



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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News

05-18

For Release: August 4, 2005

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Izembek Refuge to Hold Public Meeting Regarding Off-Road Vehicle Area Closure

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Manager, Sandra Siekaniec, will hold public meetings to present the final decision regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Area Closure of Off-Road Vehicle Use for Subsistence Purposes." The area in question is approximately 4-square miles adjacent to the recently approved King Cove Access Project. The Aleutians East Borough will construct a 17.2 mile road along the east side of Cold Bay waters between the King Cove airstrip and a planned Northeast Cold Bay Hovercraft Terminal on King Cove Corporation land. The road would pass within one-half mile of wilderness lands within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). This closure was discussed in the King Cove Access Project, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in December 2003.

Because these Refuge lands have not been accessible, they do not have a history of off road vehicle (ORV) use. If ORV users were to use the new road as a means of entering the Refuge through routes other than currently designated roads or trails, damage to the Refuge could result.

During discussions with the Aleutians East Borough (AEB), King Cove Corporation (KCC) and State of Alaska, these entities have provided their concurrence to this closure.

Public meetings on the final area closure will be conducted at the following locations:

Cold Bay Community Center - Tuesday, August 23, 2005 at 7:00 p.m.

King Cove Community Center - Wednesday, August 24, 2005 at 7:00 p.m.

Additional background on the ORV issue can be found in the following documents, which may be obtained from city offices of the nearby communities, or from the web site at: <http://izembek.fws.gov/publicmeeting.htm>.

1. "Area Closure Document, Off-Road Vehicle Use for Subsistence Purposes"
2. "Figure 1. Map of Proposed ORV Closure Area"
3. "Impact Analysis of Off-Road Vehicle Use for Subsistence Purposes on Refuge Lands and Resources Adjacent to the King Cove Access Project"
4. "Historical Review of the Use of Motorized Vehicles on Lands Administered by Izembek Refuge"
5. "Final Limited Area Closure Document, Off-Road Vehicle Use for Subsistence Purposes"
6. "Final ORV Closure Area (Map)"

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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