

Opportunity to Protect Special Areas Within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska



© Reserve Rainbow, Arctic Lupine, and Brants by Dave Shreffler

The National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (Reserve) is the largest single unit of public lands in the nation. Encompassing 23.5 million acres, the Reserve harbors rich and vital wild lands and wildlife, important in their own right and to the Inupiat people of Alaska's North Slope for their subsistence culture. President Harding established the Naval Petroleum Reserve-Alaska in 1923. Congress transferred management of the Reserve from the Navy to the Interior Department in 1976, and required the Secretary of Interior to provide "maximum protection" for the Reserve's critical biological and cultural resources.

Bureau of Land Management Developing an Area Wide Plan

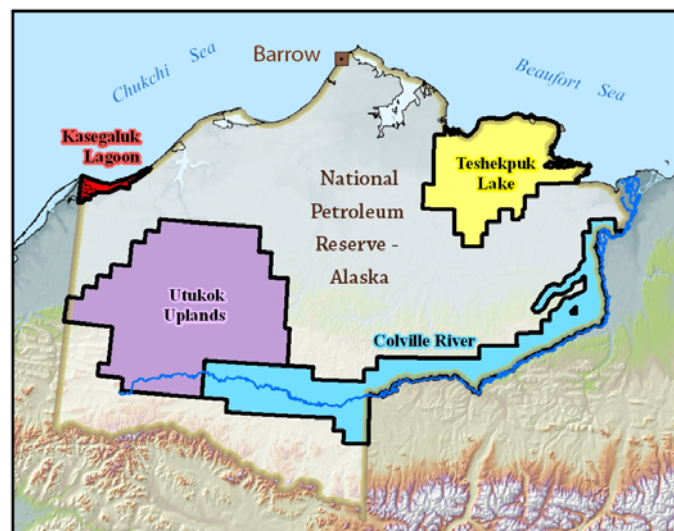
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is drafting an area wide plan for the Reserve. The plan developed through this process will replace existing plans with a single plan that covers all lands within the Reserve. The goal of this management plan is to help BLM identify management actions that are needed to reduce impacts to resources from oil and gas leasing and other activities that may occur in the Reserve in the future and will include management goals, objectives and actions. BLM is currently reviewing input from the public, tribal governments, and other government agencies.

Priority Conservation Special Areas in the Reserve

The issues BLM is taking under consideration include: oil and gas leasing, Special Areas (see map at right), caribou, long-term impacts from climate change, mining, protection of threatened species, impacts to the Reserve's subsistence resources from possible off-shore oil and gas development in the Beaufort or Chukchi Seas, and protection of important waterfowl and raptor habitats.

Teshkepuk Lake: Located on Alaska's North Slope, within the Reserve, the Lake and its surrounding wetlands are ecologically unique and one of the most important wildlife habitats in the circumpolar. Gray wolves, grizzly bears, polar bears, and the 45,000 Teshkepuk Lake caribou herd all thrive in this area. The area is important for subsistence hunting and fishing to residents of several North Slope Native villages, including Barrow and Nuiqsut.

Utukok River Uplands: This lush area includes critical calving areas and other habitats for the 450,000 animal Western Arctic caribou herd utilized by 40 villages for subsistence throughout Western Alaska.



Colville River: The cliffs along the Colville River provide critical nesting sites and adjacent hunting areas for peregrine and gyrfalcons, golden eagles, and rough-legged hawks; two tributaries, the Kikiakrorak and Kogosukruk Rivers also possess outstanding wildlife values.

Kasegluk Lagoon: A unique barrier island ecosystem within and adjacent to the Reserve along the Chukchi Sea coast, this area has high marine mammal, fish, waterfowl and other wildlife values. These resources are heavily relied on by local subsistence users. Up to 3,500 beluga whales gather in the area to feed and bear their young. The area is also used by grizzly and polar bears.

Dease Inlet-Meade River: The wetlands found here are key habitats for waterfowl, loons, and shorebirds. Yellow-billed and red-throated loons, brant, white-fronted geese, king eider, and the threatened spectacled eider nest in high densities. Spotted seals have an important haul out area, and polar bears den along the outer shores.

Peard Bay: These wetlands provide important shorebird and waterfowl habitat including high nesting densities of spectacled eiders. It is also an important polar bear denning area.

DeLong Mountains and Arctic Foothills: Located in the remote headwaters of the Colville and Utukok River, this area provides critical habitat for bear, wolf, wolverine, and caribou. It also has high wilderness and river values.

Ikpikpuk River: This region is a key nesting site for peregrine falcons and habitat for fish.

A balanced approach to management of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska would provide meaningful, lasting protection for key natural areas, wildlife habitat, and subsistence uses while permitting responsible development elsewhere under a well-funded program of oversight and enforcement of environmental protection laws and regulations.

After a series of public meeting open houses, BLM has received 175,000 comments through its planning process. We expect that the area wide plan will be released in 2012.

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Visit our website at www.AlaskaWild.org.