

**SUSITNA MATANUSKA AREA PLAN  
DRAFT PLAN AMENDMENT  
Management Units S-02 and S-07: McKenzie Creek  
Land Classification Order No. SC 09-002A01  
December 5, 2016**

The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources finds that the attached amendment to the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan meets the requirements of AS 38.04.065 and 11 AAC 55.010-030 for revisions of land use plans and hereby adopts this amendment. The attached document, ‘Susitna Matanuska Area Plan, Plan Amendment, Management Units S-02 and S-07: McKenzie Creek’ provides background and the justification for the amendment. The Department of Natural Resources will manage state land consistent with this amendment.

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Andrew T. Mack, Commissioner

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Date

**RECONSIDERATION PROVISION**

A person affected by this decision who provided timely written comment or public hearing testimony on this decision may request reconsideration, in accordance with 11 AAC 02. Any reconsideration request must be received within 20 calendar days after the date of issuance of this decision, as defined in 11 AAC 02.040(c) and (d), and may be mailed or delivered to the Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources, 550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1400, Anchorage, Alaska 99501; faxed to 1-907-269-8918; or sent by electronic mail to [dnr.appeals@alaska.gov](mailto:dnr.appeals@alaska.gov). If reconsideration is not requested by that date or the commissioner does not order reconsideration on his own motion, this decision goes into effect as a final order and decision on the 31st calendar day after issuance. Failure of the commissioner to act on a request for reconsideration within 31 calendar days after issuance of this decision is a denial of reconsideration and is a final administrative order and decision for purposes of an appeal to Superior Court. The decision may then be appealed to Superior Court within a further 30 days in accordance with the rules of the court, and to the extent permitted by applicable law. An eligible person must first request reconsideration of this decision in accordance with 11 AAC 02 before appealing this decision to Superior Court. A copy of 11 AAC 02 may be obtained from any regional information office of the Department of Natural Resources.

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**Background:** The McKenzie Creek Homestead area was offered for public staking in 1985 by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) pursuant to a final finding and decision to offer the area for sale signed March 22, 1985. This area is located east of the Susitna River and Alaska Railroad approximately 17 miles north of Talkeetna. Ten parcels were staked and surveyed, of which eight parcels have been conveyed to private owners. Two surveyed land sale parcels in the McKenzie Creek Homestead area returned to state ownership in February, 2012 when the sale contracts were terminated.

The Susitna Matanuska Area Plan (SMAP) was adopted by DNR August 11, 2011. Due to an error, SMAP did not designate and classify approximately 86 acres of state land in the McKenzie Creek Homestead area. This land is surrounded on three sides by Unit S-02, which is classified Wildlife Habitat. SMAP also erroneously included a portion of one sale parcel within Unit S-02.

The land which was included in SMAP unit S-02 as well as the piece of state land which is surrounded by unit S-02 that was omitted from SMAP was previously designated and classified settlement by the Susitna Area Plan (SAP) as part of the South Parks Highway subregion, subunit 1e. The SAP was adopted in 1985, and the intention of that plan was to offer parcels in the McKenzie Creek area for sale. SAP limited the McKenzie Creek area to 11 entries for parcel staking. Ultimately 10 parcels were staked and surveyed, of which two have returned to state ownership.

DNR can only offer state land for sale if that land is designated and classified as settlement land. Due to the errors in SMAP, one sale parcel is partially classified as wildlife habitat and partially unclassified and the other sale parcel is unclassified. These two parcels of state land under land sales contracts in 2011 should have retained the settlement designation from SAP. There is also approximately 58 acres of unsurveyed, unclassified land which should be classified to better guide DNR management of this area.

A plan amendment and land classification order will allow these errors to be corrected and bring clarity to DNR management of land in the area affected.

**Current Plan Requirements:** The plan does not currently classify or provide land management guidance for most of the area under discussion. Approximately 11 acres of one surveyed, land sale parcel are designated as habitat in unit S-02; this unit is to be managed to protect and maintain fish and wildlife habitat values. Unit S-07, designated settlement, is located a mile south of these parcels, and contains a number of other past sale parcels. Unit S-07 is considered

appropriate for land disposals during the planning period.

**Proposed Plan Revisions:** The proposed plan amendment will classify the two surveyed, land sale parcels as settlement land by incorporating them in to unit S-07. The amendment will also classify the currently unclassified, unsurveyed state-owned land as wildlife habitat by adding it to unit S-02. The impact of this proposed plan amendment is to increase the amount of land classified as settlement by 39.289 acres and a net increase in the amount of land classified as wildlife habitat by approximately 47 acres.

**Alternative Courses of Action:** There are two alternative courses of action: either retain the current plan as originally adopted or amend the plan with the designations and management intent recommended in 'Proposed Plan Revisions'. In the former instance, approximately 86 acres of state-owned land will remain unclassified and two surveyed land sale parcels will not be available for sale.

The two existing sale parcels are surveyed land well suited for development in a part of the state where very little land is available for private ownership. Amending the plan to include a unit designated Settlement will allow the state to offer these parcels for sale. Amending the plan to classify the remaining 58 acres as Wildlife Habitat Land will also provide clear guidance on the management of this state land. The latter course of action, implementation of this amendment, is the preferred alternative.

**Recommendation:** The recommended course of action is to amend the SMAP as discussed above to classify the currently unclassified area and to re-classify the portion of one sale parcel which was classified as wildlife habitat to settlement. This may be in the best interest of the state.

**ATTACHMENT**  
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**November 16, 2016**

*The boundaries of the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan (SMAP) Units S-02 and S-07 are modified as detailed in the table below and depicted on the attached map by this plan amendment. The modified boundaries update SMAP Map 3-1. The management intent and descriptions of these units in Chapter 3: South Parks Highway Region of the SMAP are not modified by this plan amendment. The MTRS list for unit S-07 is amended to add S029N004W28,29,32,33.*

SMAP Unit	Legal Description of land added to unit	Acreage	Current Designation	Designation by this action
S-02	The unclassified, state-owned land east of the Alaska Railroad within T. 29 N, R. 4 W, Sections 28, 29, 32, and 33, Seward Meridian, Alaska, excluding Tract A of ASLS 91-225 and ASLS 90-11 as depicted on the attached map.	Approx. 58	None	Ha
S-07	ASLS 91-225, Tract A ASLS 90-11, All	39.289	None (approx. 28 acres) / Ha (approx. 11 acres)	Se