



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BERING LAND BRIDGE NATIONAL PRESERVE
PO Box 220, 214 Front Street
NOME, ALASKA 99762

June 3, 2011

Public Scoping Letter Reindeer Grazing Enclosures

Dear Interested Public,

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to install a set of 18 grazing enclosures in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (BELA). The enclosures would protect vegetation from grazing, and would be used to answer the questions:



1. How would the tundra vegetation condition change in the absence of reindeer, caribou, and muskox grazing in a variety of vegetation communities?
2. How long does it take for a heavily grazed area to recover the abundance and diversity of lichens comparable to that in an ungrazed area?

We request your comments on this proposal by July 5, 2011. Please send us comments through the web site <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>, by email to Jeanette_Pomrenke@nps.gov, by mail to the

above address, by fax to 907-443-6139, by Twitter to BELA Tweet, or stop in our offices and talk to us. The NPS will issue a detailed environmental assessment (EA) for this project and we want your scoping comments as we develop the EA.

Between 1999 and 2005, NPS conducted winter range studies in BELA. During these studies, a set of 78 long-term lichen monitoring plots were established. BELA's plots had much more lichen biomass than sites outside BELA known to be heavily grazed. Unfortunately, the plots with known heavy grazing were in a different climate

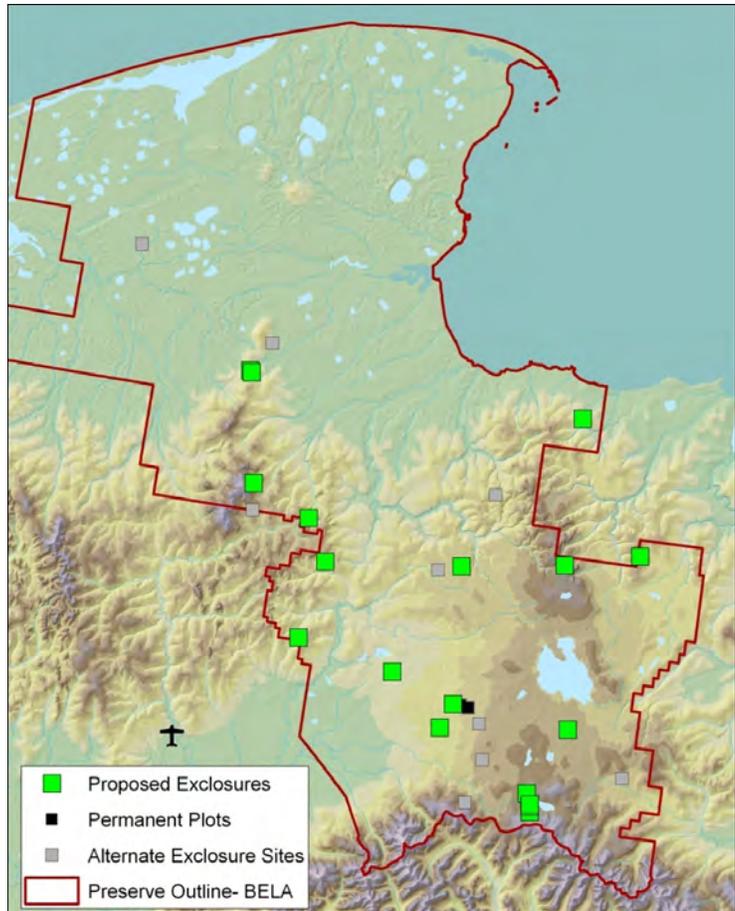


than occurs inside BELA. The condition of BELA's plots relative to heavily grazed or ungrazed plots in the same climate is therefore unknown.

The proposed exclosures would assist NPS in understanding the changes in long-term winter range vegetation. Exclosures would be co-located with the existing monitoring plot network. Each 30 x 30 ft exclosure would contain two vegetation plots inside and two immediately adjacent. Where possible, the plots outside the exclosure would be inside of the larger 1 acre long-term monitoring plot.

Statistically rigorous point counts would be used to monitor the exclosure plots. This method of monitoring is designed to detect even subtle differences between grazed and ungrazed conditions. Exclosures would be placed in a broad spectrum of ecological types from alpine to lowland in order to characterize the differences in grazing effects and recovery time in different places on the landscape. Little is known about long-term recovery of lichens following heavy grazing, and what is known generally applies only to lowland, mixed reindeer lichen ecotypes.

NPS's array of exclosures would compare grazed to ungrazed plant communities along the full continuum of BELA's ecological zones. The exclosures would be maintained for 30 to 50 years.



We look forward to your comments on this project.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Pomrenke

Superintendent