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2. Deshka River Management Unit

2a. Mouth of the Deshka Subunit 3 - 40
2b. Lower Deshka River Subunit..... 3 - 44
2c. Middle Deshka River Subunit..... 3 - 46
2d. Neil Lake Subunit 3 - 48
2e. The Forks Subunit 3 - 50
2f. Kroto Creek Subunit..... 3 - 52
2g. Lower Moose Creek Subunit 3 - 55
2h. Oilwell Subunit 3 - 57
2i. Upper Moose Creek Subunit..... 3 - 59

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2

1
2 **2. Deshka River Management Unit**

3
4 **Background**

5
6 **Miles of River**

7
8 This unit includes over 140 river miles including the Deshka River³ from its confluence with
9 Susitna River (RM 0.0) to (RM 82.4) and 59 miles of Kroto Creek above the Forks.

10
11 **Land Ownership**

12

State	61,233 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	11,536 acres
Private & Other	1,858 acres
Total	74,627 acres

13
14 **River Characteristics**

15
16 The Deshka River meanders with mid-channel bars and riffles throughout. Channel width
17 varies along the river. Near the mouth the normal channel width is about 300 feet, in
18 Subunits 2b and 2c it is 100 feet, in Subunits 2d and 2e it is 50 feet, and upstream of the forks
19 it is 30 feet. The average stream flow near the mouth is 873 cubic feet per second. Winter
20 low flows are 200 to 300 cfs. Peak summer flows are 800 to 2800 cfs. The average depth is 2
21 to 8 feet. The width of the 100-year floodplain at the mouth of the Deshka River is
22 approximately 1.5 miles, primarily to the east side of the river, meeting the floodplain of the
23 Susitna River. The banks at the mouth of the Deshka River have experienced an increase in
24 levels of erosion in recent years. Over half of this corridor is wetlands. Wetlands are
25 particularly extensive near the Moose-Kroto creek confluence. The terrain in the remainder
26 of the corridor is rolling to flat with moderately dense tree cover.

27
28 The Deshka River has experienced a trend of warming summer temperatures in recent years.
29 These temperature increases have been shown to stress and may lead to population declines
30 in cold-water fishes, including salmonids. Airborne thermal image surveys of the Deshka
31 River have located patches of cold water (cold-water refuges) that provide localized relief
32 from warming water and contribute to an overall cooling gradient of the river’s main
33 channel. The reliable presence of these cold-water refugia will be important to the persistence
34 of salmonids and other fish species as the trend of warming summer temperature increases
35 into the future.

36

³ The term *Deshka River* as used in this plan to refer to Unit 2 includes both Moose Creek and Kroto Creek from the Susitna River to their headwaters. *Deshka River* is also used more specifically to include the river below the confluence of Kroto and Moose Creeks. Above the confluence of Moose and Kroto creeks, these creeks are called by their respective names.

1 Because the view from the river is generally confined to the riverbanks, the visual quality
2 along the Deshka River is moderate. However, in open areas, there are panoramic views of
3 the Alaska Range, Denali, and the Talkeetna Mountains. The river is a dark color from
4 tannins in the water. There are numerous camps, buildings, and docks along the river
5 particularly near the mouth.

6
7 **Fisheries**

8
9 *Species Present*

10
11
12 Arctic grayling Pink salmon
13 Arctic lamprey Rainbow trout
14 Chinook salmon Slimy sculpin
15 Coho salmon Sockeye salmon
16 Humpback whitefish Threespine stickleback
17 Longnose sucker

18
19 Chinook salmon are found from the mouth of the Deshka to the upper reaches of Moose and
20 Kroto creeks. They spawn in the river beginning at approximately RM 5. A small number of
21 sockeye salmon are found at the headwaters of Kroto Creek and near the upper limit of
22 Moose Creek. Coho and pink salmon spawn nearly to the upper boundary of the Moose and
23 Kroto creek subunits. Arctic grayling and rainbow trout are present throughout the
24 management unit.

25
26 *Sport Fishing*

27
28 The level of sport fishing on the Deshka River is second only to the Little Susitna River in
29 the planning area. Peaks in recreation and fishing activities on the Deshka River correspond
30 with the Chinook and coho salmon runs; approximately May 29 to July 4 and July 15 to
31 September 5. Many people fish for rainbow trout and Arctic grayling in late May as the pink
32 salmon smolt out the lower river and throughout the summer to early fall. The most popular
33 fishing areas are the mouth of the Deshka and lower 10 miles of river, the Forks, and the
34 mouths of Trapper and No Name creeks.

35
36 *Special Regulations*

37
38 Moose and Kroto creeks have been designated by ADF&G as catch and release special
39 management waters for rainbow trout.

40
41 **Wildlife**

42
43 *Moose*

44
45 Moose and Kroto creeks have high moose densities in the winter. Riparian habitat is critical
46 for the winter survival of moose. Riparian willow stands provide a large portion of the winter

1 forage. The river provides established travel corridors which are enhanced by upland
2 coniferous forests that provide thermal cover and shallower snow depths. Radio telemetry
3 studies conducted by ADF&G indicate high concentrations of moose occur in and along the
4 corridor during late fall and winter seasons.

5
6 *Bear*

7
8 On the Deshka River, brown bear and black bear are equally common and are important for
9 hunting and wildlife viewing. This river is one of the more important spring black bear
10 harvest areas in Game Management Unit 16A. Black bear frequent the lowlands and river
11 flats in early May. During summer, forested, riparian habitats provide food and cover. During
12 June and July, salmon provide a significant portion of the bears' diet. Travel corridors along
13 the river are important components of brown bear habitat. Both species of bear target moose
14 calves as prey in May and early June.

15
16 *Bald Eagles*

17
18 Bald eagle nests have been identified within or immediately adjacent to several of the
19 subunits within the management unit. Nest trees are primarily black cottonwood, always over
20 50 feet tall, and usually within 20 feet of the river.

21
22 *Trumpeter Swans*

23
24 Trumpeter swans were documented throughout the river corridor in recent USFWS surveys.

25
26 *Hunting*

27
28 Moose and bear are important for hunting and viewing. Hunting of moose and bear is
29 concentrated in the road-accessible areas along the Petersville and Oilwell roads. Hunters
30 access the mouth of the Deshka River and Moose Creek downstream of the Oilwell Road by
31 boat. Airplanes and off-road vehicles are also used for hunting. This management unit
32 receives some of the highest hunting use of all the Recreation Rivers because of its proximity
33 to population centers, relative ease of access, and large moose population.

34
35 *Trapping*

36
37 Recreational trapping for otter, muskrat, mink, beaver, fox, coyote, marten, and wolf occurs
38 in the corridor during spring and winter seasons.

39
40 **Access**

41
42 Moose and Kroto creeks are accessible by automobile from the Petersville and Oilwell roads.
43 Foot and off-road vehicle trails along the river and seismic lines also are common.
44 Powerboats generally access the lower river from the Deshka or Susitna landings. With
45 adequate flows, they can travel up to the confluence of Moose and Kroto creeks. Travel by

1 powerboat is low above the confluence. Float trips originate from several locations on the
2 upper river. Floatplanes land on the Susitna River, the lower Deshka River, and several other
3 places along the corridor. Airplanes use several strips located along the lower river. The
4 Deshka River is used extensively for winter travel by private property owners and other
5 recreationists. Snowmachines are the primary method of transportation, but dog mushing is
6 also common.

9 **Management Guidelines for the Unit**

11 **Boating Restrictions**

1. *Voluntary no-wake area* Confluence with Susitna River (RM 0.0) to the island.

Season: May 15 - August 20.

Justification: This is a highly congested area with high boat traffic, boats anchored in midstream, and high floatplane traffic. A no-wake area reduces safety hazards.

2. *Non-motorized area* From just above the forks (RM 29.7) to: just below Oilwell Road on Moose Creek (RM 54.2), and to just below Amber Lake Creek on Kroto Creek (RM 19.1).

Season: May 15 - August 20.

Justification: The non-motorized areas on Moose and Kroto creeks provide high quality float trips. Because of numerous riffles and shallows on both creeks, powerboat use is low. There is no private property in the corridor in these two river segments.

15 **2a. Mouth of Deshka River Subunit**

17 **Background**

19 Miles of River/River Characteristics, Susitna River Confluence (RM 0.0) to RM 1.9

21 This subunit extends from above the confluence of the Deshka and Susitna rivers to 0.5 miles
22 above the ADF&G camp.

24 Contiguous wetlands comprise ninety percent of the area along the river between RM 0 and
25 RM 1. Most of the dry terrain is in private ownership. From RM 1 to RM 1.9, wetlands occur
26 in the areas between river channels.

1 **Land Ownership**

2

State	1,370 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	877 acres
Private & Other	65 acres
Total	2,312 acres

3

4 Several parcels of private land are located along the west bank of the river near the mouth.
 5 There is also private land on the east bank, including the land on which a private lodge is
 6 located. An ADF&G cabin is authorized by an Interim Land Management Agreement with
 7 ADNR. The Alaska Wildlife Troopers also have a cabin within the corridor that is authorized
 8 by permit. Both cabins are surrounded by state land.

9

10 **Fisheries**

11

12 During peak season, the mouth of the Deshka River can receive as much as 80 percent of the
 13 daily fishing use for the entire Deshka River.

14

15 **Wildlife**

16

17 Several unoccupied bald eagle nests have been located within the subunit, although occupied
 18 nests have not been sighted in recent surveys. Active trumpeter swan nests have not been
 19 sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

20

21 **Camping**

22

23 The borough maintains a campground at the mouth and issues permits to camp on its land.

24

25 **Development**

26

27 *Upland Structures and Improvements*

28

29 There is extensive development in this subunit. Most private parcels have some level of
 30 development including commercial lodges and private cabins. The ADF&G and Alaska
 31 Wildlife Troopers each have cabins.

32

33 Temporary camps are established in May as soon as ice leaves the river. These camps remain
 34 through the summer and many improvements are left through the winter. There are also a
 35 number of camps established for just one to three nights peaks during Chinook salmon
 36 season. These camps are often located away from the river in less desirable places because of
 37 the lack of space on the shoreline. The same areas used for camps are used for boat and
 38 equipment storage. Many river users are flown to the mouth of the Deshka, or charter larger
 39 boats to access the area and use smaller boats stored in the subunit to travel along the river.
 40 Some of the abandoned and stored debris is washed away by spring flooding, however, much
 41 still remains and abandoned boats and camps have accumulated over the years. The borough

1 established a campground in 1990 and requires a permit for camping in the remainder of the
2 area. This has altered the use patterns and largely eliminated the practice of abandoning
3 camps and equipment on public lands.
4

5 *Water-Dependent Structures*

6
7 Several docks are associated with cabins and lodges in this subunit. Many of the cabins and
8 lodges have small shelters or storage areas adjacent to the river for equipment and gasoline.
9 There are also some access stairways, particularly along the steep west banks of the river.
10

11 **Access**

12
13 Foot and off-road vehicle trails have been established in the subunit. Most are associated
14 with structures on private land or the campsites along the east bank of the Deshka River.
15 Access to the area is by airplane or boat. The mouth of the river is used as a pick-up point for
16 float trips and by fishermen. Most powerboats that use the river are launched from the
17 Deshka Landing. The most congested section of the Deshka River for boats is below RM 0.4
18 which offers the best fishing opportunities.
19

20 Floatplanes and wheelplanes land near the mouth of the river. There is a public airstrip on
21 state land near the confluence with the Susitna River. Floatplanes also frequently land on the
22 Susitna and Deshka rivers. There are also primitive landing areas on gravel bars.
23

24 **Heritage Resources**

25
26 There is a high probability of locating additional heritage resources sites in the subunit.
27 Known sites are on private land.
28

29 **Other Activities**

30
31 Small-scale timber cutting occurs for firewood and houselogs. There is also extensive wood
32 gathering by campers.
33
34

35 **Management Intent**

36
37 **Class III.** This subunit is notable for its high concentration of anglers in a relatively small
38 area during the Chinook and coho salmon runs. The subunit features high quality fishing and
39 camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank users in an accessible moderately
40 developed area. Lodges and residences are located on either side of the river. With good
41 wheel and floatplane access, this subunit receives more air traffic than any other area in the
42 Recreation Rivers. Winter use is by snowmachiners, skiers, and dog mushers. The subunit
43 will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife
44 habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Management presence is
45 expected to be high. Managing for concentrated public and commercial use will be the focus

1 of management activities. Proposed actions include providing public facilities such as a
2 campground and privies to minimize unsanitary conditions, reducing damage to natural
3 resources from over-use, and preventing unauthorized use of public lands. Because of the
4 concentration of use, public education through signs and a visitor contact station is
5 recommended. There is a voluntary no-wake area at the mouth to protect public safety during
6 the fishing season. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. Because of the
7 proximity of state and borough lands and intense public use, cooperative management or
8 conveyance of part of this area to the borough should be considered.

11 Management Guidelines

12
13 **No-Wake Area.** See management guidelines for the Deshka River Management Units in this
14 chapter.

15
16 **Commercial Camps.** Commercial camps are prohibited on state land in this subunit.
17 Borough use of this land for a visitor contact station, public campground, or other public
18 facility may be authorized by permit or lease.

19
20 **Camping Limits.** If borough camping policies result in trespass, sanitation problems,
21 overcrowding, threats to public safety, or resource damage on state lands ADNR should work
22 with the borough to address these problems. Limits in addition to the four-day camping limit
23 on state land may be considered. If needed, these limits may be established by regulation,
24 designating the area a *Special Use Area* under 11 AAC 96.010; or under the closures and
25 use-management provisions described under *Recreation* in Chapter 2.

26
27 **Floatplane Landing Area.** The lower Deshka is an extremely popular fishing, boating, and
28 recreation area. Public access is by float plane and powerboat. Because of the high density of
29 floatplanes and boats on the river, ADNR should consider establishing a floatplane landing
30 area during the peak season, when boat and plane traffic is heaviest. DMLW, DGGS, the
31 borough, FAA and the public should be involved in the process of evaluating boat and plane
32 use patterns, airspace, hydrology, and other variables. If the initial evaluation demonstrates
33 that a designated landing area is feasible and prudent, a landing area should be designed.
34 ADNR should then implement needed regulations, establish signs or buoys, and notify FAA
35 and the public of the designated landing area.

36
37 **Wheelplane Landing Strips.** A public airstrip owned by ADNR exists on the west side of
38 the river and provides access to the area. Another airstrip exists on lands owned by the
39 Matanuska-Susitna Borough and is used to access a lodge in this subunit.

40
41 **Consistent Management of the Mouth Area.** One of the goals of the plan is to provide
42 consistent management of lands within the planning area. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is
43 the major landowner at the mouth of the Deshka River and developed the Deshka River
44 Recreation River Management Plan for their lands. The borough also had a land-use permit
45 in 1990 and 1991 to use state lands at the mouth. If the borough agrees to manage state land

1 in Section 35 consistent with the general management intent for the mouth of the Deshka
2 Subunit and it is consistent with AS 41.23.400 - 510, ADNR may consider conveyance or
3 leasing the parcel under AS 38.05.810, or entering into a management agreement. Lands that
4 may be addressed by conveyance or lease are in Section 35, T19N, R6W, and include the two
5 vegetated point bars east of the mouth of the Deshka River and northwest of the main
6 channel of the Susitna River. A plan amendment is not required to convey, lease or reclassify
7 this parcel as long as it is consistent with this intent.

8
9 **Alaska Department of Fish and Game Site.** ADF&G manages a site near RM 2 under an
10 Interagency Land Management Agreement (ILMA) with ADNR. The site will be managed
11 consistent with the ILMA. ADF&G and the Alaska Wildlife Troopers currently have cabins
12 on the site. With concurrence from ADF&G, additional cabins for ADNR field staff and
13 equipment may be constructed near the ADF&G camp. Since well-drained uplands adjacent
14 to the river in state ownership are limited within this subunit, these lands should be retained
15 in state ownership. See guidelines for *Resource Management Camps* in Chapter 2.

16
17 **Heritage Resources.** Historic and prehistoric sites near the mouth should be evaluated for
18 their interpretive values for tourism and general public interest. Since most of these sites are
19 located on private land, this will require the cooperation of property owners.

20
21 **Public Information.** An informational sign exists on land owned by the Matanuska-Susitna
22 Borough at the mouth of the Deshka River identifying the boundary of the Recreation River.

23
24 **Weapons.** Between June 15 and August 31, discharge of weapons is prohibited within one-
25 quarter mile of the river on state land and water between the mouth of the Deshka River and
26 the ADF&G camp. See *Recreation, Use of Weapons* in Chapter 2.

27
28 **Public Use Sites.** Unlike other subunits where public use sites were identified, this entire
29 subunit receives high public use and will be managed as important for access, fishing,
30 camping, or other recreation and public use.

31 32 33 **2b. Lower Deshka River Subunit**

34 35 **Background**

36
37 River Miles/River Characteristics, RM 1.9 to RM 6.8

38
39 This subunit extends from the ADF&G cabin to the Laub Homestead. The immediate upland
40 terrain is flat to rolling with occasional 30 to 50 foot cutbanks. The river contains numerous
41 channels and islands. The channel is 100 to 200 feet wide. The water is usually brown and
42 relatively slow moving. Less than 25 percent of the subunit is contiguous wetlands. All
43 wetlands are located on the east side of the river.

1 **Land Ownership**

2

State	504 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	2,219 acres
Private & Other	231 acres
Total	2,954 acres

3

4 **Fisheries**

5

6 This segment contains at least two popular fishing areas, although visitor use here is lower
7 than at the mouth of the river. The ADF&G data suggests 9 to 20 percent of the total Deshka
8 River use occurs within this subunit.

9

10 **Wildlife**

11

12 Active bald eagle nests and trumpeter swans have not been sighted in recent surveys of this
13 subunit.

14

15 **Camping**

16

17 Camping is concentrated between RM 2 and RM 5, particularly near the Silver Hole public
18 use site.

19

20 **Development**

21

22 There are several private cabins located in the subunit. A large homestead has been used in
23 the past for commercial recreation.

24

25 **Access**

26

27 One seismic line near the homestead is used for year-round access by off-road-vehicles.
28 There are two private airstrips. Considerable powerboat traffic travels through this reach
29 enroute to various fishing areas. Navigability is marginal at about RM 5.5 at low water
30 levels.

31

32 **Heritage Resources**

33

34 The heritage site potential in this subunit is high, primarily due to the high number of house
35 pits in the area. Most of the known sites are on private land.

36

37

38 **Management Intent**

39

40 **Class II.** This subunit receives high public use because of its proximity to the mouth of the
41 Deshka River, and the opportunities it provides for a variety of recreation uses. This subunit

1 features fishing, camping, powerboating, and floating opportunities in a moderately
2 accessible natural setting. In winter the subunit is used by snowmachiners, dog mushers and
3 skiers. The area contains salmon spawning and moose wintering habitat. Private lands are
4 located along the river in the northern half of the subunit. The subunit will be managed to
5 provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while
6 accommodating uses associated with private lands. A limited number of commercial camps
7 may be authorized. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. There are no
8 nonmotorized areas in this subunit. Warning signs may be placed at the Silver Hole
9 (PU 2b.1) to warn boaters to reduce speed when anglers are present.

12 Management Guidelines

14 **Boating Restrictions.** None

16 **Commercial Camps.** A maximum of two commercial camps may be authorized in this
17 subunit. Commercial camps will not be authorized in public use sites.

19 **Camping Limits.** If borough camping policies result in trespass, sanitation problems,
20 overcrowding, threats to public safety, or resource damage on state lands, ADNR will work
21 with the borough to address these problems. Limits in addition to the four-day camping limit
22 on state land may be considered. If needed, these limits may be established through
23 regulation, designating the area a *Special Use Area* under 11 AAC 96.010, or under the
24 closures and use management provisions described under *Recreation* in Chapter 2.

27 Public Use Sites

29 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
30 on maps at the end of this unit.

31 **PU 2b.1 Silver Hole(s)** (RM 3.9). This site is used for camping and fishing. Users
camp both on the shore and in their boats.

PU 2b.2 Mile 6 Fishing Hole (RM 6). This is a popular fishing and camping site.

34 2c. Middle Deshka River Subunit

36 Background

38 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 6.8 to RM 14.4

40 This subunit extends from the Laub Homestead to Trapper Creek. Wetlands are located
41 adjacent to the river and cover less than 25 percent of the upland area.

1 **Land Ownership**

2

State	2,739 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1,520 acres
Private & Other	159 acres
Total	4,418 acres

3

4 **Wildlife**

5

6 Neither active bald eagle nor trumpeter swan nests have been sighted in recent surveys of this
7 subunit.

8

9 **Camping**

10

11 Good campsites are scarce in this subunit.

12

13 **Development**

14

15 Several private cabins are located in this subunit. All the cabins are located in the northern
16 half of this subunit along the river. There are also commercial lodges located within the
17 subunit.

18

19 **Access**

20

21 Powerboat activity is heavy in this subunit during highwater periods. River navigability
22 becomes marginal during low water levels in late summer. A tractor trail and seismic line are
23 used by vehicles at RM 10 on the west side of the river.

24

25 **Heritage Resources**

26

27 There are several known heritage sites in this subunit and the potential to locate more is high.

28

29

30 **Management Intent**

31

32 **Class II.** This subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for
33 powerboaters and floaters in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. In winter the subunit is
34 used by snowmachiners, dog mushers, and skiers. There are also a number of private parcels
35 in the subunit. The subunit contains salmon spawning and moose wintering habitat. The
36 subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and
37 wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands. A limited number
38 of temporary camps will be allowed. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. A
39 voluntary no-wake area is located at the Silver Hole public use site to protect public safety.
40 There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

41

1 **Management Guidelines**

2
3 **Voluntary No-wake Area.** See management guidelines for the Deshka River Management
4 Unit in this chapter.

5
6 **Commercial Camps.** A maximum of two temporary camps may be authorized in this
7 subunit. Commercial camps will not be authorized in public use sites.

8
9
10 **Public Use Sites**

11
12 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
13 on maps at the end of this unit.

14
15 **PU 2c.1 Unnamed** (RM 10.1). This is a popular fishing and camping site.

16 **PU 2c.2 Unnamed** (RM 13.8). This is a popular fishing and camping site.

17 **PU 2c.3 Trapper Creek** (RM 14.5). This is a popular fishing and camping site.

18
19
20
21 **2d. Neil Lake Subunit**

22 **Background**

23 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 14.4 to RM 23.3

24 This subunit extends from Trapper Creek to Neil Lake. The terrain is flat; the river slow-
25 moving. Just over 50 percent of the area is contiguous wetland. Neil Lake and the land
26 around it are not in the Recreation Rivers.

27 **Land Ownership**

28

State	5,048 acres
Private & Other	87 acres
Total	5,135 acres

29
30 **Wildlife**

31
32 Trumpeter swan have been sighted in recent USFWS surveys of this subunit.

33
34 **Camping**

35
36 This subunit is very popular for camping particularly on gravel bars.

1 **Development**

2

3 There are many private cabins around Neil Lake which is adjacent to the subunit. There are
4 several docks located on the lake.

5

6

7 **Management Intent**

8

9 **Class II.** This subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for
10 powerboaters and floaters in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. There are some private
11 lands in the southern half of the subunit, and around Neil Lake, northwest of the subunit. In
12 winter the subunit is used by snowmachiners, dog mushers, and skiers. The subunit contains
13 salmon spawning and moose wintering habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and
14 enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating
15 uses associated with private lands. Some commercial camps may be authorized. Maintaining
16 public use sites is a high priority. There are no nonmotorized areas in this subunit.

17

18

19 **Management Guidelines**

20

21 **Boating Restrictions.** None.

22

23 **Boat Storage.** A public boat storage area may be designated near Neil Lake. See *Shoreline*
24 *Development, Boat Storage* in Chapter 2.

25

26 **Access to Neil Lake.** Much of the land surrounding Neil Lake is privately owned. Although
27 Neil Lake and the surrounding land are not within the corridor, some access the lake from the
28 corridor. The primary access points currently used by the public are three trails on the
29 southeast end of the lake. Two trails connect with the Deshka River, the other with a slough
30 of the Deshka River. There is an existing 30-foot easement through tract D, widening to
31 60 feet on state lands outside tract D. In addition, the 10-foot easement on the shore of Neil
32 Lake is not wide enough to accommodate the floatplanes that beach at the trailhead. Signs
33 could be placed to mark the legal access through the private parcel (tract D). A private parcel,
34 tract E, on the southeast corner of the lake was donated to ADF&G (ADL 228368) and now
35 is managed by ADF&G (OSL 1121). This parcel now provides public access to/from the lake
36 into the corridor.

37

38 **Public Information.** A kiosk that provides information on the Deshka Recreation River may
39 be established on or adjacent to Neil Lake.

40

41 **Commercial Camps.** Up to two commercial camps may be allowed in this subunit.
42 Commercial camps will not be authorized in public use sites or on Neil Lake.

43

44

45

1 **Public Use Sites**

2
3 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
4 on maps at the end of this unit.
5

- 6 **PU 2d.1 ChijukCreek** (RM 17.7). This is a popular fishing and camping site.
- 7 **PU 2d.2 Eagle’s Nest Camp** (RM 17.8). Fishing and camping spots are popular at this
8 site.
- 9 **PU 2d.3 Middle King Fishing Hole** (RM 20.7). This site provides good fishing and
10 camping. ADF&G holds a 10-foot pedestrian easement for public access
11 along both banks of the creek.
- 12 **PU 2d.4 Upper King Hole** (RM 21.8). This is a popular fishing and camping site.
13 ADF&G holds a 10-foot pedestrian easement for public access along both
14 banks of the creek.
- 15 **PU 2d.5 Neil Lake** (RM 23). There are several camp sites and trails associated with
16 this public use site. The public use site includes several trails connecting the
17 lake with a slough and the river, and areas used for dropping-off parties,
18 camping, and for tying up floatplanes or boats. Neil Lake itself is not within
19 the corridor.
20

21 **2e. The Forks Subunit**

22 **Background**

23 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 23.3 to RM 29.8

24 The subunit extends from Neil Lake to the confluence of Moose and Kroto creeks. The
terrain is flat to rolling. The water column is 60 to 75 feet wide and meandering. Water
velocity is slow. Floaters often exit the river at Neil Lake for this reason. Water levels drop
during the fishing season making navigation marginal through the course of the summer.
Wetlands are contiguous and cover about 50 percent of the area, mostly along the river
banks.

Land Ownership

State	3,658 acres
Private & Other	10 acres
Total	3,668 acres

1 **Wildlife**

2

3 Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit however,
4 USFWS has documented trumpeter swan in the subunit.

5

6 **Camping**

7

8 The Forks are the first place where floaters, coming downstream, can catch and keep
9 Chinook salmon, so fishing pressure is high in this subunit. Several camps have been
10 established here in past years although camping use has declined.

11

12 **Development**

13

14 There may be a few remote private cabins located within this subunit.

15

16 **Access**

17

18 There is one short off-road vehicle trail at the east end of the small lake at RM 26. A seismic
19 line crossing the river at RM 27.8 is a popular access trail and is used in winter. Another
20 seismic line which parallels the subunit to the west is used in winter. Neil Lake is used for
21 floatplane landings.

22

23

24 **Management Intent**

25

26 **Class I.** This subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for
27 powerboaters and floaters in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. There are no private
28 lands in the subunit. Neil Lake is a primary access point for river users. Use is also
29 concentrated at the Forks (the forks of Moose and Kroto creeks), a popular fishing and
30 camping area. In winter the subunit is used by snowmachiners, dog mushers, and skiers. The
31 subunit contains salmon spawning and winter moose habitat. The subunit will be managed to
32 provide and enhance the recreation opportunities named above. Maintaining an essentially
33 unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining public use
34 sites will be a high priority. Although the Deshka Recreation River does not include Neil
35 Lake or the lands around the lake, public access to the river from the lake should be
36 maintained. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

37

38

39 **Management Guidelines**

40

41 **Boating restrictions.** None. See management guidelines for the Deshka River Management
42 Unit in this chapter for a safety warning sign to be placed on a slough of the river.

43

44

45

1 **Public Use Site**

2
3 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
4 on maps at the end of this unit.
5

6
7
8 **PU 2e.1 The Forks** (RM 30). The confluence of Moose and Kroto Creek is a popular
9 fishing area and camping spot. This site includes the north, east, and west
10 banks.

11
12 **2f. Kroto Creek Subunit**

13 **Background**

14 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 0 (Kroto-Moose Creek Confluence), to RM 58
15 (Kroto Lake)

16 This subunit includes all of Kroto Creek, from the junction with Moose Creek to Kroto Lake.
17 Kroto Creek is similar to, but smaller than Moose Creek. It is narrow, shallow and marginally
18 navigable, even by floatboats. The lower segment, below Amber Lake, has fewer navigability
19 problems. Float trips occasionally begin at Amber Lake. Powerboats sometimes are able to
20 use Kroto Creek, just above the forks, during high water. Approximately 90 percent of the
21 subunit below Amber Lake is contiguous wetland. Wetlands make up 10 to 25 percent of this
22 subunit above Amber Lake.

23 **Land Ownership**

24

State	29,882 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1,042 acres
Private & Other	319 acres
Total	31,243 acres

25
26 **Wildlife**

27
28 Recent USFWS surveys have documented many adult trumpeter swans and their young
29 within the subunit. Bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys.
30

31 **Camping**

32
33 Use of Kroto Creek is relatively light. It is heavier on the portion below Amber Lake because
34 navigability improves below Amber Lake. Kroto Creek has not been surveyed for commonly
35 used campsites.
36
37

1 **Development**

2
3 One lodge is located on Kroto Lake. It is primarily used in the winter for cross-country skiing
4 and other winter activities. There are several private cabins in the subunit.

5
6 A bridge crosses Kroto Creek on Petersville Road. There are several docks on a lake at
7 RM 51 in this subunit and several on Amber Lake, adjacent to but outside the subunit.

8
9 **Access**

10
11 *Summer*

12
13 Kroto Creek users can access Amber Lake by floatplane and float Amber Lake Creek for one
14 mile before entering Kroto Creek. Oilwell Road crosses Moose Creek via a bridge, passes by
15 Amber Lake, and crosses Kroto Creek, before it terminates 2.5 miles east of the Kahiltna
16 River. An unimproved seismic line continues to the Yentna River. There are extensive
17 offroad vehicle trails between RM 43 (just downriver from the Petersville Road) to Kroto
18 Lake. Because of the combination of heavy use and extensive wetlands, this area has the
19 most evidence of off-road vehicle use in the Recreation Rivers. In several places there are
20 dozens of parallel tracks. Much of this impact may be a result of a few property owners near
21 Safari Lake who use off-road vehicles to access Petersville Road by passing through the
22 Kroto Creek subunit. The nine seismic lines that cross the river do not appear to be receiving
23 summer use. Within the corridor there is floatplane access to a lake west of the river at RM
24 51 and Lake 295' at RM 14. Amber Lake and Parker Lake (outside but adjacent to the
25 subunit) are also used by floatplanes.

26
27 *Winter*

28
29 Upper Kroto Creek includes extensive open bogs used for winter travel. There are a number
30 of intertwining trails along the creek above the Petersville Road. This area is extremely
31 popular for snowmachining, dog mushing, and cross-country skiing and has seen an increase
32 in use in recent years. Several Iditarod mushers train in the area. The lodge on Kroto Lake
33 caters to winter ski tourers and other winter recreationists.

34
35 There is also a winter trail from the Moose Creek bridge to Schneider Lake that crosses
36 Kroto Creek at RM 21.5. There is extensive use of the trails in the Amber Lake area
37 connecting the Oilwell Road and Skwentna. Below Amber Lake, seismic lines are used for
38 winter travel. Seismic lines and the Oilwell Road are used in winter for transporting heavy
39 equipment.

40
41
42 **Management Intent**

43
44 **Class I.** This subunit features fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for powerboaters,
45 floaters, and bank fishermen. Fishing for Chinook salmon is prohibited and rainbow trout

1 fishing is catch-and-release only. However, the creek provides important fish habitat.
2 Powerboat navigation becomes marginal later in the summer due to low water levels. In the
3 winter, the subunit features numerous snowmachine, dog mushing, and cross-country ski
4 trails, particularly between the Petersville Road and Kroto Lake. The subunit will be
5 managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat
6 while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining an essentially
7 unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining public use
8 sites will be a high priority. The lower part of this subunit will be managed to provide non-
9 motorized opportunities during the fishing season.

12 Management Guidelines

14 **Boating Restrictions.** See management guidelines for the Deshka River Management Unit in
15 this chapter.

17 **ADOT/PF Materials Site.** There is an existing ADOT/PF material site in this subunit on
18 1.3 acres near RM 67.5 on Oilwell Road where it meets Petersville Road. This site is very
19 important to ADOT/PF for maintenance of Petersville Road. ADOT/PF applied for an
20 interagency land management agreement (ILMA) from ADNR in 2018. See Chapter 2,
21 *Materials*.

23 **Public Information.** A kiosk should be constructed on Amber Lake where the public begin
24 float trips down Amber Lake and Kroto creeks. An additional kiosk can be placed off Oilwell
25 Road where the public congregates near the creek. Signs identifying Kroto Creek as a
26 Recreation River should be placed on either side of the Petersville Road bridge.

28 **Boat Launch.** A boat launch that accommodates trailers should not be built where Kroto
29 Creek meets Oilwell Road. The river is too shallow and rocky to safely accommodate large
30 power boats. A primitive launch may be constructed to accommodate boats carried on
31 rooftops.

34 Public Use Sites

36 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
37 on maps at the end of this unit.

39 **PU 2f.1 Amber Lake Creek Confluence** (RM 21.5). The confluence is used for
fishing and camping by Kroto Creek floaters whose trips originate at Amber
Lake. Site accessible via Oilwell Road.

PU 2f.2 Amber Lake (RM 24). Several private cabins exist on the banks of Amber
Lake. The lake may be accessed via Oilwell Road.

1 **Special Management Areas**
2

3 See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations
4 of sites are shown on the map at the end of this unit.
5

SMA 2f.1 Oilwell Road Crossing of Kroto Creek (RM 21.5) This special management area includes a road crossing and the private land along the river adjacent to the crossing. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate public facility improvements associated with the road crossing while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Seasonal restrictions on ground or air transport intended to provide a non-motorized experience in the adjacent subunit do not apply within the SMA.

SMA 2f.2 Petersville Road Crossing (RM 47.1). This SMA includes the land and water in and adjacent to Petersville Road crossing. A private parcel and structural improvements are located in the SMA. The area will be managed as a Class II area. Class II guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate necessary maintenance and improvements to the Petersville Road Bridge, and access to private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. In summer it is primarily a day-use area. In winter the bridge is heavily used by automobiles, snowmachines, dog sleds, and skiers.

SMA 2f.3 Unnamed Lake (RM 51.0). Private parcels with cabins and docks are located in the SMA. There is also a floatplane landing area. It will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. It will be managed to accommodate access to private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat.

SMA 2f.4 Kroto Lake (RM 58.5) There is one cabin and one lodge on this lake. An ORV trail connects the lake with the Petersville Road. Floatplanes rarely use the lake because of its small size. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate access to private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat.

6

7

8 **2g. Lower Moose Creek Subunit**

9

10 **Background**

11

12 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 29.8 to RM 54.2

13

1 This subunit extends from the junction of Moose and Kroto creeks to the southern-most
2 private parcel on Moose Creek. The water column is 40 to 125 feet wide. The terrain is
3 rolling, contiguous wetlands cover about half of the subunit.
4

5 **Land Ownership**

6

State	11,882 acres
Private & Other	15 acres
Total	11,897 acres

7
8 **Wildlife**

9
10 Both occupied and unoccupied bald eagle nests have been sighted within the subunit. Recent
11 surveys have documented adult trumpeter swans in the subunit.
12

13 **Development**

14
15 There is no private land within this subunit.
16

17 **Access**

18
19 Several off-road vehicle trails access the upper subunit from Oilwell Road. Other off-road
20 vehicle trails near RM 25 link up with seismic lines crossing Kroto Creek. Several seismic
21 lines on Moose Creek are used in the winter. Most of the boat traffic is from canoes or rafts,
22 although small powerboats are occasionally used.
23
24

25 **Management Intent**

26
27 **Class I.** Because of extensive wetlands and the relatively remote location of this subunit, it is
28 visited primarily by floaters in summer and snow travelers in winter. This subunit also
29 features fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities. Although the subunit contains salmon
30 spawning habitat, fishing for Chinook salmon is prohibited. Rainbow trout fishing is catch-
31 and-release only. Powerboat navigation becomes marginal due to low water levels later in the
32 summer. In winter, the subunit features snowmachine and dog mushing trails. There is no
33 private land in the subunit. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these
34 recreation opportunities, the primitive quality of the area, and fish and wildlife habitat.
35 Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management.
36 Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The lower part of the subunit will be managed
37 to provide non-motorized opportunities during the fishing season. Opportunities for
38 harvesting Chinook salmon should be provided by the Board of Fisheries in the lower part of
39 this subunit.
40
41
42

1 **Management Guidelines**

2
3 **Boating Restrictions.** See management guidelines for the Deshka River Management Unit in
4 this chapter.

5
6 **Fishing Regulations.** See *Other Recommendations, Fishing Regulations* in Chapter 4.
7
8

9 **2h. Oilwell Road Subunit**

10
11 **Background**

12
13 River Miles/River Characteristics, RM 54.2 to RM 69.5

14
15 This subunit extends from the private land beginning about 3 miles below the end of Oilwell
16 Road, to a point approximately one mile above the Petersville Road. The terrain is rolling.
17 Contiguous wetlands cover approximately 80 percent of the subunit.
18

19 **Land Ownership**

20	State	3,425 acres
	Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1,097 acres
	Private & Other	897 acres
	Total	5,419 acres

21
22 **Wildlife**

23
24 Few trumpeter swans have been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit. Bald eagle nests
25 have not been observed in recent surveys.
26

27 **Development**

28
29 The area along Moose Creek near the Oilwell and Petersville roads is heavily developed.
30 There are many private cabins in this subunit and commercial businesses on Petersville Road.
31

32 Three bridges cross Moose Creek. The Petersville Road bridge is heavily used in both
33 summer and winter. The Oilwell Road bridge crosses Moose Creek near RM 57.5. A foot-
34 bridge is located at RM 61.5.
35

36 **Access**

37
38 Road access is by the Petersville (RM 69) and Oilwell roads (RM 57.5). There are several
39 foot and off-road vehicle trails along Oilwell Road to access private land. Most trails are
40 concentrated along the creek between Nine-mile Creek (RM 51.5) and one mile north of the

1 Petersville Road. Oilwell Road is used as a float put-in on the Deshka River. Above Oilwell
2 Road the river is seldom floated. There are no aircraft landing areas.
3

4 Moose Creek is extensively used in winter by snowmachiners and dog mushers. Most of the
5 use is between RM 57 and RM 69. Several seismic lines that cross Moose Creek are used in
6 winter. Snowmachine trail rides and dog mushing races pass through this subunit. Above the
7 Petersville Road the subunit is heavily wooded and receives light winter use.
8
9

10 **Management Intent**

11
12 **Class II.** Because of its proximity to the Petersville Road and numerous parcels of private
13 land, the subunit is used for a variety of purposes. It features fishing, hunting, and camping
14 opportunities, and uses associated with the road. The river is navigable below the Oilwell
15 Road terminus, except in late summer when water levels usually drop. Although the subunit
16 contains fish spawning habitat, fishing for Chinook salmon is prohibited. Rainbow trout
17 fishing is catch-and-release only. In winter, the subunit features snowmachining, skiing, and
18 dog mushing trails. There are numerous private parcels of land, particularly on the east side
19 of the river along the Oilwell Road. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance
20 these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses
21 associated with private lands on the road. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The
22 river will be managed to provide both motorized and non-motorized opportunities. There are
23 no non-motorized areas in the subunit.
24
25

26 **Management Guidelines**

27
28 **Boating restrictions.** None.
29

30 **Public Information.** A kiosk may be placed along Oilwell Road providing information on
31 the Recreation Rivers. Signs should also be placed on either side of the Moose Creek bridge
32 on Petersville Road and either side of the bridge on Oilwell Road, identifying Moose Creek
33 as a Recreation River.
34

35 **Public Facilities.** Moose Creek is too shallow through most of the season for prop or
36 jetboats. A boat launch able to accommodate trailers should not be built off the Petersville or
37 Oilwell roads.
38
39

40 **Public Use Sites**

41
42 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
43 on maps at the end of this unit.
44

PU 2h.1 Oilwell Road Crossing (RM 57.5). This site is used for camping, fishing, and launching boats.

PU 2h.2 Petersville Road Crossing (RM 68.5). This site is a popular day use area. In the past, there have been local businesses on the private lands adjacent to the site and it was a community meeting area. Access to the river is restricted by private land.

1
2

3 **2i. Upper Moose Creek Subunit**

4

5 **Background**

6

7 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 69.5 to RM 82.5

8

9 Upper Moose Creek is generally narrow and shallow. Contiguous wetlands cover about
10 10 percent of the mostly flat terrain. Non-contiguous wetlands cover another 10 percent of
11 the area.

12

13 **Land Status**

14

State	2,725 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	4,781 acres
Private & Other	75 acres
Total	7,581 acres

15

16 **Wildlife**

17

18 Trumpeter swans have been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit. Bald eagle nests have
19 not been observed.

20

21 **Camping**

22

23 There is no boat use on upper Moose Creek. Private landowners on the upper limit of the
24 subunit access the area by floatplane. Campsites along the river have not been inventoried.

25

26 **Development**

27

28 Several cabins and associated docks are located on Loon and “S” lakes.

29

30 **Access**

31

32 There are three floatplane landing areas but no airstrips in this subunit. The floatplane
33 landing areas are located on the two lakes at the headwaters and on a lake at RM 43.5. The
34 lakes at the headwaters receive frequent winter use.

1 **Management Intent**
2

3 **Class I.** This subunit features limited fishing and camping opportunities during the summer
4 months. The river is not navigable. Although the subunit contains salmon spawning habitat,
5 Chinook salmon fishing is prohibited. Rainbow trout fishing is catch-and-release only. The
6 subunit is primarily used in the fall for hunting and by private property owners. Winter uses
7 include snowmachining, dog mushing, and skiing. Private lands are located near “S” Lake,
8 Loon Lake, and K’da Lake. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation
9 opportunities, a primitive setting, and fishing and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses
10 associated with private lands. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment
11 will be the focus of management. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.
12
13

14 **Management Guidelines**
15

16 **Boating Restrictions.** None.
17
18

19 **Special Management Area**
20

21 See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations
22 of sites are shown on the map at the end of this unit.
23

SMA 2i.1 “S” Lake and Loon Lake (RM 82.5). These lakes are used by floatplanes to
access private land with cabins and docks located on the lakes. The SMA
will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The
area will be managed to accommodate access to private lands in the SMA
while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities, and fish
and wildlife habitat.

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Location Map: Deshka River Management Unit

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Map 1: Deshka River

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Map 2: Deshka River

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Map 3: Deshka River

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Map 4: Deshka River

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Map 5: Deshka River

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Map 6: Deshka River

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Map 7: Deshka River

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Map 8: Deshka River

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Map 9: Deshka River

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Map 10: Deshka River

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Map 11: Deshka River

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Map 12: Deshka River

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