

VIII. Little Susitna

A. LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Primary Use:	Recreation, Grazing in Section B, Water Resources (See Map 6, page 196 of original plan)
Secondary Use:	Fish and Wildlife Habitat
Prohibited Uses:	Commercial Recreation Leases, Settlement, Remote Cabin Permits, Grazing in Section A (See Map 3, pages 116/117 in original plan)
Mining:	Open except for a corridor along the Little Susitna River

B. BACKGROUND

This scenic, glacially carved valley is used primarily for wilderness-type activities, such as foot travel, skiing, snowmachining, horseback riding, and ptarmigan hunting. Rock and ice climbing, mountaineering classes, and year-round glacial travel are also popular. A loop route is used by skilled skiers and glacier travelers between the upper Little Susitna Valley and Reed Lakes. This rugged backcountry, which can be reached by hikers or skiers in one day, provides the opportunity for a weekend wilderness-type experience. A hut built by the Mountaineering Club of Alaska is located near Mint Glacier, at the head of the valley.

The valley is within the general sheep distribution range and there are moose in the lower valley. Trapping and ptarmigan hunting are traditional uses in the valley in fall and winter. Spawning king and coho salmon are found in the Little Susitna River within this subunit and there is sport fishing for Dolly Varden. This valley contains the headwaters of the Little Susitna River and has high value for downstream fisheries, wildlife habitat, riparian habitat, and watershed.

Lode gold mining potential is high. Small-scale placer mining occurs in the lower Little Susitna valley; there is a chance that a deep pre-glacial placer deposit underlies the river. (Refer to Chapter 2, page 70 in original plan, Subsurface Resources for more information on placer potential.)

The primitive trail known as the Gold Mint Road was originally constructed to provide access to the Lonesome Mine on the east side of the river. It is an unmaintained state road approximately four miles long. A derelict foot bridge is still in place at the river crossing. No other trails are known to occur in this rugged valley.

The legislature has designated the river corridor as the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area (see Map 12 in original plan). To protect scenic, recreational, and fisheries values, it has been closed to mineral entry.

The valley is steep and mountainous with many unstable surficial geologic features, an active fault system and glaciers. The valley floor has some avalanche potential, and the rest of the area has high avalanche potential.

The lower valley has moderate value grass resources and has been leased for grazing for 25 years; however, it has not been grazed the past two years. Herd management is easy due to the natural boundaries provided by the mountains and the swift, rocky rivers.

C. MANAGEMENT INTENT

The overall Hatcher Pass management scheme is to provide a variety of dispersed, wilderness-type, recreational opportunities to a wide variety of users. This subunit is the only one where a quiet, backcountry experience is available from a road access point.

This unit will be managed primarily for low density, non-motorized use, and dispersed recreation, including hunting and trapping. Keeping options open for future lode mineral development of the valley walls has a high priority. Within Section "A", grazing is a high priority and will be managed so it is compatible with recreation.

D. PLANNED ACTIONS

1. MINING

A mineral closing order will be placed on the Little Susitna River headwaters lake to protect the public recreation and fisheries values. Most of the rest of the river has been closed to mineral entry by the legislature in SB 334 which created the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area (see Map 12 in original plan).

2. RECREATION

- a. **Non-Motorized Special Use Area.** Establish a nonmotorized (including aircraft landings) special use area in the portion of this subunit within the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area and its proposed additions. [WILL BE CLOSED TO MOTORIZED USE (INCLUDING AIRCRAFT LANDING) FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES IN BOTH WINTER AND SUMMER. PERMITS FOR MOTORIZED ACCESS WILL BE ISSUED TO THOSE WHO CAN DEMONSTRATE AN ECONOMIC INTEREST (OTHER THAN RECREATION) IN THIS VALLEY ON WHICH THEY ARE ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT (E.G., A MINING CLAIM, GRAZING LEASE, OR TRAPLINE), OR FOR GROOMING OF A WINTER SKI TRAIL. NO PERMIT IS REQUIRED FOR EMERGENCY RESCUE. A PERMIT MAY