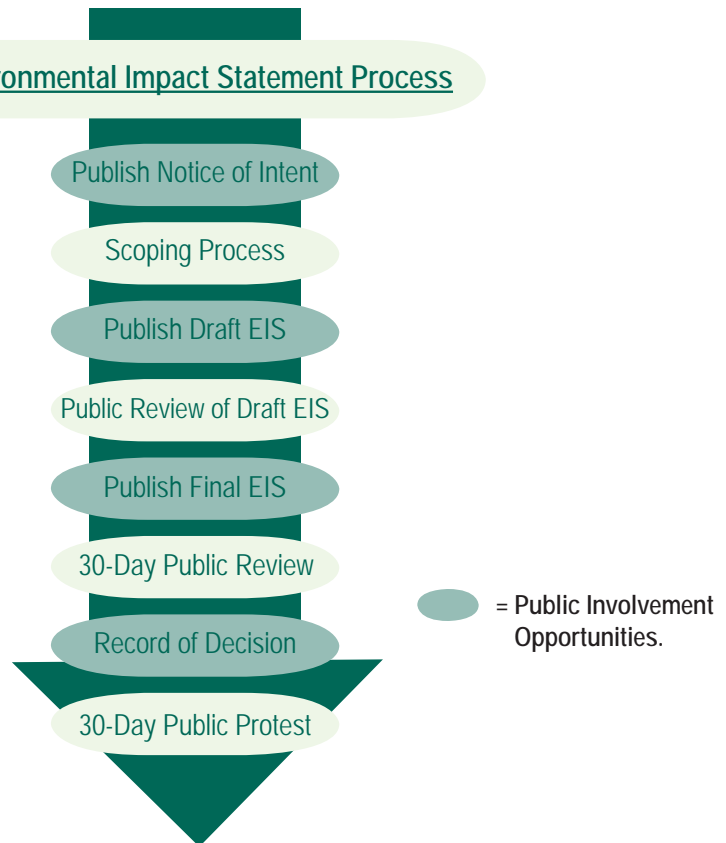
Once a Federal lead agency has decided to prepare an EIS and has published the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS, scoping begins. Scoping is the process of actively acquiring input from the public and other interested Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies. Information gained during scoping assists the lead agency in identifying potential environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures associated with development of the proposed project. The process provides a mechanism for “narrowing” the scope of issues so that the EIS can focus the analysis on areas of high interest and concern. Therefore, your participation in the scoping process is a vital component to preparing a sound National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document.

The scoping process provides the public and agencies opportunities for meaningful involvement in the decision-making process.

“Engaging citizens in policy making is a sound investment and a core element of good governance.”

Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development Caddy & Vergez

Environmental Impact Statement Process



Public Scoping Meetings

Scoping meetings will be held in all Yukon Flats villages, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. They will be informal “open house” meetings where individuals can stop by, pick up information, and talk to Service and Doyon representatives about issues they want to see addressed in the EIS.

Project Manager's Corner

I am pleased to introduce our first newsletter designed to inform you about the Yukon Flats Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange EIS being developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As the project progresses, future newsletters will focus on topics directly affecting the development of the EIS.

Public involvement is an important and integral part of the NEPA process. The public involvement process provides a means for identifying the concerns, needs and values of interested parties, and I hope that you will participate during the preparation of the EIS. I welcome your comments and suggestions. In the next newsletter we will update you on the EIS schedule, provide a summary of the scoping process, and continue to identify specific opportunities for your involvement.

Thank you for your interest in the Yukon Flats Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange EIS. Please let me know if you have any suggestions on how we can make this newsletter more useful to you. Comments may be mailed to me at the address below, given by telephone at 1-888-222-1802, or submitted electronically using the comment form on the project website at <http://yukonflatseis.ensr.com>.

Cordially,

Cyndie Wolfe
Project Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
MS-231
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
907-786-3463



ACRONYMS

ANCSA	<i>Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act</i>
EIS	<i>Environmental Impact Statement</i>
NEPA	<i>National Environmental Policy Act</i>
ROW	<i>Right-of-way</i>

We Want Your Input!

The Service values your input in the decision-making process. In the spirit of NEPA and public participation, the Service considered your comments during pre-scoping last spring and developed three draft alternative land exchange scenarios in addition to the proposed action described in the Agreement. One of the three alternative land exchange scenarios is the No Action Alternative. Your input on these draft alternatives will assist the Service in determining the final alternatives for analysis in the EIS. The draft land exchange alternatives are briefly described below.

- ◆ **Modified Land Exchange with Conservation Easements Alternative.** The land exchange would occur as described in the Agreement; however, Doyon would donate conservation easements that would preclude oil and gas development on the additional 120,000 acres of quality fish and wildlife habitat described in Phase 2 of the proposed land exchange. If Doyon were to produce oil and gas on the lands exchanged in Phase I of the Agreement, the Service would receive reduced production payments.
- ◆ **Modified Land Exchange Excluding White-Crazy Mountains Alternative.** The land exchange would occur as described in the Agreement; however, Doyon would receive title to about 84,000 acres instead of 110,000 acres, excluding lands previously recommended for Wilderness designation in the White-Crazy Mountains (approximately 26,270 acres that were included in the Agreement). Doyon would receive some subsurface oil and gas rights under the northern edge of the recommended Wilderness area, but no surface occupancy. The land consolidation exchange and 12(b) reallocation would be the same as described in the Agreement; however, Doyon would be committed to selling approximately 80,000 acres instead of 120,000 acres of additional lands to the Service.
- ◆ **No Action Alternative.** The Service would not enter into a land exchange with Doyon; however, Doyon could pursue oil and gas development on its current land holdings in the Refuge. The Service would be required to provide access across Refuge lands if warranted by oil/gas exploration and production.



Many Ways to Comment

If you have any issues, concerns, or questions that you would like addressed in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Land Exchange Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), you may complete the Written Comment Sheet (enclosed) and mail it to:

Cyndie Wolfe
Project Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
MS-231
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

You can also electronically submit comments on the EIS public website at <http://yukonflatseis.ensr.com> or call toll-free 1-888-222-1802 to leave a recorded comment. If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive a copy of the Draft EIS, please complete the contact information on the enclosed Written Comment Sheet.

We want your input!

Public Scoping Meetings

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold 11 public scoping meetings in all Yukon Flats villages, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. You are encouraged to attend and provide your comments on the proposed Yukon Flats Land Exchange project. Agency staff will be on hand to respond to your questions, and information about the proposed project will be available. These meetings will provide you the first of many opportunities to submit your comments about the proposed activity. Meetings are scheduled in your community on the following dates:

Birch Creek	February 23, 2006
Central	February 24, 2006
Circle	February 25, 2006
Venetie	March 2, 2006
Arctic Village	March 3, 2006
Chalkyitsik	March 22, 2006
Fort Yukon	March 23, 2006
Beaver	March 27, 2006
Stevens Village	March 28, 2006
Fairbanks	April 3, 2006
Anchorage	April 4, 2006

Specific locations will be advertised and posted in the community.



Cyndie Wolfe
Project Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
MS-231
Anchorage, Alaska 99503