

Public Meetings and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act 810 (ANILCA) Hearings for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange/Road Corridor



The Project:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is engaging communities across Alaska to gather relevant comments, concerns and/or issues pertaining to the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Draft SEIS) for a potential land exchange involving the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. The Draft SEIS considers the effects of a potential land exchange of certain lands owned by the King Cove Corporation with certain lands owned by the U.S. Government and located within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, including Congressionally designated wilderness.

If a land exchange is approved, King Cove Corporation would have a corridor of land through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and Congressionally designated wilderness which, assuming all permitting and regulatory requirements are subsequently met, would allow for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a single lane gravel road between the communities of King Cove and Cold Bay, Alaska.

The 2013 Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange/Road Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement (2013 EIS) analysis of a then-proposed exchange, road corridor, and viability of alternatives to provide safe and reliable transportation between King Cove and Cold Bay, Alaska, has been updated and evaluated based on new circumstances and new information wherever available.

This Draft SEIS evaluates a new action alternative (Alternative 6), identified as the preferred alternative, for a proposed road corridor and land exchange based on an offer from King Cove Corporation, in addition to the no action and four action alternatives that were evaluated in the 2013 EIS.

Background

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (2009 Act) authorized the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a land exchange with the State of Alaska and King Cove Corporation upon a finding that it is in the public interest. Under the exchange, the U. S.

Government would convey a corridor of land through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to construct a single lane gravel road connecting the communities of Cold Bay and King Cove in exchange for conveyance of land from the State of Alaska and the King Cove Corporation for inclusion in Izembek and Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuges. The 2009 Act further required the Secretary to prepare an EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which was completed in 2013. Among other alternatives, including marine-based alternatives, the EIS evaluated specific road corridors through the Izembek Refuge identified in consultation with the State of Alaska, the City of King Cove, and the Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove. In December 2013, Secretary Jewell issued a Record of Decision selecting the “No Action” Alternative.

On July 3, 2019, Secretary Bernhardt approved a different land exchange between the Department of the Interior and King Cove Corporation (2019 Land Exchange Agreement). This exchange enabled commercial use of the road, authorized gravel mining within the Refuge, and involved less land for the Refuge. A federal district court in Alaska vacated the 2019 exchange due to several legal flaws, including that Secretary Bernhardt failed to properly justify his change in policy and rejection of Secretary Jewell's prior conclusions.

On March 14, 2023, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland issued a new decision memorandum withdrawing the Department from the 2019 Land Exchange Agreement. This memorandum identified procedural flaws, noting the failure to consider the effects of the exchange on subsistence uses and shortcomings in the record regarding NEPA and Endangered Species Act analyses. In addition, the Secretary expressed significant policy concerns regarding the nonpublic nature of the agreement and its terms, which differed from the exchange evaluated in the 2013 EIS.

In June 2023 the Service published a Federal Register Notice of Intent to prepare a supplemental EIS to consider the effects of a potential land exchange.

For more information go to:
<https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>



Current Action

While the authorities in the 2009 Act remain expired, the Service has prepared a Draft SEIS to address a potential exchange under section 1302(h) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The Service's Draft SEIS analyzes the potential impacts of a land exchange and road construction and use; allows for public participation; and integrates the NEPA analysis with an evaluation under ANILCA section 810. The Service is also using and coordinating the NEPA process to help inform the Department's processes and analyses under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, ANILCA (including any land exchange's furtherance of the statute's conservation and subsistence purposes), Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and the Wilderness Act of 1964.

The purposes of the proposed action are to provide a safe, reliable, year-round transportation system for health and safety purposes, with particular emphasis on emergency medical evacuations between King Cove and Cold Bay, and increase the overall conservation values of lands preserved in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and also maintain or increase the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural Alaskans.

Alternatives

No new road alternatives, that were not previously evaluated or dismissed, were identified during the SEIS scoping process. This Draft SEIS considers a reasonable range of alternatives, including a No Action alternative and five action alternatives: four from the 2013 EIS and one additional alternative. The 2009 Act expired on March 30, 2016 and contained a proposed land exchange involving State of Alaska parcels, but the State is not a party in the proposed land exchange. Alternatives 2 and 3 were proposed land exchanges under the 2009 Act and, therefore, cannot be selected and are retained in this Draft SEIS for comparative purposes only.

The Service evaluated the new additional alternative (Alternative 6) for a new land exchange with King Cove Corporation. This road corridor alignment is a similar route to the southern road alignment evaluated in the 2013 EIS (Alternative 2), with refinements to avoid waterbodies and account for topography. The new proposed land exchange is based on an offer from King Cove Corporation to the Service. This is the preferred alternative.



For more information go to:
<https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>



Commenting

Comment Period:

The 45-day public comment period for the Draft SEIS began with the [Notice of Availability](#) published by the Environmental Protection Agency in the Federal Register on November 15, 2024, and will end on [December 30, 2024](#) (at 11:59 p.m. eastern time).

We invite comment on the Draft SEIS from the public and local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies. The Draft SEIS is available online at <https://www.regulations.gov> on Docket No. FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072. The comment period provides an opportunity for people who could be affected by the proposed action to express their views and concerns, and to offer comments on the Draft SEIS.

How to comment:

There are several ways to comment on the Draft SEIS:



Comment Online at: <https://www.regulations.gov>

Follow the instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072.



U.S. Mail: Public Comments Processing

Attn: Docket No. FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS:PRB/3W
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803



Public Meetings and ANILCA 810 Hearings:

Comments will also be accepted at the in-person and virtual public meetings/hearings.

The most effective comments include specific details regarding issues or concerns that also provide rationale for the concern or suggestion. Ideas for effective comments include:

- New information that might change the analysis or conclusions
- Providing a substantially different alternative that meets the purpose and need statement and has not been considered
- Specifying information in the document that should be clarified
- Making known an error in methodology, analysis, or conclusions

**Comments must be received/
postmarked no later than
11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
on December 30, 2024!**

Next Steps in the NEPA Process:

Following the completion of the comment period, the Service will review and assess all substantive public comments submitted on the Draft SEIS and incorporate changes into the Final SEIS before release, and a Record of Decision will be prepared in 2025.

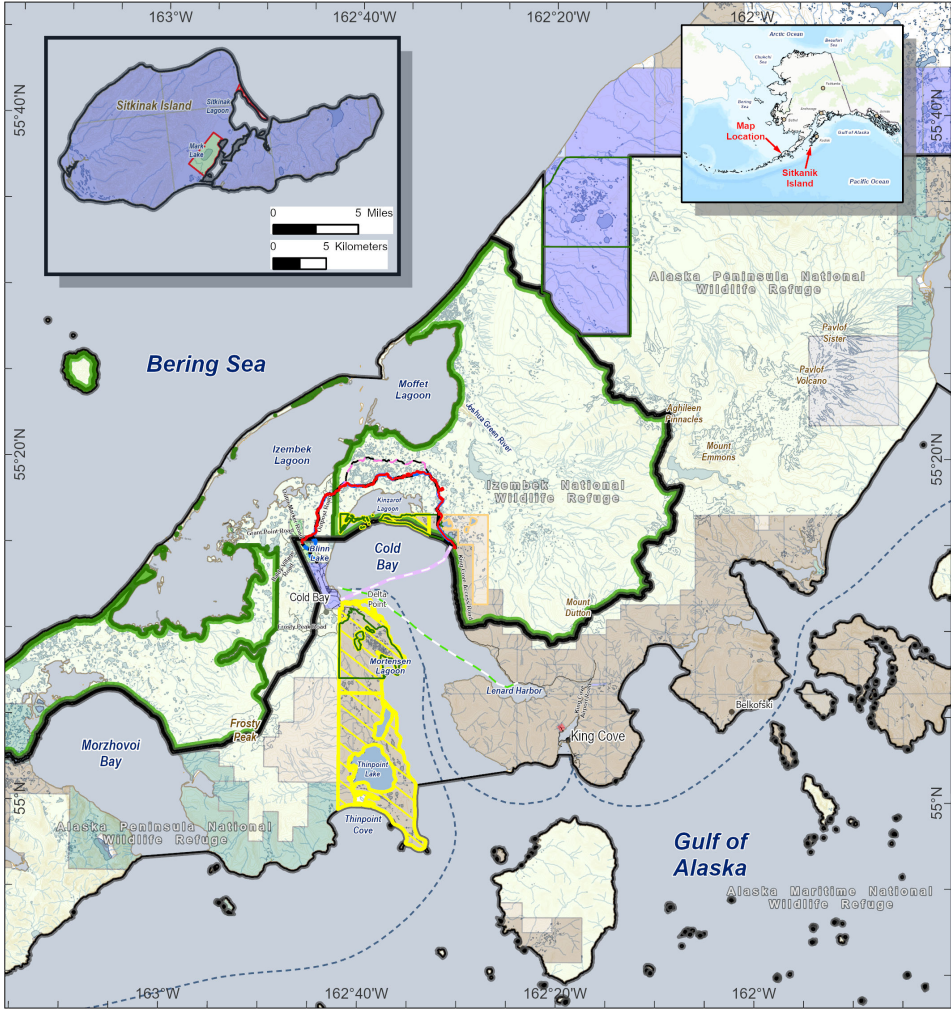
Privacy Notice: If you submit a comment via <https://www.regulations.gov>, your entire comment, including any personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and email address, will be posted on the website. If you submit a hardcopy comment that includes personal identifying information, you may request at the top of your document that we withhold this information from public review. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. We will post all hardcopy comments on <https://www.regulations.gov>.

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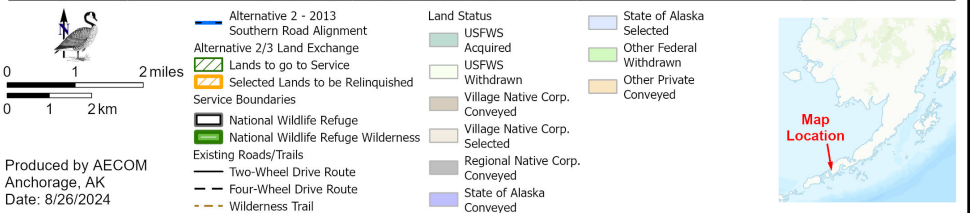
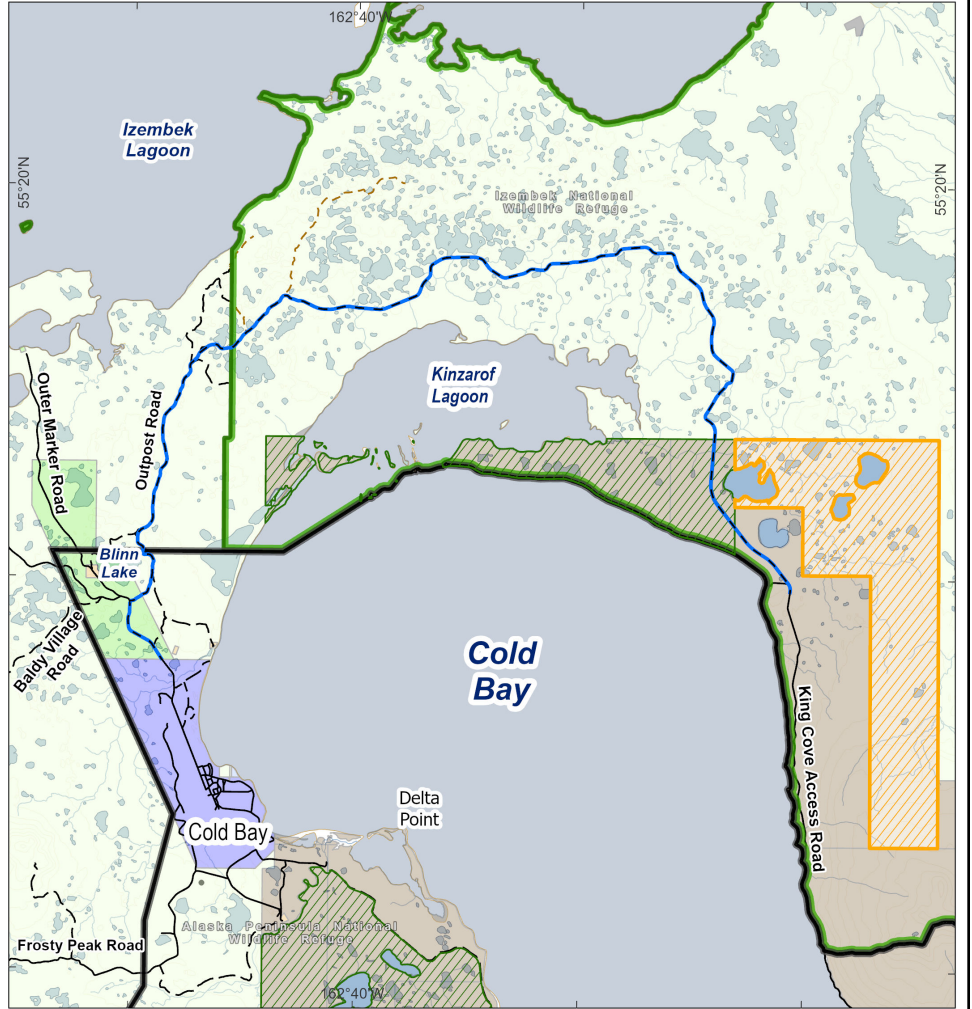
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
Alaska



Project Area Map



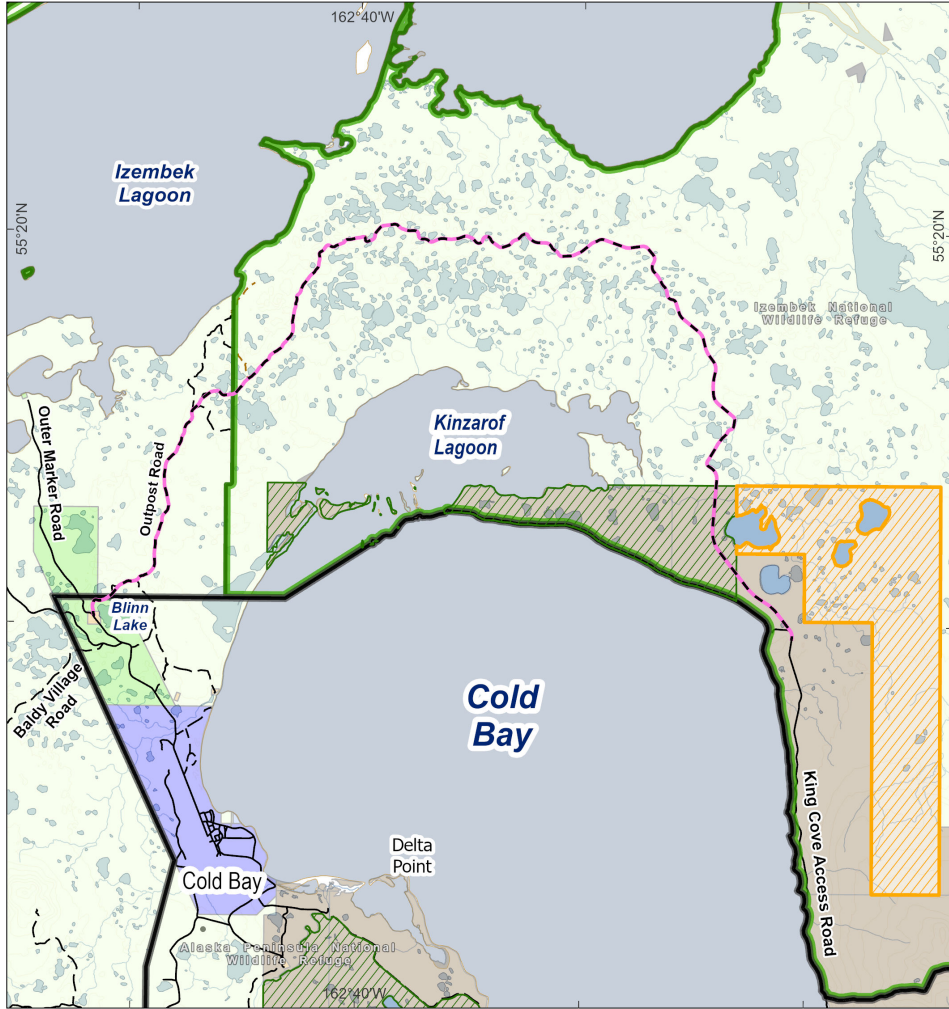
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
Alaska



Alternative 2 - Southern Road Alignment



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
 Alaska



0 1 2 miles
 0 1 2 km

Produced by AECOM
 Anchorage, AK
 Date: 8/26/2024

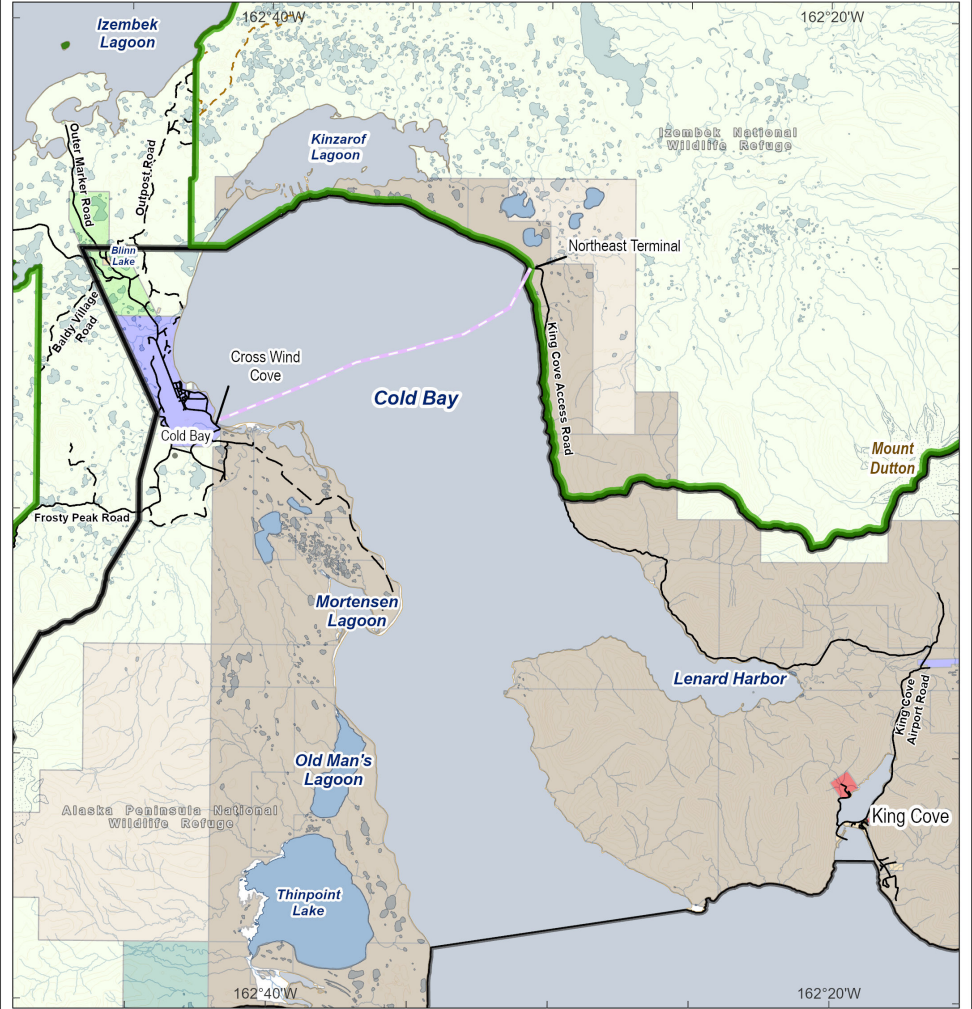
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative 3 - 2013 Central Road Alignment Alternative 2/3 Land Exchange Lands to go to Service Selected Lands to be Relinquished Service Boundaries National Wildlife Refuge National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Existing Roads/Trails Two-Wheel Drive Route Four-Wheel Drive Route Wilderness Trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Status USFWS Acquired USFWS Withdrawn Village Native Corp. Conveyed Village Native Corp. Selected Regional Native Corp. Conveyed State of Alaska Conveyed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State of Alaska Selected Other Federal Withdrawn Other Private Conveyed
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Map Location

Alternative 3 - Central Road Alignment



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
 Alaska



0 1.5 3 miles
 0 1.5 3 km

Produced by AECOM
 Anchorage, AK
 Date: 8/26/2024

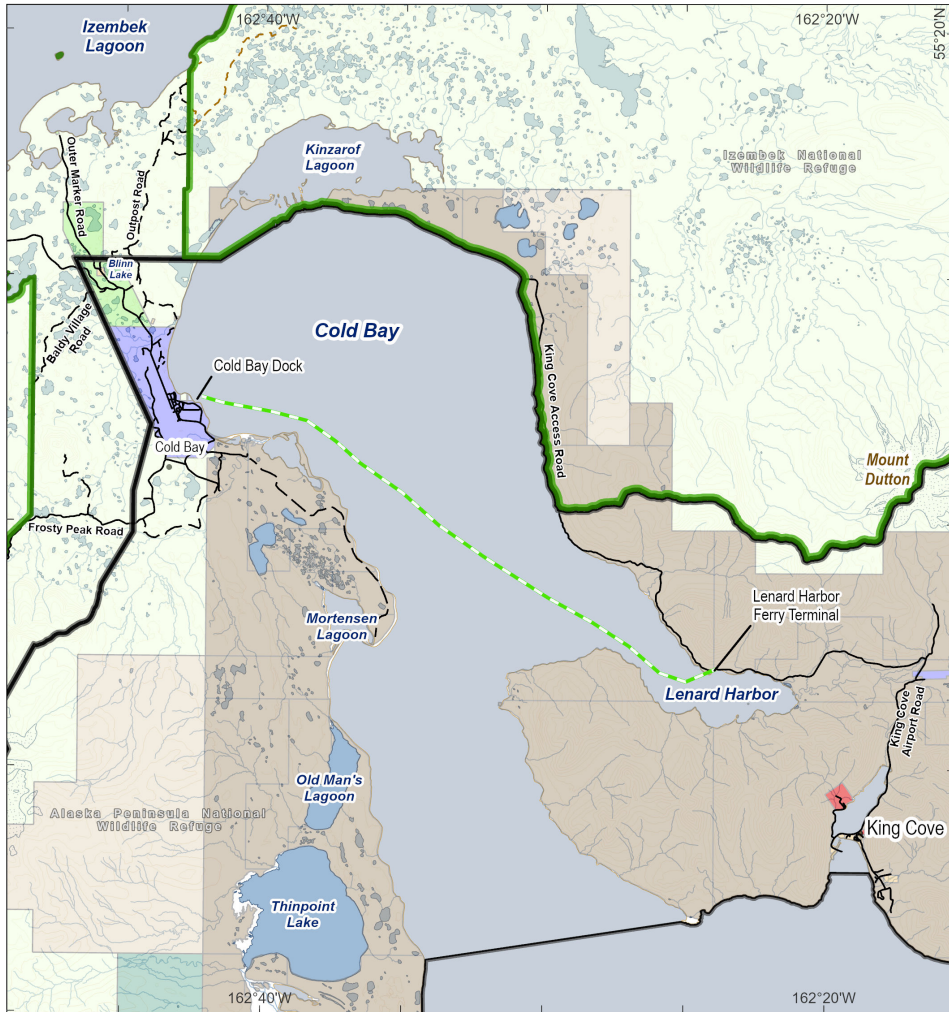
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative 4 Hovercraft Cross Wind Cove to Northeast Terminal Service Boundaries National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Existing Roads/Trails Two-Wheel Drive Route Four-Wheel Drive Route Wilderness Trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Status USFWS Acquired USFWS Withdrawn Native Allotment Conveyed Village Native Corp. Conveyed Village Native Corp. Selected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Native Corp. Conveyed State of Alaska Conveyed State of Alaska Selected Other Federal Withdrawn Other Private Conveyed
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Map Location

Alternative 4 - Hovercraft from Northeast Terminal



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
 Alaska

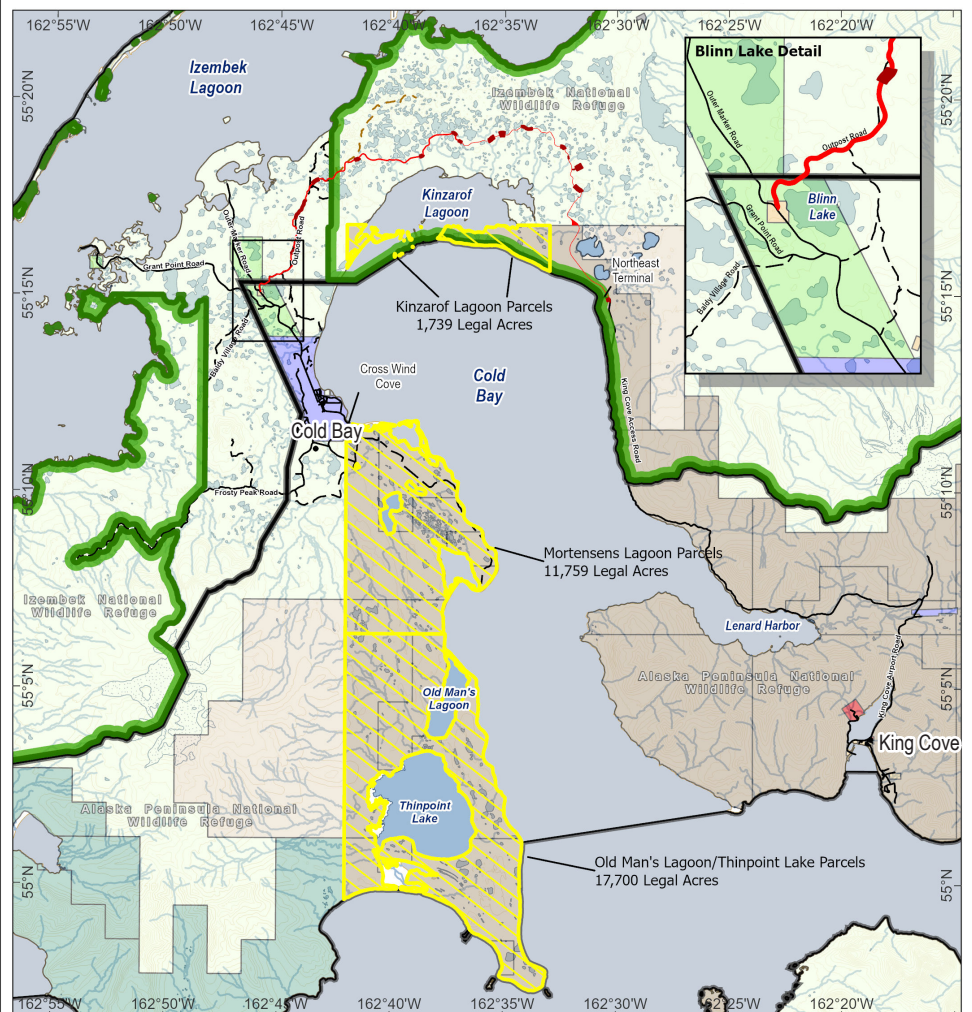


 Produced by AECOM Anchorage, AK Date: 8/26/2024	Alternative 5 Lenard Harbor Ferry Terminal to Cold Bay Dock	Land Status USFWS Acquired USFWS Withdrawn Native Allotment Village Native Corp. Conveyed Village Native Corp. Selected	Regional Native Corp. Conveyed State of Alaska Conveyed State of Alaska Selected Other Federal Withdrawn Other Private Conveyed
	Service Boundaries National Wildlife Refuge National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Existing Roads/Trails Two-Wheel Drive Route Four-Wheel Drive Route Wilderness Trail	Map Location 	

Alternative 5 - Lenard Harbor Ferry with Cold Bay Dock Improvements



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
 Alaska



 Produced by AECOM Anchorage, AK Date: 8/26/2024	Alternative 6 Proposed Road Corridor Proposed Material Sites Proposed King Cove Corporation Lands to be Exchanged to Service	Current Land Status USFWS Acquired USFWS Withdrawn Native Allotment Conveyed Village Native Corp. Conveyed Village Native Corp. Selected Regional Native Corp. Conveyed	State of Alaska Conveyed State of Alaska Selected Other Federal Withdrawn Other Private Conveyed Existing Roads/Trails Two-Wheel Drive Route Four-Wheel Drive Route Wilderness Trail
	Map Location 		

Alternative 6 - 2024 Land Exchange and Road Alignment