

## Hatcher Pass Management Plan

### Recreational Focus Group Meeting Summary Motorized and Non-Motorized Recreational Use Discussion

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land, and Water (DMLW), and Department of Outdoor Recreation, (DPOR), held a meeting with representatives of eighteen recreational user groups from the Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley area to discuss recreational use taking place in the Hatcher Pass Management Plan area (HPMP). A variety of recreational user groups were represented and included groups who favored motorized, non-motorized, and multiple use activities. The intent of the meeting was to provide the user groups with an opportunity to discuss the overlapping use concerns they had, and to encourage them to offer suggestions about how to modify the current management plan units and designated recreational use areas, to resolve those concerns.

DNR presented maps that depicted three types of information: current HPMP boundaries, overlapping concern areas, and a depiction of conceptual boundary changes. The conceptual changes were based on four map work-shops held earlier this year, public comments, and internal discussions. The attendees were informed that the boundary changes were conceptual, and subject to change. Their opinions were needed in order to determine what changes, if any, needed to be made to the HPMP boundaries.

#### Meeting Results

The meeting produced useful information but there were problems with the meeting structure and format. We learned that while the groups had strong positions and two different views about how the area should be managed; there may be some flexibility in the way that these issues can be resolved. All representatives agreed that the combination of signage, education, and geographically defined non-motorized areas and motorized corridors may make enforcement of use restrictions easier for DPOR and for the public while recreating in the area. We also learned that there were specific recommendations from both motorized and non-motorized groups. There was a general consensus from the non-motorized representatives regarding a proposal made by Wayne Todd that pretty well reflected their point of view. Similarly, there seemed to be an acknowledgement of the proposal made by Jim Turner from the motorized group representatives, although it suggested new restricted areas.

There were several problems with the meeting structure. The primary meeting room was too small to accommodate the number of representatives who attended, which made it difficult for everyone to see the maps clearly and did not allow for an in-depth discussion about management alternatives. The initial intent of the meeting was not to have one large group. Another room had been arranged, with supporting staff, in order to break into two smaller groups, which would have been easier to moderate. This did not occur since the group as a whole wanted to stay as one group and hear each other's suggestions. Although the dynamics might have been better in small groups, we would have missed the discussion put forth on possible solutions offered by Wayne Todd and Jim Turner.

#### Motorized and Non-Motorized Boundary Realignment Recommendations:

- Jim Turner, who represented the Alaska ATV Club, provided a narrative report which offered suggestions for management unit boundary changes. His suggestions included reductions of land currently open to motorized use on the condition that well-marked motorized corridors through the restricted areas were established. Representatives from several groups stated they felt some of the ideas he proposed warranted further research.
- Wayne Todd, who represented the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, provided a map of the Hatcher Pass Management Plan area that his group and many other non-motorized group representatives felt would resolve overlapping use concerns. Their suggestion is to close the east side of the plan area to motorized use entirely and leave the west side open for motorized use recreation.

#### Pending Actions

DNR and DPOR are in the process of reviewing proposals presented throughout this process, including the six previous meetings this year and all comments received to date. No actions will be taken that are based solely on the meeting from June 4<sup>th</sup>. We intend to hold an additional focus group meeting in the valley area after these comments and suggestions have been reviewed and will present an updated conceptual map at that time. The webpage for this plan revision will be updated continuously with map revisions, meeting dates, and reports as they become available.

## Proposed Management Unit Boundary Realignment

A draft map depicting conceptual management plan realignment has been developed. Revisions to the spatial boundaries of the management units have been developed to allow for a better overall land management strategy. These changes fall under two types. First, there are modifications of existing management unit boundaries along topographical features, which allow for better on the ground recognition. The boundaries of existing management units may also be shifted to reflect current use patterns to allow for more effective management. Second, new management units have been developed to reflect current use patterns that did not exist when the original plan was written. Areas of intense use may be redefined as a new management unit because they require a focused management strategy.

In addition to changes within individual management units, there have also been changes to the overall plan area. The eastern boundary of the plan has been extended to meet the western border of the Matanuska Moose Range. The northern border of the plan area has been extended to the Kashwitna River drainage. Mental Health Trust Land has been omitted from the plan area because DNR does not manage Mental Health Trust Land.

Please note that conceptual changes in allowable recreational uses will be indicated in the management unit description. No conceptual recreational use restrictions have been drafted unless otherwise indicated. DNR has not closed the entire HPMP to motorized use. Please see the map for further details.

## Conceptual / Draft HPMP Management Units Description

Unit No.	Unit Name	Description of Units and Conceptual Draft Boundary Modifications
1	Willow Mountain Unit (WMU)	<p>The WMU is located in the western area of the HPMP. It is the largest unit and encompasses over 50% of the HPMP. This unit is nearly all state owned land.</p> <p>Revisions include slight modifications along the eastern and southern borders to follow topographical features and ridge lines. These modifications will allow for the management unit boundaries to be more identifiable on the ground and managed more effectively.</p>
2	Willow / Craigie Creek Unit (WCCU)	<p>This WCCU is located adjacent to the southwest border of the WMU. Although there are private parcels, Mat-Su Borough parcels, and mining claims in this unit, most of the land is state owned. The northern section of the Summit Lake Special Recreation Site is located in the southwest area of this unit.</p> <p>The WCCU boundaries have been modified to follow topographical features and ridge lines. It also contains the area formerly identified as the northern half of the Lucky Shot Ridge / Baldy North Unit. The southern border now follows the Willow-Fishhook Creek Road. These modifications allow for the management unit boundaries to be more identifiable on the ground and managed more effectively.</p>
3	Baldy / Hillside Unit (BHU)	<p>The BHU is located directly south of the WCCU. Most of BHU is state owned. There are private parcels and Mat-Su Borough parcels located in the southern area of this unit. Two areas with seasonal motorized restrictions are located in this area. The southern section of the Summit Lake Special Recreation Site is located in the northeast area of this unit and the Bald Mountain Habitat Area is located in the western, central area of this unit.</p> <p>The BHU boundaries have been modified to follow topographical features and ridge lines. It now consolidates the southern half of the former Baldy / Lucky Shot Ridge Unit and the Hillside Unit (as reflected in the 1989 HPMP Amendment). It also includes a western portion of the Government Peak Unit. The units have been consolidated because they fall under a similar management theme. The northern border of this unit now follows the Willow-Fishhook Road.</p> <p>The current draft depicts the lifting of motorized use restrictions the eastern section of the BHU that was formerly included in the GPU. Research of current use patterns suggests that regulations for recreational use may no longer be necessary in this area.</p>

Unit No.	Unit Name	Description of Units and Conceptual Draft Boundary Modifications
4	Independence Unit (IU)	<p>The IU is located in the center of the HPMP, north of the GPU. The western half of the unit is comprised of private parcels, mining claims, Mat-Su borough parcels, and the Independence Mine State Historical Park.</p> <p>The IU has been modified to extend south across the Willow-Fishhook Creek Road to the Hatcher Pass Creek. Other sections have been modified to better follow topographical feature and ridge lines. The modifications reflect current use patterns and are based on the need for a more focused management strategy of the area for the DPOR.</p> <p>The southern section of the IU would be open to motorized use via a motorized corridor that would extend both north and south of the Willow-Fishhook Creek Road. This corridor would allow a passage for motorized users to reach the western area of the HPMP. This proposed change would lift motorized use restrictions that were recommended in the original 1986 HPMP in the southern area of the Independence Unit.</p>
5	Government Peak Unit (GPU)	<p>GPU is directly south of the IU. It encompasses a combination of state land, Mat-Su Borough land, and a portion of the southern (non-restricted) section of the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. It is also the area of potential ski resort development by the Matsu Borough.</p> <p>The GPU has been modified and reduced in size. The northern boundary extends to Hatcher Pass Creek and Fishhook Creek. The 16-Mile Triangle is no longer part of the GU. The eastern boundary extends to the Palmer-Fishhook Creek Road. The western boundary extends west to Government Creek. Other areas have been modified to better follow topographical features and ridge lines. The modifications reflect current use patterns and are based on the need for a more focused management strategy of the area for the DPOR and Mat-Su Borough. This proposed change would lift motorized use restrictions that were recommended in the original 1986 HPMP for northern section of this area.</p>
6	Archangel Unit (AU)	<p>The AU is located in the central, eastern area of the HPMP, east of the IU. Most of AU is state owned, although there are mining claims, private parcels and Mat-Su Borough parcels located in the northern and eastern areas of this unit.</p> <p>The AU boundaries have been modified to follow topographical features, ridge lines, and the Archangel Road. These modifications allow for the unit boundaries to be more identifiable on the ground and managed more effectively.</p>
7	Reed Lakes / Little Susitna Unit (RL/LSU)	<p>The RL/LSU is located on the eastern area of the HPMP, east of the AU. It is comprised mainly of state land. The entirety of Hatcher Pass Special Use Area is included in this Unit. The Little Susitna River also runs through the RL/LSU. A private lodge and parking lot is located within the RL/LSU.</p> <p>The RL/LSU boundaries have been modified to follow topographical features, ridge lines, the Archangel Road, and Palmer-Fishhook Creek Road. The boundary has been extended east to meet the boundary of the Matanuska Moose Range. These modifications allow for the unit boundaries to be more identifiable on the ground and managed more effectively.</p>
8	16-Mile Triangle Unit (16-MU)	<p>The 16-MU is a new management unit. The area is known as the 16-Mile Triangle. It is located in southeastern area of the HPMP. It is comprised of state land and is encircled by the Willow-Fishhook Creek Road and Palmer-Fishhook Creek Road.</p> <p>The 16-MU has been developed based on the current recreational use patterns in the area. The volume of recreational use has made it necessary to develop a focused management strategy for DNR and DPOR to effectively manage the area. This unit is currently intended to be closed to motorized recreational use.</p>

Unit No.	Unit Name	Description of Units and Conceptual Draft Boundary Modifications
9	High Glacier Peaks Unit (HGPU)	<p>The HGPU is a new management unit. It is located in the north east area of the HPMP, north of the RL/LSU and extends north to the Kashwitna River tree line. It is comprised of entirely state land. Two mountaineering huts are located within this unit.</p> <p>The unit has been developed to reflect the current recreational use patterns that are associated with the use patterns within the HPMP and consistent with the management intent for that area. The unit boundaries follow topographical features and ridge lines that are recognizable on the ground for effective management.</p>
10	Kashwitna River Unit (KRU)	<p>The KRU is a new management unit. It is located in the northern area of the HPMP and encompasses part of the Kashwitna River drainage directly north of the current HPMP northern boundary.</p> <p>The unit has been developed to reflect the current recreational use patterns which are associated with the HPMP and public recommendations for a more discernable plan boundary. The unit boundaries follow topographical features and ridge lines that are recognizable on the ground for effective management.</p>