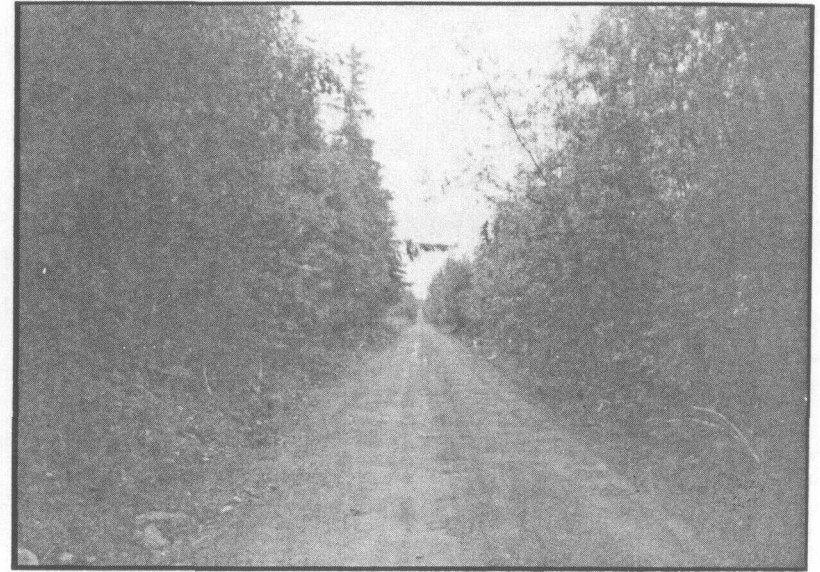


# Management Unit 28

---

## Moose Lake



*Dense stands of cottonwood, willow and spruce vegetation limits views beyond the road and the long straight alignments contribute to the relatively low scenic resource values typical of this management unit.*

### General Description

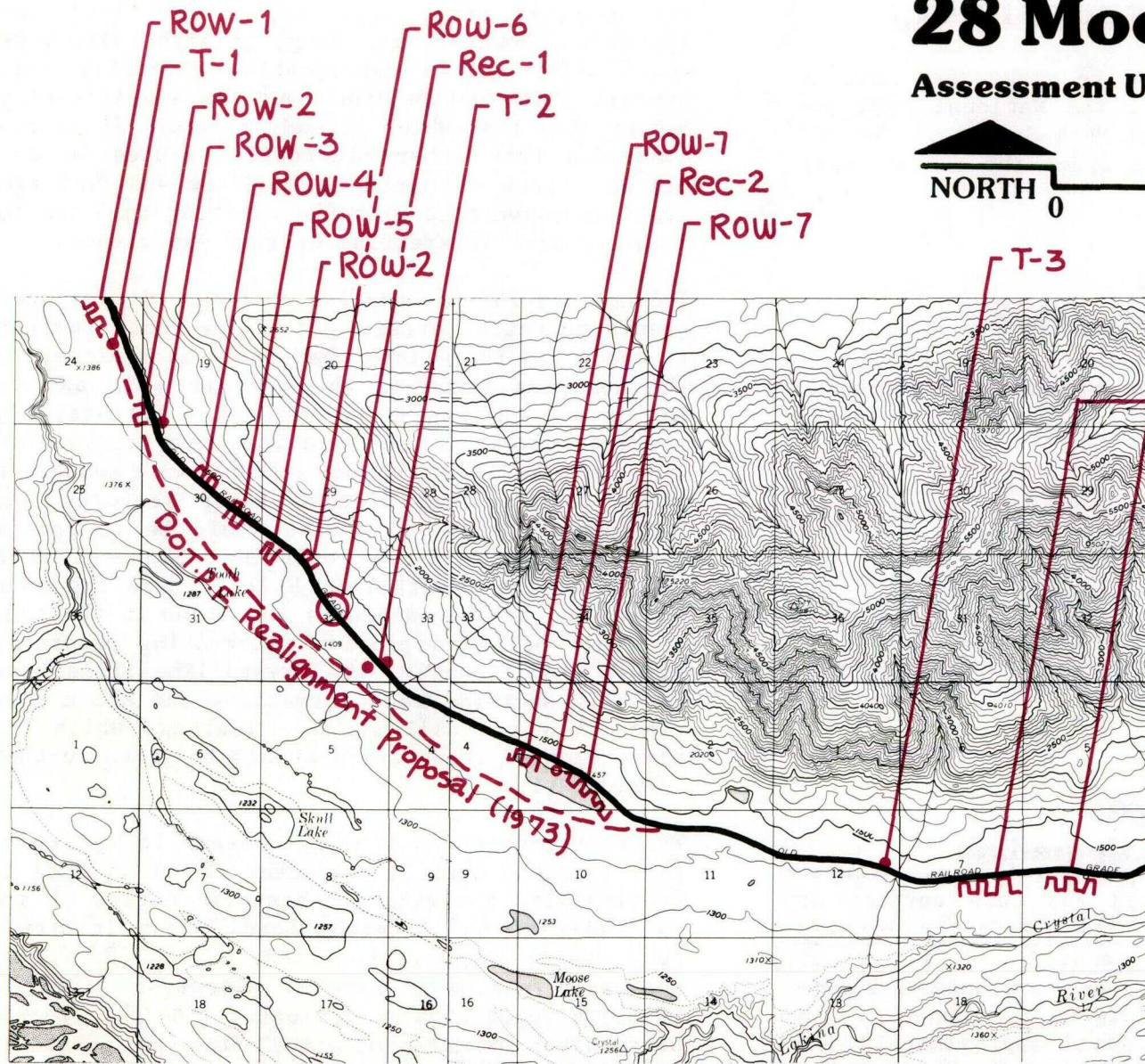
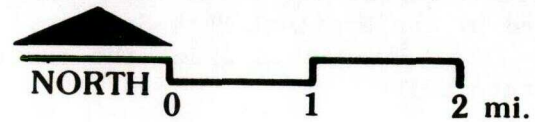
Management Unit 28 begins about one mile east of the Gilahina River crossing and ends just west of Ruth Lake. It is approximately 11 miles long. The only notable landscape feature near the road within this entire unit is Moose Lake. The road follows the former railroad alignment along a terrace near the Crystalline Hills which are located immediately to the north. Vegetation is predominantly high brush, spruce bog, and cottonwood dominated spruce/hardwood forest. Topography is, for the most part, level. No development or use is evident other than a few small

material sites, intermittent roadside camping at Moose Lake, and one small railroad building which appears to be in the process of being moved.

The general feeling is one of enclosure with few distant views, and of monotony due to the minimal change in landcover and the absence of views to water features, near and distant mountains and other desirable elements. As a consequence, scenic resource values are the lowest here for the entire McCarthy Road.

# 28 Moose Lake

Assessment Units M15 - M19



### KEY

- ROW - Right of Way Mgt.
- T - Turnout
- Rec - Recreation
- Federal Land

---

## **Land Ownership & Management Responsibility**

Roadside land for this entire management unit is within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park administered by the National Park Service. The 200 foot wide right-of-way is under the jurisdiction of the State DOTPF.

## **Visual Resource Management Objectives**

Visual resource management objectives recommended for this unit relate to the theme of enhancement.

Enhancement: To take advantage of opportunities to enhance the viewing and driving experience within this management unit. This can be accomplished in two ways. First, by altering the road right-of-way and in some cases the lands and vegetation beyond it, greater visual variety may be introduced. Second, by changing the location of this portion of the road, the traveler could be taken through a visually more diverse landscape that offers greater variation in viewer position and increased awareness of near and distant landscape features.

## **Management Recommendations**

### **Road Realignment & Upgrading**

Realignments were proposed for this portion of the road in the 1973 Chitina-McCarthy Highway Environmental Impact Statement to avoid some of the areas suffering from poor drainage and mudflows and to create straighter alignments. A major realignment is proposed approximately 1/2 mile south of the existing road passing on the

south side of Moose Lake over a small hill. Such a route could offer better views of Moose Lake and possibly other near and distant landscape features. However, its long, straight alignment would offer little experiential diversity and, overall this routing would not be significantly better than that which already exists. It is recommended that other alternative routes be explored - both to avoid the mudflow and drainage problems associated with the existing road and to create a more interesting driving experience.

Two options for alternative routings with greater scenic potential exist. First, a route further to the south could take the viewer much closer to the numerous lakes in the area as well as the Lakina and Chitina River valleys. If carefully sited on higher moraines, a road here could provide a visually rich experience with numerous views to near and distant water features and landforms. A second option would be to locate the road north of the existing alignment much closer to the Crystalline Hills. Here the road could wind around landforms and climb to the tops of small hills to provide interesting panoramic views. Additionally, the Crystalline Hills have visually striking rock formations and are a good place to watch Dall sheep. Routings which explore each of these areas should be given further consideration.

Whatever routing is finally chosen, it is important that the overall character of the road be in keeping with the wild and historic nature of the remainder of the McCarthy Road. Thus it should be a gravel and dirt surfaced, narrow (20 feet), seasonal road with careful attention given to roadside vegetation management. (See the general discussion for the McCarthy Wild and Historic Road on road design and upgrading.)

## **Land Use & Development**

Since this management unit is apparently entirely within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, land use and development should not be a significant issue. Dispersed recreational use would be compatible with the scenic resource management goals and objectives recommended in this report. Since particularly attractive recreational amenities are uncommon along this portion of the road, it is recommended that the National Park Service play an active role in identifying alternative routings which augment desirable recreational opportunities for visitors and are compatible with the overall park use plan.

## **Greenbelts**

Specific greenbelt management strip recommendations are not made for this unit because the lands beyond the right-of-way are under management by the National Park Service. It is assumed that NPS management activities would be compatible with the scenic resource management goals and objectives identified here. It is recommended that the NPS work closely with the State DOTPF so that the road right-of-way and adjacent lands are both managed in a fashion which is responsive to each agency's responsibilities and sensitive to the overall character of the road. This is one of the few areas where scenic resource management recommendations can most readily be implemented, since only two public agencies would be involved.

## **Right-of-Way Management (ROW)**

Road alignment and right-of-way management offer the most significant opportunities for enhancing



*Natural and manmade clearings can open up views to the nearby Crystalline Hills shown here. These low mountains have visually distinctive rock formations and colors and are good places to view mountain sheep.*

the driving experience within this management unit. Two responses are possible. First, if a new alignment is identified and constructed, it would be essential that the right-of-way management be sensitive to the site specific opportunities of this route. A right-of-way management plan should be developed along with the road construction plans so construction activity minimizes the impacts on the land beyond the road and clearings, staging areas and material sites are located to open up views or provide turnouts or recreation use facilities. Also, such a plan should outline general right-of-way management guidelines for post-road construction.

The second type of response relates to the situation where the existing alignment is retained. In this case, a concerted effort needs to be directed at making this stretch of road visually and spatially more interesting. It would require carefully executed management of the roadside vegetation, consistently performed over a number of years. The following site specific recommendations outline ways to improve the existing alignment. The general discussion on right-of-way management for the entire McCarthy Wild and Historic Road outlines additional recommendations and guidelines which are of particular interest to this unit in order to respond to the "enhancement" management objective.

- Row-1 Filtered views towards the Chitina River valley could be improved with careful right-of-way clearing.
- Row-2 Clearing right-of-way shrub and tree vegetation could open up views towards the Chugach Mountains and Rock Lake and across the Chitina River valley.
- Row-3 Remove roadside willows to open up better views to the Crystalline Hills. Retain black spruce and other plants characteristic of the adjacent bog to create a roadside edge which blends in better with the adjacent lands.
- Row-4 Right-of-way clearing could open up lateral views towards the nearby Crystalline Hills for east-bound travellers.
- Row-5 The opportunity exists here to open up views on both sides of the road through vegetation management. This area is too wet for any turnout development to take advantage of these views.
- Row-6 Existing brush clearing has resulted in good lateral views towards the Crystalline Hills. While this is a good example of using right-of-way management to open up views, the uniform cutting height and highly visible slash which remains has resulted in negative visual impacts.

Row-7 Although the road passes close to Moose Lake no views of it are possible. Selective right-of-way and lakeside clearing and thinning could create filtered as well as open views to the lake. This should be considered a priority since this lake is one of the only strong visual amenities close to the road within this management unit.

Row-8 Clearing poplar and willow roadside vegetation could open up views across the valley towards the Chugach Mountains as well as some very nice views towards the Wrangell Mountains southeast of McCarthy.

## **Road Related Recreational Facilities**

Recreational amenities are few within this management unit and much more desirable locations for both day use and overnight use have been identified in management units to the east and west. Road related recreational facilities (Rec) identified here are an overflow camping area within an old material site, day use facilities near Moose Lake, and three turnouts (T) which provide opportunities for scenic views. Additional turnout-turn around sites need to be identified so they are spaced at approximately every mile to meet traveler needs.

Rec-1 These two existing material sites are immediately adjacent to the road and are separated by a seasonal creek which opens up nice views to the nearby Crystalline Hills. These sites could use some regrading and revegetation to better screen them from the road and to function as small, undeveloped, overnight camping areas. Both sites could be developed, each one oriented to travelers going in a particular direction. These sites should also be used to meet traveler turnout-turn around needs.

Rec-2 This small clearing adjacent to the road is used for parking and access to Moose Lake. Considerable selective vegetation clearing is needed to

provide better visual access to the lake and invite more day use. Because of its proximity to the road, overnight use should not be encouraged. Intensive development is not recommended because of generally boggy soil conditions and lake banks which make access to the water difficult. If the road alignment remains unchanged, the Moose Lake area should be more carefully evaluated with respect to its recreational potential since it is the only potential activity node between the Gilahina and Lakina rivers.

- T-1 This area where the road has been widened could be converted into a turn around-turnout. Some foreground vegetation management could open up views towards the Chugach Mountains and Rock Lake.
- T-2 A small (2 car) turnout is recommended at this site. There are potentially good lateral views towards the Crystalline Hills as well as the opportunity for viewing Dall sheep. Debris in the creek needs to be cleaned up. Turnouts should be provided on both sides of the road (though staggered) since there also exists opportunities for views to the Chugach Mountains for travelers heading west.
- T-3 This is a recommended turnout with views towards the Crystalline Hills and some interesting rock features. For travelers heading west this is a "new" view of these hills and, therefore, of particular visual interest.



*Moose Lake, seen here from the road, is the only significant water feature readily accessible from the road within this management unit. The boggy terrain and dense vegetation make recreational use difficult.*