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## **NWRA/Friends of Alaska Refuges Applaud Yukon Flats Land Exchange Decision**

**Washington, DC** - The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) and the Friends of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuges announced their support today for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) decision to choose the “no action alternative” as the preferred alternative in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange.

“The Fish and Wildlife Service made the right decision by choosing the ‘no action’ alternative,” said David Raskin, President of the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. “It was a sound decision based on science, practical implications, and massive public comments and opposition by Native villages that illustrated how debilitating this exchange could be to the third largest unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System.”

The proposed land exchange would transfer 110,000 acres of land from the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge to Doyon, Limited, along with 97,000 acres of land adjacent to the National Wildlife Refuge. The land would be exchanged for 150,000 acres of land currently owned by Doyon to the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, Doyon would have reallocated 56,500 acres of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act land entitlements within the Refuge to lands outside the Refuge.

The NWRA and Friends of Alaska refuge has opposed the exchange for the following reasons:

- Current refuge lands that protect wildlife would be traded away and converted to an oil field;
- While the proposed development was to occur on lands traded to Doyon, it would require infrastructure and pipeline crossing refuge lands and create major “beyond the boundary” problems for the refuge;

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- The land exchange would bisect the refuge, put wildlife at risk by restricting movement, and increase fire protection activities that could change the ecotype and reduce the natural diversity of the area.

“This decision demonstrates Fish and Wildlife Service’s commitment to ensuring Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge is managed first and foremost for the conservation of wildlife,” said Evan Hirsche, President of the NWRA.

Although the FWS has announced their ‘no action’ alternative, the final EIS on the proposed land exchange will likely be released in late 2009, with a Record of Decision in early 2010.

*The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America’s wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity. For more information, visit [www.refugeassociation.org](http://www.refugeassociation.org).*

*The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges educate the public and decision makers on local, national, and international levels about Alaska’s National Wildlife Refuges; assist the refuges in accomplishing their missions through wildlife management and habitat improvement projects; and fund refuge-oriented projects through grants, memberships, donations, and other activities. For more information, visit [www.alaskarefugefriends.org](http://www.alaskarefugefriends.org).*

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