

Alaska Lands Update

Jeep Crossing Bridge in Izembek
NWR, 1961. Photo Credit—USF&WS

Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, Department of Natural Resources, State of Alaska
3700 Airport Way Fairbanks, AK 99709

Final EIS Released on Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Land Exchange/Road Corridor

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced in the Federal Register on Wednesday, February 6, 2013 the availability of a final environmental impact statement (EIS) for a proposed land exchange/road corridor on the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), Alaska. The alternatives in the EIS considered: Alternative 1 – the no action alternative, involving no land exchange, continue current modes of transportation, including air and marine. Alternative 2 - Land exchange and southern road alignment through Izembek Refuge and Wilderness; Alternative 3 - Land exchange and northern alignment through Izembek Refuge and Wilderness; Alternative 4 - Hovercraft operation 6 days per week from Northeast Hovercraft Terminal to Cross Wind Cove; and Alternative 5 - Lenard Harbor ferry with Cold Bay dock improvement.

The final EIS requires agencies to identify the agency's preferred alternative in a final EIS. The Service's preferred alternative is Alternative 1, the no action alternative. This alternative was so identified because it is believed to best meet refuge purposes and the Service mission. While the proposed land exchange would provide many more acres of land as part of the Refuge System; the habitat values of these lands do not compare with the habitat values of the areas within the proposed road corridors and do not compensate for the effects that locating a road within the Izembek Wilderness would have on wildlife, habitat, and wilderness values of the refuge. The identification of Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative in the EIS was made by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as lead agency and is not preferred by all the cooperators on the project. The Izembek Refuge and Alaska Peninsula Refuge

would receive over 55,000 acres offered by the State and King Cove Corporation in exchange for redesignating approximately 200 acres of Izembek Refuge Wilderness and transferring it to the State of Alaska for road construction. While the over 55,000 acres offered contain important wildlife habitat, they do not provide the wildlife diversity of the internationally recognized wetland habitat of the Izembek isthmus. Simply exchanging lands will not compensate for myriad ripple effects on habitat and wildlife due to uses on and beyond the road, nor would new lands provide habitat for all the same species.

The final EIS has been released for a 30-day public review period until March 8, 2013. We are not soliciting public comments at this time. After the public review period, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed, in which we disclose the Service's final decision and any conditions of approval.

Questions or requests for more information may be submitted by: *Email:* izembek_eis@fws.gov; include "Izembek National Wildlife Refuge final EIS" in the subject line of the message; by fax: Attn: Stephanie Brady, Project Team Leader, (907) 786-3965. *U.S. Mail:* Stephanie Brady, Project Team Leader, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Rd., MS-231, Anchorage, AK 99503. The final EIS and additional information can be found at the Izembek refuge web site: <http://izembek.fws.gov/eis.htm>.

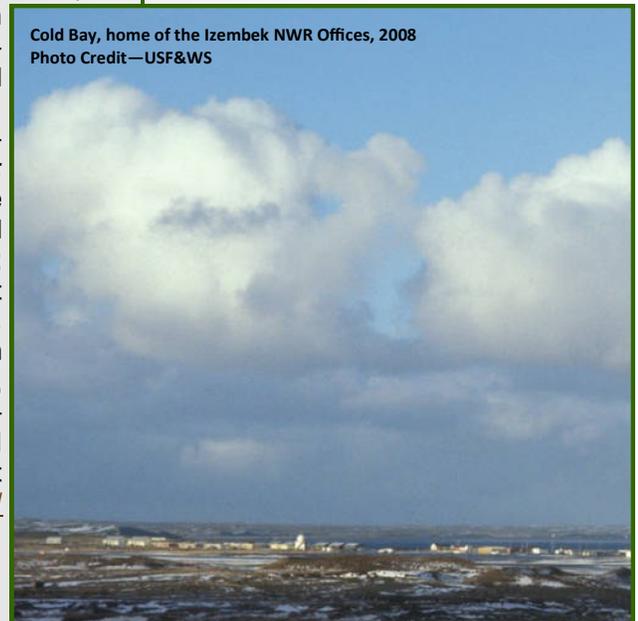
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Cold Bay, home of the Izembek NWR Offices, 2008
Photo Credit—USF&WS



Comment Deadline Reminders

- **Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Five-Year Review**
Public Comment period ends March 31, 2013. Public meeting schedule and project information at: <http://prdp2fs.ess.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5402695>;
- BLM Alaska **Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan** supplemental documents on hard rock mining were released on January 11, 2013. A 90-day public comment period for both the Draft RMP/EIS and the Supplement began on that date and will close on April 11, 2013. The project can be found at: <http://www.blm.gov/ak>;
- USF&W Service has extended the comment deadline for its Draft Technical Guidance for selecting **Surrogate Species** in their **Strategic Habitat Conservation** concept until March 29, 2013. The project website can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/landscape-conservation/draft-guidance.html>;
- **BLM Alaska Ring of Fire RMP and Haines Planning Area Amendment** March 14, 2013. The project website is http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning/ring_of_fire_plan/Haines_Block_Supp_EIS_Amend.html;
- The January 2013 **Schedule of Proposed Actions for the Tongass National Forest** is now available and can be found online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?111005>. If you have any questions, please contact Suzanne Webb, 907-228-6293 or suzannewebb@fs.fed.us;
- **Katmai National Preserve, Brooks River Visitor Access Final Environmental Impact Statement** has been released on Wednesday, February 6, 2013, the project website can be found at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BrooksVisitorAccess>;
- **Izembek Land Exchange/Road Final Environmental Impact Statement** is available for review at: <http://izembek.fws.gov/eis.htm>, public review of the document is open until March 8, 2013;

Documents expected out soon:

- The **Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan** for the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** is still pending Secretary approval. There is no projected release date at this time;

Final EIS for Brooks River Visitor Access for Katmai National Park and Preserve

On Wednesday, February 6, 2013, the National Park Service announces the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Brooks River Visitor Access, for Katmai National Park and Preserve, Alaska. The Plan/FEIS evaluated five alternatives, four action alternatives that include bridge and boardwalk systems to replace the existing Brooks River floating bridge and sites to relocate the existing Naknek Lake barge landing area at the mouth of the Brooks River, and a no-action alternative. If implemented this EIS would amend the access provisions of the 1996 Brooks River Area Final Development Concept Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. Alternative 4 (NPS Preferred Alternative): This alternative evaluates construction of a new wooden bridge and boardwalk system across the Brooks River. The bridge would be approximately 350 feet in length with a minimum distance of 24 feet between piles. The bridge and boardwalk system would have a total estimated length of 1,550 feet. A barge landing would be located on the shore of Naknek Lake about 2,000 feet south of the existing barge landing. A new access road, approximately 1,500 feet long and 14 feet wide, would intersect the Valley Road and extend to the new barge landing site on Naknek Lake. Alternative 4 is the environmentally preferred alternative.

The Plan/FEIS is available in electronic format online at the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) Web site <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BrooksVisitorAccess>. For Hard copies and compact discs of the Plan/FEIS or for more information contact: Brooke Merrell, National Park Service, 240 West 5th Avenue Anchorage, AK 99501. Telephone: 907-644-3397. Email: brooke_merrell@nps.gov.

Tongass National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan 5-Year Review Public Meeting Schedule

The Forest Service has announced their public meeting schedule on the 5-Year review of the 2008 Plan review go to the Forest Plan 5-year Review Project Website at: <http://prdp2fs.ess.usda.gov/detail/tongass/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5402695>. All meetings will include a brief review of the Forest Plan and provide time for questions and comments. Comments are being accepted through March 31, 2013. The preferred method to submit comments is online using the form at www.tnf-5yearreview.com.

Southeast Alaska Public Meeting Schedule

All Public Meetings will be from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Community	Date	Location
Wrangell	Thursday, Feb. 7	City Hall Assembly Chambers
Petersburg	Monday, Feb. 11	Petersburg Indian Association Conference Room
Sitka	Wednesday, Feb. 13	Harrigan Centennial Hall
Craig	Wednesday, Feb. 20	Craig Tribal Association Hall
Ketchikan	Thursday, Feb. 21	Ted Ferry Civic Center
Juneau	Thursday, Feb. 28	Juneau Arts and Culture Center