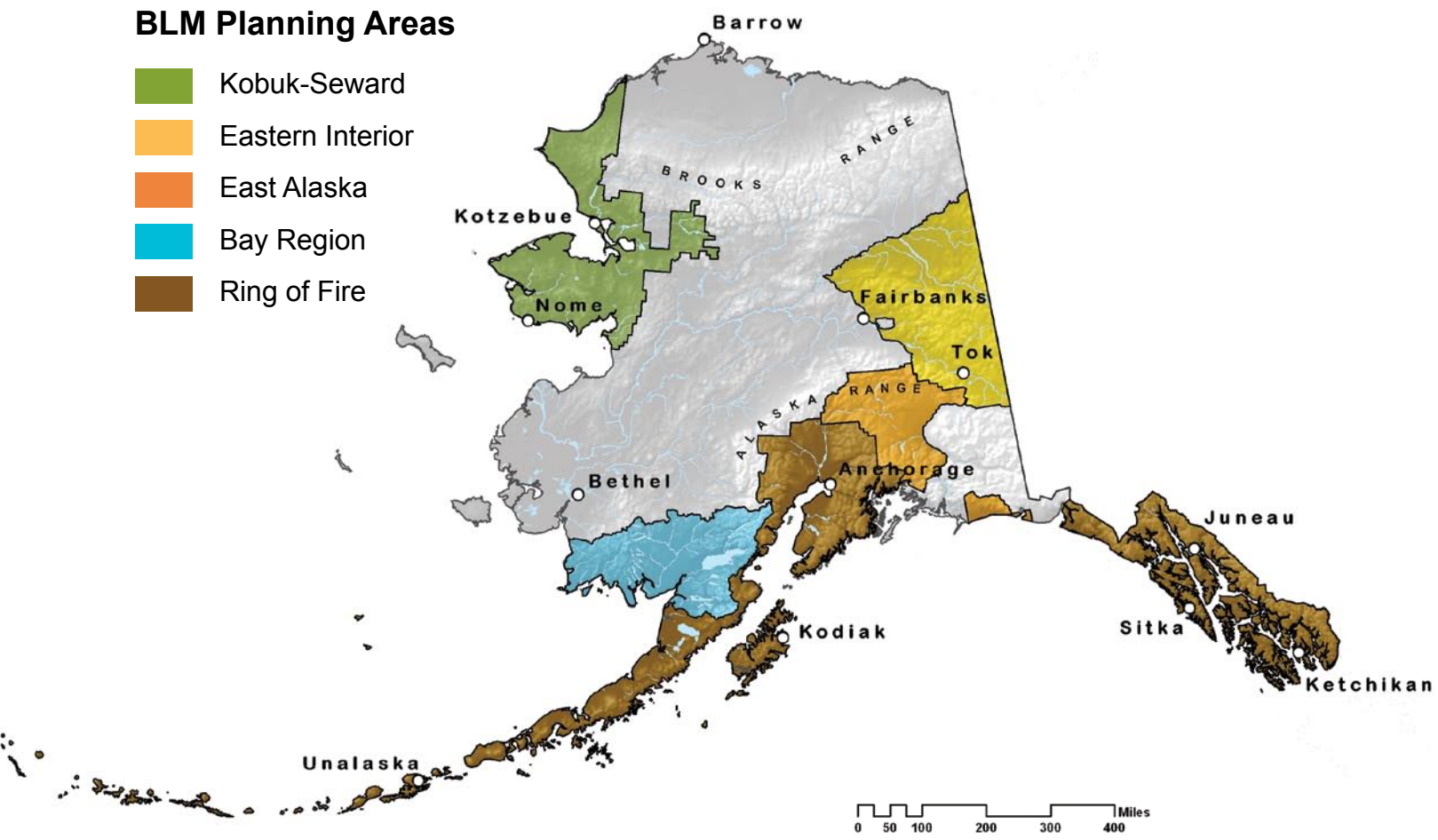
Alaska's Hidden Gems:
Exploring Alaska's BLM Lands

Where can you find 80 million acres of unique history, wild untouched beauty and once-in-a-lifetime outdoor adventure? Only in Alaska. In a state known for its vast expanses of wilderness, there are still some areas yet to be discovered. These areas are managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management, and that means that they belong to all of us.

The following pages will introduce you to just five of the most spectacular of these areas (which together total 34.6 million acres), in order to shine the spotlight on these natural gems. The federal government is quickly making decisions that can rob Americans of these wild lands that we share. We need to keep Alaska wild because it is a national treasure.



500,000 Caribou: Kobuk-Seward Region

The Western Arctic Caribou herd, with nearly 500,000 animals, is the world's largest. The herd winters and summers throughout this 11.9 million acre expanse in northwest Alaska. Some 40 rural Alaskan communities, including many Alaska Natives, depend on these caribou for their subsistence lifestyle.

Salmon Central: Bristol Bay Region

Millions of salmon return here each year to push up river to spawn – creating not only the world's largest wild salmon runs, but also the largest commercial salmon fishery on earth. While five species of Pacific salmon are found in the Bay Region (chinook, coho, sockeye, chum and pink), the area accounts for more than 55 percent of wild sockeye salmon production in the world.

40 Million Birds: Ring of Fire Region

The largest number of sea birds in North America—nearly 40 million birds of 30 species—come to the Ring of Fire region each year to nest and raise their young. Covering a total of 1.3 million acres, the Ring of Fire region is made up of widely fragmented pieces of land that run across southeast and south central Alaska, and include Kodiak Island and the Aleutian Islands.

Longest, Highest and Largest: East Alaska Region

The largest, longest glacier in North America is found here. The Bering Glacier winds its way through the St. Elias Range, the highest coastal mountain range in the world, for 1,900 miles. The region is known as a globally-renowned glacial research area.

Mighty Yukon River: Eastern Interior Planning Area

The Yukon River is Alaska's longest river and it is home to the longest salmon migration in the world. The river spans more than 2,000 miles and supplies an international fishery shared by the U.S. and Canada. The region's chinook and chum salmon are cherished for their size and high oil content.

The Alaska Wilderness League and Campaign for America's Wilderness are working hard to ensure these five special places stay wild. And the timing couldn't be more critical. The BLM is currently proposing to open nearly 100 percent of the total 34.6 million acres to oil, gas and mineral development.

Historically, these lands have been protected by the BLM for the purpose of inventory and classification—until it could be determined which areas warrant protection. For generations, these lands have supported Alaska Native cultures, wildlife and the sustainable economies of recreation, hunting and sport and commercial fishing.

Now, quickly and quietly, the BLM is drawing up "Resource Management Plans" for the five areas—in order to cover these wild treasures with a spider web of development. Unless Americans demand a common sense approach to developing Alaska's resources, these wild places will not remain wild for future generations to enjoy.

We believe we must slow this process down and bring greater transparency to the decisions and actions that threaten our nation's treasures. Direct congressional oversight of the BLM is needed immediately to protect the public interest, provide greater transparency in BLM planning and hold the agency accountable. BLM must prioritize existing uses and protect sensitive areas while taking a balanced approach to responsible development. Instead of the current fast-track approach, planning needs to be inclusive and on a realistic timeframe that ensures the public can be involved.

Together, we can ensure the strongest protection possible for Alaska's wild lands.

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