

Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently taking efforts to change land use management of some of our best recreation lands of Interior Alaska. This ‘Resource Management Plan’ will make decisions for the White Mountains National Recreation Area, the Steese National Conservation Area, the Fortymile Wild and Scenic River and the Upper Black River area.

Approximately eight million acres of land will be reviewed to determine a wide range of possible uses – including mineral development. There are certainly places that mining and oil and gas are appropriate, but not on our nation’s and local Alaskan’s most prized recreational areas.

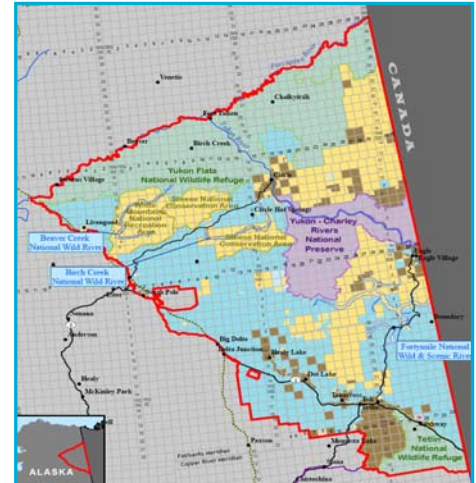
Wide Range of Recreational Opportunities

Our BLM lands host endless options for recreational activities:

- The Steese is the only ‘National Conservation Area’ under BLM ownership in the entire state of Alaska. The Steese provides hiking trails, birding, camping and sport and subsistence hunting opportunities for Alaskans. The high quality habitat in the Steese provides important forage for the Fortymile Caribou Herd – one of the top subsistence resources in Interior Alaska. Within the Steese is the Birch Creek National Wild and Scenic River – designated to preserve its wild and natural state. Eighty-eight percent of the Steese is available for summer OHV use and one-hundred percent is available to seasonal snow machine use.
- The White Mountains is the only ‘National Recreation Area’ under BLM ownership in the entire state of Alaska. The White Mountains is a year-round, recreation destination for both motorized



A view of the White Mountains from the Beaver Creek National Wild and Scenic River. Photo by Kaarle Strailey



Map of the Eastern Interior planning area and BLM lands (in yellow)

- and non-motorized users, such as skiers, dog teams, fishermen, hikers, and campers. Many visitors come here to float the Beaver Creek National Wild and Scenic River the longest road-to-road float trip in the US at 400 miles and tributary to the mighty Yukon River.
- The Fortymile Wild and Scenic River Corridor is an internationally recognized river and tributary to the Yukon – Alaska’s longest river. It is easily accessible by road, with developed and undeveloped recreation opportunities. This areas includes critical habitat for the Fortymile Caribou Herd for summer calving.

- The Upper Black River is an important traditional area for Gwich'in and a critical subsistence resource to villages in Interior Alaska. The BLM has never developed a management plan for this area and possesses little information about the values and resources. The Black River serves as a traditional transportation corridor, a drinking water source for the village of Chalkyitsik and provides vital salmon habitat.

Can Mineral Development and Recreation Coexist?

The BLM would like to allow all uses: hunting, fishing, OHVs, non-motorized recreation, mining, roads and oil and gas all within the boundaries of congressionally designated conservation, recreation, and wild and scenic river corridors. The BLM has a 'multiple-use' mandate but that doesn't necessarily mean all uses, all the time, at the same time.



A late summer trip down the Birch Creek National Wild and Scenic River located in the Steese.

Changes that we may see to our public lands without public involvement:

- Recreation and conservation areas reclassified and available to mineral interests – limiting the use and enjoyment of our public lands.
- Decreased acreages for primitive recreation to allow for mineral development and transportation corridors through and within conservation areas.
- Reduced water quality due to increased mining operations; which may result in lost fish and spawning habitat.

- Impacts from climate changes, if BLM does not prioritize monitoring and mitigating, such as: erosion, increased wild fires, and fisheries and wildlife habitat losses.

Support the Wild Lands Policy and Wild Lands in the Eastern Interior Planning Area

Department of Interior Secretary Salazar announced the Wild Lands policy in December 2010. This policy reinstates the BLM's authority to inventory and consider wilderness characteristics in their resource management plans. The Eastern Interior wilderness inventories still need to be completed for the Black River planning area. Local communities are working to protect this area and could use your support. Visit ([website for action](#)) to ask your local representative to support the Wild Lands policy for BLM managed lands.

The League anticipates a draft RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be released in spring 2011. For more information, please contact *Darcie Warden 907.459.5539*

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