general management plan
land protection plan
wilderness suitability review

NOATAK

NATIONAL PRESERVE / ALASKA

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DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The Noatak National Preserve General Management Plan (GMP) is divided into five separate sections.

Chapter I — Introduction - Indicates why the GMP is being done, what the changes are in the text from the March 1985 Draft General Management Plan and in the December 1985 Revised Draft General Management Plan, what the management objectives are for the preserve, and what some of the planning issues and management concerns are for Noatak National Preserve.

Chapter II — The Region and Preserve - Describes the northwest region of Alaska in general and the Noatak National Preserve specifically.

Chapter III — General Management Plan - Describes the management strategies for natural and cultural resources, public uses, and preserve operations.

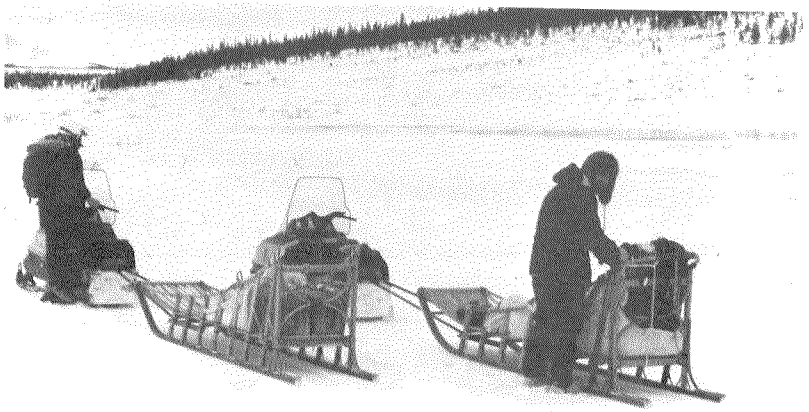
Chapter IV — Land Protection Plan - Proposes options and priorities for protection of federal lands within Noatak National Preserve from activities that might take place on private lands within or adjacent to the preserve and proposes two possible boundary changes.

Chapter V — Wilderness Suitability - Describes the existing wilderness management and analyzes suitability of nonwilderness federal land within the Noatak National Preserve for potential inclusion into the national wilderness preservation system.

Unnamed lake in the upper Noatak basin

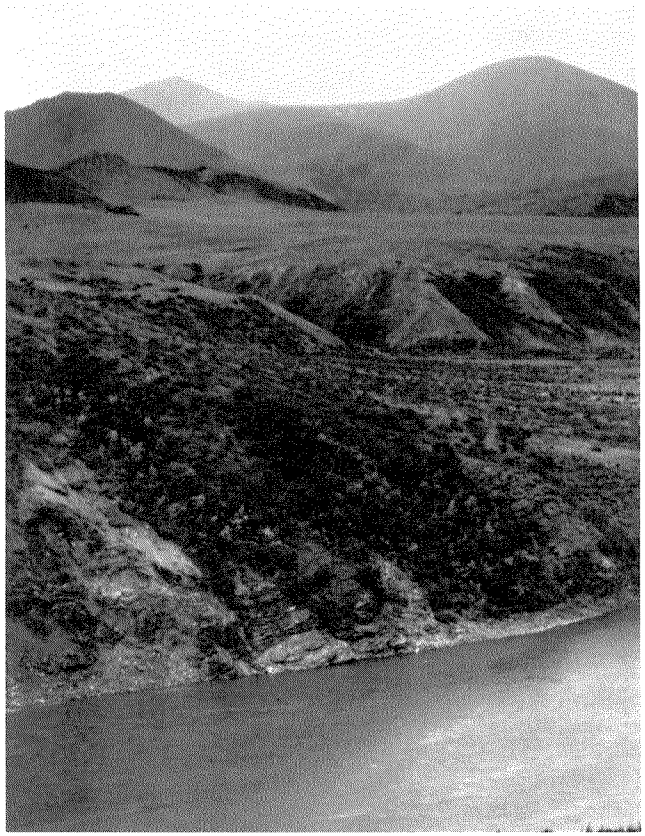
Eli River drainage

Noatak River near Makpik Creek



Upper Hugo Creek

Transportation to and within the Noatak National Preserve is by aircraft, boat, foot and snowmachine.



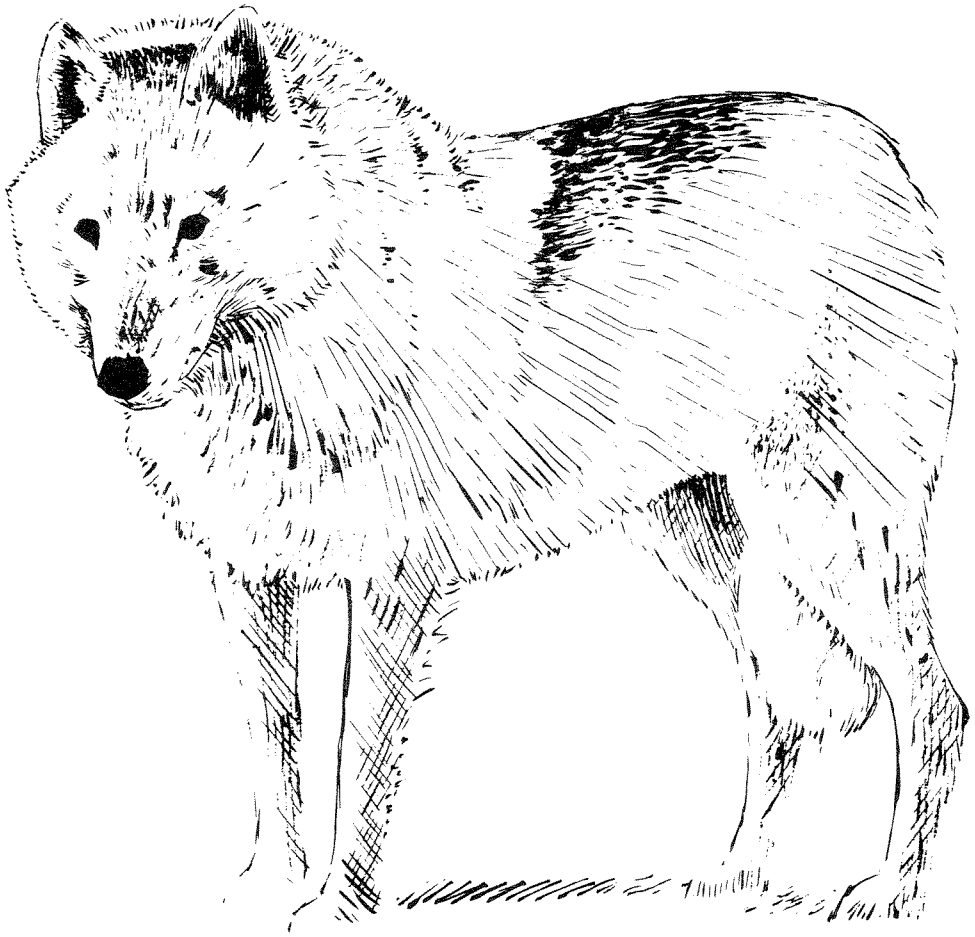
Noatak Canyon

Kugururok River and DeLong Mountains

Noatak River near Douglas Creek

Early summer wildflowers

INT RODUCTION



CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION - THIS SECTION EXPLAINS WHY THE GMP IS BEING DONE, WHAT THE CHANGES ARE IN THE TEXT FROM THE MARCH 1985 DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AND IN THE DECEMBER 1985 REVISED DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN, WHAT THE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES ARE FOR THE PRESERVE, AND WHAT SOME OF THE PLANNING ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS ARE FOR NOATAK NATIONAL PRESERVE.
Chapter II	The Region and Preserve - This section describes the northwest region of Alaska in general and the Noatak National Preserve specifically.
Chapter III	General Management Plan - The management strategies for natural and cultural resources, public uses, and preserve operations are set forth in this section.
Chapter IV	Land Protection Plan - This section proposes options and priorities for protecting federal lands within Noatak National Preserve from activities that might take place on private lands within or adjacent to the preserve, and proposes two possible boundary changes.
Chapter V	Wilderness Suitability Review - Describes the existing wilderness management and analyzes suitability or nonwilderness federal land within the Noatak National Preserve for potential inclusion into the national wilderness preservation system are described in this section.

INTRODUCTION

Noatak National Preserve lies in northwestern Alaska, in the Western Brooks Range, and encompasses over 250 miles of the Noatak River watershed. The preserve is north of the Arctic Circle and is approximately 350 miles northwest of Fairbanks and 16 miles northeast of Kotzebue at its closest point.

The Noatak is the largest mountain-ringed river basin in America that is still virtually unaffected by human activities. Its scientific importance for research as a base against which to detect future environmental changes has been internationally recognized by its designation as a biosphere reserve in the United Nations' Man and the Biosphere program.

The preserve is in a transition zone between the northern coniferous forests and the tundra biomes of North America and is almost completely enclosed by the Baird and DeLong mountains of the Brooks Range. The basin contains most types of arctic habitat as well as one of the finest arrays of flora and fauna anywhere in the Arctic. Archeological resources show human occupation in the Noatak valley over the past 10,000 years. Coupled with the Noatak River as an access corridor, the basin provides an outstanding resource for scientific research, environmental education, and subsistence and recreational opportunities. This nationally significant diversity of natural and cultural resources led to the establishment of Noatak National Preserve.

This general management plan presents the management direction for Noatak National Preserve over the next five to 10 years; it also contains the legal mandates for the preserve, a list of issues confronting the preserve, descriptions of the preserve and the region, and the minimum management actions necessary to maintain the environmental and cultural integrity of the preserve.

ESTABLISHMENT AND LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

Noatak National Monument was created by presidential proclamation in December 1978. On December 2, 1980, through the enactment of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA, Public Law 96-487) the monument became Noatak National Preserve. Section 201(8) of this act specifies that:

> The preserve shall be managed for the following purposes, among others: To maintain the environmental integrity of the Noatak River and adjacent uplands within the preserve in such a manner as to assure the continuation of geological and biological processes unimpaired by adverse human activity; to protect habitat for, and populations of, fish and wildlife, including but not limited to caribou, grizzly bears, Dall sheep, moose, wolves, and for waterfowl, raptors, and other species of birds; to protect archeological resources; and in a manner consistent with the foregoing, to provide opportunities for scientific research. The Secretary may establish a board consisting of scientists and other experts in the field of arctic research in order to assist him in the encouragement and administration of research efforts within the preserve.

Sections 101(a), (b), (c) and (d) of ANILCA state general purposes for all the conservation system units established by the act.

Section 203 of ANILCA directs that the Noatak National Preserve be administered as a new area of the national park system, pursuant to the provisions of the organic act of the National Park Service. Management and use of all units of the national park system are also directed by federal regulations (see appendix A), some of which are specific to national park system units in Alaska, and by National Park Service (NPS) management policies and guidelines.

Sections 601 and 605 of ANILCA designated the Noatak River from its source in Gates of the Arctic National Park to its confluence with the Kelly River in the Noatak National Preserve to be administered as a wild river in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and ANILCA.

Section 701(7) of ANILCA also designated over 5,800,000 acres (about 90 percent) of the preserve as wilderness to be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act and ANILCA.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC REVIEW

The National Park Service has an established procedure and sequence by which it is meeting Noatak's planning and management goals as mandated by ANILCA, the 1916 act that established the National Park Service, the 1964 Wilderness Act, the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and various other federal acts and regulations.

This procedure requires definition of the major issues and clarification of objectives for which Noatak was originally set aside, followed by public discussion of the issues and feasible management alternatives and the selection of one alternative as the general management plan. The plan specifies the basic strategies to reach management objectives for natural and cultural resource protection, public use, research, land protection, and facilities development.

For Noatak National Preserve issues and objectives were first outlined in the spring of 1984 during agency and public meetings in Kivalina, Noatak, Noorvik, Selawik, Kiana, Kotzebue, Ambler, Kobuk, Shungnak, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Buckland, and Deering. Over 200 people attended these meetings, which also involved identifying similar issues and concerns for preparation of general management plans for Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Kobuk Valley National Park. The meetings were followed by the release of the Draft Statement for Management (SFM) for public review in the fall of 1984, which further refined the planning issues and management concerns. The SFM, which presents objectives for the management of natural and cultural resources, preserve use and interpretation, visitor protection and safety, concessions, administration, and cooperative planning (see appendix B), was approved in January 1985. These objectives guide all subsequent planning and management.

A Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment for Noatak was released in March 1985. It presented two alternatives for management of Noatak and an analysis of the environmental consequences of implementing each alternative. The draft plan was available for over four months of public review and comment until the end of August 1985. Public meetings were held in the same villages and communities as before with over 360 people attending the second round of public meetings. Written comments were received from more than 200 people and organizations throughout Alaska and the rest of the United States. The plan was released again for additional public review as a revised draft from December 1985 to February 7, 1986. Over 60 additional written comments were received from the public during this period. There were no public meetings during this last public review period.

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY ON THE MARCH 1985 DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

This final plan benefited from the ideas, concerns, and preferences expressed in the meetings and from the written comments received on the draft plan. Comments received on the draft plan requested more definitive statements of policy and management intent. Although this was done in many instances, it is important to understand that more than one level (i.e., detail) of planning will be done (see page ii). More specific plans will be developed

to implement the general management plan. The following is a summary of the comments received on the Draft General Management Plan for Noatak National Preserve:

> The public review period for the draft plan should be extended; the plans should be easier to read; explain how the plans can be changed; can cabins be built on private land; explain how local people get National Park Service jobs; recreational group sizes should be limited; National Park Service should allow surficial geological studies; subsistence use has priority over other uses; public meetings should be held in the lower 48 states; National Park Service should not actively advertise or promote the preserve; there was objection to fee acquisition of the Native allotments; interpreters (who speak Inupiaq) should be present at village meetings; specific wilderness recommendations should be made in the GMP; aircraft should be kept higher above the ground and farther from the Noatak River area, especially during the fall caribou migration period; the preserve should be closed to recreational use of snowmachines; inholdings should be acquired; resources should be monitored; permits to remove live timber from the preserve should not be required; the National Park Service should work closely with Bureau of Land Management to identify land for land exchanges; environmental impact statements should be done for all land exchanges and Congress should review all such exchanges; the subsistence map is not accurate; there needs to be a clarification of NPS management intent for access and transportation, natural resources, water rights, navigability, and public use within the preserve; ORVs should be recognized as a traditional method of transportation; and the relationship between access methods and management, and the wilderness suitability criteria should be explained.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DECEMBER 1985 REVISED DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following is a summary of the written comments received during the public review of the Revised Draft General Management Plan for Noatak National Preserve:

General

There is support for the undeveloped character of the NPS units in Alaska; the National Park Service is using policies that are too restrictive: the Park Service is anti-people; there is support for a voluntary registration system; the public is not capable of developing data to respond to the plans; develop use limitations now; radio repeaters do not belong in parks; private land, subsistence, and mining are future cultural values; plans provide little improvement of recreational opportunites; did not discuss employment opportunities for local residents; there should be subsistence management plans for each NPS unit; there should not be management cabins for the preserve; include definitions of traditional, temporary use, and public safety; implementation of the plans is too expensive; requests for temporary facilities should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, not blanket

REGION

Noatak National Preserve

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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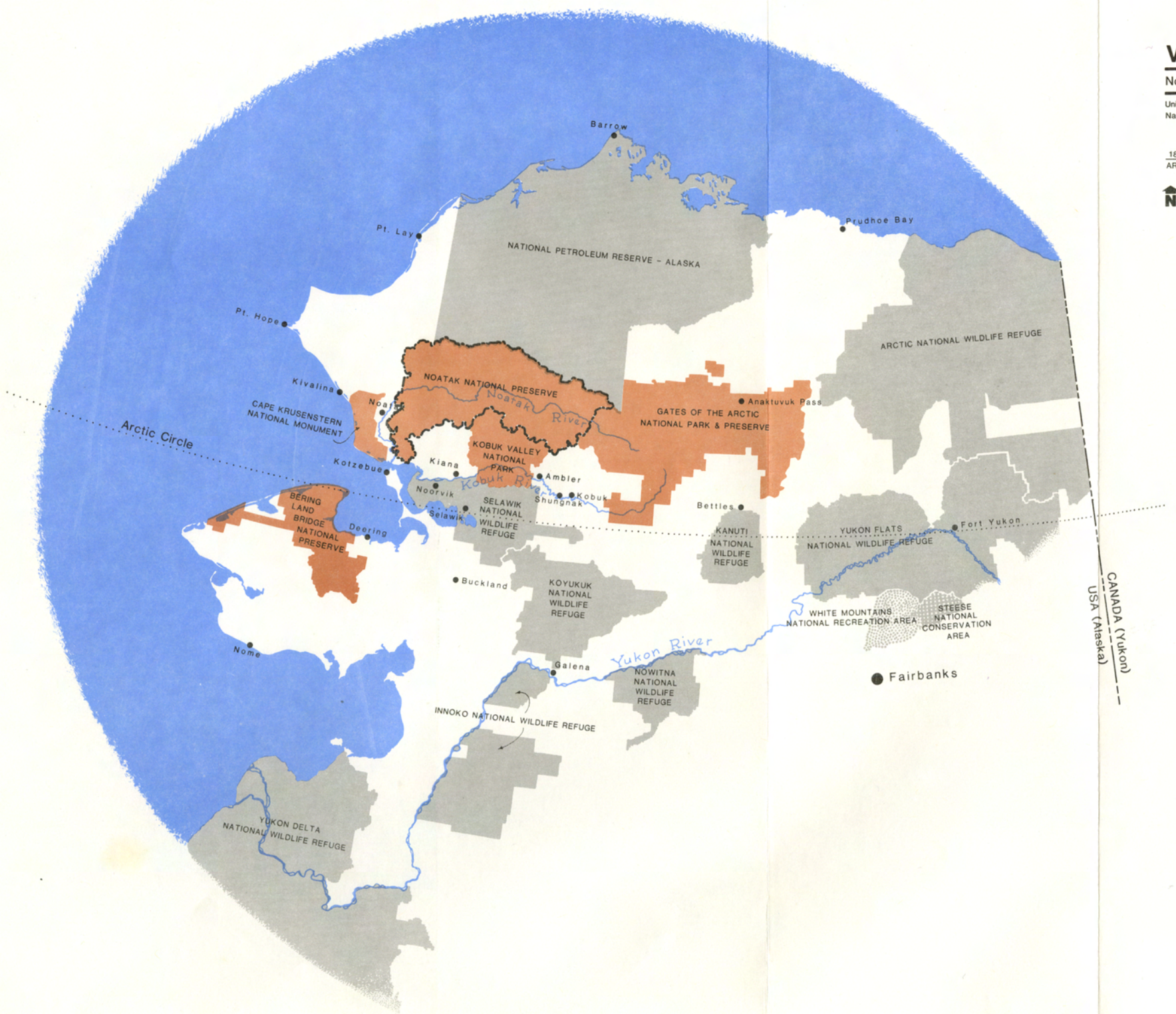

VICINITY

Noatak National Preserve

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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prohibition; accurate data should be collected for all human uses ocurring in the preserve; need to determine what would constitute a "significant expansion" of temporary facilities; and there should be no aircraft use for subsistence.

Natural Resources

Clarify management intent for fish and wildlife between the National Park Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G); all NPS units should have Class I air quality; have no pack animals except dogs; Park Service should make greater effort to identify all resources, including minerals; define "healthy" wildlife populations and identify management implications; consider following FWS policy on regulation of navigable rivers; prohibit aerial trapping and hunting; need to state that Park Service has ulitmate authority in managing fish and wildlife; need to describe process to involve fish and game advisory councils and committees; and do not include mineralized areas in the preserve.

Land Protection Plan

Complete federal ownership is needed for management; acquire all private lands; adjust boundary to eliminate private lands; inholders are threatened by unnecessary regulations; oppose high priority on acquisition of nonfederal lands; should consider exchanges within NPS units to minimize effects on native allottees; allotments should not be acquired; work with inholders to provide commercial services; need to prepare NEPA and 810 documents on land protection plans; private land should be used as developed areas; private land should remain private; additions to NPS units should not simply receive designation of adjacent units; plans violate ANILCA provisions for access to inholdings (in land protection plans); and use boundary adjustments to exclude private land from the preserve.

Access

Support limits on off-road vehicles; delete RS 2477 maps from the plans; restrict helicopters to administrative use only; the impact from using helicopters for research can be minimized; the Park Service does not have adjudicative or management authority for RS 2477s; further restrict snowmachines and motorboats; ORV determinations regarding subsistence use lack substantiation; RS 2477s should be settled prior to wilderness considerations; permits for ATVs should be easily attainable, if necessary; ORVs have been used as traditional transportation; and should not extrapolate findings of Wrangell's ORV study to other NPS units.

Public Involvement

Local participation should be institutionalized, the system for getting rural input was inadequate in preparing the plans, and Park Service needs to provide mechanisms for public review of resource management plans.

Wilderness

Potential transportation corridors should not be recommended for wilderness; Congress should review all changes in wilderness boundaries; need to manage wilderness more liberally to be consistent with ANILCA; and no boundary changes or land exchanges until the wilderness recommendation process is completed.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES MADE IN THE MARCH 1985 DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

As a result of the public review comments on the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment for Noatak; the following changes have been made in the revised document:

Deletions

1. Subsistence Use map because it did not show all areas used for subsistence.

2. Second alternative, because the plan was revised after public and management review.

3. "Environmental Consequences" chapter.

4. "Consultation and Coordination" chapter, with a summary of it placed in the new heading "Plan Development and Public Review" in chapter I.

5. Appendix entitled "Summary of ANILCA Provisions" because it became a copy of ANILCA.

Revisions/Reorganizations

1. In the "Land Protection Plan" the land status was updated and the minimum interest needed changed from fee simple to conservation easement for native allotments.

2. The river management plan was incorporated into the general management plan because management of the Noatak National Preserve more than adequately meets and is compatible with the management standards for wild rivers.

Clarifications/Additions

1. Added a new "Plan Development and Public Review" section in chapter I, including a summary of the deleted "Consultation and Coordination" chapter.

2. When and how the "General Management Plan" and "Land Protection Plan" may be amended or changed, including public review, is explained.

3. Subsistence use having priority over other consumptive uses of fish and wildlife is explained.

4. It was clarified that using aircraft for subsistence use in the preserve is permitted.

5. A new "Management Concept" section was added; other wording in the general management plan was also added to clarify that management will stress the continuation of natural processes and that any natural resource management will be primarily done by managing human actions that affect resources.

6. National Park Service intent to obtain water rights and work cooperatively with the state to close any future shorelands (beds of navigable waters) within the preserve to any form of appropriation under state land laws is clarified.

7. Information that human use studies have started with the establishment of permanent transects at several representative sites has been added.

8. It was clarified that interpretation and information will be carefully prepared to be sure visitation is not directed to any particular site or feature in the preserve.

9. Several research projects were added under the "Public Uses" section.

10. It was clarified that condemnation would only be used as a last resort after other means of resolution have been exhausted.

11. It was added that management of 17(b) easements, when acquired, will be in accord with the specific terms of each easement and applicable park unit regulations.

12. It was added that the proposed western boundary change would <u>only</u> take place <u>if</u> the state and native land selections are relinquished and <u>if</u> the mineral claims are abandoned in the area within the preserve.

13. Along the Noatak River a ranger station (two cabins) will be built on removeable pads near the Kelly River and a summer seasonal station (two tent frames) will be built near Makpik Creek.

14. Local hire program goals were clarified.

15. Additional subsistence information was referenced.

16. Added more information concerning existing types and locations of access including management intent.

17. Clarified the NPS management intent for fish and wildlife, public use, water rights, navigability, rights-of-ways, and easements.

18. Clarified that the visitor facility in Kotzebue will be a visitor contact station and not a visitor center.

19. It was noted that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has a trust responsibility (role) with native allotments.

20. Clarified the relationship between rights-of-ways and easement management and potential use by ORVs.

21. Clarified how lands added to the preserve (through exchange, boundary adjustments, etc.) would be managed.

SUMMARY OF REQUESTED CHANGES NOT MADE IN THE REVISED DRAFT

The following comments were raised during the review of the draft plan but were not changed in the revised draft plan because of existing laws and regulations, NPS policies, and existing and future planning efforts:

> Objection to subsistence and sport hunting in the preserve; recreational snowmachine uses should be prohibited; that areas recommended for wilderness designation be included in the GMPs; public meetings should be held in the lower 48; there should be a reduction in NPS presence and no administrative cabins; carrying capacities and recreational use limits should be established; recommendation that air quality standards be changed to class I; ORVs should be recognized as a traditional and customary method of transportation; cost estimates should be provided for the land protection plan; and removing live timber (larger than 3 inches in diameter) should not require a permit.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES MADE IN THE DECEMBER 1985 REVISED DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following changes were made to the December 1985 Revised Draft General Management Plan for Noatak National Preserve.

General

Added definition of "traditional"; provided clarification on temporary facilities and added justification for determination; provided clarification on management of unclaimed cabins on federal land; and added summary of comments received on and changes made in the Revised Draft General Management Plan.

Natural Resources

Provided clarification on management of fish and wildlife.

Access

Revised process to determine whether ATVs are traditional for subsistence by allowing for opportunities to review additional data; provided clarification on maintenance of aircraft landing strips; and added commitment to inventory access routes and uses, and involve the public in future actions regarding access.

Public Involvement

Included a new section on public involvement in plan implementation.

Land Protection Plan

Provided clarification on the designation (park, preserve, monument, wilderness) of potential additions to NPS units; provided clarification on NEPA and section 810 compliance requirements for the land protection plan; and provided clarification why cost estimates are not included in the plan.

Wilderness

Provided clarification on the suitability of potential RS 2477 rights-of-way for wilderness designation.

PLANNING ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

The involvement of the public, interested groups, and government agencies in the identification of issues and special concerns related to Noatak National Preserve has been an ongoing activity. From these contacts the issues and concerns described below were identified and the strategies of the general management plan were developed.

Table 4 at the end of chapter III summarizes how the plan will address the concerns and issues raised during the study process.

PRIVATE LAND AND VISITOR USES

For the past five summer seasons increasing numbers of visitors from outside the region have been using the Noatak River corridor. They stop and generally camp on sandbars and gravel beaches, which are often at the mouths of tributary streams and sometimes front private land. Some landowners are disturbed by visitors, particularly if they disrupt subsistence activities, compete for harvestable resources, or trespass on private land.

The issues are the means to inform visitors about the locations of private land and the procedures to reduce the potential for trespass and annoyance.

See "Information and Interpretation" section in chapter III for management proposals to minimize or avoid trespass.

COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN SUBSISTENCE AND RECREATIONAL USES

Closely related to the issues above is the issue of increasing recreational and subsistence uses. Population increases in the villages, larger river boats and motors, snowmachines, and technologically advanced hunting and fishing equipment could contribute to increased subsistence harvests. From a recreational point of view more people are traveling farther from home to avoid crowded conditions. Sport hunting and fishing parties from Fairbanks, Anchorage, and other communities and other states and countries are visiting the preserve, sometimes competing for subsistence resources .

The issue then is of devising a suitable means, in cooperation with the ADF&G, to maintain the viability of subsistence resources within the preserve with the increasing subsistence and recreational uses. Subsistence activities are of socioeconomic and biological value. They represent the perpetuation of the heritage of local, rural residents. The law establishing Noatak National Preserve assures that within the preserve, opportunities for subsistence activities will continue.

See "Recreational Uses," "Information and Interpretation," and "Subsistence" headings in chapter III for management proposals to minimize conflict between subsistence and recreational uses.

ACCESS

ANILCA provides access for traditional activities and for travel to and from villages and homesites by nonmotorized methods as well as by snowmachines, motorboats, and aircraft. These methods, however, are subject to reasonable regulations by the National Park Service to protect the natural and other values of conservation system units (ANILCA section 1110). They will not be prohibited unless, after public notice, the National Park Service finds such use would be detrimental to the resource values of the area.

The National Park Service, therefore, has discretionary authority to restrict means of access under certain conditions. Because of this authority and the enabling legislation requiring management to "assure the continuation of geological and biological processes unimpaired by adverse human activity; . . . [and] to protect archeological resources" (ANILCA section 201(8)(a)), some groups are advocating that management restrict aircraft access and powerboat use in the upper Noatak region so as to maintain the environment in accordance with ANILCA.

The issue concerns the continuing use of motorized craft to gain access and how much can be tolerated before adversely impacting preserve resources and diminishing the quality of wilderness experiences.

See "Access and Circulation" heading in chapter III for management proposals to manage access.

MANAGEMENT FACILITIES WITHIN PRESERVE

Currently there are two seasonal ranger stations on the banks of the Noatak River--one near the Kelly River confluence and the other near Makpik Creek. During the summer season the sites consist of two tent frame facilities at the Kelly River site and two tent frames at Makpik Creek. At the end of summer the tents are removed, some items are stored in a cache at each station, and the remaining gear is returned to Kotzebue. Questions have been raised about whether these temporary seasonal facilities are adequate or whether more permanent, cabin-type facilities should be constructed to afford managerial use throughout the year. With the present seasonal ranger stations it is difficult even for a few months of the year to effectively respond to emergencies, illegal activities, fires, and the needs of some visitors.

Some people feel that these temporary facilities are small prices to pay for maintaining the wilderness character of the region. They desire no permanent structures. They argue that initially small and unobtrusive permanent structures have ways of growing into large complexes with various amenities that deprive visitors of quality wilderness experiences.

The issue, then, is providing adequate facilities within the preserve for managing resources and providing visitor services without adversely impacting the natural landscape or diminishing quality wilderness experiences.

See "Administrative and Maintenance Facilities" heading in chapter III for management proposals for management structures in the preserve.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Questions arise about the responsibility of the National Park Service to inform the public. How much of the responsibility should be borne by individuals to inform themselves? For commercial operators to inform clients? For native corporations to inform their stockholders? For state and federal agencies (including the Park Service) to increase efforts to inform all interested parties? Some people feel strongly that recreational information should be kept at a minimum and supplied only when specifically requested. They believe quality wilderness experiences are those that people discover on their own, not those highlighted in brochures or through other information/interpretation media.

Issues are evolving from these questions. The most pressing current issues are how to attain equitable cooperation among a variety of area resource managers to keep the public informed about the preserve and adjacent areas and what information, if any, should be provided or be available to all visitors and what should be left for visitors to discover and experience on their own.

See "Information and Interpretation" heading in chapter III for management proposals to inform preserve visitors.

LIMITING USES

The legislation establishing the preserve directs management to "assure the continuation of the geological and biological processes unimpaired by adverse human activity; . . . to protect archeological resources; and . . . provide opportunities for scientific research" (ANILCA section 201(8)(a). Legislative intent--recorded in committee hearings on the preserve--also recognized the importance of the preserve as a natural laboratory. Management's chief responsibility in the preserve is to maintain the natural environment.

Central to the environment are the corridors of the Noatak River and its numerous tributary streams. These corridors attract most visitor uses. The entire preserve constitutes a fragile, arctic environment. Concentrated human use can easily damage resources and recovery can be extremely slow.

Questions are arising about limiting visitor uses in some areas. Although at present these areas can hardly be considered congested, visitor uses over the entire summer season are more than intermittent. With an increasing state population, an expanding Alaskan tourism industry, and widespread interest in Alaska park units, the potential exists for overuse of some areas in the preserve.

Some persons and groups believe the National Park Service should immediately consider limiting uses in some areas of the preserve. They see merit in having a permit system prepared and quickly operational should the need arise to protect declining resources. Other people prefer that the National Park

Service maintain a low profile, not attempt to regulate the flow and dispersal of visitors, and continue to allow visitors to plan and explore on their own. At issue then, considering these contrary viewpoints, is what the National Park Service should be doing in Noatak National Preserve to protect resources while accommodating a variety of visitor uses.

See "Recreational Uses" and "Commercial Services" headings in chapter III for proposals to manage public use.

ASSESSMENTS OF MINERAL RESOURCES

Section 1010(a) of ANILCA instructs the secretary to "assess the oil, gas, and other mineral potential on all public lands in the State of Alaska in order to expand the data base with respect to the mineral potential of such lands." In assessments on lands within the national park system, core and test drilling for geologic information are prohibited. The secretary is also instructed to allow access by air for assessments and is "authorized to enter into contracts with public or private entities to carry out all or any portion of the mineral assessment program." Large mineral deposits have been discovered just outside the preserve, and the mineral industry believes there is potential for additional deposits to be discovered in the preserve.

Questions have been raised regarding which public or private entities are the most capable, efficient, and legally entitled to carry out mineral assessments in park units. Additional questions have been raised about whether the superintendent of a park unit has the authority to issue permits for assessments, whether the information from these assessments is reported accurately and systematically, whether the assessments are integral, progressive parts of the mineral assessment programs for public lands in Alaska, and whether the assessments are in accord with ANILCA.

See "Minerals Management" heading in chapter III for management proposals to carry out the section 1010 mandate.

NAVIGABLE WATERS AND AFFECTED LAND

The Alaska Statehood Act of 1958 conveyed ownership of riverbeds to the ordinary high water marks of navigable waters to the state. As a result, the state of Alaska in the future may own land and water resources crucial to the ecosystem of the Noatak National Preserve. The issue is to know how to prevent or mitigate potential adverse impacts on preserve resources and visitor experiences should the state allow mining and other resource extraction.

See "Shorelands, Tidelands, and Submerged Lands," "Management of Watercolumns," and "Water Rights" headings in chapter III for management proposals to protect preserve resources.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN PLAN PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION

The planning for and management of the units of the national park system in Alaska is an evolving and dynamic process. The general management plan provides overall guidance and direction for the management of the preserve and announces the intent of the National Park Service to undertake a variety of actions pursuant to established law, regulation, and policy. Actions proposed in this plan, such as closures and boundary adjustments, do not become effective upon approval of this general management plan. Further information collection and analysis and public involvement, where appropriate, are needed before these actions become final.

It is recognized that involving the public in the development of significant policies and management practices and in further planning for the preserve can result in more comprehensive and better proposals and actions by the National Park Service, as well as better public understanding of them.

This section outlines the means by which the National Park Service will ensure continued public involvement in the ongoing planning for and management of Noatak National Preserve. Described here are the procedures the National Park Service will use for public involvement in the areas of policy development, action plans, closures, restrictions or openings, new or revised regulations, and amendments to this general management plan. The superintendent is expected to consult with all affected and interested parties as an integral part of the management of the area.

It is the policy of the Department of the Interior to offer the public meaningful opportunities for participation in decision-making processes leading to actions and policies that may significantly affect or interest them (301 DM 2.1). Accordingly, the National Park Service will integrate public participation and the decision-making process. Public participation activities will be scheduled with other elements of the decision-making process to ensure that the timing of information both to and from the public results in the expression of public comment at points in the decision-making process where it can make the greatest contribution. The overall public participation process, closely tied to the decision-making process, will be flexible enough that methods may be added or deleted as public input shows a new level of need or interest.

All public review documents will be submitted to the state of Alaska for coordinated state review. The National Park Service will mantain an active mailing list of groups, agencies, and individuals who have expressed interest in reviewing the documents. These groups, agencies, and individuals will be notified of the availability of public review documents, and upon request copies of such documents will be made available to them.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The National Park Service manages the parks, monuments, and preserves in Alaska for the national interest and recognizes that the policies and management practices implemented by the National Park Service can be of great interest to the people of Alaska and the nation. These policies and practices can also affect the lives of individuals living in or near the areas and the public using the areas.

To the extent practicable, when a new policy or management practice that affects the public is to be developed or an existing policy or practice is to be revised, there will be thorough consideration of comments received. If significant changes are made to the proposed policy or managment practice as a result of public comment, there will be additional review prior to the policy or practice being adopted.

ACTION PLANS

Several specific action plans are indentified in this general management plan. Future plans include a resource management plan, wilderness recommendations, revisions to the land protection plan, a subsistence management plan, and boundary adjustment recommendations. These plans and the required public involvement are described in the appropriate management sections of this plan, and the major ones are summarized on page ii. These more detailed plans will be initiated by the superintendent over the life of this general management plan. Although it is the intention of the National Park Service to initiate all of the implementing plans identified in the general managment plan in a timely manner, the undertaking of these plans will depend on funding and other considerations that cannot be accurately forecast at this time.

As part of the ongoing planning and management for the area, internal planning documents will be prepared. These include an interpretive plan (prospectus), a scope of collections statement, a visitor services study, and others. Formal public review of these types of plans and studies is not anticipated; however, parties expressing an interest in these plans will be involved as appropriate in their preparation and invited to comment on them before they are finalized. Copies will be available from the superintendent upon request.

CLOSURES, RESTRICTIONS, AND OPENINGS

In cases where the closure of areas within the unit or restrictions on activities are proposed in the general management plan, the procedures of 36 CFR 1.5, 13.30 (13.46, 13.49 and 13.50 in the case of subsistence), and 43 CFR 36.11(h) must be followed before any proposed closures or restrictions take effect. These procedures also apply to any future proposals to open an area to public use or activity that is otherwise prohibited. The procedures of 36 CFR 1.5, 13.30, 13.46, 13.49, 13.50 and 43 CFR 36.11(h) are contained in appendix A. A specific proposal contained in this plan to close an area or restrict an activity is the proposal to restrict pack stock to dogs (see "Public Uses" section in chapter III).

REGULATIONS

New regulations and revisions to existing regulations will be proposed in accordance with the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act (5 USC 553). The National Park Service will provide a minimum 60-day comment period.

AMENDMENT OF THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Specific parts of the general management plan may be amended to allow for changing conditions or needs, or when a significant new issue arises that requires consideration. Amendments of this general management plan will include public involvement and compliance with all laws, regulations, and policies. If the proposed amendments are minor and not highly controversial, public notice and a 60-day waiting period will take place prior to making decisions to incorporate the changes into the plan. If the amendments are significant or highly controversial, the public will be provided opportunities to participate in the development and review of alternatives and the proposed action. This will include a minimum 60-day public comment period and public meetings as necessary and appropriate. All amendments to the general management plan must be approved by the regional director.

In the future, changing conditions will warrant preparation of a new general management plan. The public will be involved throughout the development of a new plan.