

Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit No 1

Assessment Units 1-11

Chugach Foothills character type

Approximate mileage 11

GENERAL

Visual Resource Management Unit number one begins at the Muldoon Road interchange north of Anchorage and extends northward for approximately 11 miles to a few miles beyond Eagle River. Scenic resource values were generally low, consequently it does not warrant a scenic highway designation. However, this stretch of road is of very significant value from a scenic quality perspective because it is the entrance-exit to Anchorage and is traveled upon daily by thousands of people. It now creates a definitive visual edge to the city as well as a pleasing entrance and exit. Present roadside land uses are primarily gravel extraction sites, shooting ranges and other military uses, some land clearing, and commercial and residential land uses mostly confined to the Eagle River area. The southern portion of VRMU Number 1 is generally within Fort Richardson military reservation lands while the northern portion around Eagle River is largely under private ownership.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Although scenic resource values are generally low to moderate, this stretch of highway should receive special attention with respect to roadside land management because of the high daily and annual use it receives, its role as an entrance/exit to/from Anchorage, its role as a definitive edge to the urban area of Anchorage and its potential to curb further distracting roadside strip development. With this in mind the following measures are suggested.

- Establish a team of land managers representing the following agencies: Fort Richardson, the municipality of Anchorage, the City of Eagle River, the State Department of Highways, and the State Department of Fish and Game. This committee would review land developments adjacent to the road and explore measures to maintain the visual quality (and enhance it where possible).
- Use the often high visual absorption capability where possible to screen roadside land uses. In areas with a high visual absorption capability (see map) a 100 ft wide belt of undisturbed land adjacent to the highway right of way can be an extremely effective way of maintaining the scenic quality of this landscape.
- To explore roadside land management strategies which would help to reduce the number of auto-moose collisions.
- Where possible to introduce and encourage native tree and shrub plantings along the median strip between the north and south bound traffic lanes. Trees and shrub plantings are also recommended between the highway and the existing and proposed bike trails.

- to require that future roadside land uses - particularly residential and commercial activity around Eagle River - attempt to retain a portion of the natural landcover immediately adjacent to the highway.
- other specific recommendations as pointed out on the map below.

Reestablishment of birch-spruce forest needed around new residential development immediately adjacent to highway.

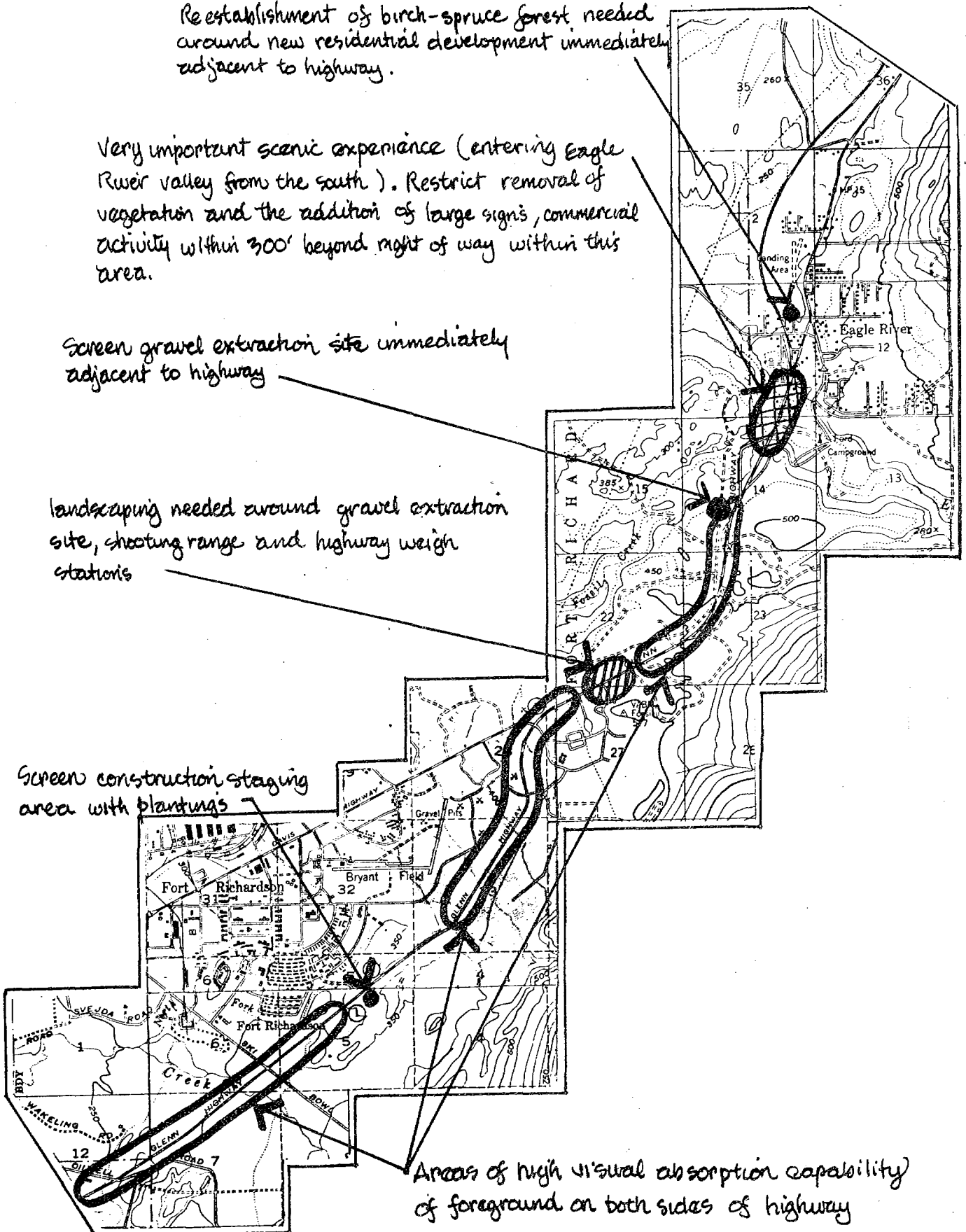
Very important scenic experience (entering Eagle River valley from the south). Restrict removal of vegetation and the addition of large signs, commercial activity within 300' beyond right of way within this area.

Screen gravel extraction site immediately adjacent to highway

landscaping needed around gravel extraction site, shooting range and highway weigh stations

Screen construction staging area with plantings

Areas of high visual absorption capability of foreground on both sides of highway



Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit Number 2
Chugach Foothills character type

Assessment Units 12, 13, 14
Approximate mileage 4

GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number two contains approximately four miles of highway through hilly, birch-spruce covered forest. This stretch of roadway has very high scenic resource values. It also receives heavy use throughout the year. VRMU No 2 is very important to prevent roadside strip development between the rapidly growing areas of Eagle River and Peters Creek-Chugiak-Birchwood.

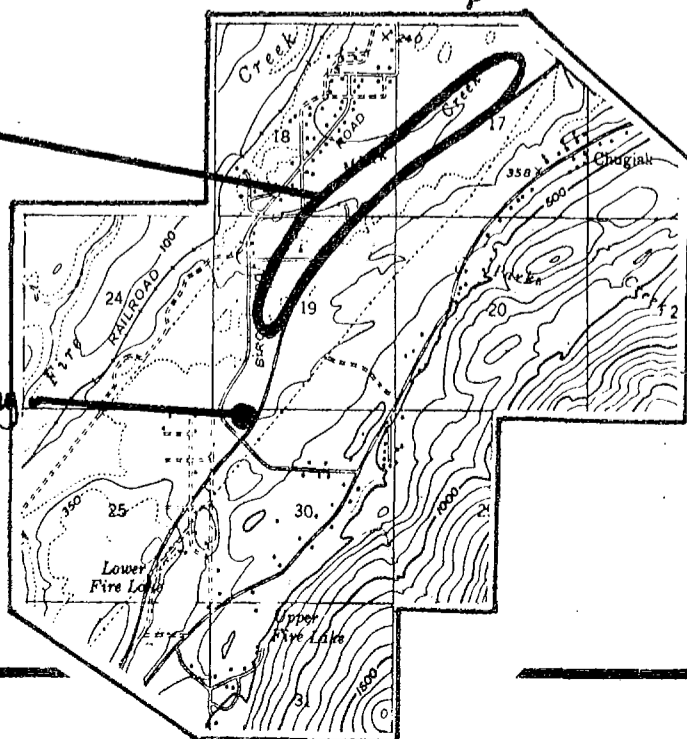
PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Designate this as a scenic highway and take necessary measures to protect the high intrinsic scenic resource values contained herein. (See p. for a discussion of what a scenic highway designation might entail). Some of these measures should include the following:

- Establish a greenbelt along the highway within this VRMU. Due to the generally moderate visual absorption capability of the foreground lands, a 300 ft. wide greenbelt should be established beyond the highway right-of-way. Within this area, only residential development should be permitted, and no more than 50% of the native forest should be removed from a given lot. Additionally land development should leave as much forest as possible undisturbed between the highway and adjacent lands. This serves both as a visual and sound barrier. Road access to developments should be outside of this greenbelt. Large billboards, signs and other distracting visual elements within this greenbelt should not be permitted.
- establish native shrub and tree plantings along the median strip dividing the north and south-bound lanes of traffic, and also between the roadway and the bicycle trail.
- other considerations as noted on the map.

particularly sensitive lands because generally below the highway and semi-open nature of the vegetation.

landscaping both within the highway right of way and on the school site itself could reduce the high visual impact of the high school complex - particularly around southeast corner.



Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit Number 3

Assessment units 15, 16, 17

Chugach Foothills character-type

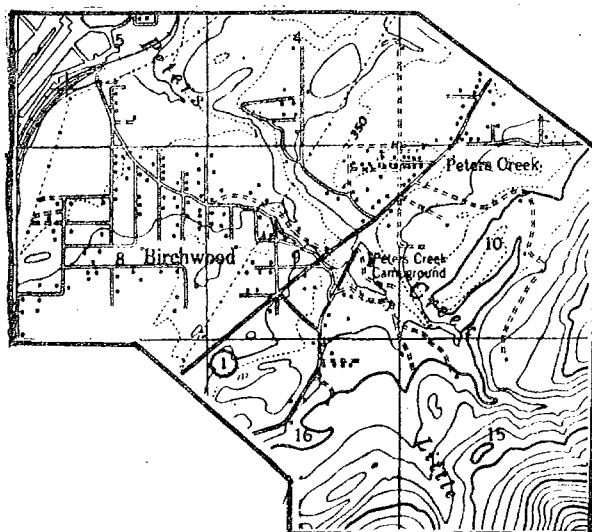
Approximate mileage 2.5

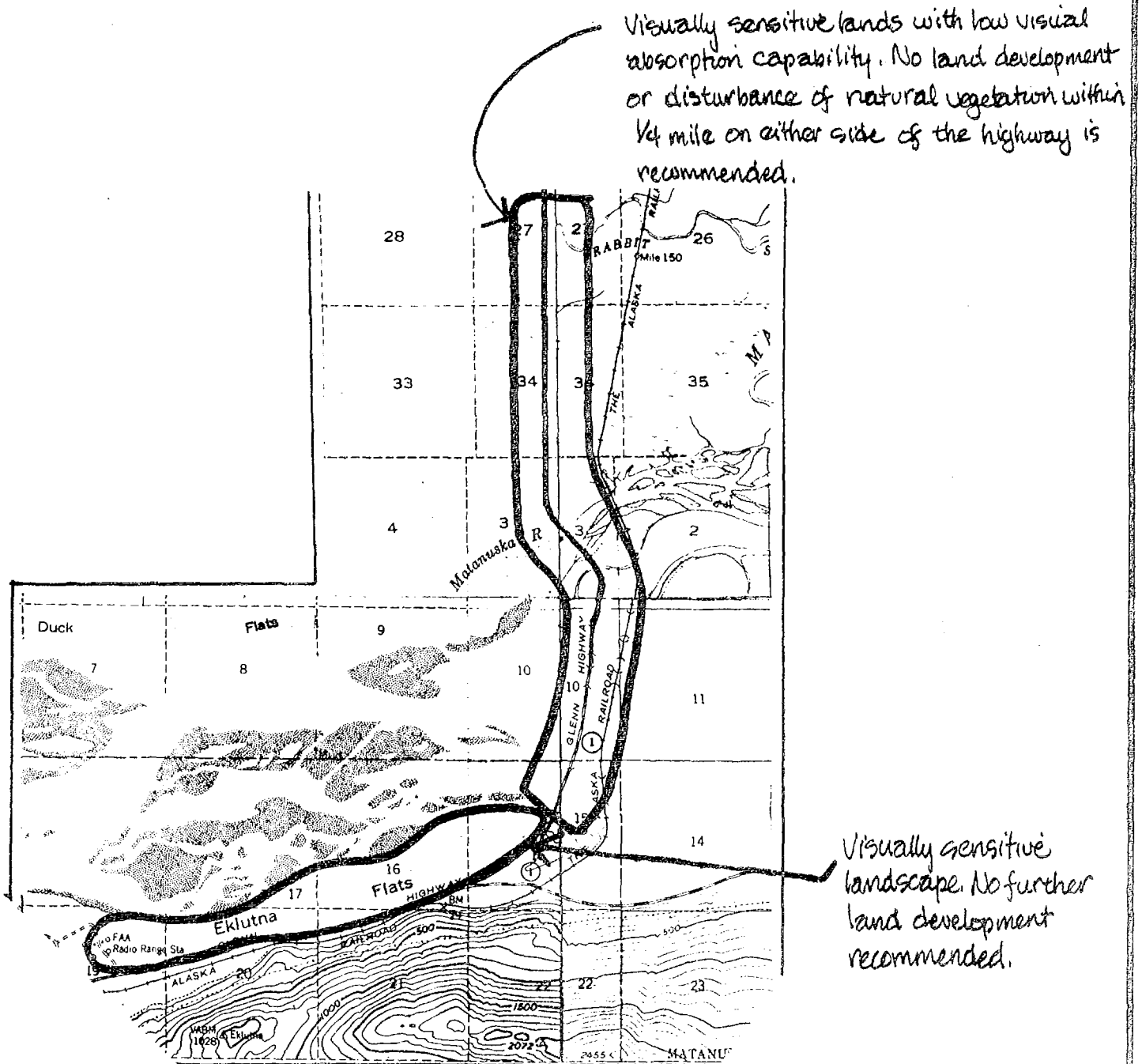
GENERAL

Visual Resource Management Unit number three is approximately 2½ miles of highway passing through the urbanizing areas of Birchwood and Peter's Creek. The scenic resource values of this stretch of highway are low, and there is considerable visible roadside commercial, residential activity, numerous intersections, signs, lights and other distractions. This area is bounded to the north and south by stretches of roadway of very high scenic resource value. Thus, it is here recommended from a scenic resource management point of view, that necessary future highway related land developments be encouraged in this area and not in URMU no 2 immediately to the south and URMU no. 4 to the north.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage necessary future roadside related commercial development within this area rather than immediately to the north or to the south.
- Encourage tree and shrub plantings both within the median strip and the shoulder area within the right-of-way. Native trees (birch, spruce, cottonwoods) would significantly soften the visual impact of intensive land development within this area.
- Encourage landscaping around existing commercial developments and recommend that in the future siting of structures which will be visible from the roadway attempts to retain portions of the natural spruce-birch forest are taken.
- Maintain a greenbelt of natural vegetation along the banks of Peter's Creek from the bridge upstream and downstream (minimum of ¼ mile up/down stream and 200 feet beyond the streambank). Residential development could occur within this greenbelt, however removal of over 50% of the natural existing landcover should be discouraged.





(—continued from facing page). The width of a greenbelt depends primarily upon the vegetation and land form character (visual absorption capability) of the roadside land. Within those areas with a high visual absorption capability the greenbelt width should be a minimum of 150 feet beyond the highway right-of-way. Other areas need additional on site evaluations to determine what width might be appropriate. (see map). Within the greenbelt, removal of over 75% of the existing natural vegetation on any given lot should not be permitted.

- Within the divided portion of the highway, it is recommended that native shrub and tree plantings be established in various locations along the median strip to add to the visual variety and reduce the visual impact of the wide highway right of way.

- Other specific recommendations as noted on the maps.

Recommendations

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Visual Resource Management Unit No 4 | Assessment Units 18-24 |
| Chugach Foothills - Matanuska-Knik Delta Character Type | Approximate mileage 13 |

GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number four extends from Mirror Lake to approximately two miles north of the Matanuska River bridge. This stretch of highway contains exceptional scenic resource values. It is especially important because of its proximity to Anchorage and the resultant intensive use it receives year round. Numerous recreational and scenic attractions occur along the highway or are easily accessible from it (Thunderbird Falls, Eklutna Native Village, Mirror Lake, Matanuska-Knik Delta, old Eklutna highway bridge). Furthermore, good views of many prominent landforms including Twin Peaks, Pioneer Peak, The Talkeetna mountains and Mt. Susitna abound. Roadside land use is restricted primarily to the area around the new Eklutna highway bridge.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Visual resource management unit number 4 should be officially designated a scenic highway and measures should be taken to protect the exceptional scenic qualities within this stretch of roadway. (See page for a discussion of what a scenic highway designation might entail). The following measures can help to insure that scenic quality is maintained

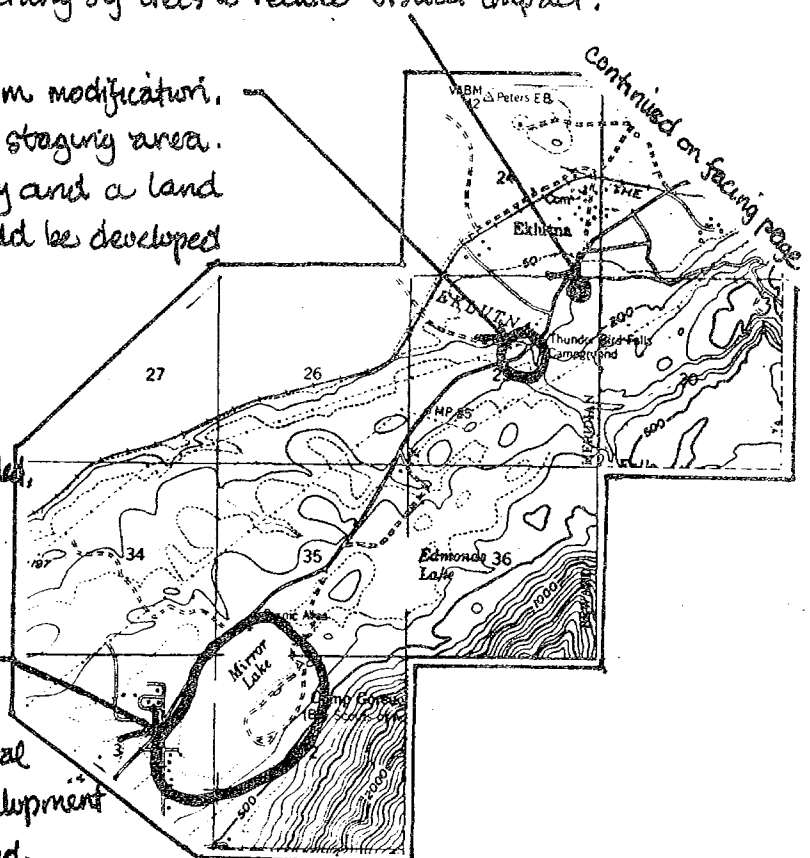
- Establish a highway greenbelt (see page for description) along the highway within this management unit. (continued bottom of facing page)

Commercial development and trailer park could use better screening by trees to reduce visual impact.

Intensive land clearing and landform modification, gravel extraction and construction staging area. This area is right next to the highway and a land reclamation and landscape plan should be developed

All foreground view areas have moderate visual absorption capability. A minimum 250' greenbelt is recommended.

Visually sensitive landscape. Further residential development should attempt to retain as much of the natural vegetation as possible. Commercial development near the highway should be discouraged.



Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit 5

Assessment units 25-38

Little Susitna River Landscape Character Type

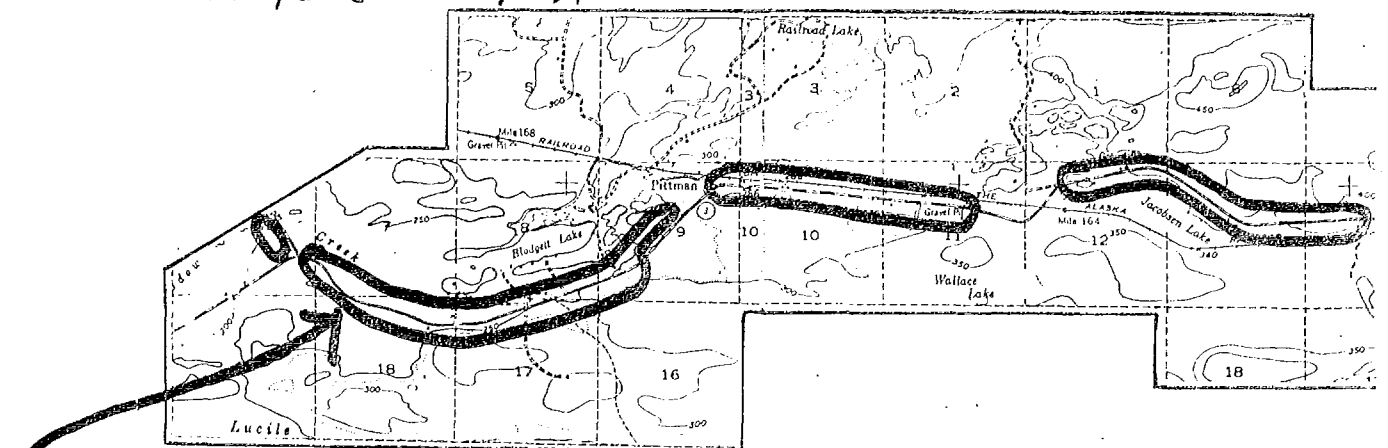
Approximate mileage 19

GENERAL

Visual Resource Management Unit number 5 begins at Palmer hay flats near the junction of the Parks highway and Glenn highway cutoff to Palmer, and extends westward for approximately 19 miles to the Big Lake cutoff. It includes the community of Wasilla. This section of the Parks highway is characterized by generally low scenic resource values and intensive roadside land use. Management recommendations are directed at specific areas where measures should be taken to prevent further deterioration of scenic resources, use the natural visual absorption capability when possible, and restore the foreground visual quality where it has been severely encroached upon by development and intensive land use. Land ownership is the primary limitation to the management of scenic resources within this area because roadside lands are almost exclusively under private ownership. Consequently, management implementation would be restricted to the following three strategies: landscaping and site planning within the existing highway right-of-way by the State Department of Highways, roadside zoning ordinances and development standards by the Matanuska-Susitna borough, and through the individual initiative of private landowners.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- To utilize the existing high visual absorption capability of this landscape (see maps).

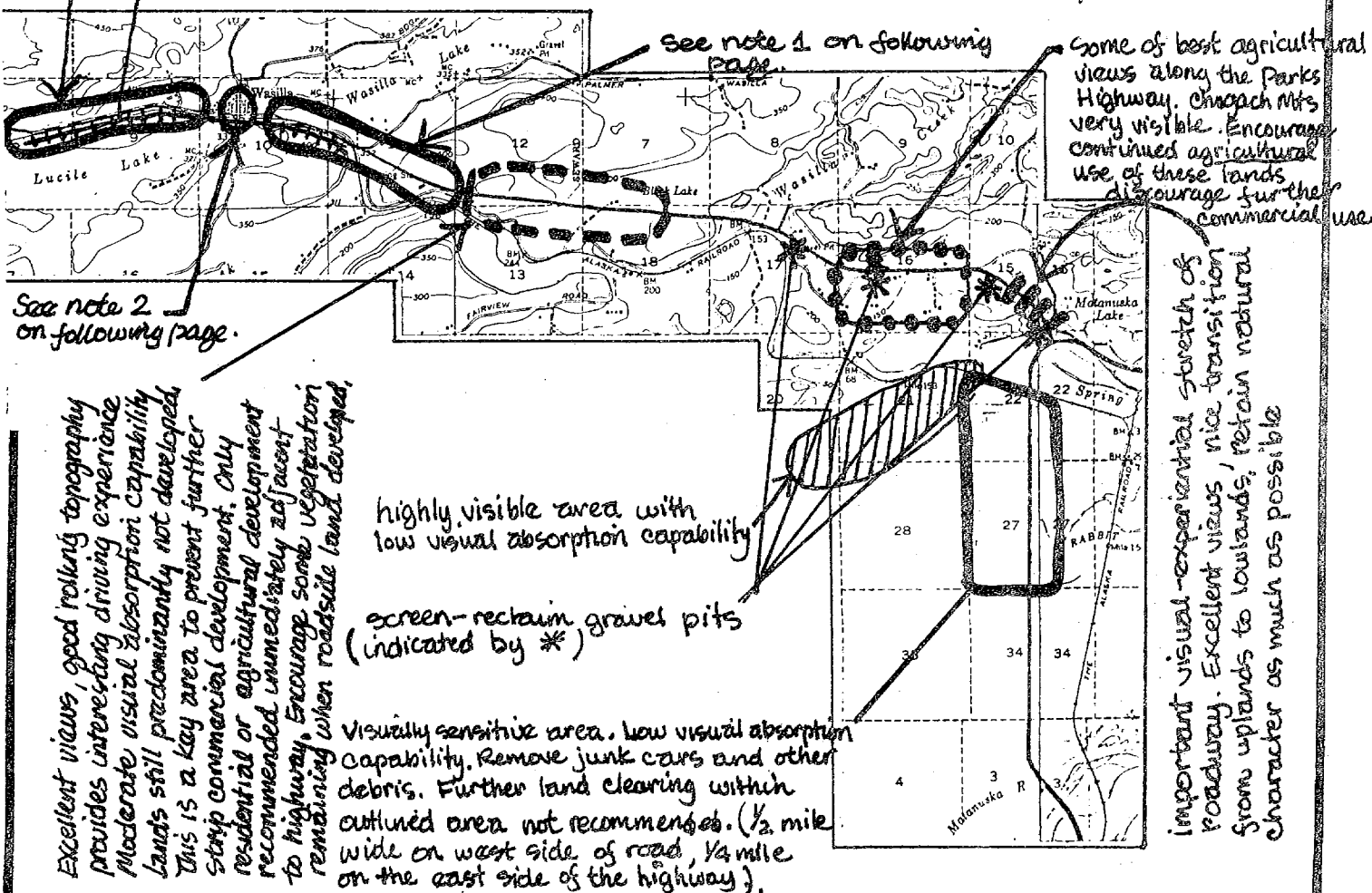


Areas circled in heavy black line have high visual absorption capability. The stretch of highway shown on this page is characterized by mixed residential and commercial development, gravel pits, clearings, and numerous intersections. However, it is in the very early stages of strip development. The generally high visual absorption capability throughout this stretch of highway suggests that roadside development can take place without severely affecting the existing visual quality if measures are taken to not totally remove all natural landcover and make the land totally level. We suggest that a minimum of 25% of the natural landcover and topography be undisturbed on those lots immediately adjacent to the highway. Those areas not circled in black have lower visual absorption capability and need additional on site evaluations to determine how the land might be developed with minimal impact on scenic resources.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

- Screen the numerous intensive industrial land uses immediately adjacent to the highway and begin land reclamation efforts on those areas which are no longer used. These are primarily gravel extraction sites and are indicated on the map by an asterisk.
- Restore foreground visual quality in those areas where intensive roadside commercial development has almost completely destroyed the natural vegetative cover and where the intensity of roadside land uses severely impacts upon the visual environment. Restoration measures include
 1. encouragement of natural revegetation process where possible. A brush stage (willows-alders) will usually precede a stand of birch and spruce.
 2. encouragement of landscaping around existing parking areas and particularly between the highway right of way and parking lots
 3. reduce the number of possible highway turnoff areas. A frontage road along those areas with particularly intensive commercial development would significantly reduce the safety hazards associated with strip development and, if landscaped properly could reduce the visual impact of it.
 4. the highway through Wasilla needs a study by landscape architects to develop a strategy for transposing this into a three mile long shopping area into a unique Alaskan community.
- Other specific recommendations as indicated on the maps.

See note 3 on following page.
See note 4 on following page regarding the railroad



NOTE 1. This area is the beginning of intensive roadside commercial development. More vegetation along the highway—particularly shrubs and trees needed. The north side of the road in particular needs landscaping and revegetation efforts.

NOTE 2. The crossroads and downtown wasilla is a particularly important area from a visual point of view. Real definition of a downtown area can reduce the feeling of extensive strip developments on either end of downtown. While this is an urban design problem and we recommend a study aimed at exploring what can be done to the "wasilla strip", a number of things can be done immediately.

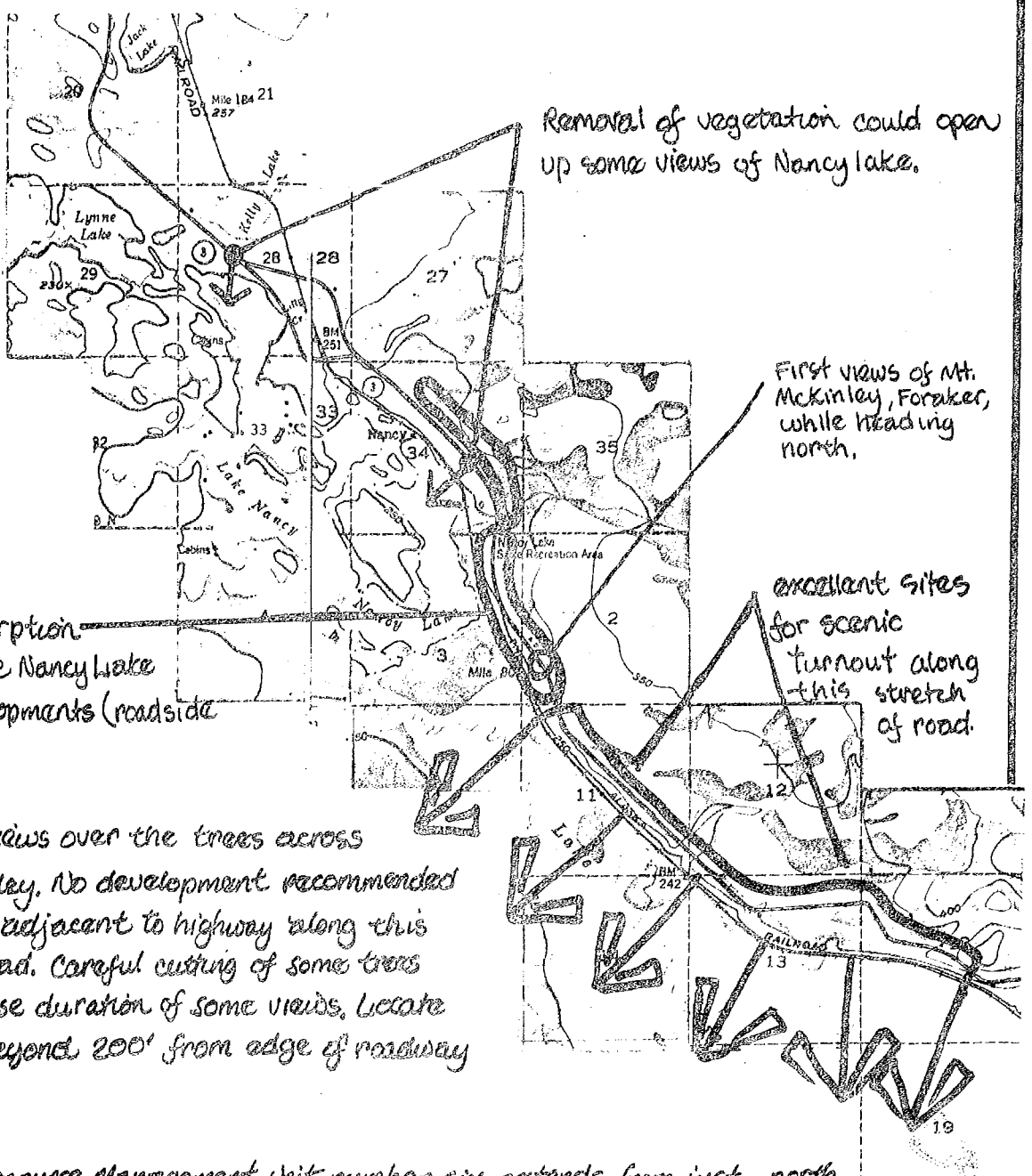
- Planting of street trees, construction of sidewalks in the downtown-crossroads area could help create a sense of place
- Taller buildings should be encouraged to provide a visual accent and focus to the downtown area and make it look and feel different from the commercial areas away from downtown. The railroad station and a few old historical buildings near this crossroads are extremely important to giving wasilla a sense of a historical heritage because most of the buildings look like they were built within the past 10 years.

NOTE 3. Intensive strip development and land clearing. Areas from note 1 through note 3 should be considered as the focus of a wasilla visual analysis study which should be conducted by a landscape architecture firm.

NOTE 4. The railroad provides an effective edge to the community to the south. A few areas of natural vegetation between the highway and railroad would provide added visual interest and reduce the monotony of the road paralleling the highway. (the railroad also effectively blocks views to Lucille Lake).

Recommendations

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Visual Resource Management Unit No. 6 | Assessment units 39-47 |
| Little Susitna River - Susitna lowlands character type | Approximate mileage 17.0 |



High visual absorption capability. locate Nancy Lake recreational developments (roadside related) here.

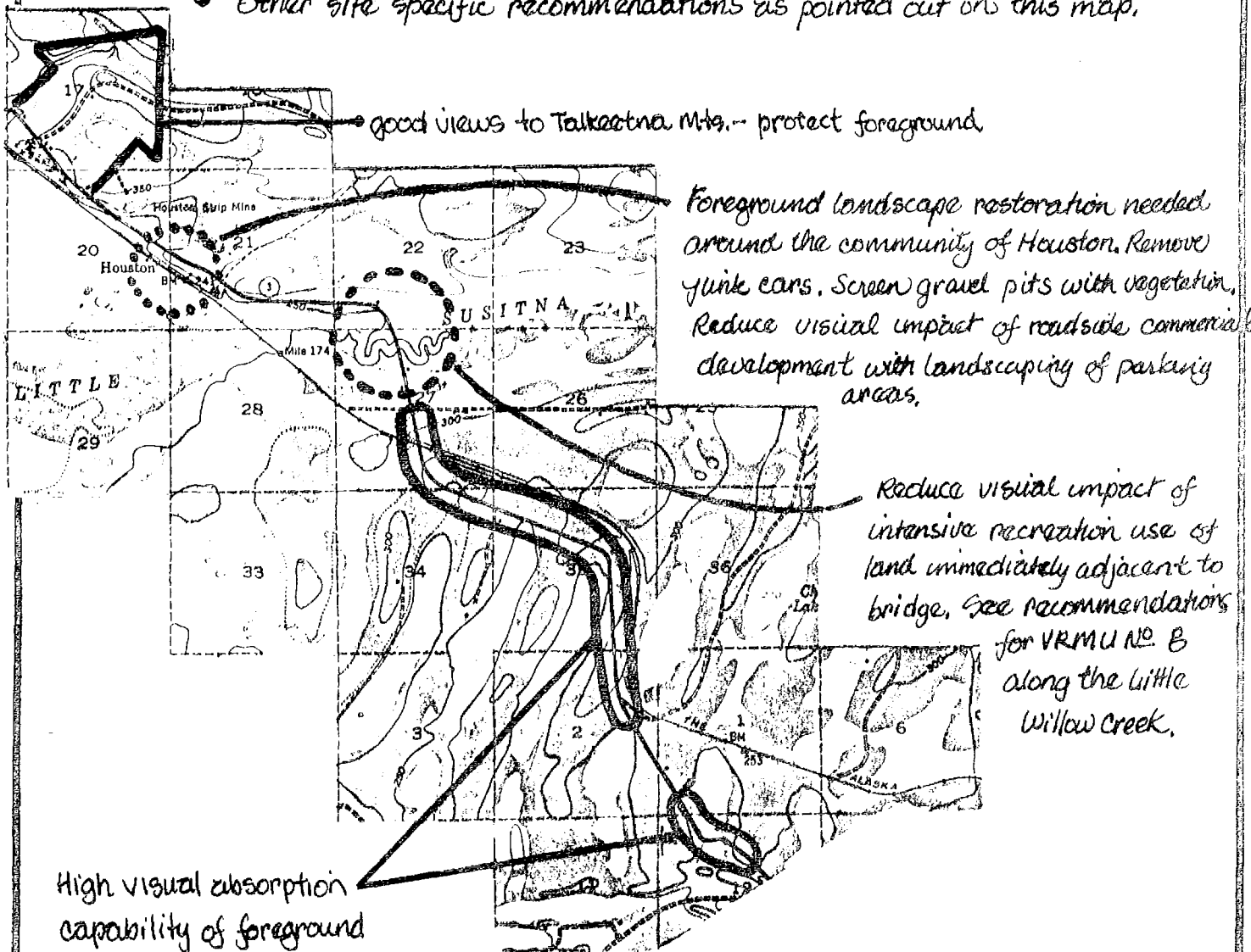
Numerous views over the trees across Susitna valley. No development recommended immediately adjacent to highway along this section of road. Careful cutting of some trees could increase duration of some views. locate land uses beyond 200' from edge of roadway

GENERAL

Visual Resource Management unit number six extends from just north of the Big Lake cut-off to south of the community of Willow. It includes approximately 17 miles of some of the most scenic portions of the Parks highway. This high scenic resource value is the result of a very diverse landscape with numerous views to distant mountains and constantly changing panoramas as the road climbs over and winds around the gently rolling low hills. It also contains the only extended views from the highway out across the broad lower Susitna valley. Due to the proximity of this area to Anchorage and the numerous recreation attractions nearby (Nancy Lake, Willow Creek) this portion of the highway is subject to relatively intensive use, especially during the summer. Only in assessment unit 41, which includes the community of Houston, is the visual landscape significantly disturbed by human development (extensive land clearings, gravel pits, commercial strip development). Also, much of the lands immediately adjacent to the highway have high visual absorption capability ratings. This suggests that there are numerous places where roadside development can occur without detracting from the exceptional driving experience (if proper site development considerations are taken).

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Designate this section of the Parks highway as a scenic highway corridor (see discussion , page)
- Encourage roadside commercial development around the existing community of Houston , and Nancy Lake while encouraging residential, agricultural and other non-auto related land uses be located along the remaining stretches of road if the need to occur near the roadway.
- Use the natural visual absorption capability of the land to reduce the visual impact of intensive land uses adjacent to the highway (mining, gravel pits, logging, subdivisions) See map for areas with high visual absorption capability.
- Establish a greenbelt along this portion of the highway. This would be 100 ft. minimum width beyond right of way along stretches of road with high visual absorption capability (see map). Other areas would require a wider greenbelt, the actual width determined in the field. (see discussion on greenbelts , p.)
- Other site specific recommendations as pointed out on this map.



Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit No. 7

Assessment units 48-49

Susitna River lowlands character type

Approximate mileage 3

GENERAL

Visual Resource Management Unit number 7 includes the lands bordering the highway as it passes through the community of Willow. The scenic resources along this stretch of roadway were rated moderate. However it is important to note that scenic resource values both immediately to the north and the south are very high (see VRMU No's 6 and 8). Willow is still in the very early stages of development, and while some signs of strip development are visible (eg, complete removal of vegetation on lands bordering the roadway, numerous intersections, extensive roadside parking areas, numerous signs) it is not as extensive as areas further to the south.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

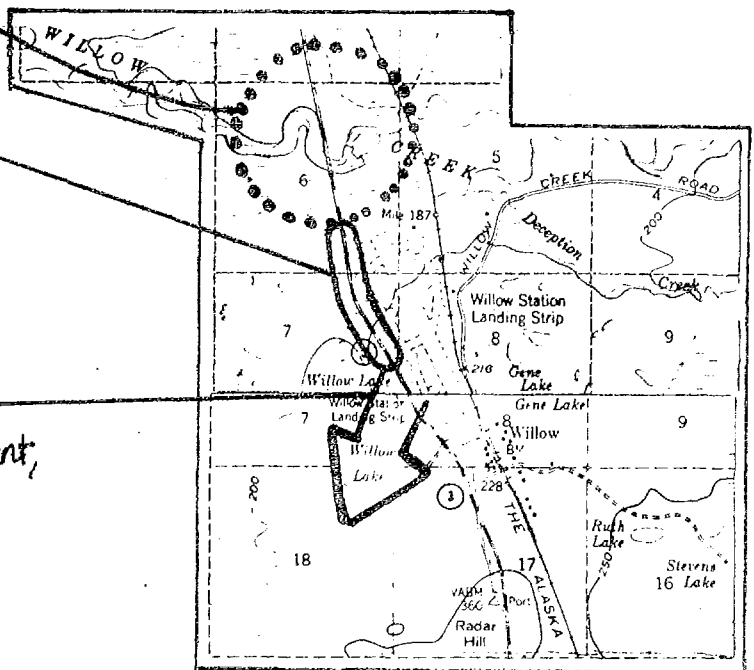
- To encourage necessary highway related commercial development within this area rather than areas immediately to the north and to the south.
- To use the natural visual absorption capability of the landscape to reduce the visual impacts of land developments in the foreground distance zone (1/4 to 1/2 mile either side of the highway). Within this character type this can be effectively accomplished by leaving some of the natural forest vegetation between the highway and the development, and in those lots bordering the highway right of way trying to maintain at least 25% of the land uncleared.
- Reduce the number of intersections with the highway. Development of a frontage road, with some of the existing vegetation left standing between the highway and this road would significantly help to maintain existing scenic quality and to soften the visual impacts of development.
- Encourage landscaping around parking areas, particularly where they are immediately adjacent to the highway. Specifically, native birch and spruce trees, and mounds of earth can be quite effective.
- Encourage the growth of native trees and shrubs within the highway right of way. Presently the right of way is neatly clipped back to the forest in a straight line parallel to the roadway. Some areas, particularly where the land beyond the right of way is publicly owned, could have the natural vegetation extend into the right of way. This would create visual interest and diversity and soften the impact of the road on the landscape.

Willow Creek is an intensive recreation node. Extensive removal of vegetation and overuse of the land immediately adjacent to the highway by vehicles has resulted in severe erosion, litter, trespassing on private property and visual blight. To remedy this the following recommendations are made.

1. Establish a greenbelt along the river a minimum of $\frac{1}{4}$ mile either direction from the bridge, and at least 150 feet back from the water's edge. Within this area only pedestrian movement would be allowed and no removal of vegetation would be permitted.

Area of high visual absorption capability in the foreground. Take advantage of this in roadside land developments.

Protect views across Willow Lake, from the highway. Land development, tree removal and other land uses should not block or destroy this important view.



(continued from above)

2. Establish auto-camper access and camping-parking facilities outside of this greenbelt and away from the bridge. Easier access to other portions of Willow Creek, especially via paved roadway would help to disperse intensive salmon fishing activities presently highly concentrated around the bridge.

Recommendations

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Assessment units 50-54 | Visual Resource Management Unit No. 8 |
| Approximate mileage 7.5 | Susitna River Lowlands character type |

GENERAL

Visual Resource Management Unit number 8 includes the lands from Willow Creek to approximately two miles north of Kashwitna Lake. It is characterized by very high scenic resource values. It also includes lands receiving particularly high recreation use, especially Willow and Little Willow Creeks during the summer salmon runs.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Designate this section of the Parks highway as a scenic highway corridor. (see discussion, page)
- Use existing visual absorption capability of lands to reduce the visual impact of land development. This is especially important in the foreground distance zone - from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the highway. See map below for areas of high visual absorption capability.
- Establish a greenbelt to protect the especially sensitive foreground scenic resource values. By greenbelt is meant that at least 75% of the land within the designated area is left in a natural state. Minimum greenbelt width of 100' beyond highway right of way in areas of high visual absorption capability, wider in other areas. Actual width should be field determined.
- Extend greenbelt around areas of high highway related recreational use - specifically Willow and Little Willow creek bridge crossings and the Kashwitna lake turnout.
- See map on facing page for other site specific recommendations.

Assessment units 50-54

Visual Resource Management Unit No 8

Approximate mileage 7.5

Susitna River Lowlands character type.

Important view across Keshwitna lake when driving south. Restrict removal of vegetation and intensive roadside development.

Excellent scenic turnout site. Presently it is a large gravel area with a few trash barrels by the lake. By simply encouraging some trees along the highway, relocating trash barrels away from lakeside a much nicer area could be created.

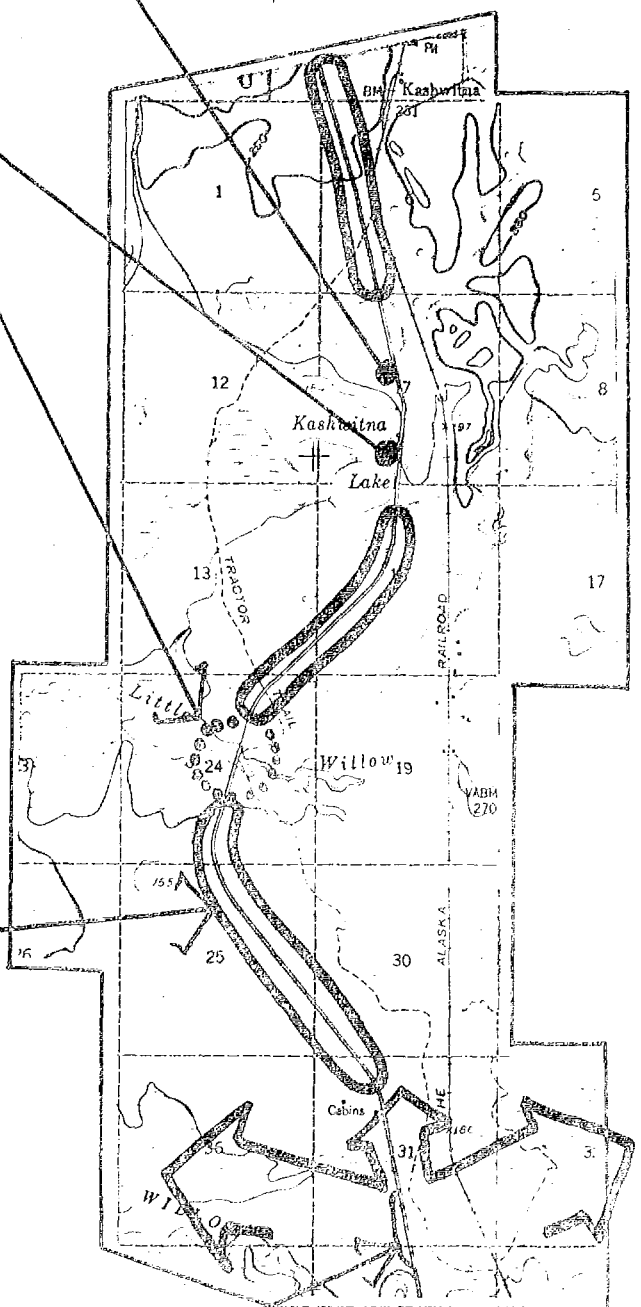
Little Willow Creek intensive recreation node. Removal of vegetation and overuse of land immediately adjacent to the highway by vehicles has resulted in severe erosion, litter and visual blight. To remedy this the following recommendations are made.

- Extend highway greenbelt $\frac{1}{4}$ mile up and down the creek (100' minimum beyond waters edge.) Only pedestrian use permitted in this area.
- Establish auto access and camping-parking facilities outside of this greenbelt and away from the bridge.

Areas of high visual absorption capability where a 100' greenbelt would be sufficient. These also are the places where roadside development might occur with minimum impact on the high scenic resources of this section of highway.

Excellent views across open muskegs to Mt. McKinley, Alaska range and Talkeetna mountains

Willow Creek intensive recreation node. See VRMU No 7



Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit Number 9

Assessment units 55-66

Susitna River lowlands character type

Approximate mileage 20

GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number nine is characterized by moderate to low scenic resource ratings but with nodes and short stretches of highway with particularly high ratings. These areas are generally near the numerous creek and river crossings (Kashwitna, Sheep, Caswell, Goose and Montana) and are the areas subject to intensive recreation use. This approximately twenty miles of highway typically has a few scattered residential developments, a few commercial structures mostly around the creek crossings and some land clearing and gravel pits.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- While this stretch of roadway is not of high enough visual quality to warrant consideration as a scenic highway, two short stretches are of particularly high scenic resource value and measures should be taken to protect the particularly sensitive foreground areas (see map for location).
- Necessary intensive roadside land uses (eg gravel pits, commercial developments, industries) should be encouraged when possible to locate along stretches of road with high visual absorption capability (see map)
- Special land use considerations need to be taken around the highway crossings of the rivers and creeks because these are the foci of intensive recreation activity. These should include
 1. Establishment of a greenbelt along the riverbanks around the highway crossings. These should be a minimum of 300' beyond the river's edge and extend up and downstream from the bridge for a minimum of 1/4 mile. Within this area only pedestrian use would be permitted, and removal of vegetation should not be permitted.
 2. Establishment of adequate auto-camper access to these rivers for fishing and other recreational use away from the bridge and outside of the area suggested for greenbelt.
 3. Establishment of publicly owned and maintained highway related stopping-parking areas near the bridge where people can safely and easily pull off the road, view the river, dispose of trash and possibly have a picnic. These river crossings are the most ideal locations for turnouts, however they need to be properly designed and located to prevent the existing pattern of uncontrolled

auto access to the riverbanks and the resulting accumulation of trash, beach erosion and destruction of vegetation.

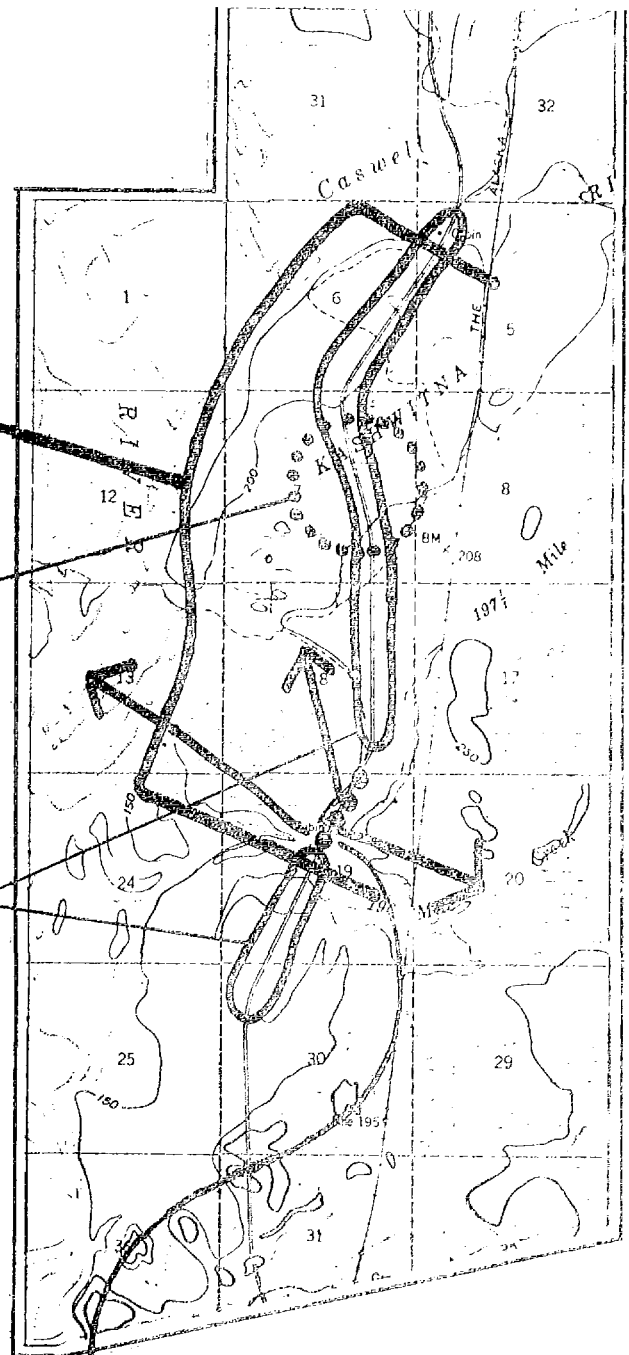
- other specific recommendations as indicated on the maps on this and the following page.

continued on following page

This stretch of road has very high scenic resource values and excellent views to Mt. McKinley and other distant mountain areas.

High use area, see narrative for special management considerations

Areas of high visual absorption capability in the foreground. Intensive roadside land uses can be sited with minimal visual impact in these areas.



good views to distant mountains, keep foreground areas natural if possible.

Intensive recreation related land use around highway crossing of Montana creek. See narrative on preceding pages for specific recommendations.

Note that extensive stretches of roadway have moderate to low visual absorption capability ratings, indicating that care must be taken in locating intensive land use or resource development activities adjacent to the highway. (High visual absorption capability areas are indicated by heavy black circles on this map).

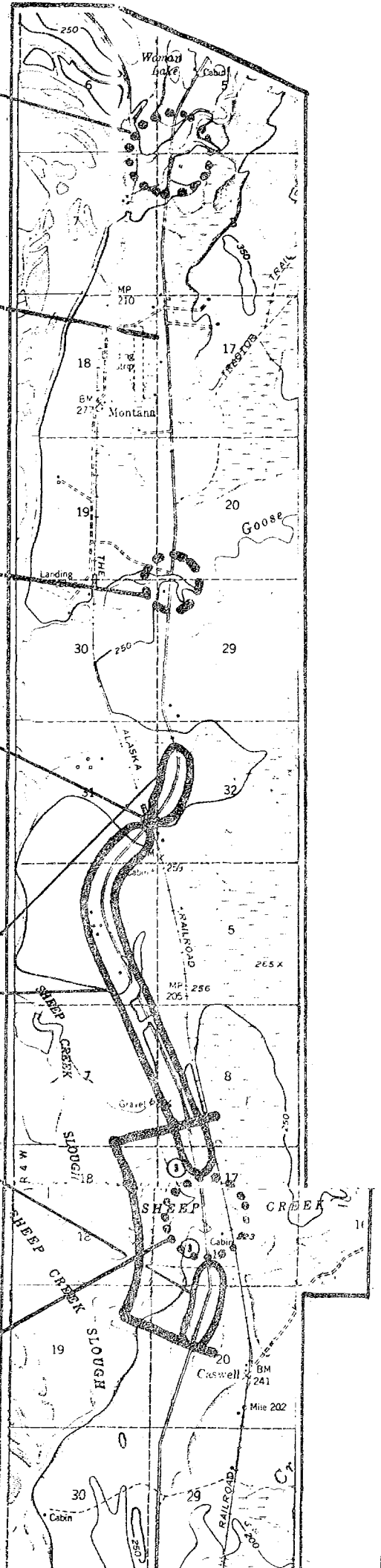
Goose Creek highway bridge. (see narrative).

Extensive land clearing and industrial activity at this crossing. Revegetation could reduce the visual impact.

Areas of high visual absorption capability in the foreground distance zone. Intensive roadside land uses can be sited with minimal visual impact in these areas.

Area of high scenic resource values. Land use and natural resource development adjacent to the road should not destroy these values. See narrative for recommendations around the sheep creek highway bridge.

particularly sensitive landscape.



Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit Number 10

Assessment Units 67-73

Susitna River Lowlands character type

Approximate mileage 11½

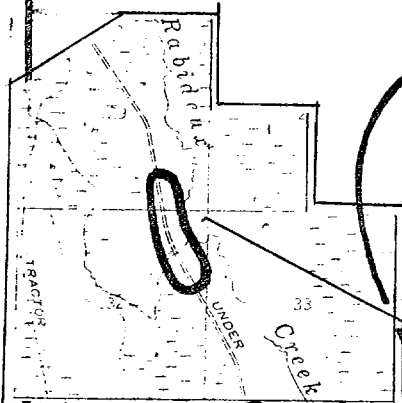
GENERAL

Visual Resource Management unit number 10 begins just north of the Parks Highway crossing of Montana Creek and trends north-northwest for 11.5 miles. Included within VRMU number 10 area the Talkeetna cutoff as well as the only highway crossing of the Susitna River. Scenic resources along this stretch of roadway were rated very high. The lands adjacent to the highway are characterized by generally dense stands of birch-spruce forest with relatively little visible human use. The gently rolling glacial moraine topography affords numerous views in all directions-including Mt. McKinley to the north and the Chugach Mtns. to the south. Future roadside land uses should recognize the high intrinsic scenic resource values as well as the generally high visual absorption capability. It should be noted that this stretch of highway still has considerable foreground land under public ownership (Matanuska-Susitna Borough and State of Alaska). Consequently the state and borough should recognize the valuable scenic resources before extensive land disposals are made.

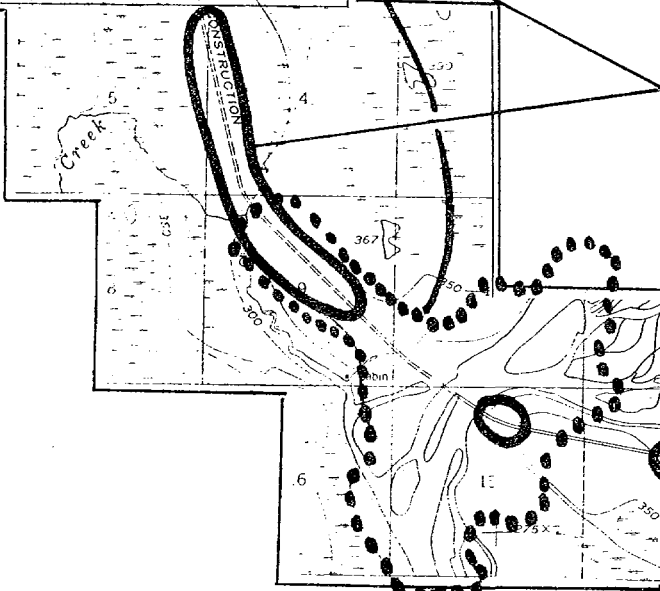
PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Designate this section of the Parks highway as a scenic highway corridor (see discussion, page)
- Establish a 150 foot wide greenbelt along either side of the roadway within those sections indicated as having high visual absorption capability. Within this greenbelt, land developments would be required to retain a minimum of 33% of the existing natural landcover. A wider greenbelt, determined by additional field surveys would be needed for those lands adjacent to the roadway with moderate to low visual absorption capability. Gravel extraction and other surface mining activities would not be allowed within this greenbelt.
- Retain under public ownership lands adjacent to the highway near the Susitna River bridge. These lands would be set aside for future development into a roadside rest area.

All roadside lands not outlined by a heavy black line have moderate to low visual absorption capability. Here a greenbelt needs to be wider than 150 feet beyond the highway right-of-way, and land developments adjacent to the road need special design considerations to insure that the high scenic resource values are not impacted.

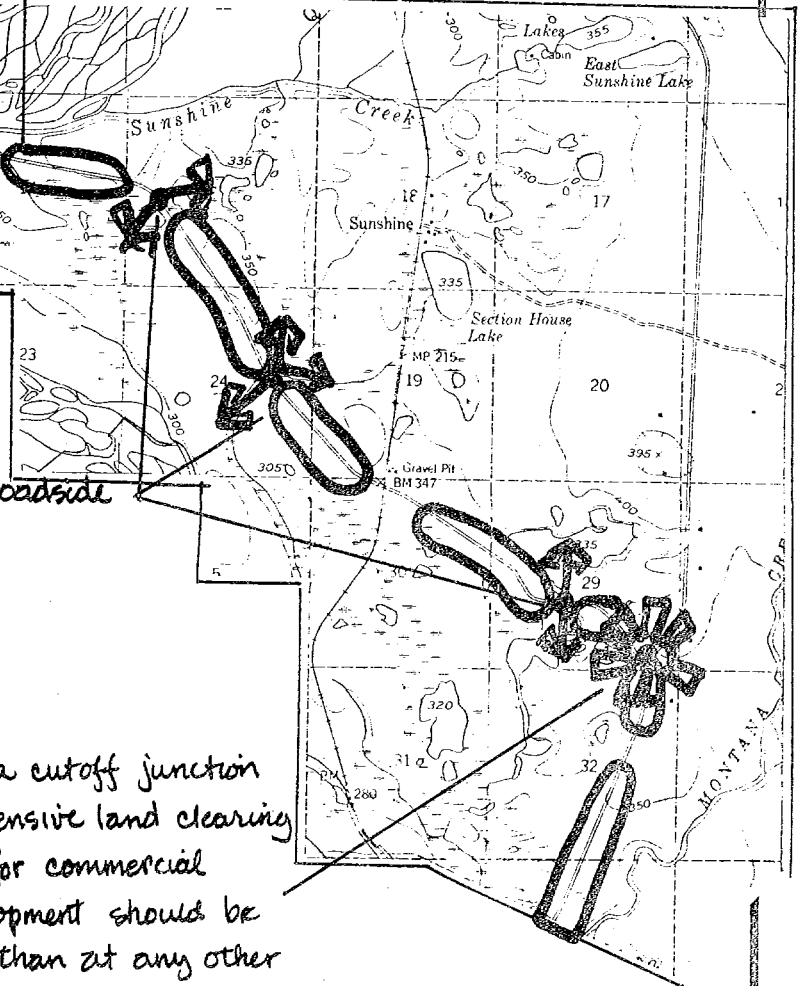


Viewshed (visible lands) from the highway immediately around the ^{and waters} Susitna river bridge. This area is especially sensitive and important. While recreational access to the river needs to be provided, concentrations of parked motorhomes and campers should be located outside of this viewshed area. This is a logical location for a scenic turnout and a highway rest area (day-use) with an overnight area further up or down stream.



Roadside land with high visual absorption capability. Residential development should be restricted to these areas (roadside residential development) and a 100 ft setback from right-of-way should be required.

Good views across lakes and meadows to mountains beyond. Keep roadside development away from these areas.



Sensitive area: Parks Highway-Talkeetna cutoff junction. This area is already experiencing intensive land clearing and appears to be a prime location for commercial development. Any commercial land development should be encouraged around this node rather than at any other point within this visual resource management unit. Land developments around this node should be required to leave a minimum of 25% of a site in a natural, undeveloped state.

Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit Number 11

Assessment units 74-80

Susitna River Lowlands character type

Approximate mileage 15.5

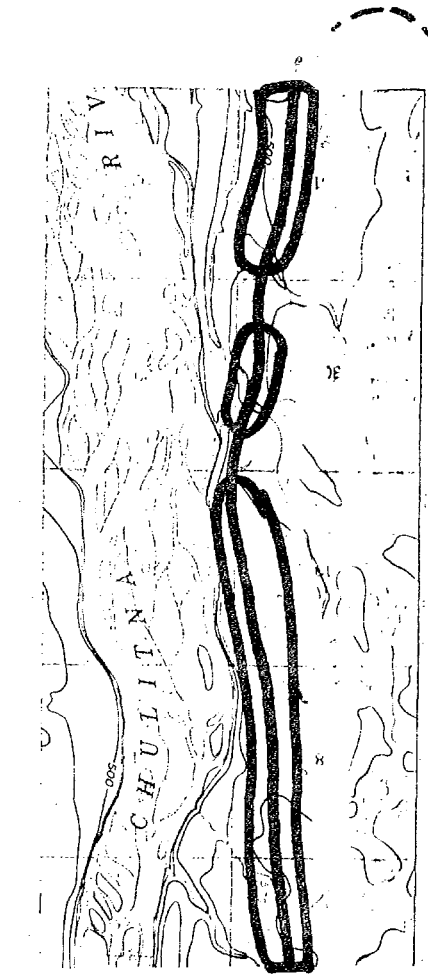
GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number 11 begins approximately $4\frac{3}{4}$ miles north of the Parks highway crossing of the Susitna River and extends almost due north for 15.5 miles. While this stretch of roadway parallels the Susitna River and later the Chulitna River, they are not visible from the highway. This is because the topography is generally level to gently rolling and dense birch-spruce stands border most of the road. This visual resource management unit is characterized by generally low scenic quality ratings and high visual absorption capability. Land uses presently visible within this VRMU are for the most part concentrated around the community of Tropper Creek which is located at the junction of the Parks Highway and the Peters Creek access road.

Recommendations involve creating more visual diversity and opening up lateral views when possible, preventing strip development and taking advantage of the high visual absorption capability of this landscape.

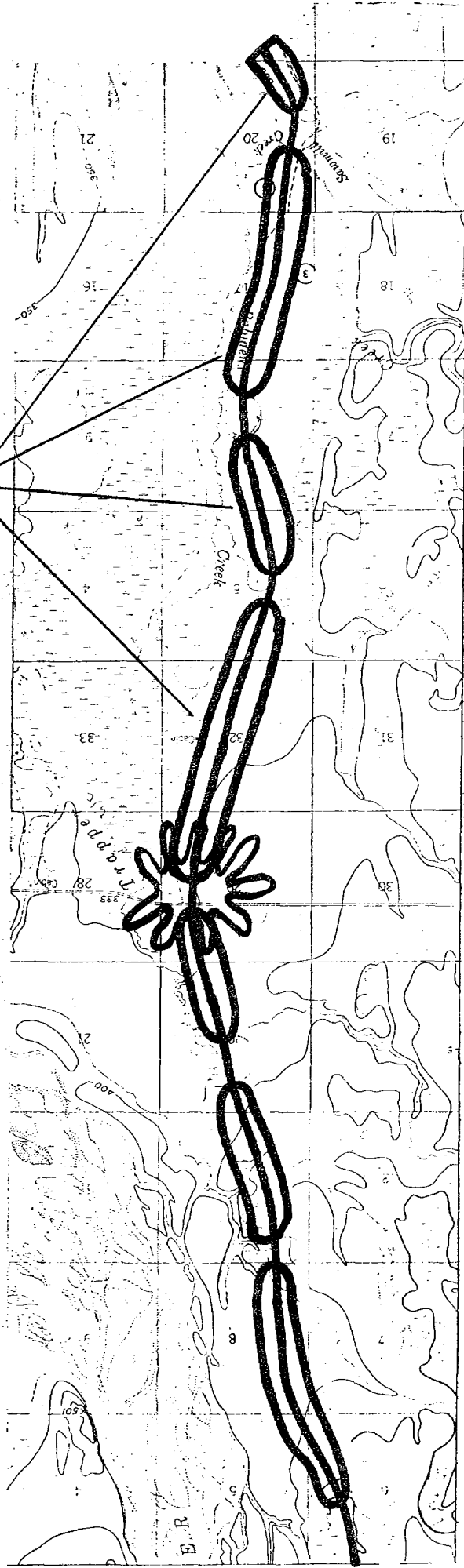
PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- To most drivers this stretch of highway lacks visual diversity. This is primarily because most views are confined to the dense forested foreground with occasional views to distant mountains. Greater roadside visual diversity could be created by encouraging some land uses which create spatial diversity by removing some of the dense tree cover (selective logging), create more topographic diversity (sand and gravel mining or other mining with a sensitive land reclamation program), or introduce structures which most drivers identify with (clusters of residential structures). A combination of these land uses, as well as some agriculture or grazing would be desirable to create the needed visual diversity.
- Commercial development should be confined to the Peters Creek access road intersection. Commercial development should remain in scale and character with the surrounding landscape. This means low buildings, generally of wood construction, and retention of as much of the native landcover as possible. A general rule of thumb would be to leave 25% of every acre in an undisturbed state.



Area most likely to undergo strip development pressures during the near future. Commercial highway related land developments should be confined to this intersection and discouraged to the north and south.

High visual absorption capability on both sides of the roadway. As was noted in the text, some roadway and roadside land uses should be encouraged to reduce the visual monotony of this stretch of highway. (These areas are indicated by a heavy black line surrounding those areas with high visual absorption capability).



CONTINUED

Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit Number 12
Susitna River Lowlands Character Type

Assessment Units 81-84
Approximate mileage 8

GENERAL

Visual Resource Management Unit number twelve includes approximately 8 miles of roadway immediately south of the southern highway entrance to Denali State Park. Scenic resource values as determined by this methodology were moderate. This stretch of roadway is important as an entrance to the state park. It is also a transitional area going from the subdued topography of the Susitna lowlands up into the more mountainous uplands of the Chulitna River. Roadside land uses within this V.R.M.U. are presently restricted to a number of gravel extraction sites used during the construction of the highway.

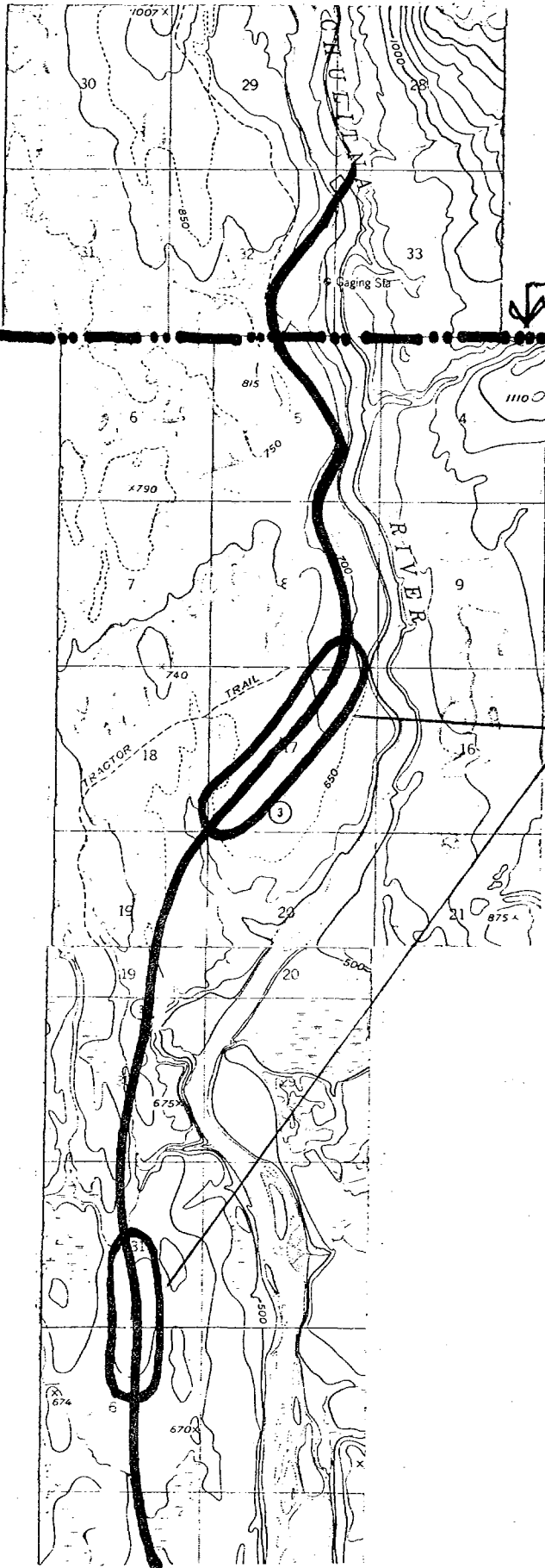
The visual absorption capability of this stretch of roadway is generally lower than that of the preceding management unit. This means that roadside land uses need to be more carefully located in order to maintain the existing visual quality. While the scenic resource values were not high enough to qualify this V.R.M.U. as a Scenic Highway, due to the proximity to Denali State Park it should be considered to be an area where roadside development is not encouraged.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage roadside developments to take advantage of these areas with a high visual absorption capability where possible.
- Protect the numerous views towards the Alaska Range and Mt. McKinley to the northwest. This suggests that the east side of the road would be the preferred side for the location of roadside land developments.

Assessment Units 81-84

Visual Resource Management Unit Number 12



Denali State Park Boundary

Areas with high visual absorption capability are indicated by heavy black lines.

Recommendations

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Visual Resource Management Unit No 13 | Assessment units 85-89 |
| Chulitna River Character type | Approximate mileage 8 |

GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number 13 extends from the northern boundary to Denali State Park (milepost 169.2) to approximately 1/4 mile beyond the crossing of Little Hondulu Creek (milepost 176.8). The most notable features found in this unit are the highway and railroad bridges over Hurricane Gulch. This portion of the George Parks highway is characterized by exceptionally high scenic resource values. This stretch of highway is an exceptionally pleasing driving experience as the road curves through rolling topography with expansive views in all directions and unique features such as Hurricane Gulch. Visual absorption capability is low to moderate. Other than four turnouts and one moderately visible gravel extraction site this stretch of roadway remains virtually untouched, adding to the high scenic resource value. It should be noted that this stretch of highway provides a distinctive entrance-exit to Denali State Park.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

To officially designate this portion of the George Parks Highway as a scenic highway and develop guidelines to manage the particularly sensitive foreground lands in a manner which conserves these especially high scenic resource values. Due to the moderate to low visual absorption capability, additional field work is needed to determine the actual width and specific nature of a greenbelt along this portion of the highway.

Commercial, industrial and residential development should not be permitted immediately adjacent to the roadway in this visual resource management unit. The only land use which would not impact upon the high scenic values would be scattered residential and recreational homesites. Such developments would best be situated at least 1/4 mile beyond the highway. Because distant views are oriented to the west across the Chulitna River to the Alaska Range, residential development would have a lower visual impact on the east side of the highway. Roadside commercial development should be permitted in visual resource management units 14 or 16 rather than here.

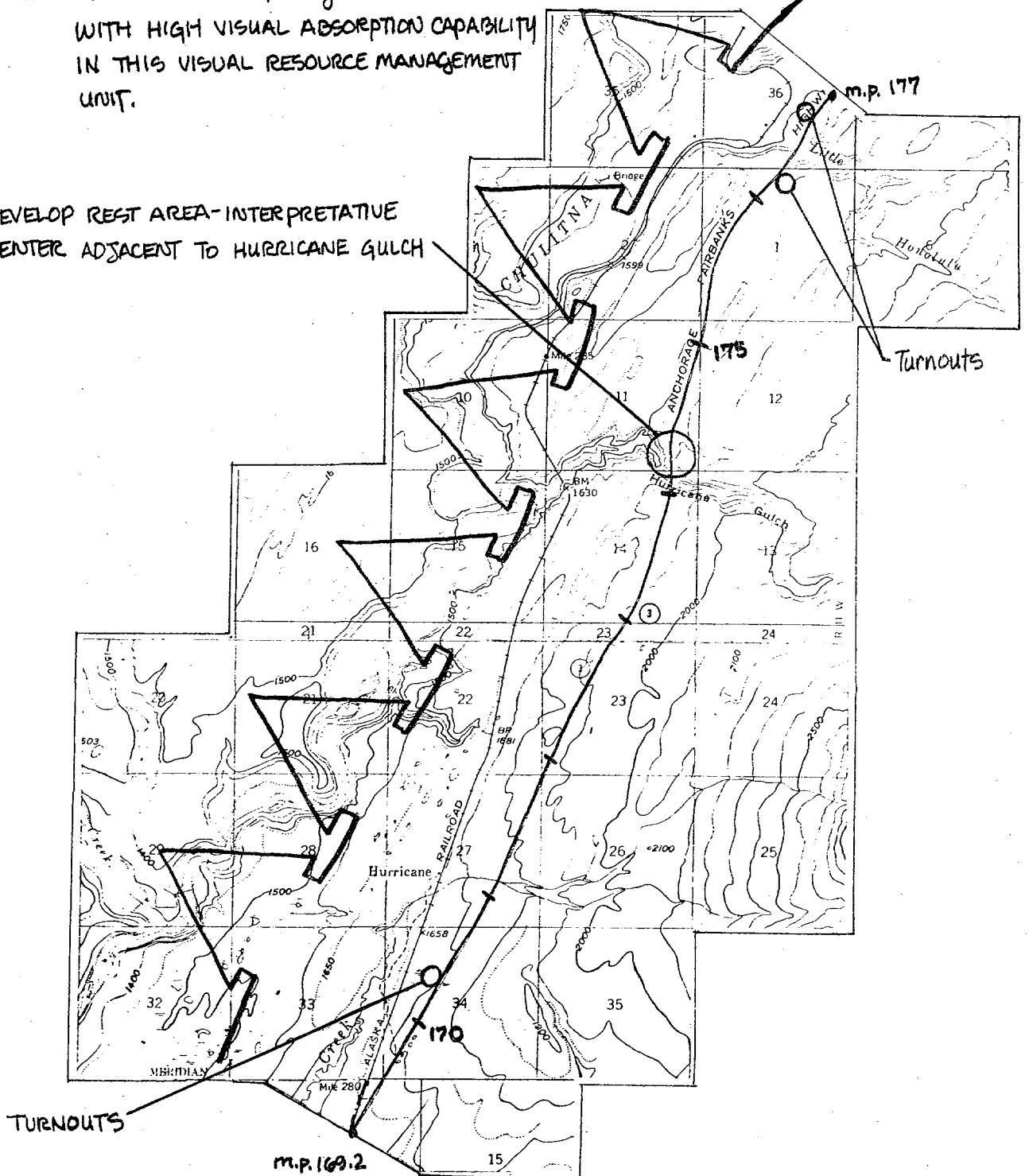
Develop a day-use roadside rest-interpretive center at the bridge crossing of Hurricane Gulch. Such a location would be ideal for providing the traveler with interpretative information about this landscape. This rest stop would be a part of the

System of rest stops-interpretive centers recommended in this report
 A trail system should also be developed to provide the traveler with
 an opportunity to seek good vista points and experience this timberline-
 open tundra landscape more readily. Already the lack of such an
 well organized trail system has resulted in a hodge-podge of
 improperly located footpaths, litter accumulation, devegetation and soil
 erosion. A professional landscape architect should prepare a master
 development plan for this rest-interpretative center. This should be
 a day use facility. An overnight facility should be sited in visual
 resource management unit number 14 along Honolulu Creek.

NOTE: THERE ARE NO FOREGROUND LANDS
 WITH HIGH VISUAL ABSORPTION CAPABILITY
 IN THIS VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
 UNIT.

DEVELOP REST AREA-INTERPRETATIVE
 CENTER ADJACENT TO HURRICANE GULCH

VIEWS ARE PREDOMINATELY
 TO THE WEST



Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit No 14

Assessment Units 90-92

Chulitna River Character Type

Approximate length: 5 miles

GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number 14 is a five mile stretch of highway which includes the crossing of Honolulu Creek. Scenic resource values are moderately high while visual absorption capability is moderate to low. The only visible land uses include a series of roadside turnouts, a picnic area adjacent to Honolulu Creek at the highway bridge, and a commercial radio tower.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Because scenic resource values for this portion of the highway through the Chulitna River character type were not quite as high as those immediately to the north and south, this stretch of highway is not being recommended as a first priority for scenic highway status. This should not be taken to mean that scenic resource values are low - on the contrary they were close to being high enough for a scenic highway recommendation. One reason to not consider this a scenic highway stretch of roadway would be to encourage meeting future demands for roadside commercial and residential development here rather than in the more scenic lands to the north and south. It should be noted that the best location for commercial roadside development, from a scenic resource management point of view, would be in visual resource management unit number 16, approximately ten miles north of here.

While development may be permitted here to meet public demands for land and services, it should be developed in a fashion which respects the high scenic resource values intrinsic to this landscape. The following guidelines are suggestive of some of the considerations necessary to accomplish this.

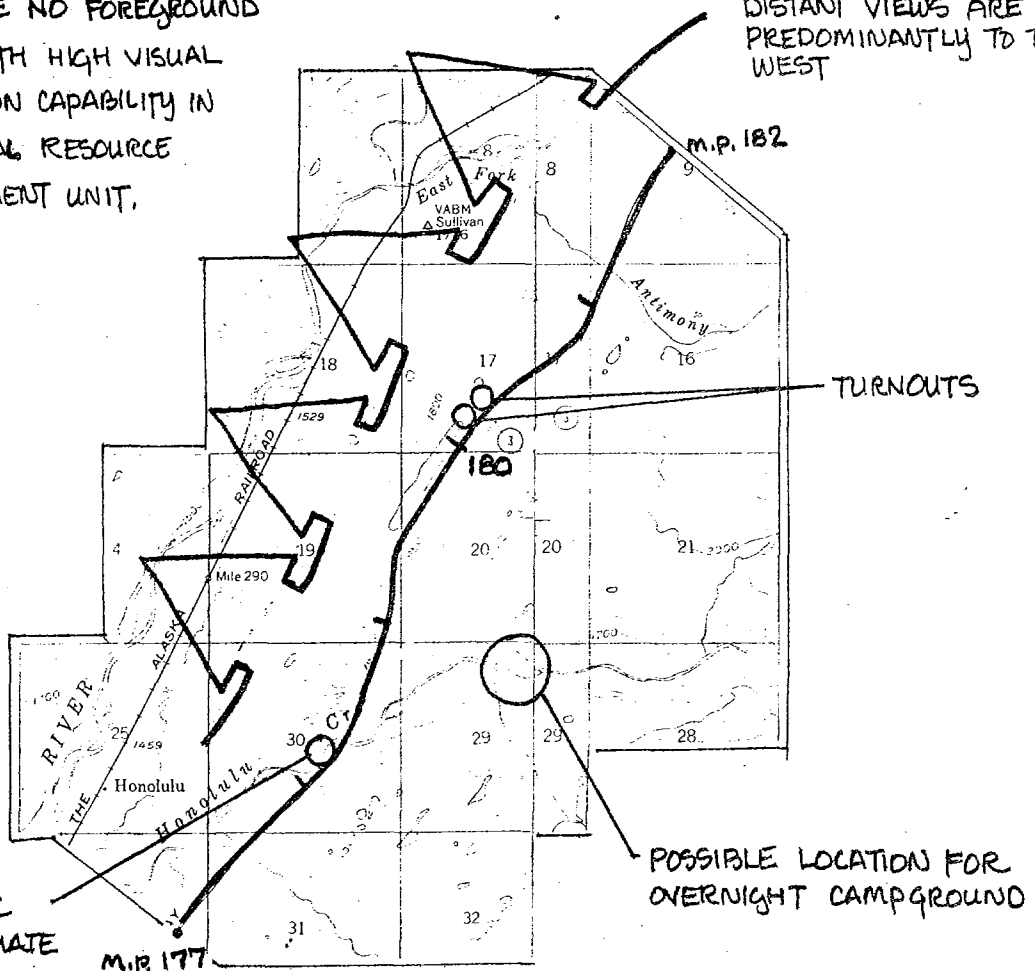
- o No development should be permitted along Honolulu Creek within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the highway crossing. Public access along the creek should be preserved through an easement along one or both banks.

- Development sites adjacent to the highway right of way should have a minimum 200 ft. setback. Land clearing-modification within this 200 ft. wide area should not exceed 50% of this area.
- Residential development should be organized around intersecting service roads to the main highway rather than each residential site having direct access to the highway.

A public overnight camping facility should be developed along Honolulu Creek. This would compliment the day-use rest area - interpretive center recommended for Hurricane Gulch to the south. Such a campground should be located a minimum of 1/2 mile from the road.

NOTE: THERE ARE NO FOREGROUND LANDS WITH HIGH VISUAL ABSORPTION CAPABILITY IN THIS VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UNIT.

DISTANT VIEWS ARE PREDOMINANTLY TO THE WEST



EXISTING PICNIC AREA (APPROXIMATE HALFWAY POINT BETWEEN ANCHORAGE AND FAIRBANKS)

POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR OVERNIGHT CAMPGROUND

Recommendations

Visual Resource Management Unit No 15

Assessment units 93-96

Chulitna River - Broad Pass character types

Approximate length: 6 miles

GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number 15 is approximately six miles of highway with exceptionally high scenic resource value. This unit includes the East Fork highway maintenance station and the highway crossing of the East Fork of the Chulitna River. The abandoned railroad stop at Colorado is a mile to the northwest, however it is of minor visual significance.

Distinctive views to the Alaska Range and Mt. McKinley as well as nearby views of the picturesque cliffs above the East Fork Chulitna River contribute to this areas very valuable scenic resource value. The highway maintenance station, gravel pits, turnouts and rest area are the only visible land developments. None of these uses significantly impacts upon the scenic values present.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

To officially designate this portion of the George Parks highway as a scenic highway and develop guidelines to manage the particularly sensitive foreground lands in a manner which conserves these especially high scenic resource values. Due to the low to moderate visual absorption capability it is recommended that commercial, residential and other development not be permitted in the area 1/2 mile on the west side of the road and 1 mile on the east side of the roadway. Additional field work is recommended to evaluate the potential visual impact of proposed developments which would be visible from this portion of the Parks highway - especially surface mining and power line routes.

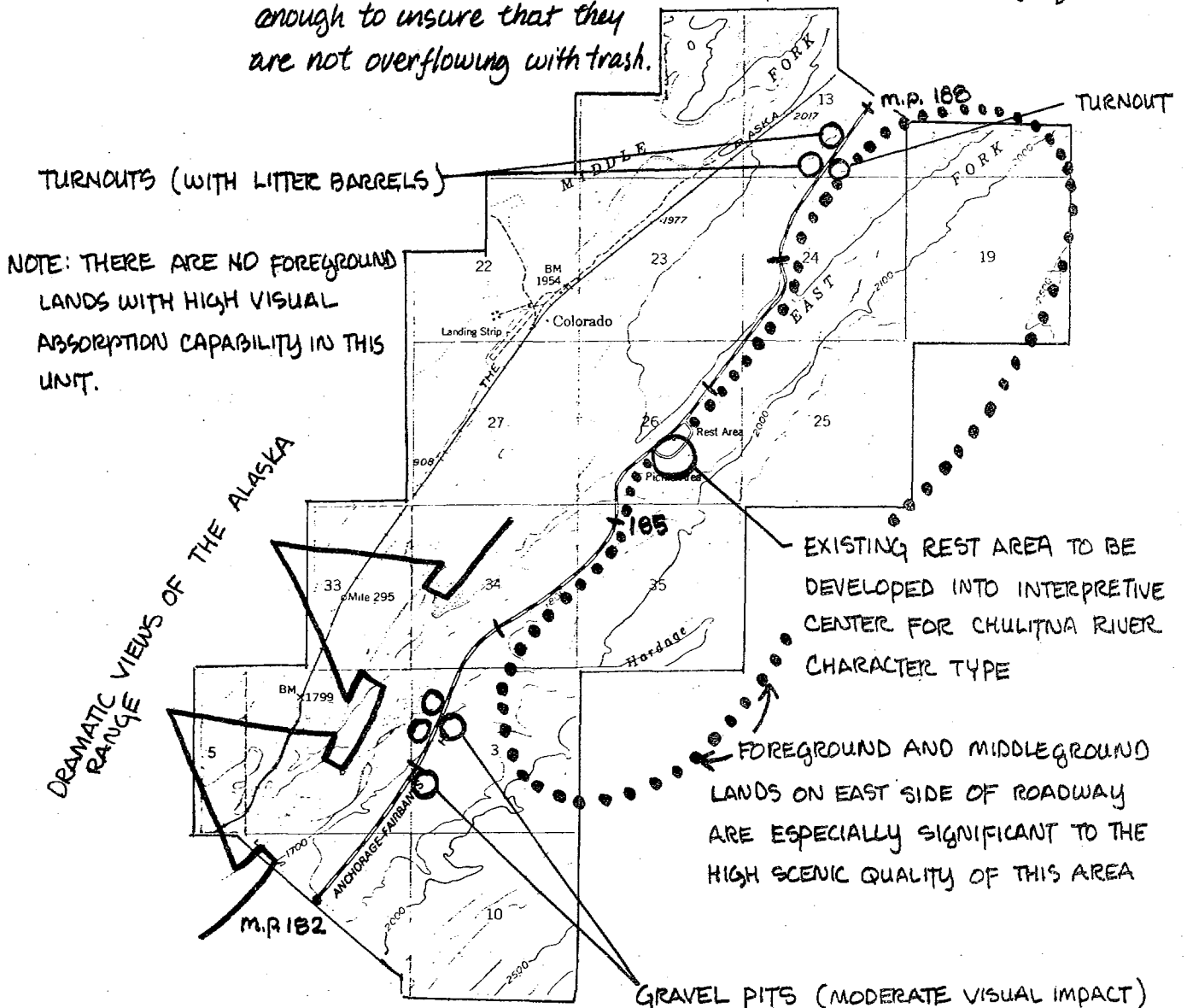
Roadside commercial and residential land developments should be located in the adjoining visual resource management units (numbers 14 or 16) rather than along this particularly valuable and sensitive stretch of highway.

There presently exists a well developed highway rest area just northeast of the bridge over the East Fork of the Chulitna River. This site could serve as a prototype

for the recommended rest area-interpretative centers for each of the landscape character types through which the highway passes. Additional work should be done to develop interpretative materials concerning this landscape and the development of a short trail system. A master development plan for this site should be prepared by a professional landscape architect. Because this site already has good rest area facilities, it should be the first place actually converted to the rest area-interpretative center facility.

Primary litter pick-up facilities should be developed at the rest area-interpretative center sites. Litter barrels should be located at some of the other numerous turnouts, however their visual impact needs to be reduced. Some considerations are:

to alert the public to litter barrels through signs rather than having them painted bright colors and in visually prominent locations. Litter barrels should blend in with the surrounding landscape, and only located where they can be emptied frequent enough to insure that they are not overflowing with trash.



Recommendations

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Visual Resource Management Unit No 16 | Assessment Units 97-99 |
| Broad Pass Character Type | Approximate length 6 miles |

GENERAL

Visual resource management unit number 16 consists of six miles of the George Parks highway as it traverses the southern portion of Broad Pass. The only notable visual features within this unit are the small railroad community of Broad Pass and the new Igloo motel and adjacent Tesoro service station. Scenic resource values are low. Visual absorption capability is also low.

PRIMARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

This area would be the best location to meet any demand for commercial, residential and institutional land development in the southern Broad Pass area. This is primarily because adjoining visual resource management units (numbers 15 and 17) both are recommended for scenic highway status and roadside commercial development would not be desirable in these areas. Development should concentrate around one of the two existing developed areas - the old railroad town of Broad Pass, or the new Igloo-Tesoro station. Of these two choices, the town of Broad Pass is the more desirable from a scenic resource management perspective because it could be more removed from the road and is much more picturesque.

Any roadside foreground or middleground development should attempt to retain as many of the scattered spruce trees as possible in an effort to reduce its visual impact.

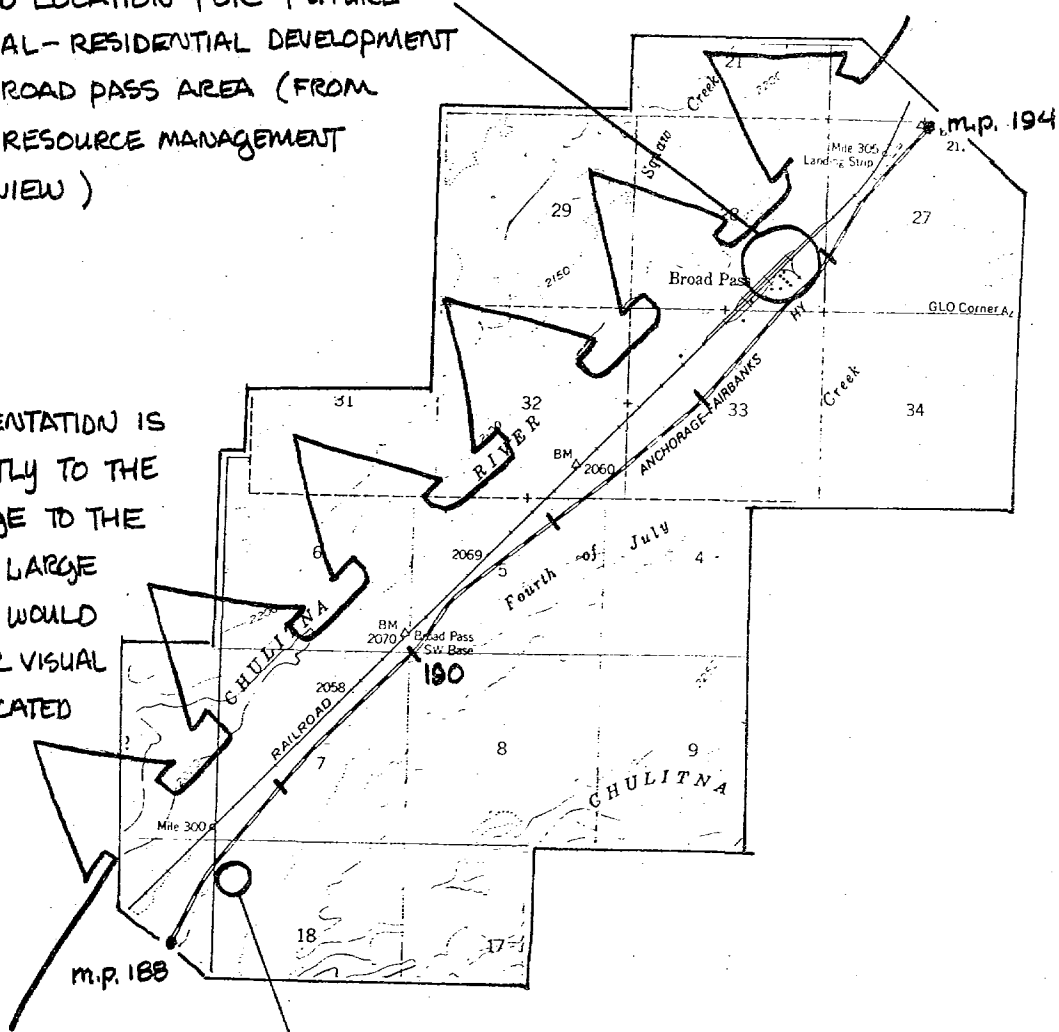
The Igloo motel is a good example of a number of points related to scenic resource management. Already in its short history it has become somewhat of a landmark. One reason for this is that most people tend to identify with and remember man-made objects more readily than natural landscape features. Today the Igloo is somewhat controversial - some people like it, some people do not. During the winter, when snow covers much of this landscape, the Igloo actually blends in quite nicely with its surroundings. During the summer it is such

a visually strong feature as to make it difficult to focus on other landscape features during the short time that it is in the viewers line of sight. In any case, the Igloo is here to stay, at least for awhile. What should be learned from the Igloo is that some type of foreground control would be desirable along those stretches of the highway with significant scenic value. Fortunately the igloo is located in an area of moderate to low scenic quality and that there is enough really spectacular scenery nearby to allow for the viewer to quickly forget it. Hopefully there will remain only one igloo along the George Parks highway.

NOTE: FOREGROUND AND MIDDLEGROUND VISUAL ABSORPTION CAPABILITY IS LOW THROUGHOUT THIS MANAGEMENT UNIT.

PREFERRED LOCATION FOR FUTURE COMMERCIAL-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE BROAD PASS AREA (FROM A SCENIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POINT OF VIEW)

VIEWER ORIENTATION IS PREDOMINANTLY TO THE ALASKA RANGE TO THE NORTHWEST. LARGE DEVELOPMENTS WOULD HAVE A LESSER VISUAL IMPACT IF LOCATED ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY



EXISTING COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (IGLOO MOTEL- TESORO SERVICE STATION). CONSOLIDATE FUTURE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY HERE OR AT BROAD PASS. TO THE NORTH,