



# NASA Sounding Rockets Program Poker Flat Research Range



## Environmental Impact Statement

**The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** establishes a framework for considering environmental values early in the Federal decisionmaking process. When Federal agencies propose projects that may significantly impact the environment, NEPA requires the following steps to be taken before final decisions are made:

- Evaluation and consideration of potential environmental consequences
- Consideration of public and government agency comments

This evaluation is presented in an environmental impact statement (EIS), that:

- Identifies and describes the affected environment
- Evaluates the potential environmental consequences from a range of reasonable alternatives
- Identifies environmental permits and specific mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, or reduce environmental impacts

### Notice of Intent and Scoping

The EIS process begins with publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register*. The NOI provides basic information on the proposed action in preparation for scoping, which is an early and open process for (1) actively bringing the public into the decisionmaking process, (2) determining the scope of issues to be addressed, (3) identifying the major issues related to a proposed action. Scoping begins before any significant analysis is completed. Public participation is an integral part of scoping. The purpose of soliciting public comments is to identify interested parties and relevant issues so they can be considered in the EIS.



### Please take this opportunity to:

- Learn about the proposal
- Identify community-specific issues
- Make sure you are included on our mailing list

### Public comment period

Comments will be accepted throughout the Draft EIS analysis process; however, for full early consideration of comments to help shape and refine the proposal, please submit comments by **June 1, 2011** to:

Joshua Bundick, Manager, Poker Flat Research Range EIS  
NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility  
Wallops Island, VA 23337  
Phone: (757) 824-2319; Fax: (757) 824-1819  
Email: Joshua.A.Bundick@nasa.gov

**There are numerous opportunities to be involved in the EIS process.**

### The EIS Timeline

 Opportunities for Public Involvement

Notice of Intent to Prepare EIS  
Published in *Federal Register*  
April 13, 2011

Public Scoping Period  
April 13 – June 1, 2011

Preparation of Draft EIS  
2011 – 2012

45-day Draft EIS Review and  
Public Comment Period  
Tentatively Spring 2012

Preparation of Final EIS  
Tentatively 2012

Notice of  
Availability of Final EIS  
Tentatively Late 2012

30-day Waiting Period  
Tentatively Late 2012

Record of Decision  
Tentatively Late 2012

**Your involvement and participation are essential to the EIS process.**

**For more information, please visit [http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code250/pfrr\\_eis.html](http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code250/pfrr_eis.html)**



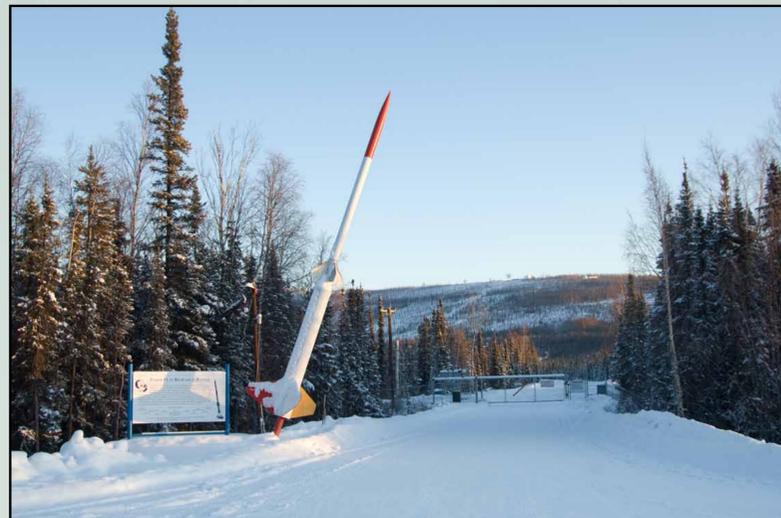
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## *Environmental Impact Statement*

### **Purpose and Need for the Poker Flat Research Range (PFRR) EIS:**

- Ensure NASA and the global science community have the capability to conduct high-latitude sounding rocket launches to aid in the understanding of phenomena affecting the ionosphere, the aurora borealis, and the sun-earth connection
- Provide sufficient information to support USFWS and BLM decision-making to permit sounding rocket landings and recovery of rocket stages and payloads on federally-managed lands, as appropriate



### **Alternatives currently being considered for evaluation in the EIS include:**

- Continuing operations of the SRP at PFRR in its present form and at the current level of effort
- Continuing SRP launches from PFRR within the existing flight zones with differing requirements for identification and recovery of rocket stages and payloads
- Modifying the trajectories of the existing flight zones from PFRR to avoid or minimize the impacts of rocket stages and payloads in sensitive areas
- Conducting a subset of launches at other high-latitude launch sites outside the United States, thereby avoiding federally-managed lands
- Discontinuing sounding rocket launches from PFRR (No Action Alternative)





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### Cooperating Agencies

#### Agencies Cooperating in the Development of the Sounding Rockets Program Poker Flat Research Range (PFRR) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Include:



#### University of Alaska – Fairbanks (UAF)

Poker Flat Research Range is owned by the University of Alaska. Since 1968, the range has been managed by the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In addition to launching sounding rockets, the range is home to scientific instruments designed to study the arctic atmosphere and ionosphere. The range employs a dozen full-time employees, and two part-time employees. During the launch season the personnel nearly doubles. The range also welcomes 60 to 100 scientists, technicians and other visitors annually. NASA contracts with UAF for PFRR operations and provides technical advice and range safety oversight.



#### Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

BLM manages and administers the use of federal public lands and resources in the area encompassed by the BLM's Eastern Interior Field Office in Alaska. BLM managed lands include the north and south units of the Steese National Conservation Area and the White Mountains National Recreation Area.

BLM would require a new permit application from the PFRR. If approved, the permit would authorize rocket landings and recovery of rocket stages and payloads from BLM-administered lands.

#### Future Planning

The BLM and USFWS are currently preparing the following long-term plans:

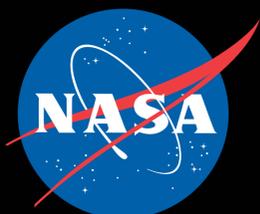
- BLM Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan (RMP)
- USFWS Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) Yukon Flats CCP revisions (within the next two years).
- The results of these planning processes will play a significant role in how future launches from PFRR would occur. The PFRR EIS will consider the effects of each agency's respective permitting actions within the context of their long-term management objectives.



#### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The Alaska Region of the USFWS administers 16 national wildlife refuges NWR within the State of Alaska. These lands are administered for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats. The primary purpose of Arctic and Yukon Flats NWRs is to conserve fish and wildlife populations and their habitats in their natural diversity.

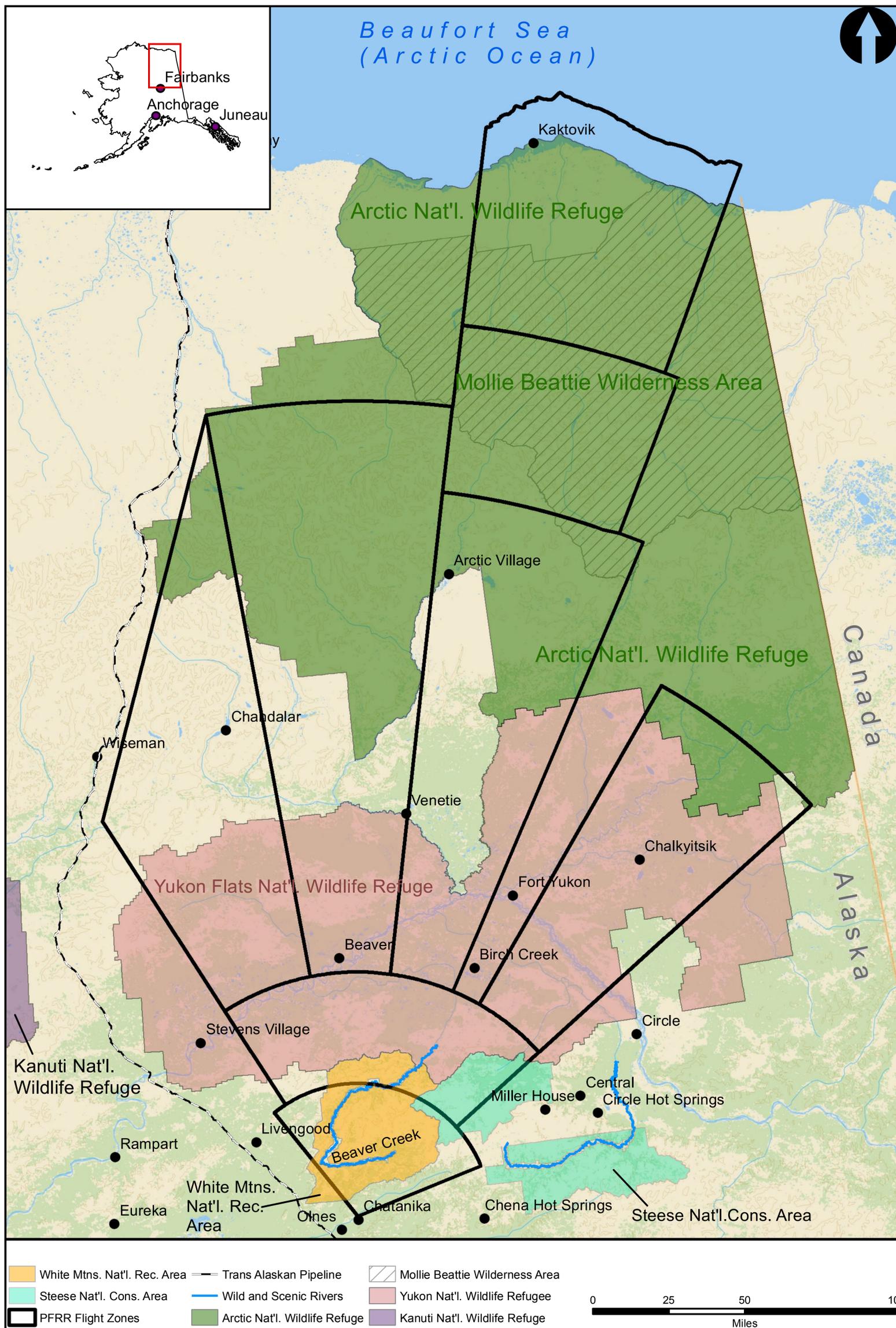
The USFWS has received a request for authorization from the PFRR. If approved, the permit would authorize rocket impacts and recovery of rocket stages and payloads from USFWS-administered lands.



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### Poker Flat Research Range Launch Corridor