

Chugach Mountains Region

This region encompasses areas above 1,000' elevation that occupy the northern flank of the Chugach Range and, with approximately 759,000 acres, it constitutes one of the larger regions within the planning area. With few exceptions all of the land within the region is owned by the state; the remaining areas are federal land, either managed by the BLM or the US Forest Service. The western and southwestern boundaries are formed by the lowlands in the Butte area and by the Knik River Public Use Area. The Matanuska River forms the northern boundary (except for areas near the Glenn Highway that are within the Glenn Highway management unit). The southern and eastern boundaries are formed by the corporate limits of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Included within this large area are extensive mountainous areas, much of which, especially in the southern part, is occupied by glaciers and their moraines and stream valleys. Refer to Figure 3-1 to locate the map of a particular area.

Distribution and Characteristics

There are approximately 706,000 acres of state general domain land within this region. With the exception of stream valleys situated in the northern part of the region, mountainous terrain is characteristic, with glaciers and their geomorphic features covering much of this terrain. Most of the lowland areas are situated in the northeastern part of the region, occupying the floodplains of the Nelchina River and the South and East Forks of the Matanuska River, which emanate from the Matanuska and Powell Glaciers. Vegetation reflects the mountainous terrain and the presence of large areas of glaciers and glacially formed topography, with most areas consisting of alpine tundra, if vegetation is present at all. Stream valleys often consist of mixed forest (evergreen and deciduous) except where large braided streams exist, like the Nelchina River. The elevated portions of their floodplains are characterized by shrub vegetation.

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 several local trails in the main stream valleys and by float or wheeled fixed wing aircraft. A RS 2477 route extends from the Glenn Highway down to the east side of the Nelchina Glacier. These trails are commonly used for access into popular bear, moose, and sheep hunting areas. Fly in access is often hampered by local weather conditions.

Use of this large area of state land is very limited, reflecting topography and very limited access, both to the area and within it. Recreational use includes hunting, trapping, rafting, hiking, climbing, and backcountry skiing. Most of this use occurs in the northern part of the unit that has somewhat better access.

Much of the western and northern parts of the region, encompassing management unit C-01, provide habitat to moose, bear, sheep, wolverine, and a number of other small mammals. The management unit C-01 contains winter concentration areas of moose and Dall sheep.

Other than recreation use and its value for certain types of habitat, few other resources exist, reflecting the mountainous topography, limited access, and dearth of resources. Mineral, coal, and oil and gas potential within the region are low, although the region is open to mineral entry and oil and gas development. The scattered mineral licks within the region are managed under a leasehold location order. There are no areas suitable for farming or that contain forest resources in sufficient quality to support a woods product industry.

Management Constraints

The only plans affecting this area are the U.S. Forest Service management plan for the Chugach Forest, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Coastal Management Plan, and the 1985 Susitna Area Plan. All were consulted in this revision. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough does not have a regional comprehensive plan, although local comprehensive plans for specific areas exist but none affect the Chugach Mountains region.

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 state land will be managed for its habitat and public recreation values within management unit C-01. State land will be managed for their multiple use values within unit C-02, although no development is anticipated in this area. Land within this management region is to be retained in state ownership. Settlement (land disposals) and remote cabins are prohibited in this unit. Consult the Resource Allocation Table for specific recommendations.

Resource Allocation Table – Chugach Mountains Region

Unit #	Designation(s)/ Acres	Map(s)/ MTRS	Management Intent	Description
C-01	Ha/Rd 380,502	Maps 3-3, 3-4 Various	Manage unit to protect its habitat and hydrologic values. Retain land in state ownership. Settlement (land disposals) and remote cabins are prohibited. Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes. Check land status in the selection areas prior to management or disposal decisions.	This large unit consists of extensive mountainous terrain divided by steeply incised stream valleys. Vegetation within the stream valley consists of fairly sparse stands of deciduous and mixed forest, while mountainous areas, which predominate, are characterized by ice, barren ground, and alpine tundra. Moose winter and calving concentration areas occur within the stream valleys and Dall sheep are common at higher elevations year round. Windblown lower elevation ridges provide important wintering areas while steep ravines provide lambing and summer habitat. There are no known anadromous streams within the unit. Recreational use is limited by terrain and restricted access and is generally confined to the stream valleys, with most use occurring during the fall hunting season. RST 447 and the Matanuska Peak Trail (ADL 224027) are within this unit. Permitted commercial guide activities occur in this unit. Portions of this unit are in selection status; review land status prior to any management or disposal action.
C-02	Gu 333,466	Map 3-3 Various	Manage land to protect its unique geologic and hydrologic values. Retain land in state ownership. Settlement (land disposals) and remote cabins are prohibited. Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes. Check land status in the selection areas prior to management or disposal decisions.	This unit, which is also very large, predominately consists of mountainous terrain occupied by glaciers and their outflow moraines. There is sparse recreational use in the unit. An RS 2477 route (RST 1431) occupies portions of C001S010W. Two leases for recreational and emergency shelters for skiers, hikers and climbers are within this unit. Glaciers, and their associated moraines and stream valleys, occupy essentially the entire unit; it is distinguished from C-01 by these features. Portions of this unit are in selection status; review land status prior to any management or disposal action.

Total state land within region (2 units) – 706,539 acres