



Copper River Basin Area Plan Planning Update No. 1



Alaska Department of
**NATURAL
RESOURCES**

Division of Mining, Land & Water

April 2016

Overview

This planning update is intended to inform you of the issues and discussions staff heard at the recently completed scoping meetings. Some comments were specific to an issue and/or use within the CRBAP, while others were more general in nature.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is nearing completion of the public scoping phase of the planning process for the Copper River Basin Area Plan (CRBAP) with the official public scoping period ending on April 29, 2016. DNR held eight public meetings (Glennallen, Mentasta Lake, Gulkana, Copper Center, Chitina, Kenny Lake, Anchorage, and Valdez) in late March and early April to solicit public input on use, resources, and issues within the CRBAP, both now and into the future. Planning staff from DNR were present at the meetings, along with a representative from Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), to meet with community councils/government, stakeholder groups, and individuals with interest in the planning process. Each meeting began with an informal map review; followed by staff introductions; a formal presentation on the CRBAP process; a question and answer period; then specific issue related discussions.

In addition to the input received at scoping meetings, individuals, groups, government and organizations were encouraged to submit written comments on the development of the CRBAP, and to contact planning staff, to discuss and identify any issues before development of the plan.

Your written comments can be submitted online through the CRBAP planning website at:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/areaplans/crbap>

The Meetings: “What we heard”

The following section is compiled from notes taken during meeting discussions. In some cases, the input may have been expressed from several or more meeting participants, while in other cases it may have been a single person. The following input and the input received through public comments will be reviewed and considered in the revision of the CRBAP.

Glennallen

March 29, 2016

Number in attendance: [7]

- A State Forest designation in the Mendeltna/Nelchina area is desirable in the foothills north of the mountains.
- Include the Tangle Lakes Archeological District (TLAD) in the plan; Summit Lake and Paxson are important from an ADF&G perspective.
- Include the lands in the Lake Louise East area in the plan.
- Exclude the area on the southern boundary of the plan extending west from Thompson Pass.
- There is support for a Management Plan for Thompson Pass, similar to Turnagain Pass.

Revised June 28, 2016

- Community hunts occur in the Slide Mountain area.
- Access to state land in the Klutina area is an issue; the road to Klutina is one of the few secondary roads in the area.
- Winter snowmobile access to Valdez from St. Anne Creek trail should be protected.
- Tonsina Controlled Use Area (CUA) is popular for snowmobiling, hunting and hiking; access to the area is from the 5 Mile Trail.
- Trapping within the planning boundary generally occurs in Paxson, Klutina and Chistochina and some seasonally in the Nabesna area. There are a few large scale trappers with 5-6 lines, but most are small.
- Place no settlement near the airport, landfill or shooting range.
- Settlement should be offered in existing settlement areas rather than new settlement areas because of existing infrastructure.
- Place no settlement north of Paxson area.
- Access to previous settlement areas was not well planned, many routes cross wetlands or are seasonally impassable; Crosswind Lake was used as an example.
- Willow Creek is an example of DNR selling wetlands, 1980's saw poor decisions for settlement offerings.
- Honor the original intent of why people picked the settlement land that they did; winter access only.
- Issues exist for the 17b easement, RS2477 to Klutina Lake; there is an illegal gate on the route.
- Klutina Lake Road (Brenwick-Craig) is a year-round active use area for salmon, snow machining, and is a historic trail to Valdez.
- Please produce thematic maps for Forestry, Habitat, etc.
- Tonsina Controlled Use Area is a popular area for harvesting berries, hiking etc.
- The Copper Basin 300 is an annual event in the area that should be considered.

Mentasta Lake

March 30, 2016

Number in attendance: [6]

- Cultural Sites exist in the area of Tolsina Creek and near Northway.
- Caribou hunting by community members occurs mainly near Chistochina.
- Genetic and migration crossover occurs between Nelchina and 40 Mile caribou herds near community of Mentasta Lake.
- Valid salmon runs exist where vehicle crossing occurs on Bone Creek; there are concerns from the community over destruction of salmon habitat. They would like a bridge over the creek for vehicular crossing.
- Permitted mining occurs near Bone Creek via Coleman Lake RS2477. Users are crossing the creek with equipment on skids, lots of salmon present when this happens. Permits are valid for mining through Ahtna and DNR.
- Ahtell Creek gold mine area is a cultural/historic site, should be recognized.
- Settlement is not supported near Mentasta Lake, citing concerns about competition for resources in their local harvest areas.
- Community members would like to see Indian Road (old highway) RS2477 trail protected and want support from the State to maintain it.
- The trail through the valley in the Tanada Lake area has some ATV use and the community has concerns about degradation to the trail as it is a wet/marsh area.
- ATV trail at Squaw Creek is newer and mainly used by hunters. Community members would like to see some restrictions on use, similar to what happens east of the road system.

Gulkana

March 30, 2016

Number in attendance: [3]

- Ancestral burial grounds exist at the old Gulkana Village site. Meeting participants mentioned that they would like to see a renewed land exchange effort with the State and Ahtna Regional Corp.
- Tonsina Controlled Use Area, south of the Settlement area, should be put on hold; more people will impact services and infrastructure.
- The Legislature should understand that the State should be careful when choosing settlement lands close to existing communities due to cost/strain put on existing infrastructure due to increased demand. The old Slana federal land disposal was used as an example.
- Local option law is not so much an issue for Gulkana like it is in Mentasta, as it is less rural.
- Use ADF&G harvest/subsistence data and maps to overlay for better information to show people.
- People want to know where state and Native Corps are with the selection process and when the lands will be conveyed from BLM.

Copper Center

March 30, 2016

Number in attendance: [9]

- Some community members would like the plan to classify certain lands to enable habitat conversion, similar to a current Ahtna project at multiple sites along Klutina Lake Road.
- Firewood collection occurs near Tazlina.
- Community harvest occurs along Richardson Highway corridor, Hwy 21 up near Tangle Lakes, all around Denali, and the Tonsina Controlled Use Area.
- Subsistence areas exist from Chitina to McCarthy, Chistochina to Tazlina.
- Community members asked the State to work with ADF&G, DOT and AHTNA on moose habitat conversion/enhancement in support of biomass projects.
- Some community members support a management plan for Thompson Pass, some voiced support for a non-motorized use area.
- Multiple community members expressed concern that there are no state owned take-out points in or around Copper Center for boat take-out. They would like to be able to do day trips in the area; currently Chitina is best place but is usually a two day or longer trip.
- Tazlina landing was washed out; the state should purchase a lot somewhere for a good boat take-out.
- Community members would like to see recreational access to river on State land in the Slana area.
- Moose hunting from Copper Center community generally occurs in the road corridor, Chistochina, and the DuRelle Trail area leading west from Pippin Lake area.
- Be careful of settlement offerings that can lead to private land blocking access to state land.
- Small parcels in Copper Center area need to be identified as those spots that people use for recreation and retain in State ownership.
- Several people indicated they would like to see 17b easements or RS2477 designations on trails with signage or better marked.
- Klutina Lake area access is a big issue in this community, several members pointed out that there is an intermittently locked gate, and that the easement is currently being litigated (Ahtna v State). This is especially concerning because this area is a high recreation and harvest/subsistence area for many members of the Copper River basin. Easements/Roads to and from lakes and other water bodies. Maintain public access by use of to & along easements, ROW's and setbacks.
- Industrial tourism is changing the nature of the Klutina River. Members expressed a desire to keep the land around Klutina Lake in state ownership and create better access to those state lands.

Chitina

March 31, 2016

Number in attendance: [5]

- Wood collection is difficult due to private lands. Community firewood harvest occurs in the 5 Mile Trail area. Meeting participants asked the planning staff to look for good areas for Forestry.
- Firewood access is decent in the Lower Tonsina area.
- Long Lake is salmon spawning grounds, and water is open into late fall. Salmon spawn into late winter here. There is a large concentration of bears, some members were concerned about human/bear encounters in the area due to hunting and the presence of salmon late into the season.
- State and Federal permits are required to hunt locally; most moose are taken right in Chitina.
- Paxson, Tangle Lakes, Thompson Pass, and O'Brien Creek Road are used for berry picking; raspberries, high bush cranberries and blueberries are harvested in the Chitina area.
- 5 Mile Trail was made for a goldmine; lots of sheep hunting occurs in this area (state hunt).
- Caribou harvest by community members occurs primarily in the Paxson Lake area.
- Members expressed a desire to classify lands for mining where mineralized, as this could be an economic source of revenue for the State.
- Mining occurs or has occurred at Ernestine Creek (placer), Dust Mountain, and Dust Creek.
- There are no recreational ATV trails, however many members of the community would still like ATV access into hunting and harvest areas.
- Chitina community members expressed a desire for the State to provide more access to state lands.
- Honor all RS2477's, not just the ones passed through the Legislature.
- McCarthy Road is a State ROW – the community would like the road maintained all the way to Kennicott. Assert state ownership of the road, there are concerns that individuals could lay claim to ROW's and charge fees. This could be an economic source of revenue for the State.
- DOT is not working on the Copper River Highway O'Brien Creek, but fishing activity has increased. The community is concerned over status of access here, which also increases risk to public safety. Emergencies with dipnetters have already occurred.
- Members suggested putting the plan back out for public review prior to adoption, or after the ITA phase.

Kenny Lake

March 31, 2016

Number in attendance: [9]

- Between Cantwell and Tangle Lakes area marriages took place in a specific spot between Ahtna tribes; please recognize the historical significance of this area.
- Firewood gathering occurs around Pump Station 12, green timber is collected near Glennallen.
- There is a need within the community for biomass resources.
- Tea Kettle Valley has lots of beetle kill that is used for home heating wood.
- Please retain the DuRelle Trail and Tonsina Lake areas in public ownership, as they are popular subsistence harvest and recreation areas for the community.
- Meeting participants pointed out a citizen proposal (2011) for a "Tangle Lakes State Wildlife Refuge" in an effort to stop progression of mining in the area.
- Manage state lands around the Paxson and Tangle Lakes for habitat and recreation, not mining.
- Some participants might be in support of a management plan for Thompson Pass but would want to know how it would be funded.
- Community members would like to see more State campgrounds in Copper Center.
- Issues with many past state settlement land disposal projects in the area;
 - Squirrel Creek: too much on north facing slopes.
 - Tonsina: Subsistence moose harvest occurs in this area.
 - McCarthy – 300 lots is too many without dealing with infrastructure or other major issues first.
 - Decision matrix needed for Settlement designation.

- Many wetland issues.
- Water availability is an issue for residential and Agriculture parcels, many get water from the fire department or community well site.
- Water use in Kenny Lake is a huge issue
 - Lower Tonsina community well site proposal.
 - Hydrology study needed.
- Identify lands available for Settlement and Agriculture for community expansion however please study the hydrology of an area before offering. The community would like to leave the Kenny Lake area as is.
- Look into Community Economic Strategies (CEDS) for CRBAP communities.
- Scan large format map and make it available online.
- Extend the CRBAP boundary to include all of Thompson Pass.
- Due to a fire at the Records Office within McCarthy, researching land records and ownership within McCarthy is difficult as well as identifying access. There are currently many issues within the community over access.
- Fireweed subdivision in McCarthy has a DOT material site close to drainage. Hydrology has been described, but stuff just happens:
 - ½ university, ½ state
 - Gravel sites need to change or be re-evaluated– can this plan address this?
- Would like to see Settlement land in McCarthy be reduced or changed completely.

Anchorage

April 5, 2016

Number in attendance: [2]

- This plan should recognize cultural sites in Gulkana and in the Tangle Lakes Corridor.
- Cultural reviews should be included for decisions on all land disposals.
- Cultural reviews should be included for all Forestry decisions.
- Rafters want continued commercial and traditional use of NPS rivers.
- Maintain commercial services on the Tana River.
- Chitina to Cordova float is very natural feeling, please maintain wilderness feel.
- Woods Canyon is generally the place where jet boats stop.
- Maintain access to the Copper River through State land.
- Maintain the remoteness of the Copper River Corridor.
- Offer smaller Agricultural parcels in new areas that have community wells, as water availability is an issue.
- Make sure impacts of new settlement areas are addressed before offering them.

Valdez

April 6, 2016

Number in attendance: [29]

- Dempsey is an old mining town from 1890's, with old equipment and remnants, and should be designated as a historical/cultural area.
- Call for Management Plan in Thompson pass was repeatedly voiced, especially to designate a non-motorized area.
- 46 Mile neighborhood is made up of skiers, and they want the area non-motorized.
- Limit access only as necessary for State-leased land and surrounding development projects
- Erickson Creek/Boulder Creek mining claim has no trespassing.
- Trails out of Slana would be nice.
- Trails in Tonsina area would be nice.
- Include Thompson Pass area entirely within CRBAP.

Revised June 28, 2016

- Revise the permitting system; bring back public review of permitting.

What happens next?

You have until Friday April 29th to submit your comments during the scoping phase of the planning process. The Department will continue to gather information, and begin to develop an agency review draft using the information received during the scoping period, along with information gathered and produced from the agencies and planning staff. This draft will take several months to complete, due to the multiple uses that occur within the Basin, and the large geographical area (approximately four million acres of State land). Soon after, a public review draft of the plan will be released for review and comment.

The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Public Review Draft (PRD) for a period of at least 30 days to review and comment. Another round of public meetings to present and discuss the document will be held during the review and comment period.

How do I become involved in the process?

It is not too late to become involved in the planning process for the CRBAP. **You are encouraged to:**

- Familiarize yourself with the information provided on the state website for the CRBAP web address: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/areaplans/crbap>
- Submit general comments online at the CRBAP website or mail them to the address provided below or subscribe to the mailing list, and;
- Review information, maps and draft planning documents provided for public review.

For information related to the planning process please contact:

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Visit the CRBAP website at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/areaplans/crbap> to get updated information on this planning process.