



BERING SEA-INTERIOR
TRIBAL COMMISSION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tribes Reject Bureau of Land Management's Proposed Resource Management Plan

On December 4, 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the Bering Sea-Western Interior Proposed Resource Management Plan, which determines the allowable uses of over 13.5 million acres of traditional Tribal land, stretching from the Bering Sea to the upper Kuskokwim. The new resource management plan will guide management of these lands for the next twenty to thirty years, significantly impacting the sixty-five federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes living within the planning area. Alaska Native peoples have stewarded this land since time immemorial and the landscape continues to be foundational to the Tribes' traditional ways of life. Tribes nominated critical watersheds for protection from mining and extractive development in the planning process, yet none of the nominated watersheds received protection in BLM's proposed plan. Instead, BLM opened nearly all the land to mining. "That's not multiple use" said Holy Cross Tribe's First Chief and Tribal Commission Chair Eugene Paul, "that's all the land for one use."

"We don't own the land, but we belong to the land, and what happens to the land happens to us," said Nathan Elswick, Anvik Tribe Environmental Director. BLM failed to recognize planning area Tribes' knowledge, expertise, and role as stewards of their traditional lands. Throughout the planning process, BLM ignored the Tribes' comments and concerns. In its proposed plan, the BLM selects a newly-developed alternative that Cooperating Agency Tribes had no opportunity to review before the plan's publication. BLM's decision to reject meaningful protections for the Tribes' nominated watersheds sends the clear message that the voices of planning area Tribes do not matter in the agency's planning processes.

Frank Katchatag, President of the Native Village of Unalakleet and Vice-Chairman of the Tribal Commission, said: "Impacts to our customary and traditional use areas were not considered or evaluated seriously. Our communities will bear the burden from the plan and our input has been largely ignored."

Bering Sea-Interior Tribal Commission is a tribal consortium of thirty-three federally recognized Tribes working in unity to protect and support our traditional ways of life by advocating for land use planning processes and natural resource management decisions that reflect our voices and values.

Formal protests to the Bering Sea-Western Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environment Impact State can be made here: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/36665/570>