



July 9, 2026

Director's Determination of State Lands Subject to Oil and Gas Exploration Licensing in the Yukon Flats Area

The State of Alaska offers oil and gas exploration licenses through its exploration licensing program. The intent of the oil and gas exploration licensing program (AS 38.05.131–134) is to encourage exploration in areas far from existing infrastructure, with unknown hydrocarbon potential, and where there is a higher investment risk to the operator. Licensees must provide any data collected under an exploration license to the state (11 AAC 82.981). The exploration licensing program does not apply to certain lands in the North Slope and Cook Inlet regions as specified by AS 38.05.131(b).

On March 4, 2026, under AS 38.05.131(c), the director of the Division of Oil and Gas (DO&G), under delegation of authority from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) commissioner, made a preliminary written determination of the state land that may be subject to the provisions of exploration licensing. The preliminary determination was given public notice using the methods described in AS 38.05.945(b). The deadline for public comments was April 6, 2026. DO&G received 180 timely public comments. Summaries of the comments received and the director's responses are included in Attachment B of this determination. In general, the commenters were opposed to oil and gas exploration and development within specific portions of the determination area. After evaluating the comments, the director has determined that the boundaries and scope of the preliminary determination will not be changed for this final written determination.

The Alaska constitution directs the state "to encourage ... the development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest" (Alaska Constitution, art. III §§1, 2). The people of Alaska have an interest in developing the state's oil and gas resources and maximizing the economic and physical recovery of those resources (AS 38.05.180(a)).

The Director of the Division of Oil and Gas (DO&G), under delegation of authority from the DNR commissioner, is making a final written determination that all state-owned acreage in the Yukon Flats Area Exploration License Determination Area (Yukon Flats Determination Area) will be available for oil and gas exploration licensing subject to the provisions of AS 38.05.132. Only state-owned oil and gas mineral estates within the Yukon Flats Determination Area that are free and unencumbered may be available for exploration licensing. For example, federally or privately-owned mineral estates would not be available.

The Yukon Flats determination area consists of state lands as described in Attachment A. See Yukon Flats determination area map on page 3 of this determination.

The land within the Yukon Flats determination area has unknown oil and gas potential and there is limited access to existing oil and gas infrastructure in much of the region. Although oil and gas

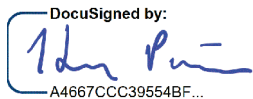
exploration has occurred in the past, technological advancements may facilitate more effective and efficient exploration. Further, the state would benefit from geological and geophysical data that may result from potential exploration. Additionally, this determination comports with constitutional direction to encourage the development of the state's resources, and with the legislature's direction that it is in the state's interest to develop the state's oil and gas resources. For these reasons, this area is suitable to be available for exploration licensing.

Alaska Statute 38.05.133 then requires the Director to issue separate public notice and written findings to determine whether the State's best interest will be served by issuing subsequent exploration license(s) within the Yukon Flats area. If such an exploration license proposal is found to be in the best interest of the state, licensees and exploration activities will be subject to all pertinent federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

The Director has determined that state land in this Yukon Flats determination area will be subject to exploration licensing under AS 38.05.132.

This determination is not a sale, lease, license, or other disposal of interest in land, nor is it a best interest finding. DO&G is not constrained by this determination, nor is DO&G prevented from making a future finding that a specific exploration license proposal within the Yukon Flats determination area is not in the state's best interest.

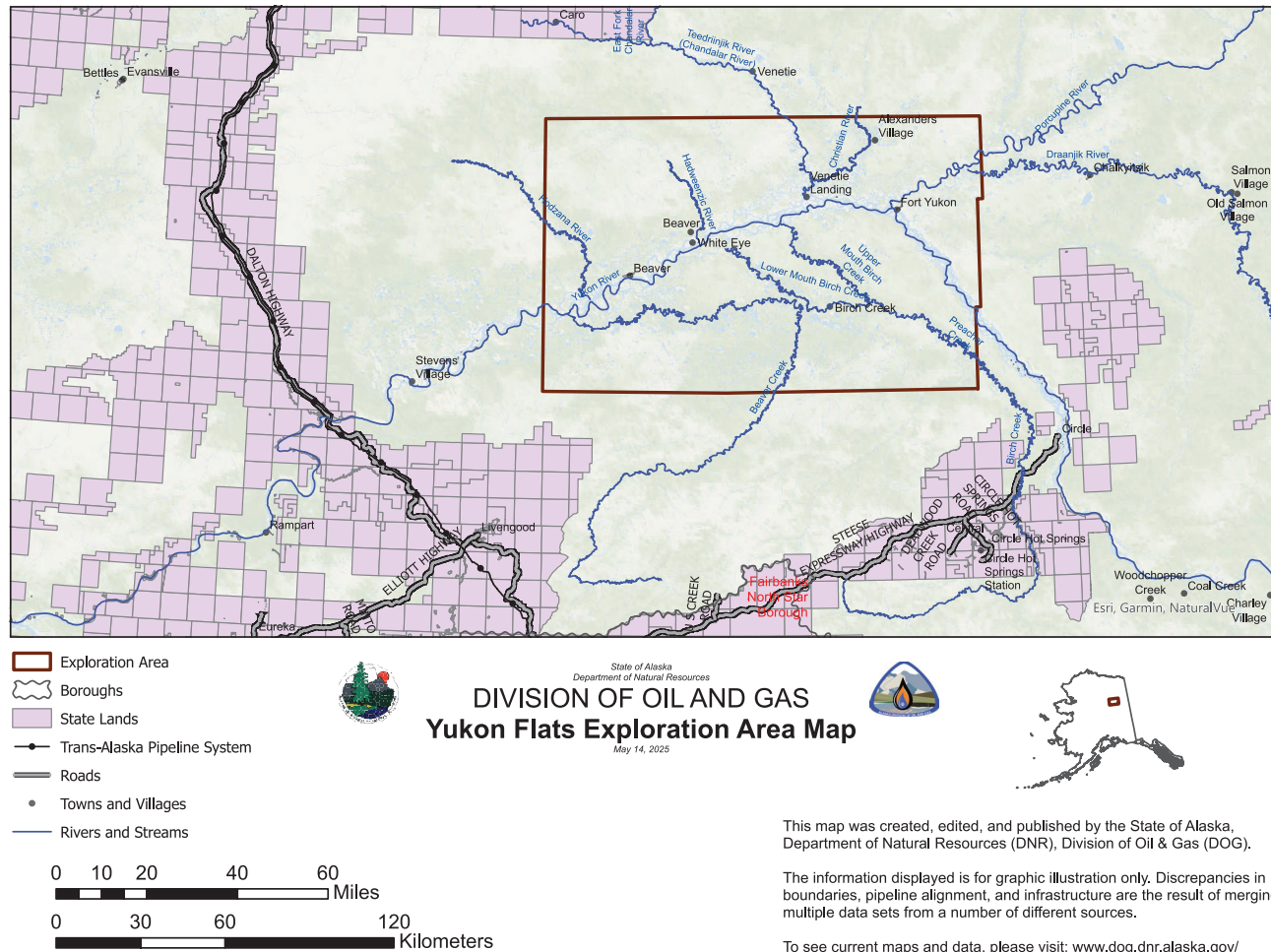
A person affected by the final determination who provided timely written comment on the preliminary determination may appeal in accordance with 11 AAC 02. Any appeal must be received within 20 calendar days after the date of "issuance" of this decision, as defined in 11 AAC 02.040(c) and (d) and include the appropriate fee. An appeal may be mailed or delivered to Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources, 550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1400, Anchorage, Alaska 99501; faxed to 1-907-269-8918; or sent by electronic mail to dnr.appeals@alaska.gov. An eligible person must first appeal the final written finding in accordance with 11 AAC 02 before appealing that decision to Superior Court. A copy of 11 AAC 02 may be obtained from any regional information office of DNR.

DocuSigned by:

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Haley Paine

Director, Division of Oil and Gas

Yukon Flats Area Exploration License Determination Area Map



Attachment A: Yukon Flats Area Exploration License Determination Area Legal Description

All state-owned, unencumbered mineral estate located within the Yukon Flats area, more precisely located within the following area:

Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska

Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 1 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 1 W.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 2 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 2 W.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 3 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 4 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 5 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 6 E.,

Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 7 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 8 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 9 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 10 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 11 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 12 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 13 E.,
Tps. 14 thru 23 N., R. 14 E..

Attachment B: Yukon Flats Area Exploration License Determination Area Summary of Public Comments and Director's Responses

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Philip S. Marshall	Oil and gas	Public	Area is not suited for oil & gas exploration due to its low-lying nature for drainage, poor engineering soils and lack of gravels & rock for construction.	The Department of Natural Resources (Department) acknowledges concerns regarding the area's low-lying terrain, soil conditions, drainage characteristics, and the availability of construction materials. These factors are important considerations for any future exploration or development proposals. However, the current decision before the Department is limited to determining whether the area should be available for potential future oil and gas exploration licensing opportunities. This action does not authorize exploration activities, infrastructure construction, or development. Site-specific engineering feasibility, access requirements, and environmental constraints would be evaluated during future licensing, permitting, and project review processes. Areas presenting significant technical or environmental challenges may prove unsuitable for exploration or development despite inclusion eligibility for exploration licensing.
Philip S. Marshall, Heather MacFartane, Dorothy Odonnell, Sherry Lewis, Ji Montgomery, Erica Khan, Mary Gentile, Claudi Thompson, Jocelyn Ciarlone, Shannon Prince, Darcy Diaz, Angela Peter-Mayo, Forest Svendgard-Lang, Cooper Freeman, Angelica Firmin, Teri Inch, Rochelle Adams, Michelle Breinholt, Judy Peter, Diana Peter, Porsha Garcia, Jeff Chen, Mamie Williams, Amy Farnham,	Oil and gas	Public	Opening these lands to exploration risks introducing industrial development into an area that remains largely intact and ecologically sensitive. Oil and gas exploration requires seismic work, road construction, water withdrawals, and other infrastructure that can disturb wildlife habitat, degrade water quality, and fragment landscapes critical to fish and wildlife.	The Department recognizes concerns regarding potential impacts to wildlife habitat, water resources, and landscape connectivity from future exploration activities. The determination of lands eligible for exploration does not authorize seismic surveys, road construction, water withdrawals, or other exploration activities. Rather, it identifies lands that may be considered for future leasing opportunities. Any future exploration proposal would require separate regulatory review and permitting processes designed to evaluate site-specific impacts, avoid or minimize environmental effects, and ensure compliance with applicable state and federal requirements. Maintaining eligibility for future licensing preserves the State's ability to evaluate resource opportunities while ensuring that any proposed activities undergo additional review before authorization.

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Etta Maillard, Melinda L Peter, Maris Goodwin, Tom Snyder, AJ Cho, Wyatt Kowalchuk, Mindy Coleman , April Carroll, Joseph Marsala Jr, Jacqueline Muehlbauer, Krystal Lapp (Northern AK Env't Center), Autumn Cantu, Jerry Rivers, Alexandra Gardiner, Allison Kelliher, Amari Peter, AnaLisa Mayo- Ramos, Angela Koe, Annette Gilbert, Asha Peter, Bonnie CarrollGinnis, Brittany Woods-Orrison, Carrie Stevens, Donna Carroll, Edward Alexander, Erin Willahan, Kayleen Ward- peter, Kristen Moreland, Lindsey Maillard, Meneka Thiru, Monika Knight, Rebecca Frenzl, Rebecca Siegel, Stephanie Wright, Trevor Edwards, Vivian Palmer, Abigail Lutmer, Arleigh Hitchcock, Darlene Herbert, Diana Donovan, Kami Kamila Szczechura, Patricia Bocanegra, Shawnté Odden, Teresa Trinidad, Bella Seppi, David Song, Roxy Carroll, Tristan Glowa, Veronica				

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Solomon, Alayna Carroll, Amanda Young, Angelica Frank, Casey Peavy, Edith Kokrine, Joshua Wachs, Kaihinjik Alexander, Kay Wallis, Kona Morris, Koso Adams, Leeyadaakhan Shaw, Liana Harriman, Mary C. James, Misty Nickoli, Myra John, Robyn Patey, Shelby Fisher- Salmon, Yatibaey Evans, Angela Merica-Hundt, Cecilia Simon, James Nathaniel, Adrian Rodriguez, Jameson Yoder, Jared Ellsworth , Jennifer Adams, Jessica Carroll, John Showfelt, Karlan Bachmann, Kimberly Nichols, Kristen Keece, Libby Musolino, Lieva Nick, Linda Frederick, Linda Pitka, Lois Hardesty, Lylith Widmer, M Kokrine, Mackenzie Englishoe, Maris Goodwin, Mary Norman, Matt Jackson, Mildred Allen, Morgan Paulsen, Nadine Carroll, Owen Jokel, Pamela Miller, Peter Paul, Porsha Garcia, Reyna Baker, Robert Mulford, Robert Weeden, Rochelle Adams, Rowan Frick,				

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Shawnen Adams-Mitchel, Shelley Westfall, Sonya Fields, Stephanie Herbert, Stephanie Rivet, Travis Cole, Tyler Ely, Victoria Lu, Zephyr Sincerny, Taylor Reitz, Kristine Chen	Oil and gas	Public	State regulations and bonding are woefully inadequate to minimize such impacts. The scars upon the land will be significantly adverse and permanent.	The Department acknowledges your concerns regarding the scope of current regulations and financial assurances. However, the determination of land eligibility is an administrative step to identify areas where exploration <i>may</i> be considered. It does not grant an immediate right to conduct ground-disturbing activities. Any future physical exploration requires a separate, project-specific review and approval process.
Philip S. Marshall	Oil and gas	Public		State regulations require that all authorized activities undergo strict scrutiny. Operators must submit a detailed Plan of Operations that outlines specific measures to prevent unnecessary degradation, manage surface impacts, and execute concurrent reclamation. Furthermore, financial bonding amounts are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. They are calculated to ensure the state secures sufficient funds to fully reclaim the specific site if an operator fails to meet their obligations. Our regulatory framework aims to prevent permanent environmental impacts by mandating site restoration, re-vegetation, and stabilization once exploration concludes.
Philip S. Marshall, Heather MacFartane, Dorothy Odonnell, Sherry Lewis, Ji Montgomery, Erica Khan, Mary Gentile, Claudi Thompson, Jocelyn Ciarlone, Shannon Prince, Darcy	Oil and gas	Public	Local communities rely heavily on subsistence fishing, hunting and gathering to sustain their families and cultural traditions. Salmon populations in the Yukon River watershed are already facing unprecedented declines. Introducing industrial activity to the region could further threaten the freshwater ecosystems that salmon and other subsistence species depend on.	The Department acknowledges the importance of subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering to local communities and recognizes ongoing concerns regarding salmon populations throughout the Yukon River watershed. The current decision does not authorize industrial activity within the Yukon Flats region. Any future exploration activities proposed under a license would be subject to additional scrutiny on a project specific basis that includes review

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Diaz, Angela Peter-Mayo, Forest Svendgard-Lang, Cooper Freeman, Angelica Firmin, Teri Inch, Rochelle Adams, Michelle Breinholt, Judy Peter, Diana Peter, Porsha Garcia, Jeff Chen, Mamie Williams, Amy Farnham, Etta Maillard, Melinda L Peter, Maris Goodwin, Tom Snyder, AJ Cho, Wyatt Kowalchuk, Mindy Coleman , April Carroll, Joseph Marsala Jr, Jacqueline Muehlbauer, Krystal Lapp (Northern AK Env't Center) , Autumn Cantu, Jerry Rivers, Alexandra Gardiner, Allison Kelliher, Amari Peter, AnaLisa Mayo- Ramos, Angela Koe, Annette Gilbert, Asha Peter, Bonnie CarrollGinnis, Brittany Woods-Orrison, Carrie Stevens, Donna Carroll, Edward Alexander, Erin Willahan, Kayleen Ward- peter, Kristen Moreland, Lindsey Maillard, Meneka Thiru, Monika Knight, Rebecca Frenzl, Rebecca Siegel, Stephanie Wright, Trevor Edwards, Vivian Palmer, Abigail Lutmer,				through a preliminary and final written finding of the director in addition to permitting and review processes that consider potential effects on fish, wildlife, habitat, water resources, and subsistence uses. Those reviews provide opportunities for agency consultation, public involvement, and the development of mitigation measures where appropriate. The Department remains committed to balancing resource development opportunities with the protection of subsistence resources and other public interests as required under state law.

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Arleigh Hitchcock, Darlene Herbert, Diana Donovan, Kami Kamila Szczechura, Patricia Bocanegra, Shawnté Odden, Teresa Trinidad, Bella Seppi, David Song, Roxy Carroll, Tristan Glowa, Veronica Solomon, Alayna Carroll, Amanda Young. Angelica Frank, Casey Peavy, Edith Kokrine, Joshua Wachs, Kaihinjik Alexander, Kay Wallis, Kona Morris, Koso Adams, Leeyadaakhan Shaw, Liana Harriman, Mary C. James, Misty Nickoli, Myra John, Robyn Paley, Shelby Fisher- Salmon, Yatibaey Evans, Angela Merica-Hundt, Cecilia Simon, James Nathaniel, Adrian Rodriguez, Jameson Yoder, Jared Ellsworth , Jennifer Adams, Jessica Carroll, John Showfelt, Karlan Bachmann, Kimberly Nichols, Kristen Keece, Libby Musolino, Lieva Nick, Linda Frederick, Linda Pitka, Lois Hardesty, Lylith Widmer, M Kokrine, Mackenzie Englishoe, Maris Goodwin, Mary				

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Norman, Matt Jackson, Mildred Allen, Morgan Paulsen, Nadine Carroll, Owen Jokel, Pamela Miller, Peter Paul, Porsha Garcia, Reyna Baker, Robert Mulford, Robert Weeden, Rochelle Adams, Rowan Frick, Shawnen Adams-Mitchel, Shelley Westfall, Sonya Fields, Stephanie Herbert, Stephanie Rivet, Travis Cole, Tyler Ely, Victoria Lu, Zephyr Sincerny, Taylor Reitz, Kristine Chen				
Philip S. Marshall, Dorothy Odonnell, Ji Montgomery, Erica Khan, Mary Gentile, Claudi Thompson, Carolyn Keller, Jocelyn Ciarlone, Shannon Prince, Darcy Diaz, Angela Peter-Mayo, Forest Svendgard-Lang, Cooper Freeman, Angelica Firmin, Teri Inch, Rochelle Adams, Michelle Breinholt, Judy Peter, Diana Peter, Porsha Garcia, Jeff Chen, Mamie Williams, Amy Farnham, Etta Maillard, Melinda L Peter, Maris Goodwin, Tom Snyder, AJ Cho, Wyatt Kowalchuk, Mindy Coleman , April Carroll,	Oil and gas	Public	The area's highest natural resource value is to remain untouched for future generations. Opening this area without any environmental, biological or cultural analysis and review is inexcusable.	The Department understands the view that the highest value of the Yukon Flats region is preservation of its natural and cultural resources. The purpose of the current process, however, is not to authorize development or dispose of state lands. Rather, it is to determine whether the lands should remain available for consideration in future oil and gas licensing decisions. Future licensing actions and any proposed exploration activities would be subject to additional review processes that evaluate environmental, biological, cultural, and other resource values before activity could occur. The Department's decision-making process seeks to balance multiple public interests, including conservation, subsistence uses, recreation, and the responsible development of state-owned resources for the benefit of state.

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Joseph Marsala Jr, Jacqueline Muehlbauer, Rhonda Pitka (Beaver Village Council) , Krystal Lapp (Northern AK Env'tl Center), Autumn Cantu, Jerry Rivers, Alexandra Gardiner, Allison Keliher, Amari Peter, AnaLisa Mayo-Ramos, Angela Koe, Annette Gilbert, Asha Peter, Bonnie CarrollGinnis, Brittany Woods-Orrison, Carrie Stevens, Donna Carroll, Edward Alexander, Erin Willahan, Kayleen Ward- peter, Kristen Moreland, Lindsey Maillard, Meneka Thiru, Monika Knight, Rebecca Frenzl, Rebecca Siegel, Stephanie Wright, Trevor Edwards, Vivian Palmer, Abigail Lutmer, Arleigh Hitchcock, Darlene Herbert, Diana Donovan, Kami Kamila Szczechura, Patricia Bocanegra, Shawnté Odden, Teresa Trinidad, Bella Seppi, David Song, Roxy Carroll, Tristan Glowa, Veronica Solomon, Alayna Carroll, Amanda Young. Angelica Frank, Casey Peavy, Edith Kokrine, Joshua Wachs,				

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Kaihinjik Alexander, Kay Wallis, Kona Morris, Koso Adams, Leeyadaakhan Shaw, Liana Harriman, Mary C. James, Misty Nickoli, Myra John, Robyn Patey, Shelby Fisher-Salmon, Yatibaey Evans, Angela Merica-Hundt, Cecilia Simon, James Nathaniel, Adrian Rodriguez, Jameson Yoder, Jared Ellsworth , Jennifer Adams, Jessica Carroll, John Showfelt, Karlan Bachmann, Kimberly Nichols, Kristen Keece, Libby Musolino, Lieva Nick, Linda Frederick, Linda Pitka, Lois Hardesty, Lylith Widmer, M Kokrine, Mackenzie Englishoe, Maris Goodwin, Mary Norman, Matt Jackson, Mildred Allen, Morgan Paulsen, Nadine Carroll, Owen Jokel, Pamela Miller, Peter Paul, Porsha Garcia, Reyna Baker, Robert Mulford, Robert Weeden, Rochelle Adams, Rowan Frick, Shawnen Adams-Mitchel, Shelley Westfall, Sonya Fields, Stephanie Herbert, Stephanie Rivet, Travis				

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Cole, Tyler Ely, Victoria Lu, Zephyr Sincerny, Taylor Reitz, Kristine Chen				
Heather MacFarlane, Dorothy Odonnell, Ji Montgomery, Erica Khan, Mary Gentile, Claud Thompson, Jocelyn Ciarlone, Shannon Prince, Darcy Diaz, Angela Peter-Mayo, Forest Svendgard-Lang, Cooper Freeman, Angelica Firmin, Teri Inch, Rochelle Adams, Michelle Breinholt, Judy Peter, Diana Peter, Porsha Garcia, Jeff Chen, Mamie Williams, Amy Farnham, Etta Maillard, Melinda L Peter, Maris Goodwin, Tom Snyder, AJ Cho, Wyatt Kowalchuk, Mindy Coleman , April Carroll, Joseph Marsala Jr, Rhonda Pitka (Beaver Village Council) , Krystal Lapp (Northern AK Env'tl Center), Autumn Cantu, Jerry Rivers, Alexandra Gardiner, Allison Kelliher, Amari Peter, AnaLisa Mayo-Ramos, Angela Koe,	Oil and gas	Public	The Yukon Flats region is one of Alaska's most ecologically significant landscapes, with a vast wetland complex supporting important habitat for migratory birds, fish populations, and numerous wildlife species. The region is a part of a larger interconnected watershed that sustains salmon-bearing rivers.	The Department recognizes that the Yukon Flats region contains significant wetland habitats and supports a variety of fish and wildlife resources that are important at local, regional, and statewide and beyond scales. The ecological values identified by commenters are important considerations in state land management decisions. At the same time, the current determination does not authorize surface-disturbing activities or development. Inclusion of lands to become eligible for the exploration licensing program allows the State to maintain future resource management options while preserving the requirement for additional environmental review and permitting before any exploration activities could occur. Should future exploration license proposals be advanced, resource values such as wetlands, fish habitat, wildlife use areas, and other sensitive features would be considered through the applicable review, written finding, and permitting processes.

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Annette Gilbert, Asha Peter, Bonnie CarrollGinnis, Brittany Woods-Orrison, Carrie Stevens, Donna Carroll, Edward Alexander, Erin Willahan, Kayleen Ward-peter, Kristen Moreland, Lindsey Maillard, Meneka Thiru, Monika Knight, Rebecca Frenzl, Rebecca Siegel, Stephanie Wright, Trevor Edwards, Vivian Palmer, Abigail Lutmer, Arleigh Hitchcock, Darlene Herbert, Diana Donovan, Kami Kamila Szczechura, Patricia Bocanegra, Shawnté Odden, Teresa Trinidad, Bella Seppi, David Song, Roxy Carroll, Tristan Glowa, Veronica Solomon, Alayna Carroll, Amanda Young, Angelica Frank, Casey Peavy, Edith Kokrine, Joshua Wachs, Kaihinjik Alexander, Kay Wallis, Kona Morris, Koso Adams, Leeyadaakhan Shaw, Liana Harriman, Mary C. James, Misty Nickoli, Myra John, Robyn Paley, Shelby Fisher-Salmon, Yatibaey Evans, Angela Merica-Hundt, Cecilia Simon, James				

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Nathaniel, Adrian Rodriguez, Jameson Yoder, Jared Ellsworth , Jennifer Adams, Jessica Carroll, John Showfelt, Karlán Bachmann, Kimberly Nichols, Kristen Keece, Libby Musolino, Lieva Nick, Linda Frederick, Linda Pitka, Lois Hardesty, Lylith Widmer, M Kokrine, Mackenzie Englishoe, Maris Goodwin, Mary Norman, Matt Jackson, Mildred Allen, Morgan Paulsen, Nadine Carroll, Owen Jokel, Pamela Miller, Peter Paul, Porsha Garcia, Reyna Baker, Robert Mulford, Robert Weeden, Rochelle Adams, Rowan Frick, Shawnen Adams-Mitchel, Shelley Westfall, Sonya Fields, Stephanie Herbert, Stephanie Rivet, Travis Cole, Tyler Ely, Victoria Lu, Zephyr Sincerny, Taylor Reitz, Kristine Chen				
Heather MacFarlane, Jacqueline Muehlbauer, Rhonda Pitka (Beaver Village Council)			There is strong local opposition to this project. Meaningful consultation with Tribal governments and careful evaluation of ecological and subsistence impacts must occur before decisions are made that could affect the Yukon Flats region.	The Department recognizes the deep connection between the local community, Tribal governments, and the land, water, and wildlife resources of the area. The determination of lands eligible for exploration licensing is an administrative step in the exploration licensing process. It

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
				does not authorize any on-the-ground exploration activities, surface disturbance, or resource development. Should an exploration license application move forward in this region, the Department must take the following actions before granting any authorizations: The Department will conduct meaningful consultation with affected Tribal entities to ensure local voices and traditional knowledge inform the process if disposal of the state's resources is considered in this area. The Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Environmental Conservation among other state and federal agencies to evaluate potential impacts on local fish, wildlife, and habitats. A thorough evaluation of potential impacts on subsistence resources and access will be conducted to safeguard local ways of life. Additionally, future milestones in the licensing process, including any proposed mitigation measures, will include opportunities for public notice and comment.
Sherry Lewis	Oil and Gas	Public	Exploration could cause damage and pollution into the area. Drilling for oil and gas could destroy the area.	The environmental values identified in this comment are important considerations in state land management decisions. At the same time, the current determination does not authorize surface-disturbing activities or development. Inclusion of lands to become eligible for the exploration licensing program allows the State to maintain future resource management options while preserving the requirement for additional environmental review and permitting before any exploration activities could occur. If exploration license proposals advance, resource values such as wetlands, fish habitat, wildlife use areas, and other sensitive features would be considered through the applicable review, written finding, and permitting processes.

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Carolyn Keller	Oil and Gas	Public	Please look for renewable energy sources.	Thank you for your interest and feedback regarding the preliminary determination of lands eligible for exploration licensing. We appreciate your focus on advancing renewable energy development. Our primary legislative mandate for this specific determination covers oil, gas, and geothermal resources. Other renewable energy resources including wind, solar, and tidal projects are managed under different statutory leasing frameworks, not exploration licenses. The Department does coordinate with internal divisions to ensure current licensing does not conflict with future surface uses for wind or solar infrastructure. Lands designated under this process remain eligible for concurrent multi-use applications where legally compatible.
Paula Davis	Oil and Gas	Public	Birds from around the world fly thousands of miles to this area. This is one of the rare places in the world that is unspoiled for birds to nest and raise chicks. Here there is an abundance of food sources with little to no habitat destruction.	The Department recognizes the importance of this region as a global migratory bird flyway and a nesting habitat. A determination of eligibility does not grant permission for surface-disturbing activities. Instead, it establishes the initial regulatory boundary where exploration may be considered under strict environmental oversight. To ensure the protection of these habitats, any subsequent exploration activities must adhere strictly to mitigation measures that would be established to implement seasonal restrictions to completely avoid activities during nesting and rearing windows. Those mitigation measures would be developed in the process of writing and publishing a preliminary and final written finding of the director and involve public participation. Additionally, other agencies including federal oversight would be required for habitat preservation where any future exploration activities would be evaluated.
Paula Davis	Oil and Gas	Public	Please do not allow Hilcorp or any other oil company spoil this incredible wilderness area.	A determination of eligibility is an initial, administrative assessment. It defines areas where exploration proposals may be considered. It does not authorize immediate drilling, construction, or ground-disturbing activities. A potential future exploration license is an administrative mechanism that grants an applicant the exclusive right to explore for natural

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Shawn Roberts	Oil and Gas	Public	Salmon are currently threatened and greatly reduced on the river. That alone should prevent natural resource exploration or use anywhere near the river. Setbacks of oil wells, and any settling ponds should be substantial to protect the watershed.	resources within a designated area. It does not authorize the extraction, development, or production of resources, nor does it automatically permit physical ground disturbance. Financial and technical mitigation measures, including seasonal operating restrictions and strict waste management protocols, are enforced to protect wildlife, water quality, and subsistence resources. The exploration licensing process ensures that public input is gathered and evaluated before any rights to explore for resources are disposed of, helping to identify specific local sensitivities that require special protection. The Department is legally mandated to foster careful development of state resources while simultaneously maximizing public benefits and safeguarding the integrity of the surrounding environment. The Department shares your commitment to safeguarding aquatic habitats and maintaining the ecological integrity of our river systems. A determination of eligibility is an initial, administrative assessment. It defines areas where exploration proposals may be considered. It does not authorize drilling, construction, or ground-disturbing activities. An exploration license is a preliminary administrative mechanism that grants an applicant the exclusive right to explore for natural resources within a designated area. It does not authorize on-the-ground activity. The Department does not allow unrestricted development near water bodies. Any future development proposal must adhere to strict statutory setbacks and riparian buffer zones designed specifically to protect watersheds. Industrial infrastructure, including settling ponds and well pads, is subject to strict engineering design standards. These include discharge restriction requirements, multi-layered impermeable liners, and comprehensive groundwater

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
				monitoring networks to ensure zero migration of contaminants into the surrounding watershed. The Department works in close coordination with state and federal agencies to monitor salmon population trends. Future operational permits would restrict industrial activity during salmon migration and spawning windows to mitigate behavioral and physical disruptions to the species.
Shawn Roberts	Oil and Gas	Public	Except for the few Riverside villages that have not created a substantial impact, the Yukon river is pristine and should be preserved that way. Wildlife, birds, fish, predators, and people, rely on and enjoy that river, and it would be a shame, and a sin in my mind, to place an oil well within 5 miles of the river. There should be no thought of mineral or oil exploration without creating a buffer along both sides of that magnificent river. It would benefit Canada as well, we're not the only ones who use it.	The Department shares the view that the Yukon River is a magnificent resource. We recognize its importance to wildlife, fish populations, and subsistence users. A determination of eligibility is an initial, administrative assessment. It defines areas where exploration proposals may be considered. It does not authorize drilling, construction, or ground-disturbing activities. If specific exploration licenses are pursued in the future, they are subject to strict mitigation measures. The Department routinely implements setback requirements and surface-use restrictions (buffers) around major fish-bearing waters and wildlife habitats to prevent environmental degradation. Any future exploration plans must undergo rigorous permitting processes. This involves coordination with state and federal environmental protection agencies, fish and game authorities, and water management

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Len Osimowicz	Oil and Gas	Public	I am against drilling in this waterfowl sensitive breeding ground.	boards to ensure water quality and wildlife corridors remain protected. The United States and Canada cooperate closely on transboundary water and fisheries management, particularly through frameworks like the Yukon River Salmon Agreement. The Department considers these international obligations and downstream impacts during the multi-agency review process before any physical operations are approved. Your feedback regarding a five-mile protective buffer has been recorded. It will be considered by the Department for future licensing in this region. The Department shares your commitment to protecting wildlife habitats and values public input during this planning process. A determination is strictly an administrative action that identifies what state lands may be legally eligible for the exploration license program. Under Alaska law, a land determination is not a lease sale, license issuance, or disposal of property rights. This phase does not authorize any physical ground-disturbing activities. Further, an exploration license does not authorize drilling, oil and gas production, or surface-disturbing activities. It grants the licensee the exclusive right to explore for a limited period. If a licensee proposes physical exploration or future development, they must first submit a detailed Plan of Operations. Before any surface activity can begin, the proposal must undergo a rigorous, multi-agency review process. The Department coordinates closely with the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Environmental Conservation, and federal regulatory bodies to evaluate impacts on local wildlife. Specific protections for waterfowl sensitive breeding grounds are managed through mitigation measures, which can include: Prohibiting surface activities during critical nesting, breeding, and rearing windows; mandating minimum buffer zones around identified wetlands, lakes, and rivers. As well as

Commenter	Subject	Agency/.org/public	Comment	Agency Response
Rhonda Pitka (Beaver Village Council)	Oil and gas	Tribal Organization	Before considering any exploration licensing in this region, the Department should evaluate the potential impacts to anadromous and resident fish habitat and consult the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Anadromous Waters Catalogue to identify waters that may be affected by exploration activities.	retaining the authority to deny specific operational plans if environmental impacts cannot be adequately mitigated. The Department recognizes the importance of protecting anadromous and resident fish habitats. We appreciate the emphasis on utilizing the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC) to identify sensitive water bodies. The Department routinely consults with ADF&G during any drafting of Best Interest Finding and licensing phases to identify sensitive habitats. Natural resource specialists drafting future decisions cross-reference the AWC during the evaluation of any proposed exploration activities. Additionally, any activity affecting designated anadromous water bodies legally requires a Fish Habitat Permit from ADF&G before work begins. Also, exploration licenses incorporate stipulations requiring setbacks, seasonal restrictions, and proper disposal of waste to safeguard water quality. The determination of eligibility establishes only the geographic availability of land for licensing. It does not authorize on-the-ground activities. Any subsequent exploration plans will undergo rigorous, case-by-case technical reviews to ensure fish habitats remain protected.
Krystal Lapp (Northern AK Env'tl Center)	Oil and Gas	.org	The determination notes that individuals must submit comments during the comment period in order to be eligible to appeal the final determination. Given the size and remoteness of the Yukon Flats determination area, NAEC recommends that the state conduct additional outreach to affected communities and Tribal governments to ensure that residents who rely on the region for subsistence uses are able to participate meaningfully in this process.	The Department appreciates the commenter's emphasis on robust public participation and recognizes the unique geographic scale and remote nature of the Yukon Flats area. Ensuring that local residents, subsistence users, and Tribal governments have a meaningful opportunity to voice their perspectives is a priority for the State during the exploration licensing process. The Department has utilized multiple notification channels to reach affected communities, including newspaper publications, online postings via the Alaska Online Public

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			Additional outreach—including community meetings, consultation with Tribal governments, and improved access to mapping and project information—would help ensure that the perspectives of those most affected by potential exploration activities are adequately considered.	Notice System, and direct emailing to local entities. To improve access to project information, the Department provides digital access to all determination documents, including maps of the proposed area, on the Division's website. The State of Alaska recognizes the importance of engaging with federally recognized Tribes. In accordance with Administrative Order 300 and Department policy, the Department welcomes consultation with Yukon Flats Tribal governments. The Department acknowledges that the requirement to submit comments during this preliminary phase to maintain future appeal rights places a high priority on early engagement. The Department is evaluating the feasibility of hosting informational meetings if an exploration license proposal continues to be evaluated in the region, as well as coordinating with local regional corporations and community leaders, to clarify the licensing process and help residents submit timely comments. The Department remains committed to considering all public and agency input regarding potential subsistence impacts before issuing a disposal decision.
Krystal Lapp (Northern AK Env'tl Center)	Oil and Gas	.org	Experience across Alaska demonstrates that exploration programs often lead to increasing pressure for infrastructure development, including access roads, staging areas, airstrips, seismic corridors, and other industrial activity. Because exploration activities may introduce long-term development pathways in previously intact landscapes, decisions made at this early stage may shape land use patterns across the Yukon Flats region for decades. For that reason, NAEC believes a precautionary and transparent approach is appropriate when evaluating	The Department acknowledges the comment emphasizing the long-term implications of exploration activities and advocating for a precautionary approach in the Yukon Flats region. The Department recognizes that exploration can represent the initial phase of potential resource development and takes its responsibility for land-use planning seriously. A determination of lands eligible for exploration licensing is not an authorization for industrial development, nor does it guarantee that infrastructure will be built. Any subsequent physical activities—including seismic corridors, staging areas, airstrips, or access roads—require separate, specific authorizations. These future applications

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Krystal Lapp (Northern AK Env'tl Center)	Oil and Gas	.org	lands that may become eligible for exploration licensing, particularly in areas with high ecological and subsistence value. These ecosystems also play an important role in water filtration, floodplain dynamics, and carbon storage within northern peatlands and wetlands. Disturbances to wetlands, hydrology, or wildlife habitat can have cascading ecological impacts across the region. While the preliminary determination references the Alaska Constitution's direction to encourage development of the state's resources consistent with the public interest, it does not evaluate whether oil and gas exploration in this region would be compatible with these ecological values. Given the ecological sensitivity of the Yukon Flats landscape and its importance to fish, wildlife, and subsistence uses, NAEC encourages the state to incorporate a more thorough evaluation of wildlife habitat, wetlands, hydrology, and watershed integrity prior to issuing a final determination.	must undergo rigorous state regulatory reviews, including public notice periods and agency consultations, to evaluate and mitigate impacts on ecological and subsistence resources under an exploration license. The Department's mission requires balancing the responsible development of Alaska's natural resources with the protection of high-value ecosystems and subsistence economies. The department utilizes a transparent, public process for all licensing determinations and will continue to carefully consider regional ecological and subsistence values during the evaluation of eligible lands. The Department acknowledges the ecological significance of the Yukon Flats landscape, including its roles in water filtration, floodplain dynamics, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, and subsistence activities. The Department appreciates the commenter's detailed emphasis on these resources. However, it is important to clarify the specific scope and statutory purpose of a Determination of State Land Subject to Exploration Licensing under <u>AS 38.05.131(c)</u>. A determination of lands eligible for exploration licensing is strictly an initial administrative action that identifies what state lands may be legally eligible to be evaluated for exploration licensing. Under Alaska law, a land determination is not a lease sale, license issuance, or disposal of property rights. This phase does not authorize any physical ground-disturbing activities, industrial water withdrawals, or road construction. A comprehensive, site-specific evaluation of fish, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and watershed integrity is not legally mandated or practical at this broad eligibility stage. Instead, Alaska utilizes a tiered regulatory structure to ensure environmental compatibility before any industrial activity occurs:

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				If an exploration license application is subsequently received for a specific tract within the Yukon Flats area, DNR must issue a separate, detailed written finding of the director. That phase will explicitly evaluate localized reasonably foreseeable effects, resource compatibility, and subsistence conflicts. Any subsequent license or disposal will incorporate mandatory mitigation measures and standard operating stipulations designed to safeguard northern peatlands, hydrology, and fish populations. Actual physical exploration (such as seismic work or exploration drilling) requires subsequent, independent permits. These include Title 16 fish habitat permits from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, water rights from the <u>Division of Mining, Land and Water</u>, and Section 404 wetlands permits from the <u>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</u> among other authorizations required by local, state and federal law.
Carrie Stevens	Oil and Gas	Public	The purpose of the Refuge as established by ANILCA includes: 1. to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, including but not limited to canvasbacks and other migratory birds; Dall sheep; bears; moose; wolves, wolverines and other furbearers; caribou (including participation in coordinated ecological studies and management of the Porcupine and Fortymile caribou herds); and salmon; 2. to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats; 3. to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for	While the statutory intent of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge prioritizes habitat conservation, the state must manage its legislatively designated lands for responsible resource development. The Department coordinates closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) during the permitting stages to ensure that any state-authorized subsurface activities do not conflict with federal refuge management mandates or degrade adjacent public resources.

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			continued subsistence uses by local residents; 4. to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge. Oil and gas exploration is a direct affront to these purposes as mandated by law.	
Donna Carroll	Oil and gas	Public	I am a 67 years old Gwich'in and Koyukon woman who survived the 1960's scoop, a kidnapping/torture, child abuse the "worst case" Judge Rhoades stated she has ever known, and my beloved #MMIW MMIP Son DV Homicide with no Justice. I won't hesitate to throw myself in front of that first bulldozer that tries to rape our land and our people, for monetary gain.	A determination of lands eligible for exploration licensing is strictly an initial administrative action that identifies what state lands may be legally eligible to be evaluated for exploration licensing. Under Alaska law, a land determination is not a lease sale, license issuance, or disposal of property rights. This phase does not authorize any physical ground-disturbing activities, industrial water withdrawals, or road construction.
Edward Alexander	Oil and gas	Public	I oppose this action because the Yukon Flats region has vast stores of yedoma permafrost, which, if disturbed, can rapidly collapse. The collapse of yedoma poses dire threats to releasing vast amounts of greenhouse gases, releasing large quantities of mercury that will pollute the Yukon River watershed and the airshed in the Fairbanks area, jeopardizing human health. It's important to understand that not all landscapes can safely support this kind of activity. We don't even have an inventory of the viruses present in yedoma in the Yukon Flats, which could also present a grave danger to the public.	The Department acknowledges the vulnerability of carbon-rich Yedoma permafrost to thermal degradation and subsidence. Currently, and historically, to mitigate thermokarst risks in areas where permafrost is present, seismic trails and winter transport routes are restricted to frozen-ground conditions using low-ground-pressure vehicles. Any future licensees would be required to maintain the organic vegetative mat intact to preserve the active layer's thermal insulation capacity during the summer thaw period.
Kayleen Ward-peter	Oil and gas	Public	Our Future Generations Deserve Better than Oil and Gas Development! They deserve a healthy life where we can be on our land the way it was for the last thousand years. Respect our people!!!	The Department acknowledges your concerns regarding potential oil and gas activities in the Yukon Flats region. The purpose of the Exploration Licensing program under AS 38.05.131-.134 is to encourage exploration in areas outside known oil and gas provinces. A finding of eligibility or the issuance of an exploration license does not authorize oil and gas licensing, leasing, commercial production, or immediate

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				surface-disturbing activities. Any future development would require a separate, rigorous public process, detailed environmental analyses in the form of a written finding of the director which would be published as a preliminary and then final with public comment opportunity at those stages, and multiple agency approvals. Article VIII of the Alaska Constitution requires the state to develop its natural resources for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans. The Department fulfills this mandate by balancing economic opportunities, state revenues, and local employment with the protection of existing uses, cultures, and habitats. The Department recognizes the importance of the Yukon River salmon fisheries to the subsistence, culture, and economy of Yukon Flats communities. If, in the future, an exploration license is evaluated and issued, strict mitigation measures and standard operating conditions are enforced to protect water quality, fish habitats, and wildlife migration corridors.
Arlyssa Wright			I personally disagree, my great-great grandfather was Chief David Salmon, he was a good hunter and a pastor, he taught my family many things and how to live off the land. Which means The Yukon Flats should not be getting drilled for oil or gas. We have many animals on our land who depend on the land and water. Our ancestors took care of this land, now it is up to us to take care of it. Taking care of our land means making sure there is no threats looking to harm it. Drilling for oil will ruin our water, which many animals drink from, will ruin the land, where many eat their food. Drilling for oil will ruin our animals and us. We depend on our animals just like our animals depend on us. We take care of one another.	The Department acknowledges your concerns regarding potential oil and gas activities in the Yukon Flats region, specifically those concerning climate change, salmon fishery declines, and the preservation of local tribal communities and cultures. The purpose of the Exploration Licensing program under AS 38.05.131-.134 is to encourage exploration in areas outside known oil and gas provinces. A determination of eligibility for exploration licensing does not authorize oil and gas licensing, leasing, commercial production, or immediate surface-disturbing activities. Any future development would require a separate, rigorous public process, detailed environmental analyses in the form of a written finding of the director which would be published as a preliminary and then final with public comment opportunity at those stages, and multiple agency approvals.

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			If we let them drill for oil, we will have no healthy land and water for our future generations to hunt and live off of. We need to protect the Yukon Flats and by protecting it, that means saying no to drilling for oil and gas.	Article VIII of the Alaska Constitution requires the state to develop its natural resources for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans. The Department fulfills this mandate by balancing economic opportunities, state revenues, and local employment with the protection of existing uses, cultures, and habitats. The Department recognizes the importance of the Yukon River salmon fisheries to the subsistence, culture, and economy of Yukon Flats communities. If, in the future, an exploration license is evaluated and issued, strict mitigation measures and standard operating conditions are enforced to protect water quality, fish habitats, and wildlife migration corridors. The Department values input from tribal members, local residents, and regional corporations. Public comments are vital to shaping the final determination, establishing effective mitigation measures, and deciding whether moving forward is in the state's best interest.
Tom Paragi	Oil and gas	public	My understanding of state lands in this area is that they are primarily control of subsurface rights beneath navigable waters (larger rivers and some lakes) and on islands in the Yukon River. Direction drilling to state lands beneath navigable waters could occur from Doyon corporation lands. My primary concern for drilling is the accidental release of drilling mud and hydrocarbons into the surface or subsurface waters (hyporheic zone) of the Yukon River basin. These are highly valuable spawning and rearing habitats for all five Pacific salmon species and a diverse array of non-salmon fishes, including burbot, Dolly Varden, northern pike, and multiple whitefish species, which together provide essential subsistence resources for local communities. The upper Yukon Flats support the largest and most productive whitefish spawning habitats in Alaska (Brown et al. 2008, attached).	The Department's determination is strictly limited to state-owned land and state-managed subsurface acreage beneath navigable waters. State actions do not authorize trespass, surface occupancy, or development operations on neighboring Doyon, Limited corporate lands or the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. Any off-lease directional drilling or surface access across non-state tracts requires independent authorization and surface-use agreements from those respective land managers. An exploration license grants exclusive rights to explore for oil and gas, but it does not grant approval for field development or production. Any future exploration proposals, including seismic surveys or exploratory drilling, must undergo a rigorous, written finding of the director and a public notice process before any specific operational permits are issued. With regards to anadromous fish habitat and water quality, the Department would establish and maintain strict mitigation

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			Water withdrawals during restricted flow in winter would have to be done in a manner that did not adversely affect fish habitat on the national wildlife refuge. Associated winter activities of ice road building or surface disturbances of vegetation, such as creating seismic trails, would put carbon-rich yedoma permafrost at risk of melting to create thermokarst. This surface subsidence and water flow change could create further difficulty in surface transportation for oil and gas activities, in addition to effects on fish and wildlife habitat, particularly in the snow free period when the active layer thaws. Exploration and development of oil and gas would be a challenging situation to portray as compatible with the statutory intent language for habitat and species conservation that designated the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge.	measures to protect the hyporheic zone, surface waters, and critical spawning habitats for Pacific salmon and non-salmon species. Future operational permits will require advanced spill prevention, control, and countermeasure (SPCC) plans, alongside the mandatory use of non-toxic, water-based drilling muds in sensitive aquatic zones. The Department recognizes the high biological value of the upper Yukon Flats whitefish and salmon populations as documented by researchers like Brown et al. (2008). Regulations enforce seasonal drilling restrictions and setback buffers around critical overwintering and spawning waters to eliminate risks to local subsistence resources. Temporary water use authorizations required for winter operations are heavily regulated in coordination with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Water withdrawals during restricted winter low-flow periods are subjected to strict volumetric caps to ensure downstream fish habitats and adjacent federal refuge waters maintain required baseline flows. The construction of winter ice roads and snow pads must comply with regional standards that require a minimum packed snow/ice thickness before heavy equipment can be mobilized. This infrastructure shields the underlying tundra and insulates the sub-surface layers. All of these types of authorizations are not permitted by this determination of lands eligible for exploration licensing. The Department acknowledges the vulnerability of carbon-rich Yedoma permafrost to thermal degradation and subsidence. This To mitigate thermokarst risks, seismic trails and winter transport routes are restricted to frozen-ground conditions using low-ground-pressure vehicles. Any future licensees would be required to maintain the organic vegetative mat intact to preserve the active layer's thermal insulation capacity during the summer thaw period.

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Claire Estell Lubke	Oil and gas	Public	I join my voice with that of many Tribal members in the Yukon flats area and ask you to please stop the advancement of oil and gas leases in the region. People along the Yukon river are facing existential threats from climate change and the collapse of their salmon fishery. It is still possible for these fisheries and communities to survive, but only if they are not subjected to additional environmental hazards such as those that arise from oil and gas leases. When the State of Alaska considers how to develop our resources for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans, we must be clear eyed that, in moments like this one, the value of preserving communities and culture far outweighs the potential for short-term profits.	While the statutory intent of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge prioritizes habitat conservation, the state must manage its legislatively designated lands for responsible resource development. The Department coordinates closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) during the permitting stages to ensure that any state-authorized subsurface activities do not conflict with federal refuge management mandates or degrade adjacent public resources. The Department acknowledges your concerns regarding potential oil and gas activities in the Yukon Flats region, specifically those concerning climate change, salmon fishery declines, and the preservation of local tribal communities and cultures. The purpose of the Exploration Licensing program under AS 38.05.131-.134 is to encourage exploration in areas outside known oil and gas provinces. A finding of eligibility or the issuance of an exploration license does not authorize oil and gas licensing, leasing, commercial production, or immediate surface-disturbing activities. Any future development would require a separate, rigorous public process, detailed environmental analyses in the form of a written finding of the director which would be published as a preliminary and then final finding with public comment opportunity at those stages, and multiple agency approvals. Regarding the specific points raised in your comment, the Department addresses them as follows: Article VIII of the Alaska Constitution requires the state to develop its natural resources for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans. The Department fulfills this mandate by balancing economic opportunities, state revenues, and local employment with the protection of existing uses, cultures, and habitats. The Department recognizes the critical importance of the Yukon River salmon fisheries to the subsistence, culture, and

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				economy of Yukon Flats communities. If, in the future, an exploration license is evaluated and issued, strict mitigation measures and standard operating conditions are enforced to protect water quality, fish habitats, and wildlife migration corridors. The Department values input from tribal members, local residents, regional corporations, and the general public. Public comments are vital to shaping the final determination, establishing effective mitigation measures, and deciding whether moving forward is in the state's best interest.
David Watts	Oil and gas	Public	I vehemently oppose this proposal. The Yukon watershed is ecologically and culturally important for subsistence and tourism, therefore it is more economically sensible to preserve its beauty and current condition to the fullest extent possible rather than try to develop what we know are finite resources, doing long-term damage in the process. We must surely be able to see farther than one step ahead of ourselves, and fossil fuels are simply no longer a wise investment for public-private partnerships in this beautiful state.	The Department appreciates your feedback regarding the exploration licensing eligibility determination. The determination of lands eligible for exploration licensing is an administrative step in the exploration licensing process. It does not authorize any on-the-ground exploration activities, surface disturbance, or resource development. State law requires the Department to evaluate resource potential while safeguarding ecological and cultural values. Further if this area is determined to be eligible for exploration licensing, an exploration license only allows for assessment and does not automatically authorize production or development. On any potential future disposal of lands for exploration, strict mitigation measures would be included in a finding to protect local fish, wildlife, and traditional subsistence harvesting activities in the Yukon watershed.
Sarah Behr	Oil and gas	Public	I am writing to oppose the preliminary determination to open the Yukon Flats to oil and gas exploration licensing. I am a lifelong Alaskan who grew up near Birch Creek between the communities of Central and Circle, on the southern edge of the Yukon Flats. My family and I have chosen to continue residing here today because of the clean environment, natural beauty, subsistence opportunity, and rural setting.	The Department acknowledges your connection to the Birch Creek, Central, and Circle areas, and we value your perspective as a lifelong resident who relies on the region's subsistence resources and rural environment. The purpose of an exploration licensing determination of lands is to evaluate both the potential benefits and the potential risks of opening an area to exploration. Your concerns regarding migratory birds, fish, mammals, water quality, and

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			The Yukon Flats are extremely important for migratory birds, fish, and mammals. I'm concerned that oil and gas development in and around this area would negatively impact wildlife habitat, contaminate water sources, and disrupt migration corridors and subsistence harvests. While life in rural Alaska comes with challenges that development might mitigate— long travel distances, fewer employment opportunities, and limited infrastructure— the environmental implications are not worth the tradeoff. I respectfully ask that the Division of Oil and Gas not move forward with this process. The Yukon Flats should not be opened to oil and gas exploration, and I urge the commissioner to issue a final determination reflecting that.	subsistence harvest disruptions are vital components of this evaluation. Under Alaska Statute (AS) 38.05.131–.134, the exploration licensing program is designed to encourage exploration in areas where oil and gas potential is unproven. This determination does not authorize oil and gas production or development. In the future if the disposal of land through an exploration license is authorized, any subsequent exploration activities—such as seismic surveys or drilling—require a series of specific, subsequent agency authorizations. Public input like yours is essential to helping the Department identify specific local geographic features, sensitive habitats, and community uses that require targeted protections. Your comments have been compiled into the public record and will be considered if a disposal decision is considered. Additionally, public notice and comment solicitation would occur under that process.