



npr-a update

Issue 1

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National Petroleum Reserve-gum Alaska-mi
News about planning for the future of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska

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New planning effort underway

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in cooperation with the North Slope Borough, the State of Alaska, and the Minerals Management Service and other federal agencies, is starting to develop a new management plan for a 4.6-million-acre area in the northeastern corner of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). To produce the best plan, the BLM wants information from the public on a wide range of resource issues including wildlife, subsistence, and the prospects for oil and gas development.

During the last two weeks of March, BLM is meeting with the public at "scoping" meetings to obtain information and learn about people's concerns, desires and expectations for the area. The BLM is particularly interested in obtaining information from local residents and Inupiaq translators will be present at the meetings occurring on the North Slope.

"We need information from the public by March 31," said BLM Northern District Manager Dee Ritchie. "The public will have other opportunities to provide comments and information, but the earlier the planning team receives information, the better chance it has to incorporate it into the development of the plan," he said.

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Some commonly asked questions

What will the planning effort accomplish?

The plan will outline BLM's future management of land, resources and their uses in the northeast part of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. This may include identifying lands that should be made available for oil and gas leasing as well as lands and resources that should receive protection.

Why are you planning for the northeast corner of NPR-A?

Recently announced plans for the development of the Alpine oil field bring a production pipeline and other facilities to within ten miles of the northeast portion of NPR-A, making this area more attractive to industry for oil exploration. However, an area around Teshekpuk Lake is rich in waterfowl, seabirds and wildlife. It would be inappropriate to consider leasing without examining the need to protect other resources. This planning effort will serve both objectives.

Why aren't you planning for the whole NPR-A?

The NPR-A is about 23 million acres in size and includes several different regions and a wide range of resources. Access is difficult to many locations. Planning for the entire area at once would take much more time and effort. BLM will develop plans for a smaller portion of the Reserve now and then the Secretary of the Interior will evaluate whether to extend the planning effort to other portions of the NPR-A.

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Important dates in NPR-A planning schedule

1997

March 31	End of first public comment period (scoping phase)
May	Descriptions of management alternatives developed
October	Draft environmental impact statement (EIS) available
Nov.-Dec.	Public hearings and comment period on draft EIS

1998

June	Final EIS published
July	Final decision document released

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