



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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News

11-XX

March 16, 2012

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**Service Seeks Public Comment on Izembek Land Exchange/Road Corridor
Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking public comment on a draft Environmental Impact Statement (draft EIS) for the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Land Exchange/Road Corridor. The Service is opening a 60-day public comment period, and comments should be submitted no later than May 18, 2012.

The draft EIS, released today, evaluates a three-party land exchange that would add approximately 56,000 acres to the Izembek and Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuges, designates approximately 43,000 acres as wilderness, transfers 1,600 acres of refuge lands on Sitkinak Island to the State of Alaska, and transfers an estimated 200-acre, 9-mile corridor through Izembek Refuge and Izembek Wilderness to the State. The purpose of this land exchange is to allow a road to be constructed between the communities of King Cove and Cold Bay.

The Service analyzed five alternatives in the draft EIS: no action, two road alternatives, a hovercraft service six days a week and a ferry service. The draft EIS does not specify a preferred alternative, but the Service will evaluate public comments and identify a preferred alternative in the final EIS.

Geoff Haskett, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Alaska Regional Director, said, "The draft Environmental Impact Statement is a detailed analysis and a good first step. The Service welcomes substantive input during the comment period, and we will be working with all of the stakeholders and cooperators as we move ahead."

In the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (the Act), Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to prepare an EIS to conduct an analysis of the proposed land exchange with the State of Alaska

and the King Cove Corporation. In addition, the Act required an analysis of a road corridor through Izembek NWR in designated Wilderness between the communities of Cold Bay and King Cove, Alaska.

The project planning team includes the Service (lead agency), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration - Western Federal Lands Division, State of Alaska, Aleutians East Borough, City of King Cove, King Cove Corporation, the Agdaagux Tribe, and the Belkofski Tribe as formal cooperators. The Environmental Protection Agency and Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council also are working with the planning team, though they are not formal cooperators. The Service conducted public involvement and scoping in 2010 and developed and analyzed alternatives in 2010 and 2011.

Comments on the draft EIS should be submitted no later than May 18, 2012. A copy of the draft plan is available at: <http://izembek.fws.gov/EIS.htm> or you may request hard copies or CDs of the draft plan by email, izembek_eis@fws.gov; or telephone, (907) 786-3357. Public comments may be submitted by email to: izembek_eis@fws.gov; by fax to 907-786-3965; or by mail to: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Stephanie Brady, Project Team Leader, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Rd., MS-231, Anchorage, AK 99503.

During the 60-day comment period, the Service intends to hold informational public meetings in Alaska at these locations: Anchorage, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon and Sand Point. Official testimony will be recorded at each meeting. Public meeting details may be found at <http://izembek.fws.gov/EIS.htm>.

A summary of the comments received and responses to substantive comments will be included in the final EIS, which is scheduled to be released in the fall of 2012. A Record of Decision will be completed no earlier than 30 days after release of the final Environmental Impact Statement. Following the Record of Decision, the Secretary of the Interior will determine if the land exchange is in the public interest.

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge is the smallest and one of the most ecologically unique of Alaska's refuges. Most of the refuge is designated wilderness and home to a diverse array of wildlife species including five species of salmon; furbearers such as wolf, fox and wolverine; large mammals such as caribou, moose and brown bears; shorebirds, seabirds; and other waterfowl. For more information about the refuge visit, <http://izembek.fws.gov>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/usfws) at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our [tweets](https://twitter.com/usfwshq) at [www.twitter.com/usfwshq](https://twitter.com/usfwshq), watch our [YouTube Channel](http://www.youtube.com/usfws) at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our [Flickr page](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq) at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>

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