



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Summary of the Draft Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan

## *Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge*

## What are we doing?

Kanuti Refuge is revising its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). Since the first CCP for the refuge was completed in 1987, laws and policies have changed, and new scientific information has become available. This revised plan addresses these changes and will provide management guidelines for the next 15 years. 🐾

## What is a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)?

A CCP guides overall refuge management. It ensures that management actions comply with the purposes for which the refuge was established and with other legal mandates. It serves as a “road map” for refuge staff and makes management actions more consistent. It also provides an opportunity for public involvement. 🐾



Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

*The short-tailed weasel, also called “koghozene,” is one of several furbearer species occurring on the refuge.*



Bill Raftern/USFWS

*Fall colors along the Kanuti River, called “Kk’oonootne” in Koyukon Athabascan.*

## What will you find in this summary?

Within this summary of the draft revised CCP you will find a brief overview of the:

- refuge vision statement;
- issues addressed in the plan;
- refuge goals and objectives; and
- management alternatives developed through the planning process. 🐾



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*Northern Pintails, also called “k’edzonule,” breed on the refuge.*



## Kanuti Refuge—wild and untamed

Kanuti Refuge covers 1.6 million acres and lies on the Arctic Circle nearly 150 miles northwest of Fairbanks. It is a prime example of Alaska's boreal forest ecosystem, where black and white spruce, birch, and poplars are interspersed with lakes, wetlands, and open areas. The refuge is home to a variety of wildlife, fish, and plants that interact much as they did thousands of years ago. It provides natural lands and waters for breeding birds—including ducks, geese, swans, loons, and other migrants—and provides habitat for moose, caribou, wolves, and bears. Rivers and seasonally flooded streams are home to salmon, arctic grayling, and whitefish. 🐟



Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

Refuge wetlands.

## Why was the refuge established?

Refuges exist to protect wildlife, fisheries, and their habitats, and to provide for wildlife-related public uses, such as hunting, fishing, observation, and education. Kanuti Refuge was established in 1980 by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). Its purposes include:

- to conserve fish and wildlife populations and their habitats;
- to fulfill international treaty obligations (e.g., regarding migratory birds);
- to provide the opportunity for continued subsistence by local residents; and
- to ensure water quality and quantity. 🐟



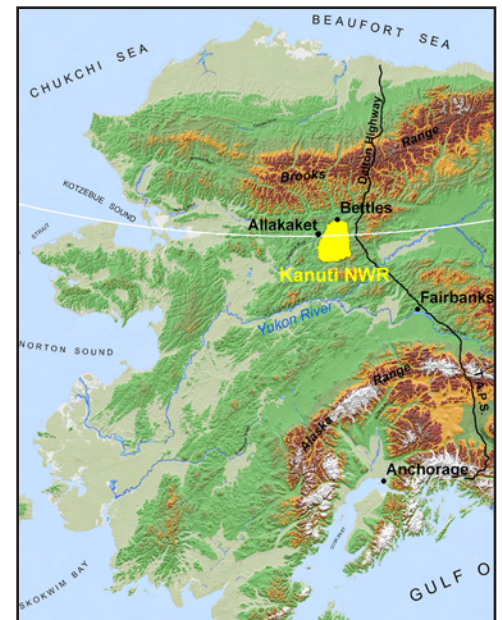
Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

Allakaket resident Steven Bergman harvesting chum salmon on the Koyukuk River.

## Living off the land

Local residents are the primary users of Kanuti Refuge. Four communities along the Koyukuk River are close to the refuge: Allakaket, Alatna, Bettles, and Evansville. Access to these communities is mainly by airplane, boat and snowmachine. About 250 people, the majority of whom are Koyukon Athabaskan and Kobuk Nunamuit, live in these communities. Local residents live a partial subsistence lifestyle, relying on natural resources like moose, caribou, salmon, whitefish, ducks, and geese. 🐟

## The refuge is remote



There are no roads or permanent residences within the refuge. Pathless terrain and rivers that are challenging to travel limit access for visitors. We estimate that fewer than twenty non-local visitors use the refuge each year. They primarily access the refuge by airplanes on floats or skis. 🐟

*Kanuti Refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.*





# Steps in CCP development

CCPs follow a process guided by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies, and other legal direction. This process includes:.

Ask public for their ideas.  
Identify planning issues.



Develop goals, objectives, and alternatives to address the issues.



Analyze impacts of and compare alternatives.



*We are here*

Publish draft plan.  
Ask public to review and comment.



Publish final plan.



Publish final decision.  
Publish finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

We expect to publish the final plan in the fall of 2007. 🐻



Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

*The City of Allakaket is located along the Koyukuk River at its confluence with the Alatna River. The old part of Allakaket lies on the riverbank; the new part in the foreground lies on a hill.*

## Refuge Vision

Our vision describes how we believe Refuge purposes will best be fulfilled:

“Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge will be managed for its natural unaltered character, biological integrity, and scientific values, as driven by biological and physical processes throughout time. Stewardship of the Kanuti Refuge will strive to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity by maintaining ecosystem integrity, while providing for subsistence opportunities. Management will foster partnerships with government agencies, tribes, organizations, and the public, including local communities. The refuge will provide opportunities for compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation. Inventory and monitoring of wildlife populations and habitats important to Alaska, the United States, and the world will be the focal points of research and management efforts. Studies will focus on the physical and biological components of the boreal forest region, their ecological relationships, and their responses to human activity.” 🐻



Lisa Saperstein/USFWS

*Site of a previous wildland fire. Fires and flooding are the two main forces shaping the refuge landscape.*



## Significant planning issues

The Kanuti CCP addresses two issues that were identified during public meetings and from within the Fish and Wildlife Service.

### Issue 1: Conservation of the natural, unaltered character of the refuge.

Many people said they want the refuge to remain in a natural, wild state with minimal intrusion. Here is what they said:

*“We want the country to stay the same for the next generations.”*

*“Your 15 year focus should be on preservation and conservation in a balance that will keep this place remote and isolated for the years to come.”*

*“I value Kanuti’s wildness most, no roads, no facilities.”*

### Issue 2: Adopt updated management policies and guidelines

This issue came from within the Fish and Wildlife Service and has not yet generated any public comment. The new management policies and guidelines were developed as part of the Alaska-wide refuge comprehensive planning effort. These policies and guidelines will ensure that refuge management actions are consistent throughout Alaska. 🐻



Koyukuk River, “Kk’nyetl’ots’ene,” in winter.

USFWS

## Goals and Objectives

We developed six management goals and several objectives for each goal:



Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

*The refuge offers outstanding opportunities for visitors to experience solitude. It is a place where people can go to seek a wilderness experience with few, if any, visible signs of human presence.*

**Goal 1:** Conserve the refuge’s diversity of wildlife, fish, and habitats, while allowing natural processes such as wildland fire and flooding to shape the environment.

*Objectives include:* working cooperatively to inventory and monitor plants, fish and wildlife; manage fire; monitor effects of fire; and monitor snow depth.

**Goal 2:** Ensure the water resources necessary to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats.

*Objectives include:* monitoring streamflow and/or water quality conditions; developing a strategy to inventory wetland and lake resources.

**Goal 3:** Provide opportunities for local residents to pursue their subsistence lifestyle.

*Objectives include:* working closely with all stakeholders to review and modify regulations; conducting informational meetings; monitoring subsistence harvest.

**Goal 4:** Provide opportunities for wildlife dependent public use such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation and photography while minimizing conflict among user groups.

*Objectives include:* Monitoring levels and types of public use; developing a law enforcement program; building an interpretative nature trail in Bettles.

## Goals and Objectives, continued

**Goal 5:** Provide outreach and environmental education to increase a sense of stewardship for wildlife, cultural resources, and the environment.

*Objectives include:* providing the public with information about the refuge; contributing to the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot; outreach at community events; building an office/bunkhouse/visitor center in Bettles shared with the National Park Service.

**Goal 6:** Conserve, appreciate, and interpret the cultural and archaeological resources of the refuge.

*Objectives include:* inventorying archeological and other cultural sites; partnering with Native organizations to manage and protect cultural and historical resources; using traditional place names for the refuge. 🐾



Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

*Calm water on the Kanuti River.*

## Why do we have different management categories?

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) requires us to designate areas according to their resources and values and to specify programs and uses within those areas. To meet this requirement Minimal, Moderate, and Intensive Management categories were established as part of the Alaska-wide planning effort. For each management category, appropriate activities, public uses, commercial uses, and facilities were identified. Only the Minimal and Moderate Management categories apply to Kanuti Refuge. 🐾

## What are Alternatives?

Alternatives represent different options for future actions. They are different ways to respond to issues, management concerns, and opportunities. Each alternative is developed with the Refuge System mission and the refuge's purposes in mind. 🐾



Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

*Blueberries are abundant on the refuge*

## How do we address the issues?

Federal law requires that we develop a range of reasonable alternatives. We considered three alternatives, all of which continue to protect the refuge and its resources. Traditional subsistence activities, recreational wildlife-dependent activities, and current methods of access would continue to be allowed.

Our alternatives have varying amounts of Minimal and Moderate Management. Minimal Management maintains the natural environment with very little evidence of human-caused change. Moderate Management allows actions and uses that may result in temporary or permanent changes to the natural environment.

**Alternative A:** This is the “No-Action” alternative, as required by NEPA. It describes what would happen if current management activities were to continue. Though refuge lands have been classified in a mixture of Moderate and Minimal Management, the refuge has to date been managed as though it was entirely in Minimal Management.

**Alternative B:** This alternative converts all refuge lands now in Moderate Management to Minimal Management and incorporates the new management policies and guidelines.

**Alternative C:** This alternative is preferred by the Fish and Wildlife Service. It converts a portion of the refuge lands now in Moderate Management to Minimal Management and incorporates the new management policies and guidelines. This alternative would allow for more intensive human uses near the communities. 🐾

## Comparison of Alternatives\*

Item	Alternative A <i>"No Action"</i>	Alternative B	Alternative C <i>Preferred</i>
<b>Wild Character</b>	Management activities which cause minimal disturbances to wildlife, habitats, and the visiting public and which focus on natural processes are emphasized.	Management activities which cause minimal disturbance to wildlife, habitats, and the visiting public and which focus on natural processes within <i>entire</i> refuge are emphasized.	Management activities which cause minimal disturbance to wildlife, habitats, and the visiting public and which focus on natural processes are emphasized.
<b>Active management of habitat</b>	Prescribed fire and wildland fire use may be allowed throughout the refuge. More manipulative habitat management techniques (mechanical means, water level manipulation) and hazard fuel reduction may be allowed in Moderate Management areas.	Prescribed fire, wildland fire use, chemical treatment of nonnative plants, and hand tools may be allowed throughout the refuge. No mechanized crushing or mowing of vegetation, no water control structures, fencing, or artificial nest structures are allowed.	Prescribed fire, wildland fire use, chemical treatment of nonnative plants, and hand tools may be allowed throughout the refuge. Mechanized habitat manipulation, hazard fuel reduction, water control structures, fencing, and artificial nest structures allowed in Moderate Management areas.
<b>Management Direction</b>	Do not adopt the new management policies and guidelines, but assume supporting glossary and language and apply it to the current management direction.	Accept new management policies and guidelines and integrate them into refuge management.	Accept new management policies and guidelines and integrate them into refuge management.
<b>Off-road vehicles (includes air boats and air cushion vehicles)</b>	May be allowed on designated routes or through special use permit.	Not allowed.	May be allowed on designated routes or through special use permit in Moderate Management areas.
<b>All-weather roads</b>	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.	Not allowed.	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.
<b>Constructed and maintained airstrips</b>	Primitive airstrips may be designated; no new construction.	Not allowed.	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.

\* This table is a summary of potential uses. A complete table may be found in the full-length plan.

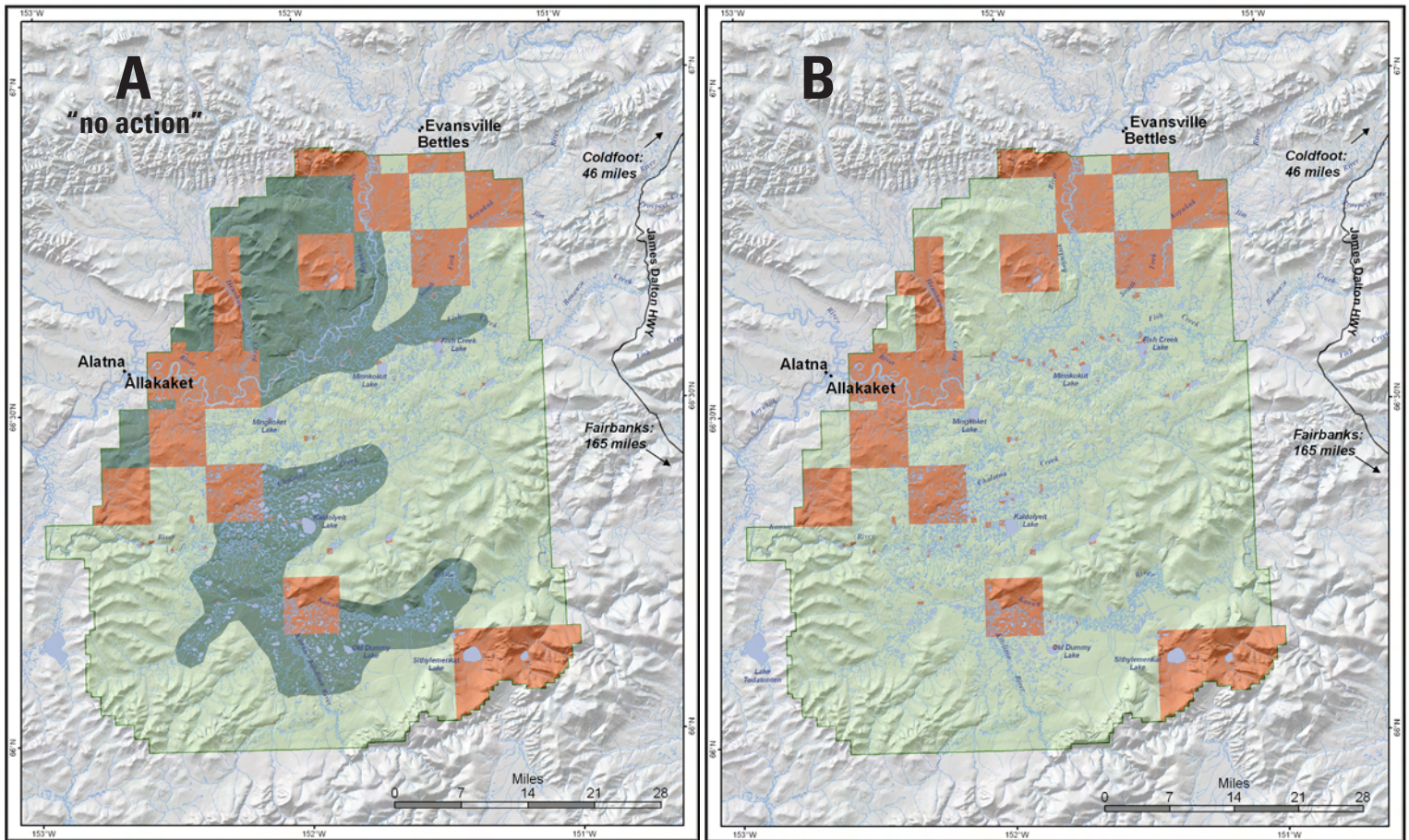
## Comparison of Alternatives, continued

Item	Alternative A <i>"No Action"</i>	Alternative B	Alternative C <i>Preferred</i>
Campgrounds accessible to highway vehicles (not applicable unless all-weather roads are constructed during life of plan)	May be provided only to confine resource damage.	Not allowed.	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.
Visitor contact facilities (staffed or unstaffed, including kiosks and signs)	Not allowed.	May be allowed.	May be allowed.
Administrative bunkhouses	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup> .	Not allowed.	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.
Improved sites for docking and storing float-equipped airplane	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup> .	Not allowed.	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.
Sale of sand, gravel, and other common variety minerals	Not allowed.	Not allowed.	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.
Commercial gathering of other resources (e.g., antlers and mushrooms)	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup> .	Not allowed.	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.
Small hydroelectric power development that does not change river flow	Not allowed.	Not allowed.	May be authorized in Moderate Management areas.
Oil and Gas Leasing	May be allowed in Moderate Management areas.	Not allowed.	Not allowed.

<sup>1</sup> Not applicable indicates that item was not included in management policies and guidelines section in the original Plan.



# Where would the different management categories be used?



## Legend

- Private Land
- Moderate Management
- Minimal Management

### Alternative A "no action"

Moderate Management: 33%

Minimal Management: 67%

### Alternative B

No Moderate Management

Minimal Management: 100%

### Alternative C preferred

Moderate Management: 15%

Minimal Management: 85%









Bill Raften/USFWS

*Allakaket residents Kitty and David David on the South Fork Koyukuk River returning from fall moose hunt.*

## What else would change under the new management guidelines?

### Less restrictive:

**Habitat management** Other methods of habitat manipulation could now be allowed in Minimal Management areas besides prescribed burning, for example chemical treatment (for non-native plants) and manual treatment.

**Extraction of sand and gravel for commercial purposes:** Could now be authorized in Moderate Management areas, was not permitted anywhere under old management guidelines.

**Hydroelectric power development:** Hydroelectric power development could now be considered. It would be separated into two categories; major or small. If it does not change the flow of the river, it would be referred to as small. If small, it could be authorized in Moderate Management. Previous guidelines only prohibited major hydroelectric power development and did not specify between categories.

### More restrictive:

**Fish and wildlife species introductions:** Reintroduction of native species could be allowed to restore natural diversity. The old management guidelines allowed the introduction of North American species not previously present.

**Subsistence house log and firewood collection:** Trees less than 3 inches diameter at breast height could be harvested for subsistence, also dead, standing or downed timber, grass, bark and other plant materials. Cutting of house logs could be allowed by permit. The new guidelines are more specific.

**Oil and gas leasing:** Hydrocarbon potential on the refuge is very low. Leasing would now not be allowed anymore; it was potentially allowed under Moderate Management.

**Commercial timber and firewood harvest:** Could be authorized only to accomplish management objectives for example to reduce fuel loads. Was potentially allowed in Moderate Management under previous guidelines. 🐾

## Refuge Staff

### Fairbanks - Kanuti staff

- Refuge Manager
- Deputy Refuge Manager
- Lead Wildlife Biologist
- Wildlife Biologist (Birds)
- Airplane Pilot (presently combined with Manager)\*

### Fairbanks - shared staff

- Administrative/Computer Support Team
- Fire Management Officer
- Airplane Pilot/Law Enforcement Officer
- Subsistence Coordinator
- Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator (Fire)

### Bettles

- Maintenance Worker, Ranger or Biologist\*

### Allakaket

- Refuge Information Technician\*

### Coldfoot - Arctic Interagency Visitor Center (AIVC)

- Interpretive Park Ranger

\* planned in the future



Wemona Brown/USFWS

*Refuge wildlife biologist Chris Harwood measuring snow density on the refuge.*





Wenona Brown/USFWS

*We held public meetings in Allakaket and in Alatna to review and discuss traditional place names.*

## Traditional Place Names

“*Kk’oonootne*” is the Koyukon Athabascan name that led to an early mapmaker assigning “Kanuti” to the refuge’s namesake river. *Kk’oonootne* means ‘well-traveled river by both man and animals.’ Another possible meaning is “fish roe river.” The Kanuti River has also been called “Old Man River.”

This information and more was gathered by Koyukuk resident and elder Eliza Jones who worked with Allakaket elder Johnson B. Moses in the late 1980s and early 1990s to record Native place names and their meaning in the area of the refuge around the communities of Allakaket and Alatna. Please contact the refuge for more information. 🐾

## We would like to hear your comments!

We would like to know what you think about our revised CCP. For example:

- Do you agree with the amount of land in Minimal and Moderate categories?
- What do you think about our proposed vision and objectives for the next 15 years?
- How about our plans for proposed staffing?
- The full plan gives details about permitted and authorized uses which have changed in some small ways since the 1987 plan. We would like to hear your comments about the new management guidelines.

The full-length Kanuti draft CCP is available online at <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/ccp.htm>. Please contact us if you would prefer a paper-copy or a compact disk. We will also host several public meetings (time and place will be announced). For more information about the refuge you may view <http://kanuti.fws.gov/>

Please send us your questions and comments before **July 15, 2007**.

Comments and requests for compact disks or further information should be directed to:

**Peter Wikoff, Planning Team Leader**  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
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Anchorage, AK 99503  
907/786-3837  
[fw7\\_Kanuti\\_planning@fws.gov](mailto:fw7_Kanuti_planning@fws.gov)

Comments and requests for further information about the refuge should be directed to:

**Mike Spindler, Refuge Manager**  
Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge  
101 12th Ave., Rm 262  
Fairbanks, AK 99701-6237  
877/220-1853 or 907/456-0329  
[kanuti\\_refuge@fws.gov](mailto:kanuti_refuge@fws.gov)

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge**  
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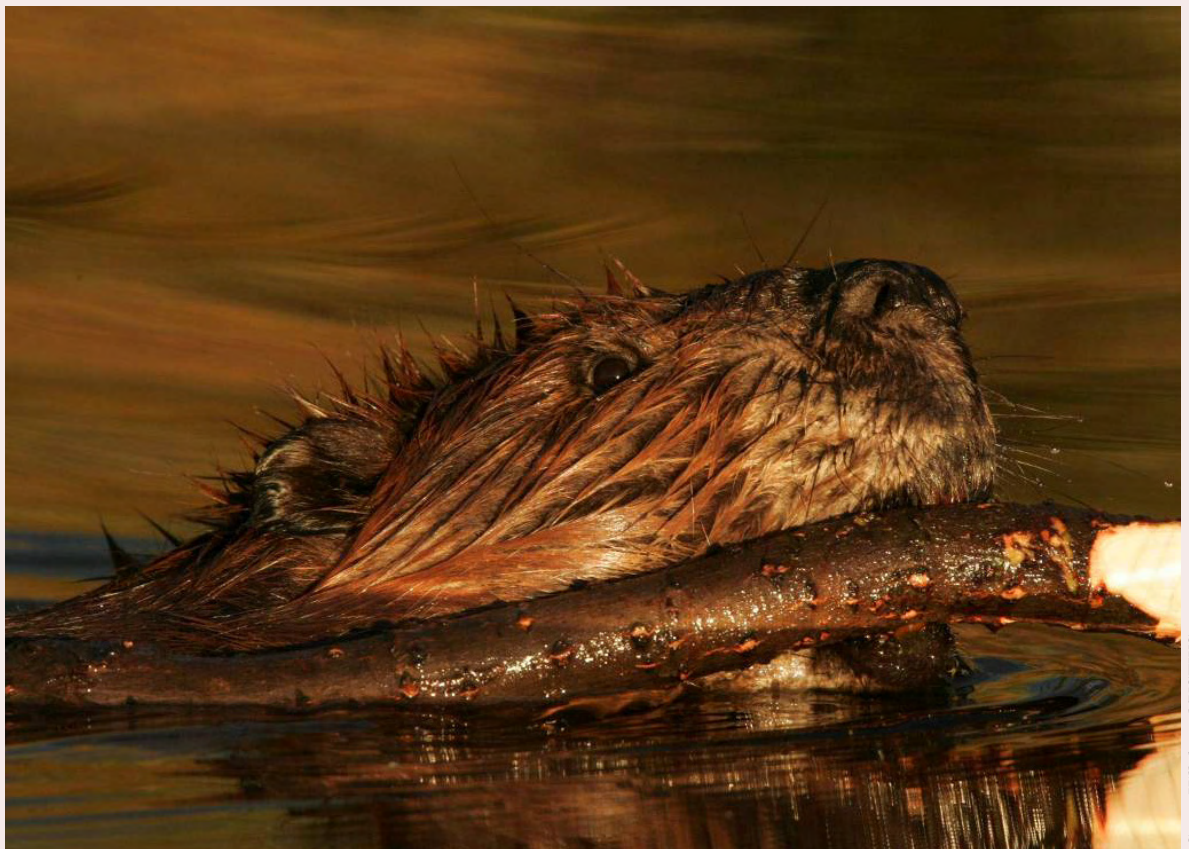
Fax: 907/456-0329

Web: <http://kanuti.fws.gov/>

e-mail: [kanuti\\_refuge@fws.gov](mailto:kanuti_refuge@fws.gov)



*Beaver, or “noye’e” in Koyukon Athabaskan, are abundant on Kanuti Refuge. They play a large role in shaping the environment. Refuge staff count beaver caches to keep tabs on the number of beaver on the refuge.*



*Beaver eat the inner bark, twigs, leaves, and roots of trees and shrubs.*