

## **Alaska Range Region**

The Alaska Range Region occupies a remote, mountainous, glaciated portion of the planning area. It is bounded by Denali National Park and Preserve (except for state land directly to the west of this Park), the Kenai Peninsula Borough to the south, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough boundary to the west, and approximately the 1,500' elevation contour to the east, which generally coincides with Range 14 West. This area encompasses approximately 1.5 million acres. With the exception of small private holdings, all of the land in this Region is owned by the state. There are no outstanding (surface) selections. Refer to Figure 3-1 to locate the map of a particular area.

### **Distribution and Characteristics**

With the exception of the major river valleys, all of the remaining land is mountainous in character and has only alpine tundra or shrub vegetation at the higher elevations. Within some of the lower elevation areas situated in the northeast of the Region, a spruce-poplar forest occurs. A bottomland spruce-poplar forest also occupies the riverine areas of the larger river drainages, such as the Skwentna, Happy, and Kichatna Rivers. Although state ownership dominates land ownership in this Region (approximately 1,471,000 acres of general domain land), there are small, isolated parcels of privately owned lands. The majority of land in private ownership has derived from previous state subdivisions, which were common in the 1980's.

### **Access, Resources, and Uses of State Land**

Access to these lands is very limited, reflecting its remote and generally inaccessible location. What access exists is provided by foot travel and off-road vehicles using either the Iditarod National Historic Trail System (INHTS), Iditarod Race Trail or regional trails, and by float or hard surface fixed wing aircraft. Water access is available on the Skwenta River. Fly in access is often hampered by local weather conditions.

Moose are present throughout much of the region and winter concentration and rutting areas occur within the Skwentna and Hayes River drainages. Dall sheep are also present, but their distribution is generally confined to the mountainous areas bordering the western planning boundary. Important brown bear spring concentration areas occur throughout the central and eastern parts of the region, generally coinciding with the principal drainages and their adjacent uplands. Waterfowl also occur throughout this area and an important nesting and

brood-rearing area for trumpeter swans occurs at the confluence of the Hayes and Skwentna Rivers. The larger streams are anadromous and many of their tributaries are similarly anadromous. Depending on location these streams contain king, silver, pink, or chum migration, rearing, or spawning areas.

Mineral potential is considered to be high to very high in the southwestern part of the region, generally coinciding with the Hayes Glacier and its tributary streams. Mineral potential is associated with both polymetallic deposits (precious and base metals like gold and silver) and base metal deposits (copper, lead, and zinc). There are no active mines operating in this region although some exploratory activity has occurred at a number of prospect sites.

There is relatively little use of this region by the public, reflecting its location and difficulty of access. There is limited hunting and the Iditarod Race Trail occurs in the region. That part of the region associated with the Alaska Range is a popular flight seeing area.

## **Management Constraints**

Several state and local management plans affect the planning area and were consulted in the development of recommendations for the Alaska Range Region. Only one state resource plan affects this region: the 1985 Susitna Area Plan, which is being revised with this update. Local plans include the Borough Comprehensive Plan and Coastal Management Plan. These plans contain both generalized land use recommendations and resource management requirements and were helpful in the formulation of recommendations.

## **Management Summary**

State land is to be managed consistent with the plan designations and management recommendations contained in the Resource Allocation Table. Most state land will be managed in a manner similar to that inferred from its designation, which means that most land will be managed for its mineral, habitat, or forest resource values.

Most of the mountainous portions not having mineral potential are designated General Use, a multiple use designation (Approximately 695,000 acres), while the southwestern part of the Region, which has high mineral potential (Approximately 595,000 acres), will be managed for its mineral resources and is designated Mineral. Some of the eastern areas of the Region that contain, in their lower elevations, merchantable timber are designated Forestry (Approximately 45,000 acres) and will be managed along with the other significant forestry areas in the western Susitna Valley for this resource. Riverine areas associated with the larger streams (Skwentna, Happy, Hayes, and Kichatna) are important for their habitat functions and, depending on location, include moose winter and rutting habitat and both waterfowl and trumpeter swan concentrations. These areas (Approximately 104,000 acres) are designated Habitat. A few areas usually located next to streams or lakes, are designated

Settlement (Approximately 32,000 acres), and are recommended for land disposal during the planning period. Consult the Resource Allocation Table for specific recommendations. Areas of the region designated Forestry are to be managed for overall forest resource management, which includes timber harvest at specific locations that may be identified in future Five-Year Timber Sales Schedule prepared by DOF. Importantly, areas designated Forestry are to be managed in a comprehensive, holistic fashion such that access is preserved, public recreation allowed to continue, and significant habitats and wetlands protected. Not all of the area designated Forestry contains forest resources. State land in this region is characterized by a mixture of wetlands and forested uplands, and many of these areas provide important habitat and recreation functions. It was determined in the plan preparation process that it would be impracticable to carve out all of the many areas important as wetlands or habitats and that inclusion of large areas of state land with a variety of resource values within a Forestry designation made the most sense since such areas must be managed comprehensively for multiple uses and the Forestry designation is a multiple use designation that encompasses the principles of recreation use and habitat protection. Accordingly, the management intent statement for management units designated Forestry will often include statements concerning the protection of wetlands and habitats, provision of recreation, and maintenance of public access. This management intent is consistent with the Division of Forestry's 'working forest' management concept. All areas designated Forestry are to be retained in state ownership. The management of areas designated Forestry will be guided by the Forest Resources and Practices Act; Susitna Forestry Guidelines, or its successor; and this area plan.

Pipelines may need to be constructed in this region. While there are no pipeline corridors designated in this plan (this is the function of more detailed studies), there is nothing in this plan that affects the placement of such facilities directly.

## Resource Allocation Table – Alaska Range Region

Unit #	Designation(s)/ Acres	Map(s)/ MTRS	Management Intent	Description
R-01	Gu	Maps 3-4, 3-8	Manage area for multiple uses.	<p>This vast unit encompasses the mountainous topography of the Alaska Range within the Alaska Range Region. There is sparse use of this area given its topography and remoteness. Vegetation is characteristically barren ground or alpine tundra. The most sensitive areas are usually situated within the major river drainages of the Skwentna, Happy, and Kichatna Rivers, which occupy the management unit R-02. Moose are known to be present in portions of this unit, generally coinciding with areas near the major river drainages. Brown bear spring use areas occur in portions of the unit that adjoin management unit R-02. Dall Sheep are present in the mountainous areas of the westerly parts of the unit, generally coinciding with the townships within Ranges 19 and 20. Numerous anadromous streams occur throughout the unit, primarily as tributaries to the principal streams within unit R-02.</p> <p>Portions of the INHTS, Iditarod Race Trail and at least one public easement and one RS 2477 route (RST 174) are in this unit. Other local and regional trails may exist. Additional authorizations include one trapping cabin, at least five permits associated with commercial hunting, commercial back country heliskiing and one GPS station.</p>
	695,097	Various	<p>Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes, which include the INHTS and the Iditarod Race Trail.</p> <p>Protect anadromous streams with riparian buffers.</p>	
R-02	Ha, Rd	Maps 3-7, 3-8	Manage unit to protect its habitat, hydrologic, and recreational values. Retain land in state ownership. Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes, which include the INHTS and the Iditarod Race Trail. Check land status in the selection areas prior to management or disposal decisions.	<p>Unit comprises the larger river drainages within the Alaska Range Region. Included are the Skwentna, Happy, and Kichatna River. These rivers often occupy extensive floodplains, and the management unit includes the riparian areas adjacent to the rivers proper. Most of these streams are anadromous for much of their extent and several contain important moose habitat areas (winter concentration areas). A fall concentration of waterfowl occurs along portions of the Kichatna River. Brown bear spring use and moose wintering areas occur throughout the unit. Vegetation is characterized by a bottomland spruce-poplar forest. Portions of the INHTS, Iditarod Race Trail and at least three public access easements and two RS 2477 routes (RST 174 and 199) are in this unit. Other local and regional trails may exist. Additional authorizations include at least five permits associated with commercial hunting and guiding, commercial back country heliskiing, grazing and one weather camera station. Portions of this unit are in selection status; review land status prior to any management or disposal action.</p>

Unit #	Designation(s)/ Acres	Map(s)/ MTRS	Management Intent	Description
R-03	F  45,310	Maps 3-7, 3-8  Various	<p>Manage unit for its forest values. Unit is affected by the Susitna Forestry Guidelines or its successor. All timber sales must meet the requirements of 11 AAC 95. Forest land use plans must, in addition to these requirements, adhere to the requirements of the Forestry section in Chapter 2 <i>Areawide Land Management Policies</i>.</p> <p>Because of the presence of important habitat and species scattered throughout portions of this unit, unit is also to be managed for the maintenance of wildlife species, fisheries, and habitats consistent with Management Guideline B in the <i>Fish and Wildlife Habitat</i> section in Chapter 2 and other management guidelines in this section associated with waterfowl concentrations and moose wintering areas. Consult with ADF&amp;G on sensitive habitats and wildlife locations prior to or concurrent with FLUP preparation.</p> <p>A riparian buffer of 300' from OHW is to be maintained on the Skwentna River. Protect anadromous streams and wetlands. Forestry riparian standards apply (AS 41.17.115 and AS 41.17.118) for riparian protection adjacent to anadromous and high value resident fish streams. Consult with ADF&amp;G.</p> <p>Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes, which include the INHTS and the Iditarod Race Trail. During FLUP preparation, identify these routes and provide suitable protection or mitigation. Coordinate with the SCRO/DMLW, and with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough on trail identification and routing.</p> <p>Retain land in state ownership. Portions of the unit may be appropriate for inclusion in a state forest.</p>	<p>Unit consists of two separate subunits, corresponding to areas of merchantable timber consisting to spruce and poplar. The subunits occupy both hilly and lowland areas, with wetlands characteristic in portions of the lowland units. Moose are present, and winter concentration areas are known to occur within the northernmost parcel. Portions of the area immediately north of Red Salmon Lake in the northeastern part of S021N015W are believed to contain an important nesting and brood-rearing area for trumpeter swans, and swans are known to be present in portions of the northern parcel. Anadromous streams are present in the unit. Portions of the INHTS, Iditarod Race Trail, one RS 2477 route (RST 199) and two access easements are in this unit. There are two authorizations for commercial recreation activities and one public use cabin.</p>
R-04	Se  3,933	Map 3-8  S024N015W; S023N015W	<p>Unit is considered appropriate for land disposal during the planning period.</p> <p>Protect riparian areas with adequate buffers.</p>	<p>Unit occupies generally flat terrain vegetated by a mixture of wetlands and bottomland spruce-poplar forest. It is part of a larger settlement area that is located in S024N014W in the Susitna Lowlands Region (management unit U-09). Refer to that unit for more detail. This unit, R-04, is currently vacant and is considered appropriate for remote settlement. Moose and trumpeter swan may occupy portions of this unit.</p>

Unit #	Designation(s)/ Acres	Map(s)/ MTRS	Management Intent	Description
R-05	Se  22,076	Map 3-7  S022N016- 018W	<p>Unit is considered appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Retain the area associated with USS 3443 at Shirley Lake as a public use area (S022N017W, Sec. 16).</p> <p>As part of subdivision design carefully evaluate moose winter concentration areas. Protect any particularly significant moose concentration areas that are identified.</p> <p>The trumpeter swan nesting and brood rearing area in S021N016W and S022N016W is to be avoided. A riparian buffer of 300' from OHW is to be maintained on the Skwentna River.</p> <p>Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes, which include the INHTS and the Iditarod Race Trail.</p>	<p>This large unit is characterized by a mixture of uplands, which largely coincide with the Long Lake Hills, and flat to gently sloping terrain along the north and south sides of the Skwentna River. The upland areas are characterized by a mixed spruce-poplar bottomland forest and the uplands, by a mixture of high brush, barren ground, and alpine tundra. Winter moose concentration areas occur within the bottomlands of the Skwentna River drainages. The Skwentna and several of its tributaries are known to be anadromous fish streams. A trumpeter swan nesting and brood rearing area is present in S021N016W and S022N016W. Segments of the INHTS and Iditarod Race Trail occupy the Skwentna River drainage. One right-of-way (ADL 222930) and one RS 2477 route (RST 199) is within this unit. This unit is almost entirely vacant, with only a few cabins present at Shirley Lake.</p>
R-06	Se  6,400	Map 3-7  S021N015- 016W	<p>Unit is considered appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. A riparian buffer of 300' from OHW is to be maintained on the Skwentna River.</p> <p>As part of subdivision design carefully evaluate moose winter concentration areas. Protect particularly significant moose concentration areas that are identified. Protect easements.</p>	<p>This unit occupies generally flat to gently sloping terrain, with vegetation characterized by a mixture of wetlands and spruce-poplar forest. Portions of a winter moose concentration area may occupy portions of this unit, and Dall sheep may be present in the winter. Currently the unit is entirely vacant and there are no platted lots. An anadromous stream is present in the unit. One public access easement is within this unit.</p>
R-07	Mi  594,702	Maps 3-7, 3-8  Various	<p>Manage unit for its mineral values. Protect anadromous streams with riparian buffers; and avoid moose winter concentration areas.</p> <p>Protect the INHTS and Iditarod Race Trail. Check land status in the selection areas prior to management or disposal decisions.</p>	<p>This large unit in the southwestern part of the region is associated with state lands having a high mineral potential. Prospects occur throughout this unit, with concentrations associated with the Mount Estelle pluton, which extends from Timber Creek in the north to Portage Creek in the south. Mineral potential is associated with both polymetallic deposits (precious and base metals) and base metal deposits (copper, lead, and zinc). Terrain within this unit is almost uniformly mountainous and contains numerous glaciers. (The river bottoms of the major drainages contain lowland, but these are contained within management unit R-02). Vegetation is alpine tundra in exposed locations (or barren rock). Portions of the INHTS and Iditarod Race Trail are in this unit. Dall sheep are known to be present in the western portions of the unit, generally coinciding with the townships occupied by Ranges 19 and 20. Moose winter concentration areas are present in the northernmost part of the unit, in T022NR017W and T022NR018W. Anadromous streams are present. Portions of this unit are in selection status; review land status prior to any management or disposal action.</p>

Total state land within region (7 units) – 1,471,403 acres