

Kobuk Region

The Kobuk Region consists of lands in the upper Kobuk basin where the major drainages are the Kobuk, Ambler, Redstone, Shungnak, Kogoluktuk, Mauneluk, Pah, and Reed rivers. The mountains ranges within this unit are a portion of the Brooks Range, the Purcell Mountains and the Zane Hills. The size of the region is approximately 5.1 million acres. The region is surrounded by five federal Conservation System Units (CSU): Kobuk Valley National Park, Noatak National Preserve, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge and the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge. Approximately 663,000 acres of the Gates of the Arctic, 236,000 acres of the Selawik NWR and 147,000 acres of the Koyukuk NWR are located within the region boundary. The terrain varies widely from exposed bedrock on mountain tops of the western Brooks Range, the Purcell Mountains and the Zane Hills; to extensive wetlands in the lower valleys. Spruce and hardwood forests are found along much of the Kobuk River and its major tributaries, with wet tundra behind the riparian forests.

Most of the state-owned/selected lands occupy the northeast portion of the region. A large block of state-selected and topfiled land straddles the 1989 plan boundary in the southeast corner of this region and this plan revision expands the plan boundary here to encompass these lands. The communities of Ambler, Shungnak and Kobuk are the three major villages in this region located on the Kobuk River. This region is mostly within the Northwest Arctic Borough with the exception being the state-selected/topfiled lands in the Purcell Mountains and Zane Hills.

Distribution and Characteristics

There are over 1.5 million acres of state-owned land and 1.0 million acres of state-selected land. Much of the state-selected land are topfiled selections over Native corporation selections, and it is not clear how much of this will be conveyed to the state. State-owned land includes most of the area between the Kobuk River and the Gates of the Arctic and Noatak CSUs to the north. Extensive areas of state-selected and topfiled land are roughly located within a 15 mile radius of the villages of Ambler and Kobuk as well as in the Purcell Mountains and Zane Hills.

The topography of this region is characteristically wetlands through the lower major river valleys. Mountains are found in the area north of the Kobuk River. Vegetation patterns generally reflect topography, with wet tundra through the lower valleys and spruce/hardwood forests adjacent to the principle river drainages. Alpine tundra and barren rock characterize upland, mountainous areas.

Access, Resources, and Uses of State Land

Access to and throughout this region is centered on the Kobuk River providing boat access or small plane traffic to the villages. There are gravel runways at the communities of Ambler, Kobuk and Shungnak. Other access is provided by snowmachine during the winter, ATVs during the summer and fall, and by skiffs and other small boats, powered and not powered, along the Kobuk River. Wheeled and float planes may also use the rivers and lakes at certain points important for recreation or mining access.

Moderate fish and wildlife values are found along the Ambler, Pah, Kobuk, and Selawik rivers. Anadromous fish, Arctic char, and whitefish are found along these rivers; sheefish spawn within the Kobuk and Selawik Rivers. Moose are distributed throughout the region, with principal winter concentrations found along the Pick, Kobuk, and Pah rivers. Caribou are scattered throughout the region. Fall migratory routes occur throughout the mountainous northern half of this region with heavy use between Ambler and Kobuk. The eastern half of this region is core winter range for the WACH. Dall sheep are present in the mountains on the north side of the Kobuk River. Waterfowl and other migratory birds use the wetlands and tundra of this region, especially during migration.

Hunting, fishing, and limited trapping are some of the major uses of the state-owned and selected uplands in the unit. The residents also use the land for gathering eggs, berries, plants, and firewood. This area is also used seasonally by guides and their clients; recreational users, especially for floating the Kobuk River; and miners.

A mineralized area considered to have high mineral potential occurs within the Brooks Range foothills north of the Kobuk River. Mining has occurred here since the 1800's and this area contains a number of significant mineral occurrences for gold, copper, zinc and lead. Both lode and placer prospects or deposits exist. State and federal mining claims blanket this area. Coal, oil, and gas resources are either of low potential or are not known to be present within the region.

Management Constraints

Few state and local management plans affect this area. Only one state resource management plan affected this area, the 1989 Northwest Area Plan, which is now superseded by this update. The Northwest Arctic Borough maintains a district coastal management plan and has land use zoning. Both were consulted in the development of this plan.

Management Summary

State land is to be managed consistent with the plan designations and management recommendations contained in the Resource Allocation Table. State land will be managed in a manner similar to that inferred from its designation. State land in this unit will be kept in

public ownership. This region is open to mineral entry and development⁸, and to mineral, coal, or oil and gas leasing. Shorelands in this unit will be managed consistent with the general management intent for such areas described in the *Navigable Rivers and Lakes* section at the end of Chapter 3. Local communities use nearby state lands for personal harvest of fish, wildlife and plant species. These resources and the opportunity to harvest them should be protected.

⁸ Except for a small area along the Kobuk River closed to mineral entry by MCO 568.

Resource Allocation Table for Upland Units – Kobuk Region

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTR	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-01	Gu 264,781	8, 9 Various	Manage for multiple uses. Since mineral potential within portions of this unit may actually have a high potential, it is likely that exploration and development of locatable minerals will occur during the planning period. Such developments are considered appropriate, but all such developments must follow the following management guideline. All authorizations issued in this unit involving long-term or permanent uses are to consider impacts upon Dall sheep and the WACH. Special consideration is to be given to activities occurring during the migration periods and to the protection of movement corridors and winter range. Consult ADF&G prior to issuing an authorization involving a long-term or permanent use.	This unit consists of seven parcels located throughout the region. Approximately half of the unit is state-owned land and the other half is state-selected. Significant land is located around Bismark Mountain, Kolliosak Lake, Coal Pass, Angayucham Mountains, north of Nutuvukti Lake, and on the southern slopes of the Zane Hills and Purcell Mountains. Moose, caribou, brown bear, and Dall sheep are present throughout. Winter concentrations for moose are along most rivers. Winter range for caribou is found especially at Kolliosak Lake, Coal Pass and Lake Shelby. The following subsistence resources are present in this unit: bear, caribou, fish, furbearers, moose, sheep, small game, vegetation, and waterfowl. Topography is either mountainous terrain or lowland forest. The vegetation varies from spruce and hardwoods along major streams to alpine tundra and barren exposed ridge tops. Some small portions of these parcels are considered to have high mineral potential with some ARDF occurrences present. Public access and recreation is mostly by plane to large lakes and rivers.
U-02	Mi, Ha 434,260	8, 9 Various	Manage unit for the habitat and harvest values present and the exploration and development of mineral deposits. All authorizations issued in this unit involving long-term or permanent uses are to consider impacts upon Dall sheep and the WACH. Special consideration is to be given to activities occurring during the migration periods and to the protection of movement corridors and winter range. Consult ADF&G prior to issuing an authorization involving a long-term or permanent use. Protect cultural resources, public access and recreation.	This unit's larger parcel is one long contiguous parcel running for approximately 75 miles paralleling the Kobuk River along the foothills about 15 miles to its north. Located north of the Ambler and Shungnak Rivers along the southern edge of the Schwatka Mountains. A second parcel is a small piece of state-selected land near the Jade Mountains, 10 miles northwest of Ambler. Moose, caribou, brown bear, and Dall sheep are present throughout. Moose and caribou have known winter concentrations along the Ambler, and Kobuk Rivers. The Ambler, Kobuk, and Shungnak, are anadromous streams. The following subsistence resources are present in this unit: bear, caribou, furbearers, moose, sheep, small game, vegetation, and waterfowl. There are known cultural resources on the upper Shungnak and at Avaraart Lake. Important trails within the unit are the Ambler to Anaktuvuk Pass; Shungnak River and Mauneluk River trails. This unit is considered to have high mineral potential and is a major mining district. A large number of mining claims are found within the unit and the ARDF database shows many occurrences. Public Access is the road to the upper Shungnak river; floatplanes to Avaraart Lake; wheelplane along the Ambler River gravel bars; boat on the Ambler and Mauneluk River. Recreation activities include hunting, camping, dog sledding and floating rivers.

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTR	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-03	Mi 509,765	8 Various	Manage unit for exploration and development of mineral deposits. All authorizations issued in this unit involving long-term or permanent uses are to consider impacts upon the WACH. Special consideration is to be given to activities occurring during the migration periods and to the protection of movement corridors and winter range. Consult ADF&G prior to issuing an authorization involving a long-term or permanent use.	The majority of this unit is located in the Purcell Mountains and Zane Hills. The terrain is mostly exposed bedrock with some alpine tundra. Most of the unit is state-selected or topfired. Mineral potential is high to very high with numerous claims and known reserves. Moose and caribou winter concentration habitat is present in portions of unit. Hunting and trapping occur in unit. The following subsistence resources are present in this unit: bear, caribou, furbearers, moose, small game, and waterfowl.
U-04	Ha, Rd 40,465	8, 9 Various	Manage unit for cultural, habitat and harvest values as well as dispersed recreation and access. Uses may be authorized in this unit but consideration must be given to the impact upon the caribou herd by a potential use. Consult ADF&G prior to issuing an authorization involving a long-term or permanent use that may impact this population. Maintain harvest opportunities.	Unit is located along the Kobuk River east of Kobuk village. There are recognized winter concentrations of moose and caribou. The unit is part of a caribou migration route. Kobuk River is anadromous and this section is critical habitat for sheefish spawning. The following subsistence resources are present in this unit: bear, caribou, fish, furbearers, moose, small game, vegetation, and waterfowl. Mineral closing order 568 affects these sheefish spawning areas. Established fall concentrations on migration routes of ducks and geese. Known cultural resource sites along the Kobuk River. Important trail for unit is Alantna-Shungnak-Kotzebue Trail. Public access is by floatplane and wheeled plane along Kobuk river and by boat along Kobuk and Pah rivers. Recreation is floating and camping along the Kobuk River. MCO 568 affects sheefish spawning areas on the Kobuk River.
U-05	Ha, Hv 1,284,641	8, 9 Various	Manage unit for habitat and harvest values. Protect dispersed recreation, access and cultural resources. Uses may be authorized in this unit but consideration must be given to the impact upon the caribou herd by a potential use. Consult ADF&G prior to issuing an authorization involving a long-term or permanent use that may impact this population. Maintain harvest opportunities.	This unit consists of several large parcels throughout the region. The largest portion begins on the eastern edge of the Baird Mountains continuing east along the Schwatka Mountains. Dall sheep, brown bear, moose and caribou are present. Moose and caribou have winter concentrations in many areas. The WACH migrates throughout this unit with heavy use occurring in the part of the Kobuk drainage between Ambler and Kobuk. Anadromous streams include the Kobuk, Mauneluk, Ambler and Pah rivers. The following subsistence resources are present in this unit: bear, caribou, fish, furbearers, moose, sheep, small game, vegetation, and waterfowl. Known cultural resource sites around Norutak Lake and along Kobuk River, and probable sites in the Ambler River Corridor. Important trails within this region are the Ambler to Anaktuvuk Pass trail; Redstone River to Cutler River trail; Ambler to Redstone River trail; Kobuk to Shungnak trail; Shungnak River to Mauneluk River trail. Some small portions of these parcels are considered to have high mineral potential with some ARDF occurrences present. Public access is along the road to upper Shungnak, a wheelstrip at Bornite, floatplane to Norutak; boat on Ambler and Manueluk rivers. Recreation includes hunting, camping and floating on rivers.

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTR	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-06	Tc 44,959	8, 9 Various	Manage unit for development of transportation corridor. Retain in state ownership. Protect habitat value.	Unit is part of ADOT/PF's Proposed Western Access Corridor from Candle to Shungnak. It consists of state selections trending southwest thru the Sheklukshuk mountains. Brown bear, moose and caribou are present. Mineral potential is low to very low. The vegetation varies from wetlands to alpine tundra. The following subsistence resources are present in this unit: bear, caribou, fish, furbearers, moose, small game, vegetation, and waterfowl. Access is by foot or snowmachine. Floatplane provides access by way of the nearby Kobuk River.

Total state uplands within region = 2,578,871 (6 units)