

Management Unit 3

Glacier/Winner Creek

BACKGROUND

This Management Unit includes approximately 8,700 acres of state owned and selected land in the Glacier and Winner creek drainages, including the confluence of Glacier, Winner, and Crow creeks, and the mountain massif between Glacier and Winner creeks. This land is part of the state's National Forest Community Grant land entitlement, and was selected for its community expansion and recreation potential.

The Glacier/Winner Creek mountain massif has long been recognized for its potential for developing a downhill ski facility. The mountain could possibly hold a ski area with year-round glacier skiing, over 5,000 feet of vertical drop, and a capacity of about 12,000 people (approximately three times the capacity of the existing Mt. Alyeska ski area). Currently, this mountainous area is used mainly by backcountry skiers, mountaineers, and summer hikers.

The area at the confluence of Glacier, Winner, and Crow creeks has high recreational and scenic values, and is used extensively by the Girdwood community. This area is commonly known as the "Four-Corners," and is bisected by steep rock canyons and waterfalls formed by the three creeks. The popular Winner Creek trail provides access for many hikers to this area. The Four Corners area is also criss-crossed by numerous smaller trails, including a trail along Glacier Creek, and a trail from the confluence of Crow and Winner creeks to the Crow Creek Mine road. The Four Corners area contains numerous historic sites and artifacts.

Although mining claims have previously been staked in this management unit, little mineral activity has taken place in the Glacier and Winner Creek drainages. Most of the mining claims were purchased by the Municipality of Anchorage, and subsequently relinquished. This management unit has potential for recreational gold mining.

Much of this management unit is heavily forested with stands of large Sitka Spruce and western hemlock trees. These Sitka spruce are among the northernmost found anywhere in the state.

Chapter 3. Land Management Policies for each Management Unit



Looking toward the head of the Glacier Creek valley from the Glacier/Winner Creek massif.

This management unit consists of three subunits:

- Subunit 3a** This subunit includes land to the south of Glacier Creek, the lower portion of Winner Creek, and the Glacier/Winner Creek mountain massif.
- Subunit 3b** This subunit includes land to the north of Glacier Creek and along the lower portion of Crow Creek.
- Subunit 3c** This subunit includes land along the upper portion of Winner Creek.

MANAGEMENT INTENT

A portion of subunits 3a and 3b will likely be conveyed to the Municipality of Anchorage as part of their municipal entitlement. Please see *Municipal Selections* in Chapter 4.

Subunit 3a

That portion of this subunit that remains in state ownership is to be retained in public ownership and managed for commercial recreation, which may include major resort development. This type of use is appropriate for state lands within this subunit, and management of this subunit should not preclude the option for this type of development.

Because much of this subunit will probably be conveyed to the Municipality of Anchorage, any resort development within this subunit will be a coordinated effort between the state and the Municipality of Anchorage.

While the intent for this subunit is to provide for commercial recreation and resort development opportunities, the emphasis is to maintain the scenic and natural beauty of the area, and to ensure that the impacts to the community of Girdwood are minimized. Resort development should be designed to provide a uniquely Alaskan experience, emphasizing the natural environment, scenic beauty, and historical significance. Because this subunit's large trees are such an important part of the community and natural character of the area, forests should be preserved to the extent possible.

Management of this subunit must ensure that resort development is harmonious with the goals of the Girdwood community. Numerous community workshops have shown what the community residents value the most about their community: the small town character, the spectacular natural environment, and the recreational opportunities. Resort development should add to, rather than detract from, these values.

Probably the single biggest concern from resort development is the impacts to the Girdwood community. Because of this, it is the intent that resort development not overwhelm the community. Resort development should be done in a phased manner. This plan allows for the initial phase within this subunit to include developed ski facilities approximately the same scale as the existing Alyeska Resort.

Subunit 3b

That portion of this subunit that remains in state ownership is to be retained in public ownership and managed for public recreation. Although commercial recreation development will not be allowed in this subunit at this time, this subunit may be suitable for such development in the future. This option should be preserved.

Subunit 3c

If this subunit is conveyed to the state, this subunit should be managed for low-scale commercial recreation development in keeping with the backcountry character of this area.

Forestry

The management intent for forest resources in this unit will be to maintain and enhance scenery and maintain forest health.

The Four Corners

The Four Corners area is where Crow and Winner Creeks join Glacier Creek, within a few hundred feet of each other. This area is very important to the Girdwood community. This area should be managed to protect the high scenic qualities and recreational uses. Development should be sited with this in mind. The following must be considered:

a. Minimize Traffic

Traffic into the proposed resort areas located near the Four Corners area should be minimized—preferably restricted to some type of mass transit, such as shuttle bus, or ultimately an automated system.

b. Employ Aesthetic Road Design

Any road into the proposed resort areas located near the Four-Corners area should be aesthetically designed, landscaped, and curvi-linear.

c. Minimize Vegetation Removal

Removal of trees and vegetation should be kept to a minimum.

d. Visual Impacts

Development should be hidden, designed to fit in with the area.

e. Retain Open Space

As much buffer/open space as possible should be retained between the development and the creeks.

Stream Corridors

Adequate buffers should be retained along Glacier, Crow, and Winner creeks within this management unit to ensure public access, protect the existing scenic character of the trails, and protect water quality and riparian habitat (See also ***Stream Corridor Guidelines*** in Chapter 2).

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Subunit 3a

The type of development that is allowed includes those types of facilities and associated development normally found in an alpine ski/four-season destination resort. This includes, but is not limited to, ski lifts, day lodge, hotel, resort housing, conference center, on-mountain restaurant; and other facilities necessary to support users of the resort. No actions will be taken which preclude resort development in Subunit 3a.

Resort development must be consistent with ***Resort Development Guidelines*** and other applicable areawide guidelines in Chapter 2.

Subunit 3b

Initial resort development may occur only in Subunit 3a. Future expansion of the resort may be allowed in Subunit 3b, after the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the initial development in Subunit 3a have been evaluated. No actions will be taken which preclude resort development in Subunit 3b.

Snowcat/helicopter skiing

Commercial snowcat or helicopter skiing operations may be authorized within this management unit as an interim use before resort development begins. Snowcat skiing operations must be consistent with the *Recreation Guidelines* in Chapter 2. In no way will authorizations for commercial snowcat or helicopter skiing preclude or hinder future resort development. If an access trail is necessary, the trail will be designed and sited so that removal of trees and disturbance of surface vegetation and soils is minimized.

Trails

The Crow Pass segment of the Iditarod National Historic Trail System (INHTS) traverses a portion of this management unit. Although the exact location may not be known, the trail generally follows the west side of Glacier and Crow creeks. This trail should be located and managed consistent with the Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Department of the Interior and the State of Alaska covering the management of the INHTS. Within this management unit, the INHTS will be protected by a 400' wide buffer (200' either side of centerline).

The Winner Creek Trail traverses a portion of this management unit. This trail should be protected by a minimum of a 200' wide buffer (100' either side of centerline). The US Forest Service has reserved an easement along this trail, and should be consulted before authorizing any land use activities that may impact this trail.

Additional guidelines affecting these and other trails in this management unit can be found in *Trails Guidelines* in Chapter 2.

Mineral Entry

Subunits 3a and 3b are closed to mineral entry by an existing mineral closing order. This closure is in effect until ten years from the date of conveyance of this land to the state, at which time the land may be re-opened to mineral entry if resort development is not likely to occur (see *Mineral Orders*, Chapter 4). Most of the land within these subunits (4,525 acres) was conveyed to the state on April 3, 1992. This land will be opened to mineral entry on April 3, 2002, unless a lease is issued by the state for the development of a ski resort, or the mineral order is amended.

LAND USE SUMMARY CHART

Management Unit 3: Glacier/Winner Creek

Subunit	Surface Land Use Designation	Subsurface	Prohibited Surface Use	Comments
3a Glacier/Winner Creek 5,750 acres	Commercial recreation	Closed*	Land disposals**	Part of this subunit may be conveyed to the Municipality of Anchorage
3b North side of Glacier Creek 650 acres	Public recreation	Closed*	Commercial recreation leasing Land disposals***	Part of this subunit may be conveyed to the Municipality of Anchorage
3c Upper Winner Creek 2,300 acres	Public recreation, Wildlife habitat	**	Land disposals***	State selected

*Closed to mineral entry for 10 years from date of conveyance of land to state.

**Management decisions to be made when DNR is ready to take conveyance.

***Land disposals are disposals of state land to private ownership authorized by AS 38.05.057 (disposal of land by lottery), AS 38.08 (homesites), and AS 38.09 (homesteads). For the purposes of this plan, land disposals do not include leasing, and do not preclude transfer of state land to another agency or municipality.