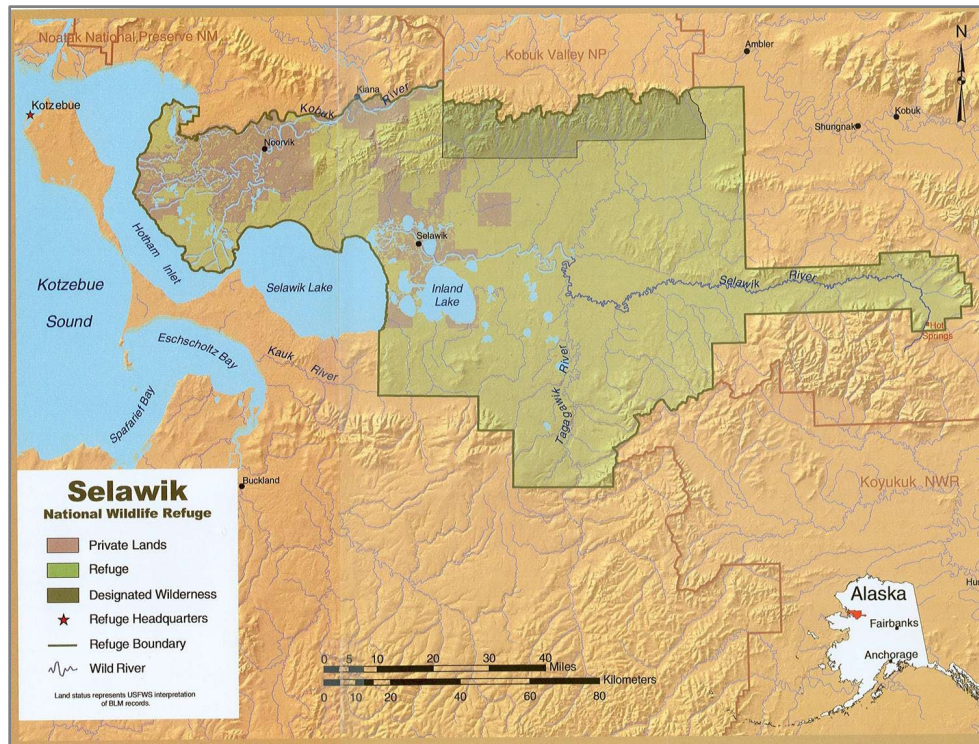




SELAWIK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
KOTZEBUE, ALASKA
907-442-3799



Selawik Refuge Program Updates
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Meeting,
October 16-17, 2023.
Updates as of 10/5/2023



Refuge Purposes:

National Wildlife Refuges are created by Congress to conserve America's fish, wildlife, and plants for present and future generations.

The main purposes of the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge are to:

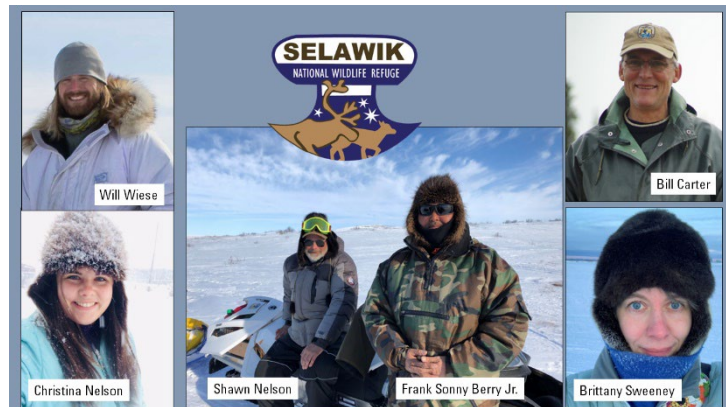
- conserve the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, migratory birds, salmon, and sheefish,
- provide opportunities for continued subsistence uses by local residents, and
- ensure water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge.

Refuge Management Updates

Staffing

The Refuge currently has 5 employees based in Kotzebue and 1 employee based in Selawik. We anticipate hiring 1-2 more people in Kotzebue (Deputy Manager, Administrative Assistant) and 1 more employee in Selawik (Refuge Information Technician) in the coming months. Current staff/positions include:

- Wil Wiese, *Refuge Manager*
- Brittany Sweeney, *Outreach Specialist*
- Bill Carter, *Fisheries Biologist*
- Christina Nelson, *Wildlife Refuge Specialist*
- Shawn Nelson, *Maintenance Professional*
- Frank Berry, Jr., *Maintenance Worker (Selawik)*
- VACANT, *Deputy Manager*
- VACANT, *Administrative Assistant*
- VACANT, *Refuge Information Technician (Selawik)*



The Refuge is grateful to Melissa Brown, former Refuge Information Technician, for her excellent service to the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the community of Selawik. Taikuu Aarigaa!

Hunting Guide Permitting

There currently are no big-game guides permitted to operate on Selawik Refuge. The refuge typically issues one big-game guide permit. Applications for the guide permit will be accepted this winter.



Co-stewardship

Selawik Refuge has long valued working closely with local Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and communities to steward lands, waters, and resources in the region. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is increasing its emphasis on co-stewardship (ie. cooperatively and collaboratively managing, conserving, and preserving natural and cultural resources). Co-stewardship can take many forms, including sharing of knowledge, partnering on projects, and entering into formal agreements. Whatever the form, successfully co-stewarding resources begins with building relationships. Selawik Refuge looks forward to expanding our partnerships and hearing from Tribes, ANCs, and local communities about how we can work better together into the future.

Proposed OTZ Telecom Microwave Tower Broadband Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is leading an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the OTZ tower project, which aims to bring improved internet service to villages in the region. USFWS is cooperating with the BLM to complete the EA. It is anticipated that a draft EA will be completed in late fall/early winter and made available for public review and comment.



Outreach Program Updates

- **Selawik Science and Culture Camp celebrates 20 years!**
We want to thank the Native Village of Selawik, Selawik school, and regional organizations for the long-term partnership to provide this event for Selawik youth. This year camp took place September 5-15 and served about 130 students in grades K-12.
- **Youth Conservation Corps returns for 2023:** Melissa Brown in Selawik served as crew leader for 4 teen “YCC” members during the month of July. YCC is a nationwide program for young people to learn about the environment, career options, and to gain hands-on work experience.
- **Critter of the month:** this year our education team, Brittany and Christina, are launching a new program for elementary school students. Each month they will offer an activity, a craft, and a storybook based around that month’s featured critter. Our primary goal is to serve Selawik, Noorvik, and other refuge-adjacent communities as well as Kotzebue.
- **Hunter Information meetings:** we worked with multiple partners to offer “hunter success” information meetings in regional villages. In August we were able to meet in Noorvik and Ambler, with good turnout in both locations. We will continue trying to meet in other communities, if we can get the tribe, city office, or other partner to help host. Taikuu to Maniilaq Association, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, NANA Lands, National Park Service, and the Northwest Arctic Borough for being a part of this effort.



Biological Program Updates

- **Selawik River Sheefish Project.** Staff from the USFWS Northern Alaska Field office in Fairbanks partnered with refuge staff and Selawik community members to collect sheefish from the spawning grounds on the upper Selawik River in September. The purpose of the project is to better understand how the Selawik thaw slump may have affected the sheefish population.
- **River temperature and discharge monitoring:** Temperature and discharge monitoring continued on the Selawik, Tagragvik (Tagagawik), and Kuugruaq (Kugarak) rivers through 2023. The refuge partnered with Noorvik Native Community staff to deploy a new temperature monitor in the Kobuk River in July.

- **Upcoming studies on potential contaminants in subsistence foods:** The refuge is working with researchers from Texas A&M University and University of Alaska-Fairbanks to facilitate community focused assessments of contaminants in common subsistence foods. Although we are not experts on contaminants and human health, we will be able to help these partners (who do have this expertise) collect samples, as we know this is a topic of concern within the region. We anticipate work beginning in Selawik in 2024.

Facilities Project update

USFWS hopes to construct a new garage/warm storage building next to the refuge office in Kotzebue. Bids for construction will be accepted over the winter with construction expected during summer 2024.

Contact Us

If you have any questions, want more information, would like to share observations, or to just chat, please contact us!

In Kotzebue:

160 2nd Ave. (around the corner from the Borough, or down the street from the bank)
(907) 442-3799 or (800) 492-8848

The Kotzebue office is open M-F, 8am-5pm (except during lunch)

Online:

Refuge website: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/selawik/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SelawikNationalWildlifeRefuge/>

Email:

- Wil Wiese, Refuge Manager: wil_wiese@fws.gov
- Brittany Sweeney, Outreach Specialist: brittany_sweeney@fws.gov
- Bill Carter, Fish Biologist: bill_carter@fws.gov
- Christina Nelson, Wildlife Refuge Specialist: christina_nelson@fws.gov