

3. Regional Management Policies and Guidelines

3.1 Overview

Sections 3.2 through 3.4 describe direction for the management of national wildlife refuges in Alaska. This management direction is primarily derived from the laws governing the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) and national and regional regulations, policies, and guidance developed to implement these laws. Although the Selawik refuge is unique, it is only one piece of the system. The management direction presented here represents the common base for management of the Alaska refuges and identifies appropriate sideboards for management of individual refuges.

Some deviations from these regional management policies and guidelines are likely to appear in each comprehensive conservation plan (comprehensive plan), given differing establishing orders or refuge purposes. Any specific departures from these policies and guidelines will be clearly described, along with supporting rationales, in each refuge's revised comprehensive plan.

The descriptions of management categories presented in this comprehensive plan are not identical to those in the 1987 comprehensive plan for the Selawik refuge (USFWS 1987a). These descriptions of management categories will remain constant for all of the comprehensive plans unless an exception is justified and warranted.

3.2 Management Categories

Five management categories (Intensive, Moderate, Minimal, Wilderness, and Wild River) are used to describe the management levels throughout the Alaska refuges. A management category is used to define the level of human activity and development that is appropriate for a specific area of a refuge. A management category is a set of management directions applied to an area based on its resources and existing and potential activities or uses. These categories have been adopted and applied to accomplish refuge purposes and achieve management goals.

Lands within the Selawik refuge currently fall into three management categories: Minimal (approximately 1,800,000 acres), Wild River (approximately 117,000 acres), and Wilderness (approximately 240,000 acres) (Map 3-1). The Management Activities Table (Table 3-1) shows the administrative, public, and commercial activities and facilities that may be allowed in each management category and under what conditions. Management direction is described for the Intensive and Moderate Management categories to provide a basis of comparison and to be available if this comprehensive plan is amended in the future in ways that would require refuge lands to be designated either Intensive or Moderate Management. Management categories that do not apply to current management of the Selawik refuge are shown over a grey background in Table 3-1.

3.2.1 Intensive Management

The Intensive Management category is designed to allow compatible management actions, public facilities, and economic activities that may result in alterations to the refuge environment. In Intensive Management areas, the presence of human developments and interventions may be very apparent. Roads, buildings, and other structures are likely to be seen. Intensive Management is applied to the smallest area reasonable to accommodate human developments and interventions.

Ecological processes or habitats may be modified through human intervention in an Intensive Management area. Habitats may be highly modified to enhance conditions for one or more species. For example, water regimes may be artificially controlled to improve habitat for waterfowl.

Substantial levels of public use may be accommodated and encouraged through alterations and modifications to the environment such as paving, buildings, developed campgrounds, and other facilities. Public facilities are designed to provide a safe and enjoyable experience of the resources on refuge lands and to increase understanding of fish and wildlife and their habitats for a wide range of visitors. Facilities are designed to accommodate a substantial number of visitors while protecting resources on refuge lands from damage and visitor impacts.

Compatible economic activities or uses of resources on refuge lands that result in alterations to the environment may be authorized in Intensive Management areas. All economic activities or uses must be compatible with refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System. Economic activities or uses require official authorizations such as special use permits.

3.2.2 Moderate Management

The intent of Moderate Management is to allow compatible actions, public uses, commercial activities or uses, and facilities that may result in changes to the refuge environment that are temporary or permanent but small in scale and that do not disrupt ecological processes. The natural landscape is the dominant feature of Moderate Management areas, although signs of human activities may be visible.

The intent of Moderate Management is to provide, restore, or enhance habitats to maintain healthy populations of plants and animals where ecological processes predominate. For example, logging and prescribed burning may be used to convert mature forests to an early seral stage to enhance browse for moose. In general, management facilities, both temporary and permanent, will be allowed for the purposes of gathering data to understand and manage resources and ecological systems of the refuges. Structures will be designed to minimize visual impact.

Public facilities provided in Moderate Management are designed to protect refuge habitats and natural resources while allowing the public to enjoy and use resources on refuge lands in relatively low numbers dispersed over a large area. The Moderate category also allows shorter-term enjoyment of resources on refuge lands in focused areas as a means to concentrate visitors and impacts. The emphasis is on small facilities that encourage outdoor experiences. Facilities such as public use cabins, rustic campgrounds, kiosks, boardwalks, viewing platforms, trails, and toilets may be provided. Facilities will be designed to blend with the surrounding environment to minimize visual impacts.

Compatible economic activities may be allowed where impacts to ecological processes and habitats are temporary (e.g., small-scale logging where an earlier seral stage meets management goals; facilities that support guiding and outfitting services such as tent platforms or cabins that encourage enhanced public use). All economic activities and facilities require authorizations such as special use permits.

3.2.3 Minimal Management

Minimal Management is designed to maintain the refuge environment with minimal or no evidence of human modifications or changes. Habitats are allowed to change and function

through ecological processes. Administration will ensure that the resource values and environmental characteristics identified in a refuge comprehensive plan are conserved. Public uses, economic activities or uses, and facilities should minimize disturbance to habitats and resources. Ground-disturbing activities are to be avoided whenever possible.

Management actions in this category focus on understanding ecological systems and monitoring the health of resources on refuge lands. Generally, no roads or permanent structures are allowed (except cabins). Temporary structures may be allowed in situations in which removal of the structure is planned after the period of authorized use, and the site can be rehabilitated using native plantings from the immediate adjacent area. Existing cabins may be allowed for administrative, public, subsistence, commercial, or economic (e.g., guiding) purposes. New subsistence or commercial cabins may be authorized if no reasonable alternatives exist. Public use or administrative cabins may be constructed if necessary for health and safety.

Public use of the refuge is encouraged for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, interpretation and environmental education, and subsistence activities. Public use facilities are generally not provided. Mechanized and motorized equipment may be allowed when the overall impacts are temporary or where its use furthers management goals.

If a transportation or utility system, as defined in Section 1102 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), is proposed to cross an area in Minimal Management, the authorization process would incorporate a corresponding comprehensive conservation plan amendment to change the management category in the affected area from Minimal to Moderate or Intensive Management, as appropriate.

Compatible economic activities may be allowed where the evidence of those activities does not last past the season of use, except as noted in the preceding discussion of cabins. The primary economic activities are likely to be guiding and outfitting of recreation activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, river floating, and sightseeing. All economic activities and facilities require authorizations such as special use permits.

3.2.4 Wilderness Management

The Wilderness Management category applies to areas designated by Congress as units of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The refuge manages the Selawik Wilderness Area, which was designated under ANILCA in 1980 and encompasses approximately 240,000 acres within the Waring Mountains. Any areas proposed for wilderness designation will be managed under Minimal Management, consistent with Section 1317(c) of ANILCA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy. Designated wilderness will be managed under the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the exceptions provided by ANILCA. Because the Selawik Wilderness Area is part of a nationwide, multi-agency system, the Service recognizes that responsibilities for managing designated wilderness go beyond the mission of the Service and that the purposes of the Wilderness Act are within and supplemental to the other purposes for which the Selawik refuge was established. (See Section 3.3.20 for guidelines on management of designated wilderness areas in Alaska.)

The history and intent of the Wilderness Act encourages managers to hold a broad perspective of the refuge landscape, one that extends beyond managing designated wilderness solely as wildlife habitat. It is managed as an area “retaining its primeval character and influence.” Designated wilderness provides visitors with opportunities for “solitude or a primitive and

unconfined type of recreation.” Recreation in designated wilderness areas has been characterized by an array of experiences such as discovery, self-reliance, remoteness, closeness to nature, challenge, self-reflection, and freedom from societal and managerial constraints (e.g., Hollenhorst and Jones 2001; Landres et al. 2008; Patterson et al. 1998).

Designated wilderness areas are managed to preserve numerous experiential values for people as well as aesthetic, scientific, and other related values. Research has shown that some values of designated wilderness areas extend beyond their boundaries to people who may never visit but who benefit from the protection of ecological processes—benefits such as clean air and water and the knowledge that such places exist (Cordell et al. 1998). In managing designated wilderness, refuge managers are encouraged to consider, in decision making, these off-site and symbolic values as well as tangible resource values.

Permanent structures are generally prohibited; exceptions include historic and cultural resources and, in certain circumstances, administrative structures or cabins that predate ANILCA, cabins that are necessary for trapping activities, and public use cabins necessary for the protection of human health and safety. Facilities and structures are rustic and unobtrusive in appearance.

Compatible commercial activities or uses of designated wilderness areas are generally limited to those activities that facilitate solitude and a primitive, unconfined type of recreation (e.g., guided fishing, hunting, and float or hiking trips into designated wilderness areas). All commercial activities and facilities require authorizations such as special use permits.

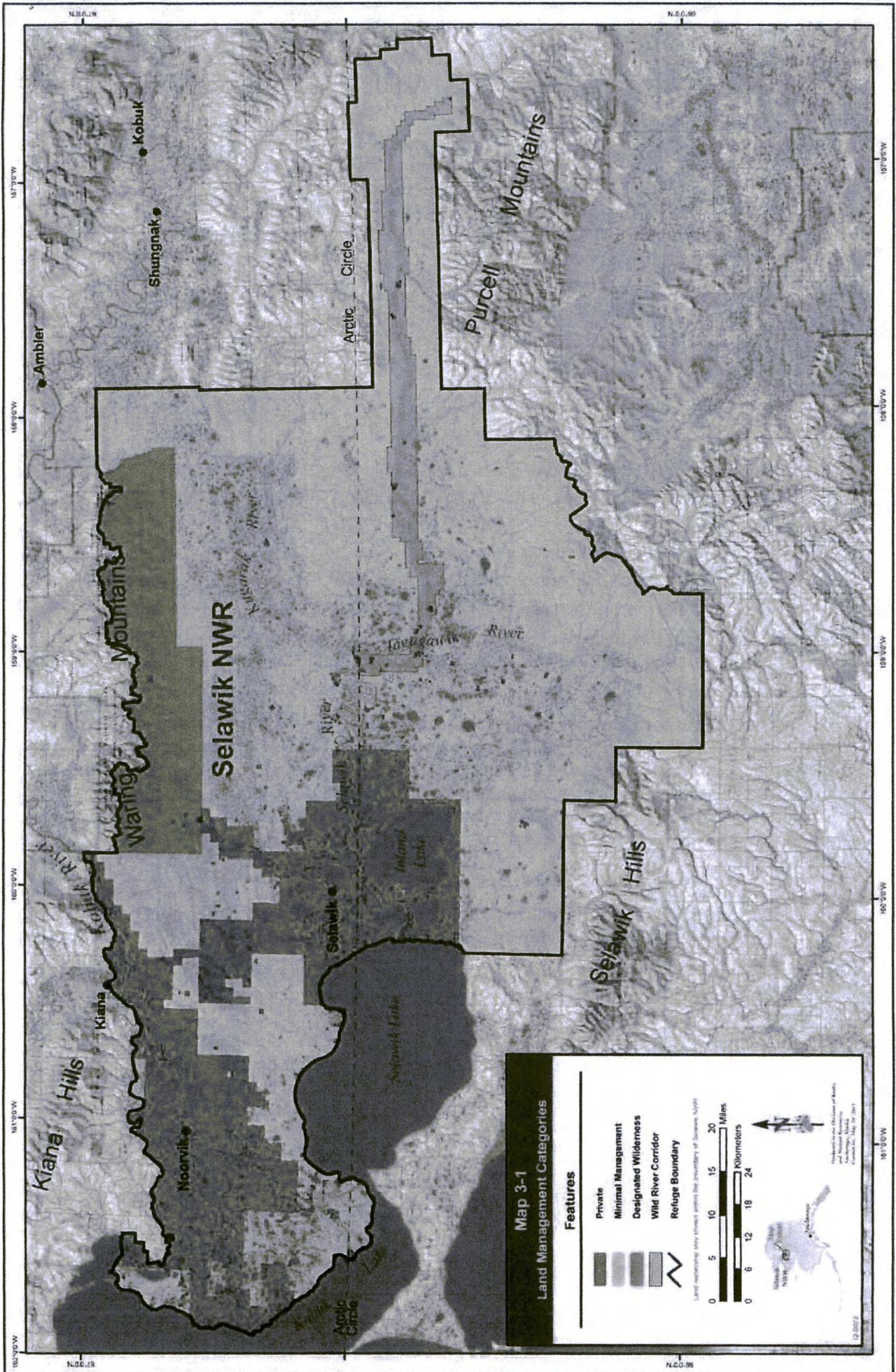
Actions such as prescribed fires or invasive species control may be conducted when it is necessary to protect life or property or when it is necessary to restore, maintain, or protect the mentioned values of designated wilderness. Management activities must be found to be the minimum requirements for the administration of the area as designated wilderness.

3.2.5 Wild River Management

The Wild and Scenic Rivers category applies to those rivers and corridors of the adjacent lands that have been designated by Congress as part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This is a national system of designated rivers that have outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. All designated rivers on refuges in Alaska are classified as Wild Rivers. Wild rivers are those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and waters unpolluted.

Within this management category, water bodies are maintained in natural, free-flowing, and undisturbed conditions. The ecological functions of the river system are maintained. The appearance and scenic quality of the river and sense of wildness are preserved. Evidence of human activities is minimized.

Each river within the Wild and Scenic Rivers System has particular values for which it was designated; the management of a wild river must protect those specific values. Management actions focus on understanding, monitoring, and maintaining the natural resources, ecosystem function, and aesthetics of the river corridor.



Map 3-1
Land Management Categories

Features

- Private
- Minimal Management
- Designated Wilderness
- Wild River Corridor
- Refuge Boundary

Land ownership data shown within the boundary of Selawik NWR

0 5 10 15 20 Miles
 0 6 12 18 24 Kilometers

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Permanent structures generally are not allowed, with the exception of historic and cultural resources and, in certain limited circumstances, subsistence or administrative cabins and associated structures. Cabins, temporary structures, and hardened sites should not be visible from the river; where this is impractical, facilities and structures are to be rustic or unobtrusive in appearance. Public use facilities would provide opportunities for low-impact, backcountry recreation experiences.

The upper 168-mile segment of the Selawik River was recognized for its outstandingly remarkable values and characteristics. Approximately 117,000 acres of the Selawik refuge were designated by ANILCA to be managed as a Wild River corridor under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (USFWS 1987a).

The following outstandingly remarkable values were identified for the Selawik Wild River corridor (Bureau of Outdoor Recreation 1976):

- **Subsistence** – hunting and/or fishing, traditional camps, house logs, and firewood.
- **Recreational** – float trips, camping, hunting and/or fishing, wildlife observation, and photography.
- **Scenic** – pristine forested corridor, diverse landscape, and wildness.
- **Wildlife habitats** – migratory waterfowl, other bird species, and large game.
- **Fishery** – northern pike, sheefish, whitefish, and Arctic grayling populations.
- **Cultural and/or historical** – early Inupiaq archeological sites and medicinal hot springs used as traditional healing place by Inupiat and Athabascans.
- **Hydrologic** – quality drinking water, free-flowing, and wetlands.

Compatible uses of the Selawik Wild River corridor will be allowed where those activities do not detract from these values. Primary commercial activities or uses are likely to be recreation services such as guided float trips, sightseeing, photography, fishing, and hunting trips. The Service may take management actions to preserve these values and characteristics of the Selawik Wild River corridor. All commercial activities and facilities require authorizations such as special use permits.

3.2.6 Special Management Areas

Special management lands are managed within one of the categories described previously with added requirements related to their establishment and special status.

In 2006, Selawik refuge was accepted as an observation site within a worldwide monitoring network, which was established to study the effects of climate change on high mountain environments. The network is known as the Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments (GLORIA) and headquartered at the Department of Conservation Biology, Vegetation and Landscape Ecology at the University of Vienna in Austria (<http://www.gloria.ac.at/>). The purpose of GLORIA is to establish and maintain a long-term observation network for the comparative study of the effects of climate change on mountain environments, which contain diverse and highly specialized plant species. The site in the Selawik refuge was established in the Hockley Hills in 2007 and will be revisited every three years. The program is described in the GLORIA Field Manual (http://www.gloria.ac.at/downloads/GLORIA_MS4_Web_english.pdf).

Aquaculture and mariculture (i.e., the cultivation of marine organisms in their native environment) support facilities may be allowed in Intensive Management areas, subject to provisions of State and Federal laws. No Intensive Management areas currently exist or are proposed in this comprehensive plan for the Selawik refuge. Seafood processing plants will not be allowed.

3.3.18.4 Commercial Harvest of Timber and Firewood

Commercial harvest of timber and firewood will only be authorized under a special use permit and when necessary to fulfill overall refuge management objectives. Within Moderate, Minimal, and Wild River Management categories, commercial harvest of timber and firewood to accomplish management objectives will only occur when an approved refuge fire management plan identifies the need to reduce fuel loads in an area. Applicable Federal and State of Alaska guidelines for timber management will be followed. Commercial harvest of timber and firewood is not allowed in designated wilderness.

3.3.18.5 Commercial Gathering of Other Resources

Commercial gathering of other resources (e.g., antlers or mushrooms) requires a special use permit under 50 CFR 27.51 and may be authorized in Intensive and Moderate Management areas.

3.3.18.6 Commercial Filming and Recording Activities

It is Service policy to provide refuge access and/or assistance to firms and individuals in the pursuit of commercial visual and audio recordings when they are compatible with refuge purposes or the mission of the Refuge System. Commercial films, television production, or sound tracks made within refuges for other than news purposes require a special use permit or authorization (43 CFR 5.1).

Commercial filming or recording activities such as videotaping, audio taping, and photography for the purpose of advertising products and services are subject to an A/V Production Permit (Refuge Manual 8 RM 16).

Permits are not required for still photography on refuge lands open to the public, including commercial still photography, so long as no models or props which are not a part of the site's natural or cultural resources or administrative facilities are used (16 U.S.C. 4601-6d(c)).

3.3.18.7 Other Commercial Uses

Generally, other commercial activities or uses such as grazing, agriculture, and hydroelectric power development will not be allowed. An exception may be made for low-head or small run-of-the-river hydropower facilities. These may be authorized in Intensive and Moderate Management areas on a case-by-case basis. See Section 3.3.14.9 for transmission lines, pipelines, and other rights-of-way mentioned in Title XI of ANILCA.

3.3.19 Environmental Contaminants Identification and Cleanup

One goal of the Refuge Administration Act, as amended, is to maintain the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System. In support of this goal, the Service studies environmental contaminants that may threaten trust species (i.e., those species for which the Service has primary jurisdiction) and other resources of the Selawik refuge. This work will continue as new concerns are identified and as funding allows.

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ACTIVITY or USE	MANAGEMENT of WILDERNESS	MANAGEMENT of WILD RIVERS	MINIMAL MANAGEMENT	MODERATE MANAGEMENT	INTENSIVE MANAGEMENT
Seafood Processing (See Section 3.3.18.3)	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed
Aquaculture and Mariculture Support Facilities (See Section 3.3.18.3)	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed	May be authorized
Commercial Timber and Firewood Harvest (See Section 3.3.18.4)	Not allowed	May be authorized	May be authorized	May be authorized	May be authorized
Commercial Gathering of Other Resources (See Section 3.3.18.5)	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed	May be authorized	May be authorized
Transportation and Utility Systems Includes transmission lines, pipelines, telephone and electrical power lines, oil and gas pipelines, communication systems, roads, airstrips, and other necessary related facilities. Does not include facilities associated with on-refuge oil and gas development. (See Section 3.3.14.7)	May be authorized by Congress	May be authorized	May be authorized; would require a plan amendment	May be authorized	May be authorized

* Subject to minimum requirements analysis