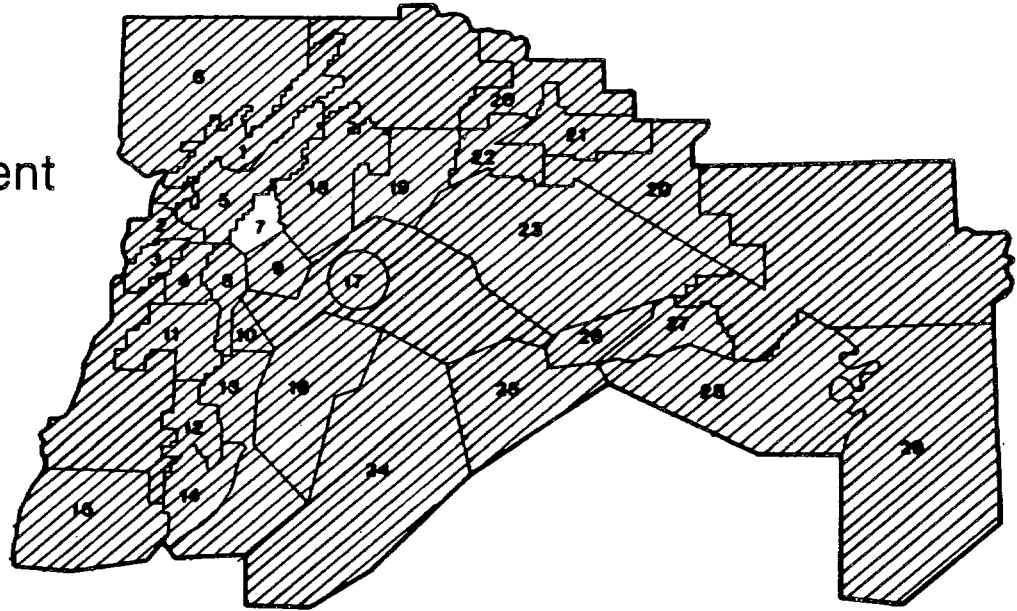

ESTHER ISLAND

Management Unit 7



Background

This management unit includes Esther Passage and the southeastern two-thirds of Esther Island. Most uplands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Service has not included any land in this unit in their 1985 10-year timber sale schedule. The federal land is open to mineral entry, but the unit has no known significant mineral values.

The state currently owns one parcel, and is proposing two additional selections as part of this plan. The state-owned parcel is the Esther Island Marine Park. The Prince William Sound Aquaculture Association has completed construction of a hatchery in Lake Bay, inside the park. The new selections include Esther Bay and land between Esther Bay and Esther Lake. The state owns the tidelands throughout the unit.

State-selected land at Shoestring Cove was relinquished. Under state ownership, the land would have been managed for dispersed recreation. This use can be accommodated under Forest Service management. In addition,

the state's selection was rejected by the USFS because it does not meet the criteria for selection established by section 6(a) of the Statehood Act (see Chapter 5).

Esther Island and Esther Passage receive a tremendous amount of public use by recreation craft and commercial fishing boats. The passage is a recreation destination and a route protected from weather. Esther Lake and the unnamed lake near Shoestring Cove make excellent hiking destinations.

Additional management intent is described below for four subunits. The intent for **Subunit 7E**, the general use area, is reflected in the previous paragraphs.

Management Intent

Most state lands in this unit will be retained in public ownership and managed for multiple use to provide for a variety of recreational uses. State land in this unit is a strategic part of the Whittier to Valdez marine route. The state lands will be managed to facilitate the

recreational use of this route. A combination of commercial recreation services at Esther Bay and on Glacier Island would facilitate this recreational use. For this reason, commercial recreation facilities are proposed in the new selection at Esther Bay. Mariculture should avoid the narrow parts of Esther Passage, north of Shoestring Cove, because of incompatibility with navigation and recreation.

Outside Esther Bay, recreation lodges are unnecessary because the area should be adequately served by the proposed lodge at the Esther Bay site. Therefore, upland lodges, floatlodges, and similar commercial recreation facilities are prohibited in this unit outside Esther Bay.

Most state lands in this unit remain open to mineral entry. The existing marine park has been closed by the legislature. Other lands in Subunit 7A may be added to the park and closed by the legislature. Any land sold at Esther Bay (Subunit 7B) would be closed before sale. The estuary at the mouth of Triple Creek will be closed to protect valuable salmon spawning and rearing habitat.

Subunit 7A - Esther Island Marine Park. Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation (PWSAC) operates one of the largest fish hatcheries in the world in Lake Bay, the western bay of the marine park. The fish hatchery uses water from Esther Lake to operate the hatchery, and part of Lake Bay for its brood take. In addition, the waters in the park are sometimes opened to commercial fishing, and the hatchery harvest area includes the waters at the mouth of the park's two bays. During commercial fishing openings, the harvest areas support concentrated commercial purse-seine and drift-net fishing use. The state-owned land and tidelands in this subunit were closed to mineral entry by the legislation that established the park.

Management of this state park will emphasize recreation, the needs of the hatchery, and commercial fishing. Recreation will be managed to avoid significant interference with the operation of the hatchery or the

fishery. To avoid creating conflicts for space and use of the shoreline, recreation facilities will be limited to those low-impact facilities, such as signs or trails, that will not attract significant boating use during commercial fishing openings in the hatchery harvest area. DPOR will prepare a management plan for this area pursuant to AS 41.21.302(c). The management plan will address coordination of DPOR's management with operation of the hatchery and the commercial fishery.

Subunit 7B - Esther Bay. The state will select approximately 2,160 acres of federal land surrounding Esther Bay. This subunit includes the uplands proposed for selection and the tideland inside the bay. Tidelands outside the mouth of the Bay are within Subunit 7C - hatchery harvest area.

State land in this subunit will be used for commercial recreation facilities and possibly for settlement. It is not yet clear whether settlement is appropriate in this location. Until the settlement decision is made, the land will be managed so not to foreclose the settlement potential of the area. Both the settlement and the commercial recreation facilities will be designed and operated to protect the continued capacity of the anchorages and the continued commercial fishing use, especially near the mouth of the bay.

Esther Bay is within the harvest area for the Lake Bay hatchery. The bay receives commercial fishing use by the purse-seine and drift-net fleets though the use is less concentrated than that in Subunit 7C. The anchorage on the southeast shore is often used by fishing and recreation vessels. There is also a sport-diving site at the head of the bay.

Esther Bay is along the frequently traveled marine route from Whittier to Valdez. Commercial recreation facilities are proposed for state land in this subunit. These facilities may include a lodge, campground, fuel stop, and hiking trails. The exact location of the development inside the bay will await detailed design, but the facilities will be sited and

designed to maintain or add to existing anchorage capacity and should, if practical, be located toward the back of the bay to minimize competition with existing recreation and commercial fishing uses. Representatives of ADF&G and appropriate commercial fishing groups, PWSAC or CDFU (Cordova District Fisherman's United), will be consulted during design.

During the next ten years, a significant number of residential lots will probably become available for private use in western Prince William Sound. Many of these lots will be remote lots available and attractive for the Anchorage market. If a significant number of private lots become available, no need exists for the state to supply settlement land in the area.

Of the land disposals listed in the plan, Esther Bay will be the lowest priority for sale. If sold, it should be among the last offered for sale in this 20-year plan. If, at the time the department is ready to offer Esther Bay, a significant number of recreational or residential lots have not been made available for private use outside Passage Canal, state land within this subunit should be offered for sale. If private lots have been made available, the state land will be managed to emphasize public recreation. In either case, the state land will be reclassified.

Until the land sale decision is made, the land will be reclassified Resource Management. Reclassification of the land from Resource Management to Public Recreation or Settlement will follow the steps of a plan amendment outlined in Chapter 4. The reclassification will not occur before 1997. Before reclassification is made, management will avoid permits or leases that would foreclose settlement or public recreation use of the uplands. Mineral closure would precede any land sale in the area.

If the state selects land to expand Esther Island Marine Park (management Subunit 7A), the remaining federal land between the marine park and Esther Bay will also be

selected to consolidate land ownership and provide additional land for recreation or other uses. This land is labelled "Proposed State Contingency Selection" on the management unit map. This additional 760 acre selection will be a part of Management Subunit 7B. This selection is "C Priority." (See Chapter 5.)

Subunit 7C - Hatchery Harvest Area. This subunit contains the tidelands near the PWSAC salmon hatchery in Esther Bay. The tidelands in this subunit include the hatchery harvest area maintained by ADF&G for the salmon hatchery. In this area, returning hatchery stock is naturally separated from wild stock, and during fishery openings it receives concentrated commercial purse seine and drift net fishing, especially along the shoreline on the south side of Esther Island. The area also supports dense concentrations of rearing juvenile salmon when the hatchery releases smolts in the spring. Tideland management will maintain the productivity of the habitat and the unobstructed use of the area, especially the shoreline, for commercial fishing.

Subunit 7D - Shoestring Cove. Tideland management will protect the capacity of the anchorage and public access to the trail at the head of the narrow inlet.

Management Guidelines

Hatchery Source Waters (Subunit 7A and Esther Lake). To preserve the quality of the hatchery water supply, uses will not be located on state land where they would risk reducing water quality below that needed for the hatchery.

Visual Protection Along the Frequently Traveled Marine Route (Subunits 7A, 7B, and 7C). The land and water in this unit have significant scenic value for people traveling on tour ships, the state ferries, and other craft; therefore, facilities will, to the extent feasible and prudent, be designed and located to avoid changing the undisturbed natural appearance of the landscape visible from the traveled

route along the south shore of the island. Facilities affected by this guideline include for example, commercial recreation facilities in Esther Bay, the potential settlement in Esther Bay, and tideland facilities along the south shore of Esther Island. Management tools to accomplish this may include requirements for vegetative or topographic screening, or other measures as appropriate.

Conflicts with Hatchery Harvest Areas (Subunits 7A and 7C).

1. Disease, Pollution, and Productivity. Because of concentrations of hatchery stock, uses that meet the following descriptions will not be allowed if there is a feasible and prudent alternative: uses with the potential to transmit disease to the concentrated hatchery stock; uses that significantly reduce the productivity of the salmon hatchery by competing with the available food supply or other means; and uses that could cause significant water pollution.

2. Interfering with the Commercial Fishery. Because the hatchery harvest area, particularly the nearshore area, receives concentrated

drift net and purse seine commercial fishing activity, any tideland facility (rafts, floats, mooring systems, etc.) that would obstruct the commercial fishing use will not be located in this area if there is a feasible and prudent alternative.

Mineral Closure - Triple Creek Estuary (Subunit 7E). To protect important salmon spawning and rearing habitat, and to prevent conflicts with these resources, the estuary at the mouth of Triple Creek (62 - T9N R9E SM, Section. 6) will be closed to new mineral entry. The boundary of the closure is described in Appendix D.

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

Fish and wildlife habitat and harvest areas
Recreation, tourism, cultural, and scenic resource

LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

Management Unit 7: Esther Island

SUBUNIT	LAND OWNERSHIP	LAND USE DESIGNATIONS			COMMENTS
		Primary Surface Use ²	Prohibited Surface Use	Subsurface ¹	
7A Esther Island Marine Park	State-owned and selected uplands; state-owned tidelands	Existing marine park	Land offerings	State-owned land legislatively closed; new selections may be closed by legislature	Existing marine park (AS 41.21.300); new selections may be added to Park. Site of Lake Bay Hatchery
7B Esther Bay	State-selected uplands; state-owned tidelands	Resource management, high value	Land offerings for 10 years	Possibly closed after 10 years if land is sold	
7C Hatchery Harvest Area	State-owned tidelands	Habitat & harvest	Commercial recreation facilities Floatlodges	Open	
7D Shoe-String Cove	State-owned tidelands	Habitat & harvest Public recreation	Commercial recreation facilities Floatlodges	Open	State selection was relinquished
7E Remainder of Unit	State-owned tidelands	General use	Commercial recreation facilities Floatlodges	Most open; estuary closed	

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.

STATE OF ALASKA

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT

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Errata -- Prince William Sound Area Plan

December 13, 1990

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Prince William Sound Area Plan for state lands was adopted by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in June 1988. The plan guides the department's management of the state land in the Sound. Our records indicate that you were sent a copy of the plan. This letter is to notify you of a typing/proofing error on page 3-58 of the Prince William Sound Area Plan, so you can correct your copy. The error was corrected on many copies of the plan before distribution, but not on all copies.

Page 3-58 contains the Land Use Designation Summary chart for Management Unit 7, Esther Island. On many copies of the plan, the chart erroneously indicates that commercial recreation facilities and floatlodes are prohibited in Unit 7B, Esther Bay. That is not correct. In fact, that subunit is one of the locations where commercial recreation facilities are recommended.

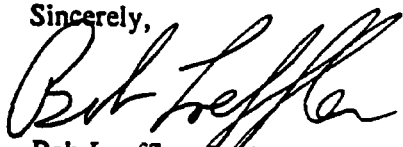
Please revise the information for that subunit as shown below:

7B Esther Bay	State-selected uplands; state-owned tidelands	Resource management- ment, high value	Commercial recreation facilities Floatlodes Land offerings for 10 years	Possibly closed after 10 years if land is sold
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The items crossed out are in error, and should not have been printed on the chart. That subunit is one of the few areas targeted for commercial recreation along the Whittier to Valdez marine route. The correct information is explained in the management intent for Subunit 7B and in the summary brochure. In addition, it was contained in the list of changes that were made from the draft to final plan, and in the response to public comment.

For your information, the department has not yet received title to the land in state-selected uplands in that subunit, nor are their current plans concerning recreation facilities at that location. This letter is only to notify you of the typing/proofing error. We hope the error did not inconvenience you.

Sincerely,



Bob Loeffler, Project Manager
Prince William Sound Area Plan

Resource Information Summary¹

Management Unit: 7. Esther Island					
SUBUNIT	Fish & Wildlife²	Recreation	Minerals	Settlement³	Forestry³
7A Esther Island Marine Park (uplands and tidelands)	Estuaries; herring spawning; sport fishing; commercial fishing	Dispersed recreation; anchorage	No known minerals	Unknown	Low
7B Esther Bay (uplands and tidelands)	Bear use; commercial fishing	Dispersed recreation; anchorage	No known minerals	Capable	Unknown
7C Hatchery harvest area (tidelands)	Commercial fishing	Dispersed recreation	No known minerals	--	--
7D Shoestring Cove (tidelands)	Estuary	Dispersed recreation; anchorage	No known minerals	--	--
7E Remainder of unit (tidelands)	Estuaries; bird rookery; herring spawning; otter concentrations; commercial fishing	Frequent use in Esther Passage; two USFS mooring buoys in Esther Passage	No known minerals	--	--

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.