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1 **Chapter 1**  
2 **Introduction**

3 **Introduction and Background**

4  
5 **Purpose of the Plan**

6  
7 The role of state land use plans was established by state statute (AS 38.04.005). It is the policy  
8 of the State of Alaska “...to establish a balanced combination of land available for both public  
9 and private purposes. The choice of land best suited for public and private use shall be  
10 determined through the inventory, planning, and classification processes...”

11  
12 The North Slope Area Plan (NSAP) is the land use plan for state-owned, state-selected and top  
13 filed lands in the North Slope area. As such, it provides the basis for management of state  
14 lands and resources and affects all authorizations issued by the Department of Natural  
15 Resources (DNR). The planning area is separated into six individual management regions that  
16 occupy areas with similar characteristics and management direction. For these regions, the  
17 plan establishes goals, objectives, management guidelines, and land classifications with  
18 management intent that apply to all state lands within the planning area.

19  
20 This plan establishes a balanced combination of land available for both public and private  
21 purposes through the identification of primary uses of state lands and waters. This plan  
22 establishes policy for the Department to direct principles of multiple use and sustained yield  
23 on all public domain lands. It does not direct land uses for private, borough, Native, or federal  
24 land. Because general state lands are managed for multiple use, this plan establishes guidelines  
25 that allow various uses to occur and minimize conflict.

26  
27  
28 **Planning Area**

29  
30 The planning boundary of the North Slope Area Plan includes all state-owned and state-  
31 selected uplands, shorelands, tidelands, submerged lands within the area depicted on Map 1.  
32 The plan covers approximately 12.6 million acres of lands north of Atigun Pass, encompassing  
33 the area north of the Umiat meridian between the eastern boundary of the National Petroleum  
34 Reserve – Alaska (NPRA) and the western boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge  
35 (ANWR). The plan boundary includes offshore areas out to the 3-mile nautical limit. Major  
36 drainages within the NSAP boundary include the Colville, Kuparuk, Sagavanirktok and  
37 Canning rivers.

1 The NSAP directs how DNR will manage general state uplands, shorelands, tidelands, and  
 2 submerged lands within the planning area. The following is a summary of the acreage to which  
 3 the plan will apply:  
 4

Area	Acreage
State-owned uplands	9.6 Million
State-owned shorelands	50,484
State-owned tideland and submerged lands	1.9 Million
Total State-owned Acreage	11.7 Million

5  
 6 **NOTE:** There is one Legislatively Designated Area (LDA) within the planning area which  
 7 encompasses approximately 1 million acres. While the NSAP establishes land classifications  
 8 and management intent for these lands, adjudicators shall refer to Alaska Statute 19.40.015-  
 9 19.59.001 for the comprehensive law concerning authorizations on and adjacent to the Dalton  
 10 Highway Corridor.  
 11  
 12

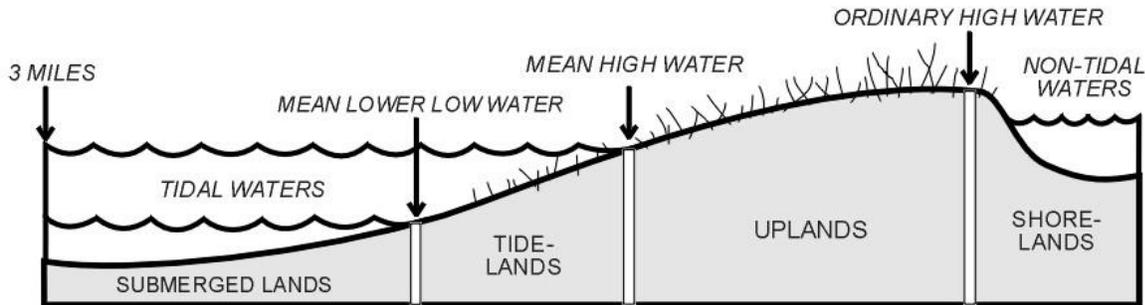
### 13 **Physiography**

14  
 15 The Arctic northward-sloping foothills, just north of the Brooks Range and along Alaska's  
 16 Arctic Ocean coast, consist of low east-west-trending ridges and rolling plateaus with irregular  
 17 isolated hills. They rise from some 600 feet in the north to 3,600 feet in the south. Except for  
 18 the east-flowing upper portion of the Colville River, most drainage is northward. The tundra-  
 19 covered area, called the North Slope, is underlain by continuous permafrost, which is ground  
 20 that remains at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit for at least two consecutive years, where only  
 21 a shallow surface zone thaws during the short summer, producing a vast number of small  
 22 ephemeral lakes and ponds. Permafrost on the North Slope has warmed 4 – 7 degrees  
 23 Fahrenheit over the past century. Thawing permafrost is more prone to erosion, excessive  
 24 wetting, plasticity, and unstable sediments. It is expected that the impacts of thawing  
 25 permafrost will become more pronounced during the life of the planning period and may create  
 26 significant landscape change in the planning area.  
 27  
 28

### 29 **Uplands and Shorelands as Described in This Plan**

30  
 31 Figure 1-1 depicts those areas typically owned by the state and affected by area plans.  
 32 Tidelands span the area from mean high water to mean low water; submerged lands reach from  
 33 mean lower low water to a line three miles seaward from mean low water. As listed in  
 34 AS 38.05.965(23), "shoreland" means land belonging to the state which is covered by nontidal  
 35 water that is navigable under the laws of the United States up to ordinary high water mark as  
 36 modified by accretion, erosion, or reliction. Uplands include all other land above ordinary  
 37 high water in non-tidal areas. These definitions are also found in the Glossary.  
 38

1 **Figure 1-1: Submerged lands, tidelands, uplands, and shorelands as described in this**  
 2 **plan**



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**Land Ownership and Land Status**

The North Slope planning area consists of a mixed ownership pattern of state land, borough land, Native land, and federal land; the State is the principal landowner. There are approximately 12 million acres within this area. The North Slope Borough currently owns 8,500 acres of land within the plan boundary, although they are entitled to an additional 76,830 acres under the Municipal Entitlement Act. Table 1-2 summarizes the distribution of land ownership in the planning area.

**Table 1-1: Land Ownership Summary**

Land Owner	Acreage
State-owned uplands	9,605,914
State-owned shorelands	50,484
State Tide and submerged lands	1,930,301
Federal	3,510,804
(state selected or top filed federal lands)	(977,332)
North Slope Borough	8,500
Private	14,920
Native	2,822,541
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.1M</b>

15  
 16  
 17  
 18  
 19  
 20

*\*Note: Plan recommendations do not apply to Native, federal, or private land.*

General Domain Land. Most of the state land consists of ‘general domain’ land, which is governed by AS 38 statutory requirements and by associated Administrative Code (11 AAC 96). This land is to be managed for multiple use and sustained yield of the area’s

1 renewable resources, although state land use plans can direct this management toward  
2 particular uses.

3  
4 Special Purpose Land. ‘Special purpose’ land, also termed Legislatively Designated Areas  
5 (LDAs), differs from general domain land in that the legislature can, under statute and the state  
6 constitution, designate certain areas as a special purpose site, withdrawing the land from the  
7 general domain. Examples include state parks, state game refuges, critical habitat areas,  
8 recreation areas, and public use areas. One LDA, the James Dalton Highway, comprises the  
9 Dalton Corridor Region of the plan and stretches from the Arctic Coast Region down to the  
10 southern boundary of the planning area. This region is to be managed according to the statutory  
11 requirements provided for this LDA. The remainder of the planning area is affected by  
12 AS 38.04 and 38.05 planning and use requirements.

13  
14 *Legislatively Designated Areas.* Management requirements pertaining to the LDA:

- 15  
16 • The James Dalton Highway LDA is managed under AS 19.40.010. This section of  
17 statute requires that state-owned land within five miles of the Dalton Highway right-  
18 of-way must be retained in state-ownership. Additionally, land within this LDA is not  
19 available for disposal if selected by a municipality to satisfy a municipal land grant  
20 under the Municipal Entitlement Act (AS 29.65). This statute also states that the  
21 highway will not impair the natural wilderness adjacent to the highway and will not  
22 unreasonably interfere with subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering.

## 23 24 25 **Why This Plan Was Developed**

26  
27 The planning area is rich in natural resources, contains a mixture of developed and  
28 undeveloped land, and there are competing demands for the use of state land. There are many  
29 different ideas about how these resources should be used or protected. Although some  
30 proposed uses might conflict with each other, many different uses can occur throughout the  
31 planning area while protecting vital resources, providing the uses are properly managed.

32  
33 This plan establishes the classifications for state land and describes their intended uses. The  
34 plan directs which state lands will be retained by the state and which should be sold to private  
35 citizens, used for public recreation, or used for other purposes. Of importance to the North  
36 Slope Borough, this plan identifies and addresses existing municipal entitlement selections and  
37 classifies lands that may be selected by the borough in fulfillment of its entitlement. It also  
38 identifies management guidelines for major resources and land uses within the planning area  
39 as well as guidelines for the development and use of resources for specific parcels.

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2  
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**Map 1-1: Planning Area, Regions, Generalized Land Status**

1 With an area plan, state permits and permit review processes become more efficient for the  
2 government and the public. The management plan guides DNR decisions for leases, sales, and  
3 permits that authorize use of state lands. Preparation of land use plans for state general domain  
4 lands is required under Title 38 of Alaska Statutes<sup>1</sup>. DNR’s actions will be based on the area  
5 plan.  
6  
7

## 8 **The Mandate**

9

10 The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for managing the general domain lands  
11 that are owned by the State of Alaska across the North Slope. There are over 11 million acres  
12 of state-owned uplands, shorelands, tidelands, and submerged lands within the planning area.  
13 The majority of these lands are general domain land managed under AS 38.04 and 38.05.  
14 Although this plan focuses on the management of the general domain state land,  
15 classifications/designations are also provided for lands within the portion of the James Dalton  
16 Highway LDA that is contained in the planning boundary.  
17

18 Alaska Statute (AS 38.04.065) requires the Commissioner of the Department of Natural  
19 Resources to “adopt, maintain, and when appropriate, revise regional land use plans that  
20 provide for the use and management of state-owned land.” To ensure that these lands are  
21 properly managed, DNR has developed this plan for all state uplands, shorelands, tidelands,  
22 and submerged lands within the planning area.  
23

24 The planning process provides a means of openly reviewing resource information and public  
25 concerns before making long-term decisions about public land management. The planning  
26 process resolves conflicting ideas on land use and informs the public about what choices were  
27 made and why. Decisions are made on a comprehensive basis, rather than case-by-case,  
28 providing consistency and consideration of the wide diversity of resources and uses within the  
29 planning area. This process provides for more efficient use and protection of the area’s  
30 resources.  
31  
32

## 33 **How the Plan is Organized**

34

35 **Chapter 1 - Introduction** includes a summary and purpose of the plan, description of the  
36 planning area, how and why the plan was developed, what the plan does and does not cover,  
37 and a summary of plan actions.  
38

39 **Chapter 2 - Areawide Land Management Policies** includes goals, objectives, and manage-  
40 ment guidelines for the major resources affected by the plan. These policies are specific  
41 directives that will be applied to land and water management decisions as resource use and  
42 development occurs.

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<sup>1</sup> State special purpose sites, like state game refuges, state parks, or state forests, often are required to prepare management plans, but do so under other authorities.

1 **Chapter 3 - Land Management Policies for Each Management Unit** includes an explan-  
2 ation of plan designations, general management intent for state land, descriptions of the six  
3 planning regions, and a detailed listing of management units and major waters. It also provides  
4 a summary of management constraints and considerations based on existing plans, legislative  
5 designations and other management constraints that significantly affect resource management.  
6

7 The bulk of this chapter consists of descriptions of background information on land status, natural  
8 resources, and the uses of state land for each of the six regions. A management summary is also  
9 included that provides an overview of the management direction within each region; this is  
10 augmented by a description of specific management considerations that apply to development  
11 authorizations. Specific management intent for planning units are contained within a Resource  
12 Allocation Table (RAT) for each region. Regions in the plan are divided into spatial areas  
13 called “units”. These units range in size from small lots or tracts to very large areas that  
14 generally have common location, access, use, or resource characteristics. The RAT identifies  
15 a land classification, background information on resources and uses, and management intent  
16 for each unit. These correspond to the management units identified on the plan maps.  
17

18 **Chapter 4 - Implementation and Recommendations** discusses specific actions necessary to  
19 implement the plan. These include a description of how land use designations convert into  
20 classifications, a description of survivor designations and classifications, and a land  
21 classification order. Procedures for changing the plan are also discussed.  
22

23 **Appendices** include a glossary and land classification order.  
24  
25

## 26 **Planning Period**

27  
28 The Plan reflects land management decisions and allocations based on the best available  
29 information on the demand for use of state land and resources projected over the next 20 years.  
30 Social, environmental, economic, and technological factors have been assessed through public  
31 input and agency review prior to the adoption of the Plan. The Plan guides state land use and  
32 resource decisions for the next 20 years, or until it is revised.  
33  
34

## 35 **What the Plan Will Do**

36  
37 The Plan will form the basis for the management of land and waters that are state-owned or  
38 state-selected. The Plan will help ensure that state resource management considers the  
39 sustained yield of renewable resources, that development is balanced with environmental  
40 concerns, and that public access to state land is provided. The Plan encourages cooperation  
41 with other landowners to better address conflicts caused by irregular land ownership patterns.  
42 The Plan also supersedes all existing classifications and reclassifies all state lands within the  
43 planning area. Finally, the Plan also documents the State’s intent for land management so that  
44 both public and private interests know and understand how the State intends to manage lands  
45 over the lifetime of the plan.

## 1 **What the Plan Will Not Do**

2  
3 The North Slope Area Plan is not the only way in which land management goals are  
4 implemented. While the Plan provides an overall basis for state decision making, it is  
5 important to recognize that there are limits on its authority and constraints on its application.  
6 The Plan is coordinated with various programs and projects implemented by DNR and other  
7 state agencies. The following are some important aspects of land and resource management  
8 that are beyond the scope of this plan:

- 9  
10 • **Non-DNR Lands.** This plan does not apply to federal, borough, Native, or private  
11 lands.
- 12 • **Fish and Wildlife.** Management, maintenance, and protection of fish and wildlife  
13 resources are the responsibility of the Department of Fish and Game. Allocation of  
14 fish and game stocks and regulation of harvest methods, means, and timing are the  
15 responsibility of the state board of Fisheries and Game.
- 16 • **Generally Allowed Uses (GAUs).** The area plan does not regulate activities that do  
17 not require a written authorization on state land, such as hiking, camping, boating,  
18 hunting, and fishing. GAUs are identified in 11 AAC 96.020 and the conditions for  
19 GAUs are provided in 11 AAC 96.025.
- 20 • **Legislatively Designated Areas (LDAs).** The plan does not apply to state parks,  
21 refuges, public use areas, and other areas that are legislatively designated, with the  
22 exception of providing land classifications for LDAs that are not totally reserved from  
23 the public domain.<sup>2</sup>
- 24 • **Decisions on Specific Applications.** While this plan provides general management  
25 intent for state lands, the plan does not make decisions about specific land use  
26 authorizations. These decisions are made through the application review process and  
27 must be consistent with the plan and existing laws and regulations.
- 28 • **Actions by Other Agencies.** The plan does not provide management intent for  
29 prescribing actions and policies for agencies and governments other than DNR.  
30  
31

## 32 **How This Plan Will be Used**

33  
34 The NSAP is intended to provide an overall management strategy for state lands and resources  
35 within the planning area, as well as specific management strategies for individual management  
36 units and is the expression of how DNR will pursue this management. Much of the use of this  
37 plan is by the DNR Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW). Adjudicators will use this  
38 plan when reviewing and making decisions on authorizations for use of state land, including  
39 permits, leases, sales, conveyances, and rights-of-way.  
40

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<sup>2</sup> See “Land Use Designation” in the glossary for a further description of authorities.

1 The DNR Division of Oil and Gas (DOG) will also use this plan in the development of lease  
2 mitigation measures, administration of lease operations approvals, and delegated  
3 authorizations.  
4  
5

## 6 **Who Developed the Plan?**

7  
8 The DNR planning staff directs the planning process, including data collection, drafting the  
9 area plan, preparing response to public and agency comments, and final plan preparation.  
10 Local, state, and federal agencies reviewed the preliminary draft of the Public Review Draft  
11 (PRD) and provided land use and resource recommendations to aid in refining initial plan  
12 recommendations. Following the review of the Issue Response Summary (IRS), the DNR  
13 Commissioner will formally adopt the North Slope Area Plan, which is scheduled to occur  
14 following the review of public comments on the PRD.  
15  
16

## 17 **Process of Plan Preparation**

18  
19 The following process is used to develop this area plan:  
20

- 21 • Identify issues in the planning area;
- 22 • map and analyze resources and uses;
- 23 • conduct public meetings to identify land use issues;
- 24 • prepare the PRD based in part on comments previously received from the public and  
25 from agencies;
- 26 • public reviews the PRD;<sup>3</sup>
- 27 • reviews all public and agency comments and prepares an Issue Response Summary  
28 (IRS) that addresses issues raised in comments;
- 29 • based upon the results and recommendations of the IRS, the Commissioner signs and  
30 adopts it as DNR's management intent for state lands in the planning area.  
31  
32

## 33 **Public Participation in Planning Process**

34  
35 The North Slope Area Plan is the product of a 5-year planning process conducted by the  
36 Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land & Water. Other Divisions within  
37 DNR, state and federal agencies, Native corporations and tribal groups, local governments  
38 (primarily the North Slope Borough), public interest groups, and the public have also played a  
39 pivotal role in the planning process. A first round of public meetings occurred in the spring of  
40 2015 and focused on a description of the planning process and planning area, and on issue

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<sup>3</sup> Current phase of planning process.

1 identification. A second round of public meetings is to be held in the spring of 2020. These  
2 meetings will focus on the PRD with information to be provided on proposed plan designations  
3 and management intent, and on plan implementation. The results of these discussions and the  
4 subsequent review of public comments submitted on the PRD form the basis for revisions, if  
5 required, to the draft plan, which are to be included in an IRS.  
6  
7

## 8 **Uses and Resources Within the Planning Area**

9

10 **Uses of State Land.** The plan outlines management goals, objectives, and guidelines for state  
11 land. This includes describing what resources and valid existing uses should be protected, and  
12 what uses are most suitable for development or protection on state land during the planning  
13 period.  
14

15 **State-selected and Top Filed Land.** Some federal lands within the planning boundary have  
16 been selected by the State for potential conveyance in fulfillment of the State’s land entitlement  
17 provided by the Alaska Statehood Act. Future selection applications have been filed for other  
18 federal lands consistent with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)  
19 Section 906(e). These “top-filed” lands are within the Dalton Highway corridor and are  
20 affected by Public Land Order 5150 (PLO 5150). This plan recommends the Bureau of Land  
21 Management (BLM) lift PLO 5150 to allow the State to receive title to its highest priority  
22 selections in partial fulfillment of its outstanding land entitlement. The plan provides  
23 management intent for selected and top filed lands in anticipation of the state receiving title to  
24 some or all of these lands.  
25

26 **Shorelands, Tidelands, and Submerged Lands.** This plan provides management intent for  
27 lands beneath non-tidal fresh waters and for tide and submerged lands for the of the State.  
28 These land areas are defined in AS 38.05.965.  
29

30 **Land Sales.** The planning process reviewed the state land holdings to determine which  
31 undeveloped lands may be suitable for settlement uses and land disposal. This plan  
32 recommends several new settlement areas.  
33

34 **Municipal Land Conveyance.** At this time (2020), the North Slope Borough has roughly  
35 76,830 acres of outstanding land entitlement and they are eligible to this receive this state land  
36 under the Municipal Entitlement Act. This plan influences entitlements by determining which  
37 state lands will be classified vacant, unappropriated, unreserved (VUU) and which lands will  
38 be retained in state ownership. It also provides the basis for the land classifications that  
39 determine if land is conveyable under the Municipal Entitlement Act. Until a final decision  
40 approving conveyance of land to a municipal entity has been approved, state land remains  
41 under state ownership and this plan provides the basis for their management.  
42

43 **Roads, Trails, and Access.** The plan considers access across state lands, including existing  
44 and proposed roads, trails, easements, and rights-of-way.  
45

1 **Materials.** The plan reviews existing state-owned material sites and makes recommendations  
2 for further studies in areas where material site development may be appropriate. Areas with  
3 significant material resources are designated as Materials.  
4

5 **Mineral and Coal Development.** The plan reviews the mineral and coal potential within the  
6 planning area and describes the statutory authorities that affect mining and coal development.  
7 Mineral and coal development can occur throughout the planning area consistent with resource  
8 presence.  
9

10 **Oil and Gas Leasing.** The plan does not provide land use designations for oil and gas leasing.  
11 AS 38.04.065 was amended in 1987 to recognize that oil and gas leasing undergo a separate  
12 planning process under AS 38.05.180.  
13

14 **Recreation.** Recreation is a popular use of state land. The plan proposes designations to  
15 manage lands for recreation in several locations where recreational use is extensive. Where  
16 appropriate, these uses are recognized in the management intent statement for a unit where  
17 recreation is particularly significant and widespread or where it is important to recognize this  
18 use. Those areas with a significant recreation use or potential use are designated Public  
19 Recreation-Dispersed.  
20

21 **Fish and Wildlife Habitat.** The plan documents important fish and wildlife habitat areas and  
22 provides management intent and guidelines for these resources and uses. Areas with  
23 particularly significant habitat, wildlife, or fisheries values are designated Habitat.  
24

25 **Water Resources.** DNR is responsible for allocating water resources on all lands within the  
26 State of Alaska. The plan designates areas to be managed for their water resource values and  
27 describes management guidelines for instream flow reservations. Areas with water resource  
28 values are primarily associated with the maintenance of wetlands, which are extensively  
29 distributed throughout the planning area.  
30  
31

## 32 **Summary of Plan Actions**

  
33

### 34 **Management Intent**

  
35

36 The planning area consists of six regions consisting of the Brooks Foothills Region, the  
37 Chandalar Region, the Central Slope Region, the Arctic Coast Region, the Arctic Tidelands  
38 Region, and the Dalton Corridor Region. The six regions are composed of state-owned and  
39 state-selected uplands, shorelands, tidelands, and submerged lands that are generally adjacent  
40 to each other. Area plans as a matter of course include designations and management intent  
41 for federal lands selected by the state for conveyance under the various types of land  
42 entitlement programs since it is likely that some or all of the land will eventually be conveyed.  
43

1 The plan presents management intent that explains the Department’s overall resource  
2 management goals, objectives, and management guidelines for each region and unit, and  
3 provides resource and use information for land managers. This information is presented in  
4 Chapter 3.

## 5 6 7 **Management Guidelines**

8  
9 According to the Alaska Constitution, state lands are to be managed for multiple uses. As  
10 defined in AS 38.04.910(5), multiple use means “the management of state lands and its various  
11 resource values so that it is used in the combination that will best meet the present and future  
12 needs of the people of Alaska, making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of  
13 these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for  
14 periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions. Management  
15 guidelines are intended to ensure that primary and secondary resource uses will be compatible  
16 to the maximum extent possible. When potentially conflicting uses are designated in a unit,  
17 the plan provides guidelines to allow various uses to occur with minimal conflict. Guidelines  
18 that apply to the entire planning area are identified in Chapter 2. Management guidelines for  
19 specific management units are given in Chapter 3.

## 20 21 22 **Land Use Designations and Land Classifications**

23  
24 General state lands are classified by identifying the resources and uses present in order to  
25 designate primary and secondary uses for individual units. Each unit identifies up to three  
26 designations representing the uses and resources for which that area will be managed. Plan  
27 designations are identified and described in Chapter 3 along with the Resource Allocation  
28 Tables that contain the designations assigned to individual units. A more complete description  
29 of compatible uses is found in the management intent statement and guidelines for each  
30 specific planning unit. These designations are then implemented through land classifications  
31 as defined by 11 AAC 55.20-277. Up to three classifications are allowable on individual  
32 management units. The Land Classification Order (LCO) that is to be adopted with this plan  
33 is included as Appendix B. Table 4-2 in Chapter 4 shows how designations convert to  
34 classifications.

## 35 36 37 **Plan Implementation and Modification**

38  
39 The plan is implemented through the LCO and serves as the final finding for land classification.  
40 The plan sets forth policy for the Department in administering actions such as leases, permits,  
41 and land conveyances. Chapter 4 presents the details of plan implementation recommendations  
42 and procedures.

1 Economic and social conditions in Alaska and the planning area are sure to change and the  
2 plan must be flexible enough to change with them. The plan will be reviewed periodically to  
3 monitor progress in implementing the plan and to identify issues that may require amendment  
4 or modification.

5  
6 Specific modifications may be made whenever conditions warrant them, though a request for  
7 these changes must follow certain procedures (11 AAC 55.240). The plan may be amended  
8 after approval by the Commissioner of DNR following public review and consultation with  
9 the appropriate agencies. Special exceptions and minor changes must follow certain  
10 procedures. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed description of procedures for plan modifi-  
11 cations, amendments, special exceptions, and minor changes.

12