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Subsurface Resources

Background

Oil and Gas Resources

The area is almost entirely in the Chugach Mountains and dominated by outcrop of Cretaceous Valdez Group and McHugh Complex with a belt of diorite, granodiorite and metamorphosed rocks along the northern boundary. These rocks are not considered to have oil and gas potential at this time. There is a very small chance for gas potential in Tertiary Kenai Group rocks in a portion of the western half of township 17N 3E and the northern part of 16N 2E. This could conceivably involve coal bed methane, tight gas sands or other unconventional gas resources at shallow depths and small potential gas volumes. However, this information is inconclusive since there are no oil and gas wells in the area and no surface outcrops of the Kenai Group have been mapped there.

The Cook Inlet Areawide Oil and Gas Lease Sale boundary does not include the public use area. A new best interest finding for the Cook Inlet area is being written and it is expected to be completed mid-2008. Although not anticipated, the Cook Inlet Areawide Oil and Gas Lease Sale boundary could conceivably be expanded to include state-owned land within the public use area for leasing under AS 38.05.180. State land, with few exceptions, is subject to oil and gas exploration and development, either through areawide leasing under AS 38.05.180 or by exploration licensing under AS 38.05.131. It should be noted that mineral closing orders under AS 38.05.185 do not apply to oil and gas exploration and leasing, nor do they preclude reasonable surface access to these resources. However, rights reserved under AS 38.05.125 may not be exercised until provision is made for payment for all damages sustained by the land owner (AS 38.05.130). In addition, geophysical exploration permits issued under 11 AAC 96 will conform to the maximum extent possible with the management guidelines in the plan, but are not prohibited.

Decisions regarding leasing for oil and gas and other energy resources will not be addressed in this plan. Oil and gas lease sales are specifically not subject to this planning process and follow the requirements of AS 38.05.180.

Coal Resources

Coal resources may be located in the western portion of the PUA however they are poor quality and not presently found in commercial quantities. Development of these resources is therefore unlikely.

1 **Locatable Minerals**

2 Locatable minerals (gold, silver, copper, and others) may be found in the eastern portion of
3 the PUA, primarily in the Metal Creek drainage. There are 32 active mining claims in the
4 area of Metal Creek. State land in the PUA is open to mineral entry but mining has not
5 occurred outside of the Metal Creek drainage due to the sparse occurrence of locatable
6 minerals. Expansion of the current area of the Mineral Closing Order is not considered
7 appropriate.

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9 **Goal**

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11 • Provide for the development of subsurface resources while protecting recreation, fish
12 and wildlife and the habitats that they depend upon.

13
14 **Management Guidelines**

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16 Because of the low potential for the area to contain locatable minerals, additional closures to
17 mineral entry are not proposed at this time. Nonetheless, all current mineral closing and
18 leasehold location orders will remain and the following management guidelines apply.

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20 • Authorizations issued by DNR shall include stipulations to minimize impacts to fish
21 and wildlife, their habitats, and recreational uses. Access to recreational areas shall
22 not be impaired.
- 23 • Subsurface authorizations issued by DNR should, where possible, ensure that such
24 activities are not conducted in high-use recreation areas. Timing restrictions should
25 be considered in these authorizations. Access to recreational areas shall not be
26 impaired.
- 27 • Mining operations should be conducted in such a manner that prevents unnecessary
28 and undue degradation of the land and water resources.
- 29 • Areas of mining operations, including placer mining, shall be reclaimed consistent
30 with the requirements of DNR. Materials sales, land use permits and plans of
31 operation will specify measures necessary to return land used in mining operations to
32 a useful condition. In habitat areas, annual reclamation will be required concurrent
33 with mining or material extraction.
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