



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# BLM Central Yukon Field Office

Western Interior Regional Advisory Council

McGrath, Alaska

October 7-8, 2025

## CULTURAL RESOURCES AND ARCHAEOLOGY

---

Contact: Crystal Glassburn 474-2240

- In 2025, CYFO cultural resource staff conducted fieldwork to inventory and monitor cultural and historic sites on BLM lands in several areas, including near Coldfoot, in the Atigun River Valley and in the Ruby Mining District. Monitoring known sites is required by BLM policy and includes checking to make sure that cultural sites and resources are in good condition are not being impacted by human or environmental factors (such as recreational users, erosion, wildfire, etc.). The results of the fieldwork showed that most sites are in good condition and are not being impacted by humans. Some sites, especially along rivers and creeks, experience small amounts of natural erosion.
- CYFO cultural resource staff also assisted with interdisciplinary work to ensure cultural resources are in good condition and not being affected by permitted activities, including inspections at mine sites, along right-of-ways (ROWs), at special recreation permit (SRP) use areas, or other areas that have planned work (hazmat removal, fuels reduction projects, etc.).

## ECOLOGY

---

Contact: Anna O'Malley 474-2363

- 2025 was the 10<sup>th</sup> year of herbicide treatment at a closed mineral material site and the sixth year of treatment at six additional mineral material sites. Treatment has been largely successful and will continue with the goals of creating weed-free material sites. Species targeted for treatment include white sweetclover, bird vetch, and narrowleaf hawkweed. Herbicide treatment will continue in 2026.
- In 2024, BLM sought weed free certification for Dalton Highway mineral material sites undergoing herbicide treatment. Eighty-two acres were inspected for weeds. All pits exceeded AK Department of Natural Resources and North American Invasive Species Management Association standards for weed free certification.
- A hand-crew contracted by CYFO completed the fifth year of manual and mechanical treatment of invasive plants in July and August. Treatment sites included high-traffic areas such as parking areas, campgrounds, highway rights-of-way and bridge crossings. Bridge crossing were targeted to minimize downriver migration from infested roadways.
- The CYFO conducted invasive plant surveys along the Jim River in July 2025. No infestations were detected.
- The CYFO, in cooperation with University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service monitored for spongy moths along the Dalton Highway. The spongy moth is an insect pest that is destructive to North America's forests. Moth traps were deployed in June in high traffic areas to detect caterpillars that might be introduced onto vegetation from vehicles travelling from out of state.
- ABR, Inc. conducted fourth year of Riparian & Wetland Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) work in the

Brooks Range Ecoregion. Twenty-one sites were sampled in July 2025. This work is part of a national effort to inventory soil, vegetation, and habitat resources on BLM lands to quantitatively inform resource management. These data will complement the Aquatic AIM data that has been collected in the CYFO since 2018. Sampling will continue in 2026.

- CYFO funded an agreement with the University of Alaska Anchorage, Center for Conservation Science to inventory and monitor BLM Sensitive Plants in the Toolik Research Natural Area, designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern in part for the presence of sensitive plants. Researchers surveyed 380 acres of potential habitat and monitored one population of BLM Sensitive Plants.

## **FISHERIES**

---

*Contact: David Esse 474-2365 or Benjamin Kelly 474-2211*

- CYFO's Aquatic AIM program completed stream surveys at 9 sites across the western portion of the field office, and 4 sites in or near the Brooks Range. The purpose of this project is to describe the range of stream habitat conditions across the field office.
- Aquatics staff conducted surveys of the Jim River and Grayling Lake for *elodea*. No *elodea* was observed.
- The CYFO funded agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Society fish contaminants project has concluded, with sampling locations along the Koyukuk, Alatna and John rivers. The final report showed generally low levels of contaminants in sampled species across the field office, with occasional outliers.
- CYFO funded an agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Society to evaluate pre-spawn mortality of chum salmon from 2025-2027 in tributaries to the Koyukuk and Nenana rivers. Fieldwork will commence in summer 2025.
- Aquatics staff conducted resident fish sampling on the Jim River from just below the Yukon River bridge to the Bettles Winter Road in July 2025. Chinook salmon were observed during this survey.
- Aquatics staff monitored water temperature at 18 locations along Dalton Highway streams and rivers in 2025.

## **HAZMAT AND ABANDONED MINE LANDS**

---

*Contact: Jessica Tighe 474-2360*

- Solid waste removal at Red's Lake was conducted in August 2025. Site closure anticipated after the removal and final inspection.
- The inventory of open mine shafts associated with early drift mining in the Dalton Highway Corridor continues. These shafts pose a potential danger to human health and safety. Temporary closure of these shafts began in August of 2025. Those that need permanent closure are anticipated to be closed beginning in June of 2026. The inventory will be updated and maintained as new shafts are observed and currently lists 17 observed shafts.
- Inventory of historic mining structures and potentially hazardous waste at Long Creek and Greenstone Creek was conducted in July 2025. Results of the inventory show potentially contaminated soil requiring sampling and likely removal as well as the removal of non-historic solid waste; these actions are being planned.
- Spills from vehicles transporting fuels and hazardous materials to and from the North Slope along the Dalton Highway are being cleaned up in coordination with the ADEC.

## HYDROLOGY

---

Contact: Noel Turner 474-2361

- Water quality data was collected in several locations within Prospect Creek and a tributary to monitor placer mine disturbance. The same locations were sampled for water quality during the summer of 2024. This is the last year of planned sampling.
- Measurements at long-term NRCS snow survey sites on the Dalton Highway occurred throughout the winter with slightly above average snow depths. Lake Todatonten was sampled in April.
- Hydrology staff floated the Jim River from the Dalton Highway Jim River 3 bridge to the Bettles Winter Road as part of a multidisciplinary team. Staff collected cross-section data to help build the Jim River regional curve.
- The stream gage with water quality components on South Fork Koyukuk River by USGS was not funded by BLM this year, unfortunately.
- Three soil temperature monitoring stations were installed along the Dalton Highway in 2024. These stations continue to provide soil temperature and snow depth data to BLM.
- Hydrology staff are working with DOT to understand thaw related mass wasting (landslides, frozen debris lobes, sediment flows, etc.) and impacts to infrastructure in the short and long term.

## PLACER MINING

---

Contact: John Barefoot 474-2250

- There were 18 active federal placer gold mining operations in the CYFO in 2025.
- Two new plans of operations were authorized for operations along the Middle Fork Koyukuk River and Gold Creek. Two plan modifications were authorized for operations along Slate Creek and Myrtle Creek. Four plans and plan modifications are being processed along Chapman Creek, Smith Creek, Slate Creek, and Gold Creek.

## PLANNING

---

Contact: Tiffany Kwakwa 474-2364

- The BLM is reviewing revocation of Public Land Orders (PLOs) 5150 and 5180 within the Dalton Utility Corridor north of the Yukon River. Revocation of PLOs 5150 and 5180 within the Dalton Utility Corridor would open the area to location and entry under the public land and mining laws, and to selection by the State of Alaska under the Alaska Statehood Act. The BLM is preparing a Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and expects to post a completed DNA in the fall to inform the Secretary of the Interior's decision about the PLOs. Additional project information and maps are available online: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2039335/510>
- The Central Yukon Resource Management Plan (RMP) Record of Decision was signed in November 2024. This plan will guide management on 13.3 million acres of BLM-managed land in the central interior for the next 15 to 20 years. All material related to the development of the RMP is available for download on the project website: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/35315/510>.
- The Department of Interior (DOI) has rescinded a majority of their NEPA implementation regulations (43 CFR 46) and has provided final guidance in a DOI Handbook of NEPA Procedures available online: <https://www.doi.gov/oepc/national-environmental-policy-act-nepa>. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA implementing regulations were also rescinded (40 CFR 1500-1508).

## **REALTY**

---

*Contact: Matthew Whitman 474-2249 or Melissa Head 474-2247*

- In 2024, BLM authorized Doyon for the portions of their fiber optic line that fall on BLM lands near the Yukon River bridge and along the Elliott and Dalton highways. This project was processed under the FAST-41 Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act). Construction began during the summer of 2025 and is ongoing. More information and documents related to the environmental review can be found here: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2031005/510>.
- The BLM is working with the village of Kaltag on their application for a proposed cultural camp that would be established on the Khotol River. The goal is to eventually grant Kaltag a lease for the camp under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

## **RECREATION**

---

*Contact: Steve Taylor 474-2242, Brian Perry 474-2237, or Kerri Hamos 474-2204*

- The Dalton Highway Yukon River boat launch sign project is on hold due to the departure of staff at the BLM's sign design office. These signs are intended to provide information regarding traditional uses of the river, depict land status along the river, and state contact information for public land management agencies for trip planning.
- Improvements to campground signage along the Dalton Highway is underway.
- Marion Creek Trail improvements continued during the summer of 2025. An additional 400 feet of boardwalk have been installed bringing the total to 700 feet. The project will likely be completed in fall, 2025.
- Staff participated in the 2025 North for Science! Expedition, a partnership with the Alaska Songbird Institute, BLM, USFWS and NPS. Ten middle schoolers spent a week exploring and learning about science and subsistence living in the central Brooks Range. Poor weather and a late summer forced the schedule to be rearranged, but the participants had a great time.
- The Coldfoot Public Use Cabin opened in March 2025. The public can make reservations online at recreation.gov. This facility, which sleeps 4-5 people, is available to the public from mid-October through the end of April. The CYFO will continue to use it for housing BLM staff and volunteers in the summer.
- The CYFO currently authorizes 47 Special Recreation Permits operating in the Western Interior region including:
  - 9 commercial hunting guides (4 operating in or near the Dalton Highway Corridor)
  - 33 commercial sightseeing tour companies
  - 7 backcountry tour guides operating in the Brooks Range on BLM lands adjacent to the Dalton Highway.

## **SAND AND GRAVEL**

---

*Contact: John Barefoot 474-2250*

- There were 8 active federal mineral material sites in CYFO in 2025.
- Resurfacing of the Dalton Highway north of Atigun Pass is expected to begin in 2026.

## **WILDFIRE AND FUELS MANAGEMENT**

---

*Contact: Monika Nicholson 474-2225 or Andrew Smith 474-2270*

- The BLM is developing fuels projects along the Dalton Highway to help assist in fire suppression efforts and to make communities more resilient to wildland fires. Wiseman is the priority community to assess and implement possible fuels treatments. The entire highway corridor will be assessed for possible work to help the highway and structures along the way from being impacted by fire.
- The BLM began a fuels treatment project at Melozitna Hot Springs. The area will be assessed for potential fuel break and all structures will be assessed for firewise treatments. There are numerous woody debris piles constructed during recent fire activity. These piles need to be disposed of likely through burning.
- The BLM burned woody debris piles at Marion Creek. Further burning at Reds Lake and other administrative sites in the field office is planned for the fall of 2025.
- Fuels personnel flew historic a historic trail from Nulato to Koyukuk for a planned project in conjunction with the villages and the Alaska Fire Service to reopen and maintain the trail.

## **WILDLIFE**

---

*Contact: Erin Julianus 474-2358*

- The CYFO conducted snowshoe hare monitoring which includes track counts, browse surveys and pellet counts in March and June, 2025. This project is a 28-year ongoing effort by the NPS to monitor snowshoe hares in the central Brooks Range which began in 1997. In 2025, management of the project transitioned from NPS to BLM and will continue indefinitely in order to monitor hare populations and habitat throughout changing hare cycles.
- The CYFO completed Breeding Bird Surveys along the Dalton Highway in June 2025.
- The NPS conducted Dall's sheep distance estimation surveys on behalf of the BLM in the 1A/1B study area in conjunction with minimum count surveys done by ADF&G. Surveys were completed July 5 to July 11, 2025.
- The BLM is conducting an inventory of Alaska marmot colonies in the central Brooks Range, Ray Mountains, and Kokrine Hills as funding allows. The BLM asks local residents to please contact us if you are aware of marmot colony locations or sightings.