



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Alaska

Arctic District Office

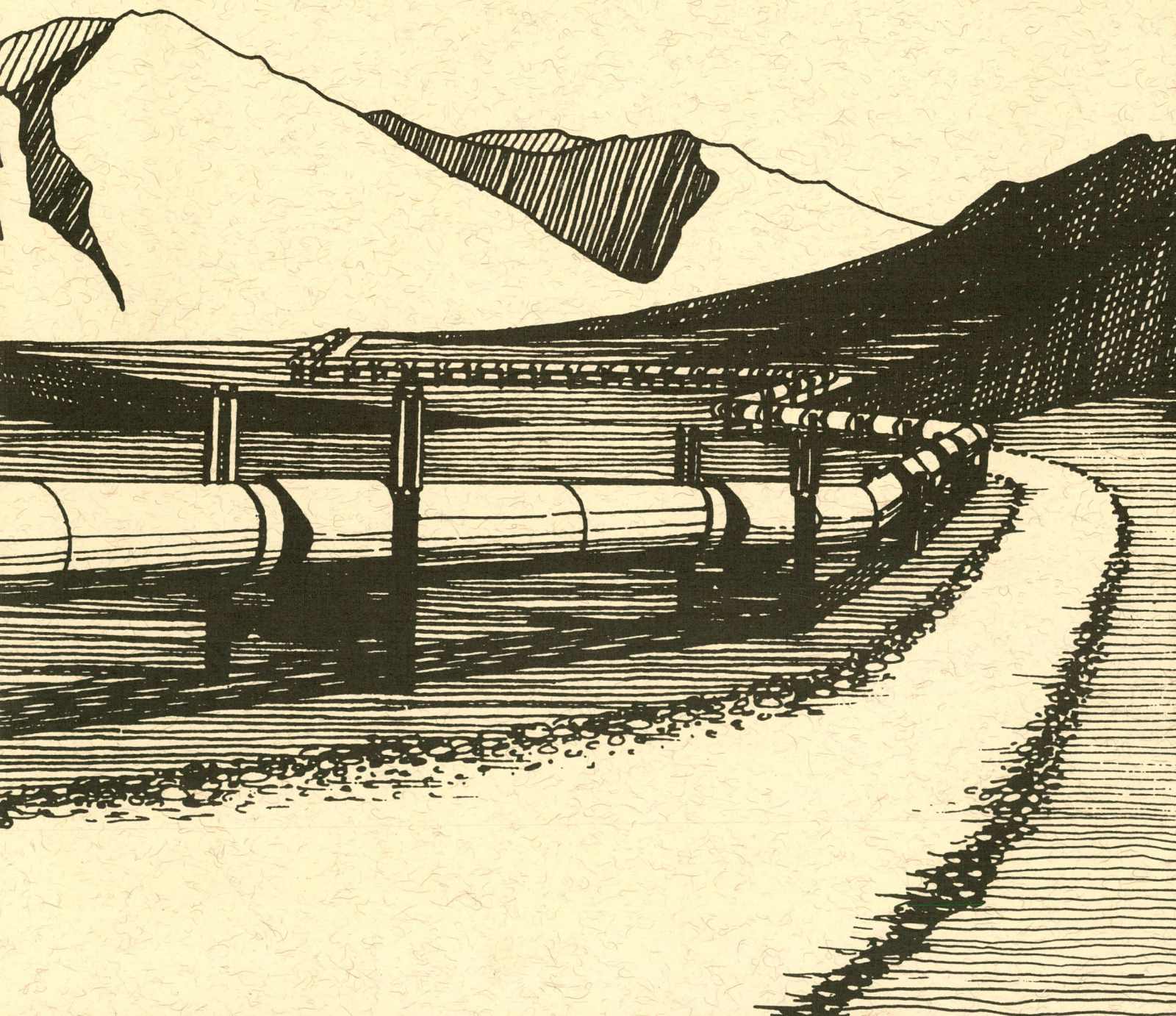
January 1991



# Utility Corridor

Resource Management Plan/  
Environmental Impact Statement

## Record of Decision





### **The BLM Mission**

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the stewardship of our Public Lands. It is committed to manage, protect and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people for all times.

Management is based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our nation's resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology.

These resources include recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness, air, and scenic, scientific and cultural values.




# UTILITY CORRIDOR

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## RECORD OF DECISION

prepared by  
United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Arctic District Office

January 11, 1991



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Edward F. Spang  
State Director, Alaska

## Introduction

This document is the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Record of Decision prepared for the Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). The Utility Corridor RMP is a long-term comprehensive land use plan developed to direct the BLM's management of a portion of the lands and minerals it administers in northern Alaska. The lands are shown on map 1.1, of the Proposed RMP (reproduced in this document for your convenience) and amount to approximately 6.1 million acres of BLM-administered surface, of which 5.8 million acres is BLM-administered mineral estate. The Utility Corridor RMP supersedes all previous land use planning decisions for this area, many of which are contained in a Management Framework Plan completed in 1979.

The Utility Corridor, established by Public Land Order (PLO) 5150, as amended, on December 30, 1971, is an essential component of the national domestic oil and gas transportation system. It provides a route to transport a significant portion of the nation's petroleum; the present and future importance of access to these resources cannot be overstated. In recognition of this fact, the Proposed RMP provides that the primary management direction and use of BLM-administered lands in the Utility Corridor is for energy transportation. Therefore, both the "Inner" and "Outer" Corridor, as shown on map 1.1 of the Proposed RMP, are designated as a Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) section 503 right-of-way corridor under 43 C.F.R. 2806.2.

The signing of this Record of Decision completes the initial phases of our land use planning process. However, the signing of this Record of Decision does not represent the end of the planning process. Planning is an on-going process of data collection, analysis and evaluation related to the prescribed uses of public lands that continues during plan implementation, and may eventually lead to amendment or revision of the plan.

The planning process began with the determination of the scope of the issues to be addressed in the

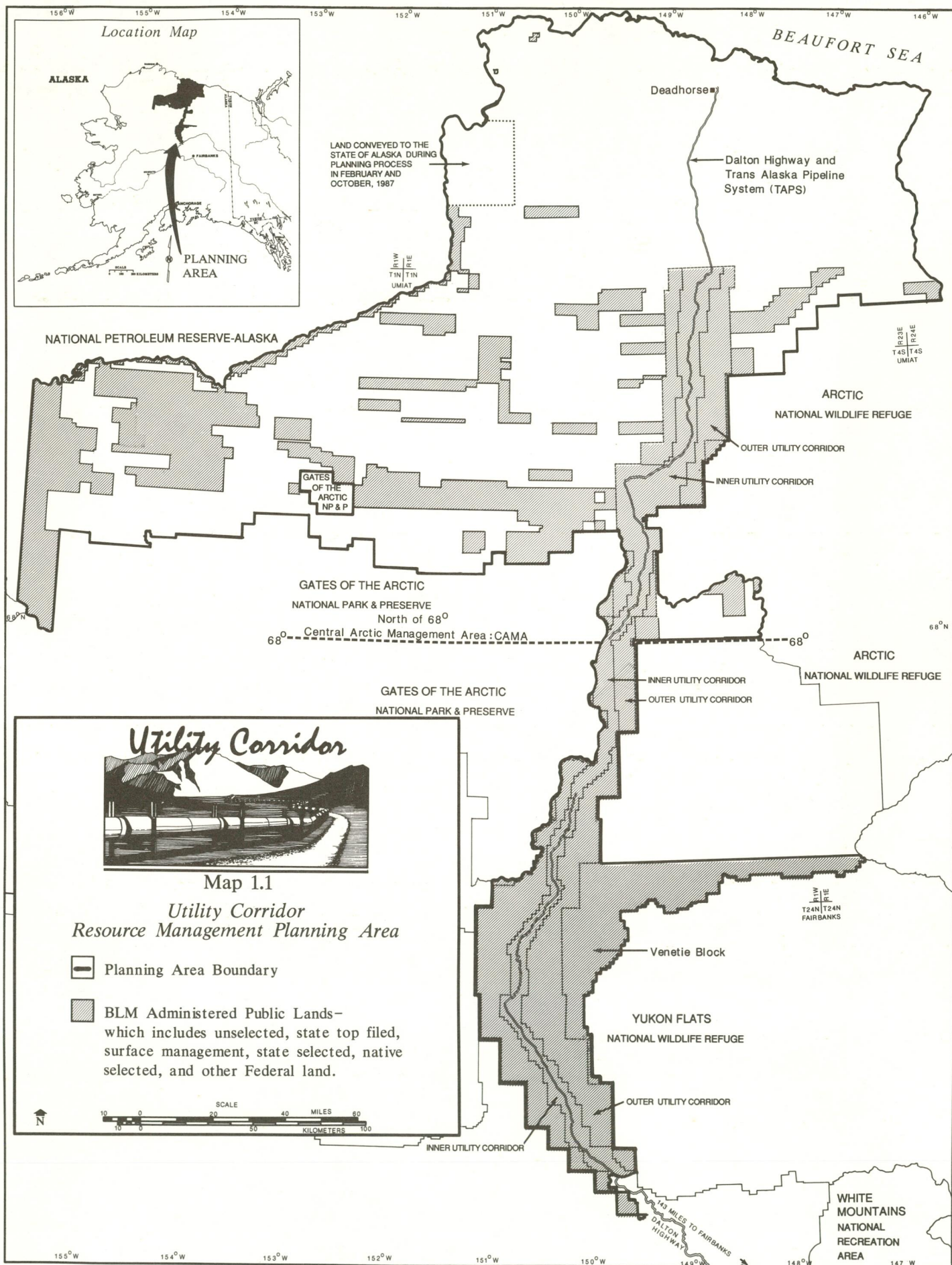
RMP in 1986. The Draft RMP/EIS was distributed for public review on August 28, 1987, for a 90-day review period, which ended on November 30, 1987. The Proposed RMP/Final EIS was signed on September 27, 1989, and made available to the public on November 24, 1989, for a 30-day protest period. The BLM Director received 14 timely protests, of which 12 were accepted for administrative review.

The Proposed RMP was prepared in accordance with the FLPMA, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA), and the Department of the Interior, BLM planning regulations (43 C.F.R. 1600). The draft and final EISs were prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (40 C.F.R. 1500.) These regulations require the consideration of cumulative impacts--the total level of impacts that would arise from the implementation of management actions described in the Utility Corridor RMP.

An important cross-reference to our analysis is contained in the final EIS prepared for the Proposed RMP. The reader is directed to the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Trans-Alaska Gas System*, published in June, 1988, document number BLM-AK-PT-88-003-1792-910, chapter 4.7 for a detailed cumulative impact analysis, which was utilized in the analysis performed for the Proposed RMP.

Specific attention was given to analysis of and impacts to existing subsistence uses and resources. In the "Affected Environment" chapter, pages 3-28 through 3-31 describe the use occurring both inside and outside the planning area (for example, Anaktuvuk Pass, Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik, all areas that are outside of the planning area.) While not specifically stated in the text, based on the body of data on pages 3-28 through 3-31, the impact analysis that is contained in the "Environmental Consequences" chapter, extended outside the planning area and the reader of the RMP should bear this fact in mind.







## Decision

The decision is hereby made to approve the Proposed Plan, as presented in Chapter 2 and Appendix N of the Proposed Utility Corridor RMP (September, 1989), with the exception of the State selection element. The Proposed Plan includes the wilderness recommendation identified in the *ANILCA Section 1001 Report Findings and Recommendations*.

During the 30-day protest period on the Utility Corridor RMP, 14 protests were filed. Ten of these protests objected to the amount of land proposed by the RMP to be made available for selection by the State of Alaska to, in part, settle the debt owed to the State under the terms of the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958. One protest, filed by the North Slope Borough, objected that the Proposed RMP excessively promoted recreational activities and was not conducive to maintenance of the Corridor as a transportation corridor. In response to this protest, the BLM Director found that the BLM Alaska State Director has balanced appropriately the many diverse resources and competing interests in the planning area. No change to the Proposed RMP was made as a result of the North Slope Borough protest. Two of the protests (Doyon, Limited and Mr. John Alfonsi) were dismissed by the BLM Director since the protestors did not meet the qualification requirements of 43 C.F.R. 1610.5-2.

The changes to State Selection decisions in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS (September, 1989) are:

(a) The Prospect unit, as identified on map 2.1 in the Proposed RMP, would not be made available for State Selection. However, as required by section 201(4)(b) of the ANILCA, the need for access to the Ambler Mining District is hereby recognized and will be provided upon application by the State of Alaska, and that Subsistence hearings under section 810 of the ANILCA may be required during the processing of the application. Additionally, the need for access to other State-owned lands to the west of the Prospect unit, is recognized and the BLM Alaska State Director will entertain an application for a right-of-way for access to these lands. As above, Subsistence hearings may be required during the processing of this application.

(b) A portion of the Coldfoot unit, as identified in the RMP as the "Coldfoot Development Node" (see map 2.4, Proposed RMP, page 2-17, reproduced here for your convenience) would be made available for State Selection. The remainder of the Coldfoot unit would not be made available for State selection. Should access be required to State-owned lands east of the Coldfoot development node, the BLM Alaska State Director will entertain an application for a right-of-way for access to these lands. Subsistence hearings under section 810 of the ANILCA may be required during the processing of this application.

The Proposed RMP recognizes the need for certain acreages within T. 28 N., R. 12 W., Secs. 15 and 16, Fairbanks Meridian, along the Dalton Highway and above the Slate Creek floodplain for use by federal agencies to facilitate their management responsibilities within the area (e.g., administrative sites, campgrounds and related facilities). This ROD authorizes, pending further site analysis and cooperative planning, up to 100 acres for these purposes in the node.

As proposed in the RMP, lands would be made available for State selection in the Sagavanirktok and "Gas Arctic" units and south of Yukon River. We conclude that subsistence uses in these units will not be significantly restricted and, therefore, hearings under section 810 of the ANILCA are not required.

Finally, one protest filed by American Rivers, Inc. concerned the identification and protection of potential wild and scenic rivers. While no change to the Proposed RMP was made as a result of this protest, a clarification of the BLM's legal responsibilities under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (WSRA) is given below.

The BLM Director, after a careful review and consideration of Sections 101(d) and 1326 (b) of the ANILCA, and the complexity and uncertainty of management responsibilities associated with the questions of navigability and State and Native land selections, has concluded that, pending further congressional action, no further wild and scenic river studies will be conducted by BLM in Alaska at this time.



However, it is important to note that Section 2 of the WSRA provides the opportunity for States to initiate statutory protection of rivers, and to petition the Secretary of the Interior to designate rivers into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. If the State of Alaska chooses to pursue such designation for any rivers located within the Utility Corridor planning area the BLM is committed to assist them with the planning, evaluation and designation processes.

The special values associated with rivers identified by this plan will be taken into account during BLM's ongoing management pursuant to the provisions of FLPMA.

None of these changes require additional public review and comment. This Record of Decision constitutes the final Bureau action on approving the Proposed Utility Corridor RMP/Final EIS. Any person adversely affected by a decision of a BLM officer to implement some portion of an RMP may appeal such action to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, pursuant to 43 C.F.R. 4.400, at the time the action is proposed for implementation.

## Wilderness Study Areas

As mandated by Congress in Sections 1001 and 1004 of the ANILCA, BLM conducted an interdisciplinary study and made recommendations on the wilderness values of the Central Arctic Management Area. The resulting document entitled

the *ANILCA Section 1001 Report Findings and Recommendations* found that the 41,000 acre upper Nigu River area was suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (see map 2.8 on page 2-31 of the Proposed RMP). This recommendation was incorporated by reference into the Proposed Plan. This 41,000-acre tract will be managed to preserve its wilderness values up and to such time that Congress acts on BLM's recommendations. Should Congress designate this area as wilderness, BLM will continue to manage it as such. The balance of the CAMA lands, determined to be non-suitable for inclusion, will be managed according to the management prescriptions in the Proposed Plan.

## Special Management Areas

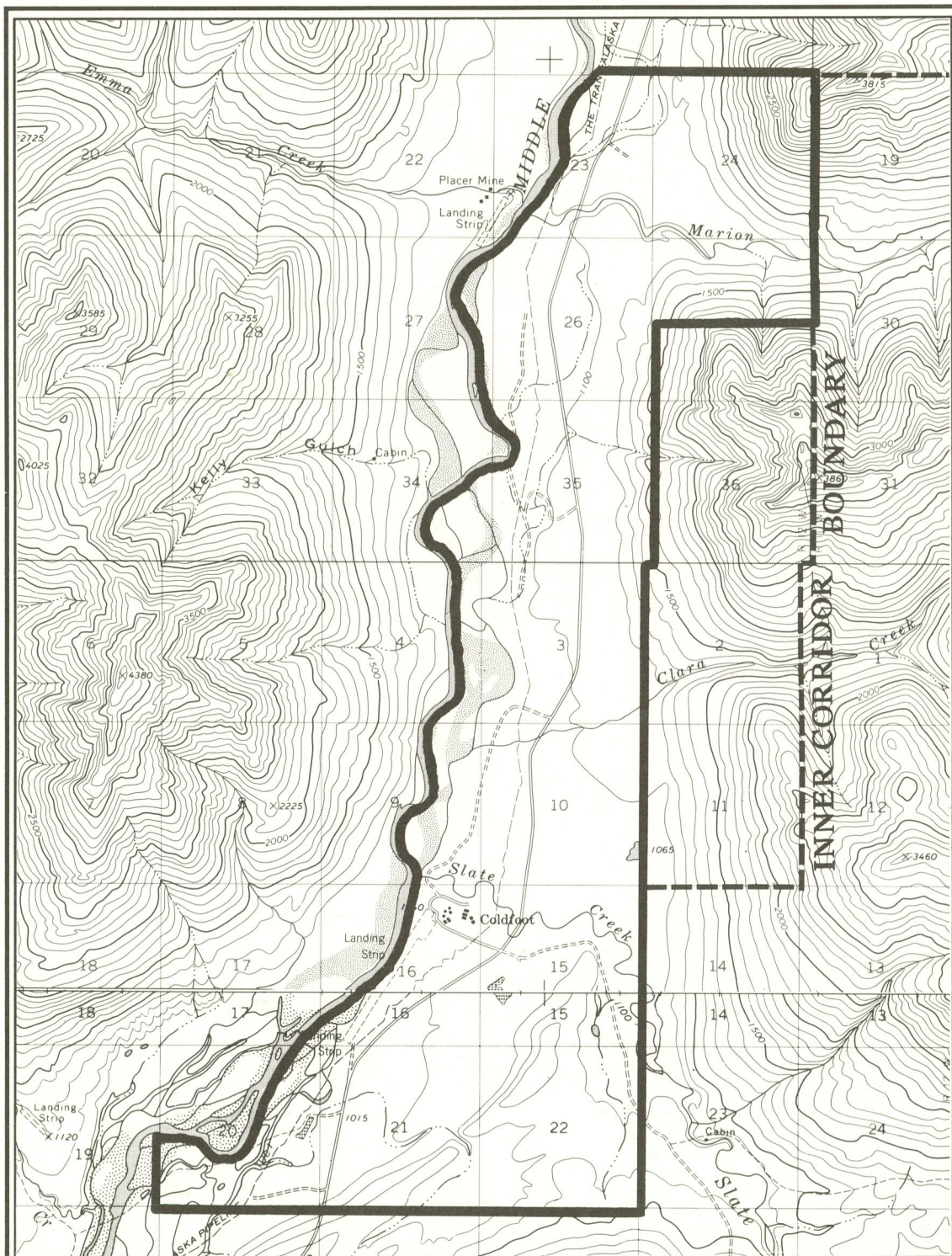
The Utility Corridor RMP establishes five recreation management areas (Dalton Highway, Dalton Corridor, Oolamagavik-Colville, the Central Arctic Management Area, and Nigu Wilderness and Iteriak ACEC). Details concerning these areas are found on pages 2-26 and 2-27 of the Proposed RMP. (See map 2.7 in the Proposed RMP.)

The Proposed RMP also establishes 13 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) as noted on the table below. One ACEC, Toolik Lake, is also designated as a Research Natural Area, in order to protect on-going and future research activities. (See map 2.10 in the Proposed RMP for locations of all ACECs.)

## Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

ACEC Name	Size in Acres	Resources
1. Galbraith Lake	56,000	Cultural, rare or sensitive plants, scenic values, lambing areas
2. Ivishak River	3,800	Fishery, cultural
3. Jim River	200,000	Fishery, recreation, cultural
4. Kanuti Hot Springs	40	Hot Spring
5. Nigu-Iteriak	64,000	Geology, cultural
6. Nugget Creek	3,300	Lambing areas, mineral lick
7. Poss Mountain	8,000	Lambing areas, mineral lick
8. Sagwon Bluffs	42,200	Peregrine Falcons
9. Slope Mountain	5,100	Lambing areas, mineral lick, cultural
10. Snowden Mountain	28,000	Lambing areas, mineral lick
11. Sukapak Mountain	3,500	Scenic, geology
12. Toolik Lake RNA	82,800	Research activities, cultural
13. West Fork Atigun River	8,500	Lambing areas, mineral lick

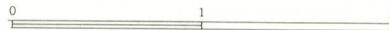




BOUNDARY MAP  
Map sheets Wiseman A1 and B1

Scale in Miles

Within Tps. 28 and 29 N., R12 W.  
Fairbanks Meridian



# COLDFOOT DEVELOPMENT NODE



Map 2.4



It should be noted that in the ACEC-specific prescriptions concerning altitude restrictions the term "BLM-authorized land use activities" means those projects, operations or other actions that require a specific written authorization by the BLM. Dependent upon the nature of the activity, the specific language of the prescription may be modified.

Because of the environmental protection afforded these sites by the requirements and stipulations of applicable agreements and grants of rights-of-way, ACEC prescriptions will not pose additional permitting or stipulation requirements for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, the proposed Trans-Alaska Gas Transportation System, or the proposed Trans-Alaska Gas System.

## The Proposed Plan and Alternatives Considered

Five alternatives were considered and analyzed in detail in the Draft RMP/EIS (August, 1987). The Proposed Plan is described in the Proposed Utility Corridor RMP/Final EIS (September, 1989). It and other alternatives considered are summarized as follows:

### The Proposed Plan

This alternative emphasizes a balance of resource uses. The Proposed Plan outlines a program of intensive land management toward the development of the multiple use resource opportunities while providing for energy transportation.

### Alternative A

This alternative is a continuation of current management practices. It is the "no action" alternative, as required by the CEQ regulations.

### Alternative B

This alternative represents a program of environmental protection and enhancement. It reflects these goals by seeking to limit actions which could have negative effects on BLM-managed lands and on adjacent Conservation System Units. The actions proposed under this alternative also emphasize wilderness recommendations. This alternative, as required by

the CEQ regulations, is identified as the "environmental preferable alternative," however, it does not fully meet the decision criteria as noted in the "Management Considerations" section on page 6 of this document.

### Alternative C

This alternative would provide economic development opportunities for the planning area. It opens as much public land as possible to the operation of the mining and mineral leasing laws. It also provides at least as many opportunities for development of recreational facilities as are found in the Proposed Plan.

### Alternative D

Under this alternative, all PLOs withdrawing the Utility Corridor lands from State selection would be revoked. The BLM would not take any other major actions and would wait for an appropriate period of time for selections or exchanges in the area to take place. Once a stable pattern of federal land ownership has emerged, the BLM would begin a new land use plan to address existing public needs. Interim management would be identical to alternative A.

## Mitigation

Measures necessary to avoid adverse impacts were built into the selected alternative wherever possible. These measures are presented in the form of (1) stipulations to be incorporated in future land use authorizations (e.g., leases or permits), (2) stipulations to govern project development, and (3) closures to protect key resources. In some cases, the need for site-specific review to aid in the development or refinement of mitigation measures has been identified. Also, some portions of the plan identify a need for monitoring of management actions to, in part, identify any additional mitigation measures that may be necessary. Finally, the environmental analysis that will be conducted for implementation actions may identify other practical means to avoid or reduce environmental impacts at specific locations.

Appendices K and L of the Proposed RMP contain a list of those mitigation measures of types (1) and (2) noted above. The effectiveness of these mitigation measures can be gauged by comparison of the detailed impacts listed in the main body of Chapter 4 of the EIS with the "unavoidable



adverse impacts" listed at the end of the chapter. These impacts are those remaining after application of the mitigation measures in these two appendices to the actions contained in the Proposed RMP.

All mitigation measures proposed for, and contained within, the Proposed Plan alternative, as modified, are hereby adopted. Given the criteria contained in the "Management Considerations" section of this Record of Decision, all practical means of avoiding or reducing environmental harm have been adopted.

## ANILCA Section 810 Summary

The Proposed Plan will not cause a significant restriction to subsistence uses, resources, and needs in the Utility Corridor. There are potential limitations to subsistence users and resources under some of the development scenarios; however, approved mitigation measures addressing those limits will be implemented based on project-specific environmental and planning analyses.

There were 8 subsistence hearings held in conjunction with the Draft Utility Corridor RMP/EIS.

## Management Considerations

The decision to choose the Proposed Plan, as modified by the results of the protest resolution process, is based on seven factors:

- 1.) effectiveness in resolution of the planning issues,
- 2.) conformance with the guidance established by the planning criteria,
- 3.) conformance with the legislative mandates of the ANILCA,
- 4.) avoidance of unnecessary impacts to the human environment,
- 5.) responsiveness to input received from public land users, other federal and State land management agencies, Native corporations, as well as State and local governments,
- 6.) the environmental analysis for the alternatives in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, and
- 7.) management direction contained in PLO 5150. (The Assistant Secretary of the

Interior, on December 28, 1971 ordered that "subject to valid existing rights, the following described lands are hereby withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws . . . and *reserved as a utility and transportation corridor . . . in aid of programs for the U.S. Government and the State of Alaska.*" [emphasis added.]

The selected RMP represents a balanced management strategy which achieves the multiple use mandates of the FLPMA, while fulfilling resource-specific requirements of legislation, such as the Threatened and Endangered Species Act, and the ANILCA, as well as the PLOs that affect the planning area.

## Implementation and Monitoring

The Proposed RMP will provide the framework for making specific management decisions in the Utility Corridor planning area. However, the RMP/EIS will be continually monitored during this period to determine if (1) actions are consistent with current policy, (2) original assumptions and analyses were correct, (3) mitigation measures are effective and necessary, and (4) conditions or circumstances have changed significantly. Results of plan monitoring will guide plan maintenance as well as help detect the need for plan amendment or revision.

Priorities for implementation of management decisions are contingent upon program funding levels established through the budget process.

## Public Involvement

As noted in the "Introduction" to this document, public involvement has been sought throughout the planning and decision making process. For a detailed documentation of public participation, please see Chapter 5 of the Proposed Utility Corridor RMP/Final EIS.

Additional opportunities for public involvement throughout the implementation of the RMP will exist. Public input will be sought during the preparation of future environmental documents for specific RMP implementation actions. Public comments will also be requested through Northern Advisory Council meetings, special purpose public



meetings or hearings, ANILCA Section 810 Subsistence hearings, as appropriate, as well as during any plan amendment that may, in the future, be required.

The BLM intends to pursue our concept of cooperative planning among various land owners and land management agencies of lands within this planning area. The Bureau wishes to cooperate with appropriate organizations in other land use planning activities for this area.

## **Consistency**

The Proposed Utility Corridor RMP/Final EIS is consistent with the plans, programs, and policies of other federal agencies and of State and local governments.

## **Public Availability**

For further information regarding the implementation of the Utility Corridor RMP, please contact the BLM's Arctic District Office at 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844. Review copies of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS are available at all Bureau offices in Alaska as well as local public libraries in Alaska.



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