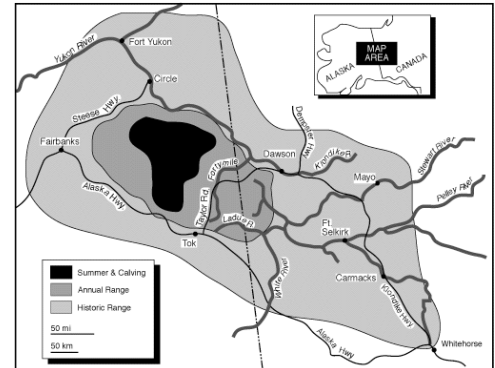


Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River and the Fortymile Caribou Herd

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan contains the Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River which also includes important habitat for the Fortymile Caribou Herd. The Fortymile River is an internationally recognized river and tributary to the Yukon – Alaska's longest river and a key cultural and subsistence resource for Alaskan communities. The Fortymile Caribou Herd is a top source of subsistence for Eastern Interior residents and continues to be a priority management species with a long history of population struggles.



The range of the Fortymile Caribou Herd wholly encompasses the Eastern Interior planning area.

Mining activities have a long history in the Fortymile River area resulting in the degradation and pollution of resources. Continued and increased allowances for mining activities could result in further damages to the prosperity and health of the river and its recreational value. In order to improve water quality, protect habitat, wildlife and recreational areas, the BLM must increase and enforce standards for mining activities as well as determine where development may not be permissible.

Restoring the Health of the Natural Systems Needs to Be a Number One Priority



Photo by Gary Braasch

In the not-so-distant past, it used to take 20 days for the Fortymile Caribou Herd, formerly the largest herd in Alaska, to migrate across the Steese Highway: it now takes a few hours. Due to population struggles caused by over harvesting, climate change, habitat loss, predation and overall poor management, the herd was designated a 'management priority population' in the 1980s. Goals were established to increase the size of the herd from a few thousand to 50,000. Today, the herd currently numbers at 51,000 due to stronger management and habitat protection measures, but the pressures on the herd have not decreased.

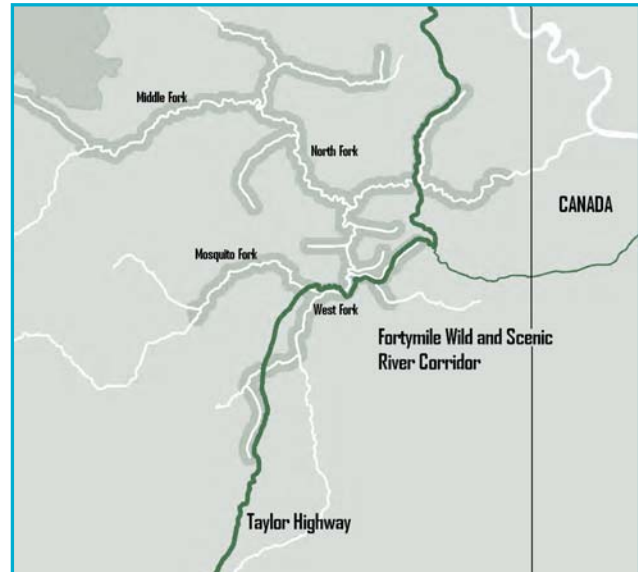
The Fortymile River is a national treasure shadowed by a mining past. During the summer months, approximately 6,000 people from all over the United States and around the world visit the Fortymile area for hiking, fishing, hunting and boating opportunities. The area provides a rich source of subsistence and provides prosperity for local residents. The current management and level of mineral development in the Fortymile River corridor is inconsistent with its recognition and designation as a Wild and Scenic River. These practices have resulted in noticeable pollution impacts and the deterioration of the water ways, resulting in lasting impacts on the waterway.

Can Mining and Wildlife Co-exist?

The Fortymile River area has a history of mineral development, both in the corridor of the designated Wild and Scenic River and on adjacent lands; it is the location of recreational and small scale mining activities. However, if development is allowed to increase and the corridor is opened to new leasing operations, we may decrease the health of the caribou herd, recreational opportunities, water quality on this international waterway, and reduce or eliminate fish habitat

in the river. During this planning process, we can set standards that allow multiple uses, but they must be balanced to ensure the sustainability of the area.

- Current management of the river corridor is inconsistent with its congressional designation for protections. Mineral development is allowed and often prioritized despite damaging impacts to the river. The BLM expects increases in mineral development as market prices increase. Our concern is that the river will become a mining district instead of a world-class, recreational destination.
- The current river management has discretionary and insufficient water quality standards. Stronger and more realistic standards must be set and upheld to reduce the impacts to aquatic resources from mining activities and to protect sensitive resources.
- Mining activities increase suspended sediments in the waterways which can have dramatic impacts on aquatic habitat and species. Suspended sediments can potentially reduce or even eliminate fish spawning habitat.
- The BLM should work cooperatively with the Fortymile Caribou Herd Management team, and establish strong management goals and standards to protect habitat for the herd. Management must be consistent with the goal of the Caribou Herd management team:
 - Restore the diversity of the system and the traditional range of the herd by minimizing development in critical habitat areas;
 - Decrease harvest amounts with priorities for rural hunting allowances and conduct monitoring studies;
 - Areas that are currently closed or seasonally restricted need to be maintained; and
 - Monitor climate change impacts and prevent losses to the herd and critical habitat.



The Fortymile Wild and Scenic River Corridor hosts year round recreation including: white water rafting, fishing, camping and hiking excursions.

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](http://www.alaskawild.org)) 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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www.AlaskaWild.org**