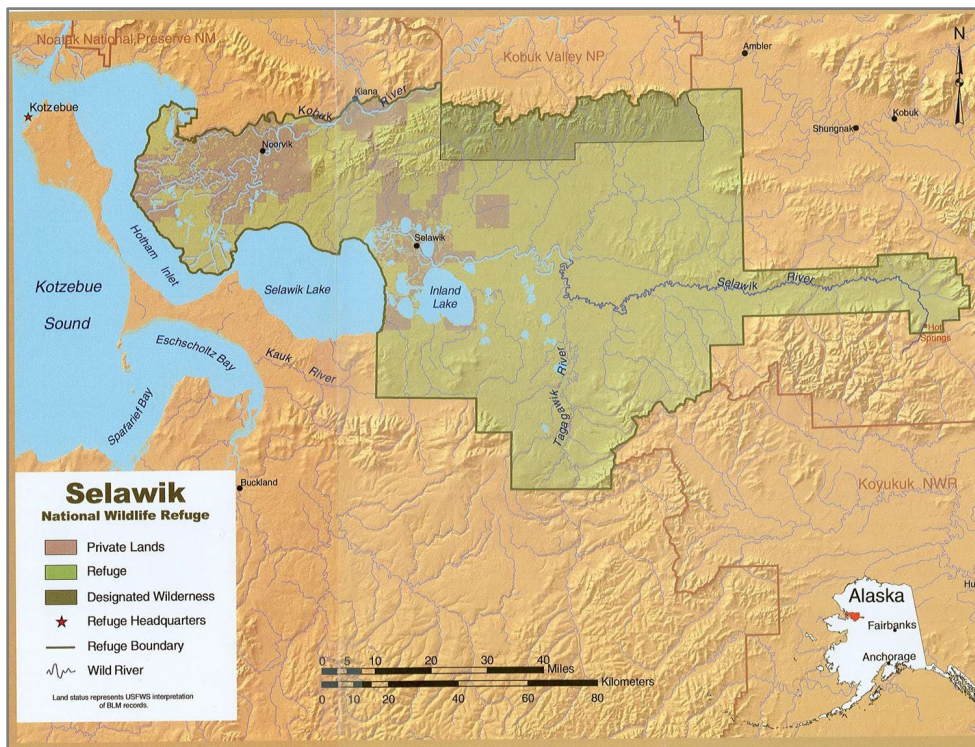




SELAWIK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
KOTZEBUE, ALASKA
907-442-3799



Selawik Refuge Program Updates
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Meeting,
March 6-7, 2023.
Updates as of 2/1/2023



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

There have not been any changes to Selawik Refuge staffing since the fall RAC meeting. Applicants for the vacant Refuge Manager position have been interviewed; we anticipate a selection will be made in the next 6 weeks. Current refuge employees include:

- Will Wiese, *Assistant Refuge Manager* (Acting Manager)
- Brittany Sweeney, *Outreach Specialist*
- Bill Carter, *Fisheries Biologist*
- Christina Nelson, *Wildlife Refuge Specialist*
- Shawn Nelson, *Maintenance Professional*
- Melissa Brown, *Refuge Information Technician* (Selawik)
- Frank Berry, Jr., *Maintenance Worker* (Selawik)

Shawn Nelson was honored in December for his 20 years of dedicated service to the Fish and Wildlife Service in Kotzebue. He is the longest serving member of our team!



Above left: FWS Staff, L-R: B. Sweeney, B. Carter, C. Nelson, F. Berry Jr. (Sonny), M. Brown, Doug Damberg (Regional Supervisor based in Anchorage), W. Wiese.

Above right: Shawn Nelson with his 20 years of service award plaque.

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. Selawik Refuge is the process of drafting an analysis of the potential impacts to subsistence opportunities on Refuge lands.

Hunting Guide/Transporter Permitting

One big-game hunting guide is permitted to operate on Selawik Refuge. No guided hunting has occurred on the Refuge in the past 5 years. The current guide permit holder has decided not to renew their permit. The refuge is currently accepting guide permit applications.



Three air taxi/transporter permits were issued in 2022. No hunters/trips were reported on Selawik Refuge in 2022.

Caribou Harvest Reporting

Selawik Refuge has begun discussion with NPS, ADF&G, NANA and other local partners to work toward a collecting more information on harvest of caribou that could be used to inform management of the herd. At the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group meeting in December, this was one of the group's primary requests to the agencies.



Outreach Program Updates

Christina Nelson and Melissa Brown have been busy visiting schools to teach students about birds and inspire artwork and literature entries for the 2023 Migratory Bird Calendar Contest.

Storytime and craft activities for young children are occurring in Kotzebue and Selawik. Planning is underway for spring birding events, learning opportunities for teens, and summer outings in local communities.

Biological Program Updates

Refuge staff continue to collect monthly ice thickness measurements near Kotzebue and Selawik for NOAA's statewide ice monitoring project. February numbers were 33 inches of ice in Selawik and 39 inches of ice on the Kotzebue freshwater pond. View data from 2018–now at <https://www.weather.gov/aprfc/IceThickness>

Planning is underway for summer/fall projects, including continued monitoring of water temperature and flow rates on rivers, and sampling sheefish on the Selawik River. Preliminary planning for a study of pike (siulik) in the Selawik River delta has also begun.

Facilities Project update

USFWS hopes to construct a new garage/warm storage building next to the refuge office in Kotzebue. Design for the building is underway, and construction could begin as early as summer 2023.

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)

In Selawik:

Stop by the City of Selawik office or reach Melissa Brown, Refuge Information Technician, at 484-5150.

Online:

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

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

Email:

- Will Wiese, Acting Refuge Manager: wilhelm_wiese@fws.gov
- Brittany Sweeney, Outreach Specialist: brittany_sweeney@fws.gov
- Bill Carter, Fish Biologist: bill_carter@fws.gov
- Melissa Brown, Refuge Information Technician: melissa_brown@fws.gov
- Christina Nelson, Wildlife Refuge Specialist: christina_nelson@fws.gov