

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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## THREE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR PROPOSED ALASKA REFUGES AND RIVER CORRIDORS

Draft environmental impact statements and supplements on proposals to establish two national wildlife refuges and to protect 11 river corridors in Alaska are now available for public review, Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus announced today.

The areas are the proposed Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge (3.5 million acres), the Iliamna National Resource Range (5.7 million acres), and the following rivers: Alagnak, Birch Creek, Delta, Fortymile, Gulkana, Kisaralik, Koyuk, Melozitna, Nuyakuk, Susitna, and Unalakleet. The refuges would be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, while the rivers would continue under the management of the Department's Bureau of Land Management.

The lands are among the remainder of those included in the 3-year emergency withdrawals of 110 million acres made by the Department in November 1978 under section 204(e) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Since that time, nearly 56 million acres have been given permanent protection as national monuments and another 40 million acres as national wildlife refuges and natural resource areas.

"My highest priority and sincere hope is that Congress will still pass an acceptable Alaska lands bill this session," Andrus said. "In the meantime, however, we must be prepared to protect these lands and their resources. Finalizing these environmental documents will complete the steps necessary for the Department to make final withdrawals under the alternatives available to the Executive Branch."

The three documents, prepared by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, analyze the significant environmental impacts of actions currently undergoing Congressional consideration, Executive Branch alternatives that approximate the legislative proposals for natural resource protection, and a no action alternative.

The draft EIS on the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge evaluates the preferred alternative of Congressional designation of the area as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Other alternatives include Congressional designation of all or portions of the area as wilderness; establishment by the Executive Branch of the area as a national wildlife refuge or national wildlife monument; increasing or decreasing the size of the proposal; and no action.

The draft supplement to the 1974 EIS on the Iliamna National Resource Range discusses Executive Branch alternatives of creating a national wildlife refuge or a national wildlife monument to protect and manage the fishery, watershed, and other natural values of the area. The no action alternative of the 1974 document, which analyzed legislative proposals, has been updated to reflect the Bureau of Land Management's current authorities and mandates under FLPMA.

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The draft environmental statement/supplement for the 11 Alaska river corridors considers the preferred alternative of Congressional designation of seven of the rivers as components of the National Wild and Scenic River System and authorization to study the remaining four rivers for potential inclusion in the system. Also considered are the alternatives of no action or a 20-year withdrawal under FLPMA. The FLPMA withdrawals would preclude appropriation under the public land laws, mining and mineral leasing laws, and selection by the State of Alaska under its Statehood Act.

Notice of the availability of the environmental documents appeared in the March 12, 1980, Federal Register. Copies of the documents are available for review in major libraries across the country and at the following locations:

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS): ANCSA Staff Office  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

All FWS Regional and Area Offices

Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS): Public Affairs Office  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

All HCRS Regional and Area Offices

Written comments on these statements and supplements will be accepted through May 5, 1980, and should be sent to the Alaska Area Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99507. During the comment period opportunity will be offered for resource experts of the State government of Alaska to provide data input into the final documents.

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