

TRAIL MANAGEMENT

Goals

Public Use Opportunities. Ensure continued opportunities for public use of important recreation, public access, and historic trails of regional and statewide significance.

Local Trails. Assist in establishing local trail systems that provide access to community recreation areas.

Trail Corridors. Protect or establish trail corridors to meet projected future use requirements and protect current use.

Management Guidelines

A. Special Trails. These are trails that require unusual widths or management practices because of historical significance or unique values. Management guidelines should be developed for such trails on an individual basis. As a general policy special trails will be protected by publicly owned buffers that will generally be wider than the 100-foot minimum trail buffer width established for trails of regional or statewide significance in C below.

B. Neighborhood and Community Trails. Local trails that are not of regional or statewide significance will be identified and protected through management plans or disposal design under guidelines recommended in DNR's subdivision design manual. Once identified, trails will be recorded on the state's land record system and reserved through issuance of a trail permit. The following criteria should be used to determine whether a local trail should be protected by easement or public ownership:

1. If the local trail serves as a neighborhood collector trail that connects to a public open space system or regional or statewide trail, it will be kept in public ownership.
2. If the trail will be used almost entirely by neighborhood residents for their own use, it should be kept in state ownership or dedicated to the local government.
3. If the objective is to provide local pedestrian access and does not have the characteristics of criterion 1 or 2 (above) an easement may be used. This would typically occur when the purpose is to establish access between two lots to improve pedestrian circulation within a subdivision where a greenbelt and neighborhood trail system does not provide adequate access or where it is impractical to establish such an integrated trail system.
4. In cases of land offerings other than subdivisions (for example, land opened to homesteading) a publicly owned buffer or an easement will be used to protect designated trails. If a trail has the characteristics described in criterion 1 or 2 (above), it will be retained in public ownership; if it has the characteristics described in criterion 3, an easement will be reserved.

C. Standard Trails of Regional or Statewide Significance. This category includes the majority of trails on state land that are identified in the area plan. These trails are generally travelled by foot, dogsled, horse and sometimes vehicle access for a variety of purposes. Most standard trails have a history of public use and can

be expected to see increased use as the state's population increases. The guidelines which follow are intended to insure consistent management practices on such trails management decisions on site specific conditions.

D. Identification of Trails. Before public lands are leased or disposed of, trails that merit consideration for protection by one of the methods described in A through C (above) should be identified. The Division of Land and Water Management will be the lead agency for identification of trails and will consult with the other divisions of DNR, DOT/PF, ADF&G, affected private land owners, and local government when identifying trails. In addition, any agency, organization, or individual may identify public trails to be considered for protection.

E. Trail Buffer Width. Trails of regional or statewide significance on state land shall be protected by a publicly owned buffer that has a minimum width of 100 feet (50 feet each side of center line). This buffer should be sized to protect the quality of the experience of the user and to minimize negative effects such as noise or dust from adjacent land uses. Buffer widths may be increased to minimize land use and ownership conflicts, to protect the privacy of adjacent landowners, to separate motorized from nonmotorized uses, to allow future siting of public facilities, to allow flexibility for rerouting, or to adopt a trail to specific public uses or aesthetic or environmental concerns. Buffer widths may vary along the length of a trail because of the above considerations. The width of a buffer on any portion of a trail should also be based on the management intent for adjacent public land as expressed through applicable land use plans. However, the minimum width of the buffer should be 100 feet. Trail buffers should be located and designed in consultation with affected divisions of DNR, the Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF), affected private land owners, and local trail committees. Activity areas of 10 to 40 acres may be identified along trails for other uses such as camping or rest areas.

F. Land Use in Publicly Owned Buffers. Trail buffers generally will be managed to maintain the natural vegetation within the buffer. Timber sales, materials sales, and permits and leases for activities that impact the natural vegetation of the buffer will, to the extent feasible and prudent, be managed so as to not adversely affect trail use or the aesthetic character of the trail. This guideline does not preclude trail crossings or rerouting of trails as described below.

G. Rerouting Trails. Rerouting of trails may be permitted to minimize land use conflicts or to facilitate use of a trail if alternate routes provide opportunities similar to the original. If trails are rerouted, provision should be made for construction of new trail segments if warranted by type of use. Rerouting trails should be done in consultation with affected divisions of DNR, DOT/PF, and ADF&G, private land owners and local trail committees. Historic trails which follow well-established routes should not be rerouted unless necessary to maintain trail use.

H. Trail Crossings. When it is necessary for powerlines, pipelines or roads to cross trail buffers, crossings should be at a 90° angle to the buffer when feasible. Vegetative screening should be preserved at trail crossings.

I. Other Guidelines Affecting Trail Management. Several other guidelines may affect trail management. See the following sections of this chapter:

- Agriculture
- Fish and wildlife habitat

Forestry
Materials
Recreation, cultural, and scenic resources
Settlement
Subsurface resources
Transportation
Lakeshore management
Public access
Stream corridors and instream flow
Wetlands management

Land Allocation Summary

Uses of most trails in the Copper River Basin will not be restricted by this plan. Overland access regulated by permit will be restricted in trumpeter swan nesting habitat from May until September (most trails in this area are impassable during this season). Specific trail recommendations are made for these trails:

- Crosswind Lake Trail (MU 3D)
- Mud Lake Trail (MU 3F)
- Ewan Lake Trail (MU 6B)
- Tazlina River Trail (MU 8B)
- Valdez to Copper Center Trail around Klutina Lake (MU 12)
- Tonsina Lake Trail (MU 14)
- Squaw Creek Trail to Tonsina Lake (MU 16A)
- Gulkana River trail easements between Gulkana and Sourdough (MU 27)
- Swede Lake Trail (MU 28B)
- Chistochina River Trails (MU 29)
- Slana River Access (MU 32)
- O'Brien Creek near Chitina (MU 33)

In addition, the trailheads of these important 17(b) easements should be marked:

- Hudson Lake Trail (off Klutina River Trail)
- Copper River Access Trail, north of Gulkana airport between the Richardson Highway and Copper River
- Klawasi Trail, East of Copper Center
- Klutina River Trail
- Bernard Creek Trail
- Swan Lake Trail