

**Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt visits NPR-A**

**Planning team analyzing five alternatives**

**Ducks Unlimited helps BLM learn more about NPR-A waterfowl**

**Important dates in NPRA planning schedule**

**News notes**

**Issue 2 is still available here.**



## Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt visits NPR-A



Picture

Several months ago Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt pledged to walk every inch of the northeastern portion of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska to learn first hand about the resources and local concerns.

Instead of being on foot, Babbitt had more of a bird's-eye view from a helicopter during his trip there in July. Babbitt took the opportunity to listen and respond to the concerns of local Inupiaq residents, government and industry officials, and scientists. Babbitt also learned more about the vast and rich North Slope and Arctic Coastal Plain, with their extensive wetlands and tundra that host waterbirds, caribou, furbearers, muskoxen, moose, and the rich cultural history of the Inupiaq Eskimo people.

"I think advances in the oil industry-fewer roads and smaller structures and better information about wildlife will make development compatible with subsistence," Babbitt said. He added that if the study doesn't support that impression, he will not allow leasing.

In the village of Nuiqsut, the secretary visited with 150 people in the school gymnasium. Several expressed fears about negative impacts on subsistence. Others acknowledged benefits received from earlier oil development, but urged the secretary not to overlook their concerns.

[\*Back\*](#)[\*Table of Contents\*](#)[\*Next Article\*](#)[\*Continue\*](#)



## Planning team analyzing five alternatives

The NPR-A planning team has identified five alternatives in the NPR-A Integrated Activity Plan that will be analyzed in the draft Environmental Impact Statement to be released this November.

"The draft alternatives cover a full range of possibilities, with options for leasing anywhere from 0 to 100 percent of the planning area," said BLM-Alaska State Director Tom Allen.

The document will present the team's preliminary findings as to the kinds of stipulations that can help minimize impacts to resources from leasing, regardless of which alternative is eventually chosen. The plan will also discuss a variety of management options for specific resources such as managing rivers and wildlife habitat. The environmental consequences of each alternative will also be assessed.

The planning team will not specify any alternative as "preferred" in the draft EIS. "We want more information from the public as to how this area should be managed. The information presented in the draft EIS will help them understand the tradeoffs," said Allen.

During his trip to Alaska in July, Secretary Babbitt said the final decision may include parts of several alternatives. Public comment on the team's ideas in the plan and the analysis of the impacts presented in the EIS will guide the development of the final plan.

*Back*

*Table of Contents*

*Next Article*

*Continue*





## Ducks Unlimited helps BLM learn more about NPR-A waterfowl

Beginning in 1994 and continuing through 1997, the BLM has been using satellite imagery to determine the mixture of landcover types throughout NPR-A through a Challenge Cost Share Agreement with Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Landcover is defined as vegetation, water, ice and bare ground (or combinations thereof). It is one of several basic digital layers of information that is being used in a geographic information system (GIS) to perform a variety of analyses for the planning area.

One of the immediate uses of this landcover information is to compare waterfowl observations (collected for the last few years by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Management Office) to potential landcover classifications created by the digital imagery.

To help in the NPR-A project, BLM-Alaska, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ducks Unlimited, Incorporated are currently developing digital "density contours" for five important waterfowl species. These species include Stellar's, spectacled and king eiders, oldsquaw, black brant and white-fronted geese. The studies will aid in determining habitat selected by these species which will then help BLM define management parameters in the future.

The final analyses are due this November.

-John Payne

*Back*

*Table of Contents*

*Next Article*

*Continue*



## Key dates coming up

November 1997

Draft environmental impact statement (EIS)  
published

December 1997

Public hearings and comment period on draft EIS  
(locations, dates and times to be announced later)

January 1998

Comment period closes

June 1998

Final EIS published

July 1998

Final decision document released

[\*Back\*](#)[\*Table of Contents\*](#)[\*Next Article\*](#)[\*Continue\*](#)





## NPR-A News Notes

North Slope Borough Mayor Ben Nageak has appointed Arnold Brower, Jr. as the borough's primary project coordinator for the NPR-A Team. Arnold works in the Office of the Mayor in Barrow, and is involved in various aspects of the NPR-A planning process, including alternatives formulation, document review, workshop coordination and distributing public information.



*Back*

*Table of Contents*

*Next Article*

*Continue*