

Region 16: Port Heiden

Summary of Resources and Uses in the Region

Region Boundary

Region 16 includes the uplands on a portion of the Alaska Peninsula generally around Port Heiden. This includes the lower Meshik River drainage system (Map 3-16). The Region borders Region 15 to the northwest, Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve on the east, and is defined on the south and southwest by the Port Heiden drainage divide; it includes only those lands that are drained by streams flowing into Port Heiden. The principal community is Port Heiden (pop. 87).

State Lands: Ownership and Acreage

State-owned land occupies approximately twenty percent of the Region and is found south of Port Heiden and southwest of the community of Port Heiden. Native-owned land occurs east of Port Heiden and along the southeastern boundary. The majority of land is owned by the Federal government. The Port Heiden Critical Habitat Area is contained within Region 16. The plan applies to 62,299 acres of state-owned and state-selected uplands and 85,677 acres of state-owned tidelands in this region. The plan also applies to state-owned shorelands (acreages of shorelands have not been calculated).

Physical Geography

The western portion of Region 16 is within the Bristol Bay Lowlands ecological province; the eastern portion of the Region is in the Alaska Peninsula ecological province. Drainage flow is predominantly westward towards Bristol Bay. The principal drainage is the Meshik River system. The western two-thirds of the Region is low-lying country with abundant lakes, ponds, and marshes. The eastern one-third encompasses the spine of the Aleutian Range and has considerable relief. The most significant topographic features are Big Butte, Black Peak (3,385 feet), and Range Peak (3,000 feet).

Climate

Port Heiden has a maritime climate, with cool summers, relatively warm winters, and rain. Snowfall averages 58 inches per year. January temperatures average 25°, and July temperatures average 50°.

Other

Region 16 is primarily within the Chignik and Bristol Bay Quadrangles. It is within the boundaries of the Bristol Bay Regional Native Corporation, and partly with both the Lake and Peninsula and Aleutians East Boroughs.

Access

Access to Region 16 is limited to marine, river, or air transport. Skiffs, ATVs and snowmachines are the primary means of local transportation. Travel on the western beaches is possible with four-wheel drive vehicles.

Resources and Uses

Cultural and Historic. Port Heiden is a traditional Alutiiq community, with a commercial fishing and subsistence lifestyle. The community recently relocated inland because storm waves had eroded much of the old townsite and threatened to destroy community buildings. There are a total of 28 cultural sites in this Region: twenty-one are prehistoric, four are historic, and three are of mixed origin. Most of the historic and archeological sites occur at the community of Port Heiden or to the east along the Meshik River corridor.

Economic. Commercial fishing and government jobs provide the majority of cash income. Many residents hold commercial fishing permits. Subsistence harvests of salmon, other fish and marine mammals is important to the inhabitants. Game, birds, plants and berries are also an integral part of villagers' diets.

Recreation. Recreational activities are primarily outdoor activities tied to hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Recreation and tourism are highly tied to the adjoining Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve which is utilized for river rafting and commercially guided hunting and fishing.

Minerals and Materials. There are no reported mineral occurrences in Region 16. Mineral sands are known to occur at locations along the beaches on the west side of the Alaska Peninsula. There are no active material sites in this Region.

Oil and Gas. Region 16 has high potential for the discovery of oil and gas. The western portion of the Region is underlain by Tertiary Milky River, Bear Lake, and Meshik formations. Elsewhere on the Alaska Peninsula the Bear Lake formation is known to contain oil and gas shows. State and Native landowners are currently pursuing a new hydrocarbon exploration licensing and leasing program. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Lake and Peninsula, Bristol Bay, and Aleutians East Boroughs have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in support of oil and gas lease sales and licensing of state land in the

Bristol Bay and Alaska Peninsula region (March 17, 2004). Similar MOUs are in effect between the DNR and The Aleut Regional Native Corporation (December 18, 2003) and the DNR and Bristol Bay Native Corporation (July 10, 2003).

Fish and Wildlife. Caribou, brown bear, waterfowl, and moose are the major wildlife resources in the Region. The Meshik River drainage system provides habitat for salmon, which are harvested by commercial, recreational, and subsistence users. Much of the lowlands in Region 16 provide calving grounds for the Northern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd. Moose also tend to calve at the southern and eastern fringes of the Region.

Region 16 encompasses the Port Heiden Critical Habitat Area, which consists of both upland and tideland areas. This legislatively designated area was created to protect habitat that supports migratory stopover areas for large numbers of ducks, geese, and shorebirds in the spring on their way to northern nesting grounds and in the fall on their return to southern wintering areas. A more detailed description of the resources of this CHA is provided in the Tideland section that follows.

Management Considerations: Local and State Plans

Several local and state management plans affect this Region and were considered in development of this plan. The comprehensive plans and district coastal plans of the Lake and Peninsula Borough and the Aleutians East Borough apply to Region 16. These comprehensive plans focus on economic and infrastructure development issues and do not contain specific land use standards or a land use map. The Enforceable Policies of the District Coastal Plans are extensive; policies affecting anadromous streams, bald eagle nests, oil and gas development, materials extraction and mining can be applicable, under certain instances, to state lands. See <http://www.alaskacoast.state.ak.us/>³⁴ for more information on enforceable policies. These policies should be consulted by DNR prior to issuing an authorization.

Region 16 is also within the area covered by the Southwest Alaska Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2003-2008, which was developed for the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration by the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (July 2003). This document identifies a number of goals, objectives, and strategies to facilitate and support efforts that retain and grow the region's wealth, including diversifying the economic base.

The two state management plans affecting this Region include the Bristol Bay Area Plan and the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan. The BBAP, first developed in 1984, has provided the basis for the management of state land until this plan revision, which replaces and supercedes the 1984 BBAP. The Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan (ADOT/PF, November 2002) identifies needed access facilities within the planning region, which includes an Alaska Peninsula Transportation Corridor that generally extends from South Naknek to the Chigniks

³⁴ The Alaska Coastal Management Program was terminated on July 1, 2011, pursuant to AS 44.66.030.

connecting with the communities of Egegik, Pilot Point, Ugashik, and Port Heiden. The Alaska Peninsula Corridor is an overland route linking the communities of the Alaska Peninsula from Ivanof Bay to Naknek.

Municipal Selections

There are no Borough selections in Region 16.

Management Summary: Uplands

State land in Region 16 is to be managed for a variety of multiple uses, including public recreation and tourism, hunting and fishing, oil and gas exploration and development, public facilities, and maintenance of sensitive wildlife habitats.

Plan Designations and Management

The plan designations that are used within this Region have the following management intent. The policies and management intent guidelines described in Chapter 2 affect all DNR authorizations. Refer especially to those guidelines relating to caribou calving areas and tundra swans in Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest Areas, and to those guidelines pertaining to Settlement.

- **General Use (Gu).** Land designated General Use is to be managed for a variety of uses including the protection of fish and wildlife habitat and harvest, dispersed public recreation, oil and gas development, and the protection of heritage resources. Development during the planning period is considered unlikely given the remote, inaccessible character of the land and, as a matter of policy, it is not intended that intensive development occur within this designation, except as may be related to mineral or oil and gas development. Land with this designation is to be retained during the planning period.
- **Habitat (Ha).** This designation is applied to streams and shorelands that are considered navigable by the state and cataloged by ADF&G as anadromous. See *Table 3.1* in the Navigability section of this Chapter for a partial listing of these streams. Certain of these streams are co-designated Public Recreation and Tourism-Dispersed.
- **Public Recreation and Tourism-Dispersed and Habitat (Co-designation).** Certain navigable waterbodies (lakes and streams) are co-designated Habitat (Ha) and Public Recreation and Tourism-Dispersed (Rd). Authorizations within these waterbodies should not interfere with important habitat or public recreation values. See *Table 3.1* in

the Navigability section of this Chapter for a listing of these streams. Note: Certain waterbodies may (only) be designated Public Recreation and Tourism-Dispersed, (Rd), Habitat (Ha), or General Use (Gu).

- Public Facilities-Retain (Pr). The area of the Port Heiden airport designated Public Facilities-Retain and is to be retained by the state.
- Settlement (Se). Two relatively small areas of state-selected land situated along Barbara Creek are considered appropriate for remote settlement and for disposal during the planning period.

Specific Management Considerations

- Generally Allowed Uses. The Generally Allowed Uses in 11 AAC 96.020 can occur on state-owned land throughout the Region with the exception of the Cinder River Critical Habitat Area.
- The Alaska Peninsula Transportation Corridor occupies portions of Region 16. Land within this corridor is to be retained by the state. Authorizations or disposals along this corridor should be allowed only after consultation with the ADOT/PF.
- Authorizations within the uplands of the Cinder River Critical Habitat Area may be appropriate subject to the protection of sensitive resources and habitats, but are prohibited unless the requirements of AS 16.20.520 and AS 16.20.530 are fulfilled. A special area permit issued by ADF&G is required for any habitat altering work, including any construction activity. Consult with ADF&G prior to issuing an authorization. See also the management requirements affecting the tidelands within the CHA that follow.
- Mineral Closing Orders and Leasehold Location Orders. No new mineral closing orders or leasehold location orders are recommended in this Region except for areas that are to be disposed of for settlement purposes. In these instances, closure of the area prior to sale is required. The MCOs in areas not selected for settlement within three years of the land sale, however, shall revert to 'open to mineral entry'. See the Mineral Resources section in Chapter 2 for more details on subsurface management requirements.
- Mineral Order No. 791 affects this Region. It precludes shallow natural gas leasing and oil and gas exploration licensing, but has no effect on locatable or leaseable minerals.
- Retained lands and lands suitable for disposal. Except for the one small management unit of state land occupied by the community airport and the area of the CHA, there are no state lands that are designated to be retained by the state. Please note the requirement above to retain lands along the Transportation Corridors.
- Municipal Selections. Management units designated Settlement are considered appropriate for disposal to boroughs under the Municipal Entitlement Act or to individuals. Areas designated General Use may also be appropriate for disposal, subject to a Best Interest Finding.

- **Navigable Waters.** Shorelands (rivers and lakes) that are believed to be navigable are listed in Table 3.1 in the Navigability section of this Chapter. Authorizations in these waters must ensure the continued use of a waterway by the public for purposes of trade, travel, and commerce. Note: These waterbodies are assigned a plan designation of Habitat, Public Recreation and Tourism-Dispersed, a co-designation of Habitat and Public Recreation and Tourism-Dispersed, and, sometimes, General Use. Authorizations issued by DNR are to maintain the habitat and public recreation values of these waterbodies.

See the Resource Allocation Table for more details on these upland management units.

Management Summary: Tidelands and Submerged Lands

Tidelands in this Region adjoin Port Heiden Bay. Much of the bay consists of extensive tidal flats, with portions of this area occupied by eel grass and salt marshes. Uplands that adjoin the bay in its southern part, and tidelands immediately adjacent to the uplands, are included within the Port Heiden CHA. With the exception of these tidelands, the remainder of the bay is excluded from the CHA. The bay and the uplands, which form the spit terminating at Strogonof Point, provide a diverse and productive habitat. Near the mouth of the bay there are a number of seabird colonies and a harbor seal haulout concentration area. The uplands that adjoin the bay, as well as upland areas adjacent to the coast extending south to the area of the Seal Islands, are important brown bear spring concentration areas. Waterfowl concentrations occur throughout these upland areas and Port Heiden Bay during the spring and fall. Large portions of this area are also used as waterfowl molting concentration areas.

An extensive yellowfin sole harvest occurs in the Port Heiden area. Drift and set gillnet salmon harvests occur in Port Heiden Bay and west of Strogonof Point. This area is sparsely populated, but the Port Heiden community relies on commercial and subsistence fishing for their livelihood. Subsistence harvest includes salmon and other fish, clams, seals, and waterfowl (birds and eggs). Walrus are not hunted, but households salvage walrus tusks from the beach for ivory carving.

Plan Designations and Management Intent

Coastal Tidelands. Areas of tideland not within the Port Heiden CHA (R16T-01) or Port Heiden Bay (R16T-02) are designated General Use. Development authorizations in this area are considered appropriate subject to the protection of sensitive resources and habitat.

Port Heiden CHA (R16T-01) and Port Heiden (R16T-02). Both the area of the Port Heiden CHA (R16T-01) and Port Heiden itself (R16T-02) are designated Habitat, except for a small area adjacent to the Port Heiden community (R16T-03). The management intent in both tideland management units is to protect the marine mammals, spring brown bear concentration areas, the waterfowl concentration areas, the areas of seabird colonies and harbor seal haulouts

that focus on Chistiakof Island and Strogonof Point. Development authorizations in tideland management unit R16T-02 may be appropriate subject to the protection of sensitive resources and habitats, but are prohibited within the CHA unless the requirements of AS 16.20.520 and AS 16.20.530 are fulfilled. See also the management guideline affecting the upland portion of the CHA, described previously.

Port Heiden Community (R16T-03). Water dependent commercial and industrial facilities to support Port Heiden are considered appropriate in this management unit, and this area is designated Waterfront Development. Development authorizations for these types of uses are considered appropriate subject to the protection of sensitive resource values and habitats.

See the Resource Allocation Table for more details on these tideland management units.

Resource Allocation Table for Upland Management Units - Region 16

Unit # / Name	Acres / Designation(s)	MTRS	Management Intent	Resources, Uses, Additional Info
R16-01 Port Heiden	550 Gu - General Use	Map 3-16 S037S057W Sec, 15,16	This unit is designated General Use (Gu). If conveyed by the federal government, these lands are to be managed for a variety of uses including oil and gas exploration and development, the protection of fish and wildlife resources and their associated habitat, and dispersed recreation. Authorizations should carefully review the guidelines provided in the Fish and Wildlife section of Chapter 2 prior to issuance, particularly those related to caribou calving areas. Intensive development is not expected within this unit during the planning period except occasionally and at specific locations related to oil and gas extraction, if found economically practicable to develop. The Alaska Peninsula transportation corridor transects the unit; the actual position of the road alignment has yet to be determined. No authorizations or disposals should be considered that are within or near the corridor until the road alignment is known or without consultation with the ADOT/PF. It is intended that this unit be retained in state ownership during the planning period.	This unit consists of two noncontiguous, small units of state-selected land north of Port Heiden. Vegetation consists of low and dwarf shrublands. The unit is within an area used by caribou for wintering. The unit has potential for the discovery of oil and gas resources. The Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) reports several heritage sites in or near this unit.
R16-02 Port Heiden Airport	3,473 Pr - Public Facilities- Retain	Map 3-16	This unit is to be managed by ADOT/PF consistent with the FAA standards and the conveyance document, and is to be retained in state ownership.	This unit (OSL 331) encompasses the Port Heiden public airport and associated facilities and is managed by the ADOT/PF.
R16-03 Barbara Creek North	4,436 Se - Settlement	Map 3-16	The unit is designated Settlement (Se). If conveyed by the Federal government, it is considered appropriate for disposal during the planning period. Development is to conform to the requirements of Remote Settlement and Caribou and Moose Rutting and Calving Area, described in the Settlement, and Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest Areas sections of Chapter 2. Buffers along anadromous fish streams must also conform to the management guidelines in Chapter 2. Should the Bristol Bay Borough make land selections in the unit under the Municipal Entitlement program, these selections are considered appropriate for conveyance, subject to a separate and subsequent Best Interest Finding.	This unit consists of approximately four sections of state-selected land in the vicinity of Barbara Creek, roughly five miles southeast of the community of Port Heiden. The terrain has little relief, is vegetated with tundra and low shrub, and considered suitable for settlement. Roads extend to within one mile of the unit. Barbara Creek is an anadromous fish stream. A caribou wintering area occupies portions of this unit. The unit has potential for the discovery of oil and gas.
R16-04 Barbara Creek	13,992 Se - Settlement	Map 3-16	The unit is designated Settlement (Se) and is considered appropriate for disposal during the planning period. Development is to conform to the requirements of Remote Settlement and Caribou and Moose Rutting and Calving Area, described in the Settlement, and Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest Areas sections of Chapter 2. Buffers along anadromous fish streams must also conform to the management guidelines in Chapter 2. Should the Bristol Bay Borough make land selections in the unit under the Municipal Entitlement program, these would be considered appropriate for conveyance, subject to a separate and subsequent Best Interest Finding.	This unit consists of approximately seven sections of state-owned land in the vicinity of Barbara Creek, roughly six miles southeast of the community of Port Heiden. The terrain has little relief, is vegetated with tundra and low shrub, and considered suitable for settlement. Roads extend to within two miles of the unit. Barbara Creek is an anadromous fish stream and the unit is within a caribou calving area. A caribou wintering area occupies portions of this unit. The unit has potential for discovery of oil and gas.

Unit # / Name	Acres / Designation(s)	MTRS	Management Intent	Resources, Uses, Additional Info
R16-05 Charles Creek	37,346 Gu - General Use	Map 3-16	This unit is designated General Use (Gu). It is to be managed for a variety of uses including minerals or oil and gas exploration and development, the protection of fish and wildlife resources and their associated habitat, and dispersed recreation. See Chapter 2 guidelines for caribou wintering areas and tundra swans. Intensive development is not expected within this unit during the planning period except occasionally and at specific locations related to oil and gas exploration and development or recreation. It is intended that this unit be retained in state ownership during the planning period.	The unit consists of state-owned uplands in the southern portion of Region 16. The unit is in low-lying terrain with tundra and low shrub vegetation. The unit is affected by a caribou wintering area, and includes areas used by brown bear in spring, summer, and fall, and also contains concentrations of waterfowl. The unit has potential for the discovery of oil and gas resources.

Resource Allocation Table for Tideland Management Units - Region 16

Unit # / Name	Acres / Designation(s)	MTRS	Management Intent	Resources, Uses, Additional Info
R16T-01 Port Heiden CHA	69,730 Ha - Habitat	Map 3-16 S037S059W, S037S060W	Unit is designated Habitat and is to be managed to protect the sensitive upland and tideland resources associated with this Critical Habitat Area. Only development authorizations that meet the requirements of AS 16.20.520 and AS 16.20.530 are appropriate. Applications must be submitted to ADF&G for review and approval.	This unit consists of the Port Heiden CHA, established under AS 16.20.555, which contains a mixture of upland and tideland areas. Most of the CHA occupies upland areas to the south and east of Port Heiden. The relatively small areas of tidelands are primarily associated with waterfowl seasonal concentration areas (spring and fall) and waterfowl molting concentrations. Large concentrations of sea otters have been documented within Port Heiden. Note: Most tideland resources in the Port Heiden area are contained within tideland unit R16T-02.
R16T-02 Port Heiden bay	52,634 Ha - Habitat Hv - Harvest	Map 3-16 S037S059W, S038S059W, S038S060W	Unit is designated Habitat. Management intent: Protect areas of eel grass, waterfowl seasonal and molting concentration areas, sea bird colonies, and the harbor seal haulout area. Tideland authorizations may be appropriate in this unit but must protect sensitive resources and habitats. Consult with USFWS prior to issuing authorizations. In general, tideland authorizations should be concentrated along the shore near the community of Port Heiden.	Most of the sensitive tideland resources and habitats within Port Heiden bay occur within this tideland unit. Sensitive upland areas are primarily associated with the Port Heiden CHA (R16T-01). There is a large harbor seal haulout area situated at the mouth of Port Heiden, just east of the spit (Strogonof Point). Sea bird colonies exist at Strogonof Point and Chistiakof Island, both of which are also situated at the mouth of the bay, and in a nearby upland area (Goldfish Lake). Areas within the bay are important as seasonal waterfowl concentration areas (spring and fall) and as waterfowl molting concentration areas, while offshore areas within this unit are important as a fall concentration area. Numerous anadromous streams empty into the bay. There are large areas of sheltered tidal flats, some of which may contain eel grass. Large concentrations of sea otters have been documented within Port Heiden. Harvest: Extensive yellowfin sole harvest occurs in the offshore tidelands of this region. Set net harvest occurs at Strogonof Point and set net and drift net harvest occur in the eastern portion of Port Heiden (bay), south of Port Heiden community. This region is sparsely populated, and the local community relies heavily on commercial and subsistence fishing. Subsistence harvesting includes salmon and other fish, clams, seals and waterfowl (birds and eggs). Walrus are not hunted in this area, but households salvage walrus tusks and bones from the beach for ivory carving.
R16T-03 Tide and Submerged Lands, Bristol Bay	85,677 Gu - General Use	Map 3-16	Manage for a variety of uses and resources. Protect concentrations of waterfowl and seabirds. Consult with USFWS and NMFS prior to issuing authorizations. Maintain opportunities for commercial harvest.	This unit consists of those offshore submerged lands not included within the Port Heiden Critical Habitat Area (R16T-01) or unit R16T-02, which occupies the remainder of Port Heiden. Consult Plan Map 3-16. Waterfowl and seabirds are present in the unit. It is also likely that marine mammals (harbor seals) that concentrate within Port Heiden may also transit or use this unit at times. Portions of the walrus range also occur. Yellowfish sole harvest occurs in these offshore tidelands.