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1 Chapter 1

2 Introduction & Background

3 Summary of Purpose

4
5 The Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan describes how the Alaska
6 Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) will manage state land and water along six rivers
7 including: the Little Susitna River, Deshka River, Talkeetna River, Lake Creek, Talachulitna
8 River, and Alexander Creek. The plan determines how these six rivers will be managed over
9 the long-term including providing management intent for each river segment, regulations for
10 recreation and commercial use, and guidelines for leases and permits on state land.

11 12 13 How to Use This Plan

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15 Although this plan is lengthy, it is organized for ease of use. The plan has two main sections:

16
17 **Chapter 2** includes land management policies that apply throughout the Recreation Rivers. It
18 is organized by types of land uses or resources, such as fish and wildlife, recreation, and
19 commercial use.

20
21 **Chapter 3** describes the management intent for each of the 31 subunits in the planning area.
22 It is organized by river. Chapter 4 describes recommendations that will assist plan
23 implementation.

24 25 26 Examples of How to Use the Plan are Shown Below

27
28 If you want to know how the plan affects a particular **land use or resource** – for example,
29 recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, or commercial use – turn to **Chapter 2** for general
30 policies that apply to the entire planning area.

31
32 For example, under *Commercial Use*, policies are described for commercial use permits,
33 commercial camps, and lodges.

34
35 If you want to know how the plan affects a particular **place** – for example, the lower Deshka
36 River – turn to **Chapter 3**.

37
38 The planning area is divided into six management units reflecting the six Recreation Rivers.
39 To find the map on which the lower Deshka River is shown, look at the index map at the
40 beginning of the chapter. This map shows the page numbers where maps of each river section

1 can be found. To find the text describing this area, see the chapter divider at the beginning of
2 Chapter 3 for an index to the subunit page numbers.

5 **How This Document is Organized**

7 **Chapter 1** describes why this plan was developed, the planning area, the purpose of the plan,
8 and the process used to develop the plan. It includes a summary of how the plan will be
9 implemented and the process for modifying the plan after it is adopted.

11 **Chapter 2** presents policies that guide state land management throughout the planning area.
12 These policies are consistent with the Recreation Rivers Act. Because this plan was
13 developed under the legislation, and because it is based on more detailed information and
14 public comments on the area, the guidance in this plan relating to the river corridors
15 supersedes and amends the two area plans that surround the Recreation Rivers: the 2008
16 Southeast Susitna Area Plan (SSAP) and the 2011 Susitna Matanuska Area Plan (SMAP).

18 **Chapter 3** contains detailed descriptions of the plan’s land and water use decisions. The
19 Recreation Rivers are divided into six management units and 31 subunits. Each subunit
20 contains background information, a statement of management intent, guidelines and proposed
21 regulations specific to the subunit, and a list of public use sites.

23 **Chapter 4** discusses specific actions needed to implement the plan: funding, field staff,
24 research, enforcement authority, proposed additions to the Recreation Rivers, procedures for
25 plan modification, mineral orders, classifications, recommendations to other agencies and
26 recommended legislative actions.

28 **Appendices**

30 Appendix A is a glossary of terms used in the plan.

32 Appendix B includes a copy of the Recreation Rivers Act.

34 Appendix C includes a list of regulations necessary to implement the plan.

Location Map

MAP 1.1



Management Units

- 1. Little Susitna River
- 2. Deshka River (Kroto Creek / Moose Creek)
- 3. Talkeetna River
- 4. Lake Creek
- 5. Talachulitna River
- 6. Alexander Creek



1 **Description of the Planning Area**

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The planning area lies entirely within the Susitna Basin and includes mile-wide corridors along the six rivers. The Recreation Rivers include about 460 miles of river and many lakes including Chelatna, Alexander, and Judd lakes. The total area is about 261,000 acres. Land ownership is as follows:

State Owned	241,000 acres
Borough Owned	16,300 acres
Private	3,400 acres

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The water column and land under rivers and lakes are entirely state-owned. Approximately 430 private parcels of land are scattered throughout the corridors. Uses of state land in the planning area are administered by the Department of Natural Resources. Uses of borough land in the planning area are administered by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

15 **Why This Plan Was Developed**

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The Concern

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Much has changed since the original Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan was adopted in 1991. The original planning effort sought to mitigate the effects of increasing use within the corridors. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game had estimated that the sport fishing effort on these six rivers increased over 300 percent between 1977 and 1988 due to an increase in the state population, a booming tourist economy in the area, and additional road and boat access along the Susitna and Little Susitna Rivers. The 1991 plan helped to mitigate negative effects such as accumulations of litter and human waste, crowding at fishing holes, the establishment of long-term camps in popular areas where space is limited, and conflicts between users. Visitor use projections indicated that these trends would continue well into the 1990’s. However, fisheries have declined, and with them many of the recreational uses that occurred within the corridors have also reduced. Although many uses have experienced declines, an upward trend in use is still happening for some activities, such as use in the winter months. With more than 30 years since the original plan was completed, an update to this plan is necessary.

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The Mandate

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The six rivers’ high public values and need for active management have long been recognized. In 1985, the Susitna Area Plan recommended legislative designation for five of the rivers, because of their high public values. During the following sessions, the legislature considered this recommendation and added the Little Susitna River to the proposal.

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In Spring 1988, the legislature passed the Recreation Rivers Act and assigned management to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The Act directed the department to prepare a

1 management plan to include long-range guidelines and management practices consistent with
2 the Act. The Act directed the department to submit the plan to the legislature for review. The
3 legislature completed its review and the commissioner adopted the original plan as
4 department policy in spring, 1991.

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7 **How This Plan Was Developed**

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9 The plan is the product of over two years of work by the state, the borough, the Recreation
10 Rivers Advisory Board, and the public.

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12 The planning process reviewed resource information and public concerns before making
13 long-range land and water use decisions. The process is a way to resolve differences among
14 possible uses. Through planning, people who use the area helped choose how the Recreation
15 Rivers will be managed. The planning process also informs the public of what choices are
16 made and why.

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18 Public scoping meetings were held in Talkeetna, Wasilla, Anchorage, and virtually. The
19 Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Advisory Board held regularly scheduled meetings, one
20 special meeting, and four board workshops from 2021 to 2023.

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23 **The Recreation Rivers Planning Process**

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25 **Step 1 - Issues** are identified through public meetings to learn about interests and
26 problems in the planning area.

27 **Step 2 - Information** is collected on natural resources, present land and water use,
28 land ownership, public use, and important public use sites.

29 **Step 3 - Land Use Alternatives** are prepared and evaluated.

30 **Step 4 - Draft Plan** is prepared and reviewed by the Recreation Rivers planning team
31 and advisory board.

32 **Step 5 - Public Review Draft** is reviewed by the public.

33 **Step 6 - Final Plan** is prepared.

34 **Step 7 - Plan is Approved** by the Commissioner.

35 **Step 8 - Legislature Reviews Plan.**

36 **Step 9 - Adopt and Implement Plan.**
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1 **What This Plan Covers & Does Not Cover**

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3 The authority of the plan only applies to the state land and water established as a Recreation
4 River by the Recreation Rivers Act. The plan does not apply to federal, borough, university,
5 or private land. ADNR management decisions for authorizations, such as permits, leases, and
6 cooperative agreements, in the Recreation Rivers will follow the plan. This plan amends and
7 supersedes the 2008 Southeast Susitna Area Plan and the 2011 Susitna Matanuska Area Plan,
8 where these plans overlap with the Recreation Rivers described under AS 41.22.500. Private
9 landowners in the planning area may choose to use this plan as a guide for managing their
10 lands.

11
12 Although the plan addresses fish and wildlife habitat issues, it does not cover fish and
13 wildlife harvest regulations. Under AS 41.23.420 the plan cannot affect the authority of
14 ADF&G, ADEC, other agencies, municipalities, the Board of Fisheries, the Board of Game,
15 or the Guide Licensing Board. ADF&G, the Board of Fisheries, and the Board of Game
16 manage use of fish and wildlife resources. Needs for cooperative fish and wildlife resource
17 planning, monitoring, and research are addressed in Chapter 4.
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