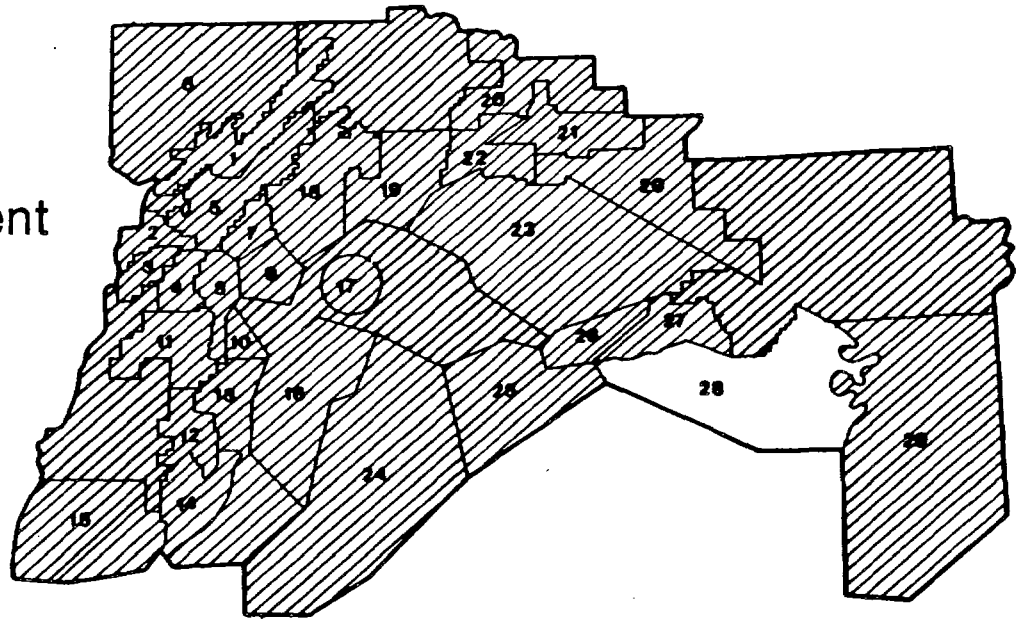


# COPPER RIVER DELTA

## Management Unit 28



### Background

In this unit, the state manages only the Copper River Highway right-of-way, the tidelands, and the land beneath Copper River and other navigable waters. The state has selected two small parcels south of the highway near Cordova airport. Most of this unit is within the state Copper River Delta Critical Habitat Area (SCHA). All of this unit is within the federal Copper River Delta Fish and Wildlife Management Area. The Copper River Highway right-of-way is managed by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

ANILCA, Section 501(b), directs the Forest Service to manage the federal land in this unit for multiple use with the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitat being the primary purpose. Federal and state land, except the right-of-way land, is open to mineral entry. The unit contains no areas with significant known mineral potential. Sand and gravel deposits occur along the highway corridor, and there is oil and gas north of Softuk Bar. The USFS land use plan indicates that

timber harvest may occur from federal lands along the Copper River Highway (north of the SCHA). Timber values within the SCHA, however, are very low.

The Copper River Delta is one of the most productive and critical bird habitats in all of Alaska. During spring migration, an estimated 20 million shorebirds and one million waterfowl stop at the delta. The harbor seal population of unit is also quite large. Seals haul out on many of the barrier islands and pup on the bars. Finally, the Copper River is one of the state's major salmon producing streams. It supports an important commercial and subsistence salmon fishery. The 1987 commercial catch for the Copper River fishery was worth over \$17.2 million. The entirety of the unit is included as crucial habitat because of its value to one or more of those species.

The state is a party to the Copper River Delta Fish and Wildlife Memorandum of Understanding for the Cooperative Management of the Copper River Delta Fish and Wildlife

Management Area. The management intent discussed below is consistent with that agreement. Management Intent

**Subunit 28A - Tidelands in State Critical Habitat Area.** The management intent for this unit is taken from the statute that established the state critical habitat area (AS 16.20.220). According to the statute, the purpose of the state critical habitat area "is to protect and preserve habitat areas especially crucial to the perpetuation of fish and wildlife, and to restrict all other uses not compatible with that primary purpose." Within the SCHA, land use authorizations are subject to ADF&G Title 16 authority concerning the use's impacts on fish, game, or habitat as well as to the authority exercised by DNR under Title 38. In addition, state management will emphasize the existing recreation opportunities including hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

Consistent with the legislative intent and the protection needs of the Critical Habitat Area, all state tidelands within the SCHA will be closed to new mineral entry. The closure will protect the important salmon spawning and other crucial habitat resources in the subunit.

**Subunit 28B - Cordova Airport Selections.** The existing state land selections are located northwest of the Cordova Airport and about four miles southeast of the airport. Both were selected for sand and gravel resources and possible landfills or light industrial uses. Sand and gravel extraction is allowed from these lands if consistent with the purpose of the SCHA.

**Subunit 28C - Flag Point.** The proposed selection at Flag Point is where the Copper River Highway meets the Copper River. It is used by residents of Cordova for access to the river for commercial fishing and community recreation. The land is suitable for commercial development and community recreation. The land will be retained in public ownership and managed for multiple use. Management will emphasize continued use of the area for public access to the river. The land may be

leased for commercial development consistent with this intent and consistent with the purposes of the SCHA. State lands in this subunit remain open to mineral entry.

**Subunit 28D - Bering River Road Junction.** The state will select land at the junction of the Bering River Road with the Copper River Highway. It will be used for commercial development related to the two transportation corridors and the associated residences. The location of this new, approximately 430 acre selection has not been precisely determined. The state will file this selection when the road junction is more accurately defined or in 1993, whichever comes first. Using information currently available, the selection's approximate location will be where the existing highway meets the east bank of the Copper River. The selection will approximately include the east half of sections 26 and 35 and all of sections 35 and 36, T15S R3E, CRM; excluding IC 943.

State lands in this subunit remain open to mineral entry.

**Subunit 28E - Copper River and Other Navigable Waters.** This subunit consists of the state owned land under the Copper River and other navigable waterbodies upstream from the SCHA. These lands require no active management. These rivers remain open to mineral entry although the size of the rivers combined with the low probability of finding minerals makes mining very unlikely.

The existing Copper River Highway traverses this unit. Nothing in the management intent should be construed to obstruct upgrading the highway right-of-way as part of a road connection from Cordova to the existing highway system or to the Katalla-Bering River area.

## Management Guidelines

**Mineral Closure - Copper River Delta State Critical Habitat Area (Subunit 28A).** Consistent with the legislative intent and the protection needs of the Critical Habitat Area,

all state tidelands within the SCHAs will be closed to new mineral entry. The closure will protect the important salmon spawning and other crucial habitat resources in the SCHAs and prevent conflicts with those resources.

The complete set of guidelines is presented in Chapter 2. Any of the guidelines could apply

to uses within this management unit; however, guidelines that are most likely to apply are listed below:

Fish and wildlife habitat and harvest areas

## LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

### Management Unit 28: Copper River Delta

<u>SUBUNIT</u>	<u>LAND OWNERSHIP</u>	<u>LAND USE DESIGNATIONS</u>			<u>COMMENTS</u>
		<u>Primary Surface Use<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Prohibited Surface Use</u>	<u>Subsurface<sup>1</sup></u>	
28A Tidelands in SCHA	State-owned tidelands	Habitat & harvest		Closed	Within Copper River Delta State Critical Habitat Area (SCHA) [AS 16.20.230(11)]
28B Cordova Airport Selections	State-selected uplands	Habitat & harvest Material site	Land offer- ings	Open	Within SCHA
28C Flag Point	State-selected uplands	Commercial/indust- rial use Public recreation	Land offer- ings	Open	
28D Bering River Road Junction	State-selected uplands	Settlement		Closed prior to sale	
28E Copper R. and other Navigable Waters Outside SCHA	State-owned navigable waters	Habitat & harvest Public recreation		Open	

<sup>1</sup>All areas are available for leasing of leasable minerals. Statements of whether or not the unit is open to mineral entry refer only to locatable minerals.

<sup>2</sup>Other uses such as material sales, land leases, or permits that are not specifically prohibited, may be allowed. Such uses will be allowed if consistent with the management intent statement, management guidelines of this unit, and relevant management guidelines in Chapter 2. See Chapter 2, pages 2-11 and 2-12, for floathome policies. Trapping Cabin and Remote Cabin permits will not be given in the planning area. See guideline B-3, page 2-39.

## Resource Information Summary<sup>1</sup>

<b>Management Unit: 28. Copper River Delta</b>					
SUBUNIT	Fish & Wildlife <sup>2</sup>	Recreation	Minerals	Settlement <sup>3</sup>	Forestry <sup>3</sup>
28A Tidelands in Unit (tidelands)	Estuaries; seals and seal haulouts; clams; eight bird rookeries; waterfowl -- crucial habitat, seasonal concentrations, and hunting; crucial swan habitat; sport fishing; commercial fishing	Frequent dispersed recreation; float trips down the Copper River; various USFS cabins and facilities	No known minerals	--	--
28B Cordova Airport selections (uplands)	Waterfowl -- crucial habitat, seasonal concentrations and hunting; crucial swan habitat;	None identified	Sand and gravel	Unknown	Unknown
28C Flag Point (uplands)	Waterfowl -- crucial habitat, seasonal concentrations and hunting; sport fishing; moose; eagle nesting concentrations mountain goats and goat hunting	Frequent dispersed recreation; Flag Point is important take-out point for recreation and fishing boats	No known minerals	Capable	Unknown
28D Bering River Road Junction (uplands)	Waterfowl -- crucial habitat, seasonal concentrations and hunting; sport fishing; moose; eagle nesting mountain goat winter range and mountain goat hunting	Frequent dispersed recreation;	No known minerals	Capable	Unknown
28E Navigable waters out- side SCHA (shorelands)	Waterfowl -- crucial habitat, seasonal concentrations and hunting; crucial swan habitat; sport fishing	Frequent dispersed recreation; float trips down the Copper River	No known minerals	--	--

<sup>1</sup> This resource summary describes only the resources for state uplands and tidelands.

<sup>2</sup> Resource list includes Crucial, Prime, and Important habitats as defined by ADF&G (see Appendix E).

Anadromous fish streams are not listed; they exist in most subunits. See ADF&G anadromous fish stream catalogue.

<sup>3</sup> Land offering and timber harvest do not occur on tidelands. Therefore, settlement and forestry resources are not rated for tideland subunits.