

§ 36.41

50 CFR Ch. I (10–1–20 Edition)

are available from Refuge Headquarters in Kodiak, Alaska.

(5) *Snowmachine prohibition.* Snowmachines, as defined in § 36.2, are prohibited within an approximately 4,972-acre area encompassing Den Mountain and adjacent highlands. The summit of Den Mountain is located within Township 29 South, Range 24 West, Seward Meridian, Alaska. Maps of the closed area are available from Refuge Headquarters in Kodiak, Alaska.

[51 FR 32332, Sept. 11, 1986, as amended at 51 FR 41509, Nov. 17, 1986; 60 FR 37311, July 19, 1995; 61 FR 29497, June 11, 1996; 64 FR 14154, Mar. 24, 1999; 71 FR 33259, June 8, 2006; 75 FR 16639, Apr. 1, 2010; 81 FR 27043, May 5, 2016; 85 FR 54145, Aug. 31, 2020]

Subpart F—Permits and Public Participation and Closure Procedures

§ 36.41 Permits.

(a) *Applicability.* The regulations contained in this section apply to the issuance and administration of competitively and noncompetitively issued permits for economic and/or other privileged uses on all national wildlife refuges in Alaska. Nothing in this section requires the refuge manager to issue a special use permit if not otherwise mandated by statute to do so. Supplemental procedures for granting historical use, Native Corporation, and local preferences in the selection of commercial operators to hold permits to provide visitor services, other than hunting and fishing guiding on refuges in Alaska, are addressed in § 36.37, Revenue producing visitor services.

(b) *Definitions.* As used in this section, the term or terms:

Commercial visitor service means any service or activity made available for a fee, commission, brokerage or other compensation to persons who visit a refuge, including such services as providing food, accommodations, transportation, tours, and guides. Included is any activity where one participant/member or group of participants pays more in fees than the other participants (non-member fees, etc.), or fees are paid to the organization which are in excess of the bona fide expenses of the trip;

Entire business means all assets including, but not limited to, equipment, facilities, and other holdings directly associated with the permittee's type of commercial visitor service authorized by permit. This term also includes assets held under the name of separate business entities, which provide the same specific type of commercial visitor services authorized by permit, that the permittee has a financial interest in. The term does not include related enterprises owned by the permittee such as taxidermy and travel services;

Immediate family means the spouse and children, either by birth or adoption, of the permittee.

Operations plan means a narrative description of the commercial operations which contains all required information identified in the prospectus;

Permit means a special use permit issued by the refuge manager which authorizes a commercial visitor service or other activity restricted by law or regulation on a national wildlife refuge;

Prospectus means the document that the Service uses in soliciting competition to award commercial visitor services on a refuge;

Subcontracting means any activity in which the permittee provides financial or other remuneration to anyone other than employees to conduct the specific commercial services authorized by the Service. The permittee's primary authorized activities must be conducted in a genuine employer/employee relationship where the source of all remuneration for services provided to clients is from the permittee. Subcontracting does not apply to booking services or authorized secondary services provided to clients in support of the permittee's primary authorized activities (e.g., a guide paying a marine or air taxi operator to transport clients);

Subletting means any activity in which the permittee receives financial or other remuneration in return for allowing another commercial operator to conduct any of the permittee's authorized activities in the permittee's use area; and

Use area means the designated area where commercial services may be conducted by the permittee.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Serv., Interior

§ 36.41

(c) *General provisions.* In all cases where a permit is required, the permittee must abide by the conditions under which the permit was issued. Refuge managers will provide written notice to the permittee in all cases where documentation of noncompliance is prepared for use in any administrative proceeding involving the permittee.

(d) *Application.* (1) This section and other regulations in this part 36, generally applicable to the National Wildlife Refuge System, require that permits be obtained from the refuge manager. For activities on the following refuges, request permits from the respective refuge manager in the following locations:

Refuge	Office location
Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge.	King Salmon.
Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.	Homer.
Aleutian Islands Unit, Alaska Maritime NWR.	Homer.
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge	Fairbanks.
Becharof National Wildlife Refuge	King Salmon.
Innoko National Wildlife Refuge	McGrath.
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge	Cold Bay.
Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge	Fairbanks.
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge	Soldotna.
Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge	Kodiak.
Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge	Galena.
Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge	Galena.
Selawik National Wildlife Refuge	Kotzebue.
Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge	Tok.
Togiak National Wildlife Refuge	Dillingham.
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge ...	Bethel.
Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge ...	Fairbanks.

(2) For noncompetitively issued permits, the applicant may present the application verbally if he/she is unable to prepare a written application. The refuge manager will keep a written record of such verbal application. For competitively issued permits, the applicant must submit a written application in the format delineated in the prospectus or other designated format of the Service.

(3) The refuge manager will grant or deny applications for noncompetitively issued permits in writing within 45 days, except for good cause. For competitively issued permits, the refuge manager will grant or deny applications in accordance with the time frame established in the prospectus, except for good cause.

(4) Refuge managers may establish application period deadlines for indi-

vidual refuges for both competitively and noncompetitively issued permits. The refuge manager will send notification of availability for commercial opportunities and application deadlines to existing and/or the previous year's permittees. He/she will publish the notice in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the State and in at least one local newspaper if available, and will make available for broadcast on local radio stations in a manner reasonably calculated to inform local prospective applicants.

(5) The Service may limit the number of applications that an individual may submit for competitively awarded offerings.

(e) *Competitively awarded permits.* (1) Where the number of available permits is limited, refuge managers will award permits competitively. A prospectus with invitation to bid system will be the primary competitive method used for selecting commercial visitor services. Where justified, other selection methods, including but not limited to lotteries, may be used. Such circumstances may include, but not be limited to, the timely refilling of use areas that have become vacant during regularly scheduled terms to prevent commercial visitor service opportunities from going unused, and initiating trial programs on individual refuges. The refuge manager has discretionary authority to issue noncompetitive permits on a one-time, short-term basis to accredited educational institutions and other nonprofit organizations to conduct primarily environmental education-related activities that also may be recreational in nature in use areas where permits for that type of guided recreational activity are otherwise limited to competitive award.

(2) Where numbers of permits have been limited for an activity prior to the promulgation of these regulations and a prospectus with invitation to bid system has not yet been developed, refuge managers may issue noncompetitive five-year permits consistent with the terms set forth in paragraph (e)(16) of this section on a one-time basis to existing permittees.

(3) The Service will publish notice of all solicitations for competition in accordance with paragraph (d)(4) of this

section and include reasonable application periods of not less than 60 days. When competitively selecting permittees for an activity in a use area where permits for that activity were not previously competitively awarded, the Service will publish notice of the upcoming opportunity a minimum of 18 months prior to the effective date of the permit term.

(4) All prospectuses will identify the selection criteria that the Service will use to evaluate the proposals. All prospectuses involving commercial visitor services must include experience and performance in providing the same or similar services as a criterion. In evaluating the experience of an applicant, the Service will specifically consider knowledge of the specific area covered by the prospectus and the nature of the technical skills required to provide quality service to the public.

(5) A panel of Service employees who use a scoring process based on the selection criteria will evaluate and rank applications received in response to a prospectus.

(6) The Service has discretionary authority to not evaluate or consider proposals that are incomplete or improperly submitted.

(7) The Service may establish minimum scores to qualify for the award of permits. If established, these minimum scores will be identified in the prospectus.

(8) The Service may establish limits on the number of use areas within an individual refuge, or on refuges statewide, in which a permittee is authorized to operate. This limit applies to different corporations in which the same individual has any ownership interests.

(9) When vacancies occur in competitively filled use areas, the procedure for reissuing the permits will depend on how long it has been since the permit originally was issued. The Service will award the permit to the next highest ranking interested applicant in the original solicitation, if a vacancy occurs within the first 12 months of the permit's effective date. Resolicited competition for the area will occur as soon as practicable if:

(i) A vacancy occurs after 12 months of the permit's effective date; and

(ii) At least 24 months of the original permit term is available for a new permittee after completion of the solicitation, application, evaluation and awards period. If less than 24 months of the term of the permit is available, the Service has the discretion to solicit competition during the regularly scheduled solicitation period. The Service may annually issue non-competitive permits for vacant areas, where there has not been significant permittee interest, until competition can be solicited in conjunction with other solicitations for vacant areas.

(10) Terms of permits awarded under the prospectus with invitation method are valid for 5 years except in those instances where the Service issues permits to fill vacancies occurring during a scheduled award cycle. In these instances, the permit duration is limited to the expiration date of the original award period. Permits awarded under the prospectus by invitation method must be renewed noncompetitively by the refuge manager for a period of 5 additional years upon application and a showing of permittee compliance with all applicable permit terms and conditions and a satisfactory record of performance. After one renewal, the Service shall not extend or noncompetitively renew another permit.

(11) Permit privileges may be transferred to other qualified entities that demonstrate the ability to meet Service standards, as outlined in the prospectus upon which the existing permit was based, subject to approval by the refuge manager. Requests for transfers must be made in writing to the refuge manager. A permittee who transfers his/her privileges will not be eligible to be considered for competitively awarded permits for the same type of activity on the same national wildlife refuge for a period of three years following the authorized transfer. The Service retains complete discretion in allowing transfers. In general, the Service approves transfers only upon demonstrating that it is to the government's benefit and if all the following criteria are satisfied:

(i) The transfer is part of the sale or disposition of the current permittee's entire business as earlier defined;

(ii) The current permittee was either conducting the commercial operation in the refuge under authorization of a permit for a minimum of 12 years or owns significant real property in the area, the value of which is dependent on holding a refuge permit. Consideration of the last element will include, but is not limited to:

(A) The relationship of the real property to permitted refuge activities as documented in the operations plan;

(B) The percentage that the authorized refuge activities comprise of the total commercial use associated with the real property; and

(C) The appraised value of the real property.

(iii) The transferee must be independently qualified to hold the permit under the standards of the prospectus of the original existing permit.

(iv) The transferee has an acceptable history of compliance with State and Federal fish and wildlife and related permit regulations during the past 5 years. An individual with any felony conviction is an ineligible transferee. Transfer approval to an individual having any violations, convictions, or pleas of nolo contendere for fish and wildlife related federal misdemeanors or State violations will be discretionary. Denial is based on, but not limited to, whether the individual committed any violation in which the case disposition resulted in any of the following:

(A) Any jail time served or probation;

(B) Any criminal fine of \$250 or greater;

(C) Forfeiture of equipment or harvested animal (or parts thereof) valued at \$250 or greater;

(D) Suspension of privileges or revocation of any fish and wildlife related license/permits;

(E) Other alternative sentencing that indicates the penalty is of equal severity to the foregoing elements; or

(F) Any multiple convictions or pleas of nolo contendere for fish and wildlife-related Federal misdemeanors or State fish and wildlife-related violations or misdemeanors irrespective of the amount of the fine.

(12) The transferee must follow the operations plan of the original permittee. The transferee may modify the

operations plan with the written consent of the refuge manager as long as the change does not result in increased adverse impacts to refuge resources or other refuge users.

(13) Upon timely approval of the transfer, the Service will issue the new permittee a permit for the remaining portion of the original permit term. The refuge manager retains the right to restrict, suspend, revoke, or not renew the permit for failure to comply with its terms and conditions.

(14) Permit privileges issued under this paragraph (e) may be transferred, subject to refuge manager approval, to a former spouse when a court awards permit-associated business assets in a divorce settlement agreement to that person. The recipient must independently qualify to hold the originally issued permit under the minimum standards identified by the Service, and the permittee must have an acceptable history of compliance as set forth in paragraph (e)(11)(iv) of this section.

(15) Permit privileges issued under this paragraph (e) may be transferred in the case of death or disability of the permittee, subject to refuge manager approval, as provided in this paragraph (e). In these cases, the permit privileges may pass to a spouse who can demonstrate he/she is capable of providing the authorized services and who has an acceptable history of compliance as set forth in paragraph (e)(11)(iv) of this section. A spouse who lacks any required license(s) but otherwise qualifies may hire an employee, who holds the required license(s) and who has an acceptable history of compliance as set forth in paragraph (e)(11)(iv) of this section, to assist in the operation. Permit privileges may also pass to another member of the immediate family or a person who was a business partner at the time of original permit issuance. This person must be independently qualified under the minimum standards identified by the Service at the time of original permit issuance and have an acceptable history of compliance as set forth in paragraph (e)(11)(iv) of this section.

(16) Upon September 26, 1997, refuge managers will amend existing competitively-awarded permits through the

prospectus method to make the terms fully consistent with this section, including eligibility for a 5-year non-competitive renewal.

(f) *Fees.* Permittees must pay fees formally established by regional and/or nation-wide Service policy. The refuge manager must document any fee exemption.

(g) *Subletting and subcontracting.* A permittee may not sublet any part of an authorized use area. Subcontracting any service authorized by the permit requires written approval from the refuge manager unless the subcontracted service is specifically identified in the permittee's approved operations plan.

(h) *Restriction, suspension and revocation of permits.* The refuge manager may suspend, revoke, or reasonably restrict the terms of a permit for noncompliance with the terms and conditions of the regulations in this subchapter C; for nonuse of the permit; for violations/convictions (including pleas of nolo contendere) of any law or regulation pertaining to the same type of activity authorized by the permit, whether or not the activity occurred on or off the refuge; to protect public health or safety; or if the refuge manager determines the use to be incompatible with refuge purposes or is inconsistent with the Service's obligations under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. All actions pertaining to this paragraph are subject to the appeal process as set forth in paragraph (i) of this section.

(i) *Appeals.* (1) Any person adversely affected by a refuge manager's decision or order relating to the person's permit, or application for a permit, has the right to have the decision or order reviewed by the regional director. This section does not apply to permits or applications for rights-of-way. See 50 CFR 29.22 for the hearing and appeals procedure on rights-of-way.

(2) Prior to making any adverse decision or order on any permit or an application for a noncompetitively issued permit, the refuge manager will notify the permittee or applicant, verbally or in writing, of the proposed action and its effective date. A permittee or applicant of noncompetitively issued permits, shall have 45 calendar days after notification in which to present to the

refuge manager, orally or in writing, a statement in opposition to the proposed action or effective date. Notification in writing to a valid permit holder shall occur within 10 calendar days after receipt of the statement in opposition to the refuge manager's final decision or order. An applicant for a non-competitively issued permit shall be notified in writing within 30 calendar days after receipt of the statement in opposition, of the refuge manager's final decision or order. An applicant for a competitively issued permit who is not selected will not receive advance notice of the award decision. Such applicants, who wish to appeal the decision must appeal directly to the regional director within the time period provided for in paragraph (i)(3) of this section.

(3) The permittee or applicant shall have 45 calendar days from the post-marked date of the refuge manager's final decision or order in which to file a written appeal to the regional director. In appeals involving applicants who were not selected during a competitive selection process, the selected applicant concurrently will have the opportunity to provide information to the regional director prior to the final decision. Selected applicants who choose to take advantage of this opportunity, will retain their right of appeal should the appeal of the unsuccessful applicant result in reversal or revision of the original decision. For purposes of reconsideration, appellants shall present the following information:

(i) Any statement or documentation, in addition to that included in the initial application, permit or competitive prospectus, which demonstrates that the appellant satisfies the criteria set forth in the document under which the permit application/award was made;

(ii) The basis for the permit applicant's disagreement with the decision or order being appealed; and

(iii) Whether or not the permit applicant requests an informal hearing before the regional director.

(4) The regional director will provide a hearing if requested by the applicant. After consideration of the written materials and oral hearing, and within a reasonable time, the regional director

shall affirm, reverse, or modify the refuge manager's decision or order and shall set forth in writing the basis for the decision. The applicant must be sent a copy of the decision promptly. The decision will constitute final agency action.

(5) Permittee compliance with any decision or order of a refuge manager shall be required during the appeal process unless the regional director makes a preliminary finding contrary to the refuge manager's decision, and prepares a written determination that such action is not detrimental to the interests of the United States, or upon submission and acceptance of a bond deemed adequate by the refuge manager to indemnify the United States from loss or damage.

(j) *State selection of guide-outfitters.* Nothing in this section will prohibit the Service from cooperating with the State of Alaska in administering the selection of sport fishing guides and big game hunting guide-outfitters operating on national wildlife refuges should the State develop a competitive selection process which is acceptable to the Service.

[62 FR 45340, Aug. 27, 1997]

§ 36.42 Public participation and closure procedures.

(a) *Authority.* The Refuge Manager may close an area or restrict an activity on an emergency, temporary, or permanent basis.

(b) *Criteria.* In determining whether to close an area or restrict an activity otherwise allowed, the Refuge Manager shall be guided by factors such as public health and safety, resource protection, protection of cultural or scientific values, subsistence uses, endangered or threatened species conservation, and other management considerations necessary to ensure that the activity or area is being managed in a manner compatible with the purposes for which the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge area was established.

(c) *Emergency closures or restrictions.* (1) Emergency closures or restrictions relating to the use of aircraft, snowmachines, motorboats, or non-motorized surface transportation shall be made after notice and hearing;

(2) Emergency closures or restrictions relating to the taking of fish and wildlife shall be accompanied by notice with a subsequent hearing;

(3) Other emergency closures or restrictions shall become effective upon notice as prescribed in paragraph (f) of this section; and

(4) No emergency closure or restriction shall be for a period exceeding 30 days.

(d) *Temporary closures or restrictions.*

(1) Temporary closures or restrictions relating to the use of aircraft, snowmachines, motorboats or non-motorized surface transportation, or to the taking of fish and wildlife, shall not be effective prior to notice and hearing in the vicinity of the area(s) affected by such closures or restriction, and other locations as appropriate;

(2) Other temporary closures shall be effective upon notice as prescribed in paragraph (f) of this section; and

(3) Temporary closures or restrictions shall extend only for so long as necessary to achieve their purposes, and in no case may exceed 12 months or be extended beyond that time.

(e) *Permanent closures or restrictions.* Permanent closures or restrictions shall be made only after notice and public hearings in the affected vicinity and other locations as appropriate, and after publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(f) *Notice.* Emergency, temporary, or permanent closures or restrictions shall be:

(1) Published in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the State and in at least one local newspaper if available, posted at community post offices within the vicinity affected, made available for broadcast on local radio stations in a manner reasonably calculated to inform residents in the affected vicinity, and designated on a map which shall be available for public inspection at the office of the Refuge Manager and other places convenient to the public; or

(2) Designated by the posting of appropriate signs; or

(3) Both.

(g) *Openings.* In determining whether to open an area to public use or activity otherwise prohibited, the Refuge Manager shall provide notice in the