

APPENDIX XI

PROPOSALS FOR EXPANSION OF NONMOTORIZED AREA

A. OUTDOOR COALITION PROPOSAL FOR A PRIMITIVE AREA

The Outdoor Coalition*, which is a coalition of representatives of several groups involved in, or supportive of, outdoor recreation, made a proposal to the planning team during the resource inventory phase to:

1. Include the "glacial peaks" area just to the northeast of the management unit boundary within the Hatcher Pass Management unit.
2. Designate the "glacial peaks" area as well as the area indicated on Figure 8 as a primitive area closed to new mineral entry and motorized use.

The purpose of this proposal is to provide the opportunity for a walk-in/ski-in quiet recreational experience in a scenic, relatively accessible, alpine, mountain and glacier setting, and reduce conflict with fly-in skiers and snowmachiners. The position of the group is that such an opportunity is not now provided on state land outside the state park system but should be in order to adequately meet the demand for this experience. Furthermore, the primitive area would provide a counter-balance for the intensive recreation development or uses which likely will occur in the Independence and Government Peak subunits.

In response to this proposal, the option of adding the glacial peaks primitive area to the management unit was included in the workbook used at the public meetings to review alternative management proposals. It received support approximately in the ratio of 2:1, and 23 letters of support were received.

The planning team did not include this proposal in the draft plan preferred alternative for the following reasons:

1. Insufficient time and budget to allow addition of such a potentially controversial issue.
2. Insufficient data from which to evaluate conflicts and propose appropriate land uses.
3. The proposed boundary includes areas which may conflict with existing or future mineral development.
4. The extremely rugged physical topography of the area which effectively bars use of the area by ground vehicles, thus there is no need for a non-motorized designation for much of this area.

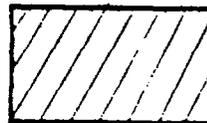
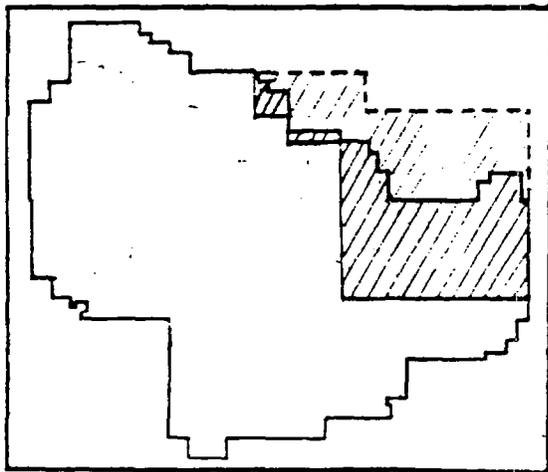
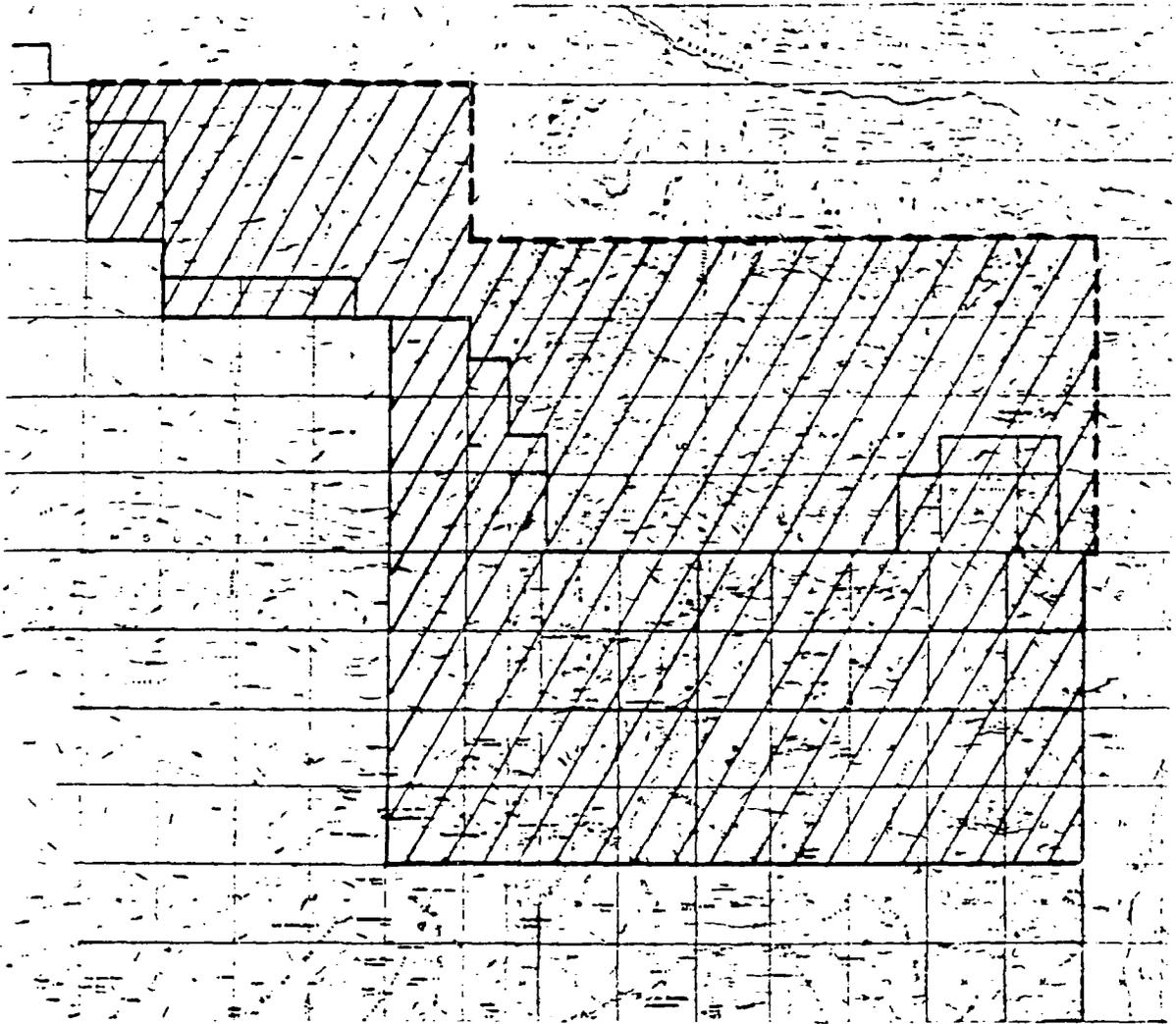
Some of the Outdoor Coalition's concerns have been met through the inclusion of Snowbird Glacier within the management unit and the proposals for non-motorized use areas in the Reed Lakes and Upper Little Susitna area.

Another possibility is future designation of the "glacial peaks" area as a special use area. Under this designation such management options could be considered as time separation of motorized and non-motorized uses, voluntary restrictions on use, or permits for helicopter ski use. Any such proposal should be considered separately from the Hatcher Pass plan due primarily to time and budget constraints.

*Participating groups included the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Nordic Ski Association, Knik Canoers and Kayakers, Alaska Center for the Environment and the Anchorage Community College Alaska Wilderness Studies Program.

FIGURE 8

OUTDOOR COALITION PRIMITIVE AREA PROPOSAL BOUNDARIES



PROPOSED
NON-MECHANIZED,
NON-DEVELOPMENT,
NON-COMMERCIAL
WILDERNESS AREA



Proposed Boundary
Change

B. PROPOSED CHANGES TO HATCHER PASS SPECIAL USE AREA DURING SPRING 1989, PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS (Page 143, guidelines 12 and 13 of original plan)

The following language was included in the April 1989 draft amendment document as an alternative proposal:

Boundaries. As part of the implementation of the original Hatcher Pass Plan, a Special Use Area was established. Within the Special Use Area, motorized use for commercial recreational purposes is currently restricted in Independence Subunit and the valley floors of the Little Susitna and Reed Lake subunits. An expansion of this area is proposed in order to ensure that the opportunity for quiet, nonmotorized recreation will continue to be available in the Hatcher Pass area as the Government Peak Subunit is developed and the visitors to the Hatcher Pass area are not accessible by ground transportation. The major anticipated change in use in these areas as a result of the resort would be an increase in use of these mountains and glaciers for guided helicopter tours. The majority of the Hatcher Pass Management Unit would remain open to motorized use.

Change in uses. The management plan currently allows motorized access by permit in the Little Susitna and Reed Lakes subunits for uses for which an economic dependency can be demonstrated such as for mining, grazing, or commercial trapping. The proposal is to only allow motorized access for commercial mining or by aircraft for prospecting. (The valley floors of the Little Susitna, Reed Lake, and Independence subunits are closed to new mineral entry. The valley walls and ridges are the places with the highest mineral potential.) The reason for this proposed change is to better achieve the objective of providing an opportunity for quiet, nonmotorized recreation. Motorized use is not needed to bring cattle to the lease site due to proximity to the Hatcher Pass Road. No clear evidence of economic dependency on trapping has been demonstrated in the past three years since completion of the management plan, and it is difficult for managers to ascertain the difference between recreational trapping and commercial trapping. Other users question the fairness of one person being able to go in by snowmachine. Trappers have the option of snowshoe or ski access.

Talkeetna Mountains Management Unit, Susitna Area Plan. Expanding the nonmotorized area into a small portion of this management unit (Subunit 3d) is consistent with the Susitna Area Plan which designated public recreation and wildlife habitat as the primary uses for this subunit. It is intended that remote cabins be a prohibited use in this portion of the subunit. This mountainous area is not suitable for them; in addition, private cabins are an inappropriate use in this area due to proximity to popular public use areas in the Hatcher Pass Management Unit.

Reevaluation. The planning team intends to reevaluate proposed boundaries and use limitations as well as the general concept following public comments. There may be some existing motorized use for hunting in the upper Purches and Peters Creek drainages and in the portions of the Talkeetna Mountain Management Unit proposed for inclusion in the Special Use Area. The team is especially interested in information on existing motorized uses within these areas.

Final Decision.

This issue proved quite controversial during the public meetings. Many commented that the issue was unrelated to the resort issue and argued that the two issues be separated. The nonmotorized expansion issue was unresolved by the planning team, and it was elevated to the director's level by the Division of Mining and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. The directors could not come to agreement, and it was elevated to the commissioner by the Division of Mining.

At the May 25, 1989, director's elevation session, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation's position was to support a nonmotorized designation for all of areas 1 and 3 and the east portion of Area 2, from Dogsled Pass north. That division offered a compromise solution: establish Area 1 as nonmotorized; designate areas 2 and 3 as needing further study because of their special values.

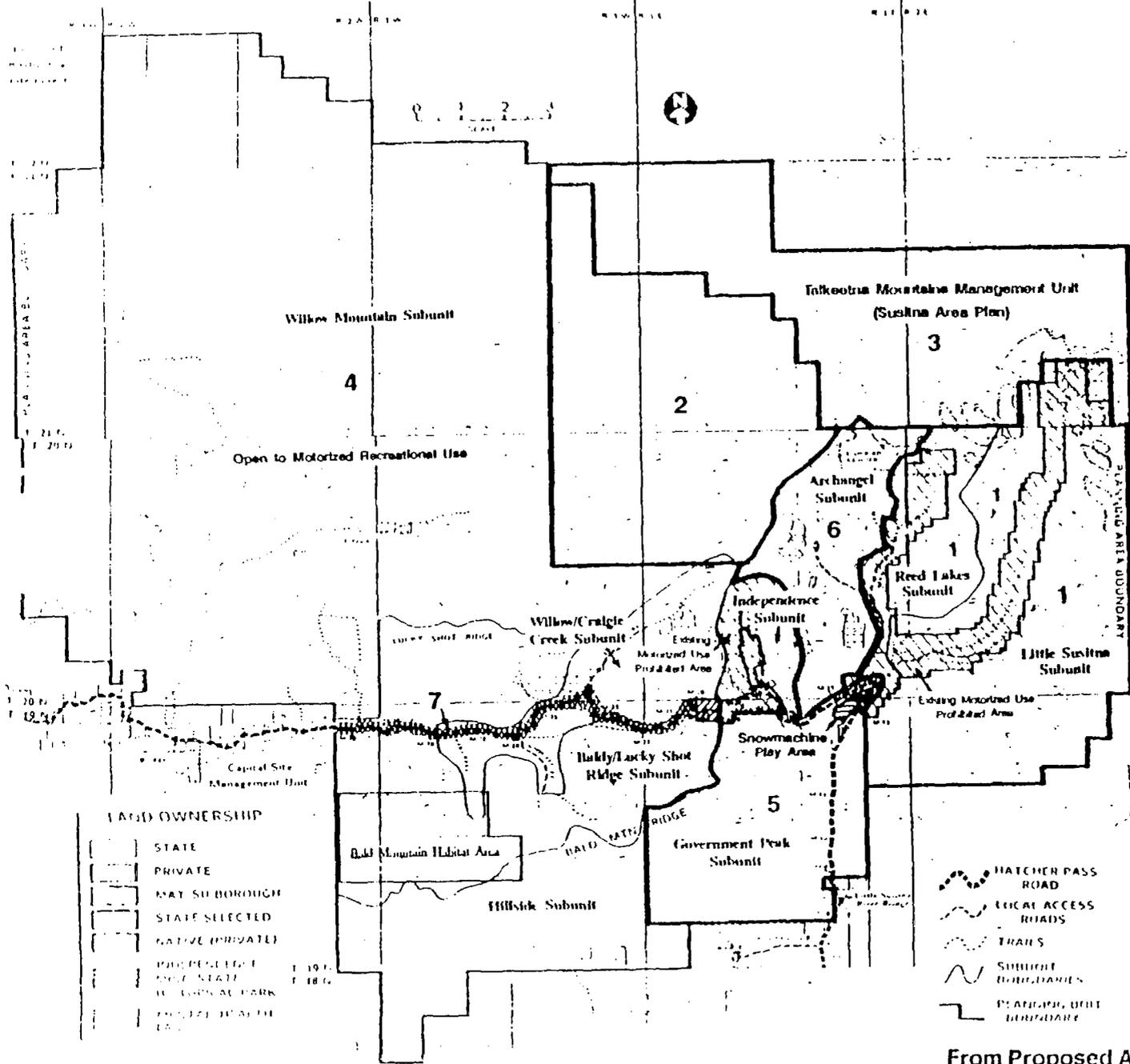
Division of Mining's position was that it does not want one more acre placed in the nonmotorized category because it believes such designation is a *de facto* mineral closing order. It also seeks to prevent the necessity of another permit requirement for miners on state land.

The Division of Land and Water Management recommended that Area 1 and the Bomber Traverse (which is in Area 3 and connects the upper Little Susitna Valley with the Reed Lakes area) be established as a nonmotorized area.

The Mat-Su Borough requested that allowance be made for the possibility of heliskiing at Delia Creek on Arkose Ridge. Permitting for this activity should require multi-agency review but not a plan amendment. The directors agreed to this amendment of the Division of Land and Water Management's recommendation.

The Department of Fish and Game stated that it has significant harvest activities in areas 2 and 3, and is, therefore, concerned about limiting motorized uses to only commercial users.

The Commissioner's final decision was not to expand the nonmotorized area due to substantial public opposition to the proposed expansion.



Map 5. Proposed Changes to Hatcher Pass Special Use Area

In addition to the existing special use area policies summarized on Map 4, the following changes are proposed

- 1** Addition to nonmotorized special use area in Little Susitna and Reed Lakes subunits. Recreational motorized use, including aircraft landings, restricted year round.
 - 2** Addition to nonmotorized special use area in the eastern portion of the Willow Mountain subunit. Recreational motorized use, including aircraft landings, restricted year round.
 - 3** Addition to nonmotorized area in southwest corner of the Talkeetna Mountains management unit (Susitna Area Plan). Recreational motorized use, including aircraft landings, restricted year round. Remote cabin permits not allowed.
- Note: Pilots flying below 1,500 feet elevation are requested to avoid flying over the designated non-motorized areas in Little Susitna, Reed Lakes, eastern portion of Willow Mountain, and the designated portion of the Talkeetna Mountains Management Unit.*
- 4** Reel of management unit to remain open to motorized use year round. (Some limitations on spring-summer-fall off-trail use may eventually be established.)
 - 5** Government Peak unit including proposed addition: off road or off-trail motorized use by permit only with exception of Snowmachine Play Area south of the Mother Lode Lodge in the triangular area bounded on two sides by the Hatcher Pass Road and on the south by Fishhook Creek.
 - 5&6** Aircraft used for commercial recreation may land at designated sites only in Government Peak and Archangel subunits.
 - 7** Hatcher Pass Road Corridor, 100 yard buffer in either direction from the edges of the road. Plant removal is not allowed.

From Proposed Amendment and Alternatives, April, 1989.