I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Plan

In early 2003, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) conveyed to the State of Alaska a 235,000 acre block in the Tangle Lakes region (Denali Block I: Figures 1 and 2). Additional lands near the Susitna River (Denali Blocks II East and West) will soon be conveyed to the State as part of statehood land selection (Figures 1 and 3). Denali Block I contains part of the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD), listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Denali Block II contains the historic Valdez Creek Mining District and other significant historic and prehistoric resources. The purpose of this plan is to develop guidelines for how the cultural resources on State of Alaska lands in this region should be managed. This plan sets forth land management and land use information, cultural resource history, areas of concern, and management recommendations for the cultural resources on Denali Highway lands.

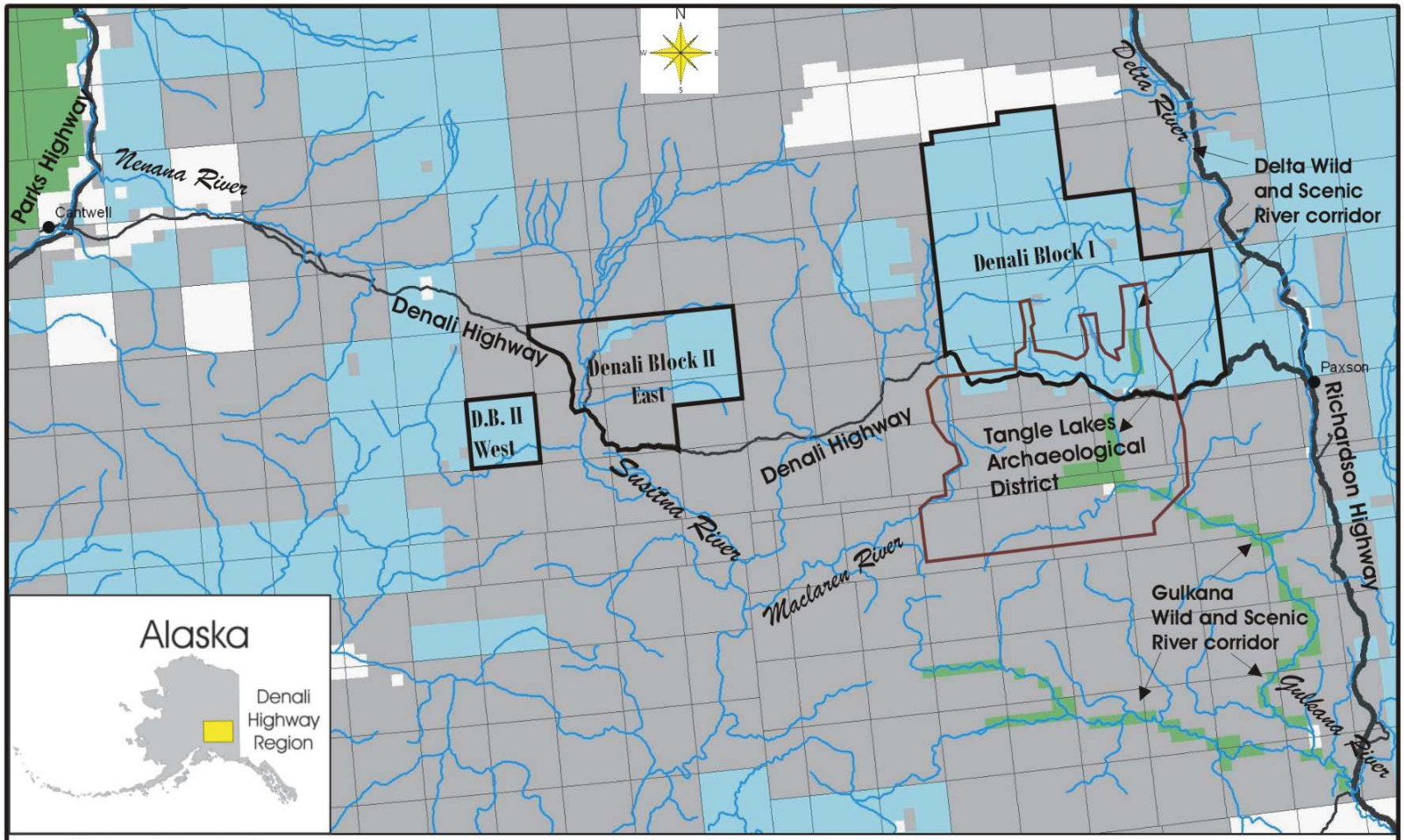
The region's cultural record, scenery, wildlife, and mineral potential make it an important area for a variety of interest groups in the State. This land is very important to the residents of the State of Alaska and to its tourist industry and mining industry. Proper management of the cultural resources on this land is essential if the State is to fulfill its legal obligations to preserve these resources for future generations.

Description of the Planning Area

The Denali Blocks are located in interior Alaska south of the Alaska Range and north and south of the Denali Highway. Denali Block I was conveyed from the BLM to the State of Alaska in early 2003. It is located north of the Denali Highway between miles 12 and 41, and stretches north from the highway over 18 miles to the crests of the first series of peaks in the Alaska Range. Denali Block I contains approximately 235,000 acres of land, including the northern fifth of the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District (TLAD). The TLAD is 226,660 acres in size, and lies on both state land, north of the Denali Highway, and on BLM land south of the highway. Under state control, the northern portion of the TLAD (41,339 acres) is enclosed in a substantially larger area called the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District/Special Use Area (TLAD/SUA) (63,620 acres – see Figures 2 and 4).

In January 2004 the State of Alaska announced which additional lands along the Denali Highway it wanted conveyed that year from BLM. Blocks of land totaling 117,337 acres were selected as Denali Block II. These lands are located east and west of the Susitna River, with the eastern block (Denali Block II East) north of the highway and the western block (Denali Block II West) south of the highway (Figure 3). The eastern block is larger, and contains the historic Valdez Creek Mining District. Some of these lands have been transferred to the State, and some are in the process of being transferred.

In November 2004 the State of Alaska circulated its State Selection Prioritization, which prioritized the remainder of lands to be conveyed from BLM to the State. These selections include large blocks of land south of the Denali Highway and between Denali Block I and Denali Block II (Figure 1). The conveyance process will be completed by 2009. After these lands are conveyed, the State of Alaska will be the landowner of the majority of lands along the Denali Highway.



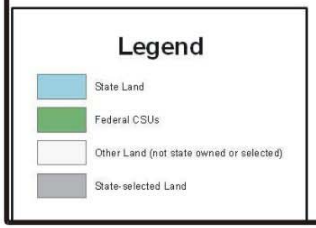


Figure 1. Denali Highway lands. Denali Block (D.B.) I and II are 2003 and 2004 State land selections. The majority of the state-selected land (shown in gray) will be transferred to the State, with all conveyances completed by 2009. Delta and Gulkana Wild and Scenic River corridors (shown in green), and other small in-holdings (not shown) along the Denali Highway, remain under BLM jurisdiction. Wild and Scenic River corridors are contiguous, not disjointed as shown here.

History of Plan Development

The Denali Highway lands and how they are administered are matters of concern to many Alaskans. Members of Ahtna Incorporated, miners, hunters, fishermen, bird watchers and other recreational users have all expressed interest and concern about how the State of Alaska should administer the lands being transferred to it along the Denali Highway. Public meetings held the year before the initial transfer were attended by many individuals who wanted the State to have enough information about the region to make informed management decisions. The Tangle Lakes region has natural and cultural resources important to the public, yet is a multi-use region which allows a variety of activities including placer and hard-rock mining. State funding for Department of Natural Resources/Division of Mining, Land and Water (DNR/DMLW) and DNR/ Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation/Office of History and Archaeology (DPOR/OHA) positions was approved to address all concerns.

Management Authority and Responsibility

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the state agency with the authority and responsibility for managing resources on state lands. The DNR/DMLW is the state division responsible for managing state lands along the Denali Highway. It is charged with making the region available to the public for a variety of uses while protecting aspects of the region that have been deemed important to preserve, particularly the cultural resources. The Alaska Historic Preservation Act (AHPA)(Alaska Statutes, 41.35.010) mandates the State to "preserve and protect the historic, prehistoric and archaeological resources in Alaska from desecration and destruction so that the scientific, historic and cultural heritage embodied in these resources may pass undiminished to future generations." The Denali Highway lands managed by the State contain significant cultural resources.

The DNR/DPOR/OHA advises DNR/DMLW on the management of cultural resources on State land. OHA is to consult with all state agencies on cultural resources, helping to coordinate management of land for the protection of the resources, and helping them comply with state and federal Cultural Resource Management (CRM) laws and regulations. OHA administers the Alaska State Historic Preservation Program (ASHPP), issues archaeological permits, maintains an inventory of cultural resource information, and conducts survey and data recovery projects. OHA also has a federal mandate to consult on cultural resources as the designated State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) SHPO consultation is required for any undertaking which uses federal funds or permits.

Cultural resources are an important focus here because Denali Block I contains a large part of the TLAD. The TLAD is located in a high alpine region that is topographically striking because of the frequency of Pleistocene glacial landforms: eskers and moraines, glacially carved valleys, and vast regions of kettle and kame topography. This same topography provided Holocene hunters with travel routes and hunting locations for caribou and other game animals. The archaeological remains left by these and later people were studied by researchers in the 1960s and 1970s, when the region was under the control of the BLM. This study resulted in the designation of the area as an Archaeological District in 1971, and entry of the district in the National Register of Historic Places because of the important information it has yielded, and it's potential to

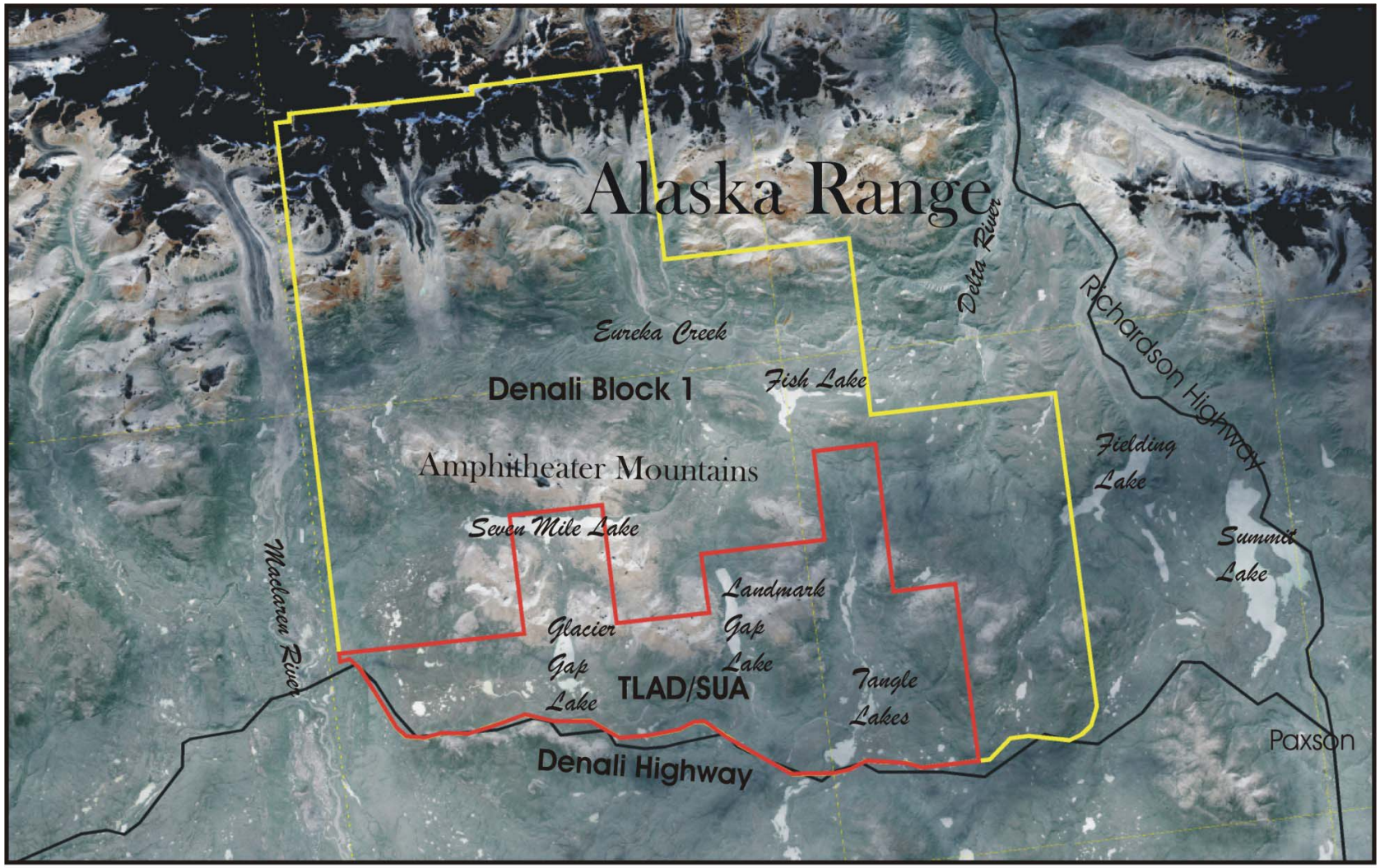


Figure 2. Landsat 7 false-color satellite photo of Denali Block I and Tangle Lake Archaeological District/Special Use Area (TLAD/SUA), central Alaska. Black in upper part of image is glacial ice.

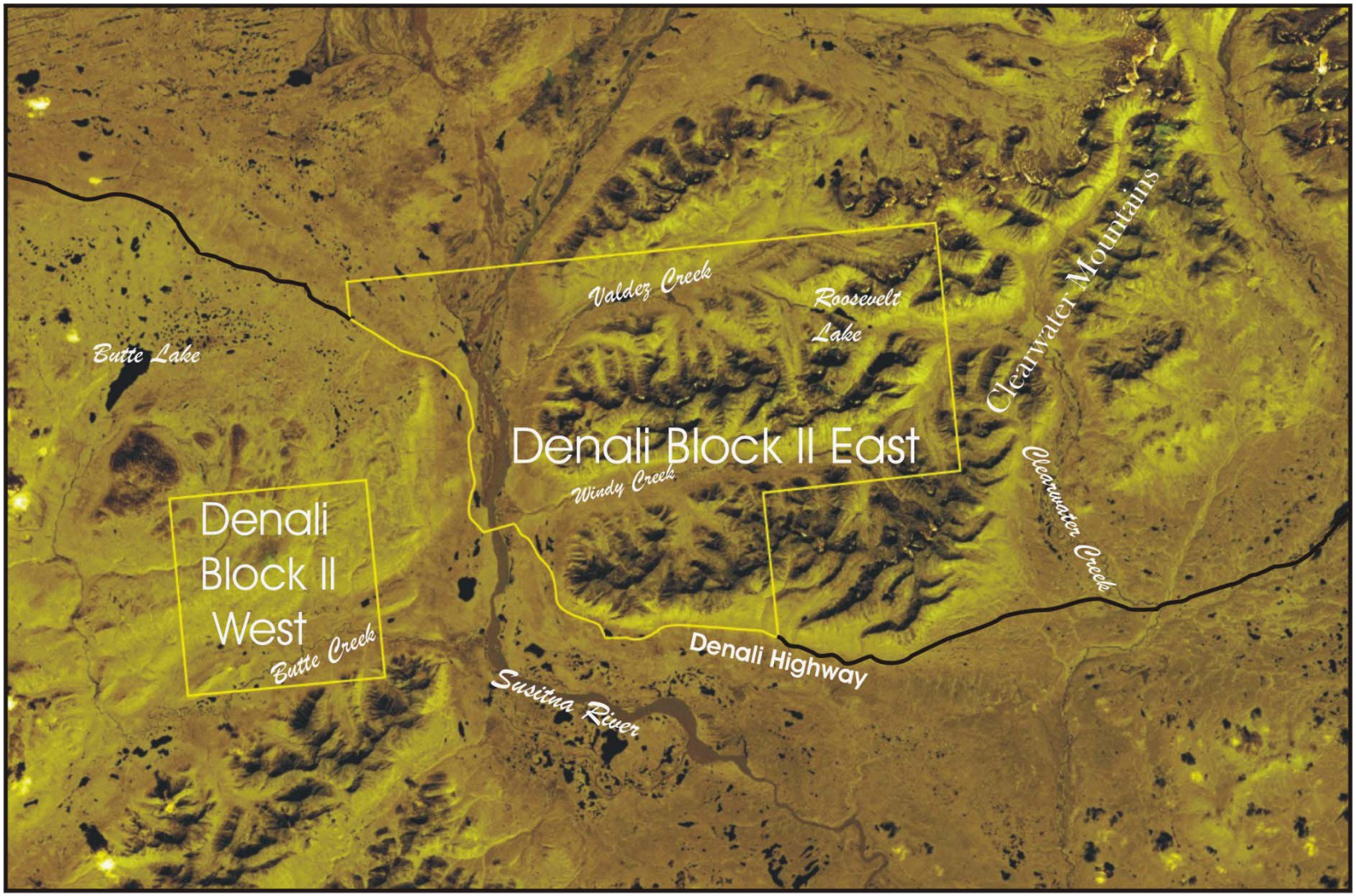


Figure 3. Landsat 7false-color satellite photo of Denali Block II East and West. The Denali Block II East contains much of the historic Valdez Creek Mining District.

yield additional information, to understanding the prehistory and early history of central Alaska.