

Appendix 1.

**MANAGEMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR LANDS
ADJACENT TO THE
GEORGE PARKS
HIGHWAY**

APPENDIX 1

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LANDS ADJACENT TO THE PARKS HIGHWAY

INTRODUCTION

In 1978 the Alaska Department of Natural Resources conducted an inventory of scenic values along the Parks Highway. This information was compiled in a report entitled "Scenic Resources Along the George Parks Highway." The report contains a set of management recommendations designed to protect views from the highway. Recommendations from the report relevant to the Willow Sub-basin are presented in this appendix. Management of public lands adjacent to the Parks Highway should be consistent with these recommendations. The borough and state will encourage private landowners to follow these recommendations in order to protect the scenic values along the highway.

The scenic resources of the George Parks Highway are of considerable value to Alaskans living along it as well as the thousands who travel it for business and pleasure. As with any valuable resource, some type of management strategy or planning is deemed necessary to preserve areas with high scenic resource values, to improve those areas where man-made diversity can enhance the driving experience, and to restore areas where the scenic quality has been severely eroded by landscape alteration. This set of recommendations points out places and types of actions required to protect the unique scenic values found along the George Parks Highway while at the same time allowing other land and resource uses as deemed necessary by public demand and planning study.

WASILLA MANAGEMENT UNIT

GENERAL

This section of the Parks Highway is characterized by generally low scenic resource values and intensive roadside land use. Management recommendations are directed at specific areas where measures should be taken to prevent further deterioration of scenic resources, use the natural visual absorption capability when possible, and restore the foreground visual quality where it has been severely encroached upon by development and intensive land use. Land ownership is the primary limitation to the management of scenic resources within this area because roadside lands are almost exclusively under private ownership.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ° Utilize the existing high visual absorption capability of this landscape.
- ° Screen the numerous intensive industrial land uses immediately adjacent to the highway and begin land reclamation efforts on those areas which are no longer used.
- ° Restore foreground visual quality in those areas where intensive roadside commercial development has almost completely removed the natural vegetative cover and where the intensity of roadside land uses severely affects the visual environment. Restoration measures include:
 1. Encourage the natural revegetation process where possible. This process usually begins with a shrub stage (cottonwood, willows, and alders) followed by birch and spruce stands.
 2. Encourage landscaping around existing parking areas, particularly between the highway right-of-way and parking lots.
 3. Reduce the number of possible highway turnoff areas by building frontage roads along areas with intensive commercial development which would significantly reduce the safety hazards associated with strip development. When properly landscaped, a frontage road could also reduce the visual impact of strip development.
 4. The highway through Wasilla should be studied by landscape architects to develop recommendations for camouflaging the extended commercial strip.

Many portions of the Parks Highway in this unit have high visual absorption capabilities. These areas are identified within heavy black lines on the attached maps. The stretch of highway shown in Figures 1a and 1b is characterized by mixed residential and commercial development, gravel pits, clearings, and numerous intersections. This strip is in the early stages of development, and roadside activity could take place without severely affecting the existing visual quality by taking measures to protect the natural landcover.

A minimum of 25% of the natural landcover and topography should be left undisturbed on those lots immediately adjacent to the highway. Those areas not circled in black have lower visual absorption capability and need additional on-site evaluations to determine how the land might be developed with minimal impact on scenic resources.

The following notes refer to Figure 1a.

1. This area is the beginning of intensive roadside commercial development. More vegetation and landscaping along the highway is needed, particularly along the north side of the road.
2. The crossroads of downtown Wasilla is a particularly important area from a visual standpoint. Definition of a downtown area could reduce the feeling of extensive strip developments on either end of downtown. While this is an urban design problem, a number of things could be accomplished in the near future to improve the "Wasilla Strip".
 - a. The planting of street trees and the construction of sidewalks in the downtown-crossroads area could help create a sense of place.
 - b. Taller buildings should be encouraged in the downtown area to provide a visual accent and focus to make it look and feel different from the commercial areas away from downtown. The railroad station and a few old historical buildings near the crossroads should be preserved to give Wasilla a sense of historical heritage.
3. Intensive strip development and land clearing occur here. This area, as well as the area described in Note 1, should be considered focal points in a visual analysis study of Wasilla.
4. The railroad, which parallels the highway, provides an effective southern edge to the community. Vegetated areas between the highway and railroad would provide added visual interest.

WASILLA MANAGEMENT UNIT

Figure 1a.

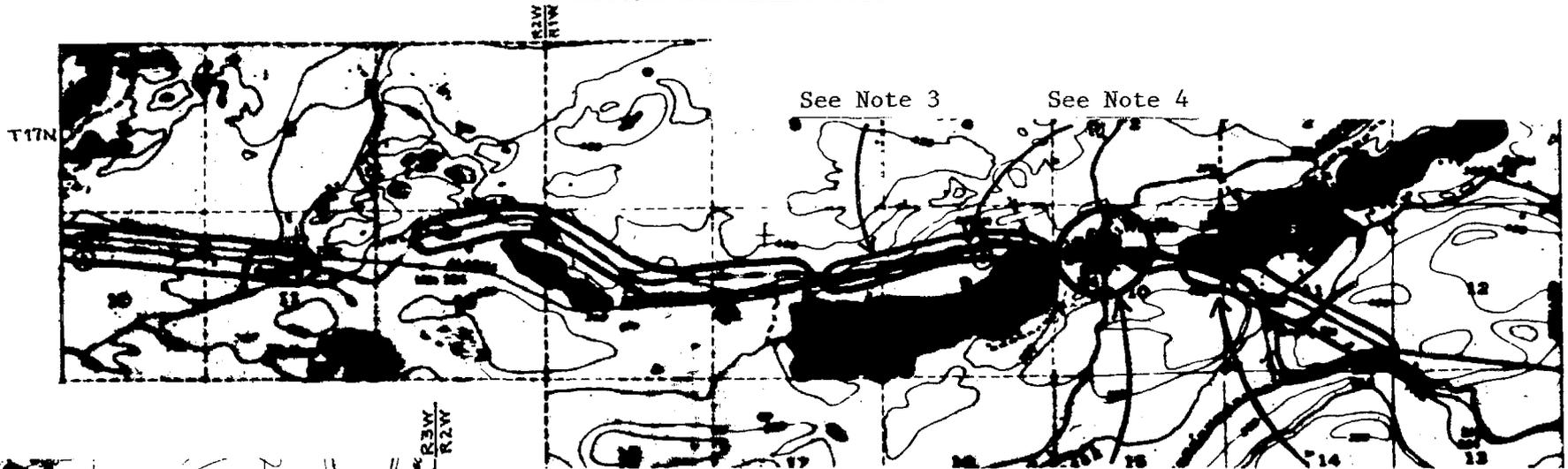
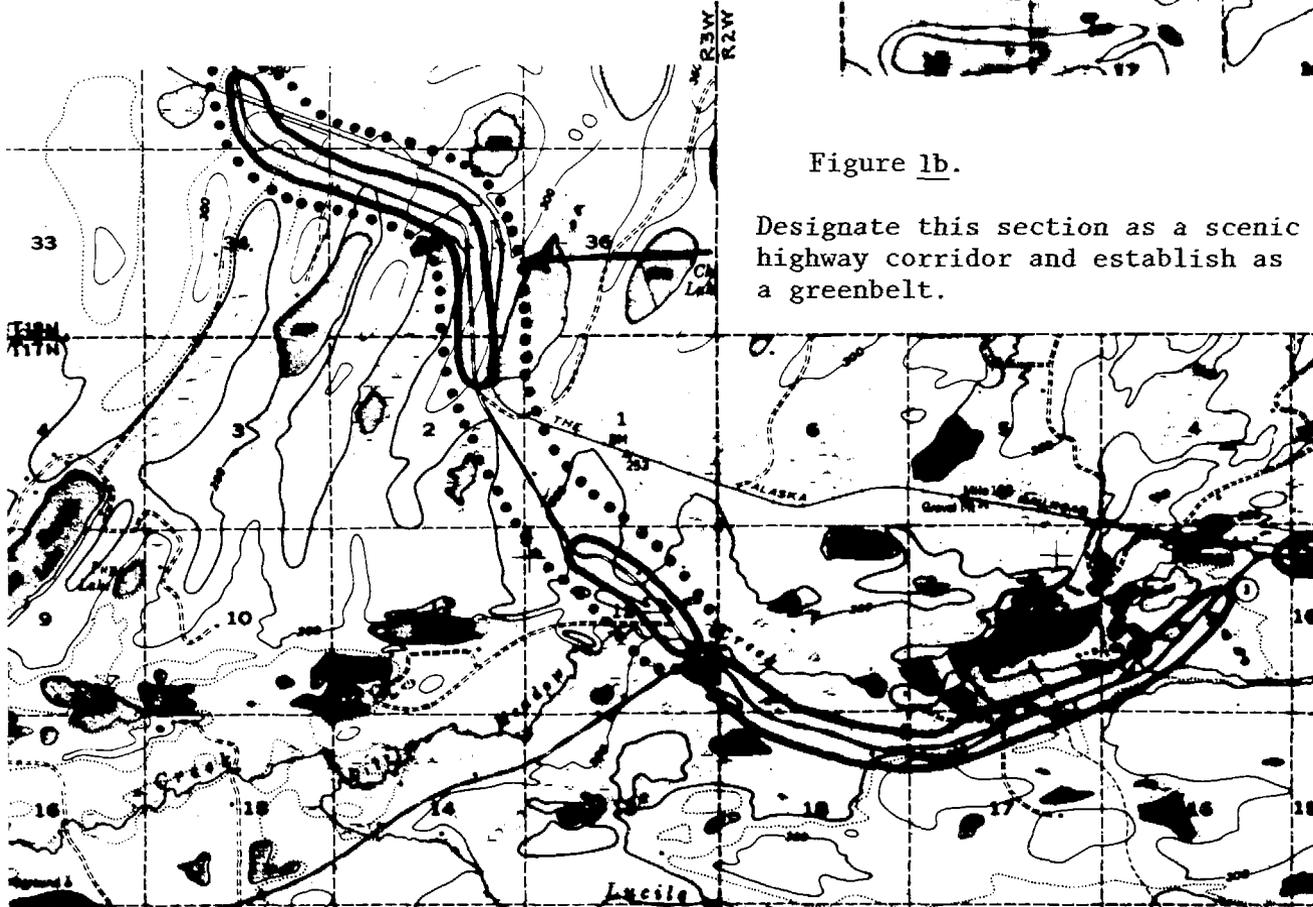


Figure 1b.

Designate this section as a scenic highway corridor and establish as a greenbelt.



See Note 2
(p. 1-5)

See Note 1
(p. 1-5)

○ Areas circled in heavy black lines have high visual absorption capability. Roadside development should be located within these areas if possible.

HOUSTON MANAGEMENT UNIT

GENERAL

Some of the most scenic portions of the Parks Highway are included within the Houston Management Unit (Figure 2).

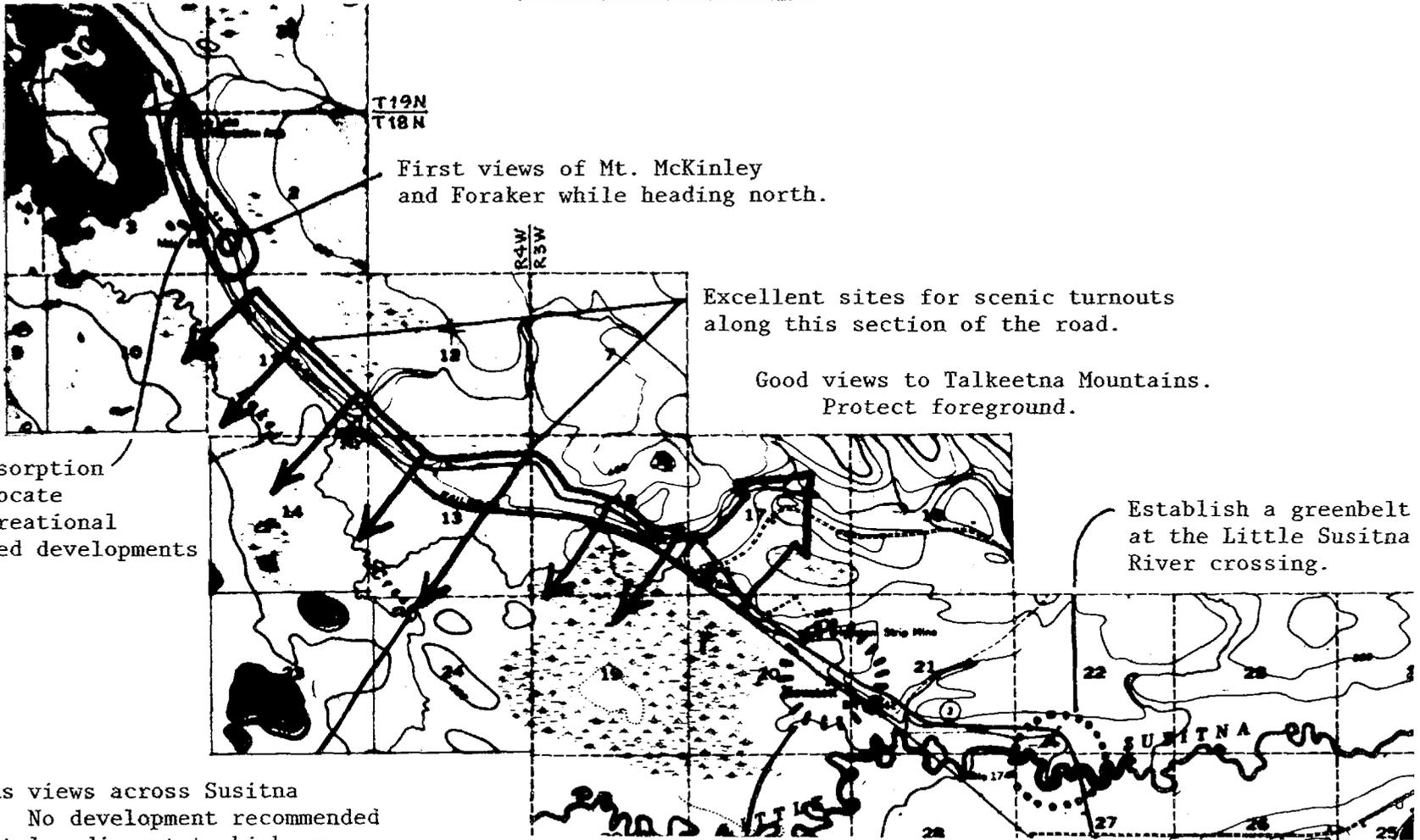
This high scenic resource value is the result of a diverse landscape with numerous views to distant mountains and constantly changing panoramas as the road climbs over and winds around the gently rolling low hills. It also contains the only extended views from the highway across the broad lower Susitna Valley. Due to the proximity of this area to Anchorage and the numerous recreation attractions nearby (Nancy Lake, Willow Creek, etc.) this portion of the highway is subject to intensive use, especially during the summer. The Little Susitna River receives a great deal of recreational use during the summer salmon runs.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Designate this section of the Parks Highway as a scenic highway corridor.
- Encourage roadside commercial development around the existing community of Houston and Nancy Lake while encouraging residential, agricultural and other non-commercial land uses along the remaining stretches of road if they need to occur near the roadway.
- Use the natural visual absorption capability of the land to reduce the visual impact of intensive land uses adjacent to the highway (mining, gravel pits, logging, subdivisions). Figure 2 shows areas with high visual absorption capability.
- Establish a greenbelt along the highway within this unit. This would be a 100 feet minimum width beyond the right-of-way along stretches of road with high visual absorption capability. Areas with lower visual absorption capability would require a wider greenbelt, the actual width to be determined through field checks.
- Within the Little Susitna River Corridor, establish a greenbelt. Auto/camper access should be established away from the bridge and outside of the greenbelt boundaries. Visual impacts of intensive recreation use adjacent to the bridge should be reduced.

Figure 2

HOUSTON MANAGEMENT UNIT



First views of Mt. McKinley and Foraker while heading north.

Excellent sites for scenic turnouts along this section of the road.

Good views to Talkeetna Mountains. Protect foreground.

Establish a greenbelt at the Little Susitna River crossing.

High visual absorption capability. Locate Nancy Lake Recreational roadside related developments here.

Numerous views across Susitna Valley. No development recommended immediately adjacent to highway along this section of road. Selective cutting of trees could increase duration of some views. Locate land uses beyond 200' from the edge of the roadway.

Foreground restoration of landscape is needed around the community of Houston to screen gravel pits and reduce visual impacts of roadside commercial development.

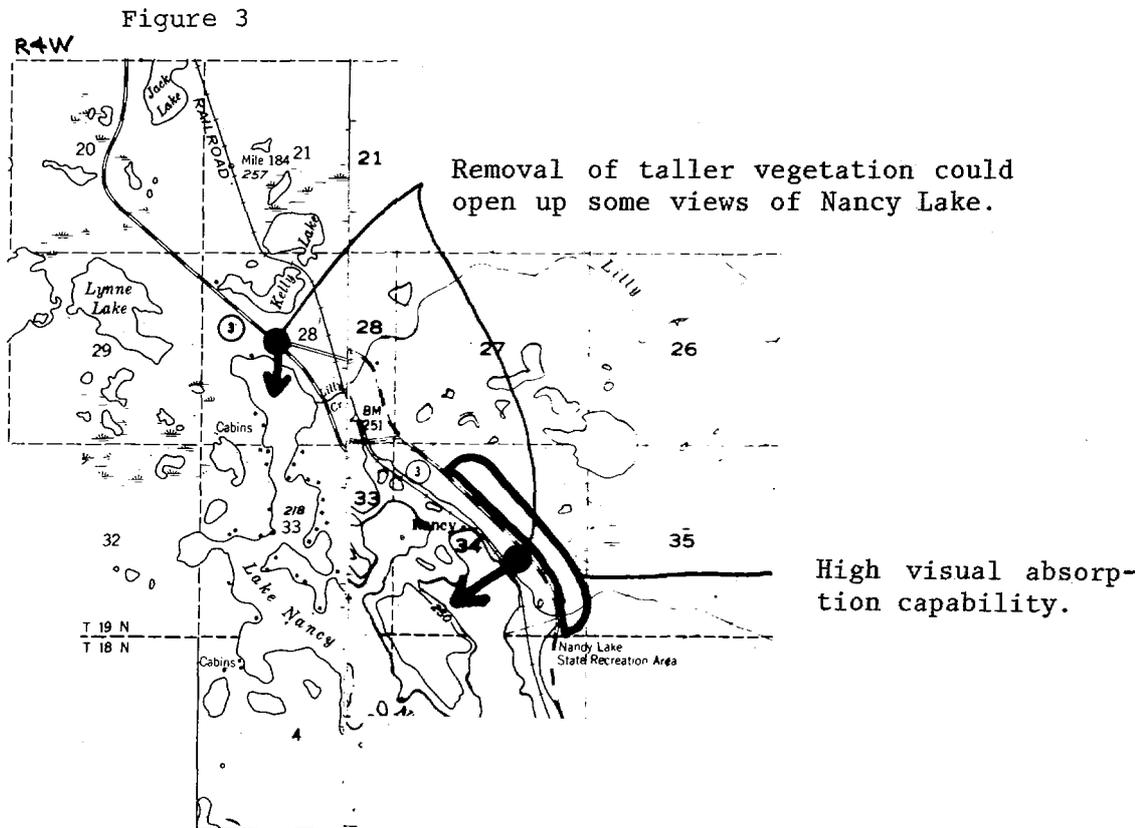
NANCY LAKE MANAGEMENT UNIT

GENERAL

The Nancy Lake Management Unit contains a short but very scenic portion of the Parks Highway. The area is subject to intensive recreation use.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Designate this section of the Parks Highway as a scenic Highway corridor.
- Encourage necessary roadside commercial development in this unit to occur along the stretch of highway with high visual absorption capability.



WILLOW MANAGEMENT UNIT

GENERAL

The Parks Highway within the Willow Management Unit contains moderate scenic values (Figure 4). Willow is still in the early stages of development, and while some signs of strip development are visible, it is not as extensive as areas further south.

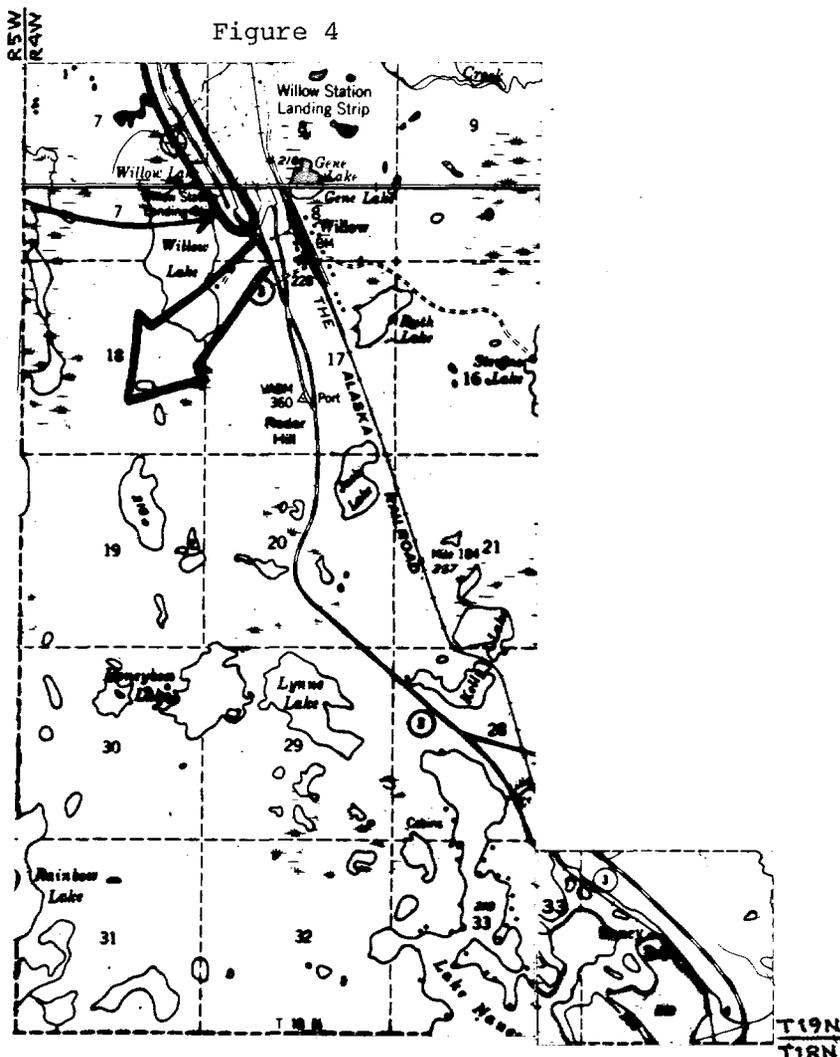
PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Include the portion south of Milepost 67 in the scenic highway and greenbelt designations recommended for the management units to the south.
- Encourage necessary highway related commercial development within this area rather than areas immediately to the north or south.
- Use the natural visual absorption capability of the landscape to reduce the visual impacts of land developments in the foreground distance zone ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile either side of the highway). This can be accomplished by leaving some of the forest vegetation between the highway and the development, and on those lots bordering the highway right-of-way. Retain at least 25% of the land in natural vegetation.
- Reduce the number of intersections with the highway by building a frontage road. Vegetation left standing between the highway and the frontage road will help maintain existing scenic quality and soften the visual impacts of development.
- Encourage landscaping around parking areas, particularly where they are immediately adjacent to the highway. Native birch, spruce trees, and mounds of earth can be quite effective.
- Encourage the growth of native trees and shrubs within the highway right-of-way. Presently the right-of-way is neatly clipped back to the forest in a straight line, parallel to the roadway. Some areas, specifically where the land beyond the right-of-way is publicly owned, could have the natural vegetation extend into the right-of-way. This would create visual interest and diversity and soften the impact of the road on the landscape.

WILLOW MANAGEMENT UNIT

Area of high visual absorption capability. Take advantage of this area in roadside developments.

Protect views across Willow Lake from the highway. Land development, tree removal, and other land uses should not block or destroy these important views.



WILLOW CREEK CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT UNIT

GENERAL

Willow Creek is an intensively used recreation area. Removal of vegetation and vehicular use of the land adjacent to the highway has resulted in some erosion, litter, and trespassing problems in this area.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a greenbelt along the river a minimum of ¼ mile either direction from the bridge, and at least 150' either side of the water's edge. Within this area only pedestrian movement would be allowed and no removal of vegetation would be permitted.
- Establish auto/camper access and camping/parking facilities outside the greenbelt and away from the bridge. Easier access to other portions of Willow Creek, especially via paved roadway would help disperse intensive salmon fishing activities presently concentrated around the bridge.

Figure 5

R5W
R4W

Establish a greenbelt



T20N
T19N

Area of high
visual absorption
capability.

ROGER'S CREEK MANAGEMENT UNIT (SOUTH OF LITTLE WILLOW CREEK)

GENERAL

This section of the Parks Highway is characterized by very high scenic resource values.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ° Designate this section of the Parks Highway as a scenic highway corridor.
- ° Establish a greenbelt to protect sensitive foreground scenic resource values. The greenbelt should be a minimum width of 100' beyond the highway right-of-way in the area of high visual absorption capability, and wider in the other areas. Actual width should be determined in the field. At least 75% of the land within the designated area should be left in a natural state.

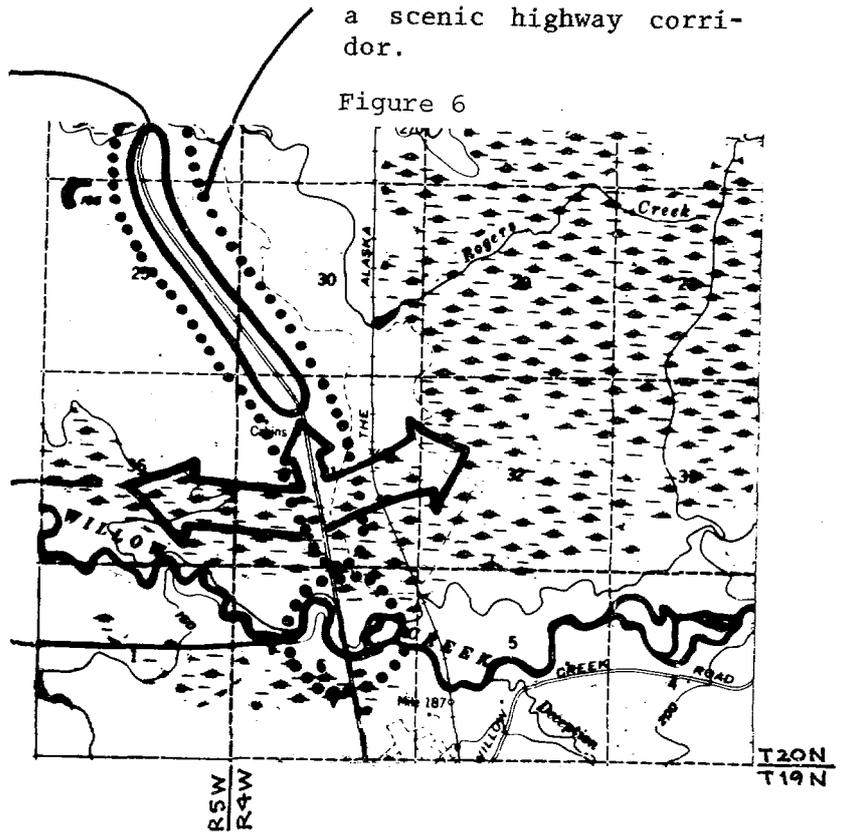
○ Areas of high visual absorption capability where a 100' greenbelt would be sufficient. These are also the places where roadside development might occur with minimum impact on high scenic resource values.

Excellent views across open muskeg to Mt. McKinley, Alaska Range, and Talkeetnas.

Establish a greenbelt around Willow Creek.

Designate this section as a scenic highway corridor.

Figure 6



LITTLE WILLOW CREEK CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT UNIT

GENERAL

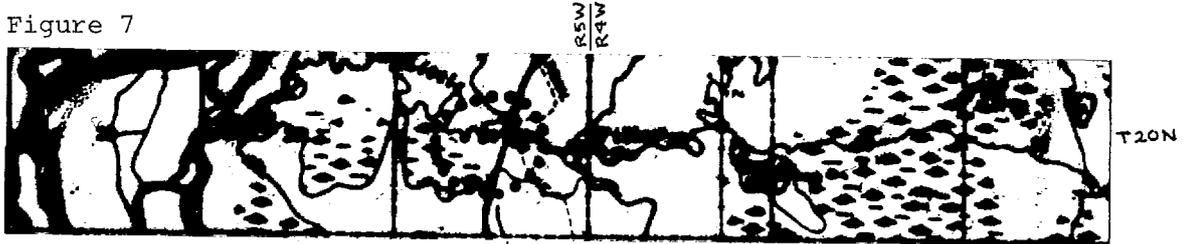
The Little Willow Creek Corridor receives high recreation use, particularly during summer salmon runs.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Little Willow Creek is an intensive recreation area. Removal of vegetation and vehicular use of land immediately adjacent to the highway has resulted in some erosion and litter problems in this area. To remedy this the following recommendations are made.

- Extend highway greenbelt $\frac{1}{4}$ mile up and down the creek (100' minimum beyond waters edge). Permit only pedestrian use in this area.
- Establish auto/camper access and camping/parking facilities outside this greenbelt and away from the bridge.
- Include this section of the Parks Highway in scenic highway designation and greenbelt establishment.

Figure 7



Establish a greenbelt and designate this section as a scenic highway corridor.

ROGER'S CREEK MANAGEMENT UNIT (NORTH OF LITTLE WILLOW CREEK)

GENERAL

Parts of the highway in the Roger's Creek Management Unit are very high in visual resource values, and other sections are fairly low (Figure 8).

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ° Designate the section below milepost 78 (in Section 31) as a scenic highway corridor.
- ° Establish a greenbelt below milepost 78 to protect the sensitive foreground scenic resource values. At least 75% of the land within the designated area should be left in a natural state. The greenbelt should be a minimum width of 100' beyond the highway right-of-way in areas of high visual absorption capability and wider in other areas. Actual width should be determined in the field .
- ° Necessary intensive roadside land uses (e.g., gravel pits, commercial developments, industries) should be encouraged, when possible, to locate along stretches of road which have high visual absorption capability.

