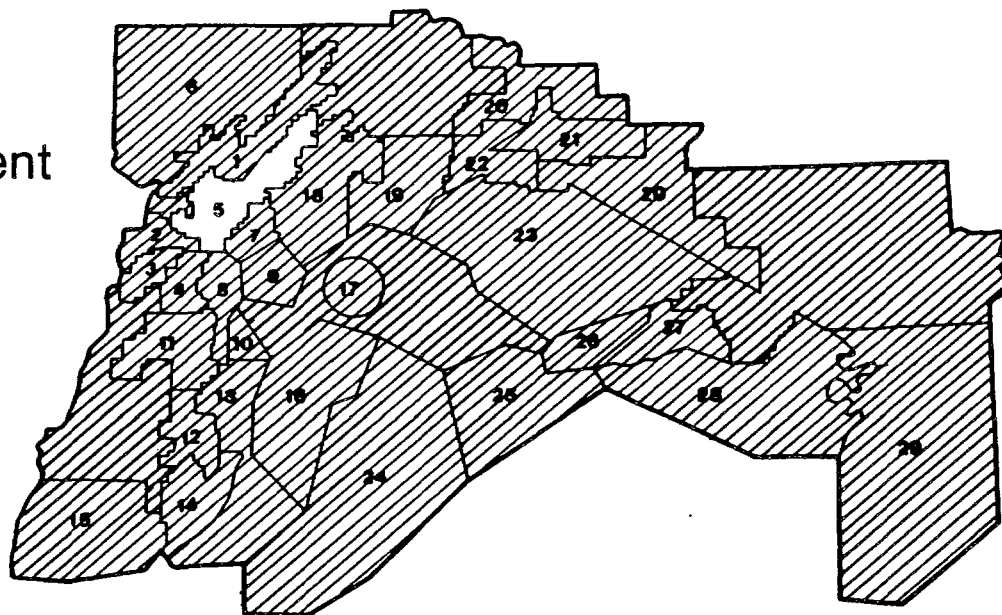

PORT WELLS

Management
Unit 5



Background

Most of the uplands in Port Wells are managed by the U.S. Forest Service; the state owns or has selected portions of many of the bays within the management unit and owns the tidelands throughout the unit. The northern portion of the management unit, including most of the Coghill River drainage, is within the USFS proposed wilderness area. The USFS land-use plan indicates that they will not harvest timber in any part of this management unit.

Federal land is open to mining, although the area inside the wilderness proposal area is likely to be closed to new mineral entry if Congress acts on the proposal. One of the most promising mineral prospects in the Sound is the Granite Mine near Hobo Bay. The mining claims are on federal land and are currently being explored for development. In addition, uplands near Pigot and Bettles Bays are highly mineralized and those near Golden have moderate potential.

Two state marine parks exist within Port Wells: Ziegler Cove in Pigot Bay and Bettles Bay. The legislature closed these areas to mineral entry. Port Wells is extensively used for recreation, sport fishing, and commercial fishing.

Port Wells' proximity to Whittier, the abundance of anchorages and campsites, a scenic coastline, and good fishing opportunities make this unit a frequently used destination for weekend boaters from Whittier. Port Wells is used by tour boats and cruise ships on the way to Harriman and College Fiords.

The Coghill River drainage supports one of the most important sport and commercial fishing resources in the Sound. Port Wells is heavily used by drift-net and purse-seine salmon fishermen. Many of the salmon they catch come from the Coghill drainage.

The numerous scenic bays in Port Wells provide campsites and anchorages used by recreationists and are an important part of the scenic features of the area. Each bay is usual-

ly fed by one or more anadromous fish streams, is used for sport fishing, and provides habitat for winter concentrations of waterfowl. The mouths of most bays are used for commercial fishing.

Management Intent

All state uplands within the Port Wells management unit should be retained in state ownership. Except for marine parks, all areas will be managed for multiple use with emphasis on public recreation and fish and wildlife habitat and harvest resources. Management for public recreation should emphasize protecting the capacity and natural appearance of campsites, anchorages, and the surrounding landscape. Management for fish and wildlife resources should emphasize habitat that supports the commercial and sport fishery of the area, including opportunities for enhancement.

Other than the existing state marine parks, most state lands in this unit remain open to mineral entry. Upper and Lower Coghill River and Coghill Lake will be closed to new mineral entry because of the critical nature of the fishery and the potential for placer mining that is in conflict with these significant surface resources. Also, parts of Avery River, Pirate Creek, Golden Lagoon, and estuaries at the heads of most bays within the management unit will be closed to protect valuable salmon spawning and rearing habitat. If Granite Bay is designated by the legislature as a state marine park, it may be closed to mineral entry.

Mariculture may be allowed in most of the unit but should be sited to avoid diminishing the capacity of existing anchorages, public facilities, and campsites. To minimize conflicts with recreation use, mariculture caretaker facilities should be concentrated in two areas on the east side and two areas on the west side of Port Wells and should be screened from the frequently used recreation areas. Mariculture and other tideland facilities should be designed and located to

avoid interfering with commercial fisheries harvest.

Provision of land for commercial recreation lodges within Port Wells and the surrounding management units are expected to be met from the lands within Passage Canal and from the proposed lodge site on south Esther Island. Therefore, lodges (including float-lodges) and similar commercial recreation facilities will not be authorized. After Esther Island is fully developed, and after development occurs in Passage Canal, the land manager, in consultation with DPOR, may determine a need for additional recreation facilities in western Prince William Sound. Floatlodges may then be allowed in this unit. This change will require a plan amendment.

Additional management intent is described below for six subunits. The intent for **Subunit 5G**, the general use area, is reflected in the previous paragraphs.

Subunit 5A - Coghill. This subunit includes the state-owned tidelands, Coghill Lake, and navigable portions of the Coghill River. Salmon originating in the Coghill River support much of the Port Wells commercial drift net and purse seine fisheries. Because this area is critical to the sport and commercial fishery in the Prince William Sound, state management of these lands will emphasize the protection of the fishery resource. The subunit also contains habitat important for nesting, molting, seasonal concentrations, and hunting of waterfowl. While a part of the Coghill River upstream from the lake contains moderate potential for placer mining, the state-owned portion of the drainage will be closed to new mineral entry to protect salmon spawning and prevent conflicts with the fishery resources.

Subunit 5B - Entrance to Esther Passage. The entrance to Esther Passage is frequently used by recreationists and commercial fishermen as a protected anchorage where they can scout the weather before crossing Port Wells. The north shore, including the stream and an unnamed lake, is used for sport fishing. Tideland activities that would adversely affect

the campsites, restrict pullouts for small boats, or that would significantly detract from the natural appearance of the area should be avoided.

Subunit 5C - Bettles Bay. Bettles Bay is a state marine park. The bay is the most scenic bay on the west shore of Port Wells. Upland public facilities such as public-use cabins or cleared tent sites are not appropriate in the park unless permitted by a management plan. DPOR will prepare a management plan for this area pursuant to AS 41.21.302(c).

Subunit 5D - Ziegler Cove in Pigot Bay. Pigot Bay is a state marine park. The main feature of the park is a small but well-protected anchorage frequently used by recreational boaters. The anchorage is also a frequently used sport-diving site. No upland or tideland activity that decreases the capacity of the anchorage, the useability or safety of the dive site, or significantly changes the appearance of the anchorage should be allowed. In the remainder of the park, public use cabins or cleared tent sites may be appropriate to increase the recreation carrying capacity of the area or if permitted by a management plan. DPOR will prepare a management plan for the area pursuant to AS 41.21.302(c).

Subunit 5E - Port Wells Bays. This management unit includes the state-owned tidelands and state-selected uplands within the bays of Port Wells. The state has selected land at Golden, Granite, and Hummer Bays. The state will select additional land in Pirate Cove (880 acres), Granite Bay (1005 acres), and Avery River (167 acres). This land is suitable for a variety of uses, including community recreation by residents of Whittier and people with boats docked at Whittier. These lands will be retained in state ownership and managed for multiple use with emphasis on public recreation and wildlife habitat. Any upland use other than public recreation should, if feasible and prudent, be screened from view of the water by vegetative or topographic buffers or other means. Additional recreation capacity may be developed (for example, public use cabins or cleared tent sites) if it

would benefit public recreation, or prevent resource damage. Management will also protect the opportunity for sport fishing, the anadromous fish streams, the estuaries and intertidal vegetation, and other habitat important for waterfowl. Granite Bay is a particularly valuable recreation site. It receives frequent use and has unusual beauty, nearby hiking destinations, a good anchorage, and good camping. The legislature should consider designating the state selection as a state marine park.

Chugach Alaska Corporation is likely to nominate a portion of the state selection at Golden to be an archaeological district because of the number and significance of the cultural sites. Management of the adjacent state tidelands will be consistent with the protection needs of the district.

Subunit 5F - Granite Mine. The Granite Mine, a lode mine on federal land, is currently being explored for possible mineral production. State management of the adjacent tidelands should protect access for mineral exploration and future mineral transfer facilities. Permits or leases that would foreclose eventual use for this purpose will be avoided. The area also supports significant dispersed recreation and fish habitat in Hobo Bay.

Management Guidelines

Mariculture Caretaker Facilities in Port Wells (all subunits).

1. Location. Mariculture caretaker facilities are more appropriate on upland locations, including those managed by the USFS, than floating facilities on the tidelands. Facilities should be concentrated to the extent feasible and prudent. Additional locations may be allowed if the land manager determines that existing uplands sites are not feasible and prudent for additional use or that additional sites will not significantly detract from the existing public use of the area.

2. Design. To the extent feasible, upland mariculture facilities and associated docks and tideland facilities should be screened so they cannot be seen from frequently used recreation areas. This may be accomplished by vegetative or topographic buffers, by color and design to blend in with the landscape, or by other means. If floating caretaker facilities are necessary, they should be located in the less frequently used areas and, to the extent feasible, be screened from view and designed to blend in with their surroundings.

Leases and Permits in Coghill (Subunit 5A). Because of the critical nature of the fishery and other fish and wildlife resources, an activity will be authorized only if the land manager determines it is compatible with the fish and wildlife resources.

Mineral Closures (Subunits 5A, 5B, 5E, and 5F). To protect valuable spawning and rearing habitat and to prevent conflicts with these resources, the following areas will be closed to new mineral entry: Lower Coghill River (approximately 1.25 miles), Upper

Coghill River (approximately 4 miles) and Coghill Lake; approximately 0.1 mile of Pirate Creek (flows into the head of Pirate Cove); approximately 0.25 miles of Avery River; Golden Lagoon; and state land within 50 feet of each side of all these streams except Coghill River. Estuaries to be closed include those at the head of Hobo (68), Bettles (69), Hummer (70), and Pigot bays (72); at Pirate Cove (71), Harrison Lagoon (67), and Golden Lagoon (64); and at the mouth of Esther Passage (63) and Coghill River (65). The boundaries of these closures are described in Appendix D.

The complete set of guidelines is presented in Chapter 2; any of the guidelines could apply to uses within this management unit. Guidelines most likely to apply to this management unit are:

- Fish and wildlife habitat and harvest areas
- Mariculture
- Recreation, tourism, cultural, and scenic resources

LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

Management Unit 5: Port Wells

Page 1 of 2

SUBUNIT	LAND OWNERSHIP	LAND USE DESIGNATIONS			COMMENTS
		Primary Surface Use ²	Prohibited Surface Use	Subsurface ¹	
5A Coghill	State-owned tidelands and shorelands	Habitat & harvest Public recreation	Commercial recreation facilities ³ Floatlodges ³	Closed	
5B Entrance to Esther Passage	State-owned tidelands	Public recreation	Commercial recreation facilities ³ Floatlodges ³	Most open; estuary closed	
5C Bettles Bay	State-owned uplands and tidelands	Existing marine park	Commercial recreation facilities ³ Floatlodges ³ Land offerings	Legislatively closed	Existing marine park (AS 41.21.300)
5D Ziegler Cove in Pigot Bay	State-owned uplands and tidelands	Existing marine park	Commercial recreation facilities ³ Floatlodges ³ Land offerings	Legislatively closed	Existing marine park (AS 41.21.300)
5E Port Wells Bays	State-selected uplands; state-owned tidelands.	Habitat & harvest Public recreation	Commercial recreation facilities ³ Floatlodges ³ Land offerings	Most open; Avery River, Golden Lagoon, Pirate Creek, and six estuaries closed; Granite Bay may be closed if marine park	Granite Bay is possible marine park

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

² 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.

³ Floatlodge and commercial recreation facility prohibition may be reevaluated after 1992, see text.

LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

Management Unit 5: Port Wells

Page 2 of 2

<u>SUBUNIT</u>	<u>LAND OWNERSHIP</u>	<u>LAND USE DESIGNATIONS</u>			<u>COMMENTS</u>
		<u>Primary Surface Use²</u>	<u>Prohibited Surface Use</u>	<u>Subsurface¹</u>	
5F Granite Mine	State-owned tidelands	Habitat & Harvest Minerals Public recreation	Commercial recreation facilities ³ Floatlodges ³	Most open; estuary closed	Mineral transfer site may be needed
5G Remainder of Unit	State-owned tidelands	General use	Commercial recreation facilities ³ Floatlodges ³	Open	

¹All 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.

²Other 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.

³Floatlodge and commercial recreation facility prohibition may be reevaluated after 1992, see text.

Management Unit: 5. Port Wells

SUBUNIT	Fish & Wildlife ²	Recreation	Minerals	Settlement ³	Forestry ³
5A Coghill (tidelands)	Estuary; seasonal waterfowl concentrations; bear use; sport fishing; waterfowl hunting; supports commercial fishery; deer; commercial fishing	One of the Sound's most important fishing sites; USFS cabin on Coghill Lake	Moderately mineralized; known placer deposits in Northwest Fork - Coghill River	--	--
5B Entrance to Esther Passage (tidelands)	Estuary; sport fishing; otter concentrations; commercial fishing	Crossing point	Moderately mineralized	--	--
5C Bettles Bay (uplands and tidelands)	Estuaries; seasonal waterfowl concentrations; sport fishing; commercial fishing	Existing Marine Park; scenic bay; anchorage; dispersed recreation	Highly mineralized	Unknown	Unknown
5D Pigot Bay (uplands and tidelands)	Seals; seasonal waterfowl concentrations; sport fishing; commercial fishing	Existing Marine Park; anchorage	Highly mineralized	Unknown	Unknown
5E Port Wells Bays (uplands and tidelands)	Estuaries; seals; seasonal waterfowl concentrations; sport fishing; purse seine hookoffs; otter concentrations	Dispersed recreation; anchorage and camping; USFS cabin and mooring buoy in Harrison Lagoon and Pigot Bay; USFS mooring buoy in Granite Bay	Highly mineralized	Capable	Low
5F Granite Mine (tidelands)	Estuary; seasonal waterfowl concentrations; sport fishing; commercial fishing	Dispersed recreation	Highly mineralized	--	--

¹ This resource summary describes only the resources for state uplands and tidelands.

² 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.

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

Resource Information Summary (page 2 of 2)¹

Management Unit: 5. Port Wells					
SUBUNIT	Fish & Wildlife²	Recreation	Minerals	Settlement³	Forestry³
5G Remainder of Unit (tidelands)	Bird rookery; otter concentrations; commercial fishing	Dispersed recreation	Highly miner- alized	---	

¹ This resource summary describes only the resources for state uplands and tidelands.

² 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.

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