

Chapter 3

Land Management Policies for Each Management Unit

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Chapter 3

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Introduction

Within the planning area there are approximately 37,947,239 total acres, of which 3,121,017 acres are state uplands and 616,546 acres are state shorelands. Additionally, there are approximately 1,616,266 acres of land that are state-selected or top-filed. This chapter presents specific land management policies for all state lands within the planning area. The planning area is further organized into regions based on geographic similarities. There are four regions identified in this plan: Arctic, Dalton Corridor, Yukon Flats, and Interior Highlands. Map 2 shows the planning regions and generalized land status.

Within the regions, lands are further subdivided into planning units. The units were developed based on similar land characteristics, resources, use patterns, topography, or other features. The management requirements of this plan do not apply to non-state land.

Before completion of this plan, there was no comprehensive land use plan for state lands in Northeast Alaska. Approximately 68,000 acres of land were previously classified without a comprehensive plan by DNR.

The Northeast Alaska planning area is extensive. Its northern boundary runs through the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and the area extends south to meet the borders of Eastern Tanana Area Plan (ETAP), Yukon Tanana Area Plan (YTAP), and Upper Yukon Area Plan (UYAP), just north of Fairbanks. It stretches east from the Dalton Highway to the Canadian border.

The state has approximately 1,616,266 acres of high-priority, top-filed, and selected lands within the planning boundary. Among these, top-filed and selected land within the Dalton Highway corridor are the highest priority for conveyance from BLM. As with the goals and objectives of Chapter 2, unit-specific management intent in this chapter is provided for all top-filed and state-selected lands.

The Dalton Highway, also known as the Haul Road, is one of the major public roads in the planning area. At over 400 miles, this highway originates south of the planning area at Livengood and extends north along the Dietrich River and Sagavanirktok River to its terminus in Deadhorse, approximately four miles from Prudhoe Bay. Though it opened to public automobile traffic in 1994, access within the corridor is restricted by AS 19.40.

Furthermore, hunting access within the corridor is restricted by state and federal agencies. These restrictions subsequently limit development and access to lands in the planning area.

The Steese Highway provides important access to recreation, mining claims, and communities. The highway was built to serve the Circle Mining District, where gold was booming in the late 19th century. The highway follows a trail that was originally used to carry mail by dogsled from Circle (on the Yukon River) southwest to the gold mines. The Steese Highway is a designated Scenic Byway, with three summits: Cleary, Twelve Mile, and Eagle. For more information on these highways, see the Public Access section in Chapter 2.

Organization of Chapter

The chapter includes the following information:

- *Land Use Designations* describes the general management direction for specific parcels (units) of state land.
- *Management Intent* consists of an explanation of how specific units of state land are to be managed. Management intent language gives additional specificity to the general management direction provided by the land use classifications.
- *Plan Duration and Flexibility* indicates the planning period and requirements for plan amendment.
- *Regional Setting* describes the general landscape, uses, and character of the lands within the region.
- *Regional and parcel specific management* specifies direction for state land.

Land Use Designations

A land use designation recognizes uses or resources that are of major importance within a management unit. Unit designations are based on readily available resource information; current and projected use patterns; and input from the public, organizations, agency staff, and other sources. The designations identified in this chapter convert to classifications identified under Title 11 of the Alaska Administrative Code. The conversions are identified in Table 4-2 in Chapter 4. Multiple designations may be applied to a single unit. DNR will manage activities in the unit to encourage, develop, or protect the uses or resources for which the unit is designated; however, all state land is intended for multiple use and should be managed in a manner that is consistent with this mission. DNR will manage state land according to these designations and the equivalent land use classifications.

When the plan assigns a designation to a unit, the designation is accompanied by region-wide management guidelines and by management intent specific to that unit. These three pieces of

Map 2: Planning Regions and Generalized Land Status

information – designations, management guidelines, and statement of intent – must be taken into consideration in determining how a parcel of state land is to be managed and in making disposal and authorization decisions. Management guidelines are found in Chapter 2.

Designations Used in This Plan

F – Forestry. Land that is or has been forested and is suited for long-term forest management because of its physical, climatic, and vegetative conditions. Approving authorizations in these areas will be conducted in compliance with the Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17 and 11 AAC 95) and the specific management guidelines in the Forestry section of Chapter 2. This designation converts to a land use classification of Forest Land. Forest Land is to be retained by the state, although timber sales are recognized as appropriate.

Ha – Habitat. This designation applies to areas where fish and wildlife species experience sensitive life-history stages where alteration of the habitat or human disturbance could result in a permanent loss of a population or sustained yield of a species. Lands designated Habitat will remain in state ownership. The identified habitat values for which these lands are classified shall be maintained to the greatest extent practicable. If impacts to the habitat cannot be avoided, they should be minimized through stipulations contained in an authorization. This designation converts to a classification of Wildlife Habitat Land.

Hv – Harvest. Fish and wildlife harvest areas are subsistence, recreational and/or community harvest areas used for non-commercial, personal use where alteration of habitat could permanently limit sustained yield to traditional users; or are areas of intense harvest where the level of harvest has reached, or is projected to reach, the harvestable surplus for the resource. This land will remain in state ownership. This designation applies to uplands and shorelands. The identified harvest values for which these lands are designated shall be maintained to the greatest extent practicable. If impacts to the habitat cannot be avoided, they should be minimized through stipulations contained in an authorization. This designation converts to a classification of Wildlife Habitat Land.

Ma – Materials. Sites suitable for extraction of materials, which include common varieties of sand, gravel, rock, peat, pumice, pumicite, cinders, clay, and sod are designated Materials. Authorizations may occur if they do not impede the extraction of materials from the land. Consult the Resource Allocation Table for identification of potentially appropriate uses for a specific unit. This designation converts to a classification of Material Land.

Mi – Minerals. Areas considered to have mineral potential and for which mining is considered to be an appropriate use, are designated Mineral. See the “Explanation of Mineral and Coal Designations” at the end of this list of designations. This designation converts to a land use classification of Mineral Land. Land designated Minerals is to be retained in state ownership, except as may be provided for under AS 38.05.195-.275.

Pr – Public Facilities-Retain. These sites are reserved for specific infrastructure to serve state interests. This may include areas intended as open space or to function as riparian buffers. Units designated “Public Facilities-Retain” will be retained in state ownership. If impacts to the identified resources cannot be avoided, they should be minimized through stipulations contained in an authorization. This designation converts to a land use classification of Reserved Use Land.

Rd – Public Recreation-Dispersed. This designation applies to those areas that offer or have a high potential for dispersed recreation or tourism and where desirable recreation conditions are scattered or widespread rather than localized. Some level of development or activities that facilitate dispersed recreation is anticipated and may include remote airstrips, trapping cabins, trails, and primitive campsites among other uses and activities. If impacts to the identified resources cannot be avoided, they should be minimized through stipulations contained in an authorization. Developments on these lands typically facilitate public use and recreation. This designation converts to a land use classification of Public Recreation Land.

Rm – Resource Management. Land that contains one or more resource values, none of which is of sufficiently high value to merit designation as a primary use, or, because of the size of the parcel, a variety of uses can be accommodated with appropriate siting and design controls is designated Resource Management. This designation may also apply where there is a lack of resource, economic, or other information with which to assign a specific land use designation. Lands within this designation may be important for harvest activities by local residents seasonally. Consult the Resource Allocation Table for the management unit designated Resource Management in each region to determine the resources and uses present in these areas. This designation converts to a classification of Resource Management Land.

Se – Settlement. This designation applies to state uplands suitable for sale into private ownership through one of the State’s land sale programs and generally excludes shorelands. This designation will generally be used for areas appropriate for land offerings for residential uses. Unsold land in the units will be managed for uses compatible with settlement including uses such as selling additional lots, expanding existing or laying out new subdivisions, identifying greenbelts or other parcels to be retained within subdivisions, reserving materials sites for subdivision roads and building lots, placing easements on access routes, or reserving lots for community facilities and open space. Areas designated Settlement should be closed to mineral entry prior to sale. This designation converts to a classification of Settlement Land.

Sc – Settlement-Commercial. This designation applies to lands that have been identified as suitable for sale into private ownership for commercial or industrial purposes generally excluding shorelands. This designation will generally be used for areas appropriate for land offerings for commercial or industrial uses. Unsettled or sold land in the management unit will be managed for uses compatible with eventual commercial or industrial activities. Areas designated Settlement-Commercial should be closed to mineral entry prior to sale. This designation converts to a classification of Settlement Land.

Tc – Transportation Corridor. This designation applies to land identified for the location of easements and rights-of-way under AS 38.04.065(f), including transportation, pipeline, or utility corridors, or is under consideration for a right-of-way lease. The intent of this designation is to provide a reserve of state land for the eventual development of easements and rights-of-way, including transportation, pipeline, or utility corridors or other linear transportation projects. This designation converts to a classification of Transportation Corridor Land.

Wr – Water Resources. This designation applies to important watersheds, or portions thereof, that are suitable for water sources, watershed protection, or hydropower sites. The identified values for which these lands are designated shall be maintained to the greatest extent practicable. If impacts to these values cannot be avoided, they should be minimized through stipulations contained in an authorization. This designation converts to a classification of Water Resources Land.

Explanation of Habitat Designations

In this plan, the designation or co-designation of Habitat was applied to areas with a unique or rare assemblage of single or multiple species of regional, state, or national significance. Where these conditions exist, the unit is designated Habitat. In some cases, there is only a single species resource, but in other instances several resources exist. These resources sometimes occupy differing portions of the management unit. The type and spatial distribution of habitat within a unit is identified in the “Resources and Uses” column for each management unit in the Resource Allocation Tables. When granting authorizations within areas designated Habitat, DNR adjudicators should consider the most current species and habitat information available from ADF&G.

Fish and wildlife species and habitats used, in part, to identify Habitat (Ha) in this plan include the following:

- Moose calving, rutting, and winter range
- Dall sheep identified mineral licks
- Caribou calving and winter areas
- Black bear and brown bear concentration areas
- Wildlife habitat connectivity
- Important Bird Areas as defined by the Audubon Society
- Eagle nesting sites
- Waterfowl nesting and concentration areas
- Anadromous fish spawning, rearing, and overwintering areas

Explanation of Mineral and Coal Designations

Except where state land is closed to mineral entry, DNR will treat mining as if it is compatible with the principal surface use. This is important to note because DNR area plans usually do not apply mineral resource designations to large areas, although in this plan significant areas are affected by Mineral designation. Chapter 2, Subsurface Resources, also includes additional guidelines and a summary of statutes regulating mining and reclamation activities.

Resources and Uses and Management Intent

The Resource Allocation Tables (RAT) within this chapter of the plan identify the resources and uses and the management intent for each planning unit. The intent is based on the existing resources and the types of authorizations that currently exist or may be expected to occur within the planning units. Management intent describes how the Department intends to manage a resource, use, or activity within a unit and may describe what is intended to occur, and in some cases, what is not intended to occur. Management intent statements refer only to management of state lands.

Disposal or Retention in State Ownership. The Settlement Land classification identifies lands that may be conveyed into private ownership through one of the State land disposal programs. Within settlement areas, lands necessary for wildlife, public use and access, and for other uses associated with the disposal will be identified and retained in public ownership. An easement or right-of-way “to and along” appropriate waterbodies under AS 38.05.127 may be established to allow access to such waters. These easements or rights-of-way will be retained by the state for public use.

In this plan, the land use designation is the general indicator of whether land should be retained in state ownership or made available for disposal. However, some units have management intent that precludes disposal of all, or a portion of, the lands based on the interests of the State even though the designation and classification might otherwise allow disposal. When this occurs, this restriction is noted in the management intent statement specific to the management unit in the Resource Allocation Table. This includes units already under management by another state agency or that contain certain unique or sensitive uses or resources that merit retention by the state. In addition, units already under management agreements with other state agencies are usually not available for conveyance. In no case can DNR convey the subsurface estate to municipalities or individuals. Shorelands must be retained in state ownership unless law requires conveyance, or the conveyance is to a political subdivision of the state. These conveyances are subject to the Public Trust Doctrine, described in Appendix E.

Shorelands. DNR will provide reasonable access across state shorelands to upland owners. Upland access across state shorelands, including developed access facilities, may be allowed within all land use designations where DNR determines the proposed facilities are consistent

with the management intent and applicable guidelines of the plan. However, state shoreland designations do not give the public access rights to adjacent private uplands. ADF&G Habitat Section requires a Fish Habitat Permit if the shorelands are within an anadromous or potentially anadromous stream.

Duration and Flexibility of Plan

This plan guides land uses for the next 20 years or until revised. The Department should review the plan periodically to determine if all or a portion of it should be revised. This document will guide the management of land within the plan area until the plan is formally revised. The Commissioner of DNR may revise all or a portion of the plan where appropriate at any time. The land use designations are intended to be flexible and provide for multiple use. DNR may permit uses not originally designated if DNR determines they are consistent with the management intent for the unit and consistent with applicable management guidelines.

Glossary

Definitions of terms used frequently in the plan are found in the Glossary, Appendix A.

Plan Structure

Plan Regions

The planning area consists of approximately 3.7 million acres of state lands, including shorelands. The plan encompasses the area northeast of Fairbanks from the Dalton Highway to the Canadian border, stretching north into ANWR (Arctic National Wildlife Refuge). Major drainages within the NEAAP boundary include the Yukon, Teedriinjik (Chandalar), Porcupine, and Charley rivers. The planning area is divided into four regions: Arctic, Dalton Corridor, Yukon Flats, and Interior Highlands. Regions are typically large geographic areas characterized by large blocks of state land, often contiguous to each other and located within an area with distinctive characteristics. They are often demarcated by political boundaries or major topographic or hydrologic features. The four regions contain state-owned and state-selected land, which is the primary focus of area plans. Map 1 in Chapter 1 depicts the plan boundary and generalized land status.

Management Units

Areas of state land and water have been separated into smaller geographic units called management units. State resource management is specific to this level. Management units

range in size but generally have similar attributes; or they may be specific legal units, like a tract within a residential subdivision; or they may be a discrete area of state land affected by a management agreement that is to be administered for a public purpose, such as a port, vehicle storage facility, or airport.

All units have an identifying alpha character and number combination. The alpha character corresponds to the region, with the following convention: ‘A’ represents the Arctic Region; ‘D’ represents the Dalton Corridor Region; ‘Y’, the Yukon Flats Region; and ‘I’, the Interior Highlands Region. The alpha character is followed by a two-digit identifying number. For example, a parcel in the Arctic region has the identifier “A-01.”

These identifiers are depicted on the plan maps and are included in the Resource Allocation Table. The unique identifier provides a cross-reference between the plan maps and the tables containing information about the parcel. The table contains information on the resources found within the unit as well as plan designations, management intent, and, if required, management guidelines.

Region Descriptions

The regions are described in this section of the plan. These descriptions are necessarily generalized and indicate only the general features or characteristics of an area and only give an overview of how the region is to be managed by the Department. For LDAs, refer to the establishing legislation as well as the plan’s management intent.

Descriptions of the regions include:

Introduction: This component provides a description of the planning boundaries, overall acreage, number of communities in a region, and related geographic information.

Distribution and Characteristics: The distribution of state-owned and state-selected lands within the region is explained. Distribution and amount of other lands is described.

Access, Resources, and Uses of State Land: Access, resources and uses of state-owned and state-selected land are described in this component. Major road access and the type of access that exists more generally within a region, including the types of access methods (e.g., snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, etc.), are described. This section includes descriptions of settlement, habitats, water resources, recreation uses, and minerals, if present.

Management Planning Constraints and Considerations: Local, state, and federal land and resource plans affecting the management unit are identified, if applicable to state land management.

Management Summary: This section describes the general way that state land is to be managed within the region. Detailed land management intent is provided at the management unit level, described in the Resource Allocation Tables of this Chapter.

Plan Maps

There are six plan maps that cover the Northeast Alaska Area Plan. See Map 2 in Chapter 3 to locate the map(s) for a particular area. This map indicates the plan boundary (external boundary of the area plan), the boundaries of the four regions, and the generalized land status.

The plan maps show land ownership, unit numbers, and plan designations. It should be reemphasized that while the land use designations provide the general management intent for each unit, management intent and guidelines (both management unit and areawide) must be considered for a complete explanation of the management policy and requirements affecting each unit. This is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the management intent contained in the area plan as it pertains to a specific unit. The management intent and guidelines contained in Chapter 2 are particularly critical and must be consulted in adjudication decisions affecting individual parcels of state land.

Land Status Depicted in Plan Maps

The maps in this chapter are not intended to be detailed land ownership maps. Instead, they are a representation of state and federal land records current to the date of plan preparation. Caution should be used when using these maps since there may be inaccuracies in the source data or constraints imposed through the Geographic Information System (GIS). Land status for parcels, including private, Native corporation, municipal, and federal land are derived from the Department's GIS land status coverage. This information is generalized and for this reason the land status can be misleading. For complete information, consult the land records of the Department of Natural Resources, federal Bureau of Land Management, and Native corporations. Consult the Mental Health Trust Office regarding Mental Health Trust Land.

The plan maps show general patterns of land ownership by color; this includes the various types of state land (general state land, Legislatively Designated Areas, and lands under management agreements with other state agencies) as well as private lands. However, because of the way that GIS maps are created, which entails a decision hierarchy on what land status to represent in priority sequence, the colors that represent an ownership pattern may not coincide with the actual pattern of such ownership. The Department has tried to make general land status on the plan maps as accurate as possible, but the ownership patterns of other entities may be incorrect.

The location of state-owned or state-selected parcels is derived from information in the Department's land status records and the federal Master Title Plat. Both the status and spatial

boundaries of these parcels are accurately represented at the time of plan preparation. However, because state land status changes with time, the same caution exists for areas of non-state land.

Resource Allocation Table

Resource Allocation Tables (RATs) provide information on specific parcels and correspond to the plan maps through the unit identifier. The Tables are meant to encapsulate the designation and management intent for each unit. Together, the Goals and Objectives from Chapter 2 and the Resource Allocation Tables found in this chapter provide a detailed description of state management guidelines and intent, as well as the resources and uses, for each unit.

More specifically, the information contained in the Tables includes:

Unit identifier: Each parcel of state land has a unit identifier. Units are preceded with a letter indicating the region that they are situated within; see previous “Management Units” section for an example.

Acreage: The approximate acreage in each unit is indicated.

Plan Designation: Land use designations indicate the primary use and resource for each unit. Although most units are only affected by a single designation, two or three compatible plan designations are sometimes specified. Where co-designations have been used, the uses reflected in the designations are recognized to be compatible or complementary to each other.

Management Intent: This column indicates the management direction for a specific parcel. It is consistent with the designation and includes more information on how state land is to be managed. In some small-sized parcels, the management intent is likely to be brief since the designation itself is often sufficient to indicate the management intent. This is not usually the case with sensitive parcels or large parcels, and, in these instances, the management intent statement is critical to an understanding of how the various resources within the parcel are to be managed. This section may also indicate if the parcel is to be retained in state ownership or if it is appropriate for transfer to a city, borough, non-profit entity, or private individuals. It often also describes those parcel resources that must be taken into consideration in land disposals, coal or mineral development, forest management activities, or other forms of development or use. In some instances, the development of a parcel is not appropriate during the planning period and, when this occurs, this is also stated. This is usually associated with units affected by the Resource Management designation since these units are often located in remote, inaccessible locations and their development is not considered likely or appropriate during the planning period.

Resources and Uses: This column summarizes the resources and uses for which the unit is designated, and which are considered important in the unit. It also provides a generalized

physical description of the unit and may indicate the presence (or absence) of certain other resources that are important to land management decisions. Typical among this type of information is the identification of heritage or cultural sites, significant concentrations of wildlife or habitat, vegetation and terrain features, current uses of the parcel, RS 2477 routes, and adjacent land ownership.

