



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
95 Sterling Highway, Suite 1
Homer, Alaska 99603

December 5, 2013

Dear Reader,

You are invited to help the US Fish and Wildlife Service identify issues and develop alternatives to address unauthorized grazing by cattle on two refuge islands, Wosnesenski and Chirikof. This effort is known as "scoping" and it is an early step in a process to develop either Environmental Assessments or Environmental Impact Statements in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These documents will identify the need for action and authority to act, summarize potential issues, evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives, and describe the affected environment and environmental consequences of alternatives. Cattle ownership and compatibility with purposes of the refuge will also be addressed.

Both Wosnesenski and Chirikof islands, located in remote Southwest Alaska, are uninhabited and part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge was established in 1980 to conserve marine mammals, seabirds and other migratory birds, and the marine resources upon which they rely. Wosnesenski and Chirikof islands have sustained severe impacts to wildlife habitat, native vegetation, and archaeological sites from grazing by unauthorized cattle left behind when ranchers left the islands years ago.

The deadline to submit your ideas on issues and alternatives to be considered in the NEPA documents is January 31, 2014. Submission will be accepted by any of the following methods:

E-mail: fw7_akmaritime@fws.gov

Letter: Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge; Attention: Cattle, 95 Sterling Hwy, Suite 1, Homer, AK 99603

Phone: 907-235-6546, or **Fax:** 907-235-7783

Or at open houses:

Homer - December 16, 2013, 4 to 6 p.m., Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, 95 Sterling Hwy.

Kodiak - January 7, 2014, 4 to 6 p.m., Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, 402 Center St.

You will also have an opportunity to comment on the draft Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement documents after they have been prepared.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Alaska Region) is committed to ensuring access to this open house for all participants. If you need an accommodation (i.e. sign language interpreting, large print materials, etc.), please contact Steve Delehanty (907-226-4627 or Steve_Delehanty@fws.gov) with your request by

close of business December 9 (for the Homer open house) or December 31 (for the Kodiak open house), or as soon as practicable.

All comments received, including those from individuals, become part of the public record, and are available to the public upon request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, NEPA, and Departmental policies and procedures. Before you include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information on your comment, be aware that your entire comment, including this information, may be made available to the public upon request. You can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you would like to receive future correspondence regarding the unauthorized cattle issue, please contact us by any of the methods listed above.

More information and project updates will be posted at
<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/akmar/grazing.htm>

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Delehanty", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Delehanty
Refuge Manager

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Wildlife Refuge Plans to Address Cattle Damage to Islands

Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge manager, Steve Delehanty, today announced the start of a public scoping process to identify issues and alternatives to address damage from unauthorized cattle on Wosnesenski and Chirikof Islands. Scoping will include meetings with interested federal, state, and local agencies, Federally recognized Tribes, stakeholders and the general public.

After the close of scoping, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared for each island. These documents will lay out the issues, alternatives, analysis of impacts, and the preferred alternative.

Wosnesenski and Chirikof are remote, uninhabited islands located in southwest Alaska. Both islands have deteriorated wildlife habitat caused by cattle left behind when ranchers left the islands years ago. Chirikof Island was first stocked with cattle in the late 1880s when the island was leased by a large fox ranching enterprise. Cattle were introduced on Wosnesenski Island in 1938 for personal use by a resident family. Without management or predators, the cattle have multiplied. Today, there are roughly 800 cattle on Chirikof Island and 200 on Wosnesenski Island. "I have been to both islands" said Delehanty. "It's a sad sight. The vegetation is short, some areas have been turned into bare sand dunes, there are cattle carcasses scattered around, and cattle are trampling wildlife habitat, archaeological sites, and sensitive wetlands." Island salmon streams, lakes, and wetlands are particularly hard hit.

"We want to hear from people who have constructive ideas and a willingness to help us solve this problem," said Delehanty. "It's time to restore these islands and finally help them fulfill their congressionally mandated destiny as a wildlife refuge."

The deadline to submit ideas on issues and alternatives to be considered in the NEPA documents is **January 31, 2014**. Submissions will be accepted by any of the following methods:

E-mail: fw7_akmaritime@fws.gov

Letter: Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge; 95 Sterling Hwy, Suite 1, Homer, AK 99603

Phone: 907-235-7835, or **Fax:** 907-235-7783

Or at open houses:

Homer - December 16, 2013, 4 to 6 p.m., at the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center, 95 Sterling Hwy.

Kodiak - January 7, 2014, 4 to 6 p.m., at the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, 402 Center St.

Opportunities to comment on the draft Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement documents will also be provided.

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All comments received, including those from individuals, become part of the public record, and are available to the public upon request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, NEPA, and Departmental policies and procedures. Name, address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information, if attached to a comment, may be made available to the public upon request. Withholding personal identifying information from public review can be requested but cannot be guaranteed.

To get on the mailing list for the unauthorized cattle issue, please contact the refuge by any of the methods listed above.

More information and project updates will be posted at
<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/akmar/grazing.htm>

All of the over 500 National Wildlife Refuges in the U.S. are set aside for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats. Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge has additional purposes, including to conserve marine mammals, seabirds and other migratory birds, and the marine resources upon which they rely.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work in Alaska and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/>.