

Big Lake-Houston Region

The Big Lake – Houston Region occupies the more central, developed part of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, similar to Palmer-Wasilla region. Most land within this region is owned by non-state entities, including the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the private sector, and much of the state land that remains is associated with the Little Susitna River State Recreation River or the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge, which are both Legislatively Designated Areas. The remaining state land is scattered throughout the region and tends to be situated in areas with limited access. Maps 2 (Southern) and 3 (Eastern) depict this region.

Distribution and Characteristics

State uplands⁵, totaling approximately 17,000 acres, are scattered throughout the region with some amount of concentration occurring around the community of Houston and the area generally west of Big Lake. Most land is generally level or gently rolling and contains a mix of vegetated uplands and scrub or forested palustrine wetlands. Limited residential development surrounds most of this land, and much of the land within the two concentration areas adjoins the Little Susitna River State Recreation River. Most state land is either adjoined by either private land, land owned by Native corporations, or land managed or owned by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. With few exceptions, this non-state land is either vacant or contains limited residential uses. Several tracts are also situated within the Meadows Creek area; in these areas residential development is fairly significant. Where residential development occurs, access (roads and trails) and limited infrastructure (electrical, telephone) is often available.

Access, Resources, and Uses of State Land

Except for areas in the far southern part of the region, access to these lands is either readily available or they can be accessed fairly easily through a combination of road and trail access.

Wetlands and areas within the Little Susitna River State Recreation River contain areas where moose are generally present and may also contain moose calving and moose winter concentrations. Waterfowl are generally distributed throughout the region and swan nesting sites are present in a number of lakes. Lacking suitable habitat, Dall sheep and caribou are not present within the region. Anadromous streams cross a few of the units within the region and, depending on location, contain king, silver, pink, or chum migration, rearing, or spawning areas. The Little Susitna River is a regionally significant anadromous fish stream and passes through the center of the region.

⁵ Not including Legislatively Designated Areas. These total 320,181 acres within this region.

1 With the exception of the Little Susitna River State Recreation River, state land receives
2 moderate to limited use, with the type of use reflecting the local patterns of recreation
3 activity. Given the dispersed character of state land, its main use is for winter recreation (dog
4 mushing, cross country skiing), although limited summer trail and ATV use is likely. Such
5 use is necessarily dispersed and limited in amount. Much more intense use is associated with
6 the Little Susitna River SRR and with the adjacent Nancy Lake State Recreation Area,
7 situated to the north of the region. The former receives considerable use during the summer,
8 with the intensity of that use related to salmon runs. This area also receives considerable
9 winter recreation use (ATV, dog mushing, and snow-machining).

12 **Management Constraints**

14 Several state and local management plans affect the planning area and were consulted in the
15 development of recommendations for the Palmer-Wasilla Region. Only one state resource
16 plan affects this region: the 1982 Willow Sub-Basin Area Plan. Local plans include the local
17 land use plans of community councils within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Borough
18 Comprehensive Plan, and the Borough Coastal Management Plan.

20 These plans provide management guidance of a general nature helped in the formulation of
21 recommendations. The Enforceable Policies of the Coastal Management Plan were
22 particularly useful.

25 **Management Summary**

27 State land is to be managed consistent with the plan designations and management
28 recommendations contained in the Resource Allocation Table. State land will be managed in
29 a manner similar to that inferred from its designation. The majority of state land (9,800
30 acres) is designated Settlement and is recommended for land disposal during the planning
31 period. These areas adjoin current or projected residential areas and are relatively close to
32 access and necessary infrastructure. It is not intended that all of this land be disposed of
33 immediately. Before the development of state land becomes practicable, adjacent private and
34 borough lands must be developed first, thereby providing access and infrastructure to state
35 lands. The remainder of state land either designated General Use (4,000 acres), where no
36 particular use could be discerned at this time, Public Recreation (780 acres) and Habitat (840
37 acres). Habitat areas are often associated with wetlands and areas adjacent to the Little
38 Susitna River State Recreation River. Areas designated Public Recreation coincide with
39 institutional uses or areas important for local recreational use. Consult the Resource
40 Allocation Table and Maps 2 and 3 for specific recommendations.

1 There are two principle Legislatively Designated Areas that are geographically located
2 within this region: these include the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge (302,717 acres,
3 designated Habitat) and the Little Susitna State Recreation River (17,464 acres, designated
4 Public Recreation). When these areas are included to determine overall state management
5 within this region, almost all state land is associated with the LDAs, which are managed for
6 habitat and public recreation purposes.
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Resource Allocation Table for Upland Units – Big Lake-Houston Region

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-01 Stl	Se 800	Map 2 S018N004W: 9, 16, 23	Dispose of remaining lots either as individual lots or combined with a larger land disposal involving state land to the east and south. Protect anadromous stream; maintain a 100' protection area adjacent to stream(s).	Parcel occupies an area of a previous land disposal involving over 35 lots of approximately 40 acres each. Although most of the subdivision lots have been conveyed out of state ownership, some remain in state ownership and these may be combined with a potential land disposal on adjacent state land to the south. Parcel is flat, vegetated, and some structures are present. The current Settlement designation needs to be retained in the event lots are returned to the state and are available for resale. Lake Creek AWC# 247-41-10200-2254, supporting coho and sockeye salmon, flows adjacent to the unit. Unit contains wetlands and tributaries connected to Lake Creek that likely support anadromous fish. AWC stream # 247-41-10200-2020-3130-4020, supporting pink, sockeye and coho salmon, flows through unit.
H-02 Stl	Se 1,600	Map 2 S018N004W: 21, 22, 27, 28	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period. Settlement is considered appropriate in upland areas, particularly those areas adjacent to the lakes that occupy this unit. Maintain 100' protection area adjacent to lakes and anadromous streams. Avoid wetlands or retain wetland functions in subdivision design.	Parcel, which is generally flat, consists of an extensive mixed wetlands/vegetated uplands area situated south of Nancy Lakes and immediately west of the Parks Highway. Several lakes are situated within the unit, and two anadromous streams cross portions of the unit. The main lake may be connected to the Little Susitna River and support anadromous fish. Portions of the unit may be susceptible for residential development. The Little Susitna State Recreation River is situated just south of this parcel.
H-03 PRL	Rd 640	Map 2 S018N003W: 23	Unit is to be managed consistent with the requirements of the PC Lease. If parcel is no longer used by the lessor and reverts to the state, the remaining area should be integrated with parcel H-02 and considered for settlement through a land disposal. If this occurs, the classification converts to Settlement.	Parcel is affected by a Public and Charitable Lease (ADL 55337) to the Boy Scouts of America.
H-04 WHB	Wr 720	Map 2 S018N003W: 28	Manage unit to preserve and protect the habitat and hydrologic values and functions of the wetlands.	Occupying flat terrain, this parcel consists of a combination of vegetated upland clusters interspersed with palustrine wetlands. Portions of the uplands adjoin a lake. The Little Susitna River SRR adjoins the parcel to the west and north and private land to the east. Wetlands and streams connected to AWC# 247-41-10200-2020-3130-4020 and Lynx Lake 247-41-10200-2020-3130-0020 may support anadromous coho, sockeye and pink salmon.

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-05 WHB	Se 1,674	Map 2 S018N004W: 25, 35, 36; S018N003W: 31	Portions of this parcel, coinciding with the scattered vegetated uplands, may be suitable for a residential land disposal. Should this occur, consideration is to be given to the protection of the SRR and the wetlands in subdivision design. A 50' non-disturbance area affects the lake.	Parcel consists of a combination of islands of vegetated upland interspersed with palustrine wetlands. Portions of the uplands adjoin a lake and portions border the Little Susitna River SRR. There is no immediate road access, and it is likely that development of this unit, should it occur, would have to wait until such access was provided, which would be from the private land to the east. The parcel is almost uniformly flat.
H-06 STL	Se 775	Map 2 S018N003W: 6, 7	Unit is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period.	Unit is slightly to moderately sloping in the central part, but flatter in other parts. It is forested throughout except for scattered palustrine wetlands and wetland areas adjacent to a small stream. There is no immediate road access, but the parcel is within 1 mile of the Parks Highway. The area to the west of the unit is a previous state subdivision and the land to the south is owned by the Mental Health Trust.
H-07 RSU	Se 80	Map 2 S018N003W: 9	Unit is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period.	Parcel is moderately sloped and heavily vegetated (forested). There is no immediate road access but is within 1 mile of the Parks Highway. The unit is surrounded by Borough land.
H-08 RSU	Rd 60	Map 2 S018N003W: 16	Manage unit to preserve and enhance public recreation uses. Retain in state ownership.	Parcel occupies moderately rolling terrain and is heavily vegetated in its northern part. Southern portion of parcel is occupied by palustrine wetlands. A large lake adjoins parcel to northeast and a road provides access. This site is used for public recreation purposes.
H-09 RMG, RSU	Se 1,760	Map 2 S018N003W: 13-15, 24; S018N002W: 18	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period. Protect anadromous stream and RST 95. Conserve areas of wetlands, focusing settlement in adjacent upland areas. Utilities and roads may cross wetlands. Maintain a 100' protection area adjacent to anadromous streams.	<p>This large parcel consists of generally flat to moderately sloped terrain that is vegetated with shrubs and trees intermixed with wetlands. Access is available immediately to the south on a pioneer road. Little Susitna is situated immediately south of the unit, although upland portions of the SRR adjoin unit to southeast. An anadromous tributary of the Little Susitna River (see below) and a RS 2477 route (RST 95) traverse portions of the parcel.</p> <p>Unit contains portions of anadromous streams 247-41-10100-2271, 247-41-10100-2285, and 247-41-10100-2285-3031 which provide habitat for coho salmon; others may exist.</p>

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-10 PUR, WHB, AG, STL	Se 240	Map 2 S018N005W: 24	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period. Protect anadromous streams and wetlands that adjoin it, with development focused within vegetated uplands. Maintain a 100' protection area adjacent to anadromous streams. Utilities and roads may cross wetlands.	Parcel is generally flat, consisting of palustrine wetlands adjacent to an anadromous stream(see below) that crosses part of the unit, and scattered, vegetated uplands. Little Susitna River SRR adjoins unit to north and residential uses, part of a previous state subdivision (ASLS 84-50), to the south. West Papoose Lake is situated south of the unit. Unit contains portions of anadromous streams 247-41-10100-2150 and 247-41-10100-2150-3010 which provide habitat for coho salmon; connected wetlands, streams and lakes may also provide habitat.
H-11 Stl	Se 1,162	Map 2 S018N005W: 23, 24, 26	Portions of unit may be appropriate for development. A study to determine feasibility and the areas of possible disposal should precede a disposal decision. Consideration must be given to the protection of lakes and wetlands, and to the buffering from existing uses in subdivision design. A 100' protection area affects anadromous lakes and streams.	Unit is moderately rolling and vegetated, and situated immediately north of a remote lot subdivision near West Papoose Lake. Parcel encompasses a previous remote lot subdivision (ASLS 84-50). Notes: 1) the Settlement designation is applied to this unit since there is still state land within the subdivision and there is the possibility of reconveyance of remote lot parcels. 2) The acreage estimate includes areas of remote lots and therefore the amount of state land that remains is considerably less than that indicated. Unit contains portions of anadromous streams and lakes; western Papoose Twin Lake 247-41-10100-2150-3010-0010, stream 247-41-10100-2150-3010 and 247-41-10100-2150 which provide habitat for coho salmon; connected wetlands, streams and lakes may also provide habitat.
H-12 WHB, WRS	Ha, Wr 680	Map 2 S018N005W: 26, 33	Manage unit to protect wetlands. All uses, except those issued by permit or involving utilities, are prohibited.	Parcel consists of generally flat terrain occupied by extensive palustrine wetlands. There are a few areas of uplands. Adjoins the Little Susitna SRR on west and residential uses on north.

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-13 STL (small part co-classified AG)	Se 442	Map 2 S017N005W: 25, 36	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period. Within the southernmost parcel, the affect of the ADOT/PF transportation corridor should be taken into consideration prior to a decision being made on the suitability of a land disposal. Retain that portion of the unit that adjoins Papoose Twin Lakes as a public use site. Retain public access to lake. Protect anadromous stream and maintain a 100' protection area adjacent to it.	Unit consists of three separate parcels situated in sections 25 and 36. These are generally flat and consist of vegetated uplands interspersed with palustrine wetlands. Borough land is situated immediately to the south; Native land is situated to the east. Residential land uses exist near and at West Papoose Lake. Agricultural uses are also present. A small lake is situated in section 36. Road access is available immediately to the south and a 600' transportation corridor under ILMA (ADL 203838) to ADOT/PF bisects the parcel and is part of a road corridor that extends from Houston to Pt. MacKenzie. AWC stream # 247-41-10100-2100 meanders east to west through the southern half of this unit and provides habitat for coho salmon.
H-14 UTL	Se 2.4	Map 2 S017N004W: 36	Alternative uses of this area are appropriate if/when the ILMA is terminated.	Parcel is affected by ILMA (ADL 209163) to Division of Forestry, but should be considered for an alternative use if ILMA is rescinded, which is expected.
H-15 RSU	Se 7	Map 2 S017N004W: 36	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period.	Parcel occupies moderately sloping topography and is heavily vegetated throughout. Road adjoins unit. Residential development adjoins parcel to north; the state forestry site (H-14) is situated to the west.
H-16 STL	Se 80	Map 2 S017N003W	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period. Avoid or protect wetland functions in subdivision design.	Consisting of separate parts, the area occupied by the unit is generally flat and contains a mixture of both wetlands and vegetated uplands. Residential land uses are present nearby. Depending on location, road access either directly abuts the parcel or is nearby.
H-17 None	Se 20	Map 2 S017N003W	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period. Protect lake, inlet stream, and wetlands in subdivision design. A 100' protection area applies to stream. Avoid construction in riverine wetlands.	Except for a steep area in its southern part, unit is generally flat and contains vegetated uplands. A road bisects the parcel from east to west. A lake occupies portions of the parcel, and a small, anadromous inlet stream (see below) is present that is adjoined by riverine wetlands. AWC stream # 247-50-10330-2050-3019-4011-5011 abuts to east; small lake within unit may be connected and provide habitat for coho salmon.

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-18 PUR	Se 776	Map 2 S017N003W: 16, 17, 20	Portions of this unit are appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Development within the area of the Meadow Creek floodplain and its adjoining wetlands shall be avoided. Protect anadromous stream and provide buffering from adjacent residential structures. Maintain a 200' protection area adjacent to Meadow Creek.	Parcel is generally flat and consists of vegetated upland areas interspersed with palustrine wetlands. It adjoins Meadow Creek on its north and south sides and is situated immediately north of Rocky Lake, an anadromous stream. Residential structures are situated on the northeast side of Rocky Lake, and the Rocky Lake State Recreation Site immediately adjoins Rocky Lake. The land use pattern in the vicinity consists of vacant land mixed with residential uses. Roads cross the parcel in a variety of locations. Meadow Creek, AWC stream # 247-41-10330-2050, meanders east to west through the heart of this unit and provides habitat for coho salmon.
H-19 STL	Se 100	Map 2 S017N003W: 27	Area is considered appropriate for land disposal during planning period. See note on ownership.	Unit is generally flat and contains a mixture of vegetated uplands and palustrine wetlands. Residential land uses surround the parcel and road access is nearby. <i>Note: Ownership of this parcel is indeterminate at this time. MapGuide shows this as state land but it is shown as disposed on status plat. (QCD 56092, ADL 59546)</i>
H-20 MA	Ma 40	Map 2 S017N003W: 31	Unit is to be administered consistent with the ILMT requirements. Use of this parcel for residential settlement should be considered in the development of the site reclamation plan. If this road is not to be constructed or upon termination of the ILMT, the consideration of alternative uses is appropriate. When the ILMT is terminated, the classification converts to Settlement and reuse of the site for settlement should be carefully considered.	Parcel is affected by ILMT (46749) to ADOT/PF under ADL 225357. ILMT was issued for the construction of South Big Lake Road (1990). Unit is undeveloped and heavily vegetated, and is characterized by moderately sloping terrain. A public use right-of-way for the construction of the South Big Lake Road crosses the parcel. Parcel has immediate road access.

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-21 STL, WHB	Gu 1,280	Map 2 S016N005W: 11, 14	<p>Manage for multiple use, including timber harvest if determined appropriate in a Forest Land Use Plan. Portions of this unit may be appropriate for settlement in upland, vegetated areas when a specific route is chosen or if it is decided that the road is no longer needed. Reclassification of the parcel to Settlement will be required to enable the land disposal.</p> <p>The Forest Land Use Plan, in its preparation, shall evaluate the effect of potential timber harvests upon wetlands, streams, and other sensitive areas prior to authorization of a timber sale.</p> <p>If a timber sale is determined to be appropriate, DOF is to coordinate with DMLW. DMLW has a similar responsibility to consult with DOF if a land disposal is under consideration.</p> <p>Consult the Susitna Basin Recreation River Management Plan for specific requirements that may affect development adjacent to the Little Susitna River LDA.</p>	<p>Parcel is generally flat and contains a mix of vegetated uplands and palustrine wetlands. There are at least six lakes in the unit. A 600' transportation corridor under ILMA (ADL 203838) to ADOT/PF bisects the parcel in a north-south orientation and is part of a road corridor that extends from Houston to Pt. MacKenzie. May be appropriate for settlement in uplands areas once a specific route is chosen by ADOT/PF or it is decided that the road is no longer needed. Borough and University land adjoin the unit. Parcel is included in the DOF Priority 1 inventory and is part of the Division's sustained yield base for the Susitna Valley.</p> <p>AWC #247-41-10100-2100, an anadromous stream, flows through the northwest corner of the unit. Waters connected to this stream or to the Little Susitna River may also support anadromous fish. The Little Susitna River flows to the west of this unit.</p>
H-22 FOR, WHB	Gu 640	Map 2 S016N005W: 24	<p>Manage for multiple uses, including timber harvest if determined appropriate in a Forest Land Use Plan. The suitability of development for residential and other purposes should be evaluated when road access becomes available. Reclassification of the parcel to Settlement will be required to enable the land disposal. Maintain RST routes and protect existing trails. Maintain Iditarod Trail easement of 400 feet total width.</p> <p>If a timber sale is determined to be appropriate, DOF is to coordinate with DMLW. DMLW has a similar responsibility to consult with DOF if a land disposal is under consideration.</p>	<p>Unit is generally flat and contains a mix of vegetated uplands and palustrine wetlands. This is an isolated parcel of state land; University and Borough land adjoin the parcel. There is no direct road access, although portions of the road system are within 1.5 miles. Agricultural uses occur to the south of the parcel. Parcel is included in the DOF Priority 1 inventory and is part of the Division's sustained yield base for the Susitna Valley. Two trails cross this unit, RST 118 and Susitna 70-12.</p>

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-23 WHB	Gu 920	Map 2 S016N004W: 7, 8	<p>Manage unit to protect wetlands, the anadromous stream, and its various tributaries. Portions of this unit may be appropriate for timber harvest. The Forest Land Use Plan, in its preparation, shall evaluate the effect of potential timber harvests upon wetlands, streams, and other sensitive areas prior to authorization of a timber sale.</p> <p>If a timber sale is determined to be appropriate, DOF is to coordinate with DMLW. The unit to the east (H-24) is designated Settlement and coordination between the two divisions is essential prior to either granting authorizations.</p>	<p>Unit occupies an area of extensive palustrine wetlands having few vegetated uplands. It contains an anadromous stream with an extensive tributary system, much of which occurs within the parcel. The parcel is generally flat. Parcel is included in the DOF Priority 1 inventory and is part of the Division's sustained yield base for the Susitna Valley.</p>
H-24 WHB	Se 283	Map 2 S016N004W: 8	<p>Portions of this unit are appropriate for land disposal during the planning period within upland areas. Development within wetlands and stream courses is to be avoided. A screening buffer between the area of land disposal and current, adjacent residential land uses is to be provided. A recreation public use site is to be retained in state ownership; a AS 38.05.127 easement affects the lake.</p> <p>DMLW must consult with DOF if a land disposal is under consideration. The unit to the west (H-23) is included within the DOF sustained yield base for the Susitna Valley.</p>	<p>Parcel is generally flat and contains a mix of palustrine wetlands and vegetated uplands. Some of the vegetated uplands adjoin Diamond Lake. Residential uses adjoin the western side of this lake. Road access is nearby, within this residential area. Diamond Lake is a stocked lake.</p>
H-25 WHB	Ha, Wr 160	Map 2 S016N004W: 12	<p>Manage unit to protect its habitat and water resource values. Accommodate dispersed recreational use.</p>	<p>Unit contains extensive palustrine wetlands. The area immediately to the east (Unit M-01) is under an ILMA to a non-profit organization for the purpose of maintaining winter recreation trails, which are used extensively for dog-mushing. This parcel is not part of the ILMA but adjoins it, and there may be similar recreational use of this parcel. Borough land surrounds the parcel.</p>
H-26 PUR	Rd 58	Map 2 S016N004W: 28	<p>Retain this parcel in state ownership and manage for its public recreation values. Protect trails and maintain Iditarod Trail easement of 400 feet total width.</p>	<p>Parcel adjoins the southern shore of Jewel Lake. Although not developed as an improved road, access is available. Site is vegetated in part but also contains palustrine wetlands, some of which may include standing water (ponds). Owing to location and poor access, there is little public recreation use of this parcel, although some trails pass through this parcel, including the Iditarod Trail. Borough land adjoins the unit to the east.</p>

Unit # / 1982 Classification	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Description
H-27 None	Gu 1,242	Map 2 S016N005W: 17, 18	Manage unit for multiple uses. Parcel is not considered appropriate for development given its location, poor soils, and the presence of extensive wetlands. Maintain Iditarod Trail easement of 400 feet total width.	Unit occupies a flat, low-lying area characterized by extensive wetlands. There are at least three lake present. A road bisects the parcel, providing connection to Susitna and Knik. This parcel occupies an area that would normally lie within the Fish Creek Management Plan area, but this management plan, for whatever reason, chose to exclude these sections from its planning boundary. Given the extensive distribution of wetlands, there is little possibility of development occurring on this parcel. The Iditarod Trail crosses parcel from east to west.
H-28 PUR	Rd 80	Map 2 S017N003W: 17, 20	Manage unit for recreational uses and to protect the entranceway of Meadow Creek into Big Lake.	Parcel occupies an area occupied in its eastern parts by Meadow Creek, an anadromous stream, and by an extensive, associated palustrine (emergent) wetland complex. Areas situated to the west and generally adjacent to Big Lake are characterized by shrub and emergent wetlands. The entire unit occupies level terrain. Big Lake is an important recreation area.
H-29 PUR	Rd 5.1	Map 2 S017N003W: 16, 21	Manage unit consistent with the requirements of the ILMA.	Unit is affected by a ILMA (ADL 50071) to DPOR for public recreation use at the Rocky Lake Wayside. Contains campground and other recreational facilities. Adjoins Rocky Lake.

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2 Total state land within region (29 units) - 16,325 acres
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