

STATE OF ALASKA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

DIVISION OF GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

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May 12, 1988

Mr. Walter O. Stieglitz
Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Mr. Stieglitz:

The following list of questions is provided by the State of Alaska in response to your March 29, 1988, request for public comment on issues and concerns related to the designation of Wilderness areas within the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs).

The state requests that the Wilderness supplements for these refuges address the questions below, as they apply to the approximately 987,000 acres proposed for Wilderness designation in these two refuges:

1. What, if any, existing uses, structures, or activities within these areas would be eliminated, reduced, or restricted by Wilderness designation?
2. Are there mining claims within these areas?
3. Do these areas include lands that have reasonable potential for inclusion in land exchanges or where landownership is in dispute?
4. Are cabins or other structures used for commercial (e.g., guiding or commercial fishing) or residential purposes within these areas?
5. Is mechanized equipment (e.g., chainsaws, generators) used to support commercial, recreational, subsistence, or management activities within these areas?
6. Are these areas immediately adjacent to roads, mining activity, recreational facilities, or other existing or proposed development?
7. Are there private inholdings within these areas? If so, how do respective inholders currently access and use their property? How are these properties likely to be accessed and used in the future? (The state recognizes that FWS may

have limited information on current and future use of these lands.)

8. How are adjacent lands currently used and likely to be used in the future?
9. Are there possible Revised Statute (RS) 2477 rights-of-way within these areas? (The state is aware of at least four possible RS 2477s within the proposed Wilderness areas in the Becharof refuge. These possible RS 2477s have been identified as trails #1, 3, and 4 on the state's quadrangle map #36 and trail #1 on the state's quadrangle map #41.)
10. Is there potential for hydroelectric or geothermal development within these areas?
11. Is there a current or foreseeable need for or interest in the following uses within or adjacent to these areas:
 - a. visitor facilities or recreational development (e.g., visitor centers, campgrounds, trails, lodges, public use cabins)?
 - b. developed access (e.g., roads, airstrips, docks, helicopter landing sites)?
 - c. utility corridors or facilities (e.g., pipelines, power transmission lines, remote communications equipment)?
 - d. state or federal administrative/management facilities (e.g., ranger stations, air/water quality monitoring stations, research facilities)?
 - e. habitat manipulation?
 - f. permanent fisheries improvement facilities?
 - g. mariculture, commercial fishing, and/or oil and gas support facilities?
 - h. core sampling or seismic studies?
 - i. sand and gravel removal?
 - j. commercial timber harvest?
 - k. oil and gas leasing? (The Alaska Peninsula has been described as having low to moderately low petroleum potential. In spite of this, oil companies have continued to express a consistent level of interest in the area. Geological and geophysical investigations

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within and adjacent to the refuges may be critical to the exploration and development of nearby state lands.

The state has held competitive oil and gas lease sales on the peninsula, and about a dozen wells have been drilled; however, the geologic knowledge of the area is still not sufficient to satisfactorily rate the petroleum potential of the peninsula. The most recent offering was Sale 41 in 1984. As a result of that sale, an exploration unit was formed adjacent to the Alaska Peninsula NWR very near the boundary between the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof NWRs. A well was drilled in the unit, but was abandoned as a dry hole.

The state is currently proposing an oil and gas lease sale adjacent to the Alaska Peninsula NWR for June 1989 (Sale 56). Though it is too soon to determine industry's level of interest, the Alaska Peninsula has always intrigued petroleum scientists and probably will continue to do so. The Preliminary Best Interest Determination for this sale will be released in January 1989. Access to refuge lands bordering the sale area may be required to support development in this area.)

The state requests that the Wilderness supplement answer the questions listed above and, where the answer is affirmative, describe in as great detail as possible the potential impacts of Wilderness designation on the use, activity, or structure in question. This analysis will help assess the effects of Wilderness designation on existing and future uses of these lands.

The state appreciates the opportunity to participate in the scoping process for the upcoming Alaska Peninsula and Becharof NWR Wilderness supplements. Please do not hesitate to call this office if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Grogan
Director



by: Michelle Sydeman
CSU Coordinator

cc: Commissioner Judy Brady, DNR
Commissioner Don Collinsworth, DFG
Commissioner Mark Hickey, DOT/PF
Commissioner Dennis Kelso, DEC
Mr. Rod Swope, Office of the Governor

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- [1490] Mr. Rex Blazer, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Fairbanks
- [1372] Mr. Al Carson, Department of Fish and Game, Anchorage
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- [1240] Mr. Dan Wilkerson, Department of Environmental Conservation, Anchorage
- [994] Mr. Geoff Wistler, Department of Commerce and Economic Development, Juneau