



Scoping Newsletter

Exotic Plant Management Plan for Alaska Parks / Environmental Assessment

Message from the Regional Director

August 2006

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing an Exotic Plant Management Plan to address a persistent and growing problem with exotic (i.e. non-native) plants in Alaska's National Park System units. We are preparing this plan and environmental assessment (EA) to consider chemical and biological control methods where physical control methods have failed or are unlikely to stop aggressive plants. Control methods for exotic plants involve potential impacts to natural and cultural resources and human health. This newsletter is the start of the public involvement process. We want your thoughts and ideas to help us identify pertinent issues and develop appropriate alternatives for the plan.

In recent years exotic plant species in Alaska have increased in diversity, abundance, and distribution. Some species are invasive, moving into natural areas and harming our environment, economy, or human health. Impacts of exotic plants to natural ecosystems are many and varied, ranging from fish and wildlife habitat degradation to displacement of native plant communities to the alteration of processes such as nutrient cycling, succession, and wildfire regimes. As an example, Japanese knotweed is spreading in Southeast Alaska and is known from the Pacific Northwest to form dense single-species stands along streams and rivers, changing water flow and thereby degrading salmon habitat. While native species predominate in Alaska National Park System units, the threat of invasion grows every year. Active, long-term, and strategic management is necessary to prevent the introduction and spread of exotic plants in Alaska's National Park System units.

The NPS is mandated to manage this problem by multiple laws and policies. The NPS Organic Act (1916) and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (1980) direct us to conserve unaltered ecosystems, natural and cultural objects, and scenery within our National Park System units. Further, Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species (1999) requires all federal agencies to pursue invasive species management. NPS Management Policies (2006) states, “Exotic species will not be allowed to displace native species if displacement can be prevented.”

We have assessed all sixteen of Alaska's NPS units for the identity, distribution, and abundance of exotic plants within and near their borders. Parks at greatest risk of invasion are those on the road system and in Southeast Alaska. The next tier of parks has few exotic plants because of fewer visitors and more challenging access. We found no exotic plants in the most remote parks with the fewest visitors. See the map on the back page for a representation of survey results.

NPS control efforts in Alaska have consisted only of hand-pulling or mechanical cutting methods. We have effectively eradicated or contained some infestations, but other infestations have persisted or spread. The NPS response to this problem has increased every year, but exotic plants continue to become more widespread and abundant in our parks.

The proposed plan would address prevention measures, inventory and monitoring procedures, and an integrated pest management strategy, which tailors control methods to the species, site, infestation, results, and context.

This newsletter contains the public scoping meeting locations and times, a schedule for completing the EA process, project contact information, and general information about the location of exotic plants in Alaska's National Park units. If you cannot attend any of the public meetings, please send us your thoughts by using our public comment website (see How to Comment inside), use the attached form, or send your own letter or card. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact core project planning staff.

As the NPS Alaska Regional Director, I invite you to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

Marcia Blaszak

What is Scoping?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) defines scoping as "... an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues."

Planning Core Team/Contacts:

NEPA Manager and Project Contact, Bud Rice: 907-644-3530

Project Manager, Jeff Heys: 907-644-3451

NEPA Coordinator, Andrew McCarthy: 907-644-3539

Regional Integrated Pest Management Coordinator, Pat Owen: 907-683-9547

Public Scoping Meetings:

Juneau

Tuesday, September 26, 2006

7:00- 9:00PM

Centennial Hall Hammond Room

Fairbanks

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

6:30- 8:30 PM

Noel Wien Library Public Conference Room

Anchorage

Thursday, September 28, 2006

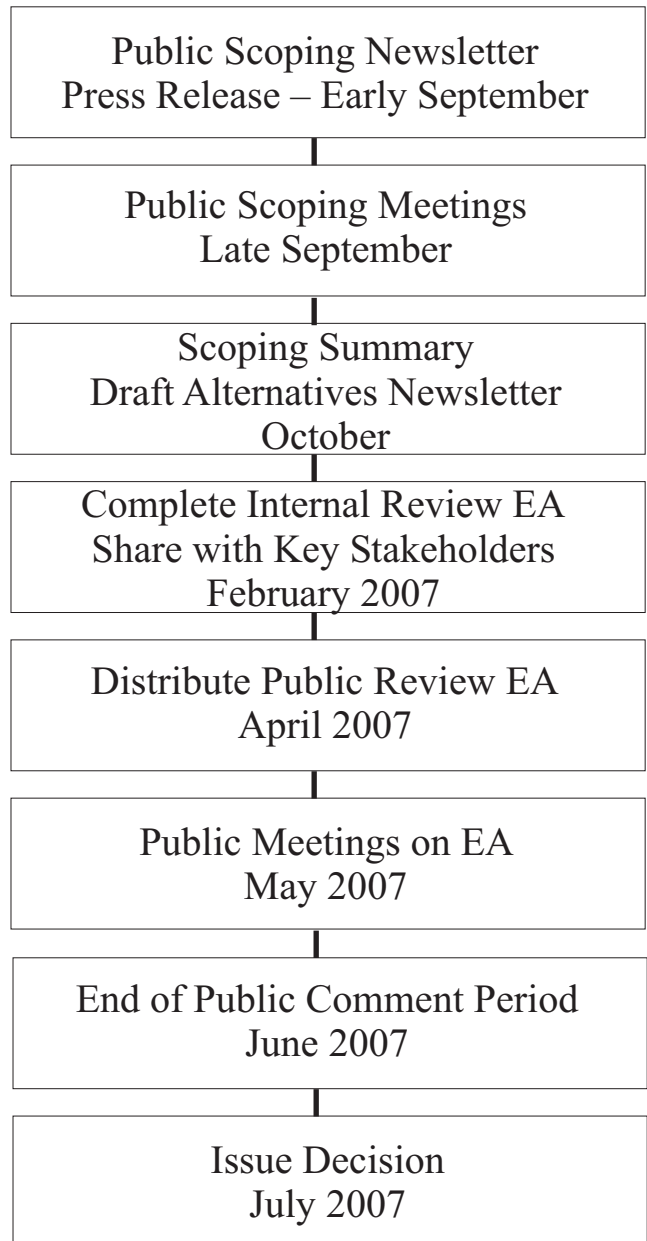
7:00- 9:00 PM

Loussac Library Public Conference Room

NPS Mission Statement:

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

EA Process Approximate Schedule (NEPA public involvement process)

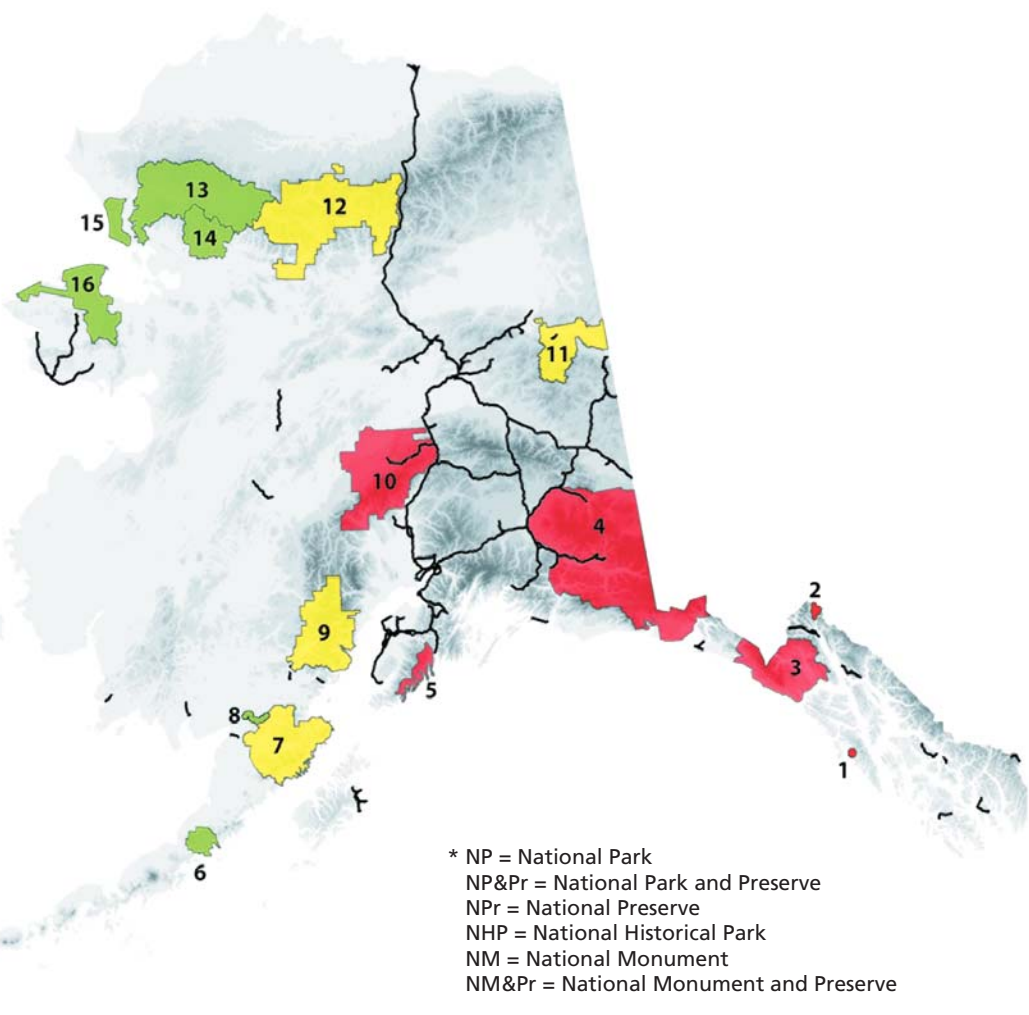


Alaska NPS Units*

1. Sitka NHP
2. Klondike Gold Rush NHP
3. Glacier Bay NP&Pr
4. Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr
5. Kenai Fjords NP
6. Aniakchak NM&Pr
7. Katmai NP&Pr
8. Alagnak Wild River
9. Lake Clark NP&Pr
10. Denali NP&Pr
11. Yukon-Charley Rivers NPr
12. Gates of the Arctic NP&Pr
13. Noatak NPr
14. Kobuk Valley NP
15. Cape Kruzenstern NM
16. Bering Land Bridge NPr

Level of Exotic Plant Threat

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Roads



* NP = National Park
 NP&Pr = National Park and Preserve
 NPr = National Preserve
 NHP = National Historical Park
 NM = National Monument
 NM&Pr = National Monument and Preserve

Relative threat of exotic plant invasion in 16 Alaska NPS units

Help Spread the Word

We're currently expanding our mailing list for this project. Please forward us the contacts for relevant interested parties in your area using the form below. Copies of this newsletter can be downloaded from the following website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/> by selecting the link "Plans/Documents Open for Comment". From the following "Plan/Document List" select the link "Exotic Plant Management Plan for Alaska Parks". Please pass this newsletter on to other interested parties. Thank you!

Cut Here

Record any additional addresses in the space below, and we'll add them to our mailing list for this project.

Mail Form To:

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