



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges

P.O. Box 277

King Salmon, Alaska 99613



In Reply Refer To:

November 29, 2022

Subject: Invitation to Consult on Preventing Issues with Unattended Personal Property on Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

Dear ANCSA Corporation Leader:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is considering proposing revisions to the Alaska-specific National Wildlife Refuge regulations on unattended personal property, including fuel, on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska. In recent years, user groups have voiced concerns with gear and equipment caches, including improperly maintained and stored fuel caches, being permanently left on Alaska refuges and impacting their experience on those refuges, as well as causing environmental damage. We have had several instances where large hunt camps have been permanently left on Alaska refuges or where large fuel caches have been abandoned, causing not only environmental damage to the refuge, but also adversely impacting other's ability to use and enjoy the refuge.

Therefore, we are considering shortening the timeframe personal property can be left unattended on Alaska refuges from 12 months to 4 months to help ensure property is removed at the end of each season, and particularly before the winter when it becomes much more difficult to remove and is more likely to be permanently abandoned. The Refuge Manager would still be able to authorize personal property to be left for longer periods of time on a case-by-case basis in writing. We are also considering adding standards for managing and storing fuel on Alaska National Wildlife Refuges to reduce the likelihood of a spill that could impact fish, wildlife, habitat, or human health and safety. Finally, we are considering requiring personal property to be labeled with proper identification (owner's first and last name, telephone number, date that the property was left if longer than 24 hours, or other valid registration markings/decals), so that the Refuge staff can ensure that personal property is not abandoned or to communicate with the owners on any other issues with the unattended property.

With these revisions, we are hoping to prevent property being abandoned on Alaska National Wildlife Refuges and resolve issues related to unattended property causing environmental damage and impacting other users' experience and ability to conduct subsistence and recreational activities on Alaska's National Wildlife Refuges.

We would greatly appreciate Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Corporation participation in consultation on this matter. Your thoughts and concerns will inform the revisions to the regulations we propose and help ensure that the revisions won't adversely impact your ability to access subsistence resources. Your input and guidance are important to us, and we are committed to providing opportunities for meaningful and respectful consultation between ANCSA Corporations and FWS officials.

Our goal is to have a proposed rule published for public comment by the spring of 2023. In order to accomplish this, we would like to complete consultations with ANCSA Corporations by January 30, 2023. If your ANCSA Corporation would like to consult with us, please contact Susan Alexander, Refuge Manager at 907-469-0431 or susan_alexander@fws.gov. Consultation could also occur when the proposed rule is available for public comment. Remember, ANCSA Corporations can request consultation at any time.

If you have questions regarding government-to-government consultation, please contact Crystal Leonetti, Alaska Native Affairs Specialist, at 907-786-3868 (email crystal_leonetti@fws.gov).

Sincerely,

Susan Alexander
Refuge Manager

Notification also sent to:

Alaska Tribes