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Chapter 3: Areawide and Management Unit Requirements

Scope of Chapter 3

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first describes aspects of the 2010 Management Plan relating to generally allowed uses, authorized uses, and aspects of the plan related to its function as an area plan. The second part, and the more detailed of the two, contains specific recommendations for each of the ten management regions within the planning area. Also included is a description of those areas that are controlled by specific administrative and legislative requirements.

This chapter primarily focuses on the overall management intent for specific management units and those management guidelines and recommendations necessary to fulfill this intent. The policies and requirements that follow focus on those principal natural resources and uses (or activities) that require specific management direction within a management unit. Uses that could occur within a management unit but are not considered appropriate are identified at the beginning of each management unit and in Table 2-1.

Map 3-1 depicts the management units and the external boundary of the Management Plan. Detailed maps are also provided for each Management unit, and should be consulted for DNR adjudicatory actions. Satellite imagery is also available on-line at Alaska Mapper¹ and should be consulted.

The boundaries of the units as well as the external boundary of the planning area are substantially different than those used in the 1986 Management Plan and the 1989 Plan Amendment. The external boundaries have been changed to reflect changes in land ownership and a shift in patterns of recreational use. Management region boundaries were changed to better reflect the types of uses that are likely to occur within a given management unit and to facilitate DPOR and DMLW management decisions on an operational level.

Central Management Orientation: Public Recreation Focus

Over the past 30 years recreational use of the Hatcher Pass area has increased significantly and most people perceive this area as an important recreational site within Southcentral Alaska. During the public meetings that preceded plan development, essentially all of the

¹ <http://mapper.landrecords.info/>

public that participated in these meetings wanted this area to continue to be managed for this purpose. This recreation focus, evident in the 1986 Management Plan, is continued in this revision.

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.

This focus in land management is central to an understanding of the recommendations that follow in this chapter and, in fact, to the entirety of the 2010 Management Plan. This management focus is reflected in the planning objectives described in the remainder of this chapter and in the land and resource management strategies for individual management units in Chapter 3.

It is intended that this management orientation be reflected in the types of uses considered appropriate or inappropriate within specific management units and in the management intent and management guidelines that are stipulated for each use. 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 within the planning area on state land are prohibited in the 2010 Management Plan: grazing, agriculture, material extraction for non-public purposes, settlement (including remote settlement), and commercial timber harvest. Except for settlement within the Government Peak management unit, these uses are also prohibited on borough land. This chapter, accordingly, does not deal with these uses or land use patterns.

Uses Requiring Authorization and GAUs

Uses Requiring Authorization

Table 2-1 indicates those uses that are appropriate, inappropriate, or potentially appropriate on an areawide basis that require authorization by DNR. *This table applies to each management unit* unless otherwise indicated in the use table for the specific unit. Additional restrictions specific to the management unit may also apply; if this occurs, it is noted in the section termed 'Authorized Uses' in the management unit description.

Generally Allowed Uses

The requirements for uses that are described in this plan *do not affect the uses that are considered 'generally allowed uses'* on state land under 11 AAC 96.020 *unless specifically specified in regulation*. With the exception of motorized (winter, summer, or winter and summer) uses in certain management units, all generally allowed uses authorized under

11 AAC 96 are allowed *throughout* the management area. If motorized uses are prohibited or their operations limited in some fashion in particular management units, this is noted in the listing of allowed uses for the affected management unit.

Note: The closures recommended in this plan are generally similar to those under the 1986 Plan (and subsequent regulations) in that year round closure restrictions continue in the Independence unit and portions of the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna unit and summer closures continue in the Bald Mountain Ridge Habitat Area and the Summit Lake State Recreation Site. The 2010 Plan, however, provides additional year round closures in portions of the Archangel and the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna unit and provides for summer closures throughout the Archangel and High Glacier Peak units. It also differs in that the Reed Creek valley, generally between Government Creek and the Gold Mint parking lot, is open to winter motorized use. This area continues to remain closed during the summer period. Approximately 18,418 acres of land contain year-round recreational motorized use restrictions as a result of the 2010 plan. This is a decrease of approximately 265 acres from the 1986 plan.

Table 3-1: Listing of Areas with Motorized Use RESTRICTIONS by Management Unit²

All Other Generally Allowed Uses Are Not Affected (See 11 AAC 96.020 <http://www.legis.state.ak.us>)

Management Unit	Restricted Area	Authority	Time of Restriction	Restricted Vehicle	Stipulations
Kashwitna River Drainage Unit	None	None	None	None	None
Willow Mountain Unit <i>See Map 3-3</i>	Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area <i>Remainder of Unit is Open</i>	AS 16.20.620	Summer ³ April 1 st – November 1 st	ORV's ⁴	ORV use is allowed on ADF&G Designated Trails within the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area during summer months. See AS 16.20.620.
High Glacier Peaks Unit <i>See Map 3-4</i>	<i>Unit is Closed During Summer</i>	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) AS 38.04.200	Summer May 1 st – October 1 st	ORV's	ORV use is not allowed within this unit during summer months. Motorized use allowed by permit for access to mining claims.
Craigie Creek Unit <i>See Map 3-5</i>	Summit Lake Recreation Site <i>Remainder of Unit is Open</i>	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) 11 AAC 12 ADL 223584 ADL 223585	Summer May 1 st – October 1 st	ORV's	Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585.
Bald Mountain / Hillside Unit <i>See Map 3-6</i>	Summit Lake Recreation Site Bald Mountain Habitat Area <i>Remainder of Unit is Open</i>	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) 11 AAC 12 ADL 223584 ADL 223585 11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) ADL 223585	Summer May 1 st – October 1 st Summer May 1 st – August 1 st	ORV's ORV's	Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585.

² As recommended in the 2010 Hatcher Pass Public Review Draft. Note: this table only identifies restrictions to motorized use; unless specified, motorized use is allowed if it is consistent with 11 AAC 96.020.

³ Months of all summer motorized use restrictions may be extended if there is insufficient snow cover to accommodate snowmachine use.

⁴ ORV: Any motor vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other natural terrain.

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Management Unit	Restricted Area	Authority	Time of Restriction	Restricted Vehicle	Stipulations
Independence Unit <i>See Map 3-7</i>	Independence Mine State Historic Park <i>Remainder of Unit is Closed</i>	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) 11 AAC 12 ADL 223585 11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) 11 AAC 12 ADL 223585	Year-Round	ORV's	Motorized recreation is not permitted within the Independence Mine State Historic Park at any time of year. Snow machines are permitted to travel along the Hatcher Pass Road Corridor during winter months. Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585.
Archangel Management Unit <i>See Map 3-8</i>	Marmot Mountain <i>Unit is Closed During Summer</i>	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) AS 38.04.200 ADL 223585 11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) 11 AAC 12 ADL 223585	Year-Round Summer May 1 st – October 1 st	ORV's ORV's	Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585. Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585.
Reed Lakes / Little Susitna Unit <i>See Map 3-9</i>	Hatcher Pass Special Use Area Delia Creek Palmer-Fishhook Road / Little Susitna River Corridor <i>Remainder of Unit is Open</i>	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) ADL 223585 11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) AS 38.04.200 11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) AS 38.04.200	Year-Round Year-Round Year-Round	ORV's ORV's ORV's	Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585. Motorized use allowed by permit for access to mining claims. Motorized use allowed by permit for access to mining claims.
Mile 16 Management Unit <i>See Map 3-10</i>	Unit is Closed	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) AS 38.04.200 ADL 223585	Year-Round	ORV's	Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585.
Government Peak Management Unit <i>See Map 3-11</i>	Unit is Closed	11 AAC 96.014(3)(b) AS 38.04.200 ADL 225965	Year-Round	ORV's	Motorized use may be allowable by permit if consistent with uses identified in the Special Use Designation ADL 223585. Other restrictions may be imposed if or when a borough "Special Land Use Designation" is enacted for the Government Peak Unit.

Map 3-1: Land Status and Facility Recommendations

Area Plan Considerations and Plan Duration

The Hatcher Pass Management Plan will function as the area plan for the management area. Since it is to function in this capacity and is adopted under AS 38.04.065(b), certain aspects of area plan format and requirements apply.

Plan Designations. This plan uses plan designations, which are converted to land classifications in the Land Classification Order in Appendix B, to indicate the primary use or resource for which the land within a management unit is to be managed. DNR will manage activities in the unit to encourage, develop, or protect the uses or resources that are designated within a management unit. These designations only apply to surface uses and to state land. On borough property other land use classifications may apply. Because of the central management focus only a limited number of plan designations are used:

Ha – Habitat. This designation applies to areas of varied size for fish and wildlife species during a sensitive life-history stage where alteration of the habitat or human disturbance could result in a permanent loss of a population or sustained yield of a species. This land will remain in state ownership and will be maintained in an undisturbed, natural state except for improvements related to public health, safety, habitat restoration or rehabilitation, and public recreation. Authorizations within areas designated Habitat are not to be considered appropriate unless consistent with the previous objectives. Utilities and roads may be appropriate with appropriate design if habitat functions can be maintained. This designation converts to a land classification of Wildlife Habitat Land.

Ma – Materials. Sites suitable for extraction of materials, which include common varieties of sand, gravel, rock, peat, pumice, pumicite, cinders, clay, and sod. This land will remain in state ownership and may continue for the purpose of materials extraction until the site is exhausted of useable material or until the requirements of the authorization are fulfilled. Sites may be used for other purposes (habitat rehabilitation or parking) when either of these conditions exist. This designation converts to the land classification of Materials Land.

Mn – Minerals. This designation is applied where state land is known mineral resources exist and where development is occurring or is reasonably likely to occur. This designation converts to a land use classification of Mineral Land.

Pr – Public Facilities-Retain. These sites are reserved for a specific infrastructure to serve state interests. These units are classified Reserved Use and areas designated “Public Facilities-Retain” will be retained in state ownership. This designation converts to the classification of Reserved Use Land.

Rd – Public Recreation-Dispersed. This designation applies to those areas that offer or have a high potential for dispersed recreation or tourism and where desirable recreation conditions are scattered or widespread rather than localized. Developed facilities are generally not necessary other than trails, trail signs, primitive campsites, and other minor improvements. This land will be retained in public ownership in an undisturbed, natural state except for

improvements related to public health, safety, or recreation. Authorizations within areas designated Public Recreation-Dispersed are not to be considered appropriate unless necessary for public health, safety or recreation. Utilities and roads may be appropriate with appropriate design if recreation functions can be maintained. This designation converts to the land use classification of Public Recreation Land.

Rp – Public Recreation-Developed. Areas used by higher concentrations of users relative to the rest of the planning area or areas with a high potential to attract higher concentrations of people. These areas offer localized attractions or ease of access, and in many instances developed facilities. Examples include cabins, scenic overlooks, and road-accessible uplands that are used for picnicking, sports, fishing, etc. In addition, as applied to this management plan, it includes the ski facilities and related uses described in the Government Peak management unit. The recreation and tourism uses for which these units are designated may be either public or commercial. Land owned by the state will remain in state ownership unless otherwise noted in the management intent for the unit. The primary management intent for these sites is to protect the opportunity of the public to use these sites for recreation. Many of these sites require additional management attention because of the use they are receiving. This designation converts to the land use classification of Public Recreation Land.

Plan designations do not, however, provide sufficient guidance for effective state land management in most instances. When the plan assigns a designation to a unit, the designation is accompanied by management intent specific to that unit, as well as specific management guidelines and, sometimes, management recommendations. All four components must be taken into consideration when making an authorization decision. If there is an apparent discrepancy between management intent and plan designation for a management unit, the former is to control. Management intent statements provide a more detailed description of management strategy than is available through the use of a plan designation and therefore provide a better basis for an adjudicatory decision.

Primary Designated, Co-designated, Prohibited, and Conditionally Allowed Uses

The management plan uses a variety of use types and plan designations to manage state land. These include allowed, prohibited, and conditionally allowed use types. Allowed use types indicate that the use is considered to be compatible with the plan designation and management intent of a particular management unit. Prohibited and conditionally allowed use types indicate those uses that are inconsistent or potentially inconsistent with the management intent of a given unit. Conditional uses require a written determination that establishes the basis and justification for such uses within a given management unit. Prohibited uses, in addition to written justification, will also require a plan amendment to be authorized. The uses that are listed in Table 3-1 are to be interpreted in terms of the criteria given below. This plan also uses plan designations and co-designations. These indicate the primary use or resource for which a given unit is to be managed. They indicate a general

direction for agency management and must be applied to be consistent with the management intent statement for a given unit. The uses that are listed (allowed, prohibited, and conditionally allowed) are a reflection of the management intent for a specific unit. Where applicable, seasonal restrictions on recreational use are also specified.

Primary and Co-designated Uses. This plan assigns four plan designations to specific management units. The designation of Public Recreation-Dispersed applies throughout all of the management units, reflecting the central orientation of the 2010 Management Plan. The only exceptions to this are the few times that a commercial activity (Government Peak) or material extraction sites may occur (Craigie and Bald Mountain/Hillside). In these instances the plan designations of Public Recreation-Developed or Materials may apply, and borough or state land is to be managed to accommodate these uses. There are also several instances where a co-designation applies; this occurs if a unit, or portions of a unit, have complementary uses of equal value. The co-designation of Habitat and Public Recreation-Dispersed is used when both uses are of equal value and the intention is to accommodate dispersed public recreation while protecting important wildlife and habitat resources. The co-designation of Minerals and Public Recreation-Dispersed is used in those areas where mining activity has occurred in the past, which coincides with the Independence and Craigie Creek and portions of the Bald Mountain/Hillside management units. Only those co-designations that are complementary to each other or compatible with each other are included in this plan. Co-designated uses should be viewed, therefore, as compatible unless specific conditions existing at the time that DNR is adjudicating indicate otherwise.

Prohibited Uses and Conditionally Allowed Uses. The plan identifies prohibited uses⁵. These are uses that would have significant conflict with other uses or activities. They are not to be permitted except by a plan amendment. Conditionally allowed uses are those uses that may be appropriate within a specific management unit at particular locations, and with the use of stipulations that make the use compatible with the primary designated use. Conditional uses must be authorized in a written finding and they must always be consistent with the management intent of the management unit in which they occur. Stipulations or siting requirements in an authorization are to ensure that this management intent is met.

Retained State Land

Area plans serve to indicate which areas of state land are to be disposed of out of state ownership and those areas that are to be retained for some significant public purpose. In this plan, it has been determined that the best use of state land within the planning area is for the protection of scenic resources, the use of state land for public recreation, and for the protection of wildlife and important habitats. *All land within the planning area is to be retained by the state unless a valid, preexisting disposal decision exists*⁶.

⁵ Referred to as 'not allowed' in Table 2-1.

⁶ None are known to exist.

The Hatcher Pass planning area lies east of the Southeast Susitna Area Plan and west of the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan. The planning process for this plan and the two pertinent area plans determined that the more active development of state land should occur within the Southeast Susitna Area Plan or the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan. Large amounts of state land are designated for agricultural, commercial/settlement, or forest management purposes in these plans and relatively little land for the purpose of public recreation specifically. The Hatcher Pass Management Plan provides an extensive area of state land devoted to public recreation.

Mineral Designations

Those parts of the planning area where mining for locatable minerals has occurred historically (or can be expected to occur in the future) are co-designated Minerals and Public Recreation-Dispersed. In those instances where a Minerals designation is not used or the area is not closed to mineral entry, DNR will treat mining as if it were a co-designated use, or a use that is compatible with the principle surface use. This is important to note because DNR area plans usually do not apply mineral resource designations to large areas. The problems in locating and measuring subsurface resources make it difficult and potentially misleading for this plan to apply designations to mineral resources in the same way that they are applied to surface resources. All areas are open to mineral entry except for the Government Peak management unit, small portions of the Independence and Archangel management units, and the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area.

Management Intent, Guidelines, and Recommendations

State land is to be administered through a combination of plan designation, management intent, and management guidelines. The following definitions of management intent, management guidelines, and management recommendations apply in this plan and are to be used in adjudicatory decision making.

- **Management intent (statements):** These describe the general management approach that the state will pursue in managing state land and resources within specific management units. They define the DNR'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 courses of action. They are usually stated in the affirmative, are 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

a management unit. They are intended to be consistent with the management intent for a unit and in the event of an apparent discrepancy between a management intent statement and a management guideline, the former applies.

- Management recommendations: These are specific recommendations for improvements, operations, administrative, or fiscal actions.

Plan Duration

This plan guides land and resource management decisions in the planning area for the *next 20 years or until revised*.

KASHWITNA RIVER DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Kashwitna River Drainage management unit (Map 3-2) consists of the Kashwitna River and its adjacent uplands as well as a large mountainous area located immediately south of it. This unit includes the Bartholf Creek drainage, which borders the High Glacier Peaks management unit. The latter was chosen to separate the mountainous area of the High Glacier Peaks management unit from the lowlands associated with the Kashwitna River and its tributaries. All of this area is either owned by the state or will likely be conveyed to the state. The western area has been selected for conveyance to the state under the statehood act, and it is expected that this area will be conveyed within the next ten years. Including the area of selection, there are 65,158 acres of land within the management unit.

There are three RS 2477 Routes that are located across this unit. The Kashwitna River Trail is a significant west-east RS 2477 route (RST 1721) occupies the Kashwitna River drainage. The Talkeetna River Trail is a north-south RS 2477 route (RST 1620) occurs in the western part of the unit. This trail begins along the Hatcher Pass Road in the south and extends northward through the Willow Mountain unit, and exists through the northern boundary of the planning area. The third RS 2477 trail is the Bartholf Creek Trail (RST 1715), which follows the Bartholf Creek drainage.

The terrain of this unit consists of three fairly distinct types of topography: a lowland area adjacent to Bartholf Creek and the Kashwitna River, the moderately sloped foothills to the west, and the remainder of the unit is part of the Talkeetna Mountains and consists of very mountainous terrain. Vegetation patterns generally follow this topography. The Kashwitna River drainage consists mostly of bottomland spruce-poplar forest, while the foothills consist mostly of shrub. The mountainous areas are similar to vegetation pattern of the High Glacier Peak management unit, consisting of alpine tundra, ice or snow, or barren rock. This unit also provides important habitat for moose, caribou, and Dall sheep. Caribou are present throughout the central and eastern parts of the unit, while the far eastern and western areas are important moose calving and rutting areas. Brown and black bears are found along the Kashwitna River riparian areas.

Access to this unit is limited and is provided by snowmachine and by ATV use in the summer. Use patterns tend to occur within the Kashwitna River valley along the RS 2477 routes.

Similar to the High Glacier Peaks management unit, this unit has experienced relatively low levels of recreation use, with most of this related to snow-machine use during the winter. The Kashwitna River is a winter travel corridor with some movement also extending southward along the Talkeetna River Trail and Bartholf Creek, providing access to a number of snowmachine routes within the Willow Mountain and High Glacier Peaks management

units, respectively. There is no known summer motorized use in this unit, except for use that occurs along the RS 2477 route in the western foothills. Although the amount of use is low compared to the other, more accessible units, it is significant and is increasing in amount. The Kashwitna River drainage was included within the planning area because of the increasing levels of use and the relation of that use to the Hatcher Pass area proper. The Kashwitna River meets the criteria to be considered navigable by the state.

There are not many historic sites in this management unit. However, there are gravel bars that may have been used as airstrips by miners located in the area.

Planning Issues

There are few planning issues associated with this management unit at this time. The use of the river drainage by snowmachines is currently limited and does not present management issues. Summer ORV use is also limited, with this occurring in the far western part of the unit along the Talkeetna River Trail RS 2477 route. Few problems now exist with summer ORV use. No closure to winter snowmachine use or summer ORV use is recommended.

Plan Designations and Land Classifications

This area is co-designated Public Recreation-Dispersed and Habitat, which converts to land use classifications of Public Recreation Land and Wildlife Habitat Land.

Management Intent

This area is to be managed to maintain its current natural, essentially unspoiled character. More specifically, the unit is to be managed to maintain its wildlife populations as well as provide opportunities for hunting and other dispersed recreation activities to meet current and future demand.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted; there are no seasonal motorized use restrictions.

Management Guidelines

Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.

Management Recommendations (Facilities)

None are recommended, although hardening and/or rerouting of the north-south RS 2477 route for summer ORV use may be required in the future.

Map 3-2: Kashwitna River Drainage Unit

WILLOW MOUNTAIN MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Willow Mountain management unit (Map 3-2) is located at the southern base of the Talkeetna Mountains. The topography of this area varies greatly from east to west. The eastern section of this unit is characterized by the rugged peaks of the Talkeetna Mountains. The land slopes in elevation into a large plateau to the west, then into the alpine tundra. This is the largest management unit in the planning area, containing 124,943 acres of land. It is predominantly state owned land (124,815 acres). It is located south of the Kashwitna River Drainage management unit and immediately north of the Craigie Creek and Bald Mountain/Hillside management units, and west of all other management units. The southeast boundary is along the Hatcher Pass Road. The low lands of this unit are marshy and sensitive to environmental degradation caused by foot travel and motorized use during the summer months. There are three prominent creeks in this unit: the Peters, Purches, and Little Willow Creeks.

Access into this management unit is provided by a number of trails that extend from the Hatcher Pass Road, including the RS 2477 Trail known as the Talkeetna River Trail (RST 1620). This trail begins at the Hatcher Pass Road and extends north, through the Kashwitna River Drainage management unit. Other trails include the Willow Mountain Trail, Blacks Ridge Trail, Purches Creek Trail, and Peters Creek Trail, which experience the heaviest use in the winter by snowmachines.

Vegetation patterns generally follow the topography of the management unit. The valley and drainage areas consist mostly of bottomland spruce-poplar forests, while the foothills of the Talkeetna Mountains consist mostly of shrubs. The unit is characterized by alpine tundra at higher elevations and by wetlands in the lower elevations in relatively flat terrain. Beaver ponds are common in the lowlands of this management unit.

The Willow Mountain management unit provides an important habitat area for many animals. Species present include: moose, brown and black bears, caribou, Dall sheep, and beavers. Migratory tundra birds also nest in the upland plateaus and ridges. The Little Willow Creek is an important salmon spawning and juvenile rearing waterbody. This area is used for hunting moose, caribou, and bears. The Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area is located along the western border of this unit. It is managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This area experiences a high level of recreational use. In the summer, it is popular for hiking, ATV's, and off-road vehicle use. The heaviest ATV use is in the fall during hunting season.

In the winter, this is a very popular area for snowmachine recreation. There are numerous snowmachine trails, which are depicted on Map 3-3. There are currently no improved routes for ATV or off-roading in this management unit. As a result, the marshy land and wetlands near the trails and creek drainages have been degraded due to unsuitable soils, trail braiding, and the weight of over-sized vehicles.

Placer mining claims have been worked along the Peters and Purches Creeks in this unit, however there were no large-scale mining operations. The Talkeetna River Trail (RST 1620) crosses the western area of this unit and was historically used to provide access to mining operations along the creeks and Kashwitna River.

Planning Issues

There are several important planning issues in this management unit. This is a very popular area for winter motorized recreational use and there are no restrictions on motorized use, other than summer restrictions in the Willow Mountain CHA. Currently, there is no on-the-ground field management of this unit. The summer use of ATV's and ORV's is causing degradation to the wetlands and alpine tundra. Since there are no improved routes, recreationalists are creating their own; many of which are not sustainable. Access to the unit is difficult, as there are few motorized corridors for the public to use to reach the area and the western side of the Hatcher Pass Road is not maintained by ADOT/PF in the winter. There are no parking lots or restroom facilities in this unit. Many recreationists often have to park their vehicles outside of the western boundary of the planning area before entering to recreate.

Plan Designations and Land Classifications

This area is co-designated for Public Recreation-Dispersed and Habitat, which converts to land use classifications of Public Recreation Land and Wildlife Habitat Land.

Management Intent

This area is to be managed primarily for recreation, with an emphasis on motorized recreation. It is also to be managed to maintain and protect wildlife populations and areas of sensitive environmental character, as well as provide opportunities for hunting and other dispersed recreation activities.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1. Material sales are a prohibited use in the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for off-road motorized recreation within the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area (CHA), which is 22,540 acres in size, during summer months. Off-road use is only permitted on designated routes within the CHA.

Management Guidelines

The management guidelines that follow are based on the uses that are allowed, conditionally allowed, or prohibited. Based on these guidelines, few uses other than those authorized as a matter of state law, are intended within this unit. Accordingly, the guidelines only deal with those uses that could occur within this unit. All state land is to be retained.

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.
- Authorizations issued within the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area shall be consistent with the 1986 Management Plan⁷ until ADF&G develops and adopts a management plan for the CHA. When this occurs uses affected by the CHA management plan are to be managed consistent with the requirements of the ADF&G plan. Uses that are not controlled by the CHA management plan are to be authorized by DNR and shall be consistent with the 2010 Management Plan.

⁷ Current statutory authority requires that the Willow Mountain CHA be managed to be consistent with the 1989 Management Plan until a CHA management plan is prepared by ADF&G. This plan revision (2010) cannot alter this statutory requirement. However, both the 1986 Plan and the 2010 Plan manage this region in a similar, if not identical manner.

Utilities

- Utility lines are to be situated so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road wherever practical. They are to be placed so they blend with ridges rather than stand out as a skyline feature.
- Utility lines shall be placed underground. If this is not practical the standards for Utilities in the Recreation section of Chapter 2 are to be followed.
- Repeater and other forms of communication sites are a 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 visibility cannot be avoided, they should be sited and designed so that they do not stand out as a prominent skyline feature and so that they blend with the ridge. Sites are to be grouped together where possible. Creation of access routes to these sites is prohibited.

Management Recommendations

Wildlife

- Maintain the seasonal restriction on vehicular use under current (2010) regulations in the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area, to continue the avoidance of adverse impacts on moose habitat areas.
- Actions to enhance moose browse are considered appropriate but are to be limited to those sites where disturbance to the viewshed from the Hatcher Pass Road can be avoided or minimized. Enhancement actions shall be coordinated with and approved by ADF&G and the Regional Manager, SCRO.

Trailheads, Parking, Scenic Pull-outs, and Public Use Cabins

- Subject to funding availability:
 - Develop a paved pull out and trailhead for the Peters-Purches Creek Trail at Mile Post 29.5.
 - Permit the establishment of public use cabins in this management unit. The establishment of such facilities is subject to agency review and they are to be managed by DPOR or not-for-profit entities.

Transportation and Public Access

- ATV routes are considered appropriate within portions of this unit and are to be designed to sustainable trail standards. See Map 3-3. (Note: these routes should be considered as preliminary at this stage of review. Other routes may be identified as a result of further public review and comment, or may be the result of a comprehensive trail plan developed by DNR.)
- The development of hiking trails is recommended; these are to be designed to sustained trail standards. Hiking trails have not been officially designated in this area. The public hikes on trails that generally follow existing roads, RS 2477 Trails, and snowmachine trails. See Map 3-3. (Note: the routes identified in the plan map should be considered as preliminary at this stage of review. Other routes may be identified as a result of further public review and comment, or may be the result of a comprehensive trail plan developed by DNR at a subsequent time depending on funding and staff availability.)

Map 3-3: Willow Mountain Unit

HIGH GLACIER PEAKS MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The High Glacier Peaks management unit (Map 3-4) occupies a mountainous area consisting of glaciers and mountains in the area immediately north of the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management unit and south of the Kashwitna River drainage. There are approximately 22,875 acres within this unit. All of the land is owned by the state and is managed by DMLW. This unit excludes Bartholf Creek, which is part of the Kashwitna River Drainage management unit. It was segregated out in order to maintain the uniformly mountainous character of this unit and to keep lowland areas within a separate management unit. Vegetation consists of alpine tundra and low growing shrubs, but many areas are un-vegetated and are covered by perpetual snow and ice or are barren rock. Dall sheep and caribou are present in the northern parts of this unit, with this area being important for both winter habitat and calving (caribou). An RS 2477 route, The Bartholf Creek Trail, (RST 1721) terminates in the western part of the unit.

This area experiences limited types of recreational use, given its remote and generally inaccessible location. The main uses of the area are rock climbing and mountaineering and associated summer trekking along the mountaineering hut system in the north western section of the planning area. There are two mountaineering huts in this unit that support these activities, the Bomber and Snowbird huts. They were built in the 1980's by non-profit organizations on land they have leased from the state for members of the mountaineering community. These groups still hold leases on this land and maintain these cabins today.

Some winter use, including snow machining and back country skiing also occur in the area. Although the amount of use is low compared to other, more accessible units, it is significant and is increasing in amount. Most access occurs by foot from the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna unit or by snowmachine, using the same access points, although some snowmachiners access the area by following the Kashwitna River drainage. This area was included within the planning area of this management plan because of the increasing levels of use and the relation of that use to the Hatcher Pass area proper. Map 3-1 depicts this unit in relation to the other units.

The High Glacier Peaks Area does not have many historic mining sites. There is a RS 2477 historic mining route (RST 1715) from the Kashwitna River, along Bartholf Creek into the unit, which provides access toward the Snowbird Glacier area and northern mining claims. The crash site of a bomber is in this management unit.

Planning Issues

The principal planning issues within this unit focus on the use of the mountaineering huts, whether it is appropriate to limit motorized use adjacent to these structures, and whether the entire management unit should be closed to motorized use during the summer. Although there is no known (summer) motorized use of this unit currently, it is possible that this could occur. Since no popular pattern of recreational use has been established, it is suggested that this area be closed to motorized uses seasonally (summer) to maintain the current use patterns. No closure of winter snowmachine use is recommended.

Plan Designation and Land Classification

This area is designated Public Recreation-Dispersed, which converts to a land use classification of Public Recreation Land.

Management Intent

This area is to be managed to maintain its current natural, essentially well-preserved character. More specifically, the unit is to be managed to maintain its wildlife populations as well as provide opportunities for hunting and other dispersed recreation activities to meet current and future demand. The area is meant to be managed for non-motorized recreation during the summer months.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for Off Road Recreational Vehicle use during the summer (May 1 – October 1).

Management Guidelines

Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.

Management Recommendations

- This management unit is recommended for inclusion into the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area. Revise the boundaries affected by the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3) to coincide with those depicted on Map 3-4.
- This management unit will be closed to summer recreational motorized use.
- No additional facilities are recommended, although the appropriateness of the current mountaineering huts is recognized. Additional structures of this type, or public use cabins, that are constructed and maintained to support dispersed recreation activities in this unit are considered appropriate if maintained and operated by DPOR or not-for-profit entities, consistent with current DMLW requirements.

Map 3-4: High Glacier Peaks Unit

CRAIGIE CREEK MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Craigie Creek management unit (Map 3-5) is situated within the Craigie Creek valley. It consists of nearly 10,061 acres of land. Although there are numerous mining claims and private parcels, the majority of the unit is state owned land (8,717 acres). The unit is directly south of the Willow Mountain management unit, west of the Independence management unit, and shares the Hatcher Pass Road as its southern boundary with the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit. The Craigie Creek and surrounding valley are the dominant landscape features in this management unit. The valley is surrounded by alpine tundra, rock glaciers, and unstable slopes at the higher elevations. The Bullion Mountain Ridge encases the valley along the southeast boundary of the management unit. The northern section of the Summit Lake State Recreation Site is located within the southeast section of this management unit.

The vegetation in this area is consistent with alpine tundra. This management unit provides habitat for moose, bear, beaver, and small game. Beaver ponds can be viewed throughout the lowland areas. Hunting activities occur here in the fall and ptarmigan are hunted in the winter.

Mineral potential is considered to be high throughout this management unit, particularly in the eastern areas. The Craigie Creek management unit is part of the Willow Creek Mining District. There have been three producing lode mines in this management area, the Lucky Shot, War Baby, and Gold Bullion Mines. More gold has been produced from mines in this management unit than all other locations in the Hatcher Pass area.⁸ The first gold produced from the Hatcher Pass area was in this unit, from a placer mine at Grubstake Gulch in 1898⁹. The remnants of Kellyville are in this management unit, which was a mining town that supported the historic mines.

This unit is blanketed with mining claims that are still in operation today. Most mining claims are located along the Craigie Creek Road and are concentrated along the eastern boundary of the unit, abutting mining claims located in the Independence management unit. There are also mineral closures (see Alaska Mapper). Since 2000, there has been extensive exploration focusing on the Lucky Shot Prospect, between the old Lucky Shot Mine and Coleman Adit high on the valley wall. Exploration in this area continues and given the extensive mining history, remaining mineral values, and extensive recent exploration, it is likely that mining will reoccur in the valley during the period of this plan.

⁸ Hunting for Gold in the Alaska's Talkeetna Mountains 1897-1951. William M. Stoll. 1997. Table p. 270.

⁹ Ibid. p.24

The Craigie Creek Road begins at the milepost 23.5 on the north side of the Hatcher Pass Road and stretches across the management unit, in a northeasterly direction, and ends before reaching Dogsled Pass. It is the main access route into the management unit and is used as a hiking trail and ATV and ORV route in the summer. It turns into a very popular snowmachine trail in the winter which crosses Dogsled Pass into the Purches Creek Valley.

The Craigie Creek management unit is popular for all types of recreation. The southern half of the Summit Lake Recreation Site is a prominent point of interest for non-motorized recreation in the summer. Non-motorized uses include hiking, paragliding, and back-country skiing in the winter. Motorized recreation includes snowmachining in the winter. Popular snowmachine trails are depicted on Map 3-5. The Summit Lake Recreation Site is closed to motorized use unless there is sufficient snow cover to protect the underlying soils and vegetation. This closure is typically May 1 – October 1, but it may vary depending on the amount of snowfall in the area. ATV/ORV use in the summer is popular in the Craigie Creek unit outside of this recreation site.

This unit encompasses the former Lucky Shot, War Baby, and Gold Bullion mines. Remnants of Kellyville, the mining boomtown that housed area miners, are visible today.

Planning Issues

This management unit is very popular for motorized recreational users. There are several important planning issues in this management unit. ATV and ORV use is occurring in the summer months, which is causing degradation to the wetlands and alpine tundra. Since there are no designated or improved routes, recreationalists are creating their own, many of which are not sustainable. This area is also very popular for snowmachines in the winter. However, it is difficult to access the western side of the planning area because there are few motorized corridors from the east side for the public to reach the area and the Hatcher Pass Road is gated at MP 20.5 and not maintained during that season by ADOT/PF. Many recreationalists who access this unit from the east side, must park their vehicles in the Fishhook Parking Lot or park in available pullouts, and ride along the Hatcher Pass Road to reach snowmachine trails on the west side. They also park their vehicles on available side streets and private parking lots outside of the planning area on the west side.

Plan Designations and Land Classifications

This area is co-designated Public Recreation-Dispersed and Minerals, which converts to land use classifications of Public Recreation Land and Mineral Land.

Management Intent

This management unit will be managed primarily for its mineral resources and for recreation, with emphasis on motorized recreation. Continued mineral entry and development are authorized in this unit. State review of a plan of operations for mineral development will be reviewed consistent with the guidelines in this unit so that the development minimizes affects on scenic resources and recreation. Designated routes and facilities to support recreation are recommended. Existing snowmachine trails should be used as designated routes where feasible. The approximate locations of the snowmachine trails are depicted on Map 3-3. Mining exploration and development are recognized as appropriate uses in this unit.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses on general domain land requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1. Uses in the Summit Lake SRS are controlled under 11 AAC 96.014 and 11 AAC 12.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for summer motorized restrictions (May 1 – August 1) to protect the Summit Lake Recreation Site. The Summit Lake Recreation Site is 390 acres, 128 acres of which are located within this management unit. It is closed to motorized use unless there is sufficient snow cover to protect the underlying soils and vegetation. This closure is generally May 1 – October 1, but it may vary depending on the amount of snowfall in the area. The area affected by this restriction is depicted on Map 3-5.

Management Guidelines

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.

Viewshed Protection

- Material extraction sites are to be screened from view from the Hatcher Pass Road in order to maintain the scenic qualities of those areas viewed from the Hatcher Pass Road.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with the standards for viewshed management described in the Recreation section of Chapter 2.

Mining

- The number and kind of structures authorized in a mining Plan of Operations shall be the minimum necessary for the operation of permitted subsurface mining operations.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with the management guidelines for subsurface facilities in Chapter 2. Utility lines internal to mineral development, that are solely used by a mineral project, are also to comply with these guidelines.
- Plan of operations for mineral development on state land should be authorized to minimize negative impacts on recreation, taking into account the environmental and economic requirements of the mineral development. To do so, authorizations for mineral development should consider methods to minimize visual impact including use of topography and vegetation, if practical, for screening facilities from view; and should consider grouping or locating facilities to minimize visual impact or to avoid blocking access to public land.
- The realignment or relocation of the Craigie Creek Road should be investigated in the Plan of Operations review for mining authorizations if those operations will substantially increase the use of that road in an effort to mitigate adverse impact to current public recreational use of the Craigie Creek Road.

Utilities

- Utility lines are to be situated so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road and so they blend with the ridge rather than stand out as a skyline feature.
- Utilities are to meet the requirements for such facilities described in the Recreation and Public Access sections of Chapter 2.
- Repeater and other forms of communication sites are an allowed use along the top of Bald Mountain 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 and the access routes to these sites should be the minimal necessary for that purpose and they should not be sited to create a prominent skyline feature.

Material Sites

- The number of material extraction sites should be limited. A single site having sufficient material for expected public road construction is preferred. If this is not feasible, material sites are to be screened from the Hatcher Pass Road. Note: A material site at MP 19.5 is not considered appropriate, given its proximity to the Summit Lake State Recreation Site.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with state permitting and regulatory requirements, SCRO development and rehabilitation standards, and with the standards for this type of facility described in the Material Sites section of Chapter 2.

Management Recommendations

Trailheads, Parking, Scenic Pull-outs, and Trails

- Subject to funding availability:
 - Construct parking lot, with sanitation facilities, near the Summit Lake State Recreation Site, near MP 19.5.
 - Construct trailhead parking near MP 23.5 for a hiking trailhead at the Craigie Creek Road and an upgraded turnout.
 - Designate the Craigie Creek Road as a multi-use activity trail in the summer for hiking and ATV use.

Transportation and Public Access

- ATV routes are considered appropriate within portions of this unit and are to be designed to sustainable trail standards. See Map 3-5. (Note: these routes should be considered as preliminary at this stage of review. Other routes may be identified as a result of further public review and comment, or may be the result of a comprehensive trail plan developed by DNR.)
- The development of hiking trails is recommended; these are to be designed to sustained trail standards. Hiking trails have not been officially recorded in this area, however they generally follow existing roads, and snowmachine trails. See Map 3-5. (Note: The routes identified in the plan map should be considered as preliminary at this stage of review. Other routes may be identified as a result of further public review and comment, or may be the result of a comprehensive trail plan developed by DNR at a subsequent time depending on funding and staff availability.)
- Retain the Summit Lake State Recreation Site within the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area and revise the boundaries affected by the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3) to coincide with those depicted on Map 3-5.

Map 3-5: Craigie Creek Unit

BALD MOUNTAIN / HILLSIDE MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit (Map 3-6) occupies mountainous and hilly terrain in the southwestern part of the planning area. It is bordered on the north by the Hatcher Pass Road, on the west by the boundary with the Southeast Susitna Area Plan, and on the east by the Government Peak management unit. There are of 28,921 acres of land in this unit, with state land (28,333 acres) constituting the dominant land owner. Private land occurs at scattered locations along the western part of Hatcher Pass Road and along the Wet Gulch and Grubstake Creek drainages which are affected by mining and mining claims. The Hatcher Pass Road is included within this unit, and a small portion of the northeastern part is occupied by the Summit Lake State Recreation Site.

Although the terrain is characteristically mountainous, there is a gradation from slight hills in the western foothills to mountainous terrain in the central and eastern parts of the unit. Vegetation reflects the terrain and changes in elevation. The westernmost areas are occupied by evergreen forest intermixed with a variety of wetlands. Shrub-type vegetation is characteristic at the lower elevations and alpine tundra and dwarf shrub vegetation is found at the higher elevations. The forested parts of this unit have significant potential for creating productive, replacement moose habitat for summer and winter range lost to development on private lands situated to the south. There is a significant moose population in this unit and there has been an increased shift in their use patterns over the last 25 years. Both moose calving and rutting occur in this unit and the area is used during the winter months as a concentration area. The majority of the moose population in the planning area occurs within the Willow Mountain management unit, specifically, within the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area. Bear, small game, and furbearers are all present within the unit.

The portion of Willow Creek within this unit has been designated as one of the few priority anadromous streams in south-central Alaska by ADF&G. Although no anadromous fish are present, downstream fish resources are of major importance. Water quality within the upper reaches of Willow Creek is important to maintaining downstream spawning and rearing habitats for fisheries. Streams on the south side of Bald Mountain Ridge are lateral tributaries to the Little Susitna River. Recent sampling has verified the presence of juvenile coho salmon. The streams in this area are important for the same reason that the upper reaches of Willow Creek are important.

Several sites on Bald Mountain Ridge have high habitat value for nesting tundra birds and a restriction exists on summer motorized use during the breeding season from May 1 to August 1. This use restriction has been in effect since 1986, but has not been particularly effective in precluding summer ORV use.

Recreation use within the management unit is significant and is increasing given the proximity of this area to private land with residential development, and it is likely that the level of use will continue to increase. Motorized recreation is popular in this unit. Snowmachine use occurs throughout the winter and there are a number of commonly used routes. Summer and fall activities include ORV use and hunting. Some of this ORV use is associated with an RS 2477 trail, the Wet Gulch Trail (RST 1720), that traverse this unit from south to north. A small amount of recreational hiking, paragliding also occurs within this unit.

The southern half of the Summit Lake Recreation Site is a prominent point of interest for non-motorized recreation in the summer. Non-motorized uses include hiking, paragliding, and back-country skiing in the winter. Motorized recreation includes snowmachining in the winter. Popular snowmachine trails are depicted on Map 3-5. The Summit Lake Recreation Site is closed to motorized use unless there is sufficient snow cover to protect the underlying soils and vegetation. This closure is typically May 1 – October 1, but it may vary depending on the amount of snowfall in the area. The April Bowl to Summit Lake Trail was recently upgraded to a class 3 standard hiking trail. ATV/ORV use in the summer is popular in the Bald Mountain/Hillside unit outside of this recreation site.

The Hatcher Pass Road forms the northern boundary of the unit. The road provides access to the East Side and the general Willow area to the west in the summer. During the winter, the road is gated at MP 20.5. Scenic views are spectacular along the central and eastern parts of the road. The presence of this road presents a challenge to land management because structural and utility development could adversely impact the scenic views along this roadway.

Robert Hatcher discovered quartz gold in 1906 in the northwest section of this management unit, near Summit Lake. Gold was discovered in the north central area of the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit at Grubstake Gulch in 1897. Placer and lode gold mining claims and operations spread north, west, and east from the gulch area. A RS 2477 route (RST 1710) provided access into the area from the south, and is still used today.

Planning Issues

The number and type of planning issues are less pronounced in this management unit than others on the East Side. It is one of the more heavily used areas for motorized recreation and hunting access on the West Side. The main planning issues are associated with summer ORV use, impacts to ground nesting birds in the area closed to summer motorized use, and preserving the scenic corridor along the Hatcher Pass Road.

Summer ORV use is fairly extensive throughout the unit and has resulted in trail degradation at a number of locations. This use is occurring in the Bald Mountain Habitat Area, which conflicts with the bird breeding season and habitat. The area is closed to motorized use during summer months. However, since an RS 2477 Trail transverses the habitat area, motorized access through the habitat area is permitted, however, recreationists stray from this trail.

The preservation of the scenic quality along the Hatcher Pass Road is also a concern. The amount of use in the planning area is expected to increase over the next 15-20 years. This increase is a reflection of the attraction to the area and its proximity to a significant, growing residential population in the Mat-Su Valley. The increase of use in the unit will likely be summer ORV use due to the relative ease of getting into the southern parts of the unit, primarily from Schrock Road and the Wet Gulch Trail. Should large scale commercial development occur along this roadway, it would adversely impact the scenic quality along the Hatcher Pass Road.

Plan Designations and Land Classifications

This unit has several designations. Most of this area is co-designated Public Recreation-Dispersed and Habitat, which converts to land use classifications of Public Recreation Land and Wildlife Habitat Land. Two areas within with the unit are co-designated Minerals and Public Recreation-Dispersed. These areas include areas of historic mining activities and to valid, existing mining claims, which are located along the Hatcher Pass Road and Wet Gulch Creek (See Map 3-6).

Management Intent

This area is to be managed to maintain its current natural, character, while recognizing the importance and appropriateness of mining in areas of historic mining use and where valid mining rights exist. The unit is to be managed to maintain its wildlife populations as well as provide opportunities for hunting and dispersed recreation activities, and maintain scenic views from the Hatcher Pass Road. Uses within this area are not to be allowed except for those noted in Table 2-1 and to those facilities that are recommended in this section under Management Recommendations. Generally, development, except related to recreation, road, and public safety projects, is not intended within this unit, although utility, mining, and gravel extraction operations may be appropriate, depending on adherence to the siting and design criteria identified under Management Guidelines and Management Recommendations of this section. The entire unit is open to mineral entry and development.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1. Uses in the Summit Lake SRS are controlled under 11 AAC 96.014 and 11 AAC 12. Material sales are a prohibited use in the Bald Mountain Ridge Habitat Area.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for summer motorized restrictions to protect a nesting bird concentration in the Bald Mountain Habitat Area and the Summit Lake State Recreation Site. The Bald Mountain Habitat Area is 3,932 acres and is closed to motorized recreation from May 1 – August 1. The Summit Lake Recreation Site is 390 acres, 262 acres of which are located within this management unit. It is closed to motorized use unless there is sufficient snow cover to protect the underlying soils and vegetation. This closure is generally May 1 – October 1, but it may vary depending on the amount of snowfall in the area. The areas affected by this restriction are depicted on Map 3-6.

Management Guidelines

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with the management guidelines for subsurface facilities in Chapter 2. Utility lines internal to mineral development, that are solely used by a mineral project, are also to comply with these guidelines.

Viewshed Protection

- Parking and material extraction sites are to be screened from view from the Hatcher Pass Road in order to maintain the scenic qualities of those areas viewed from the Hatcher Pass Road.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with the general standards for viewshed management described in the Recreation section of this Chapter and if a mining operation, with the specific standards under the ‘Scenic Resources’ management guidelines of the Subsurface section.

Mining

- Plan of operations for mineral development on state land should be authorized to minimize negative impacts on recreation, taking into account the environmental and economic requirements of the mineral development. To do so, authorizations for mineral development should consider methods to minimize visual impact including use of topography and vegetation, if practical, for screening facilities from view; and should consider grouping or locating facilities to minimize visual impact or to avoid blocking access to public land.

Utilities

- Utility lines are to be situated so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road and so they blend with the ridge rather than stand out as a skyline feature.
- Utilities are to meet the requirements for such facilities described in the Recreation and Public Access sections of Chapter 2. Repeater and other forms of communication sites are an allowed use along the top of Bald Mountain 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 and the access routes to these sites should be the minimal necessary for that purpose and they should not be sited to create a prominent skyline feature.

Material Sites

- The number of material extraction sites should be limited. A single site having sufficient material for expected public road construction is preferred. If this is not feasible, material sites are to be screened from the Hatcher Pass Road. Note: A material site at MP 19.5 is not considered appropriate, given its proximity to the Summit Lake State Recreation Site.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with state permitting and regulatory requirements, SCRO development and rehabilitation standards, and with the standards for this facilities described in the Material Sites section of Chapter 2.

Management Recommendations

Wildlife

- Maintain the Bald Mountain Habitat Area affected by a seasonal restriction on vehicular use under current (2009) regulations that are intended to avoid impacts during the breeding period of nesting birds.

- Retain the Bald Mountain Ridge Habitat Area within the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area and revise the boundaries affected by the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3) to coincide with those depicted on Map 3-6.
- Actions to enhance moose browse are considered appropriate but are to be limited to those sites where disturbance to the viewshed from the Hatcher Pass Road can be avoided or minimized. All such enhancement actions shall be coordinated with and approved by ADF&G and the Regional Manager, SCRO.

Trailheads, Parking, Scenic Pull-outs, and Campgrounds

- Subject to funding availability:
 - Construct trailhead parking near the Willow Creek Bridge (MP 34.36) for year-round motorized access and at MP 34.5 for a proposed dog mushing trail.¹⁰
 - Upgrade turnout at MP 23.5.
 - Develop a paved pullout and trailhead at MP 26.
 - Construct a day-use site by Willow Creek at MP 29.
 - Improve the Wet Gulch Trail (RST 1710), to accommodate ATV's and ORV's to be utilized as a motorized access corridor from the southern boundary of the Hatcher Pass planning area, beginning at the terminus of Schrock Road.
 - Construct parking lot, with sanitation facilities, near the northern terminus of Schrock Road on state or borough land. This facility is to be designed to support both motorized and non-motorized uses in the southern part of the planning area. Use of this route and parking area should relieve some amount of pressure on facilities located on Hatcher Pass Road. It will also provide a southern access route into the western side of the Hatcher Pass planning area for motorized recreationists.
 - Should summer recreation use greatly increase within the West Side, consider the development of a small campground near MP 29 along Willow Creek.
 - Develop an ATV trail/hiking trail along Grubstake Gulch drainage and a hiking trail along Wet Gulch.

Transportation and Public Access

- Upgrade of the Hatcher Pass Road to resolve safety and drainage problems is required. Development at a higher standard to support tour buses and other forms of large commercial vehicles is contingent upon further DNR and ADOT/PF review at the time of project conceptual design.

¹⁰ Trailhead facilities situated at milepost 30.3 or greater are located outside the planning area. They are included here because their development is linked to uses within the planning area.

- ATV routes are considered appropriate within portions of this unit but must be designed to sustainable trail standards. See Map 3-6. (Note: Snowmachine routes are used by ATV's in the summer. The depicted locations of these trails should be considered as preliminary at this stage of review. Other routes may be identified as a result of further public review and comment, or may be the result of a comprehensive trail plan developed by DNR.)
- The development of hiking trails is recommended. Trails are to be designed to sustained trail standards. Hiking trails have not been officially recorded in this area, however they generally follow existing roads, and snowmachine trails. See Map 3-5. (Note: The routes identified in the plan map should be considered as preliminary at this stage of review. Other routes may be identified as a result of further public review and comment, or may be the result of a comprehensive trail plan developed by DNR at a subsequent time depending on funding and staff availability.)
- A winter motorized corridor on *state* land between the proposed Schrock Rock trailhead and borough land in the Government Peak management unit is recommended, generally following a southerly alignment as indicated in Map 3-6, is recommended, contingent on the borough determining that a comparable east-west route on borough land is appropriate.
- A winter motorized corridor on *state* land at the western end of borough land in the Government Peak unit is recommended, contingent upon the borough determining that a comparable access route on borough land is appropriate. Note: a suggested boundary change to the Bald Mountain – Hillside unit boundary at Government Creek will make the area west of Government Creek part of a motorized area¹¹. If this occurs, this recommendation should be reevaluated to determine if such a corridor is still necessary.

¹¹ The Matanuska Susitna Borough Assembly, in Resolution 11-089, recommended that the western boundary of the Government Peak management unit be revised, which would delete this area from this unit and add it to the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit.

Map 3-6: Bald Mountain / Hillside Unit

INDEPENDENCE MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Independence management unit (Map 3-7) is part of the historic Willow Creek Mining District. The Independence Bowl is a prime scenic viewshed with a U-shaped valley that overlooks the Fishhook Creek, Little Susitna River, and the Matanuska Valley below. There are numerous mining claims located within this management unit, primarily on the west side. The Independence Mine State Historical Park is also located within this unit. There are 2,811 acres in this unit and most of it is general state land (2,159 acres). The remaining land consists of private parcels and federal mining claims. This unit is located in the center of the planning area. It is located east of the Craigie Creek management unit, west of the Archangel management unit, and north of the Government Peak management unit, where it shares the Hatcher Pass Road as its boundary.

Access into the management unit is provided by the Hatcher Pass Road and the road leading directly to the Independence Mine State Historical Park and Hatcher Pass Lodge. Parking is available at the southeastern section of this management unit at the Fishhook trailhead, lodge, Independence Bowl, and at the Independence Mine State Historical Park.

Small mammals (arctic ground squirrels, marmots, and pikas) are common in this unit, especially in the high valleys and along the roads, and Dall sheep are known to be present in the mountainous areas. Ptarmigan are also present and often hunted. However, no hunting is permitted within the boundaries of the historical park.

Mineral potential is considered to be high throughout this unit. There are many current claims, mining, sites and historic sites located in this unit. Mineral order closures do occur at various locations in this unit, particularly in areas near the park and southern Marmot Mountain area, see Map Appendix C-2.

This unit is characterized by all-season recreational use, both summer and winter, and tourism, and visitation to the Independence Mine State Historical Park. During the summer, hiking, berry picking, backpacking, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and paragliding are popular. Tours are held at the Independence Mine State Historical Park in the summer. There is no authorized motorized use in this unit in the summer. During the winter, snowmachines travel through the southern sections of this unit to reach open areas in the western side of the planning area. They also high mark in the Marmot Mountain Range. Non-motorized use includes all types of skiing, snowshoeing, snow boarding, and sled riding. Avalanche and search and rescue training courses are offered.

Because of the 3,500 elevation of Independence Bowl area, it often has some of the earliest and latest (shoulder seasons) road-accessible snow in south-central Alaska. For this reason, the area is very popular with winter recreation enthusiasts of all interests. The East-West Snowmobile Corridor traverses along the southern edge of this unit from the Fishhook Trailhead to Hatcher Pass. This designated area of this unit typically opens to snowmobile use (sufficient snow) before other public land openings. Nordic and backcountry skiing is very popular especially during the shoulder seasons, with groomed cross-country ski trails typically set the earliest in Alaska through the Independence Mine complex. Prime snow conditions also make this area very attractive for several organizations to conduct training in backcountry survival, avalanche safety, and search and rescue exercises. In the past, the US Olympic Ski Team has practiced in this area. Facilities at Independence Mine are often used to support training programs, and commercial lodging is available within the unit.

This unit has two of the longest operating mines, the Independence and Gold Bullion mines. The Independence Mine State Historical Park is the only site officially recognized in the National Register for Historic Places in the Hatcher Pass area. The remaining buildings from that mining operation are now a tourist destination and educational center.

Planning Issues

Planning issues focus on the ability of current facilities to support additional recreational use and conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses during the winter. This unit is experiencing some of the most rapid growth in visitation of any DNR-Parks managed recreation lands in the region. The parking areas and facilities are not large enough to accommodate for the amount of visitors to the area. Parking lots at both Fishhook and Independence Bowl often exceed capacity during shoulder season periods. Compounding the problem are the larger trailers being used by snowmobilers taking up more space in limited parking lots. No parking is allowed along Hatcher Pass Road in the winter due to heavy snows, high snow berms and the need for snow removal crews to have obstacle-free plowing.

Conflict between recreational users occurs primarily in the winter along the southern flanks of the Marmot Mountain ridge complex, near the Fishhook Trailhead. In the 1986 management plan, this area was closed to motorized recreational use. However, it was reopened administratively by DPOR due to insufficient staffing resources to maintain the closure. This area may be closed again in accordance with the original plan pending public approval.

Because of the heavy visitation and public demand for improved infrastructure, there is a strong need to develop a management plan for the Independence Mine State Historical Park. Current facilities cannot support large commercial tours. A development plan is needed to identify priorities for historic preservation projects to preserve the historical structures and to identify other needed infrastructure and use improvements.

Improve opportunities for summer mountain biking through the area. Because of the elevation gain/loss of the road, there is a demand for car-up, bike-down opportunities and there are currently no trails to accommodate this need.

Plan Designations and Land Classifications

This unit is co-designated Public Recreation-Public Use Site (Developed), Public Recreation-Dispersed, and Mineral, which converts to the co-classifications of Public Recreation Land and Mineral Land.

Management Intent

The management intent of this unit is to maintain the area for public recreation in such a manner that protects the scenic quality and wildlife and to both protect and enhance the Independence Mine State Historical Park. Continued mineral entry use and development are authorized. The area is intended to be managed primarily for non-motorized use and is closed to recreational motorized use during the summer months. The southwest section of this unit is open to winter motorized recreation as depicted on Map 3-7. The remainder of the unit is to be managed to ensure the continued use of the area for non-motorized forms of travel.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for motorized uses in designated 'non-motorized' areas. The areas affected by this restriction are depicted on Map 3-7.

Management Guidelines

The management guidelines that follow are based on the uses that are allowed, conditionally allowed, or prohibited. Based on these guidelines, few uses other than those authorized as a matter of state law, are intended within this unit. Accordingly, the guidelines only deal with those uses that could occur within this unit. All state land is to be retained.

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.

Mining

- The number and kind of structures authorized in a Plan of Operations shall be the minimum necessary for the operation of permitted subsurface mining operations.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the requirements for the siting, type, and number of mining identified in the Subsurface Resource section of Chapter 2.
- Initiate a mineral order (closing) to close the west one-half of section 28 within T020NR001E.

Utilities

- Utility lines are to be situated so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road and so they blend with ridges rather than stand out as a skyline feature.
- Utility lines shall be placed underground. If this is not practical the standards for Utilities in the Recreation section of Chapter 2 are to be followed.
- 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. The creation of access routes to these sites is prohibited.

Management Recommendations

- The management unit is recommended for inclusion into the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area. Revise the boundaries affected by the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3) to coincide with those depicted on Map 3-7. Management Unit boundaries have been realigned to coincide with visible ground features and resolve discrepancies in multi-agency mapping. This change will make boundary interpretations easier for on-the-ground management.

- The southeast area of this unit accompanied with the Marmot Mountain ridge complex should be managed according to the original 1986 Management Plan and closed to winter motorized recreation for public safety purposes. The area is steep and commonly used by skiers and sled riders due to its close proximity to the Fishhook Trailhead. There is potential for snowmachine and skier accidents due to the extreme high-marking by snowmachines through an area frequently used by families and novice recreationists.
- State land within this unit should remain closed to recreational off-road vehicle use in this unit year-round, except in areas identified as being ‘open’ to such use, consistent with the 1986 management plan. The amount of land closed to year round (including winter) off-road motorized use in this management unit totals 1,931 acres. This is a decrease of 373 acres.
 - *Note: The 1986 plan and associated regulations resulted in the closure of approximately 18,683 acres of land. The overall year-round recreational motorized closures in this plan is approximately 18,418 acres, or a decrease of 265 acres.*
- Develop a management plan for the Independence Mine Historical Park. (Note: Although this plan provides recommendations for facilities and improvements at the IMSHP, it is out of the scope of this plan to provide specific management guidance for the park. It should also be recognized that the management plan may develop somewhat different recommendations than those contained herein and should this occur, the management plan for the Independence Mine Historical Park shall prevail.)
- Close an area of approximately 50 acres to mineral entry to protect facility and recreational area development. (Note: Mineral entry closure does not mean motorized recreation closure. See Map C-2.)
- Subject to funding availability:
 - Expand existing parking areas and public restroom facilities to accommodate year-round public needs.
 - Develop electrical grid connections to the Independence Bowl and Mine area, underground or alternative.
 - The further development of hiking trails is considered appropriate; these are to be designed to sustained trail standards. Existing trails are depicted as “Non-Motorized Trails” on Map 3-7.
 - Develop a summer off-road bike trail system from Independence Mine to MP 12 Parking Lot.
 - Develop and implement Historic Preservation and Interpretive Plans.
 - Upgrade water tunnels to promote underground tours of the Independence Mine.
 - Provide funding for historic building renovation and adaptive re-use (priority emphasis will be on Bunkhouses #1 and 2, Managers Office, Mill Building, Trestle, and Mess Hall).

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Management Unit*

- Develop facility upgrades to accommodate large group tours.
- Expand facility use to year-round operations, including full funding for staff.
- Develop partnerships with other agencies, organizations, and possible concessionaires to appropriately use IMSHP infrastructure.

Map 3-7: Independence Unit

ARCHANGEL MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Archangel management unit (Map 3-8) is part of the historic lode district and is located in a rugged, glacially carved valley with many rock glaciers and large, granitic boulder areas. There are 6,943 acres in this management unit, of which 6,321 acres are state owned. Although there are still existing mining claims located within this unit, the majority of the land is state land, which is managed by DPOR. The unit is centrally located; bordered by the Willow Mountain, Craigie Creek, and Independence management unit to the west, Mile 16 management unit to the south, the High Glacier Peaks management unit to the north, and the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management unit to the east, where it shares the Archangel Road as its boundary.

Access into this unit is provided by the Archangel Road, which is currently maintained by the ADOT/PF in the summer. The road is in poor condition. It has a narrow bridge, and heads north, ending at the Fern Mine, where the public has established an unofficial parking area along the roadway. Snowbird Glacier is a popular year round recreation destination and is accessed via foot travel from this management unit. There are no RS 2477's present in this unit.

Small mammals, including arctic ground squirrels, marmots, and pikas, are common in this unit, especially in the high valleys and Dall sheep are known to be present in the mountainous areas. Ptarmigan are also present and often hunted. The Archangel Creek is a Chinook and coho salmon spawning area and a coho salmon rearing area.

Vegetation reflects elevation and is characterized by shrub types in the river bottoms and dwarf shrub at lower elevations.

Mineral potential is considered to be high in the northern area of the unit, although there are few current and active mining sites. Several historic mining sites scattered across the northern area of the unit.

This unit is characterized by extensive recreational use, both summer and winter. During the summer, hiking, horseback riding, backpacking, mountain-biking, and paragliding are popular. The most popular, non-motorized recreation in the northern area of this unit is rock climbing and mountaineering. The most popular climbing area is called "The Wall," which is depicted on DPOR maps. Berry picking is very popular in the late summer and early fall. People often travel to the Snowbird Glacier through the Archangel management unit, via the Lane Hut. There is very limited summer motorized use in the Archangel area.

During the winter, the Archangel management unit becomes an intensely used multi-use area. The access into the unit is provided by the Archangel Road and the Hatcher Pass Road. Since the Archangel Road is closed, many people park along the road in pull-outs where possible after the existing parking areas are filled. Non-motorized recreation includes cross-country skiing in the valley bottoms, back country skiing in the high country, and snowboarding, and telemarking in the Marmot Mountain Range. Motorized recreational use is snowmachining. Motorized users usually stay on trails and motorized corridors and head to the west side of the planning area, but have been known to recreate on steep slopes and high mark on the southern Marmot Mountain Ridge, amidst skiers and sled riders.

This unit has many historic mining claims, including the Fern Mine, which is located at the terminus of the Archangel Road in the northwest area of the unit.

Planning Issues

Planning issues focus on the ability of current facilities to support additional recreational use and the conflict between motorized and non-motorized uses during the winter. Conflict between uses occurs in the southern Marmot Mountain area, along the road, and west of Archangel Road. Another issue of concern is whether certain areas of this unit, that are now open, should be closed to snowmachine use. Discussion has focused on the conflicts between winter recreation user groups in the Marmot Mountain area and there have been several proposals during plan development that this area should be closed to snowmachine use and designated as a non-motorized recreation use area, due to safety concerns that occur when high-marking and skiing are occurring in the same area. This area is readily accessible and close to the road, which is one of the reasons it is so popular for non-motorized recreation. Since snowmachiners are able to travel further distances in a shorter period of time, they can ride north and west to open areas rather quickly. It was also suggested that the area north and east of the Marmot Mountain, on the eastern side of Archangel Road, within the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna unit be open to motorized recreational use in the winter.

Plan Designations and Land Classifications

This unit is co-designated as Public Recreation-Dispersed, and Mining, which converts to the co-classification of Public Recreation Land and Mineral Land.

Management Intent

The management intent of this unit is to maintain the area for dispersed public recreation in such a manner that protects the scenic quality and wildlife. This unit is to be managed for both motorized and non-motorized recreation in the winter and for non-motorized recreation in the summer. The non-motorized areas designated on Map 3-8 are to be managed to ensure the continued use of these areas for non-motorized forms of travel.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for motorized uses in areas designated 'non-motorized' areas in the winter, which is located in the south and southeast sections within this unit and encompasses the Marmot Mountain Ridge. The management unit is closed to off road motorized recreation in the summer. The areas affected by this restriction are depicted on Map 3-8.

Management Guidelines

The management guidelines that follow are based on the uses that are allowed, conditionally allowed, or prohibited. Based on these guidelines, few uses other than those authorized as a matter of state law, are intended within this unit. Accordingly, the guidelines only deal with those uses that could occur within this unit. All state land is to be retained.

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.

Mining

- The number and kind of structures authorized in a Plan of Operations shall be the minimum necessary for the operation of permitted subsurface mining operations.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the requirements for the siting, type, and number of mining identified in the Subsurface Resource section of Chapter 2.

Utilities

- Utility lines are to be situated so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road and so they blend with ridges rather than stand out as a skyline feature.

- Utility lines shall be placed underground. If this is not practical the standards for Utilities in the Recreation section of Chapter 2 are to be followed.
- 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.

Management Recommendations

- This management unit is recommended for inclusion into the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area. Revise the boundaries affected by the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3) to coincide with those depicted on Map 3-8. Management Unit boundaries have been realigned to coincide with visible ground features. This change will make boundary interpretations easier for on-the-ground management.
- Restrict off-road recreational motorized use in the Marmot Mountain area during the winter for public safety and reduction in user conflict. This area of closure is approximately 762 acres in size and borders the Hatcher Pass Road to the south and the Archangel Road on the east, as depicted on Map 3-8. (This closure is a result of the review of the ‘Winter Use Option’ in the PRD)¹²
- Restrict off-road recreational motorized use on 2.5 miles of the Archangel Road, beginning at the Hatcher Pass Road and ending at the Fern Mine Road as depicted on Map 3-8. It is intended that this section of the road be used for Nordic Ski Trails.
 - Note: The Archangel Road was formerly a multi-use trail. As part of the adopted plan, the Reed Creek area was open to recreational motorized winter use to allow for motorized recreation alongside the Archangel Road. Additionally, DPOR received funding for a snowmachine corridor that will parallel this section of the Archangel Road, however it will be located within the Reed Lakes / Little Susitna Unit.
- The Fern Mine Road will remain a winter multi-use trail in the winter.

¹² The PRD contained a ‘Plan Recommendation’ and a ‘Winter Use Option’. The ‘Plan Recommendation’ represented the (then) recommendation of the department and generally consisted of the current (1986) regulation non-motorized boundaries realigned to topographic features plus the closure of the Mile 16 management unit and a portion of the Independence management unit. The ‘Winter Use Option’ substantially changed the non-motorized boundaries by adding as closed areas, in addition to Mile 16 management unit, portions of the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management unit at Delia Creek and Marmot Mountain in the Archangel unit. In addition, it *opened* the area of the Reed Creek drainage between Government Creek in the north and the Gold Mint parking lot in the south, to winter motorized use, while retaining the summer closure in the same area. Consult the PRD for more detail on the Winter Use Option.

- All state land within the Archangel unit will be closed to off-road recreational motorized use during the summer months as depicted on Map 3-8.
- Develop new parking lots and restroom facilities and improve existing facilities along the Archangel and Hatcher Pass Road to support parking needs of recreational users. Providing additional parking areas should ease parking congestion during the winter. These new and expanded parking facilities are also intended to provide motorized recreationists with additional parking along the east-west snowmachine corridor to facilitate their transportation to the west side of the planning area. (See Chapter 4, Table 4-4 for specific recommendations.)
- Close an area of approximately 130 acres to mineral entry to protect facility and recreational area development. (Note: Mineral entry closure does not mean motorized recreation closure. See Map C-1.)
- Subject to funding availability:
 - Widen and provide year round maintenance to the Archangel Road.
 - Replace existing bridge on Archangel Road since it is substandard and an increase in volume of visitation and traffic is anticipated.
 - Develop a large parking area with restroom facilities to accommodate year-round public needs at the terminus of the road near Fern Mine.
 - Develop a large parking area with restroom facilities to accommodate year-round public needs at the intersection of Archangel Road and Hatcher Pass Road at Mile Post 14.5.

Map 3-8: Archangel Unit

REED LAKES / LITTLE SUSITNA MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management unit (Map 3-9) contains portions of Reed Creek and the two Reed Lakes and the upper reaches of the Little Susitna River. There are 30,529 acres of land within this management unit, 30,513 acres of which are state land that is mountainous except for the two well developed river valleys. It is bounded on the north by the High Glacier Peaks management unit and on the west by the Archangel and Government Peak management units. The area east of Hatcher Pass Road is included within this unit. In the area of principal use, the western boundary is formed by the Archangel Road, a dominant landscape feature. (The road itself is situated within the Archangel Management unit). The unit also abuts the Matanuska Valley Moose Range on the east. A portion of the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area occupies the Little Susitna River drainage and the two river corridors (Reeds Creek and Little Susitna River) are closed to motorized recreation on a year-round basis by state regulation 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3)¹³.

Access to this unit is provided from the Gold Mint parking lot on the Hatcher Pass Road. From this location, winter recreationists access the mountainous areas to the south and, through the Archangel Road corridor, the Archangel management unit. The Little Susitna Drainage is accessed from this location for cross-country skiing and other non-motorized sports. There are no RS 2477s present in the unit.

Although the terrain of the management unit is mountainous, two broad river valleys occupy the lowlands of this unit. Vegetation reflects elevation and is characteristically shrub types in the river bottoms and dwarf shrub at lower elevations. Alpine tundra, ice, or barren rock is characteristic of higher elevations.

Small mammals (arctic ground squirrels, marmots, and pikas) are common in this unit, especially in the high valleys and Dall sheep are known to be present in the mountainous areas. Moose are present in the two river valleys. Trapping and hunting activities are common during the fall. The Little Susitna River is an anadromous stream until it reaches Lone Tree Creek, within the management unit. This stream still has significant value for downstream fisheries, because it functions as its headwaters. It is a Chinook and coho salmon spawning area and coho rearing area.

¹³ This area is closed to motorized use except that the department may issue a permit for motorized use for mineral, grazing, trail construction or maintenance, or trapping, if the department determines that the use would not substantially interfere with the recreational uses of the area.

Mineral potential is considered to be high in that portion of the unit near Reed Lakes. There are no current active mining sites although there are several historic sites, the principal one being the Snowbird Mine. The Hatcher Pass Public Use Area is closed to mineral entry as are Reed Creek valley and the two lakes (MCO 496)¹⁴. There are few current mining claims and neither of these occurs in the Reed Lakes area.

This unit is characterized by extensive recreational use, both summer and winter. During the summer, hiking, horseback riding, backpacking, and mountain-biking are common. Some berry picking occurs during the fall and the high peaks are used for both mountain and rock climbing. During the winter there is a mixture of cross-country skiing in the valley bottoms and back country skiing in the high country. Within this unit, there are two principal trails: one provides access to the backcountry adjacent to the Little Susitna and the Reed Lakes Trail provides access to the two Reed Lakes and the Snowbird Mine. While both are extensively used, the Reed Lakes Trail is considered one of the most scenic trails in south-central Alaska. The head of the valley occupied by the lakes is a portal for multi-day trip backcountry trips to the peaks near the Mine, Bomber, and Snowbird Glaciers. A hut built by the Mountaineering Club of Alaska is located near Mint Glacier.

This was an important placer mining area until the late 1930s. The Snow Bird Mine is within this unit. The road leading to it is now a popular hiking and cross-country skiing trail.

Planning Issues

Planning issues focus on the ability of current facilities to support additional recreational use and the conflict between motorized and non-motorized uses during the winter. Conflict between these uses occurs in the mountainous terrain south of the Little Susitna River and along the valley bottom immediately east of Archangel Road. Another issue concerns whether certain of the areas of this unit, although now closed, should be opened to snowmachine use and, conversely, whether areas now open to motorized use should be closed. Discussion has focused on the conflicts between the two forms of winter recreation in the valley bottom of Reed Creek and there have been several proposals during plan development that this area be used a snowmachine 'play area' for beginner and intermediate level snowmachiners. Few areas of this type are available within the East Side area. Conversely, areas south of the Little Susitna River have been proposed for designation as non-motorized areas on the grounds that there are on-going conflicts between uses and because this area is readily accessible.

Plan Designation and Land Classification

This unit is designated Public Recreation-Dispersed, which converts to the classification of Public Recreation Land.

¹⁴ The effect of these closures is to preclude mining in the more scenic areas of the unit.

Management Intent

The management intent of this unit is to maintain the area for dispersed public recreation in such a manner that protects the scenic quality and wildlife. The non-motorized areas designated on Map 3-9 are to be managed to ensure the continued use of these areas for non-motorized forms of travel.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for motorized uses in areas designated 'non-motorized' areas. The areas affected by this restriction are depicted on Map 3-9. Within this management unit there are areas that are closed on a year-round basis, on a summer only basis, and are not closed to such use at all.

Management Guidelines

The management guidelines that follow are based on the uses that are allowed, conditionally allowed, or prohibited. Based on these guidelines, few uses other than those authorized as a matter of state law, are intended within this unit. Accordingly, the guidelines only deal with those uses that could occur within this unit. All state land is to be retained.

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.

Mining

- The number and kind of structures authorized in a Plan of Operations shall be the minimum necessary for the operation of permitted subsurface mining operations.
- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with the requirements identified in the Subsurface Resource section of Chapter 2.

Utilities

- Utility lines are to be situated so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road and so they blend with ridges rather than stand out as a skyline feature.
- Utility lines shall be placed underground. If this is not practical the standards for Utilities in the Recreation section of Chapter 2 are to be followed.
- 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.

Management Recommendations

- Reed Lakes and the valley bottom associated with Reed Creek are recommended for inclusion in the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. This is an area of outstanding scenery and warrants inclusion within the PUA.
- Revise the boundaries affected by the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3) to coincide with those depicted in plan Map 3-9. Boundaries have been realigned so that they coincide with visible ground features in order to make on the ground boundary interpretations easier.
- In addition, an area along the Little Susitna River Corridor that parallels the Palmer-Fishhook Road and the general area of the Mat-Su Borough Alpine and Nordic Ski facility development is recommended for year round motorized use closure. This change was made at the request of the borough in an effort to preclude noise, potential traffic impact, and uses that may be incompatible with the development of their ski facilities.
- As a result of the review of the 'Alternative Winter Option' in the PRD¹⁵ and eventual adoption of this approach by the DNR Commissioner, two other significant changes to motorized boundaries within this management unit are recommended. These include the opening of the Reed Creek valley to winter motorized use and the closure of the Delia Creek area south of the Gold Mint parking lot to year-round motorized

¹⁵ The PRD contained a 'Plan Recommendation' and a 'Winter Use Option'. The 'Plan Recommendation' represented the (then) recommendation of the department and generally consisted of the current (1986) regulation non-motorized boundaries realigned to topographic features plus the closure of the Mile 16 management unit and a portion of the Independence management unit. The 'Winter Use Option' substantially changed the non-motorized boundaries by adding as closed areas, in addition to Mile 16 management unit, portions of the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management unit at Delia Creek and Marmot Mountain in the Archangel unit. In addition, it *opened* the area of the Reed Creek drainage between Government Creek in the north and the Gold Mint parking lot in the south, to winter motorized use, while retaining the summer closure in the same area. Consult the PRD for more detail on the Winter Use Option.

use. The area of the Reed Creek drainage remains closed to motorized use during the summer, however, continuing the current regulatory closure. These changes in boundaries will result in 6,742 acres being closed to year round motorized use in this management unit, an increase 1,869 acres from the current area of closure. A substantial revision in the manner of use of Archangel Road is associated with these changes. Changes to the allowable uses on this road in the winter are described under the Archangel management unit.

- Subject to funding availability:
 - Improve Reed Lakes Trail and develop the Reed Creek trail.
 - Develop a motorized winter trail adjacent to and immediately east of Archangel Road. This trail would start at the Gold Mint parking lot and continue northward just east of Archangel Road to (approximately) the unimproved parking lot at the Reed Lakes trailhead.

Map 3-9: Reed Lakes / Little Susitna Unit

MILE 16 MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Mile 16 management unit (Map 3-10) is located at the first switchback on the Hatcher Pass Road. It consists of 718 acres land and includes 689 acres state and 29 acres of private land that are primarily associated with the Motherlode Lodge. With the exception of the Motherlode Lodge, this unit encompasses the land enclosed by the road corridor as depicted on Map 3-10. It is bordered by the Hatcher Pass Road on the west and east sides and by the southern ravine crest of the Fishhook Creek on the south. It is southeast of the Archangel management unit, west of the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management unit, and north of the Government Peak management unit. This area was included in the Government Peak management unit in the 1986 management plan. With the exception of the Motherlode Lodge, this land is state owned and currently managed by DPOR under a management agreement between DMLW and DPOR. Much of this management unit is included in the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. Most of the land is steep terrain and includes the popular Mile 16 and 'Paradise Ski Runs'. Access to this unit is provided from the Gold Mint parking lot, pullouts on along the Hatcher Pass Road, and from the Motherlode Lodge, at Mile Posts 12, 13, and 16.

Vegetation reflects elevation and topography. It is characteristically shrub types and a few stands of cottonwood trees at the lower elevations and sub-alpine meadows, Alpine tundra, dense alder thickets with grassy meadows characteristic of higher elevations.

Small mammals (arctic ground squirrels, snowshoe hares, and marmots) are common and some small game hunting does occur in this area. The lower sections of Fishhook Creek are salmon rearing areas. Game birds include ptarmigan, spruce grouse, and ruffed grouse. Bald eagles have been known to roost and nest in the cottonwood trees in lower elevations.

Mineral potential is not considered to be high in this management unit although some placer mining potential exists there, mainly along the Fishhook Creek. There are historic mine sites located in the eastern side of the planning area as well.

This unit is characterized by year-round recreational use. During the summer, photography, hiking, berry picking, recreational gold panning, and some small game hunting, are common activities. During the winter, the area is very popular for skiing the 'Mile 16' and 'Paradise Ski Runs', telemarking, downhill skiing, snowboarding, and sled riding. The area is not popular for motorized users, although they do use the far eastern area near the Motherlode Lodge to access the east-west snowmachine corridor to the west side of the planning area.

Planning Issues

The Mile 16 management unit is a new management unit which was created because of the concentrated non-motorized recreation that occurs in the area. In the original plan and amendment it was a section of the Government Peak management unit. In the 1986 management plan, the area was noted as a snowmachine area. Since that time, it has become a popular area for non-motorized recreation instead. Planning issues focus on the ability of current facilities to support intense recreational use, potential conflict between motorized and non-motorized uses during the winter and safety concerns of recreational users. Portions of the Hatcher Pass Road along the north-west side of this unit are subject to avalanches. The plowing of pullouts along avalanche-prone areas of the road is not performed for safety reasons. This problem is exasperated by a narrower road in the winter with high snow berms. With safety in mind, the careful development of pull-outs, parking or turnarounds associated with recreational use and ski runs within this unit are recommended to mitigate public safety concerns and congested road traffic.

In the winter, the area is extremely popular as a self-serviced ski and sled area due to the ease of highway access at the top and bottom of the runs. Highway vehicles are commonly used to shuttle recreationalists to the top of the ski runs, allowing numerous runs in a fairly short time period. When snow conditions are good, weekend use of this area often exceeds parking and turnaround capacity, and creates traffic congestion on the highway. This is especially pronounced at the Paradise Run where there is no parking or pullout area at the drop-off zone. This creates a situation where vehicles are making 3-point and U-Turns in a narrow roadway, on a hill, with limited visibility and often icy road conditions. Additional problems arise at the bottom of Paradise with insufficient run-out between the base of the hill and the highway, causing many recreationalists to ski out into the roadway. Conflict is primarily due to road congestion, parking, and occasional snowmachines riding in areas where people are actively skiing or sled riding.

In the summer, recreational use is not as concentrated in the area, however the Mile 16 parking area is also one of the most popular scenic overlooks in the planning area, and frequently used as a photographic backdrop and small ceremonies such as weddings. The lower section of Fishhook Creek is a popular recreational gold panning area. The area has great potential for all-terrain bicycling, using similar runs as winter skiing. Concerns were raised about the need for a designated ATV route for summer use across the center of the unit to connect with Archangel Road. A motorized corridor along the Fishhook Creek was also proposed. There was little opposition to closing or restricting motorized use in the winter.

Plan Designation and Land Classification

This unit is designated Public Recreation-Concentrated, which converts to the classification of Public Recreation Land.

Management Intent

The management intent of this unit is to maintain the area for safe public recreation in such a manner that protects the scenic quality and wildlife. The non-motorized areas designated on Map 2-3 are to be managed to ensure the continued use of these areas for non-motorized forms of travel and recreation. Summer motorized recreation is only permitted on designated motorized routes developed to sustainable trail standards. A proposed route is depicted on Map 3-10.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in Table 2-1.

Generally Allowed Uses

All Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 are permitted except for motorized uses in areas designated 'non-motorized areas or routes'. The areas affected by this restriction are depicted on Map 3-10.

Management Guidelines

The management guidelines that follow are based on the uses that are allowed, conditionally allowed, or prohibited. Based on these guidelines, few uses other than those authorized as a matter of state law, are intended within this unit. Accordingly, the guidelines only deal with those uses that could occur within this unit. All state land is to be retained.

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 2-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state.

Utilities

- Utility lines are to be situated so that they are not visible from the Hatcher Pass Road and so they blend with ridges rather than stand out as a skyline feature.
- Utility lines shall be placed underground. If this is not practical the standards for Utilities in the Recreation section of Chapter 2 are to be followed.

- 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. The creation of access routes to these sites is prohibited.

Management Recommendations

- The management unit is recommended for inclusion into the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area. Revise the boundaries affected by the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3) to coincide with those depicted on Map 3-10.
- This area of concentrated recreational non-motorized use should be closed to year round motorized use. This closure will effect 633 acres of state land.
- The Mile 16 area should be considered for inclusion into the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area.
- Consider seasonal highway safety zones (speed reductions, warning signage) during peak winter recreation periods.
- Regulatory Change Recommendation: Formally designate the major ski runs through the area as closed to hunting. Small game hunters (winter) currently utilize the Mile 12 as a staging area for hunting, often discharging weapons along trails being used by skiers and boarders. Because of the high density recreation occurring, firearm discharge should be disallowed for public safety reasons. If implemented, this recommendation will require changes to the current regulations under 11 AAC 12.
- Subject to funding availability:
 - Enlarge the Gold Mint Trailhead to accommodate for heavy recreational use in that area.
 - Expand the Mile 12 pullout and the pullout at the end of Paradise Run. Heavy weekend use of these areas results in congestion and that often obstructs traffic along the Hatcher Pass Road.
 - Develop more pullouts in the area of mile 12 and 13 (Hatcher Pass Road). Many recreationists beginning their run at the top of Paradise end up in dispersed locations along the road. Although most end up at the popular Paradise pick-up area, there is a growing number of skiers and boarders attracted to off-trail and exploratory runs which result in these users ending up at random points along the roadway. This ultimately results in vehicles stopping and obstructing traffic.

- Develop ski/sled runs that could be utilized as summer hiking and biking corridors throughout the unit. This would involve enhancement of existing routes, development of additional routes, and to improve safety especially where these routes meet the roadway along Mile 12 and 13.
- Develop restroom facilities at designated parking areas as use increases.
- Develop a bicycle trail plan for the area. The trail plan should consider whether technical features such as jumps, ramps, rails, etc are appropriate, and if so how they will be maintained. (Currently, the public creates their own.)
- Designate a motorized (summer) trail on the section of dirt road that transects the center of this management unit. This trail is to be developed according to sustainable trail standards. Note: This recommendation is tentative at this time and is subject to public comment.

Map 3-10: Mile 16 Unit

GOVERNMENT PEAK MANAGEMENT UNIT

Background

The Government Peak management unit (Map 3-11) includes areas suitable for a variety of recreational uses, primarily for Alpine (Northern Area) and Nordic (Southern Area) ski facilities, and possible commercial and residential development. There has been great interest on the part of both the state and the borough over the last two decades to see these facilities developed.

The unit¹⁶ is bordered on the north by the Mile 16 and Independence management units, to the west by the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit, on the east by the Reed Lakes/Little Susitna management unit, and on the south by private land. The northern boundary does not include the Hatcher Pass Road while the eastern boundary does.

The Government Peak unit is easily accessed by Hatcher Pass Road and contains approximately 8,347 acres. In contrast to other units in the planning area where the state is the dominant land owner, ownership in this unit is split between the state (5,335 acres) and the borough (3,012 acres). The ownership pattern is depicted on Map 3-11. The area owned by the borough includes the more developable and accessible land within the management unit. The more mountainous areas within this unit are owned by the state. It is important to recognize this dual ownership since it greatly impacts how the unit is managed.

This area is located adjacent to the Hatcher Pass Road on hilly terrain, although some benches occur and are fairly level. Deciduous forest occurs adjacent to portions of the Hatcher Pass Road while other areas are covered by shrub at lower elevations and by shrub and dwarf shrub at middle elevations and alpine vegetation in the higher elevations. Most of the unit consists of uplands (99%) with the remainder either wetlands or streams. The majority of the wetlands and streams are in the Southern area.

¹⁶ The boundary of the Government Peak management unit is different in the 2010 Management Plan than in the 1986 Plan and the 1989 Plan Amendment. The three areas of principle difference occur within the eastern, northeastern, and southwestern boundaries. The eastern boundary is shifted to coincide with the Hatcher Pass Road, an obvious management feature. The area that is known as 'Mile 16' is dropped from the northeastern part of the Government Peak management unit and made a separate management unit. The intensity of use and level of conflict warranted the creation of this new management unit. The northern management unit boundary is Fishhook Creek, not the Hatcher Pass Road. This portion of the Hatcher Pass Road is now managed under the Mile 16 management unit. Also, much of the southwestern part of the unit has been modified, and generally coincides with Government Creek. This change was made to accommodate the current uses in this area, which include motorized uses.

There are 5 tributaries of the Little Susitna River with coho salmon and Dolly Varden spawning and rearing in each of them. Moose are present in the unit below an elevation of 3,000 feet on the eastern and southern sides of Government Peak. Black bear are also seen in the unit on occasion. Beaver are present and numerous beaver dams and lodges are present throughout the northeastern side of the unit.

Because of favorable terrain and ready access, this unit is very popular for winter sports, including skiing, snowmobiling, sledding, and snow shoeing. The northeastern slopes of Government Peak and Bald Mountain Ridge contain suitable terrain for alpine skiing. There is potential for commercially operated alpine skiing, with skiers coming from the Valley and surrounding communities. An access road and parking facility has been partially developed off of Hatcher Pass Road (Mile 11.2) by the borough to access this area. There has also been a demand by the public to develop Nordic ski facilities and the southern part of this unit contains topography suitable for this purpose. During the summer and fall the entire unit is popular for a variety of activities including hiking, mountain biking, mountain running, hunting, berry picking, whitewater kayaking, and mountaineering education. ORV use also occurs in the southern part, which is primarily associated with hunting in the fall.

A variety of existing administrative and statutory provisions control land use in the unit and will continue to do so under this management plan:

- Lands closed to mineral entry. The unit is closed to mineral entry under administrative mineral closing orders (MCO 549, 541) and pursuant to the authority of the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area, which closes the land within the PUA to mineral entry (AS 41.23.110(f)¹⁷.
- Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. The PUA, which is also depicted on Map 3-11, requires that the land owned by the state be managed consistent with the purposes of the PUA, which focus on the provision of recreation and the protection of wildlife and fishery resources as well as the scenic resources of the area. Portions of the PUA exist within the Government Peak management unit, generally to the west of the Hatcher Pass Road and the Little Susitna River. Although settlement is precluded within the PUA, the types of developed recreational uses permitted in this plan, on both borough as well as state land, are consistent with PUA statutory provisions and legislative intent.
- Development Lease. Ownership and management of the Development Lease, originally issued by the state, has been transferred to the borough, reflecting the interest of the borough to develop the ski areas. When the lease was originally issued to Mistui Ltd. in 1989, the state was the only land owner in the Government Peak management unit. Since that time, the Borough became the principal land owner

¹⁷ Note: Valid mining claims that existed on September 1, 1986 remained valid. These claims have since been abandoned or extinguished.

where the ski area facilities would be built and the state has transferred its management to the borough as it relates to ski area and related development. The state retains decision making authority on the use and management on other aspects of state land only.

- **Tri-Party Management Agreement.** A management agreement between the MSB, DPOR and DMLW has existed since 2002. This agreement provides that DPOR and DMLW will be the lead agencies in the natural resource permitting and recreation management of state land. DMLW is responsible for land use decisions on state land. The borough is responsible for all land use activities on land owned by the borough. In the case of the Alpine area where the land is owned by both the state and borough the agreement calls for a mutual decision making process. It is the intent that DPOR shall function as the lead for enforcement of general recreation and related activities (traffic, parking, vandalism, recreation, etc.) on both borough and state lands, but works in coordination with the borough.

Planning Issues

A variety of significant issues affect this management unit. Perhaps the most significant are land use decisions affecting the development of Alpine and Nordic ski area facilities in the northern and southern portions of the unit. If constructed, the majority of the improved facilities will be located on borough owned land. Because federal funds will be used to develop certain transportation related elements that access the Alpine and Nordic ski areas, the borough has completed an Environmental Impact Statement. The areas of the proposed Alpine and Nordic skiing facilities are depicted on Map 3-11. Besides the EIS process, other planning processes are now underway (see below) that may affect development of both areas. The state supports the efforts of the borough in its development of both the Nordic and Alpine ski facilities and the recommendations that follow implement this concept. The Borough Assembly has adopted “Hatcher Pass – A New Beginning” which is a conceptual phased development plan for the ski area facilities.

Consistent with a litigation related settlement agreement, (*Cascadia Wildlands Project v. State of Alaska, DNR, DMLW*), the land owned by the borough must be managed consistent with the Hatcher Pass Management Plan. As a result of this settlement, the Borough must adopt this management plan along with the DNR.

Another significant issue affecting this management unit is the need for additional parking and trail facilities on the south side of this management unit. These facilities are almost certainly necessary, even with the proposed development of similar facilities in the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit.

Applicability of Plan Requirements within the Government Peak Management Unit

The following requirements affect both the borough and DNR. It is intended that these requirements and the 2010 HPMP generally, function as the basis for the management of state and borough land within the Government Peak management unit. As such, the HPMP will function as the land use plan for the state and as the comprehensive plan for the borough as it relates to this unit. The borough intends to adopt the HPMP as the basis for its land use management and planning on borough owned land. The 2010 Plan supersedes the 1986 Plan and the 1989 Plan Amendment. The provisions of either do not apply once the 2010 Plan is adopted.

Plan Designations, Land Classifications, and Allowed Uses

Two plan designations affect this management unit. The areas depicted in Map 3-11 as 'Northern Development Area' and 'Southern Development Area' correspond to the plan designation of 'Public Recreation-Developed', while the plan designation of 'Public Recreation-Dispersed' affects all remaining areas. The state land in the unit is designated Public Recreation-Dispersed, except for a relatively small area associated with the Alpine ski facility development. The Public Recreation-Developed designation affects borough owned land and the small area of state land associated with the Alpine ski facility.

Borough land in the unit has been separated into two areas; Northern Area and Southern Area. The northern area may be developed as an Alpine ski facility, which would include parking, roads, and other structures intended to support this facility. Most structures would be concentrated on borough land, while the state land is intended to accommodate ski lifts and related ski facilities. The Southern Area may be developed as a Nordic ski facility, with ski trails, parking, roads and other facilities designed to support a Nordic ski area¹⁸.

Both designations convert to the land use classification of Public Recreation Land on both state and borough land. The borough owned land is currently unclassified but, when the HPMP is adopted by the Borough, the borough land will be classified Public Recreation Land.

Uses that are currently authorized on state and borough land remain authorized. Other uses, including settlement and commercial, may also be appropriate within this area, but under certain conditions. Commercial and settlement uses associated with public recreation or public recreation facilities are permitted within areas designated Public Recreation-Concentrated if authorized through borough planning and legislative processes. A plan

¹⁸ Within lands owned by the borough, the borough may create subunits with more specific management rules and guidelines as long as they are consistent with the management intent and plan designations in the 2010 Plan. When these subunits are approved by the Borough Assembly, they also become part of the 2010 Plan. A plan amendment is not required for such changes.

amendment is not required under this procedure. Settlement or commercial uses that are not directly related to public recreation including improved public recreation facilities are only to be allowed through an amendment of the 2010 HPMP.

Management Intent

Areas designated “Public Recreation-Dispersed” on state land are to be managed to accommodate current non-motorized uses. Motorized uses that may be authorized include those motorized uses that are necessary to the support and operation of the Alpine and Nordic ski facilities. The description of uses under Plan Designations, Land Classifications, and Allowed Uses is included by reference.

Generally, development, except related to recreation, recreation related infrastructure, and public safety projects, is not intended in these areas. Some of these uses may be appropriate based on agency and public reviews, and adherence to the siting and design criteria identified under Management Guidelines and Management Recommendations of this section. DMLW shall not issue authorizations within this area that are incompatible with the proposed borough developments in the Northern and Southern areas. DNR shall coordinate with the borough on the authorization of all applications in the unit and shall not issue authorizations if the borough finds the proposed use(s) are inconsistent with the proposed borough developments in the Northern and Southern Areas. Uses are to be limited to those shown on the table below titled, “Listing of Uses Within the Government Peak Unit” and to those facilities that are recommended in the section under Management Recommendations.

Areas designated “Public Recreation-Developed” are to be managed to accommodate Alpine and Nordic ski facilities. Except for the small amount of state land, the land affected by this designation is borough owned. Borough land is to be managed to accommodate the development of Alpine and Nordic ski facilities, and those current uses consistent with these forms of development and land use. State land within the Northern Area will be managed to allow continued non-motorized uses and to accommodate structures related to the Alpine ski facility, such as ski lifts, and mid-mountain structures related to use of the ski areas.

Commercial and settlement uses within areas designated Public Recreation-Developed on borough land are appropriate if related to public recreation or public recreation facilities and if authorized through borough planning and legislative processes. Commercial or settlement use(s) that are directly related to the functions of the recreational facility (i.e. ski shop, caretaker housing, etc.) or those uses where revenue is derived from the sale of land or improvements that will be used for developing and operating the recreational facilities are considered appropriate, if authorized as indicated above. Commercial or settlement uses that are not directly related to the public recreation shall only be allowed within areas designated Public Recreation-Developed or Public Recreation-Dispersed through a plan amendment. Motorized uses necessary to the operation of the Alpine ski facility and for maintenance, public health and safety, and security are recognized as appropriate on both state and borough land.

Generally Allowed Uses (State and Borough)

Requirements related to Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020 only affect state land. These same uses are also allowed on borough land. This management unit is closed to recreational motorized recreation and the use of motorized corridors on a year-round basis.¹⁹

Areas affected by the “Public Recreation-Dispersed” designation: All generally allowed uses are permitted except for year-round motorized use restrictions and those uses allowed by permit under the Special Land Use Designation (ADL 223585). Lawful trapping, hunting, and fishing, among other uses, are allowed on state land (11 AAC 96.020) and borough land. Motorized uses in support of both the Nordic or Alpine ski facilities and their operations are exempt from this restriction. The areas affected by this restriction are depicted on Map 3-11.

Areas affected by the “Public Recreation-Developed” designation: All generally allowed uses are permitted except for year-round motorized use restrictions as depicted on Map 3-11, except those authorized by permit under the same Special Use Designation (ADL 223585). Motorized uses in direct support of the Nordic or Alpine ski facilities and their operations are exempt from this prohibition. The area affected by this restriction is depicted on Map 3-11.

Uses Requiring Authorization

Uses requiring authorization by DNR and the Borough are to be consistent with state or borough code, as appropriate, and are to be allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed according to the listing provided in the table below (also shown for the entire HPMP area in Table 2-1) and consistent with Management Intent for this unit. In the event of discrepancies between the two tables, Table 3-1 controls.

¹⁹ The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly passed two resolutions in 2010 requesting that the Government Peak Management Unit be closed to motorized recreational use on a year-round basis and that there be no motorized corridors within the management unit. See Resolution No. 10-036, which was passed on May 04, 2010 and Resolution No. 10-103, which was passed on December 14, 2010.

Table 3-2: Listing of Uses Within the Government Peak Unit²⁰

Potential Use	Allowed, Prohibited, or Conditionally Allowed	Stipulations	Comment
Agriculture	Not allowed.		
Commercial Recreation (not including Alpine and Nordic ski area development)	Allowed on state land.	Commercial recreation facilities may be authorized if in complementary or direct support of the commercial recreation activity and consistent with the stipulations that may be imposed in a borough adopted development plan or included in a Special Land Use Plan. The appropriateness of these uses is to be determined during the adjudication and public involvement process.	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 commercial tours.
General Commercial, including lodging	Conditionally allowed.	Commercial use is allowable if it is consistent with the management intent and management guidelines and, on borough land, will be subject to the stipulations that may be imposed in borough adopted development plan or included in a Special Land Use Plan.	On borough land commercial use is an allowed use if related to public recreation facilities and if authorized by the borough. See also the discussion under 'Plan Designations and Land Classifications.'
Grazing Leases	Not allowed.		
Industrial, including uses similar to industrial in character	Not allowed.		This definition does not include alternative energy or hydroelectric power facilities, or facilities that would support ski development.
Material Extraction	Not allowed except for cut and fill situations as related to public safety and public transportation (road, trails, and the like), and development of commercial Alpine, Nordic or other recreational facilities.	Subject to all typical DNR or borough stipulations as appropriate for material extraction plus the restrictions noted for this use in Chapter 2.	Special care must be taken in the siting of material extraction adjacent to principal roads. Borough code related to mining and material extraction shall apply to both borough and state land.
Mining (including placer mining)	Not allowed.		

²⁰ The borough intends to prepare and implement a special land use designation (SLUDs) for portions of the Government Peak management unit, and this may include state land as well as borough. SLUDs identified allowed, conditionally allowed, and prohibited uses. A SPUD adopted by the borough may affect uses in this listing when its standards are more restrictive. SPUD requirements, however, may not allow a greater scope or intensity of use that those authorized in the listing. A plan amendment to this plan is required if other uses are to be restricted and/or if an expanded scope or intensity of use for listed uses is intended.

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Potential Use	Allowed, Prohibited, or Conditionally Allowed	Stipulations	Comment
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 on state land, 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 as necessary for forest health or where improvements will be located including roads, trails, utilities, etc.
Public Facilities	Public facilities related to public safety are allowed. Other types of public facilities are also allowed if identified in the management intent, management guidelines, or management recommendations in the Government Peak management unit.		Structures or facilities other than those noted in the second column are to be treated as conditionally allowed and must be authorized through a written decision.
Public Use, Recreational Use, Trapper and Remote Cabins	Public, administrative, or commercial recreation cabins are conditionally allowed. Personal use and trapper cabins are not allowed.	These types of structures may be allowed if consistent with management intent and management guidelines. All such uses are to go through borough or state adjudication and public review processes.	
Settlement	Not allowed, except that settlement may occur within the Government Peak Unit on borough land. See also 'Stipulations'.	Settlement is subject to the stipulations that may be imposed in the borough's development plan and/or Special Land Use District.	Settlement is an allowed use if related to public recreation facilities and if authorized by the borough. See also the discussion under 'Plan Designations and Land Classifications.'
Ski Facilities (including recreational facilities)	Allowed, subject to approval of a development plan.		The term 'ski facilities' means those uses and structures related to Alpine and Nordic ski complexes.
State Land Disposals for purposes of settlement or agriculture	Not allowed.		
Timber Harvest (Commercial)	Not allowed on state or borough land except for salvage and management for forest health and fire safety. May also be permitted where improvements will be located, including roads, trails, utilities, etc.	All such activities are to be coordinated with DOF, SCRO and the borough, and, if permitted, are to be consistent with the management intent for the unit.	Personal use harvest and general forest management is permitted. See below.

Potential Use	Allowed, Prohibited, or Conditionally Allowed	Stipulations	Comment
Trail Development and Management	Allowed.	Trails on state land are to be developed accordingly to DPOR Sustained Trail Standards.	The management of trails shall be consistent with the 2010 Plan and with any step-wise plan approved by the Assembly. The tri-party management agreement should be consulted prior to trail development or management actions.
Other Uses Not Otherwise Identified	Conditionally allowed.	Only uses consistent with the management intent and management guidelines for the Government Peak 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 and/or borough adjudication and public review process(es).

Management Guidelines: State

The management guidelines that follow are based on the uses that are allowed, conditionally allowed, or prohibited in Table 3-1. Consistent with the management intent for this unit, except for public recreation and some utilities, few uses are intended.

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by DNR are to be consistent with requirements of Table 3-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit and is in the overall best interest of the state and borough.
- Infrastructure, utilities and similar types of uses, including hydroelectric power generation facilities, are to be treated as a conditional use. Approval of facilities and structures of this type must be in the overall best interest of the state and borough and must be consistent with the requirements of this plan, particularly the management intent for this management unit and with the requirements for ‘utility lines’ in the Recreation section of Chapter 2.
- DNR shall not issue authorizations for uses or structures on state land that would be incompatible with the development and long-term operation of either the Alpine or Nordic ski facilities.
- 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.

Management Guidelines: Borough

Authorizations

- Authorizations issued by the Borough are to be consistent with requirements of Table 3-1. Prohibited uses can only be authorized by a plan amendment. Conditional uses may be authorized but the written finding must conclude that the use is consistent with the management intent for the management unit, borough land use requirements and is in the overall best interest of the Borough.
- Commercial, infrastructure, utility, and other uses related to the development and operation of an Alpine ski facility, as well as the ski facility itself, are recognized as appropriate within the Northern Area. Commercial and/or residential development not directly related to public recreation or public recreation facilities shall require an amendment to this plan.
- The development of a Nordic ski facility as well as commercial, infrastructure, utility and other uses that may be related to the development and operation of such uses are recognized as appropriate within the Southern Area. Commercial or residential development not directly related to public recreation or public recreation facilities shall require an amendment to this plan.
- Public recreation uses may continue on lands owned by the borough unless, in an approved development plan or amendment to this plan, use restrictions are established.

Management Recommendations: State

- This management unit has been recommended for inclusion into the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area. Implement changes to the Generally Allowed Uses of 11 AAC 96.014 that reflect the changes to recreational motorized use depicted in Map 3-11. This management unit remains closed to year round motorized use except for those uses permitted under Special Land Use Designation (ADL 223585). Appendix D contains the proposed changes in regulation.
- Revise the Development Lease between the borough and DMLW to bring it up to date. Revision should occur prior to or concurrent with the approval of a development plan for the ski facilities. See Chapter 4 for details. The state is to coordinate with the borough on this revision.

- Although the borough has recommended (2010) that a north-south winter motorized corridor not be established within the Government Peak management unit, in the event that the borough changes its position in regards to this facility, the 2010 Plan recognizes such a facility and, when/if approved by the Borough Assembly, the plan is amended by this action to automatically include it, although the state reserves the ability to alter corridor alignment in order to create a continuous facility on state and borough land. A winter motorized corridor on state land to connect with the corridor on borough land is similarly authorized in the 2010 Plan. Similarly, these connections are to be automatically included in the 2010 Plan, with the alignment following that identified in then current engineering studies (or a similar analytic process). Neither of these actions will require a plan amendment.
- The 2010 Plan also recognizes the potential for an east-west winter motorized corridor on state land within the area immediately south of Fishhook Creek²¹. The development of this facility should be considered after the improvements to the existing parking lots on Hatcher Pass Road, the establishment of a new parking lot at the intersection of Archangel Road and the Hatcher Pass Road, and the upgrading of the current snowmachine access corridor that adjoins this road on its north side²² and a determination is made by DNR that these improvements are insufficient to handle current or expected requirements for snowmachine access from the East Side to the West Side, or a determination is made that improvements are required for reasons of public safety. Conceptually, this new winter motorized corridor would begin just south of the intersection of Fishhook Creek and the Hatcher Pass road, continue westward following (and within 500') of Fishhook Creek, and then cross that creek to eventually tie into the Fishhook parking lot. The actual alignment of this facility is to be determined in more detailed site analyses. An additional parking facility may be required on Hatcher Pass Road in conjunction with the east-west corridor.

An east-west corridor can be developed independently of a north-south corridor on borough land or it can be integrated with a borough facility. To provide for the potential development of this facility, a corridor of 500' (south) from Fishhook Creek is to be retained for this purpose. Other uses may occur within this area on an interim basis, but only to the extent that they do not preclude the potential development of this winter motorized corridor. Assuming that the written determination finds that the development of a winter motorized corridor is required, amendment of the 2010 Plan is not required.

- Consider the development of a summer hiking trail connecting Government Peak to Hatch Peak. The evaluation of this route is to be coordinated with the borough.

²¹ The 2010 Plan recognizes the strong desire by the public to get from the East Side over to the West Side (which has extensive areas available for snowmachine use) and acknowledges this as a legitimate need that the state must attempt to meet through the development of new and/or improved facilities.

²² These facilities are described in the Archangel management unit.

- Improve signage at entrance to the Hatcher Pass Management Plan area (Class A sign).
- Improve signage on all designated trails and parking areas.

Management Recommendations: Borough

- Consider the development of an all season motorized route aligned in an east-west direction within the Southern Area built to sustainable trail standards. If such a corridor is determined appropriate it is intended that a connection on state land be provided that connects the segment in the borough with and through state land in the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit. If this route is developed by the borough, it should be connected with the proposed motorized corridor beginning on Schrock Road and the Wet Gulch Trail in the Bald Mountain/Hillside management unit. If established, management of the corridor within borough land is to be the responsibility of the borough. Sections of the corridor that are located on state land will be the responsibility of DMLW or DPOR.
- Improve signage on all designated trails and parking areas.

Map 3-11: Government Peak Unit

ADMINISTRATIVELY AND LEGISLATIVELY DESIGNATED AREAS

Background

The vast majority of state land within the planning area is what is termed general domain land, which can be thought of as typical state land. It is that state land administered under AS 38 (Natural Resources) for multiple uses (purposes) and includes the Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96.020. The other form of land within the planning area is that which is either administratively or legislatively withdrawn from general domain land for a special purpose'.²³ Special purpose land is state land that is intended for a particular purpose, usually as a state park, state game refuge, public use area, state recreation area, or state recreation site. As such, these areas must be administered differently than other state land within the planning area. These special purpose sites can be grouped into those legislatively designated and those that have been administratively designated. In all cases these areas *must be administered differently than general domain land and are to be managed for the purposes that are given either in statute or an administrative decision*, and as further described below:

Legislatively Designated

- Hatcher Pass Public Use Area (PUA). This PUA is controlled by AS 41.23.130 and is to be administered consistent with the purposes of that legislation, which broadly focus on recreation and habitat protection. The general requirement is that the PUA be managed to be consistent “with their primary function as public use land.” DNR interprets this broadly in the sense that a variety of uses may be allowed within the PUA if they do not interfere with public recreation or degrade habitat resources. (PUA’s are also subject to the other requirements of AS 38.) AS 41.23.110 also provides for the development of a management plan by DNR. The 2010 Management Plan is adopted as this management plan. Thus, uses appropriate within the PUA area are those that are specified in this plan.
- Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area (CHA). The Willow Mountain CHA is controlled by AS 16.20.500-530, which is the general authority for CHAs, and more specifically, by 5 AAC 95.420, which lists the activities that require a permit. The latter precludes certain activities from occurring within a CHA unless a permit is issued by ADF&G Division of Habitat. ADF&G has routinely issued a special area permit to the general public, which authorizes certain types of off road use in the CHA. ADF&G is to manage the CHA consistent with the management intent for the

²³ Both general domain land and special purpose land are described at length in Chapter 1 in the section ‘Land Ownership and Land Status’ (pp. 2-3).

Willow Mountain management unit in the October 1986 Management Plan unless a management plan prepared by ADF&G is prepared and adopted. ADF&G intends to develop such a plan and, once adopted, this plan will control those uses that are listed in 5 AAC 95.400. The requirement to be consistent with the 1986 Management Plan is then voided.

Administratively Designated

- The Summit Lake State Recreation Site is administered by DPOR under an ILMA (ADL 223584) with DMLW. Uses allowed in the SRS are those allowed under AS 38 except that summer motorized use is prohibited under 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3). DPOR exercises its general authorities (11 AAC 12) in this area.
- The Independence Mine State Historical Park is administered under an ILMA (ADL 223571) with DMLW. Uses allowed in this area are strictly controlled, with DPOR exercising its authorities under 11 AAC 12. This area is closed to off-road motorized use on a year-round basis under 11 AAC 96.014(B).²⁴

²⁴ Note: The citation reference may change with the adoption on revised regulations.