Western Governors' Wildlife Council
Wildlife Pilot Proposal – Concept Paper template
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Pilot Title: Identifying crucial habitats and corridors for resident fish and caribou Alaska's North Slope

General Description: The purpose of this pilot project is to 1) prepare spatial data for respective aquatic/resident fish, 2) consolidate up to 4 of the spatial datasets for the arctic migratory caribou herds, 3) work with partners to prepare metadata incorporating base maps and fish and wildlife data, and 4) demonstrate capabilities to apply the WGA guidelines to define crucial habitats and corridors. Partners include the State of Alaska's – Department of Natural Resources and the North Slope Science Initiative (a consortium of local, state, federal governments [e.g., departments of Energy, Interior] and various NGO's, industry [e.g., Conoco Philips] and university partners [e.g., University of Alaska – Fairbanks]).

Secondary State Partners: None. Key partners for this project include major land management agencies on the North Slope including the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Natural Resources, and the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (North Slope Borough).

Energy Nexus: Oil and gas development continues to expand across Alaska's North Slope and while the land footprint for drilling is greatly reduced from a few decades ago, there is still significant infrastructure associated with work crews, roads, and especially pipelines and other transmission corridors. This cumulative development is taking place across largely pristine and unfragmented arctic habitats that have resident fish and caribou herds. Interactions between these fish and wildlife resources and energy development must focus on ways to identify crucial and important habitats early in project planning and across land jurisdictions to display possible issues, aid in decision-making and minimize conflict.

Desired outcomes (6 mo and 12 mo): 6 months – a) *caribou* – choose among the Western Arctic, Teshukpuk, Central Arctic, and Porcupine caribou herd spatial datasets and develop data standards and metadata compatible with existing base maps; b) *fish/aquatic* – choose spatial aspects of the Alaska Freshwater Fish Inventory and work with cooperators to evaluate and merge with base maps. 12 months – a) *caribou* – conduct demonstration geospatial analysis of important caribou calving ground and migration corridors; b) *fish/aquatic* – conduct demonstration geospatial analysis of important resident fish and aquatic habitats.

DSS advancement: Decision-making systems involving oil and gas development and impacts to resident wildlife and aquatic resources will be enhanced by this pilot project. This will be one of the first attempts by the State of Alaska to evaluate these resources apart from a specific development project. Therefore, the science and mapping can be independent from any given activity and focus on meeting fish and

wildlife management objectives. There are a few ways in which this will help advance a decision support system. First, long-term caribou spatial data will be summarized using standard protocols with associated meta-data. This can be used in association with the Geographic Information Network of Alaska (GINA) and include partners such as the many agencies that are part of the North Slope Science Initiative and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Results and summary information will be readily useable by those planning oil, gas and related projects (e.g., transmission corridors). Finally, long-term spatial data summaries of aquatic and wildlife resources on the North Slope that are compatible with other information in GINA are very useful for evaluating climate change. Such projects are now being planned by a variety of agencies and academic institutions.