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Programmatic fire hazardous fuels management plan environmental assessment available for public comment

ANCHORAGE: The National Park Service (NPS) has released for public review an environmental assessment (EA) that addresses new protocols for protecting life and infrastructure within Alaska National Park System area boundaries by managing hazardous vegetation, also known as fuels. Areas covered in the proposed plan include: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#), [Lake Clark National Park and Preserve](#), [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#), [Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve](#), [Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve](#), [Bering Land Bridge National Preserve](#), [Cape Krusenstern National Monument](#), [Noatak National Preserve](#) and [Kobuk Valley National Park](#). The analysis does not include areas in Southeast Alaska, [Kenai Fjords National Park](#), and [Denali National Park and Preserve](#).

Each affected NPS area has an approved fire management plan (FMP) and fuels management plan. The plans were designed to protect visitors, employees, firefighters and infrastructure in the event of a wildfire. FMPs are reviewed annually and undergo a comprehensive review and update every five years. Most of the EAs associated with the original FMPs were completed 8-12 years ago. The original plans emphasize wildfire response and include fuel reduction techniques such as mechanical and prescribed fire. They were developed at a time when the magnitude of the hazardous fuels program was not fully developed and do not address hazardous fuels build up mitigation actions – a critical component of a proactive fuels reduction program. They also do not address potential environmental impacts of specific fuel reduction prescriptions. That level of detail was beyond the scope of the original FMPs and EAs and the fire management program has since evolved to accommodate an increased need to protect NPS and community assets.

This EA is needed to evaluate the scope and effects of detailed hazardous fuels removal protocols and to address a maintenance plan for maintaining adequate defensible space around facilities and

sites. The EA available public review analyzes the proposed action and alternatives and impacts on the environment.

The EA was completed in accordance with the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act and the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9).

The EA comment period will extend 30 days, beginning August 21, 2013 and ending Sept. 20, 2013. Please post comments to the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) program at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Be aware that comments may be available to the public at any time. If your comment includes your address, phone number, email address or other personal identifying information, you may ask the NPS to withhold your personal identifying information from public view. However, the NPS does not guarantee we will be able to do so. We will always make submissions available from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of or officials of organizations or businesses. Please send written comments to the attention of Bud Rice at 240 West 5th Ave, Anchorage, Alaska 99501.

The EA has been mailed to the State of Alaska, various federal agencies, affected communities, area landowners and parties who have expressed an interest in this effort. Others can request a hard copy or CD-ROM of the EA or download the document from the PEPC web page at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=43090>.

Please contact Bud Rice, Environmental Protection Specialist at 907.644.3530, william_rice@nps.gov or Dan Warthin, Regional Wildland Fire Management Officer at 907.644.3409, dan_warthin@nps.gov for additional information.

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