

**CHAPTER 1.**  
**INTRODUCTION**

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This chapter includes overview information about the plan and the planning area.

## **WHY THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED**

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation prepared and adopted the Bristol Bay Area Plan (BBAP) in 1984. BBAP provides overall direction for managing state lands in the Bristol Bay region. The Bristol Bay Coastal Management Plan, prepared by the Bristol Bay Coastal Resource Service Area (BBCRSA) and approved by the state and federal government in 1987, provides direction for managing resources in coastal areas of the region under the Alaska Coastal Management Program.

Both plans cover the drainages of the Nushagak and Mulchatna rivers and highlight the importance of recreation and fish and wildlife values for commercial and noncommercial uses (including subsistence and recreation) in these drainages. Both plans direct DNR and BBCRSA to do additional planning for public use management in the Bristol Bay region. Direction to the BBCRSA was also to prepare an Area which Merits Special Attention (AMSA) plan.

In response to these plans and to public concern about subsistence use and increased recreational use in the region, DNR, ADF&G, and BBCRSA signed a cooperative agreement in the fall of 1987 to prepare the Nushagak and Mulchatna Rivers Recreation Management Plan.

The plan is the product of over two years of work by state and local agencies that have resource management responsibilities in the planning area, interest groups, private landowners, and the public.

A resource assessment was completed in August 1988. Management alternatives were prepared and reviewed in December 1988, and in January 1989, at public workshops in Anchorage, Dillingham, Ekwok, Iliamna, Koliganek, and New Stuyahok. The draft plan was prepared and reviewed during the summer and fall of 1989, at public hearings in these same locations. Throughout the process, comments were also gathered from mailouts, letters, and telephone calls.

See Appendix B for documents related to this plan.

## **WHAT THIS PLAN COVERS AND DOES NOT COVER**

This plan guides state land management by the Department of Natural Resources in the Nushagak and Mulchatna drainages and guides coastal consistency review by serving as an AMSA plan for the BBCRSA (see Chapter 4, Plan Implementation sections). This plan

- 1) identifies goals, management intent, and public use sites for 25 management units in the planning area;
- 2) specifies management policies for long-term uses (uses that take place at one site on state land for longer than 14 consecutive days), including permanent and temporary facilities, trapping cabins, boat storage, airstrip development, docks, and other uses, and specifies where these uses may be allowed and where they are prohibited;
- 3) includes guidelines that provide specific management direction for the 25 management units and public use sites; and
- 4) includes implementation information and recommendations for future management of the planning area.

This plan is consistent with the goals and guidelines of the Bristol Bay Area Plan and the Bristol Bay Coastal Management Plan.

This plan does *not* cover

- 1) Other management issues addressed in the Bristol Bay Area Plan and the Bristol Bay Coastal Management Plan: agriculture and grazing, alternative energy, minerals, materials, oil and gas, settlement, remote cabins, geophysical hazards, utilities, and fish and seafood processing.
- 2) Fish and wildlife management. DNR manages land. ADF&G, the Board of Fisheries, and the Board of Game manage use of fish and wildlife resources. Issues raised by the public during the planning process concerning use of fish and wildlife are not addressed in this plan but are addressed by the boards. These issues include how fish and game should be allocated among user groups, hunting and fishing seasons, bag limits, means and methods of harvest, and impact of use on the availability of game.
- 3) Management policies that restrict short-term uses (uses that take place at one site on state land for 14 consecutive days or less), such as hiking, backpacking and camping, light plane and helicopter landings, use of boats, rafts, and canoes, and hunting, fishing, and trapping.
- 4) Various aspects of a recreational experience. At this time, DNR does not have adequate authority or information to justify actions that address various aspects of a recreational experience, such as level of encounters (the number of people or groups of people seen during a specified time). For example, DNR cannot justify limiting the number of facilities in a management unit

because of the impacts those facilities would have on a level of encounters. To do so requires additional statistics and information on public use and related impacts. Level of encounters is not addressed by this plan but is identified as one aspect for future management.

### **HOW THIS PLAN APPLIES TO FEDERAL AND PRIVATE LAND**

See Chapter 4, Plan Implementation by the Alaska Coastal Management Program, for how the Area which Merits Special Attention (AMSA) portion of this plan affects management of private and federal land within the Nushagak-Mulchatna drainage. DNR does not manage federal or private land. Private landowners in the planning area may choose to use this plan as a guide for managing their lands.

### **HOW THE FORMATION OF THE LAKE AND PENINSULA BOROUGH AFFECTS THIS PLAN**

The Lake and Peninsula Borough was formed in April, 1989 after work on the Nushagak and Mulchatna Rivers Recreation Management Plan was in progress. The new borough includes much of the eastern portion of the planning area (see maps in the envelope at the back of this document). See Chapter 4, Plan Implementation by the Alaska Coastal Management Program for how the formation of the new borough affects the AMSA portion of this plan.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA**

The planning area stretches 200 miles from the headwaters of the Mulchatna River to Bristol Bay and includes the land drained by the Nushagak and Mulchatna rivers upstream of the Wood River. Wood-Tikchik State Park and Lake Clark National Park and Preserve are not part of the planning area.

The planning area includes about 6.7 million acres. Approximately 5.7 million acres (85 percent of the total acreage) are state owned or state selected. The state also owns and manages all shorelands, tidelands, and submerged lands of the Nushagak and Mulchatna rivers and other major waterbodies in the planning area. Uses on state land in the planning area are administered by the Department of Natural Resources Division of Land and Water Management (Southcentral Region).

About 720,000 acres (11 percent of the total acreage) are owned or selected by seven Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations. Most corporation land is located on the lower Nushagak River near the communities of Dillingham, Ekwok, New Stuyahok, and Koliganek.

The federal government (Bureau of Land Management - BLM) administers about 250,000 acres (4 percent of the total acreage). BLM also retains interim management authority for state and ANCSA corporation selected land.

Other private ownership includes approximately 200 tracts (most of them Native allotments).

The river systems are the dominant physiographic feature of the planning area. The Nushagak River headwaters are in the rounded Nushagak Hills, which with the Kuskokwim River basin form the northern boundary of the planning area. The Mulchatna River drains lakes of the Alaska Range in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Both rivers are generally clear in their upper reaches, but become increasingly muddy as they flow to the coast. Because of steeper terrain and fewer lakes in its watershed, the Mulchatna is more often subject to flooding than is the Nushagak, and often flows muddy. The river systems include important clear water tributaries: the Nuyakuk, King Salmon, Chilikadrotna, Koktuli, Stuyahok, and Kokwok rivers.

Vegetation throughout the planning area is diverse. White spruce, birch, and cottonwood forests are generally concentrated along streams. The lower Nushagak, Nuyakuk, and upper Mulchatna rivers have large spruce stands. Much of the low rolling mountainous terrain in the northern portion of the planning area is covered with lichen shrub tundra interspersed with open low shrub tundra. The coastal lowlands adjacent to Bristol Bay have hundreds of small lakes and ponds, and large areas of open shrub tundra.

Abundant fisheries resources support important subsistence and recreational uses, and contribute to the valuable commercial fishery in Bristol Bay. Lakes and streams support five species of salmon, rainbow trout, and other freshwater fish. Sportfishing use is increasing rapidly in the planning area. Much public use is guided; operators fly their clients to a place for the day from nearby lodges or base use out of camps established nearby. Subsistence use is relatively stable in harvest quantities.

Wildlife resources are substantial and support important subsistence and sport hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing uses. There is valuable habitat for caribou, moose, brown bears, raptors, and other animals. The Mulchatna caribou herd has increased greatly during the 1980s, and hunting effort and harvest have risen sharply, particularly in the Mulchatna drainage. Subsistence use originates from local communities or is based out of cabins located near traditional hunting areas. Outfitters and guides establish camps for use by their clients.

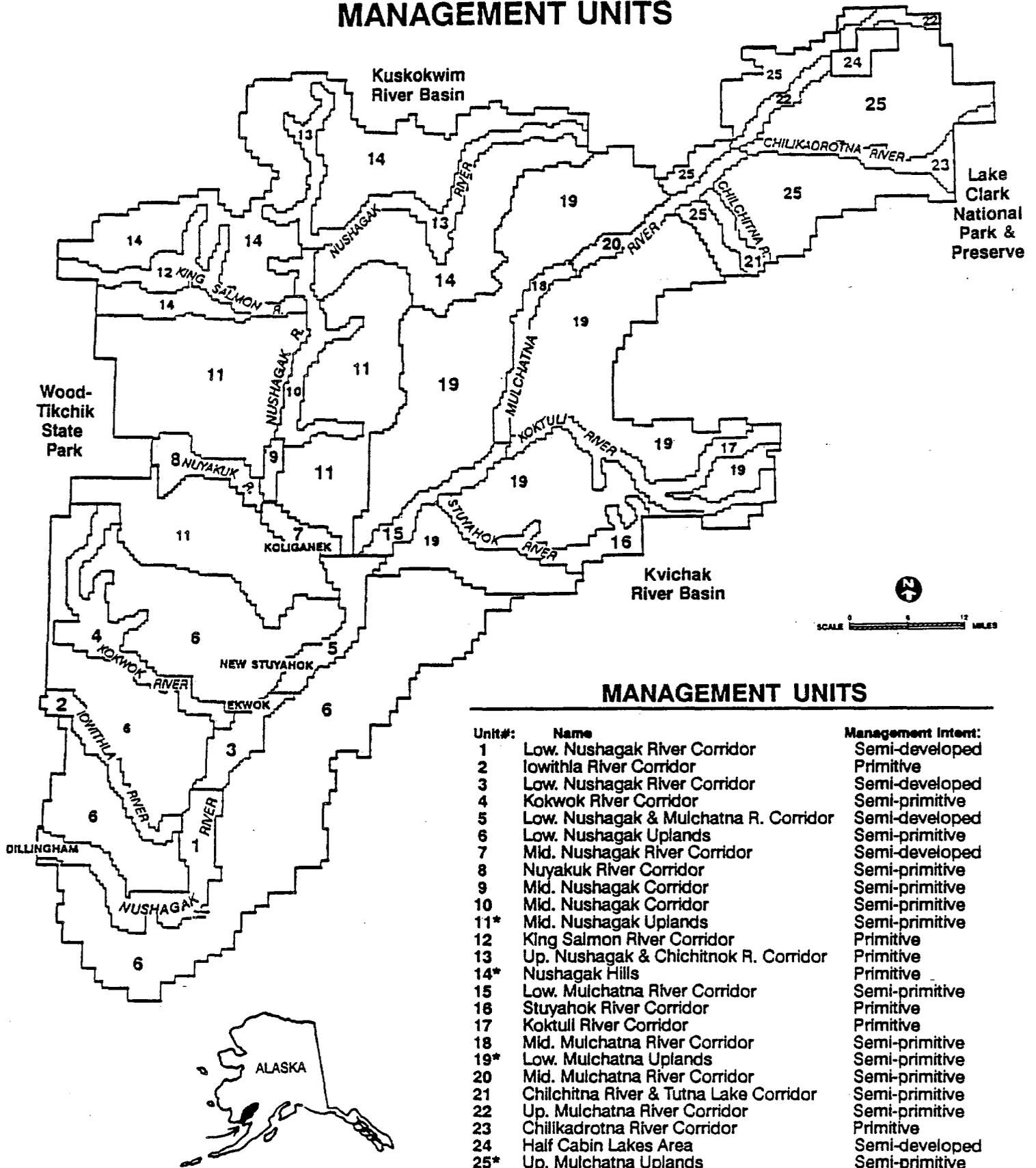
Airplanes provide major access to the area. Reliable floatplane landing areas are distributed on lakes and rivers throughout the Nushagak basin. Gravel bars along streams and tundra-covered ridgetops provide natural landing sites for wheeled airplanes. Much airplane use originates from Dillingham, Iliamna, Port Alsworth, and Anchorage.

Most of the main stems of the rivers are accessible by motorboat. Motorboat traffic is heaviest on the lower Nushagak. Canoes, rafts, and kayaks provide hunting, fishing, and recreational access to smaller drainages. Important rivers for guided and unguided floating include the Chilikadrotna, upper Mulchatna, upper Nushagak, Stuyahok, Koktuli, and Nuyakuk.

The planning area is divided into 25 management units (see the following map and the region maps in the envelope in the back of the plan). Units are generally similar in resource values and uses.

# Nushagak & Mulchatna Rivers Recreation Management Plan

## MANAGEMENT UNITS



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Unit#:	Name	Management Intent:
1	Low. Nushagak River Corridor	Semi-developed
2	Iowithla River Corridor	Primitive
3	Low. Nushagak River Corridor	Semi-developed
4	Kokwok River Corridor	Semi-primitive
5	Low. Nushagak & Mulchatna R. Corridor	Semi-developed
6	Low. Nushagak Uplands	Semi-primitive
7	Mkd. Nushagak River Corridor	Semi-developed
8	Nuyakuk River Corridor	Semi-primitive
9	Mkd. Nushagak Corridor	Semi-primitive
10	Mkd. Nushagak Corridor	Semi-primitive
11*	Mkd. Nushagak Uplands	Semi-primitive
12	King Salmon River Corridor	Primitive
13	Up. Nushagak & Chichitnok R. Corridor	Primitive
14*	Nushagak Hills	Primitive
15	Low. Mulchatna River Corridor	Semi-primitive
16	Stuyahok River Corridor	Primitive
17	Koktull River Corridor	Primitive
18	Mkd. Mulchatna River Corridor	Semi-primitive
19*	Low. Mulchatna Uplands	Semi-primitive
20	Mkd. Mulchatna River Corridor	Semi-primitive
21	Chilchitna River & Tutna Lake Corridor	Semi-primitive
22	Up. Mulchatna River Corridor	Semi-primitive
23	Chilikadrotna River Corridor	Primitive
24	Half Cabin Lakes Area	Semi-developed
25*	Up. Mulchatna Uplands	Semi-primitive

\*These upland units are divided into separate parts by river corridor units.