

## **Chapter 2: Areawide Goals, Policies, and Management Guidelines**

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## **Chapter 2: Areawide Goals, Policies, and Management Guidelines**

### **Scope of Chapter 2**

This chapter presents the goals, policies, management guidelines, as well as specific management recommendations that cover and affect the entire management area. The goals, policies, and requirements that follow focus on the management of the principal natural resources and uses (or activities) that require specific management direction within the management area. Only those uses that are appropriate within the planning area and require detailed policies to guide their use or development are included in this Chapter. Guidelines for uses that *could occur* within the management area but are not considered appropriate within the planning area are *not* included. Uses considered inappropriate must go through a written decision and/or plan amendment process to be authorized. These requirements do not pertain to what is termed the Generally Allowed Uses on state land under 11 AAC 96.

The 1986 plan recommended that the entire Hatcher Pass Management Planning Area be managed with recreation as a primary use, and this revision maintains that orientation. The uses and resources that are managed in this revision of the management plan do not greatly differ from those dealt with in the 1986 plan and the 1989 plan amendment. However, certain use recommendations made in the 1986 plan are no longer relevant because they have not occurred in the area during the life of the existing plan or are no longer consistent with the primary use of the area, which is recreation. Because some of those uses are no longer relevant, they are not dealt with in this revision. Accordingly, this chapter provides a discussion of recreation and the other uses that can be expected to occur in the planning area.

A discussion of the relationship of Generally Allowed Uses on state land to this management plan is also provided. The latter is provided since certain aspects of public use within the planning area are not affected (are not under the jurisdiction) of this plan, and there is widespread confusion over what a plan may affect and what is allowed as a matter of right under state law and regulations. For example, the plan does not control the use of motorized vehicles whereas the regulations do.

### **Central Management Direction: Recreation**

Although the 1986 Management Plan dealt extensively with recreation, the plan also dealt with a broad range of issues, some of which are no longer relevant in the area. Uses were identified in the 1986 Management Plan that could be described as extractive or commercial in character. Grazing, commercial timber harvest and private commercial facilities (involving structures) were recognized as appropriate. Since the 1980's, the Hatcher Pass

has experienced marked additional recreation use, the development of regulations to manage recreation use, the active management of recreation on the East Side by DPOR and the Borough, and indications are that the use patterns of the Hatcher Pass area will continued to evolve in the direction of further recreation use. Most people think of this area now as a recreation area and, based on the results of the recent public participation process, have expressed the desire that area be used primarily for recreation and managed with this use as a focus. This revision reflects this shift in public perception and in use.

*The central management orientation of this plan is to manage the Hatcher Pass area for recreation and for those uses compatible with this activity or otherwise allowed by law, including mining.*

DNR recognizes that certain areas may best be managed for particular uses that are compatible with each other, and incompatible activities prohibited as long as the prohibited types of uses are allowed elsewhere on adjacent state land. To this end, certain uses are prohibited in the 2010 Management Plan: grazing, agriculture, general commercial development in most parts of the planning area, settlement (including remote settlement), and commercial timber harvest. This chapter, accordingly, does not deal with these uses or land use patterns.

Important exceptions to this general orientation exist and should be noted. Mineral exploration, development, and processing is allowed, consistent with state mining law and regulation except for the Government Peak unit which is closed to mineral exploration and development, the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area, and certain small areas associated with recreation facilities. Additionally, the development of ski or similar types of recreational facilities that involves private (or public) commercial use is recognized as appropriate on borough and state land within the Government Peak unit. Residential uses are not permitted outside the Government Peak unit. Material extraction (gravel) is allowed within the West Side and is also allowed for public road and trail construction; public facilities related to utilities; roads; and trail development and maintenance, emergency facilities are on the East Side. A listing of allowed, conditionally allowed, and prohibited uses are listed in Table 2-1.

## **Generally Allowed Uses**

Certain uses are allowed under state law and administrative regulation on *state* land<sup>1</sup> that is designated as general domain land. With the exception of the two LDAs and the two ILMAs (see Chapter 1 for description), all of the state land in the management area is general domain land and subject to management under AS 38.04 and AS 38.05. The requirements of

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion of generally allowed uses relates to *state owned* land. GAU requirements do not affect private or borough land, land withdrawn or designated by the state legislature for management as a special purpose site, or state selected land.

11 AAC 96.020 (Generally Allowed Uses) applies to these lands. That is, all of those uses allowed in 11 AAC 96.020 may take place within the plan area except for certain areas that may be constrained by regulation (11 AAC 96.014).

11 AAC 96.020 states that certain uses either alone or in combination on state land do not require a permit or other form of authorization from DNR. Uses that are generally allowed include non-motorized and motorized forms of transportation. Some allowable non-motorized uses include hiking, climbing, skiing, bicycling, or travel by horse or dogsled. Motorized use is allowable for highway vehicles up to 10,000 pounds on road easements and all-terrain vehicles up to 1,500 pounds, on or off road, provided the use does not cause adverse effects to water quality, ground disturbance and significant rutting. See 11 AAC 96.020 for complete list of allowable uses.

Generally allowed uses under 11 AAC 96.020 *are not directly affected* by this management plan, *and may only be constrained or limited by regulation*. Certain motorized uses are, however, currently constrained by regulation within the Hatcher Pass management area under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3). Within the area of the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area and portions of the Independence, Archangel, Reed Lakes/Little Susitna, and Government Peak, motorized uses are prohibited on a year-round basis. Summer restrictions on motorized use occur within portions of the Independence and Bald Mountain/Hillside management units. The areas of current closure are depicted on Map 1-5. It is important to emphasize that, other than these areas, *all uses allowed in 11 AAC 96.020 can occur within the Hatcher Pass management area subject to adherence to the requirements of 11 AAC 96.025*<sup>2</sup>.

Note: The final plan continues to recommend the closure of certain areas on a year-round or summer closure basis, but with a somewhat different pattern. The closure areas recommended in the 2010 Plan, and those are contained in draft regulations, are reflected in Map 2-5 and are explained in detail in Chapter 3.

## **Uses within Hatcher Pass Management Area Requiring Authorization**

Most uses within the management area do not require a permit; that is, they are one or more of the uses that are generally allowed on state land under 11 AAC 96.020.

However, there are some uses that require authorization by DNR before the activity can proceed and are likely to occur or could occur within this area. Uses on borough owned land are to be consistent with the management intent of the Government Peak management unit.

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<sup>2</sup> 11 AAC 96.025 establishes the conditions for generally allowed uses.

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The uses listed in Table 2-1 constitute the principal types of uses, by general category, that *could* occur within the management area and that *require authorization* by DMLW<sup>3</sup>. This table identifies uses as allowed, prohibited, or allowed conditionally and applies to both borough and state land<sup>4</sup>. All authorizations issued by the borough or state are to be consistent with the management intent and management guidelines of this plan. If a prohibited activity is found appropriate through a written best interest finding, a plan amendment would be required to authorize the use. In instances where a proposed use is not listed in this table, adjudicators are given the authority to determine if the proposed use is similar to one or more of the uses included in the table. If so, it shall be treated in a similar fashion to that use. If not, it shall be treated as a conditional use. The units identified in Table 2-1 correspond to the management units identified in Maps 1-1 through 1-5.

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<sup>3</sup> That is, they are not Generally Allowed Uses as defined in 11 AAC 96.020. Constraints on Generally Allowed Uses (GAU) are identified by management unit under the section 'Generally Allowed Uses'. All other GAU uses are authorized within the management unit.

<sup>4</sup> Note: This table does not list all activities that may be considered. The DMLW will use discretion when adjudicating uses not specifically listed on this table.

It should be noted that this table indicates the appropriateness of use at an areawide level. There may be additional conditions to consider at the management unit level, which follows in Chapter 3. Consult both this table and the applicable management unit table to determine whether a use or activity is allowed within a specific management unit and the appropriate action.

**Table 2-1: Listing of Uses on Areawide Basis**

Potential Use	Allowed, Prohibited, or Conditionally Allowed	Implementation	Comment
Agriculture	Not allowed.		
Cabins (not including trapping and remote cabins)	Public use, administrative, or commercial recreation cabins are Conditionally Allowed.  Personal or Private Use Cabins are prohibited.	DMLW will issue authorizations consistent with the divisional procedures and with management intent and management guidelines for specific management units.	
Commercial Recreation Facilities and Activities	Allowed but registration is required under 11 AAC 96.	This use includes the various types of commercial recreation services that may occur within the management area. Examples include services like guided fishing, hunting or mountain climbing, or helicopter skiing, or commercial tours. All such uses require authorization by DMLW.	
Developed Ski Facilities	Alpine: Allowed within the Government Peak management unit. May be allowed as a conditional use in other management units, subject to adherence to management intent and guidelines specific to the unit.  Nordic: Allowed throughout the planning area.		There are two general types of ski facilities: Alpine and Nordic.  The term 'ski facilities' means those uses and structures related to Alpine and Nordic ski complexes.

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Potential Use	Allowed, Prohibited, or Conditionally Allowed	Implementation	Comment
General Commercial	<p>Not allowed on East Side except on borough land in the Government Peak management unit and under certain conditions.</p> <p>Commercial uses of small scale and related to recreation may be appropriate and can be conditionally allowed on the West Side if consistent with the management intent and guidelines of the management unit.</p>	<p>On the East Side, commercial use is subject to the stipulations that may be imposed in Borough adopted development plan or contained in a Special Land Use District.</p>	<p>In the context of this plan, 'general commercial' is to be interpreted as including all commercial uses except those related to commercial recreation. It does not include facilities that are related to communication, the generation of power through wind or water, utility lines, or other uses of this type.</p> <p>The appropriateness of commercial uses within the Government Peak management unit is to be determined through borough planning and legislative processes. See Table 3-10 in the Government Peak management unit for detail.</p>
Grazing (leases)	Not allowed.		
Hydroelectric Facilities	Conditionally allowed.		
Industrial, including uses similar to industrial in character	Not allowed.		
Material Extraction	<p>Allowed as a conditional use on West Side except within the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area, where they are prohibited.</p> <p>Not allowed on East Side projects except as related to public safety and public transportation (road, trails, and the like), and development of commercial Alpine, Nordic or other recreational facilities.</p>		<p>Special care must be taken in the siting of material extraction adjacent to the Hatcher Pass Road<sup>5</sup>. Either the use must be screened or not visible from the road. Authorizations are to follow the requirements of the viewshed management zone.</p> <p>Materials extraction directly related to a mining operation are to be managed as part of the mining operation and the review of this aspect of mine development is to occur through the review of the plan of operations for a proposed mine.</p>

<sup>5</sup> The term 'Hatcher Pass Road' as it is used in this plan refers to the entirety of this road within the planning area.

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<b>Potential Use</b>	<b>Allowed, Prohibited, or Conditionally Allowed</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Material Sales	<p>Not allowed in the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area and Bald Mountain Ridge Habitat Area.</p> <p>Not allowed on East Side projects except as related to public safety and public transportation (road, trails, and the like), and development of commercial Alpine, Nordic or other recreational facilities.</p> <p>Allowed as a conditional use in West Side management units.</p>		
Mining (including placer mining)	Allowed in areas with valid existing rights and in areas open to mineral entry consistent with applicable requirements under 11 AAC 96.025, 11 AAC 97, and AS 27.19, as well as other pertinent state and federal requirements affecting mining activities.	Not allowed in areas closed to mineral entry.	State mining laws applicable to placer mining and lode operations control this type of use.
Personal use firewood harvest and general forest management activities	Personal use firewood gathering is allowed if a collection area is identified by DOF and DMLW or by the Borough on Borough land.		DOF or the Borough may conduct timber removal operations for such administrative purposes as timber salvage, habitat manipulation, insect control, fire fuel reduction, or other forest management purposes determined by DOF or the Borough on their respective lands, to be necessary for forest health or where improvements will be located including roads, trails, utilities, etc.
Public Safety Facilities	Public facilities related to public safety are allowed.		Emergency and safety facilities provided by private entities are also allowed.

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Potential Use	Allowed, Prohibited, or Conditionally Allowed	Implementation	Comment
Recreation Facilities	Public Recreational facilities: allowed. Includes public recreational facilities such as: trails, parking areas, signs, trailheads, sanitation facilities, snow grooming. These uses require authorization by DMLW.  Private Recreational facilities; conditionally allowed.	All public recreation facilities require authorization by DMLW.  Similarly, all private recreational facilities require authorization by DMLW.	See specific restrictions for Government Peak in Table 3-1.
Settlement	Not allowed except that settlement may occur within the Government Peak Unit under certain conditions.	Settlement is subject to the stipulations that may be imposed in the Borough's development plan and Special Land Use District.	See Table 3-1 in the Government Peak management unit for detail.
Timber Harvest (Commercial)	Not allowed on state land except for salvage and management for forest health and fire safety.  Not allowed on Borough land.	All such activities by DOF are to be coordinated with SCRO & ADF&G and, if permitted, are to be consistent with the management intent and any specific requirements identified in this plan for a management unit.	Very little merchantable timber exists within the management area. Commercial logging is intended to take place in SSAP or SMAP. Personal use harvest is permitted. See below.
Trail Development and Management	Allowed.	Trails on state land are to be developed according to DPOR Sustained Trail Standards.  Trails on borough land are to be developed according to the MSB Recreational Trails Plan.	The management of trails on state land shall be consistent with the 2010 Management Plan and, within borough land, any step-wise plan approved for the Assembly.
Trapper Cabins	Not allowed in Government Peak unit. Conditionally allowed in remainder of planning area.		
Utilities (Including Telecommunication Facilities)	Conditionally allowed.		See Management Guidelines for Utilities in this chapter.
Other Uses Not Otherwise Identified	Conditionally allowed.	Only uses consistent with the management intent and management guidelines for a management unit may be allowed.	Since not all uses that might occur in this area can be anticipated, such uses may be allowed but must go through DNR adjudication.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following general guidelines pertain to the entirety of the planning area and are to be followed in the granting of authorizations as well as the overall land management of the Hatcher Pass area.

- All authorizations for the use of state land within the planning area will be consistent with the overall management intent of this plan and of individual management units.
- In considering authorizations for the use of state land, DNR will adjudicate applications consistent with the uses allowed in this plan generally and within specific management units, and with the intent to:
  - Avoid anticipated, significant adverse effects on fish, wildlife, or their habitats through siting, timing, or other management options;
  - Minimize damages to streambeds, fish and wildlife habitats, vegetation, trails, and other resources of significance;
  - Minimize conflicts between resources and uses and ensure a high level of public safety; and
  - Manage the area and its resources for long-term sustainable use.
- State land will be managed to protect public access and public resources.
- State land will be open to mineral entry unless specifically closed in current (2010) mineral orders.
- State land within the planning area is to be retained.<sup>6</sup>
- In management units where a primary use or co-designation is designated, activities and authorizations that may be issued are to be consistent with that use(s). The primary designated use(s) are to take precedence over other uses. Other uses may only be allowed if that use is a permitted or conditionally permitted use in a management unit and only if that use is compatible with the primary use(s).

### Areawide Land Management Policies

The remainder of this chapter presents land management policies for each of the major resources or activities affected by this plan: fish and wildlife, materials, mineral resources, cultural and heritage resources, and recreation. These policies apply to state land throughout the planning area regardless of land use designation.

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<sup>6</sup> Leases and rights of way that are functionally irrevocable (which are types of disposals) are allowed.

The management intent statements and management guidelines apply to all state land within the planning area and are to be applied when issuing authorizations or making management decisions on state land. They are also to apply to state selected federal land when that land is conveyed to the state by BLM.

- **Goals:** Goals are the general conditions that the state attempts to achieve through its management actions. They express desired end-states and may not be realized during the planning period.
- **Management intent (statements):** These are the statements that describe the general management approach that the state is intending to pursue within management units. They define the Department's near and long-term land management objectives and, sometimes, the methods to achieve those objectives. They are similar to goals in being of long-term duration and of general scope, but differ in that they are applied to the management of specific uses or resources within a management unit.
- **Management guidelines:** These are the intended course of actions; as used in this plan, they are usually specific to a resource or management unit and identify the action or approach that is to be used in managing a resource or area. Guidelines are intended to guide DNR decision making on all aspects of land management within the planning area.
- **Management recommendations:** These are specific recommendations for improvements, operations, administrative, or fiscal actions.

## SUBSURFACE RESOURCES

### Background

Mining for locatable minerals (primarily gold and some silver) has occurred in the Hatcher Pass area since the placer gravels of Grubstake Gulch were first worked in 1897. Since then, both placer and lode mining have occurred: placer mining has been concentrated in Wet Gulch, Grubstake Gulch, Craigie Creek, and the Little Susitna River and lode mining has occurred at Skyscraper Mountain and Granite Mountain Ridge, where the Independence Mine is situated within the Independence management unit. The areas of mineral potential generally correspond with the distribution of mining claims, both state and federal.

Most of this area is open to mineral entry, exploration, and development (about 94%). Closed areas, which can be viewed on Alaska Mapper<sup>7</sup>, coincide with the Legislatively Designated Areas<sup>8</sup>, specific management areas (Independence Mine and Summit Lake), and the Government Peak management unit, the latter coinciding with the area of the borough's Development Lease. The remainder of the planning area is open to mineral entry. Mining claims, both state and federal, concentrate along Peters Creek, Willow Creek, Wet Gulch, and Grubstake Gulch. The Craigie Creek and Independence management units are also blanketed by claims. Claims can also be viewed on Alaska Mapper.

Coal, leasable minerals and oil and gas resources do not occur within the planning area, except for very small areas associated with the Susitna geologic basin. Coal and leasable minerals generally do not occur within this area since the most common widespread rock is quartz diorite which has no potential for coal or oil or gas. There is some limited potential for coal and oil and gas along the southern and western peripheries where sedimentary rocks are present.

Current mining and reclamation authorities, both under statute and administrative code, are considered sufficient to deal with most aspects of mining development and reclamation and this plan does not recommend additional restrictions, with some few exceptions. Mineral exploration and development are governed by AS 38.05.185-.275 (mining rights) and AS 29.19 (mining reclamation). Other state and federal requirements also apply. Mining under state mining claims must conform to these requirements. Specific requirements also exist for recreational mining businesses. The latter types of operations either fit within the generally allowed uses on state land or require authorization through a permit or lease,

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<sup>7</sup> <http://mapper.landrecords.info/>

<sup>8</sup> Differing authorities exist for mineral entry under the two LDAs: in the Hatcher Pass PUA this area is closed to mineral entry (after September 1, 1986) except for valid mining claims existing at that date. The Willow Mountain CHA requires the issuance of a permit from ADF&G for any surface altering activity under 5 AAC 95.420.

depending on the scale of the operation. Recreational gold panning and hard-rock prospecting or mining using light portable field equipment are allowed under generally allowed uses but must conform to the conditions of GAUs in 11 AAC 96.025. No DNR permit or other authorization is required for these uses. Mining or placer operations in waters cataloged by ADF&G in the Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC) must also obtain an authorization from ADF&G under Title 16 requirements. Together, these authorities provide a comprehensive review of a proposed placer or hard-rock mining operation and provide the authority to impose stipulations related to water quality and quantity, dredging, the disposal of mine waste, off-site runoff, and other aspects of mineral development.

## Goals

- Allow mineral exploration and development in those areas where locatable minerals are present, which generally coincides with the distribution of mining claims.
- Maintain the historic mining character of the area.
- Protect historic structures and areas associated with past lode mining activity.

## Management Intent

Provide for the continued exploration and development of lode and placer mineral resources, maintain the historic character of the Independence Mine area, and protect areas with historic mining activity. Current areas of mineral closure are to be maintained, although no additional large closures are recommended. The management area remains open to oil and gas exploration and development.

## Management Guidelines

Broadly, this plan assumes that the extensive requirements under 11 AAC 96, 11 AAC 97, AS 27.19 as well as other state and federal requirements will be sufficient to manage aspects of mining activity related to water quality and quantity, the control of runoff and off-site water pollution, and tailings and overburden disposals for both lode and placer operations without additional stipulations identified in this plan. These authorities require a plan of operation and a reclamation plan to be submitted and approved for mining operations.

Additional requirements are identified, however to ensure that the scenic and cultural resources are not degraded to a significant degree.

**Review of Plans of Operation (General Requirement).** DMLW review of Plans of operations for mineral development are to consider the impact of the proposed operation on public access, the disturbance of visual resources (especially as viewed from the Hatcher Pass Road), and public recreation, while taking into account the environmental and economic

requirements of the mineral development. Authorizations should consider methods to minimize visual impact including use of topography and vegetation, provide for the screening of facilities from view, and consider the grouping of locating of facilities to minimize visual impact or to avoid blocking access to public land. Additionally, consideration should be given to storing operating equipment compactly and in a location and manner that minimizes visual prominence. Abandoned and unusable equipment should be removed as soon as practical and construction material should be stored in an area that is screened from view.

**Scenic Resources.** During the review of the plan of operations for proposed mineral development, authorizations should consider methods to minimize impact of the development on the scenic resources of Hatcher Pass. The consideration should take into account the potential effect of on scenic resources, recreation, and the economic effect of stipulations on the development. Methods of minimizing impacts may include:

- Locating facilities away from the maintained road system and established recreational trails;
- Screening facilities with natural contours or vegetation;
- Minimizing or grouping facilities;
- Other methods to blend facilities with the landscape;
- Abandoned and unusable equipment should be removed as soon as practical and construction material should be stored in an area that is screened from view.

**Utilities.** Given the prominence of these features, special care is to be taken in their siting. To the extent practical, utilities are to be located so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road. Depending of the site context and feasibility, they are to be screened or buried, or situated sufficiently distant from this road to limit adverse visual impacts. If they are visible from this road, they should be positioned to blend with ridgelines rather than stand out as prominent skyline features, and should use structures and materials that are not visually prominent or limit their prominence.

- **Fish and Wildlife.** Mining operations will avoid impacts on fish and wildlife resources to the extent practicable. ADF&G needs to be contacted before mining exploration occurs to determine if there are any impacts to streams, fish, or wildlife resources and to mitigate adverse effects.
- **Cultural Resources.** Mining operations will avoid areas with cultural resources to the extent practicable. Where this is not possible, adverse impacts to these resources shall be minimized. The following guidelines are to be followed:

- Prior to the initiation of a mining project, the DPOR Office of History and Archeology (OHA) shall be contacted. This office reviews authorizations, construction projects, and land uses for potential conflict with cultural resources. It determines if there may be adverse impacts on heritage resources and makes recommendations for mitigation.
- If determined by OHA during an agency review of a proposed project that a cultural survey may be required, further coordination between OHA and the project agency is to occur. Cultural surveys are required if OHA reported sites exist or where there is a potential for such sites to exist. The extent and area of the cultural survey within the area of the proposed project or activity shall be determined by OHA in consultation with DMLW. Detailed procedures exist governing when a survey is required and the extent of such a survey and are to be considered by DMLW adjudication of authorizations.
- If artifacts are discovered while mining, the discovery must be reported to OHA. Work that would disturb the artifacts is to stop until OHA has provided directions as to the preservation of the artifacts in accordance with AS 41.35.010.
- Preservation of historic remains of earlier mining operations is encouraged. As part of the Plan of Operations submitted with the mining project, historic remains shall be identified. To the extent practicable such remains shall be preserved and subsequently flagged, signed, or otherwise identified if the Plan of Operation determines that mining remains should be preserved.

## Management Recommendations

- Initiate<sup>9</sup> a mineral order (closing) within the Independence and Archangel management units; see these management units for detail. These closures affect small areas associated with recreation facilities in the Archangel unit and within the area of the Independence Mine State Historical Park in the Independence unit. A total of 180 acres are recommended for closure. See Appendix C.
- Maintain the existing mineral closing orders that affect the Hatcher Pass Management Plan area, which primarily occur within the Government Peak management unit.

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<sup>9</sup> A mineral order (MO 1107) was adopted on November 17, 2010 that closed the two areas to mineral entry.

## MATERIAL SITES

### Background

Material extraction has occurred within the area west of Summit Lake at various locations along the Hatcher Pass Road, primarily by ADOT/PF in support of road and bridge projects, both within the planning area as well as immediately west thereof. All of these material sites immediately adjoin the road and several are visible, and some are sufficiently set back so they are not obvious. The current authorizations have not expired, and the pits remain active. They are currently issued to ADOT/PF and may be used subject to the stipulations of their authorization.<sup>10</sup>

Although new and additional gravel extraction sites have not been identified by ADOT/PF, it is likely that additional sites will be needed, particularly in support of the improvement of Hatcher Pass Road in the part west of the Independence Mine area. Because the costs of haulage are such a large component of cost in material extraction operations, it can be expected that new pits will occur along or in close proximity to the highway.

### Goals

- Provide sufficient, suitably located material sites to meet the needs of ADOT/PF for road and public projects.
- Material sites shall be designed and developed so that they do not adversely affect the scenic, fish, wildlife, water quality, and recreational values and uses within the planning area.

### Management Intent

The primary intent for material site development in the planning area is to provide sufficient materials for future road and public facilities consistent with the protection of values and uses mentioned previously. The excavation and removal of gravel for use by the public is a secondary objective. Where appropriate, it is intended that completed gravel extraction sites be made available for recreational parking or for fisheries enhancement. ADF&G needs to be contacted before extraction occurs to determine if there are any impacts to streams, fish, or wildlife resources.

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<sup>10</sup> Material extraction is prohibited in the Bald Mountain Ridge Habitat Area and the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area.

## Management Guidelines

In general, the requirements of 11 AAC 97, and specifically 11 AAC 97.310, are viewed as sufficient to manage most aspects of site reclamation. The plan of operations that accompanies these types of activities requires the preparation of a reclamation plan, which must be provided for authorization by DNR prior to the commencement of operations. This plan may also require additional stipulations under AS 38.05.035(e). The following guidelines apply.

- Material sites are conditionally allowed located within the Willow Mountain, Craigie Creek, and Bald Mountain/Hillside management units. Except for the emergency extraction of material for road rehabilitation in Government Peak management unit or the other uses of gravel identified in Table 2-1, other management units are not considered appropriate for this use.
- Material sites should be sited and designed to be minimally visible from the Hatcher Pass Road. A natural, topographic, embankment screen, or other screening techniques sufficient to shield the material site and equipment from the Hatcher Pass Road is to be provided.
- If stream crossings are required, ADF&G will be consulted to determine how bridges or culverts should be designed to allow for fish passage and potential high water flows. Contact ADF&G to obtain a Fish Habitat Permit before beginning work and determine appropriate stipulations.
- Access roads should be constructed of sufficient curvature to prevent direct view of the open excavation from Hatcher Pass Road.
- A riparian buffer shall be provided adjacent to anadromous waterbodies. DMLW procedural standards<sup>11</sup>, or the riparian standards identified in the Southeast Susitna Area Plan, shall apply.

## Management Recommendations

- Visual Screening. The material site development plan that is submitted to DMLW shall, in addition to the information typically included in such plans, include information on visual screening from the Hatcher Pass Road.
- Coordination with Borough. Prior to granting authorizations for material sites, DMLW should coordinate with the Matanuska Susitna Borough to determine applicable local requirements.

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<sup>11</sup> DMLW riparian buffer standards are generally consistent with the requirements of existing area plans but will provide more specificity in allowed uses, appropriate widths, and guidance as the when these standards are to be applied.

## **FISH AND WILDLIFE: HABITAT**

### **Background**

Wildlife. The Hatcher Pass Management Area contains a high diversity of wildlife and habitats. Over 160 species of animals, fish, and birds are represented in this area. Wildlife habitats include grassland, shrubland, and wetland; tundra plant communities; coniferous, deciduous, and mixed forests; and riparian zones. The diversity and abundance of wildlife and habitats is one of the reasons the area has become such a popular destination.

The Hatcher Pass area also provides excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation. Winter activities include snowmobile riding, backcountry skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and Nordic skiing. Summer include recreational ATV use, hiking, berry picking, hunting and fishing, trapping, wildlife viewing, bird watching and photography. Some of these activities can affect wildlife and their habitats in the planning area.

Wildlife species in the planning area include moose, black and brown bear, wolf, wolverine, coyote, fox, and lynx. Caribou and Dall sheep are uncommon, but occur in the high drainages of the eastern and northern parts of the area. Small alpine mammals commonly seen along the Hatcher Pass Road corridor include marmots, pikas, red squirrels, ground squirrels, lemmings, and hare. Beaver, mink, weasel, otter and marten are also common.

Moose are the most abundant large mammal in the Hatcher Pass area. In the vicinity of the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area, moose concentrations are periodically high and range between 300 - 600 animals. There is also a large moose population of 500 - 800 animals found south of Bald Mountain Ridge. Willow Mountain and Bald Mountain Ridge provide exceptional quantities of alder and willow browse which is interspersed with forest, shrub, and alpine plant communities. These areas support significant summer and winter moose habitat and breeding activities. Important summer and winter areas are also found along Peters and Purches Creek. Important calving areas are found along the wetlands, lowlands and riparian areas of the Little Susitna River and Willow Mountain areas. (See Map 2-1 Moose Habitat)

Brown and black bears inhabit the Willow Mountain subunit and occasionally are seen in other parts of the planning area. Caribou occur in the eastern and northern portions of the management area. They are part of a resident population of about 200 - 250 animals that generally ranges further east and is considered part of the Nelchina Herd. (See Map 2-2 Caribou Habitat.) Dall sheep are at the fringe of their distribution range in the Hatcher Pass Management Area but occasionally inhabit higher elevations on Willow Mountain, Arkose Ridge, and the southern slopes of the upper Kashwitna drainage.

Birds. The Hatcher Pass Management Unit has over 140 species of birds. Riparian and mixed forest habitats are used by bald and golden eagles, sharp-shinned hawks, red-tailed hawks, merlins, kestrels, gyrfalcons, peregrine falcons, and several owl species. Ptarmigan (willow, rock, and white-tailed), spruce grouse, and small mammals provide important prey species for these raptors and hunting and viewing opportunities for visitors. In addition to these birds, wandering tattlers, rosy finches, white-crowned sparrows, Wilson's warblers, Swainson's thrushes, and downy and hairy woodpeckers and a variety of other song bird species are present. This area is unique to at least five species of migratory tundra birds nesting on Bald Mountain Ridge. These are the long-tailed jaeger, lesser golden plover, Lapland longspur, northern wheatear, and whimbrel. As tundra birds normally nest much further north, this is a fairly unusual concentration in south-central regions and warrants the continuation of special management considerations and retention of the Bald Mountain Habitat Area. Because of the wide array of bird species in Hatcher Pass, bird watching will remain an important public activity.

Fish. Anadromous fish present in the Hatcher Pass planning area include Chinook, coho, sockeye, chum, and pink salmon. Resident species include rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, grayling, round whitefish, burbot, three-spine and nine-spine stickleback, and long-nose suckers.

The headwaters of the Little Susitna River, Willow Creek, and Little Willow Creek occur within the management area. These streams have important sport fisheries in their lower reaches just outside of the management area and produce a significant harvest of all five salmon species. Additionally, the Little Susitna River and Little Willow Creek are important salmon spawning and juvenile rearing water bodies. Aerial surveys have identified Chinook spawning habitat in the upper reaches of the Little Su River and Archangel Creek. Peters and Purches Creeks are important for resident Dolly Varden populations.

## **Goals**

- Protect and maintain fish and wildlife habitat while allowing for continued recreation use, including hunting.
- Maintain and protect the publicly owned habitat base in order to supply sufficient numbers or diversity of species to support recreational and traditional uses on a sustained yield basis.
- Protect unique or rare assemblages of a single or multiple species of regional, state, or national significance.

## Management Intent

Manage the Hatcher Pass area so that fish and wildlife species are protected while allowing for recreational uses, mining operations authorized under AS 38.05.185, or other applicable statutes, and uses deemed appropriate on borough land in the Government Peak management unit in an adopted land use plan. The primary method for achieving this management intent is through implementation of the allowed, conditionally allowed, and prohibited uses in Table 2-1 and through the management guidelines that follow. Intensive uses, which may adversely affect habitat, are only to occur in portions of the Government Peak management unit and will be limited to those sites determined to be appropriate for such uses in a DNR authorization.

## Management Guidelines

Many of the management guidelines that follow are typically applied in state area plans for uses that can be expected within a planning area. Although few such uses are expected or intended in the Hatcher Pass management area, management guidelines are included should uses of the type that might produce adverse habitat impacts be under consideration for authorization by DNR. Other guidelines have been developed specifically for the planning area:

- Uses in areas designated Habitat in Chapter 3 of this plan are to be consistent with the standard requirements for the authorizations of uses in the Southeast Susitna Area Plan. These requirements are contained in Chapter 2 of this plan under the section titled, 'Allowing Uses in Fish and Habitats (Ha)'.
- Habitat restoration through water control, removal of pollution sources, or other measures may be used to improve habitat for certain fish and wildlife species where ADF&G determines that such actions are beneficial to the species or habitat and where DNR determines that it is compatible with other primary uses.
- Land within the planning area is to be managed to avoid the introduction of and reduce the spread of invasive non-native plants and animals, consistent with 11 AAC 34.
- Uses that are likely to produce levels of acoustical or visual disturbance sufficient to disturb moose or caribou calving, rutting, or post-calving aggregations that cannot be seasonally restricted should not be authorized in these areas. Uses may be authorized in these areas at other times of the year. Authorizations should include seasonal restrictions on activities that would produce significant acoustical or visual disturbance during sensitive life-cycle periods.
- Riparian areas adjacent to anadromous waterbodies are to be provided and are to be at least 100' in width, consistent with FRPA requirements under AS 41.17.115-119 and criteria identified in the Southeast Susitna Area Plan or DMLW Riparian Buffer Standards.

- All new trails (new and up-graded, expanded, or re-routed) and associated facilities should be sited and designed to avoid impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitats. If impacts to these species and habitats cannot be avoided, they are to be minimized and/or restored.
- Facilities and other structures are to avoid anadromous waterbodies; if this cannot occur and the use is determined in a Title 16 ADF&G authorization review to be appropriate and consistent with the standards of this plan and ADF&G habitat standards, the impacts are to be minimized and must meet the requirements imposed by ADF&G to mitigate impacts.
- Habitat enhancement activities are not to occur within areas of diverse habitats, or scenic areas. The diversity of habitats will be retained during enhancement activities in order to protect other species. The quality of the foreground scenery near or along roads, including old growth trees, shall be maintained during habitat enhancement or timber harvesting efforts.
- In-stream flow (termed Water Reservations in this plan) requirements apply within the HPMP area. Authorizations issued by DNR are to ensure that water quality and quantity are maintained sufficient to protect human, fish, and wildlife resources and uses within the planning region. Although not generally expected within the planning area, proposals for major new developments that will negatively impact in-stream flow needed to protect fish, sustain water quality, or recreation shall include an evaluation of the need for an in-stream flow reservation or other forms of in-stream flow protection.
- Wildlife viewing opportunities, particularly for special features such as dead trees, beaver ponds, waterways, and wildlife concentration areas shall be preserved wherever possible.

## **Management Recommendations**

- **Habitat Enhancement.** Habitat enhancement activities for fish and wildlife species may occur within the planning area when biological and/or population statistics indicate that improvements in survival, reproduction, and/or population numbers can be or need to be increased, as determined by ADF&G.

**Map 2-1: Caribou Habitat**

**Map 2-2: Moose Habitat**

## RECREATION

### Background

Recreation has been the main use within the Hatcher Pass planning area for at least the last 30 years. The importance of recreation activity within the Hatcher Pass planning area has always been significant, and has been increasing rapidly over the last 10 years. Winter recreational use and visitation on the east side of the planning area has more than doubled (See Table 2-2 below). This importance reflects the intrinsic value of this area for summer and winter recreation, the large and early snowfalls that occur there, relatively easy access, facilities to accommodate recreational users, and the presence of a large population base, which includes residents of Anchorage as well as the Matanuska-Susitna Valley (Valley). Recreation use is expected to grow significantly in the future, reflecting the growth of the population base generally as well as the presence of the other factors mentioned previously. Based on the results of public meetings and focus group meetings held throughout 2009 and agency observations, regular patterns of seasonal recreational use of all kinds occur. Most of this use is carried out in specific areas and only some of these use patterns generate user conflicts.

Significant recreational use occurs in both winter and summer. Non-motorized use occurs on a year-round basis throughout the main parts of the Independence, Reed Lakes/Little Susitna, Government Peak, and Archangel management units. The western part of the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit is also used during the summer months. Motorized use during the winter occurs throughout the planning area, including areas that are now closed to such use under regulation, particularly the Reed Lakes / Little Susitna unit. Winter motorized use patterns are particularly heavy in the Willow Mountain and Craigie Creek units and within a motorized corridor along the Hatcher Pass Road. General recreation patterns are depicted on Map 2-1.

Winter use is of two types: motorized (snowmachine) and non-motorized, which includes cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snow boarding, snowshoeing, and sledding. Non-motorized activity tends to occur within areas relatively close to the road system and within the areas designated (2010) for non-motorized uses in regulation such as the Reed Lakes / Little Susitna Unit, Archangel, Independence, and Government Peak. Winter motorized use occurs virtually throughout the entirety of the planning area, reflecting the power and capability of the new snowmachines, except for certain areas that are remote and are technically difficult to access.

Summer motorized use occurs primarily on the West Side of the planning area and includes both Off-Road and On-Road vehicles including ATV's and 4 X 4 trucks. There is also use by road vehicles and ORVs on the Archangel Road, which is intended for backcountry access. Limited motorized use occurs illegally during the summer in a non-motorized area established in regulation as the Bald Mountain Habitat Area.

Non-motorized activity is more varied and includes hiking, photography, paragliding, rock and mountain climbing, bicycling, and kayaking/canoeing. Summer non-motorized uses also tend to occur in areas that are closer to the road system. These activities also occur in the areas that have related geologic features such as mountain and rock climbing in the High Glacier Peaks unit. The east side management units have terrain for trails suitable for hiking and bicycling, especially the Independence, Archangel, and Reed Lakes / Little Susitna units. The eastern and central management units are suitable for paragliding. A popular area is near the Summit Lake Recreation Site.

Map 2-4 depicts areas identified by the public as having a higher level of joint use; these areas also largely coincide with the areas identified as having ‘overlapping concerns.’ Areas of ‘overlapping concern’ were identified by both motorized and non-motorized users and represent their perception of actual or perceived conflict. During the winter these areas of ‘overlapping concerns’ occur throughout the more accessible parts of the East Side and are especially great within the corridors that are used by both motorized and non-motorized users. There is little to no conflict in the areas identified as ‘shared use areas’ on this map, which includes the majority of the planning area. The area of conflict is generally similar during the summer, occurring in the same locations except for the addition of the western parts of the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit.

**Table 2-2: Department of Parks and Outdoor Recreation Analysis of Recreational Visitation to the East Side of the Planning Area<sup>12</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b><u>Winter</u></b>	<b><u>Summer</u></b>
2009	109,298	143,701
2008	94,694	134,401
2007	76,587	135,996
2006	99,355	69,907
2005	77,040	98,840
2004	56,558	137,736
2003	24,087	151,586
2002	41,181	155,473
2001	55,189	126,106
2000	47,364	124,748
1999	46,727	107,302

<sup>12</sup> The DPOR Hatcher Pass East Management Area includes the area up to and including the Summit Lake State Recreation Site from approximately Mile 8 on the Palmer-Fishhook/Hatcher Pass Road.

**Map 2-3: Recreational Use Patterns (Reported 2009)**

## Goals

- Continue to provide a broad spectrum of dispersed motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, including developed facilities at select sites along the road system.
- Where appropriate, separate motorized/non-motorized uses in the East Side.
- Provide facilities at select locations to support recreational activities, especially in high-use areas and areas where problems of public safety exist or can be expected to occur.
- Maintain the high scenic values and cultural resources of the planning area.
- Improve public safety and reduce conflicts in use.
- Designate routes or areas for specific types of uses, including use corridors that provide access to areas of attraction but where motorized/non-motorized uses are separated.

## Management Intent

The planning area will be managed with recreation as the primary use. Throughout this area, dispersed recreational uses such as hunting, skiing, hiking, trapping, fishing, and snowmachining will be the main management emphasis. Only those uses that are identified as allowed or conditionally allowed uses in Table 2-1 are to be authorized in this area, and nearly all uses involving the conversion of state land to another use are to be prohibited. Exceptions to this policy are mining (where open to mineral entry), materials extraction in certain areas, public facilities, commercial recreation, and commercial or related uses on borough land in the Government Peak management unit authorized through borough planning processes. It is intended that large portions of the planning area will remain in an undeveloped state and managed as undeveloped open space, and that concentrated, developed recreational uses and facilities only occur on borough land within the Government Peak management unit and only if such uses are authorized in a land use plan adopted by the borough.

Improvements related to dispersed recreation use and upgrade of the Hatcher Pass Road in the remainder of the planning area is recognized as appropriate. Such facilities may include parking areas, road pull-outs, sanitary facilities, and other types of facilities related to dispersed recreation or public safety.

The planning area will be managed to provide designated non-motorized areas. Changes to the regulations constraining motorized uses are proposed. The current regulations are to be changed to improve public safety, to expedite and recognize current motorized movement corridors, and to improve management and administration of the planning area, particularly in the East Side. These changes are explained more fully in the section that follows on

management recommendations and for the individual management units in Chapter 3. Map 2-5 is the 'Adopted Plan Map'. It depicts topography, land status (current to November 2010) and the non-motorized boundaries recommended for inclusion in the revised regulations. Consult individual management units and Appendix D for more detail. For comparison, the current regulatory closures are depicted in Map 1-5.

A specific component of management intent concerns motorized uses. The general intent is for the East Side to be managed for mixed motorized and non-motorized uses, with emphasis placed on the management of the area for non-motorized uses. The West Side is intended to be primarily managed for motorized uses, although non-motorized uses are also appropriate and may constitute an aspect of the management focus for specific areas.

Different policies apply to summer and winter periods.

- Summer: Motorized use is authorized on the West Side, except for the area of important bird habitat situated in the western portion of the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit and within the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area. Non-motorized uses are allowed but the management focus, in terms of recreation, is on the management of state land for motorized uses. Motorized use in the East Side will be designated on those roads and trails able to accommodate such use, where facilities to support motorized use exist, and where this use is designated on plan maps or text<sup>13</sup>.
- Winter: Motorized uses are authorized throughout the planning area except for specific areas designated for year-round non-motorized use in the East Side.
- Specific recommendations are included for each of the management units in Chapter 3 and are more fully explained in the recommended changes to regulation.

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<sup>13</sup> Generally, motorized use on the East Side is only authorized on state or borough roads and highways and within developed parking areas.

**Map 2-4: Overlapping Use Concern Areas**

**Map 2-5: Adopted Plan Map**

## Management Guidelines

- The following guidelines apply to the location of facilities (which are to be related to dispersed recreation needs on state land<sup>14</sup>):
  - Picnic and campsites are to be located off the road system and in areas not visible from the road. A spur road from the Hatcher Pass Road with suitable signage is recommended.
  - Parking areas are to be developed and expanded where appropriate to support dispersed recreation needs. General parking demand may also be included if public use of the parking areas is expected to be high.
  - Utilities shall be placed underground. If that is not practical at specific locations or an overhead location is necessary by virtue of the type of facility, the types of poles and structures are to be selected to minimize visual disturbance and the utility is to be screened from view of users to the Hatcher Pass area.
  - Trails intended for pedestrian movement are to be developed according to the Sustainable Trail standards (2009)<sup>15</sup>. They are to avoid wetlands and other sensitive features.
- Tourism activities are considered an important part of the recreational experience that the Hatcher Pass management area provides. This management plan supports the use of the Hatcher Pass management area for tourism purposes, consistent with the availability of infrastructure.
- The following guidelines pertain to public safety:
  - The discharge of firearms is prohibited in administratively designated sites and campgrounds, picnic areas, developed trailheads, adjacent to developed trails and roads, and designated public use areas or facilities consistent with 11 AAC 20.770.
  - Permanent structures involving the use of a foundation are not to be sited within (high) avalanche prone areas or floodways/floodplains.
  - Winter trails identified by DNR should avoid high avalanche prone areas or floodways unless no feasible alternative exists.
  - ORV use is prohibited on maintained public roads, consistent with 13 AAC 02.455.

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<sup>14</sup> These recommendations do not affect the area of borough owned land that is the subject of ski development and is the subject of a current borough planning process. It is intended that the kind and design of facilities within this area derive from this planning process. All such facilities shall conform to the borough land use plan.

<sup>15</sup> Standards adopted (2009) by DPOR for the development and maintenance of trails and similar facilities.

## Management Recommendations

- Addition to Hatcher Pass PUA. Add the Reed Lakes corridor and the Mile 16 management unit to the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area (PUA). The Reed Lakes area is included in the Special Use Designation (ADL 223585) that regulates uses in the Hatcher Pass area, and this area is appropriate for inclusion in the PUA because of its uniqueness and public values. This area was recommended to be added to the PUA in the 1989 Plan and its addition continues to receive public support. It is also appropriate to add the Mile 16 area to the PUA since it contains many of the features that are common to the Public Use Area. The management objectives of the Hatcher Pass PUA and these areas are essentially the same.
- Uniform Sign System. Establish a uniform sign system which is compatible with and is complementary to the character of the area. DPOR is the lead agency.
- Recreational Mining conducted as a business. Recreational Mining (business) is recognized as an appropriate use within the principal placer streams within the management area, including Craigie Creek and Little Susitna. All such uses shall adhere to the requirements for such uses issued by DMLW. In general, these standards are related to the size of the activity. Day use activity that do not require facilities are considered a Generally Allowed Use. Uses using camps or structures require a commercial recreation permit, a land use permit, or a negotiated (short-term) lease.
- Revise Regulations designating Non-Motorized Areas. Revise the current (2002) regulation that designates non-motorized areas under 11 AAC 96.012(b)(3). These changes conform to the management intent for motorized and non-motorized uses described previously and that are indicated as ‘plan recommendation’ in affected management units, which includes Independence, Government Peak, High Glacier Peaks<sup>16</sup>, Archangel, Mile 16, and Reed Lakes/Little Susitna. Change to the text of the current regulations is to be limited to reflect the areas that are recommended for closure in this plan. These changes are included in the draft regulations in Appendix D, and Map 2-5 (the Adopted Plan Map) identifies the spatial boundary of these revisions. In instances where there is uncertainty in boundary location, the more detailed management unit maps are to prevail.<sup>17</sup>
- Public Safety. Public safety was a major concern raised by the public and it is the primary reason additional areas have been closed to winter recreational motorized use in the planning area. The non-motorized areas recommended in this plan are intended to increase public safety, reduce user conflict, and to facilitate enforcement efforts. The non-motorized areas have been modified to include areas that are popularly used by non-motorized users, which are close to the road system and parking facilities,

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<sup>16</sup> The High Glacier Peaks unit is not currently closed to motorized use by regulation; amendment of the current regulations will be necessary to effectuate closure (summer only). The draft regulations include the closure of the High Glacier Peaks unit during the summer period to motorized use.

<sup>17</sup> See also footnote 9.

including a section of the Archangel Road. The boundaries have been modified to follow recognizable topographical features where possible. The proximity of many of these areas to the road system should allow for easier on the ground recognition by all recreational users and for park rangers when they are patrolling the area. These areas are reflected on Map 2-5. Information related to the closures in each management unit is included in Chapter 3.

- Hatcher Pass Road. Design and develop the Hatcher Pass Road to be complementary to the recommendations of this plan. In general, the upgrade of this road on the West Side shall follow the recommendations for its reconstruction developed by DPOR in documents dated September 19, 2002 (or successor plans to this document). It is intended that these recommendations be viewed as advisory, with DPOR having the authority to deviate from these recommendations in final road project design. ADF&G should be consulted to ensure there will not be habitat damage or disturbances. The general intent of developing western portion of this road with necessary pull-outs and safety features is to be maintained, however.
- Viewshed Management.<sup>18</sup> The maintenance of the views of adjacent areas from the Hatcher Pass Road is to be considered in an authorization issued by DNR<sup>19</sup>. Structures or activities that significantly degrade the viewshed visible from this road are considered generally inappropriate, although they may be made compatible through the use of stipulations that significantly reduce their visual impact.<sup>20</sup> Exceptions to this policy are intended to be few and only appropriate when DNR determines that there is no other alternative location for a proposed structure and if mitigation measures are imposed to reduce the visual presence of the use<sup>21</sup>. In these instances the plan recognizes that a use may produce an impact but may still be appropriate; the management objective in these situations is to focus on the minimization of impact to visual resources, which may require the use of stipulations to achieve this objective. The siting standards for structures and utilities given for subsurface uses should be used as stipulations, although other requirements may also be considered in the authorization. This policy applies to all allowed and conditionally allowed uses.
- Facilities. Provide those facilities that are identified for specific management units in Chapter 3. These include trail development and rerouting, trail upgrading, the development or expansion of sanitary and parking facilities, road pull-outs, and

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<sup>18</sup> This standard does not apply to current existing facilities or to historic uses of an area that are being renovated or improved at the same site or area that they currently occupy.

<sup>19</sup> Viewshed management requirements for mining operations follow the standards for 'Scenic Resources'.

<sup>20</sup> Material sites are conditional use on the West Side and may be approved if the authorization determines that visual impacts have been minimized to the extent practicable, the use is consistent with the management intent of the unit it occurs within, and the placement of the facility is in the overall best interest of the state.

<sup>21</sup> The plan recognizes that this objective may not be practical to achieve where existing or historic structures are involved. In these instances, the minimization of impact to visual resources is to be used as the management objective.

picnic/day use areas. No additional campgrounds are recommended. A listing of proposed facilities, by management unit and along the Hatcher Pass Road, is contained in Table 4-4, 'Facility Recommendations on State Land'.

- **Recreational Motorized Corridors.** Additional recreational motorized corridors are not recommended on the east side of the planning area during summer months. Winter recreational use corridors may only be authorized on state owned land that is not closed through regulation and in locations that will not significantly interfere with other forms of recreation. (See 11 AAC 96.014.) Recreational motorized corridors on land owned by the Mat-Su Borough require the permission of the borough. No recreational motorized corridors are permitted in the Government Peak Unit per 2010 regulation and through the recommendations of Mat-Su Borough Assembly Resolution 10-036.

Funding for a winter recreational motorized corridor within the Reed Lakes / Little Susitna management unit was provided to the Department of Parks and Outdoor Recreation in 2010 to facilitate transportation to the Good Hope Creek Valley.

The existing east-west winter recreational motorized corridor should be improved and enlarged to accommodate increased public use. Additional parking facilities along the Hatcher Pass Road will serve to accommodate recreational user needs and provide multiple access points to the existing east-west motorized corridor and facilitate transportation of motorized users across the planning area. Existing parking areas should be expanded to accommodate increased visitation and public need. A listing of those proposed facilities is contained in Table 4-4, 'Facility Recommendations on State Land'.

If the needs of motorized recreational users for additional access to the east-west corridor are not be met through the development and expansion of parking facilities, DMLW may consider authorizing a winter motorized corridor along the Fishhook Creek on state owned land within the Government Peak management unit.

- **Public Use Cabins.** Public use cabins (PUC) may be developed within the planning area to provide the public with recreational opportunities in the Hatcher Pass area. All such cabins are to be treated as conditional uses and are subject to authorization by SCRO, DMLW. Cabins should be constructed by state or non-profit agencies only, consistent with current SCRO, DMLW permitting process, and are to be insured for liability. PUCs should be located away from the road system, screened by trees or contour features, and located in visually unobtrusive areas. PUCs should not be located in moose concentration areas, within 200' of streams, in avalanche areas, or in intensive use areas. The exact location of the PUCs is to be determined following a more detailed site analysis.

## **PUBLIC ACCESS, TRANSPORTATION, AND UTILITIES**

### **Background**

The primary access to and within the Hatcher Pass planning area is provided by the Hatcher Pass Road, which is a combined east-west route that includes Palmer-Fishhook and Willow-Fishhook Roads. This road has recently been upgraded in the East Side by ADOT/PF and a variety of related improvements, such as parking areas, have also been made to support recreational use and the parking requirements of recreational users. The road west of the Independence Mine complex is in poor condition and needs improvements to bring it to an adequate level of service. The Hatcher Pass Road is currently impassible to large vehicles between MP 19 – 21.

Off-road transportation occurs throughout the planning area and mostly involves ATV use in the summer and snow-machine use during the winter. For a more complete description of use levels and patterns, see the background part of the Recreation section of this Chapter.

### **Goals**

- Develop a safe and scenic Hatcher Pass Road that can accommodate vehicles in common use by the tourism industry and includes facilities supportive of scenic viewing, public safety, and recreation access.
- Provide new or improved trail access to accommodate recreation use at the more intensely used locations.
- Ensure public access to the Hatcher Pass planning area, consistent with the constitutional intent of providing the broadest possible access to and use of the state's natural resources.
- Provide adequate public access to areas of motorized and non-motorized use.

### **Management Intent**

- Hatcher Pass Road: Develop Hatcher Pass road to accommodate vehicles in common use on state roads as well as vehicles in common use by the tourist industry. Develop this road to be supportive of recreational activities, including scenic viewing, public safety, and recreational access.
- Off Road Access: Manage off-road vehicle use consistent with the general intent of providing maximum access to state resources consistent with the need to ensure public safety and avoid or minimize natural resource degradation.

## Management Guidelines

### Hatcher Pass Road

- The Hatcher Pass Road should be upgraded according to AASHTO<sup>22</sup> standards for recreation and resource development roads. Provision is to be made for scenic viewing, recreation access, and public safety.
- Road signage should be consistent throughout the planning area with an emphasis on recreation. Entrance and Exit signs should be replaced due to extensive damage from vandalism to the existing structures.

### Off Road Vehicle Use (General)

- DMLW and DPOR management of off-road vehicle use is to be consistent with the stipulations of AS 38.04.200 (Traditional Means of Access), 11 AAC 96.020 (Generally Allowed Uses of state land), and 11 AAC 96.014. The use of 11 AAC 12 (General Park authority) is to be limited to those areas managed by the DPOR under the management agreement with DMLW and should only be applied to manage for recreation, public safety, and natural resource degradation. These authorities are not to be used to close state land to motorized uses except with the permission of DMLW. DPOR, in its management of the Hatcher Pass area (East Side) is to be consistent with the requirements of the 2010 Plan.
- DMLW and DPOR management of recreational vehicles is to be consistent with the requirements of this plan.

### Off Road Vehicle Use (Summer)

- ORV use during the *summer* is not permitted except as may be authorized by DNR for uses specified in 11 AAC 96.014.
- ORV use during the summer can occur throughout the West Side except for the areas which are closed to motorized use during the summer. Those areas include the Summit Lake Recreation Site, the Bald Mountain Habitat Area within the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit, and the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Unit within the Willow Mountain Management Unit, except for on designated routes.
- ORV use closures within areas of the West Side may/can occur in addition to those identified in the proposed regulations (see above) for the following purposes, which are to guide decisions on closure: 1) minimize the harassment of wildlife or disruptions to wildlife habitats, based on ADF&G recommendations; 2) minimize damage to soils, vegetation, or other natural, cultural, or historic resources; or 3) minimize conflicts between ORV use and other users for purposes of public safety.

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<sup>22</sup> American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Off Road Vehicle Use (Winter)

- ORV use (snowmachine) can occur throughout the West Side during the winter, subject to adequate snow cover to protect the underlying vegetation.
- ORV use (snowmachine) on the East Side is open to such use during the *winter* except for those areas closed to such use by regulation, subject to adequate snow cover to protect the underlying vegetation. Areas to be closed to snowmachine use under the revised regulations of this plan are depicted in Map 2-3. There are currently 18,683 acres of land with year-round recreational motorized use restrictions. The recommendation for land with year-round recreational motorized use restrictions in this plan is 18,418 acres, or a decrease of 265 acres compared to current restrictions. This amount is less than 1% of the overall acreage in the planning area.
- Snowmachine closures within areas of the East Side management units, including the High Glacier Peaks unit, may/can occur in addition to those identified in the proposed regulations (see above) for the following purposes, which are to guide decisions on closure: 1) minimize the harassment of wildlife or disruptions to wildlife habitats, based on ADF&G recommendations; 2) minimize damage to soils, vegetation, or other natural, cultural, or historic resources; or 3) minimize conflicts between ORV use and other users for purposes of public safety.

Utility Lines, Communication, and Related Facilities

- Power transmission lines should be situated to minimize or preclude visual impacts, especially as viewed from the Hatcher Pass Road. Power transmission lines (>115KV) shall be situated and designed to minimize or reduce the visual disturbance produced by such facilities. This is particularly important for transmission facilities that may be viewed from the Hatcher Pass Road. If it is determined in the DNR authorization that such facilities cannot be located to minimize or reduce visual impacts in a significant way and must be located in view of this road, screening of the more visible locations may be required and the types of poles and structures should be selected to minimize visual disturbance. Utilities may only be located within view of this road if a DMLW written determination finds that no feasible alternative exists and that it is in the best interest of the state to locate such lines adjacent to or within the view of this road.
- Repeater and other forms of communication sites are conditionally allowed use on the higher peaks but must be situated to avoid being seen from the Hatcher Pass Road. If the latter is not feasible and some amount of visibility cannot be avoided, they should be sited and designed so that they do not stand out as a prominent skyline feature as viewed from the road and so that they blend with the ridge. Sites are to be grouped together to the extent possible. Access routes to these sites are prohibited. Repeaters and other forms of communication sites should not be located in the Bald Mountain habitat area. Consult with the borough prior to issuing authorizations for communication sites.

- Wind generation facilities are conditionally allowed use on the higher peaks but must meet the same requirements as described above. Wind generation facilities should not be located in the Bald Mountain habitat area.
- Hydroelectric generation facilities are conditionally allowed and require authorization from SCRO, DMLW. Such structures shall be consistent with all applicable state and federal standards and shall be sited so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road. If the latter is not feasible and some amount of visibility cannot be avoided, they should be sited and designed to blend in with the natural environment and terrain so that they do not stand out as a prominent skyline feature as viewed from this road.

## Trails

### Trail Development and Maintenance

- Trails shall be developed consistent with DPOR standards for sustainable trails on state land and to the standards of the Borough Recreational Trail Plan on borough land.
- A Trail Development Plan is recommended. DPOR should be the lead agency on the development of such a plan.
- Signs are to be located at trailheads noticing the trail and providing essential information.
- Parking lots shall be provided for major trailheads where significant public use has occurred or is likely to occur.
- Areas adjacent to trails shall remain undisturbed on 100' each side of a trail unless the area of disturbance is related to trail development or enhancement.
- Specific trail development, summer and winter, is appropriate in order to accommodate current existing uses, enable access to more remote areas or attractive features, and to divert movement to more desirable locations, or for purposes of public safety. Specific trail recommendations, summer and winter, are described in the specific management units that they occur.

### Winter Trails

- Nordic Ski Trails have historically been developed by and maintained by volunteer groups and should continue to be developed by them.
- Nordic Ski Trails may be developed and managed by DPOR through trail grant programs similar to state grant funding that is allocated for snowmachine trail and corridor development.
- Nordic ski trails should only be developed in non-motorized areas to avoid conflict with snowmachine use.

- Snowmachine corridor and trail development has been funded through a combination of snowmachine registration fees state funding mechanisms that are managed by DPOR. These funding mechanisms include the SnowTRAC Grooming Pool (Snowmobile Trail Grant Program Grooming Pool) and ORTAB (Outdoor Recreation Trail Advisory Board). These funding mechanisms should still be used for future trail development.
- Snowmachine corridors on the East Side of the planning area that were developed by DPOR should continue to be managed by DPOR.

#### General Public Access

- Before leasing or otherwise disposing of state land, DNR will reserve public use easements pursuant to the requirements of 11 AAC 51.015.<sup>23</sup>
- Access to state lands may be curtailed at any time to protect public safety, provide for the remediation of public use areas, allow special uses, or prevent harm to fish and wildlife habitat.
- Temporary roads will be routed to avoid wetlands, streams, and shall minimize disturbance to natural drainage patterns, and long-term effects on water quantity and quality.
- RS 2477 routes are to be retained by the state and managed to allow for use by a broad range of vehicles, although certain size restrictions exist. Vehicle size restrictions can be found under the regulation for ‘Generally Allowed Uses’, 11 AAC 96.020. Motorized use highway vehicles up to 10,000 pounds and all-terrain vehicles up to 1,500 pounds.

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<sup>23</sup> Although the plan stipulates that state land is to be retained as a general intent, there may be instances where state land may need to be used for purposes of access, mandating an public access easement.

## HERITAGE RESOURCES

### Background

Historical resources in the Hatcher Pass area relate to placer and lode gold mining activities between 1897 and the 1940s in the Willow Creek Mining District, which extended from Archangel Valley on the east to Grubstake Gulch on the west. It is estimated that mines in the district produced over 400,000 ounces of gold; and over 10,000 ounces of the gold was from placer mining. Although few formal mining operations are active today, recreational gold-panning in the area is popular.

The early placer miners worked in Grubstake Gulch before heading north and east seeking the source of the gold, which proved to be at the headwaters of Willow Creek and the Little Susitna River. In 1906, quartz lode deposits were discovered, and placer mining decreased in the area. There was renewed placer mining for a brief period in the 1930s, and in the 1960s William Mrak started placer mining and did so successfully for about 25 years.

The lode gold discovery is credited to Robert Hatcher in 1906. His discovery was in the area now known as Hatcher Pass, on the high ridges between Craigie, Upper Willow, and Fishhook Creeks. Other lode discoveries were made between 1907 and 1918. By 1914 three mines operated. After the Alaska Railroad was completed shortly after World War I, the Willow Creek Road was built, which allowed heavier mining equipment to be brought into the area. Gold production peaked in the 1930s. During World War II the federal government ordered nonessential mines to close. Operations never fully recovered. Independence Mine closed in 1951. The Gold Cord mine operated on a limited basis until the 1960s. In the 1970s, Dan Renshaw and Starkey Wilson acquired mineral rights to many claims in the Upper Willow, Craigie, and Fishhook Creek areas, joined with Enserch to explore for additional reserves, constructed a new mill, and started mining in 1983 in the Independence Valley.

The Independence Mine State Historical Park preserves the most evidence of mining in the area. Since its creation in 1986, it has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in south-central Alaska. The historic buildings, trails, tunnel openings, and cable lines have great public appeal. Interpretive signs, maps, and guides help tell the story of the Independence Mine and history of mining in the Hatcher Pass area. The Independence Mine was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. In the late 1970s, 271 acres of land were donated to the State of Alaska for the historical park by Starkey Wilson. The 1986 Hatcher Pass Management Plan recommended 530 acres be added to it. The area is designated a special use area under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3). No formal management plan for the park has been adopted. This plan recommends one be written.

Other historic mines in the area, such as the Lucky Shot and Thorpe, have not been restored. There are remnants of Kellyville, the boomtown where area miners once lived. Many of the wooden structures associated with these places have collapsed.

Multiple historic roads exist throughout the Hatcher Pass planning area. Four are identified as RS 2477 historic mining roads recognized by the Alaska Legislature: RST 1721 (Kashwitna River Trail), RST 1620 (Willow to Talkeetna River Trail), RST 1715 (Bartolf Creek Trail), and RST 1710 (Wet Gulch Trail). They are in the Kashwitna River Drainage, Willow Mountain, High Glacier Peaks, and Bald Mountain/Hillside Management Units respectively.

There is substantial interest in the Carle Wagon Road that connected the Knik-Goosebay settlement and Independence Mine. The Alaska Road Commission built the Knik-Willow Road in 1911 incorporating sections of the Carle Wagon Road. Over the next several decades the Alaska Road Commission built other roads, including the Archangel Road Extension, Fishhook Extension, Wasilla-Fishhook Creek, and Willow-Fishhook Creek roads.

## **Goals**

- Develop a formal management plan for the Independence Mine State Historical Park.
- Maintain the historic mining character of the area.
- Protect historic structures and areas associated with past lode mining activity.

## **Management Intent**

Although limited commercial development (as well as other forms of development) is recommended in this plan, some may occur. Such development is to avoid cultural sites. If avoidance is impractical, precautions need to be taken to mitigate potential adverse effects on cultural sites.

## **Management Guidelines**

Broadly, this plan assumes that the extensive requirements under 11 AAC 96, 11 AAC 16, and 11 AAC 17, will be sufficient to manage aspects related to cultural and historical resources in the planning area.

## *Chapter 2: Heritage Resources*

Detailed stipulations, pertaining to the protection of cultural resources have been outlined in the Subsurface Resources section of this chapter. These stipulations are also intended to apply to all types of development or use that may adversely impact cultural and historical sites. The Independence Mine State Historical Park is afforded with added protection by the federal government under the National Historic Preservation Act, as it is recognized in the National Register of Historic Places.

## WATER RESERVATIONS

### Goal

**Water reservations.** Maintain water quantity and quality sufficient to protect the overall ecosystem integrity as well as the human, fish, and wildlife resources and uses of the region.

### Background

There are two water reservations within the planning area; one affects the Little Susitna River and the other, Willow Creek. While water reservations are a tool to be used in protecting water quantity, they do not by themselves ensure that the overall quantity and quality of water within the planning area will be protected. This plan attempts to ensure water quantity and water quality within this area by land use designation and guidelines.

As indicated in the section, ‘Uses Requiring Authorization’, there are very few uses that are to be permitted within the planning area. Outside of the Government Peak unit, in which intensive development is anticipated for a portion of the unit, the only uses that are to be permitted are related to utilities, materials extraction, and some public facilities associated with recreation. These types of uses typically do not require large quantities of water nor generate large effluent flows. The areas that are important to water supply are associated with the Bald Mountain and Reed Lakes/Little Susitna units. Within these units, there are to be no disposals of land and permitted uses are related to recreation and habitat protection.

### Management Guidelines

**A. Stream Uses to Consider for Reservations of Water.** Streams, lakes, and other water bodies may be considered for reservations of water under AS 46.15.145. Such reservations are intended to maintain a specified water flow or level of water at a specified point on a stream or body of water, or a specified part of a stream, throughout the year for specified times. The purposes of the reservation, defined in statute, include: 1) protection of fish and wildlife habitat, migration, and propagation; 2) recreation and park purposes; 3) sanitary and water quality purposes; and 4) navigation and transportation purposes.

**B. Priorities.** A limited number of rivers have reservations of water applications filed on a portion of their systems; mainly in the vicinity of a stream gage (see [http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mapguide/wr\\_intro.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mapguide/wr_intro.htm)). Both the Little Susitna and Willow Creek have Instream flow reservations. Proposals for new developments requiring substantial water use or uses of water or that have the potential to negatively impact water flows needed to produce fish, sustain water quality, provide for navigation, and/or recreation,

may include an evaluation of the need for a reservation of water or other forms of Instream flow protection.

**C. Process for Determining Reservations.** Applications for water reservations are submitted to the Department for adjudication following the procedures identified in 11 AAC 93.141-147. In general, these procedures estimate the quantity of water seasonally available and review the amount of water already appropriated in consideration of the requested water reservation or levels of water for the purposes to be protected.

**D. Other Guidelines Affecting Water Reservations.** Several other guidelines may affect water reservations. See other sections of this chapter.