

MANAGEMENT UNIT 2 – NELCHINA PUBLIC USE AREA

MANAGEMENT INTENT

This unit includes the majority of an area proposed by the plan for legislative designation as the "Nelchina Public Use Area." (Some of the area lies within portions of the Glenn Highway and Lake Louise subregions.) Legislation creating this public use area was introduced but not acted upon during the 1984 legislature. Revised legislation was reintroduced during the 1985 session. As this plan goes to press, the fate of the legislation is not known.

ADNR's overall management intent for this area is that it be retained in public ownership (disposals are prohibited) and be managed for three major purposes: to protect fish and wildlife resources, to provide opportunities for recreation, including hunting, fishing and other uses of fish and wildlife resources and to permit exploration and development of mineral resources. A cooperative management plan should be prepared by ADNR, ADF&G and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to work out the potential conflicts between these general management goals. All lands in this management unit are open to mineral location except for specified sheep mineral licks. These areas are open under leasehold location. More on this subject is presented in the subregion overview at the beginning of this subregion section. All public lands will be available for coal and oil and gas leasing.

This management unit has been divided into two subunits. Subunit 2a encompasses the majority of land in the unit; subunit 2b is located in the center of the unit and is the area where the majority of caribou calving occurs. Although the plan recommends that this entire management unit be legislatively designated, only the area where the majority of calving occurs (subunit 2b) is recommended for near-term designation. This is because the central portion is critical to the survival of the Nelchina herd and is more vulnerable to disruption. See the maps at the end of this section for boundaries of these areas and the accompanying chart for a summary of designated uses.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The complete set of areawide management guidelines is presented in Chapter 2 of this plan. All of the guidelines potentially apply to uses within this management unit; however, those that are most likely to be applicable are indicated with asterisks in the following list.

Agriculture
Fish & Wildlife
*Forestry
*Recreation
Settlement
*Subsurface
Transportation
Instream Flow
Lakeshore Management
Public Access
Remote Cabin Permits
*Stream Corridors
*Trail Management
Wetlands Management
Resource Management

Management guidelines that apply to this management unit only are presented below.

Subunit 2b (Caribou Calving Grounds)

Mining

This subunit is open to mineral entry and mineral leasing. Because this area is used on a regular basis for caribou calving, mining will be regulated through the application of the lease stipulations or miscellaneous land use permit guidelines below:

1. Exploration

- Exploration is prohibited in caribou calving areas during the period May 1 to June 15.
- Construction of improved roads will be discouraged until pre-production development necessitates such access. Roads constructed during exploration should be limited to winter roads.

2. Development

- In caribou calving areas, access to and from the mining site will be minimized during the period May 1 to June 15. Only traffic essential to the health, safety and maintenance of the staff will be permitted during that period. Transportation of ore and heavy equipment will be prohibited during this period unless approved by DNR in consultation with ADF&G.
- Pipelines, fences and other obstructions to caribou movement shall be designed in consultation with DNR and ADF&G so as not to impede caribou movement.
- Use of explosives shall be done so as to minimize

LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

SUBREGION Talkeetna MountainsMANAGEMENT UNIT 2 — Nelchina Public Use Area

SUBUNIT	LAND OWNERSHIP (GENERALIZED)	LAND USE DESIGNATIONS				PROHIBITED SURFACE USE(S)*	COMMENTS
		SURFACE		SUBSURFACE			
		PRIMARY USE(S)	SECONDARY USE(S)	LOCATABLE MINERALS	LEASEABLE MINERALS		
2a Nelchina Public Use Area except caribou calving grounds	State/ State Selected	Public Recreation Wildlife Habitat	Forestry	Open	Available for leasing	Grazing Land Disposals	Recommended for legislative designation as the Nelchina Public Use Area
2b Caribou Calving Grounds	State	Public Recreation Wildlife Habitat	—	Open	Available for leasing	Grazing Land Disposals	Recommended for legislative designation as the Nelchina Public Use Area

*Other uses such as material sales, land leases, remote cabin permits, etc., that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed. Such uses will be allowed if consistent with the management intent statement and management guidelines of this unit, and with the relevant management guidelines in other

impact on caribou.

- During the period May 1 to June 15, aircraft associated with mining operations shall maintain an altitude at least 1000' above the ground when weather conditions allow. Airstrips and appropriate landing patterns shall be established in consultation with DNR and ADF&G to minimize adverse effects on caribou.

The miscellaneous land use permits associated with existing state mining claims will be modified to include these same restrictions. The terms and plans of operation associated with the development of any leaseable mineral (e.g., coal) will be worked out with the consultation of ADF&G and be consistent with the land management objectives of this unit.

Subunits 2a & 2b (Caribou Range and Calving Grounds)

Settlement

No land sales are allowed within this management unit. Non-permanent workcamps are allowed within this area if necessary to support resource development. The location and design of any such workcamp would have to be determined after consultation with the Department of Fish and Game.

Road Construction

Construction of new roads will be allowed in this area only if required for resource development. Presently there are no firm plans for road construction within this unit. The only road that has been suggested is a road from the Glenn Highway into the Nelchina Mining District. This road, which was proposed by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and not by the planning team as a whole, would reduce the environmental impacts of people coming and going from this area by consolidating traffic to a single route. The road, if extended further north, also could be a means of linking the Glenn and Denali highways. Should a decision be reached to build this or other road or railroad projects they will be designed to minimize impacts on habitat and the following guidelines will apply:

- roads will be limited to narrow (< 20') gravel or dirt roads;
- road or railroad routes will be located to minimize the need to modify topography (cut/fill) wherever such routes would be consistent with other habitat protection objectives; and
- wherever economically feasible, alternatives to permanent road or rail construction should be pursued (e.g., winter roads, airstrips, etc.).

Management Planning and Remote Cabins

It is recommended that a management plan be prepared for this management unit. The management plan will determine, among other things, whether remote cabins will be permitted in this area. Remote cabin permits will not be offered until and unless areas open to remote cabins are designated by a management plan.

Grazing

Grazing will be prohibited in this area for at least 5 years following the adoption of this plan but will be reconsidered in the management plan done for the area. By that time, the success and problems of grazing in other parts of the planning area will be evaluated and a decision may be made to open all or part of this area. If the management unit is opened, grazing will be allowed as a secondary use subject to the areawide grazing guidelines presented in the Agriculture section of Chapter 2.