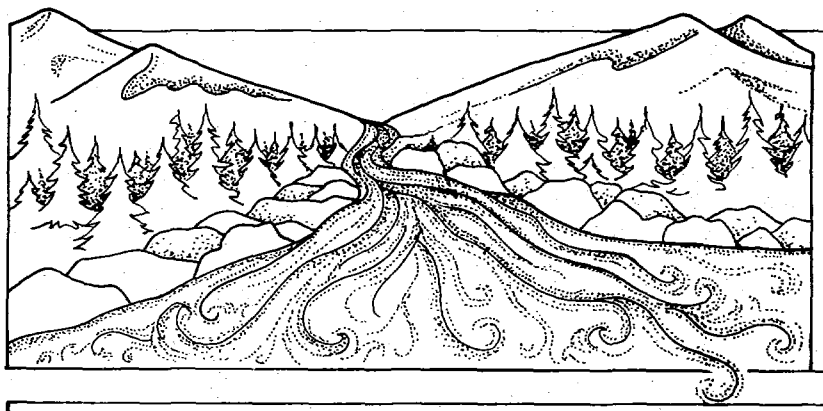


DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF LAND
LAND & RESOURCES SECTION

SUSITNA BASIN
RECREATION RIVERS
MANAGEMENT PLAN

AUGUST 1991

SUSITNA BASIN

RECREATION RIVERS

MANAGEMENT PLAN

AUGUST 1991

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF LAND
LAND AND RESOURCES SECTION

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME

IN COOPERATION WITH
MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 107005
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510-7005
PHONE: (907) 762-2483

The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources finds that the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan meets the requirements of AS 41.23.400-510 for the Recreation Rivers and AS 38.04.065 and 11 AAC 55.010-.030 for land use plans. The Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan is hereby adopted. The Department of Natural Resources will manage state lands within the planning area consistent with this plan. The Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan amends and supersedes the Susitna Area Plan and the Willow Subbasin Area Plan where these plans overlap with the Recreation Rivers described under AS 41.23.500.

Harold C Heinze
Harold C. Heinze, Commissioner
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

6/28/91
Date

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game assisted the Department of Natural Resources in preparing the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan. We appreciate the opportunity to represent fish and wildlife habitat, harvest, and public use values during the development of the plan. The Department of Fish and Game will use the plan as guidance when implementing its authorities and when reviewing and commenting on proposed uses of state lands in the planning area.

Carl L. Rosier
Carl L. Rosier, Commissioner
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

7/5/91
Date

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 90-156 (sub) AM

A RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH APPROVING THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN WITH SOME REQUESTED CHANGES.

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough recognizes the importance of management of the Six Recreation River Corridors for a variety of resources and uses including fish and wildlife, recreation, economic use, the enjoyment of the public, multiple use of the uplands, and the accommodation of access; and

WHEREAS, representatives from the City of Houston and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough have been involved in reaching a compromise on the boating restrictions proposed within the Final Draft of the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the representative from the City of Houston has agreed to the proposed boating restrictions within the Final Draft of the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the management intent of State lands within the Recreation River Corridors will have a direct effect on both Borough and private lands dependent on access across or through the corridors; and

WHEREAS, the Final Draft of the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan includes stipulations which do not appear to be consistent with management for a variety of resources.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Assembly of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough approves the Final Draft of the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Assembly of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough requests that the following changes be made to the Final Draft of

the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan prior to adoption by the Alaska State Legislature:

1. The following statement be eliminated from the Plan. "Non-Motorized areas. Roads and both types of vehicular trails may be built in non-motorized areas if they are built with public funds or if there is a state or public interest." The stipulations for roads within Class I areas are sufficient without adding this restriction.

2. The following statement be eliminated under guidelines for construction of utilities. "Utilities which serve only a few users, are not publicly regulated utilities, and cross waterbodies that receive high public use should not be authorized." The guidelines for construction of utilities are sufficient without this additional restriction.

Adopted by the Assembly of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, this 5 day of February, 1991.

Dorothy A. Jones
Dorothy A. Jones, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

Linda A. Dahl
Linda A. Dahl, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)

PLN/PMG/MM523

RESO: 90-156 (sub) AM
AM: 90-400

PLANNING TEAM, ADVISORY BOARD, PLANNING STAFF, TECHNICAL ADVISORS, & COMMUNITY ADVISORS

The Recreation Rivers Management Plan was prepared by a multidisciplinary planning team and advisory board. The planning team included representatives from state agencies, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the City of Houston. The advisory board included representatives of 11 user groups and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Planning staff from the Land and Resources Section and the Southcentral Regional Office of the DNR Division of Land coordinated the work of these two groups. National Park Service staff served as technical advisors through the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program. The planning team, advisory board, planning staff, and technical advisors are listed below.

PLANNING TEAM

DIVISION OF LAND, SOUTHCENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE
Allan Samet, Mike Sullivan, and Keith Quintavell

DIVISION OF PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION
Dennis Heikes

DIVISION OF FORESTRY
Jim Eleazer and Bill Beebe

DIVISION OF MINING
Mitch Henning

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
Bonnie Friedman

DIVISION OF OIL & GAS
Kris O'Connor

DIVISION OF GEOLOGICAL & GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS
Stan Carrick and Bill Long

DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME
Kim Sundberg and Technical Advisors: Larry Engel, John Westlund, Dimitri Bader, Glen Seamans, and Christopher Estes

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Keven Kleweno and Dan Wilkerson

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC FACILITIES
Roger Maggard

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
John Duffy, Marcy Martin, and Chuck Kaucic

CITY OF HOUSTON
Freelon Stanberry

ADVISORY BOARD

OTHER RECREATIONAL USERS
Noel Kopperud (Chair)

CONSERVATION
Cliff Eames (Vice-Chair)

COMMERCIAL FISHING
Pat Burden and Drew Sparlin

SPORT FISHING
David Law

SPORT HUNTING
Edward Grasser and Ron McAlpin

SUBSISTENCE
Raymond Craig

FOREST PRODUCTS
Richard Tindall

MINING
Allen Bingham

POWERBOAT USERS
Donald Sherwood

RECREATION-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL USERS
Charles Heath

PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS WITHIN THE CORRIDORS
Carl Dixon

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH DESIGNEES
Bob Stickles and Dorothy Jones

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
Paul Campbell and Delbert Hanrath

TECHNICAL ADVISORS

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, RIVERS AND TRAILS CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.
Jack Mosby (Program Manager), **Doug Whittaker, Lynn Anderson, and Thetis Smith.**

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STAFF

DEPARTMENT STAFF
Harold Heinze (Commissioner), **Rod Swope** (former Commissioner), **and Lenny Gorsuch** (former Commissioner)

DIVISION OF LAND STAFF
Gary Gustafson (Division Director), **Ron Swanson** (Section Chief/Division Director), **Veronica Gilbert** (Regional Manager)

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COMMUNITY ADVISORS

SKWENTNA COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Mick Booth

TRAPPER CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Steve Hanson

CITY OF PALMER
David Soulak, Manager

CITY OF WASILLA
John Stein, Mayor

WILLOW COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Joe Tweedy

TALKEETNA
Arthur Mannix

FISHHOOK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Don Rothermel

ALEXANDER CREEK
Cathy and Paul Gabbert

U. S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The National Park Service Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program provides planning assistance to communities, non-profit organizations, and state and local agencies involved in river or trail conservation efforts. Their invaluable assistance in the Recreation Rivers planning process is the result of a request from the Department of Natural Resources. The National Park Service involvement in the planning process was in three key areas: 1) inventory and assessment of the rivers resulting in recreation resource, use pattern, and trend data; 2) design and analysis of a survey of river users resulting in a better understanding of public preferences and attitudes; and 3) in hydrologic studies resulting in a report on in-stream flow needs for recreation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Recreation Rivers Planning Team, Advisory Board, and staff would like to thank the following individuals for their help:

Diane Dusek, Susan Peck, Robin Hall, Elaine Thomas, and **Mario Ayerdis** for preparing the maps, figures, and tables for the plan and related publications.

Amy Reidell, Odin Brudie, and **Yvonne Goldsmith** for their assistance with the user surveys, resource assessment, aerial photos, and other plan-related products.

Alice Iliff, Rob Walkinshaw, and **Bob Loeffler** for assistance formulating the planning process, and editing.

Ron Swanson and **Martha Welbourn** for assistance formulating the planning process, writing, editorial comments, assistance at meetings, and a multitude of plan-related issues.

Pearl Reamer, Gloria Weinberger, Debbie Chubin, Kaye Fegert, Emilie Beasley, Judy Samsal, Shelly Sanderford, Michelle Zenor, Rae Dowrick, Rose Bowden, Colleen Rutledge, and **Jenny Otteson** for assistance with typing, mailing lists, and mailings.

Kevin Delaney, Larry Bartlett, Durrand Cook, Steve Albert, Dave Rutts and **Kelly Hepler** from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for providing information on fish, wildlife, and recreation resources.

Several individuals in the Department of Natural Resources for assisting with a variety of issues and tasks including: **Gary Prokosh** and **Mary Lu Harle** (instream flow), **Ken Rowell** (materials), **Mary Kay Hession** (regulations and statutes), **Rick Thompson** (DLW issues), **Jim Culbertson** (Prairie Creek issues), **Kathy Means** and **Roger Burnside** (State Selections), **Scott Christy** (airstrips), **Helen Nienhueser** (recreation issues), and **Hal Bracket, Rich McMahon, Jean Tam, J. P. Zeller,** and **Willie Hershman** from the Land Records Information Section for managing the computerized database, and for designing and printing maps and spread sheets.

Sue Fisler, Al Meiners, Dale Bingham, Walter Ward, and **Dan Hourihan** with the DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DOPOR) for their helpful advice on recreation management. **Steve Klinger** with DOPOR, office of History and Archaeology for his research on heritage resources.

Mike Farmer, Kassarina, Serena and Yingdi Wang for assistance with a multitude of tasks including mapping, mailing lists, summarizing revenues, and GIS digitizing.

Sheila Gottehrer and **Karen Newton** from the Office of the Governor, Division of Boards and Commissions, for setting up the Advisory Board.

Thetis Smith with the National Park Service for editting the plan resource assessment.

Jon Hall and **Tom Jennings** with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for mapping wetlands and providing aerial photography.

Ken Thomas and **Holly Stephens** for volunteering their time to gather information on recreation resources.

Jim Kerr with the University of Alaska, Institute of Social and Economic Research for data processing and analysis of the plan alternatives survey.

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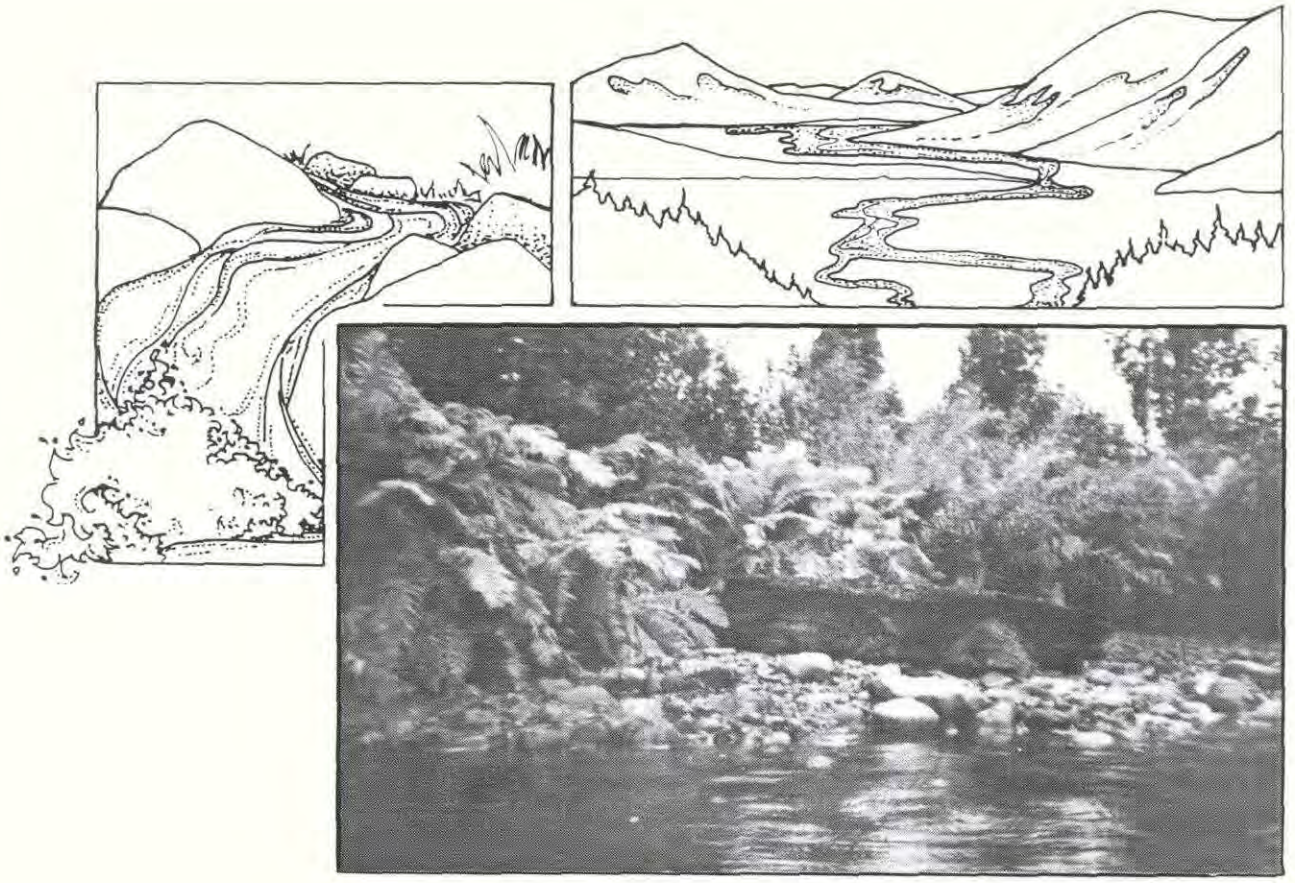
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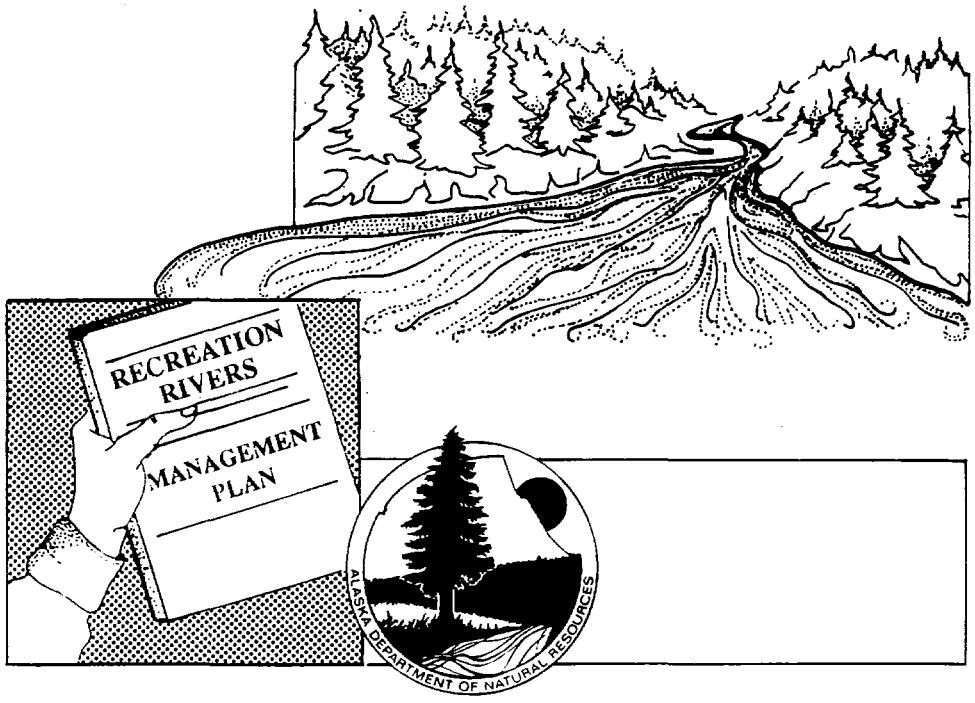


CHAPTER 1

Introduction & Background

SUMMARY OF PURPOSE

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



HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

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

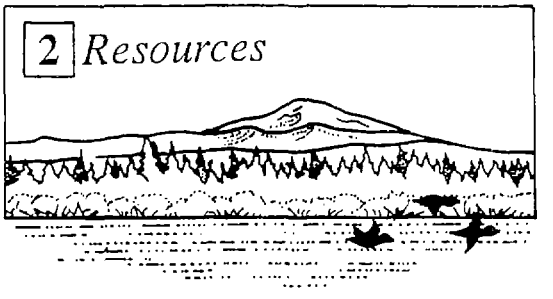
Chapter 2 includes land management policies that apply throughout the Recreation Rivers. It is organized by types of land uses or resources, such as fish and wildlife, recreation, and commercial use.

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

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO USE THE PLAN ARE SHOWN BELOW.

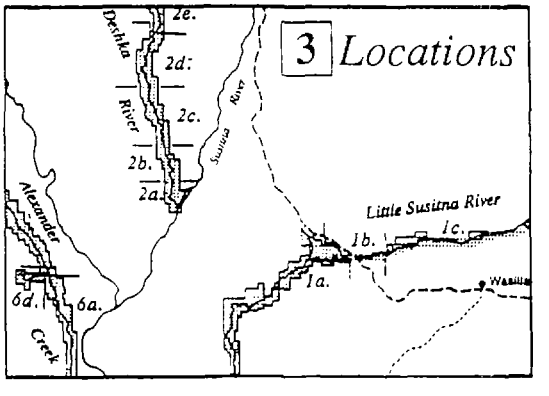
If you want to know how the plan affects a particular **land use or resource** -- for example, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, or commercial use -- turn to **Chapter 2** for general policies that apply to the entire planning area.

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

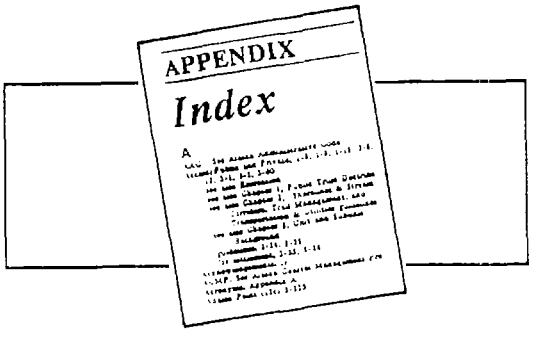


If you want to know how the plan affects a particular **place** -- for example, the lower Deshka River -- turn to **Chapter 3.**

The planning area is divided into six management units reflecting the six Recreation Rivers. To find the map on which the lower Deshka River is shown, look at the index map at the beginning of the chapter. This map shows the page numbers where maps of each river section can be found. To find the text describing this area, see the chapter divider at the beginning of Chapter 3 for an index to the subunit page numbers.



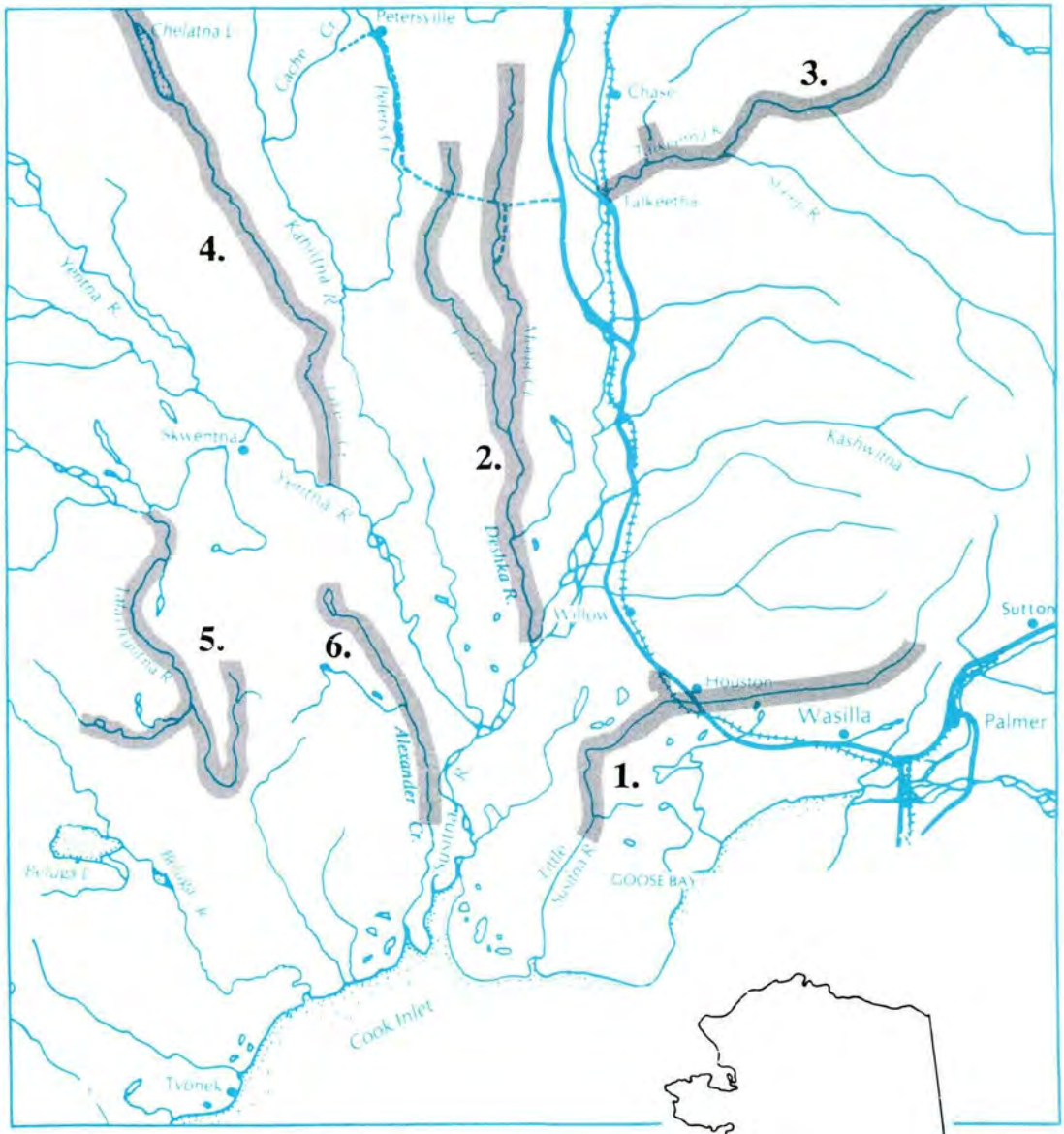
To determine if the resource, use, or area is described elsewhere in the plan, consult the index at the end of the plan.



SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT 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



* 1:63,360 maps of the Recreation Rivers are included in Chapter 3.

HOW THIS DOCUMENT IS ORGANIZED

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

Chapter 2 presents policies that guide state land management throughout the planning area. These policies are consistent with the Recreation Rivers Act. Most are also consistent with the Susitna Area Plan, which initially proposed the legislative designation. However, because this plan was developed under the legislation, and because it is based on more detailed information and public comments on the area, some policies and guidelines differ from the Susitna Area Plan. This plan supersedes and amends the Susitna Area Plan and Willow Subbasin Area Plan in the designated area.

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

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

Appendices

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

Appendix B includes a copy of the Recreation Rivers Act.

*Appendix C l*ists publications related to the plan.

Appendix D includes a list of statutes and regulations necessary to implement the plan.

Appendix E lists the river miles by unit and subunit.

Appendix F includes a description of common types of authorizations required for use of state land.

Appendix G includes a list of priorities for plan implementation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

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 260,000 acres. Land ownership is as follows:

STATE OWNED	243,000 acres
BOROUGH OWNED	14,000 acres
PRIVATE	3,000 acres

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 on state land in the planning area are administered by the Department of Natural Resources. Uses on borough land in the planning area are administered by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

RESOURCES & USES IN THE AREA PLAN

The Rivers

The six Recreation Rivers include the Little Susitna River, Deshka River (including Moose and Kroto creeks), Talkeetna River, Lake Creek, Talachulitna River, and Alexander Creek. These rivers are rich in resources including:

Fish

The rivers support strong runs of all five species of Pacific salmon and healthy populations of rainbow trout, Arctic grayling, and Dolly Varden. These fisheries provide excellent opportunities for sport anglers and are a mainstay for fishermen in upper Cook Inlet.

Wildlife

The corridor includes habitat for wildlife. The riparian areas and their associated uplands provide some of the best moose winter habitat in the Susitna drainage. Cottonwoods along the rivers support a number of eagle nests. Areas with open water support trumpeter swan nests. Black bear and brown bear are distributed throughout the Recreation Rivers and heavily depend on the strong fish runs and the use of the river banks as travel corridors through the region.

Recreation Opportunities

The corridors include over 460 river miles. The Recreation Rivers are unique in that they provide a remote setting for boating, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, snowmachining, skiing, dog-mushing, and wildlife viewing. The rivers attract recreation users from across Alaska, North America, and the world and use has increased rapidly over the last decade.

Economic Opportunity

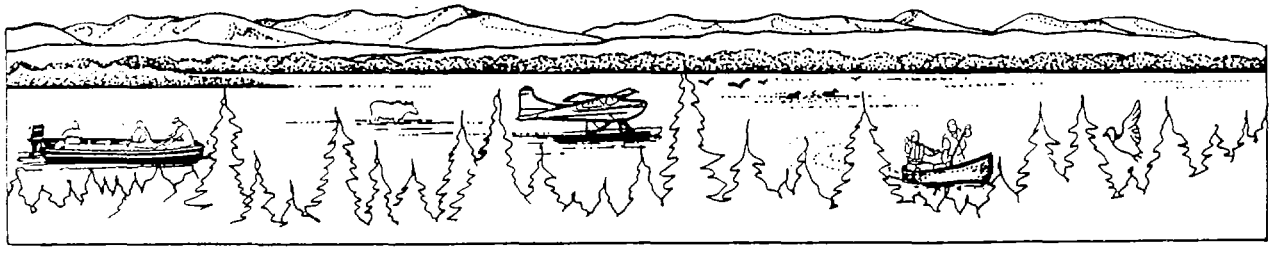
With over 100 recreation-oriented businesses and 30 lodges currently operating in the corridors, the Recreation Rivers are a focal point for the tourism and recreation industry in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Fish runs also help support commercial fishing in upper Cook Inlet.

Access

Because of the few roads in the region, the Recreation Rivers are transportation corridors to private lands and recreation resources. In addition, the many forms of transportation are also important forms of recreation.

Other Resources

The corridors provide other important resources including timber for personal use, placer gold, and materials. The corridors include over 400 parcels of private land which now support 150 homes and recreation cabins.



WHY THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The Concern

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates that the sport fishing effort on these six rivers has increased over 300 percent between 1977 and 1988. There are several reasons for this increase. The state population increased dramatically during this time; tourism has boomed; additional road access and boat launches were built along the Susitna and Little Susitna rivers. Visitor use projections indicate that these trends will continue well into the 1990's.

The effects are apparent from accumulations of litter and human waste, crowding at fishing holes, establishment of long-term camps in popular areas where space is limited, and conflicts between users. In addition, demands on other resources such as timber, minerals, and settlement lands, in and adjacent to the corridors, have increased.

The Mandate

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.

In Spring 1988, the legislature passed the Recreation Rivers Act and assigned management to the Department of Natural Resources. The Act directed the department to prepare a management plan to include long-range guidelines and management practices consistent with the Act. The Act directed the department to submit the plan to the legislature for review. The legislature completed its review and the commissioner adopted the plan as department policy in spring, 1991.

What May Happen in the Future without a plan

Without management attention existing problems are likely to increase. Projections show that sport fishing efforts on the six Recreation Rivers will meet or exceed statewide trends for yearly increases in tourism and population growth. Contributing to this is additional road access including a proposed road to the Little Susitna River. A major resort and boat launch is proposed in Talkeetna which may result in more crowding on the lower Talkeetna and Clear Creek. Additional crowding on the Kenai Peninsula and proposed reduction in guides on the Kenai River may also generate use on the Recreation Rivers. Slowly, but surely, the character of the Recreation Rivers is disappearing before our eyes. As more people begin using these rivers, the number of conflicts and damage to the resources becomes more apparent. The vexing thing is that there are no "bad guys." No one wants to damage the rivers and everyone would like their favorite fishing hole to be less crowded -- but it is happening anyway. You need only to ask long-time users of the rivers how different the rivers were in the 60's and 70's to realize that significant changes have taken place.

How the Plan Addresses these Concerns

Those working on the plan have recognized these problems and proposed methods for dealing with them. The plan is the culmination of the efforts of a wide spectrum of agencies, organizations, public, individuals, and the legislature. The plan provides a long-term blueprint for the management of these six important rivers. The plan was not developed in a vacuum; the department involved potentially affected individuals, groups, agencies, and officials throughout the process. Thousands of individuals attended public meetings, wrote letters, signed petitions, and contributed to the development of the plan alternatives and plan. As a result of this public input, significant changes were made at every step of the process. These are summarized at the end of this chapter.

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

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

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

Twenty-three public meetings were held in Wasilla, Anchorage, Houston, Willow, Talkeetna, Trapper Creek, Skwentna, and Alexander Creek. In addition, a workbook and user survey were used to gather public comments and ideas. The steps in the planning process are shown in Table 1.1.

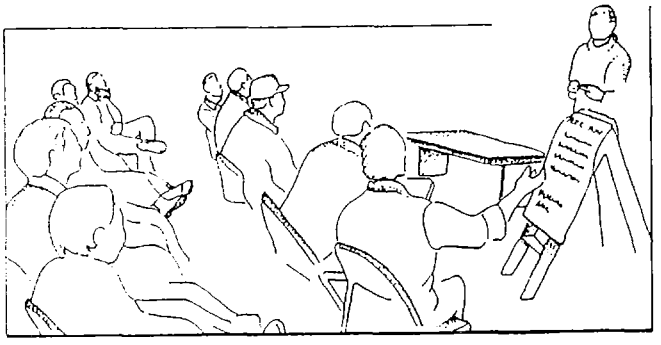


Table 1.1 THE RECREATION RIVERS PLANNING PROCESS

Step 1 - Issues are identified through public meetings to learn about interests and problems in the planning area. (Winter 1988 - 1989)

Step 2 - Information is collected on natural resources, present land and water use, land ownership, public use, and important public use sites. (1988 - 1990)

Step 3 - User Survey is administered on all six rivers. (Summer 1990)

Step 4 - Management Alternatives are prepared and reviewed by the public. (Winter 1989 - 1990)

Step 5 - Agency Review Draft is prepared and reviewed by the Recreation Rivers planning team and advisory board. (Summer 1990)

Step 6 - Public Review Draft is reviewed by the public. (Fall 1990)

Step 7 - Final Plan is prepared. (Winter 1991)

Step 8 - Plan is Proposed by the Commissioner. (Winter 1991)

Step 9 - Legislature Reviews Plan. (Spring, 1991)

Step 10 - Implementation. The plan is used

WHAT THIS PLAN COVERS & DOES NOT COVER

The authority of the plan only applies to the state land and water established as a Recreation River by the Recreation Rivers Act. The plan does not apply to federal, borough, university, or private land. DNR management decisions for authorizations such as permits, leases, and cooperative agreements, in the Recreation Rivers will follow the plan. This plan amends and supersedes the Susitna Area Plan and the Willow Subbasin Plan where these plans overlap with the Recreation Rivers described under AS 41.22.500. The Recreation Rivers plan also includes recommendations for management actions by the borough and other agencies that have authorities or land in the Recreation Rivers. Private landowners in the planning area may choose to use this plan as a guide for managing their lands.

Although the plan addresses fish and wildlife habitat issues, it does not cover fish and wildlife

harvest regulations. Under AS 41.23.420 the plan cannot affect the authority of DFG, DEC, other agencies, municipalities, the Board of Fisheries, the Board of Game, or the Guide Licensing Board. DFG, the Board of Fisheries, and the Board of Game manage use of fish and wildlife resources. Needs for cooperative fish and wildlife resource planning, monitoring, and research are addressed in Chapter 4.

PLANNING FOR STATE & BOROUGH LANDS

Most of the land in the planning area is state owned, but many important recreation lands are borough owned. These include the lower stretches of the Little Susitna River, Deshka River, Lake Creek, and Alexander Creek. Borough-state cooperation is necessary to ensure that adjoining lands are managed to complement each other. Tools for effective management include coordinated planning, cooperative agreements, and shared resource information. In addition, the likelihood of the borough and DNR receiving management funds is greater when both actively support proposals.

Coordinated planning is critical to rational land management. For example, high density commercial development on one agency's land may conflict with management for a primitive recreation experience on an adjacent agency's land. In light of these considerations, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game will coordinate planning and plan implementation for the use of state and borough lands in the Recreation Rivers.

SUMMARY OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION & MODIFICATION

The Recreation Rivers Plan will be implemented through administrative actions, including regulations, field staff, leases, permits, cooperative agreements, classification orders, and mineral orders. In addition, the department will make recommendations to the state legislature for funding, staffing, boundary adjustments, and additional statutes necessary to implement the plan. Land classification orders and mineral orders were adopted along with the plan. These orders are the formal record of the primary uses allowed on state lands, and are recorded on state status plats.

The plan uses a 20-year planning period to guide land management. However, conditions in the Recreation Rivers may change and the plan must be flexible enough to change with them. The department will meet with the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board and other groups periodically to review the implementation of the plan and identify any new or reoccurring problems. The Recreation Rivers Plan will be reviewed approximately every five years to determine if revisions are required. Specific revisions may be made at any time when conditions warrant. Substantive changes to the plan on state land can be made by amendment. Amendments must be approved by the commissioner of DNR, with public review, and through consultations with the advisory board and affected agencies. Special exceptions to the plan may be allowed when compliance is impossible or impractical. Special exceptions also constitute revisions and require the same process as amendments. A minor change to the plan (for example, correction of typographic or technical errors) does not require public review. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed description of implementation and modification of the plan.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO MAJOR PLAN PROPOSALS

The main provisions of the plan and the reasons for decisions are summarized in this section. It summarizes public concerns by issue and how the plan alternatives, draft plan, and final plan were changed to address these concerns. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are the detailed descriptions of the resolution of these issues.

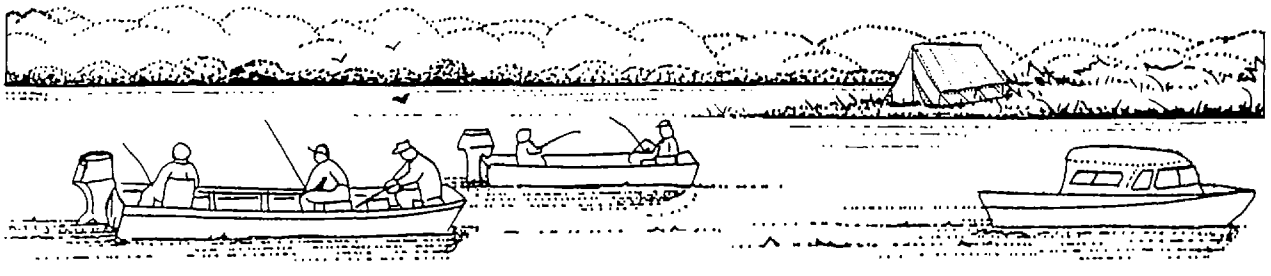
Recreation

The six rivers have seen significant increases in recreation use over the last decade. The public identified many issues that the plan should address as a result of this use. Primary concerns included littering, sanitation, long-term camps at popular campsites, abandoned property, and crowding. The public also emphasized the need for enforcement to address these issues and fish and game regulations.

To address the concerns about long-term camps dominating popular campsites and fishing holes, an alternative was presented to limit the number of days a camp could be established at one site. A large majority of users supported limits of 4 days or less. Few respondents supported the statewide 14-day limit that applied to the Recreation Rivers. The draft plan proposed a four-night limit for a given site before the camp must be disassembled and moved at least one mile.

The public was also concerned about camps that were abandoned at the end of the season, derelict boats that were unclaimed, and cars and heavy equipment that were stored or abandoned on state property. To address this issue the plan includes a time limit and proposed regulations to address non-compliance. Regulations are also proposed for littering, vandalism, and marking natural objects. Guidelines also address unauthorized cabins and recommend conversion of some to public use cabins.

To ensure that crowding does not occur on the whitewater stretches of Lake Creek, the Talachulitna River, and the Talkeetna River, a monitoring and voluntary trip scheduling program is proposed. Finally, because of the on-going concerns about the lack of information on the Recreation Rivers, the plan puts a high priority on implementing an educational program (signs, brochures, and other types of general information to address major public concerns).



Boat Access

Early in the process, several boating issues were addressed by the public. The primary issue was whether or not there was a need for additional regulations on the rivers. Horsepower restrictions on the Kenai River and non-motorized lakes in Anchorage and elsewhere were a concern to powerboaters. Safety, recreation experience, erosion of banks, and damage to fish habitat were among the issues addressed by powerboaters, floaters, property owners, bank anglers, and other river users. Although all the rivers were mentioned, the Little Susitna River was discussed most often.

Addressing these concerns was not easy. There are a variety of river users and each uses the rivers differently. Some use powerboats to access fishing holes during the salmon runs, others use floatboats to reach more remote sections of the rivers, and still others don't use boats at all but still had views on the issue. To compound the complexity of resolving this issue, the amount and type of use varies considerably between river segments, season, and even from year-to-year.

The boating working group, composed of members of the planning team and advisory board, reviewed public concerns, the existing use of the rivers, and potential effects on other resources. Early in the planning process it was determined that although there may be cases where wakes accelerate erosion, jet units disturb spawning beds, and cause physical injury to fish, there was a lack of information to justify regulations based on these potential effects. However, the effects of powerboats on the recreation experience, including safety concerns, convinced the advisory board to present alternatives on this issue. Although different alternatives for airboats and boats with kickers were initially developed, the effects on the recreation experience on river users were similar to those for all powerboats so the draft plan addressed all powerboats the same. Horsepower restrictions were also discussed. However, horsepower restrictions were not included in the draft plan because adequate horsepower is needed to stay "on step" in shallow rivers, cross fast-flowing glacial waters, and cross Cook Inlet.

In the plan alternatives, the public was asked about boater education programs, no-wake zones, and non-motorized zones. Over 80 percent of the respondents supported a boater education program. Over 90 percent supported either voluntary or regulatory no-wake areas. When asked whether floaters should be restricted on some river segments, the majority of powerboaters and floaters opposed such restrictions. There were, however, significant differences in the responses to whether powerboat restrictions were necessary on river segments. Powerboaters were significantly more likely to oppose non-motorized zones than floaters. Powerboaters generally opposed areas where powerboats would be prohibited while floaters and bank users supported them. Most people who attended public meetings opposed any restrictions on powerboats, particularly where powerboat use occurred. Letters were mixed on this issue. Powerboaters were divided on whether kickers should be allowed in areas that may be non-motorized. Floaters opposed kickers in non-motorized areas.

The draft plan proposed non-motorized areas on parts of all six rivers. River segments proposed as non-motorized areas receive far less powerboat use than those areas where no restrictions were proposed. At the eight public meetings and from letters received, most people opposed the non-motorized zones. There were particular concerns about restrictions on the river segment from Neil Lake to the Forks on the Deshka River and the split weekend system for managing boating on the Little Susitna River. There was also concern about the length of some no-wake zones and the fact that they were regulatory rather than voluntary.

In response to public comments on the draft plan, several changes were made. These changes are summarized in Tables 1.2 and 1.3. The length of the Deshka River no-wake zones was reduced. All no-wake zones were made voluntary rather than regulatory. All non-motorized areas on the Talkeetna River and Clear Creek were dropped. The length of the non-motorized sections on Alexander Creek, the Talachulitna River, and the Deshka River were shortened. The most controversial non-motorized area (between Neil Lake and the Forks on the Deshka) was dropped. The time period for the second-most controversial non-motorized area (Little Susitna River) was changed from split weekends to alternating weekends with one weekend for powerboats and the next for float boats. This reduced the non-motorized periods on the Little Susitna River from 42 days per year to 14 days per year. The season for most non-motorized areas were also reduced from the "ice-free season" to May 15 to August 20 (June 15 - August 20 for the Talachulitna).

TABLE 1.2
SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO BOATING LIMITS

RIVER	SEGMENT	RIVER MILES	LIMIT OR SIGN	DATES	HOW CHANGED[1]
Little Susitna River	Parks Highway	67.5 - 69.6	No-Wake, Voluntary, One-Year Trial Basis	May 15 - August 20	No longer by regulation
Little Susitna River	Nancy Lake Creek to Game Refuge Boundary	33.2 - 60.5	Non-motorized	Alternating weekends May 15 - August 20	Alternating weekends instead of split weeks, one weekend float boats only, the next weekend powerboats only
Deshka River	Mouth	0.0 - Island	No-wake, Voluntary	May 15 - August 20	No longer by regulation, extends only up to island
Deshka River	Silver Hole	3.8 - 4.9	Place sign: "Reduce speed to 5 MPH when anglers present"	May 15 - August 20	Place sign instead of voluntary no-wake area
Deshka River	Forks to 2 mi. below Amber Lake Creek and Forks to 3 mi. below Oilwell Road	0.0 - 19.1 (Kroto Creek) 29.7 - 54.2 (Moose Creek)	Non-motorized, Recommendation to Board of Fish to open lower Moose Creek to salmon fishing	May 15 - August 20	Delete Neil Lake - Forks non-motorized area, change dates from June only to May 15 - August 20
Talkeetna River	Entire river	- -	No restrictions	- -	Delete non-motorized area in Talkeetna Canyon
Clear Creek	Entire creek	- -	No restrictions	- -	Delete non-motorized area on Upper Clear Creek
Lake Creek	Whitewater	8.1 - 51.2	Non-motorized	May 15 - August 20	No change
Lake Creek	Mouth	0.0	Establish voluntary no-wake area at the mouth on a one-year trial basis	May 15 - August 20	New
Talachulitna Creek	Lower	0.0 - 17.0	Non-motorized	June 15 - August 20	No change
Talachulitna River	Canyon	9.0 - 18.2	Non-motorized	June 15 - August 20	Non-motorized area reduced
Alexander Creek	Upper	23.0 - 38.3	Non-motorized	May 15 - August 20	Reduce length of non-motorized area on south end by two miles
Alexander Creek	Pierce Creek Confluence	7.4	Sign that cautions large boats above this point	May 15 - August 20	New

[1] With the exception of the Talachulitna River and Creek, all dates have been reduced from ice-free season to May 15 - August

Numerous letters, petitions, and phone calls were received concerning these proposed changes to the draft plan. Powerboaters focused primarily on opposing any powerboat restrictions. Floaters generally supported the proposed changes but voiced concern that some non-motorized segments were dropped or altered, particularly on the Little Susitna River where the number of non-motorized days was reduced. They still supported including the Parks Highway to the Nancy Lake Creek in the non-motorized area.

The advisory board met to discuss these comments on the proposed changes to the draft plan. They discussed whether or not to keep or delete all non-motorized areas. They did not reach consensus on this issue. The planning team listened to advisory board concerns and decided to keep these areas.

TABLE 1.3
SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO PROPOSED BOATING LIMITS FOR AREAS MANAGED BY ADF&G OR IN PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE RECREATION RIVERS[1]

RIVER	SEGMENT	RIVER MILES	LIMIT OR SIGN	DATES	COMMENTS	HOW CHANGED FROM PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT[2]
Little Susitna River	Proposed South Big Lake Road Junction	Within one mile of Junction	No-wake	May 15 - August 20	Takes effect when road is built	No change
Little Susitna River	Plan boundary to Burma Road Access	28.6 - 33.1	Non-motorized	Alternating weekends May 15 - August 20	Recommendation to DF&G	Alternating weekends instead of split weeks, one weekend float boats only, the next powerboats only
Little Susitna River	Burma Road Access	27.6 - 29.5	No-wake	May 15 - August 20	Recommendation to DF&G	No change
Little Susitna River	Above Old FAA Station on Game Refuge	17.0 - 33.1	Address Safety Concerns	- -	Recommendation to DF&G	No change
Talkeetna River	Upper Canyon	- -	No restrictions	- -	- -	Delete proposed non-motorized area
Alexander Creek	Mouth	Susitna River and Alexander Creek 0.0 - 0.2	No-wake, Voluntary	May 15 - August 20	Takes effect if lower river is added to corridors	No longer by regulation

[1] The following limits are proposed for lower Alexander Creek (if the legislature adds this area to the Recreation Rivers) and DF&G (for the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge).

[2] All dates have been reduced from ice-free season to May 15 - August 20.

Upland Access

Although the rivers were the focus of much of the planning effort, access to uplands was a key issue. There are hundreds of parcels of private land in the corridors and thousands more along the boundaries. Roads, trails, easements, and rights-of-way exist throughout the planning areas. Management intent and guidelines for these types of improvements are contained in Chapter 2 policies and guidelines. They describe measures which ensure reasonable access to land and resources in and adjacent to the Recreation Rivers while protecting recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and water quality.

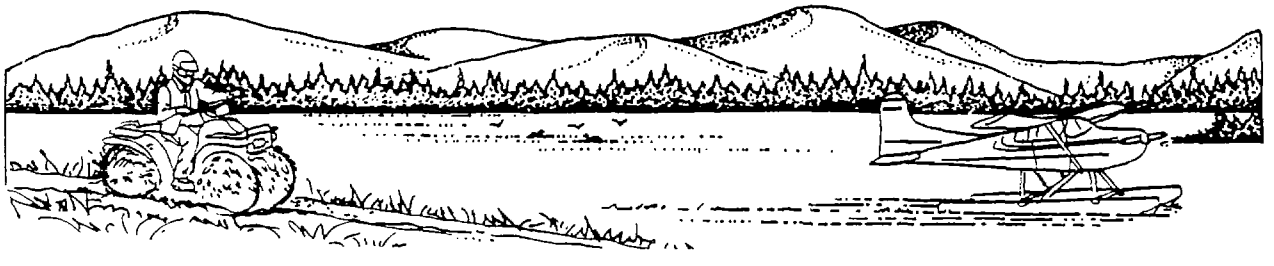
Another key issue was the use of off-road vehicles (ORV's) during the summer. In several areas, particularly adjacent to the Petersville Road, use of these types of vehicles is causing damage to soils and vegetation. In the plan alternatives, the majority of respondents supported limits on these types of vehicles where environmental damage was occurring. Respondents were evenly split on whether or not they should be limited to provide for a remote recreation experience. In the survey of river users, a slight majority of respondents felt that seeing ORV's would detract from their trips.

To address concerns about environmental damage, the plan limits use of off-road vehicles to existing trails during the snow-free season. It also recommends a trail plan to help identify trails that may be suitable for this use without causing significant damage to the environment. To address concerns about a remote experience, off-road vehicles are prohibited adjacent to the non-motorized areas during the periods when motor restrictions apply. There are, however, many exceptions to allow for reasonable access to areas with private land or mineral locations. Few specific public comments have been received on this issue. Similar to the boating issue, many people have voiced opposition to any restrictions on motor transport while those supporting motor restrictions for boats in some areas generally support restriction on upland access in these same areas.

Air Access

Aircraft are used by many floaters and bank anglers to access the rivers. They are also the principal means of access to lodges and private property on the more remote river segments. The plan addresses three air access issues: a) the need for access improvements such as airstrips and floatplane landing areas; b) restricting air access to some areas to provide for a remote recreation experience, and; c) ensuring continuing access to private lands and mineral locations. The plan includes management intent for addressing airstrips in two key areas. The mouth of the Deshka and on Chelatna Lake. To provide for a remote recreation experience, aircraft landings are prohibited along the non-motorized river segments during peak use periods. As with boat and upland access, there are exceptions to these limits to provide for reasonable access, particularly for individuals with legal interest in land.

Most comments on the issue have been from helicopter pilots and those using Super Cubs to land on small gravel bars. Other types of aircraft are generally unaffected because the non-motorized areas neither restrict lakes and rivers large enough for floatplane landings nor airstrips. However, they do affect helicopters and Super Cubs that will not be able to land in small clearings and gravel bars in non-motorized areas. At meetings, pilots opposed restrictions on aircraft. Of those supporting non-motorized areas for boats, many supported non-motorized areas for aircraft. The advisory board discussed a blanket exception for aircraft in non-motorized areas but decided it was inconsistent with the general management intent: to provide for a non-motorized experience on these river segments. Changes were made to this proposal between the draft and final plan. The number and length of the non-motorized zones was reduced consistent with the changes made for boating. Additional special management areas were designated to allow for aircraft landings.



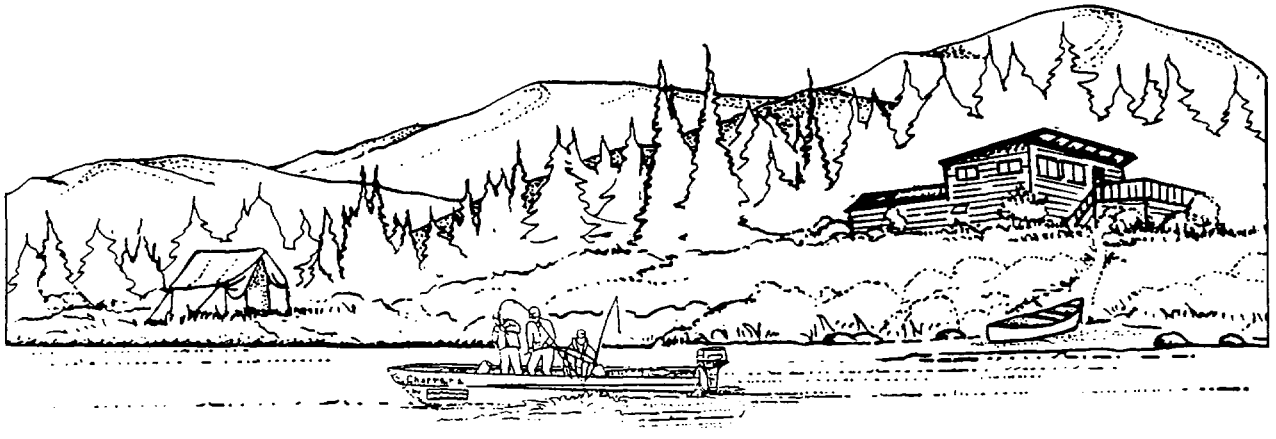
Commercial

Over one-hundred commercial operations are active in the Recreation Rivers. These include fishing guides, whitewater companies, boat taxis, air taxis and lodges. As tourism and sportfishing have increases state-wide, so has the number of recreation-oriented businesses. The number of users on the rivers who use commercial services varies widely across the rivers. On the Little Susitna River, a small minority of users employ commercial services, such as guides. However, on the Talachulitna, approximately 98 percent of the users stay at lodges, are guided, or use commercial air transportation. Currently no permit or fee is required for the commercial-recreation use on the Recreation Rivers. A license is, however, required for hunting guides and registration for fish guides.

Early in the process the public identified the need for active field presence to enforce existing laws and to address problems resulting from high public use. To generate revenues to fund part of the management program, a commercial permit fee was proposed in the plan alternatives. Fees for all users were also considered but the lack of public support and legal constraints eliminated this alternative. Another public concern was that some commercial operators or their clients were causing resource damage. Over-harvest of fish, littering, and long-term camps at popular fishing holes were among the concerns. To address these concerns, the plan includes standards for commercial operators and strict guidelines on the placement of commercial camps.

In the final plan, changes were made to the fee structure to more fairly reflect the number of clients each commercial operator serves. During the first year of the commercial permit program, there will be a set fee. In the second year of the program, there will be an additional fee based on the number of days guides accompany clients or the number of drop-offs and pick-ups (if clients are unaccompanied). The final plan also changed the grounds for suspension or revocation of permits. Also, transportation of illegally caught fish or game was added to the list of grounds for revocation or suspension of permits. Criteria for long-term commercial camps were also modified concerning fees, the viewshed within which they are located, and the number of clients allowed per camp.

Additional lodges were prohibited in both the draft and final plans. The advisory board and planning team based this decision on the fact that there are currently over 30 lodges in and adjacent to the corridors and the public opposed to any more. In addition, there are a number of undeveloped parcels of private land and many acres of undeveloped borough lands where new lodges could be built. Authorized lodges on state lands while there are no restriction on the number of lodges that may be built on private and borough lands may result in excessive crowding on the rivers.



Shoreline and Upland Development

Within the Recreation Rivers there are numerous developments including 30 lodges, 150 cabins, 30 docks, sixteen airstrips, seven major bridges, and numerous boat launches. Although much of this development occurs on the 430 parcels of private land in the corridors, many improvements are on adjacent state lands. Currently the department has over 50 applications pending for proposed developments on state land. As use increases on the rivers, more applications for use of state uplands, shorelands, and waters are likely. One of the major objectives of the planning process was to develop management intent for guidelines on how these types of development can be accommodated while mitigating potential adverse effects on other important uses and resources within the corridors. The plan does not address development on private or borough lands.

To develop intent for state lands, plan alternatives included a choice of four general levels of management for each of the 31 units. Choices offered included natural, isolated development, moderate development, and dense development. The majority of public responses favored the option that provided for the least development.

Plan alternatives listed thirty-two locations where public facilities such as campgrounds or boat launches could be located. Overall, there was more opposition to public facilities development than support for it. When provided with the option to select between a developed public facility and a primitive one, respondents always favored the primitive facility. There were some facilities, however, that received support or where opinions were divided. There was strong support for a floatplane landing area at the mouth of the Deshka River. Primitive facilities at the mouth of Nancy Lake Creek and on the Chelatna and Judd lakes were supported. A campground at the mouth of the Deshka River was also supported. A survey of river users found that there was generally more support for public facilities on river segments where use and development levels are high than where use and development levels are low.

The draft plan supported the construction of public facilities for river mouths and road-accessible areas where public use was so high that degradation of the natural environment, public health, and the recreation experience would result without management actions. Specifically, the draft plan supported designating public floatplane and wheelplane landing areas at the mouth of the Deshka River to protect public safety. The plan recognized the need for improvements on state-owned shorelands if the borough builds the Big Lake Road extension and campground on the lower Little Susitna River.

The draft plan included guidelines for a variety of types of development on state lands. Only a few types of development were specifically prohibited. These included remote cabins, trapping cabins, private airstrips, some types of erosion control structures, and floating facilities such as floating lodges and floathomes. The public thought that these types of improvements would benefit only a few individuals and could result in crowding, uses that would conflict with current recreation uses and have potential adverse effects on fish and wildlife habitat.

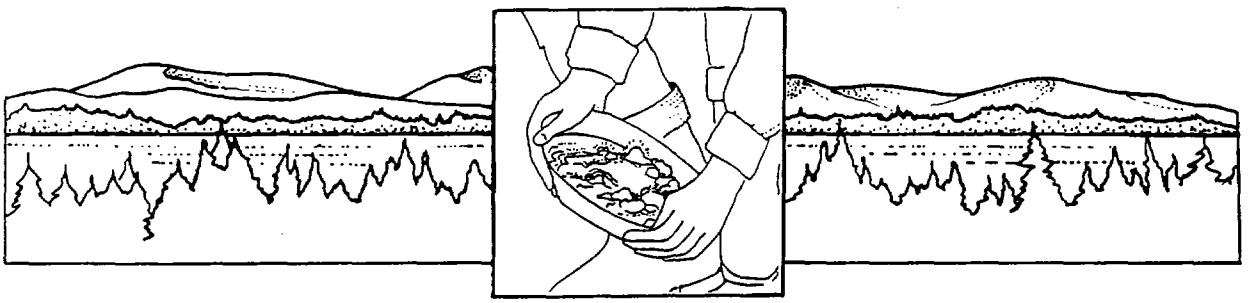
In response to agency and borough comments, guidelines were modified in the draft plan to eliminate redundancies with existing laws and permitting procedures and to ensure stipulations, particularly for bridges, roads, and stream crossings were not needlessly restrictive. Guidelines for private airstrips, flood control levees, and anchor buoys were also modified in the final plan to provide more flexibility to river managers when making decisions that affect river users and communities.



Subsurface

Most of the Recreation Rivers were closed to new mineral entry under the Susitna Area Plan and Willow Subbasin Plan. The Recreation Rivers Act allowed the Commissioner to consider permitting "mining leasing" under a management plan. With the exception of Lake Creek, the corridors have low potential for placer gold. In the alternatives workbook, the public was asked whether upper portions of this creek should be open to mining under the leasehold location system. Most opposed it.

The draft plan reduced the size of the leasing area and included several stipulations to protect recreation, water, and fish and wildlife resources. The public was still concerned and additional stipulations were added in the final plan. The final plan does not allow mining within 300 feet of Lake, Sunflower, and Camp creeks. All water used in a mining operation must be recycled. In addition, living quarters for new locations will not be authorized in the corridors and leases will be limited to five-year periods.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Although the plan for the Recreation Rivers has been completed, it is only the beginning. Without public cooperation, the plan cannot be fully implemented and issues will remain unresolved. To ensure public involvement, the plan identifies a number of ways the public can help. The plan emphasizes heightening the public's awareness of the many resources in the Recreation Rivers and how to protect or enhance them. It also identifies many areas where the public, commercial operators, and other agencies may help with litter patrols, constructing facilities, and maintaining high public use sites. In addition, when the department develops regulations to implement the guidelines in the plan, we will be seeking public advice and input. We sincerely hope that those who are interested will assist in this work, because they have detailed knowledge and information about the rivers.

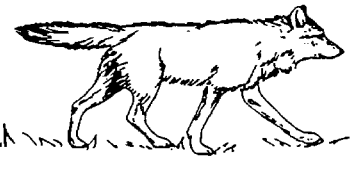
Because the number of river miles and the distances between the six rivers are large, it will be difficult for the department to be as responsive to problems on the river as the public would like. River managers will be looking to the public, service groups, and other agencies to assist with river management.

Please contact us if you would like to help. Further explanations and details of our work are available by contacting the: Mat-Su Area Office, Division of Land and Water, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, 1830 E. Parks Highway, Suite A-116, Wasilla, AK 99687 or by calling 376-4595.

CHAPTER 2

Areawide Land & Water Management Policies

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CHAPTER 2

Areawide Land & Water Management Policies

INTRODUCTION

Summary

This chapter includes goals, management intent, management guidelines, and proposed regulations that apply to state lands in the Recreation Rivers. The policies in this chapter consist of goals and management guidelines. Goals are the general conditions the department is trying to achieve and guidelines are specific directions that will be applied to land and water management decisions as resource use and development occur. For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Definitions

Throughout the plan, the terms *Recreation River, rivers,* and *corridors* are used. Recreation Rivers includes all land and water (including the uplands, shorelands, and water columns) designated under the Recreation Rivers Act (AS 41.23.500(1-6). *River(s)* includes the water column designated under the act. *River corridor(s)* or *corridor(s)* includes the uplands designated under the act. *Uplands* are defined as lands above ordinary high water. *Shorelands* include land belonging to the state that is covered by navigable water up to the ordinary high water mark. For further definitions see the glossary in Appendix A.

GOALS

The Recreation Rivers Act states that the primary purpose for the establishment of the six Recreation Rivers is the maintenance and enhancement of the land and water for recreation. The act states that the primary purpose for the management of the six Recreation Rivers is for a variety of resources and uses including fish and wildlife, recreation, economic use, the enjoyment of the public, multiple use of the uplands, and the accommodation of access.

To meet these goals, state land and water in the Recreation Rivers will be managed for[1]:

Public Ownership. Retain the Recreation Rivers in public ownership for public use.

Recreation. Maintain and enhance the Recreation Rivers for recreation.

Fish and Wildlife. Manage, protect, and maintain the fish and wildlife populations and habitat on a sustained-yield basis.

Public Use. Protect and enhance public use and enjoyment of the Recreation Rivers, including ensuring the availability of public use sites to meet the needs of all users.

[1] The order of the goals listed throughout this chapter are not listed in order of priority.

Economic Use. Allow continued economic uses.

Mitigation Measures. Manage upland activities for multiple use within the Recreation Rivers using mitigation measures to alleviate potential adverse effects on water quality and stream flow.

Access. Accommodate access for resource uses including recreation and tourism within or adjacent to the Recreation Rivers.

Spectrum of Opportunities. Provide for a spectrum of recreation opportunities on the six Recreation Rivers.

Specific Opportunities. Provide specific recreation opportunities on individual rivers, river segments, units, subunits, and public use sites.

Monitoring. Monitor conditions to ensure that the desired recreation opportunities are maintained through time.

Education. Promote public understanding and appreciation of the resource and public values.

Management. Formulate policies and specific guidelines for short- and long-term management.

MANAGEMENT INTENT

The goals listed above will be met by managing state land through management intent statements. Management intent describes the future condition that is desired. Three general classes of management intent were developed to provide diverse recreation opportunities to satisfy the public's varying preferences. The class assigned to each area is similar to current use patterns. Management intent classes range along a recreation opportunity spectrum that includes Class I, Class II, and Class III areas: Class I areas provide primitive recreation opportunities; Class II areas provide semi-primitive recreation opportunities; Class III areas provide recreational opportunities in a more developed setting. Management decisions on whether proposed land uses are compatible and which guidelines apply will be based on these general management intent statements, guidelines, and specific management intent for the subunit. The management intent class for each subunit is shown in Map 2.1 on the following page and described in Table 3.1 in Chapter 3.

PROPOSED REGULATIONS

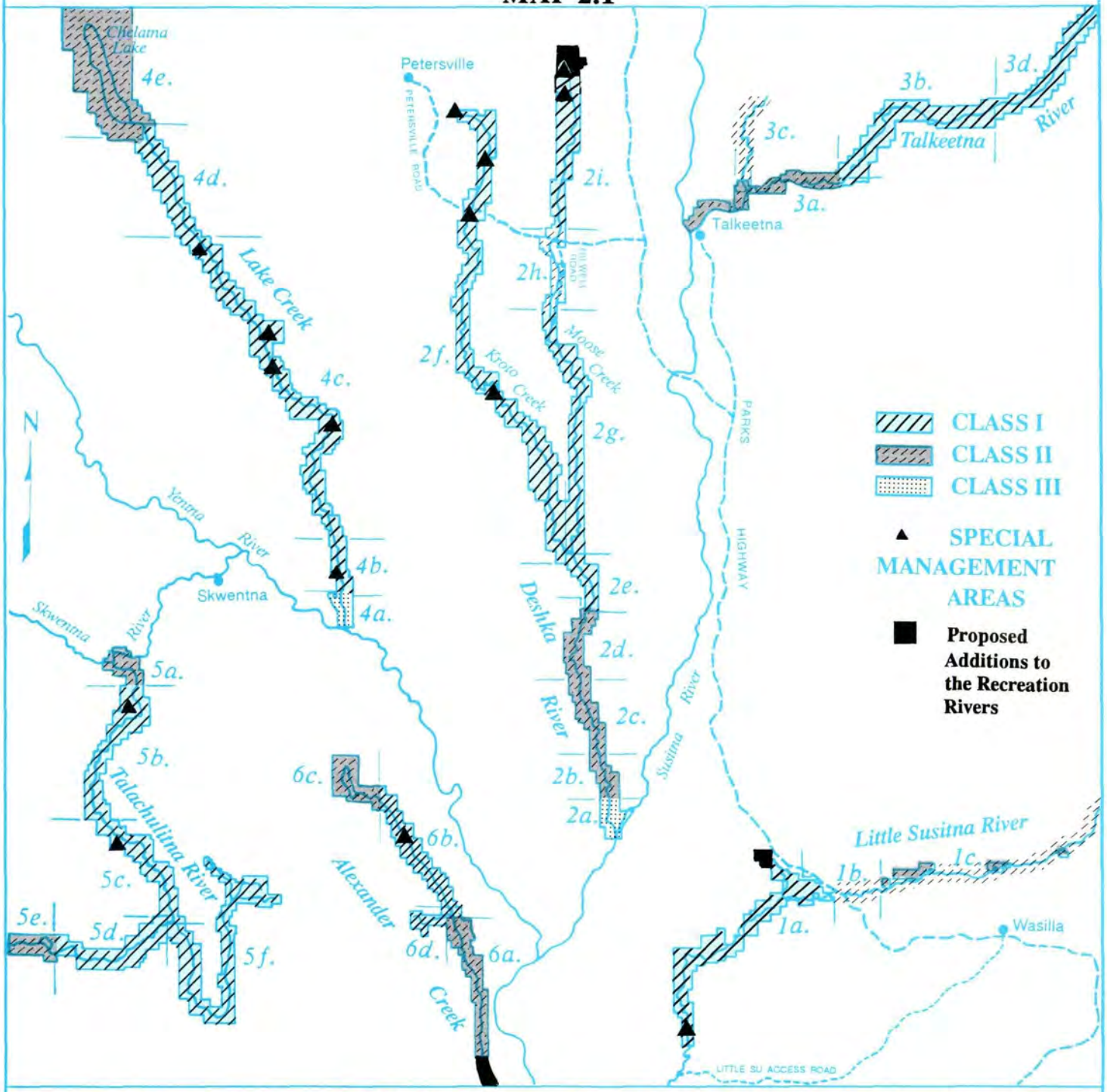
New regulations are necessary to implement the policies and guidelines in the plan. Proposed regulations are described in this chapter. In the Recreation Rivers Act, AS 41.23.440(c) states that, "The commissioner shall adopt regulations necessary to implement the management plan." Most regulations proposed apply to recreational use, including recreation-related commercial use. All regulations, whether or not specifically indicated, apply only to state land and water in the Recreation Rivers. Under AS 41.23.440(b) in the Recreation Rivers Act, DNR may not adopt regulations until the management plan takes effect. Proposed new statutory authorities needed to enforce these regulations are listed in Chapter 4.

Two new types of permits are proposed to implement the plan. The first is the Commercial-use Permit which is described in Chapter 2 (See *Commercial).* The other is the Recreation Rivers Special Use Permit which covers all activities listed in the plan that require a permit but are not covered under existing DNR or other agency permits.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

MANAGEMENT INTENT FOR SUBUNITS

MAP 2.1



MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS

1. Little Susitna River
- 1a. Lower Little Susitna River
- 1b. Middle Little Susitna River
- 1c. Upper Little Susitna River

2. Deshka River
- 2a. Mouth Of Deshka River
- 2b. Lower Deshka River
- 2c. Middle Deshka River
- 2d. Neil Lake
- 2e. The Forks
- 2f. Kroto Creek
- 2g. Lower Moose Creek
- 2h. Oilwell Road
- 2i. Upper Moose Creek

3. Talkeetna River
- 3a. Lower Talkeetna River
- 3b. Middle Talkeetna River
- 3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek
- 3d. Talkeetna Canyon

4. Lake Creek
- 4a. Lake Creek Mouth
- 4b. Lower Lake Creek
- 4c. Middle Lake Creek
- 4d. Upper Lake Creek
- 4e. Chelatna Lake

5. Talachulitna River
- 5a. Mouth Of Talachulitna River
- 5b. Talachulitna River Canyon
- 5c. Middle Talachulitna River
- 5d. Talachulitna Creek
- 5e. Judd Lake
- 5f. Upper Talachulitna River

6. Alexander Creek
- 6a. Lower Alexander Creek
- 6b. Upper Alexander Creek
- 6c. Alexander Lake
- 6d. Sucker Creek

GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are specific directives that will be applied to management decisions. DNR will use criteria included in the guidelines when considering permit or lease applications on state land. All Chapter 2 guidelines, whether or not specifically indicated, apply to all state land in the Recreation Rivers. For additional guidelines, see *Management Guidelines* for each unit and subunit in Chapter 3.

PUBLIC USE SITES

Goals

Public Use. Protect and enhance public recreation use and enjoyment of public use sites.

Protect Values. Protect the public recreation value of these sites.

Management Guidelines

Public use sites are sites on state land and water that have been identified as particularly important for public access, fishing, camping, or other recreation or public use. The management intent is to protect the opportunity for the public to use these sites, and to protect the public value of the sites. Seventy-three (73) public use sites have been identified in the Recreation Rivers. When uplands are in borough or private ownership, the public use site and its guidelines apply only to the land below ordinary high water. See the unit maps in Chapter 3 that show these sites. Appendix I lists all sites.

Several guidelines in Chapter 2 apply to these sites. For example, commercial camps that remain for more than four days in the summer are not allowed in public use sites. Improvements such as public facilities, docks, boat ramps, and public airstrips may be allowed. Camping may be restricted to identified sites if a campground is constructed or if designated campsites are identified. Public use sites, because of their high value for public use, will receive higher levels of management attention than other less heavily used areas.

The list of sites is based on the best available information. As use patterns change and more information becomes available, new sites are likely to be identified and existing sites deleted. DNR should work with the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to identify additional sites. Additions or deletions from the list of the public use sites requires a "Minor Change" to the plan. See *Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment* in Chapter 4. Also see *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

Goals

Access. Accommodate reasonable access improvements to support uses on private and state lands located in these areas.

Improvements on Private Land. Allow reasonable improvements on state lands to support uses of private lands.

Management Guidelines

Special management areas are areas on state land and water where specific developments are proposed or where clusters of private land are located. Their designation as special management areas acknowledges these circumstances, and the need for a different management intent for levels of development and recreation experiences than surrounding public land. There are fifteen (15) special management areas shown in Map 2.1 and in the unit maps in Chapter 3. Appendix I includes a list of all special management areas. Special management areas are located in Class I. areas. Special management areas will be managed as Class II areas. Motorized access is allowed in these areas even when they are located along non-motorized river segments. When uplands are in private or borough ownership, the special management area only includes the land below ordinary high water and the water column. Additions to or deletions from the list of special management areas require a "Plan Amendment." See Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment in Chapter 4. Also see *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 3.

RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT AREAS

Goals

Opportunities for Development. Accommodate opportunities for small scale developments and access improvements for public, commercial, and agency use.

Shoreline Vegetation. Maximize the amount of shoreline remaining in a natural timbered or vegetated state.

Habitat. Maintain the functional integrity of fish and wildlife habitat at no less than existing levels of productive capability.

Scenery. Protect and maintain the scenic qualities of rivers, lakes, and their viewsheds.

Shorelands. Minimize disturbance of lands below ordinary high water and associated with wetlands and floodplains.

Uplands. Minimize the degradation of the land adjacent to the rivers and lakes which may have deleterious effects on water quality, stream flow, and hydrology.

Public Use. Protect and maintain public uses of the rivers, shorelines, and associated riparian areas.

Safety. Protect the public from hazardous structures or channel modifications in or over the river, or along the shoreline.

Structures. Ensure the long-term public use of the Recreation Rivers by minimizing the construction of long-term habitable private facilities on state lands. These include cabins for private use, trapping cabins, remote cabins, and unauthorized cabins.

Water Quality and Quantity. Protect riparian areas which are groundwater recharge areas, regulate water flow, retain floodwaters, purity water, reduce sediment and nutrient loads, and are the basis for food chains.

Consolidate Improvements. Consolidate permanent structures, when feasible and prudent, to areas where there are already significant improvements on both public and private lands.

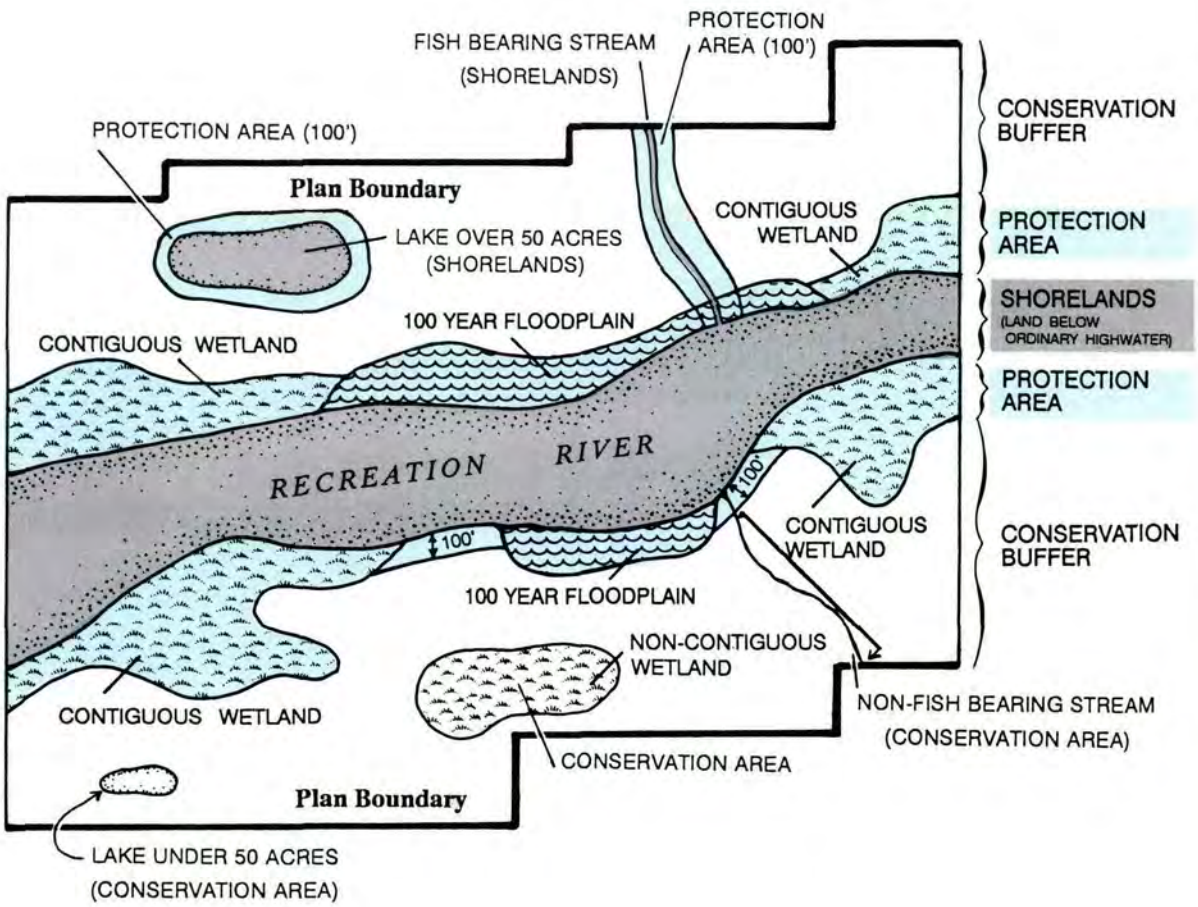
Management Guidelines

Riparian Management Areas. Riparian management areas include three areas: land and water below ordinary-high-water, protection areas, and conservation areas. Special guidelines apply to these areas. Activities in riparian management areas shall be authorized consistent with the U.S. Army Corps Section 404 process where it applies. Maps showing the floodplains and wetlands that help delineate these areas are in Appendix H (under a different cover).

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT AREAS

FIGURE 2.1



Land and Water Below Ordinary High Water

Description: This includes water and land-below-ordinary-high-water on navigable river channels, lakes over 50 acres, and fish-bearing streams. Ordinary high water is the mark along the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of the nontidal water are so common and usual, and so long continued in all ordinary years, as to leave a natural line impressed on the bank or shore, indicated by erosion, shelving, changes in soil characteristics, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, or other distinctive physical characteristics [from 11 AAC 53.900(23)].

Intent. The management intent for the land below ordinary high water or in the waterbody is to protect the water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife habitat, hydrologic regime, riparian ecosystem, and recreation uses of the river. In general, only those activities that are water-dependent should be allowed below or within 100 feet of ordinary high water. These activities are defined as those that must have direct access or proximity to, or be located in, the water to fulfill their purpose.

Protection Area

Description: The protection area includes contiguous wetlands, the 100-year floodplain, or 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark, whichever is greater (see Figure 2.1). Contiguous wetlands are defined as wetlands which have a visible surface water connection with the six Recreation Rivers or their tributaries. The 100-year floodplain is the point to which the six rivers or their tributaries will flood, on the average, once every 100 years or that area that has a one-percent chance of being flooded in any given year. The minimum 100-foot width of the protection area applies to all navigable or fish-bearing waterbodies and to lakes over 50 acres.

There are some guidelines in the plan that apply only to development within one-hundred foot buffers along waterbodies. They apply to activities such as commercial camps, storage of large volumes of petroleum products, and material sales. A 75-foot, rather than one-hundred foot, setback ordinance applies to all borough and private lands.

The wetlands shown in Appendix H (under a separate cover) were mapped by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The maps only show wetlands in the Recreation Rivers. The definition (see glossary in Appendix A) used is from the National Wetlands Classification System.

For purposes of this management plan, wetlands are further divided into two classes. Contiguous wetlands have a visible surface water connection with the Recreation Rivers or their tributaries. Non-contiguous wetlands have no apparent surface-water connection. Actual wetlands may vary from those shown in the plan addendum. Wetland and non-wetland areas less than two acres are not shown. Field verification may be necessary in some instances.

There may be exceptions where the minimum protection area is wider (e.g, high banks with low soil stability or forest susceptibility to windthrow). The minimum width of the protection area along navigable waters, fish-bearing streams, and lakes over 50 acres should be expanded in sloping areas as follows:

Average Side Slope	Minimum Buffer Width
20-40%	125'
40% or greater	150'

In forested areas, the minimum protection area should be widened as necessary to increase resistance to windthrow in areas subject to strong winds.

Intent: The primary intent of guidelines applying to the protection area is to minimize disturbance to rivers and their associated ecosystems so that they may maintain their function in a dynamic natural state, thus enabling the fish and wildlife resources to maintain critical life functions and productivity.

In the protection area, few activities which would degrade the integrity or function of the riparian zone, floodplain, contiguous wetlands, or the adjacent waterbodies will be allowed. Only those uses which are water-dependent should be allowed within 100 feet of or below ordinary-high-water. Uses may also include bridges, roads, and utilities that must cross rivers as long as they are constructed consistent with the *Upland Access*

guidelines. Water-dependent uses are defined as those that must have direct access or proximity to, or be located in, the water to fulfill their purpose. When located in the floodplain, uses and structures must also comply with the borough flood damage prevention ordinance.

Conservation Buffer

Description: The conservation buffer includes all the land in the Recreation Rivers that is located outside the protection area and above ordinary-high-water mark. This also includes non-contiguous wetlands that are not directly connected by surface waters with the Recreation Rivers or their tributaries and located outside the 100-year floodplain. Also included in this area are lakes under 50 acres and non-navigable, non-fish bearing streams.

Intent: The purpose of the conservation area is to provide a vegetative shield for critical resources in the protection area. Removal of natural vegetation in this area should be minimized. Without the pollution dissipation function provided by the conservation buffer, the inner protection area would be vulnerable to degradation.

Modifications to Floodplain and Wetland Maps. Floodplains and wetlands are shown in *Appendix H, Wetlands and Floodplains in the Recreation Rivers.* Rivers are dynamic and floodplains and wetlands may change. In addition, there may be cases where the map scale does not accurately depict these areas. If field verification or other sources of information indicate errors in the wetland and floodplain boundaries in the appendix to the plan, changes may be made through a *"Minor Change"* to the plan. See *Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment* in Chapter 4.

UPLAND DEVELOPMENT

Management Guidelines

General Guidelines. The following general guidelines should be applied to development one-hundred feet or more landward from ordinary high water in the Recreation Rivers:

1. *Vegetation.* Removal of vegetation shall be limited to the minimum necessary to accomplish the allowed use.

2. *Disturbance.* Surface disturbance, particularly in the protection areas, shall be minimized.

3. *Fill.* Fill shall be limited to that needed for the structural integrity of the project.

4. *Revegetation.* Disturbed soil areas shall be revegetated as soon as feasible and prudent after disturbance and no later than the next growing season. Natural revegetation is acceptable if the site is suitable and will revegetate itself within the next growing season.

5. *Contours.* Pre-existing contours should be maintained when feasible and prudent.

6. *Consolidation.* Joint use and consolidation of facilities will be encouraged wherever it is feasible and prudent to do so. Facilities shall be designed and sited to accommodate future development and avoid unnecessary duplication of facilities. The feasibility of using an existing facility shall be evaluated before the construction of a new facility is authorized.

7. *Ordinances.* Projects in the floodplain shall comply with the borough floodplain hazard protection ordinance which requires engineering plans prior to construction.

Resource Management Camps. Resource management camps are facilities established for resource or recreation management, or for scientific study. They are generally constructed by natural resource agencies such as DNR or DFG, the borough, or non-profit groups such as the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association and the University. Resource management camps must be authorized by a land use permit.

These facilities benefit a wide range of river users and therefore may be authorized in any subunit. The following guidelines should be followed where feasible and prudent:

1. To avoid contributing to crowding at public use sites, camps unrelated to the management or protection of the resources in these sites should not be located in or near these sites unless the location of the camp at the site complements the public use of the site.

2. To avoid damaging new sites and for more efficient management of the rivers by different agencies, new camps should be located near existing resource management camps, such as near the DFG camps on the Lower Deshka River, Lake Creek, and Talachulitna River.

3. Camps should be located at least 100 feet from the rivers and should be sited to minimize evidence of human use as seen from the river. This may not always be possible for water-dependent structures such as weirs, sonar sites, fish counting stations, or fish trap devices. If such facilities must be located on the river, they should be rustic in nature, and constructed of materials that visually blend into the surroundings.

Remote Cabins and Trapping Cabins. Construction of private cabins on state lands is not compatible with the management intent for these rivers. Remote cabins and trapping cabin permits will not be authorized in the corridors. Existing trapping cabin permits may be renewed if they do not create conflicts with fish or wildlife, habitat, recreation, or other uses in the subunit.

Unauthorized Cabins. DNR should remove unauthorized cabins on state land from the corridors. Actions should first focus on unauthorized cabins in Class I subunits (particularly where cabins are visible from the river), where they represent a significant liability, or are located in important habitat areas. Unauthorized cabins in Class II and III areas will be evaluated for their suitability as public use cabins, consistency with the management intent for the subunit, habitat and recreation use considerations, structural design and integrity, and consistency with the public use cabin guidelines described elsewhere in this chapter. Trespassers may be removed but the cabin may remain for cabins with historic values, as determined by the State Office of History and Archeology. Also see *Recreation, Public Use Cabins* and *Heritage Resources, Site Protection* in this chapter.

Removal of the unauthorized A-frame cabin on Moose Creek and the unauthorized cabin on Shovel Lake are a priority. The existing unauthorized mining cabin at the north end of Chelatna Lake will be considered for conversion to a public use cabin. See Subunits in 2g, 4c, and 4e in Chapter 3 and *Recreation, Public Use Cabins* in this chapter.

Communication Towers, Antennae, and Long Wires. These should be sited to avoid or minimize visibility from the river and conflicts with air traffic patterns for airports and landing areas.

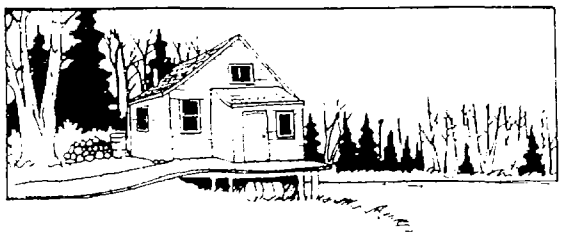
Utilities (including powerlines, telephone lines, and pipelines). Oil and gas gathering and feeding lines will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Also see Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Trumpeter Swans, and Bald Eagles and *Subsurface Resources, Oil and Gas* in this chapter.

Guidelines for construction of these are listed below:

- Utilities shall be designed so as not to be a hazard to river or air navigation or public safety.
- Utilities shall be designed so that there is little or no maintenance required.
- Utilities shall be designed to cross the river and the corridors at 90 degrees or as near perpendicular as possible.
- Construction of utility projects below ordinary high water or in the airspace above waterbodies may be allowed if the project is in the best public interest. Utilities which serve only a few users and cross waterbodies that receive high public use shall be discouraged.
- All construction below ordinary high water shall normally occur between May 15 and July 15 when there is the least potential for damage to fish. This period may vary depending on the DFG Title 16 Permit.

Other Guidelines Affecting Upland Development. Several other guidelines may affect upland development. See the following sections of this chapter.

Shoreline Development
Recreation
Fish and Wildlife Habitat
Commercial



SHORELINE DEVELOPMENT

Management Guidelines

The following guidelines should be used for all types of shoreline development below or within 100 feet of ordinary high water.

1. *Title 16 Permit.* A fish habitat (Title 16) permit is required from DFG for all in-water and shoreline construction work, including the placement of docks in the Recreation Rivers. This permit will specify measures required of the applicant to protect fish habitat. The DFG Habitat Division will evaluate proposed project design for effects on riverflows, hydraulics, and fish habitat before construction begins.

2. *Ordinary High Water.* Only water-dependent uses may be allowed below or within 100 feet of ordinary high water. Water dependent uses are those that can be carried out only on, in, or adjacent to water areas because the use requires access to the waterbody.

3. *Storage of Petroleum Products.* To help protect waterbodies from oil spills, no more than 55 gallons of fuel, oil, or other liquid petroleum products may be stored on state land, water, or associated structures within 100 feet of a waterbody.

4. *Bank Disturbance.* Bank disturbance shall be minimized.

5. *Water Velocity.* Projects below ordinary high water or along the banks of a waterbody shall be located, designed, and maintained so that natural water circulation patterns are not significantly interrupted, unless the changes are an integral part of the project purpose.

6. *Engineering.* The project will be reviewed through applicable agency review processes including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 process. Within DNR, DGGS should have the opportunity to review project designs to assess their potential effects on the hydrology of the river. Projects in floodplains shall comply with the borough flood damage protection ordinance which requires engineering plans. A structure will not be allowed if there is little likelihood of success or the project is not sufficient to withstand a 100-year flood event.

7. *Temporary Fills.* Temporary fill shall be completely removed after the completion of a project requiring fill.

8. *Use of Shorelands Where Uplands are in Private Ownership.* DNR will consult with the private upland landowner and use its best professional judgement to determine if a proposed use occurs on state-owned shorelands. DNR will retain the right to issue a permit or lease for uses that are not prohibited over the objection of adjacent landowners. However, DNR will carefully consider comments from the private landowners and others when making a decision.

Applications for shoreland uses that require use of private uplands will not be considered until there is a written agreement between the applicant and the upland owner(s) approving the

necessary use. The term of the lease or permit should not be longer than the term of agreement between the applicant and the upland owner. If the applicant has not applied for the use of adjacent uplands, the application must show how all the necessary associated uses will be accommodated on the shorelands.

9. *Construction Season.* All in-water construction shall occur in the shortest practical time.

10. *Revegetation.* Disturbed soils shall be revegetated as soon as feasible and prudent after disturbance and no latter than the next growing season. Natural revegetation is acceptable if the site is suitable and will revegetate itself within the next growing season.

Types of development

Erosion Control Projects. Requests for permits for erosion control projects on the Recreation Rivers will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by DLW and other appropriate agencies. While riprap, gabions, drop structures, trees cabled to the bank, and projects using native vegetation are the preferred types of erosion control methods, as technologies and materials improve, other techniques may be approved. General criteria that will be used to evaluate a proposed project include whether the project is in the best public interest, effects the hydrology of the river, impacts fish and wildlife habitat, and is a hazard to navigation.

1. *Structures to Protect Private Property.* Building erosion control structures to prevent the erosion of private property is generally discouraged because of its detrimental effects on the river and adjacent property. Before a project is approved, the applicant shall demonstrate that there is no feasible or prudent alternative to constructing an erosion control structure. Bank protection may be allowed as part of bridge construction.

2. *Reclamation.* Structures or improvements designed to reclaim land from the river will not be allowed, except when determined to be in the best public interest. Structures will not be authorized to create additional private property by filling in a river.

3. *Maintenance.* Erosion control projects should be designed to minimize the need for maintenance. Bank erosion control measures shall be limited to the areas where erosion is excessive and should not create further bank disturbance.

4. *Materials.* No materials shall be removed from below ordinary high water except to create a flat base for the toe of a structure.

5. *Removal of Vegetation.* Removal of vegetation shall be limited to that which is necessary to accomplish the allowed use. Organic materials such as trees, brush, or soil shall not be deposited in the waterbody unless specifically authorized. The structure will be revegetated above ordinary high water by spreading overburden and planting native species such as grasses and woody vegetation such as willows and alders. The materials used shall be free of loose dirt or gravel below ordinary high water. For some types of structures, materials may be required to be placed on filter fabric.

6. *Construction Period.* All in-water construction and maintenance shall normally occur between May 15 and July 15 when there is the least potential damage to fish. This period may vary depending on the DFG Title 16 permit.

7. *Design.* The structure shall be designed so as not to be a hazard to river navigation.

Cabled Trees. Trees cabled to the bank for bank protection may be allowed. In some areas this method has proven to be cost effective, successful in reducing erosion, and in providing fish habitat. Using trees already in the river or which are moved from another area where they were a hazard to navigation are preferred but not required. If cut from banks, trees should be taken from sufficiently far from the bank so as not to accelerate bank erosion. Trees shall be firmly cabled to the bank to withstand a 100-year flood event.

Drop Structures. These are structures which are placed on the bed of the river to redirect flows. Drop structures have proven effective in controlling bank erosion and have less potential to damage fish habitat than many other erosion control methods. However, they can be a

hazard to navigation unless properly designed, constructed, and maintained. Drop structures may be considered on streams not used by boats. On navigable rivers they must be designed, constructed, and operated to maintain or enhance navigation before they will be authorized.

Dolphins, Groins, Bulkheads, and Jetties. Because these structures cause adverse effects on river hydrology, such as increasing sedimentation and loss of fish habitat, they are prohibited in the Recreation Rivers. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for bulkheads and other in-water structures associated with approved bridge construction. See *Stream Crossing* in this section.

Diversion Channels, Navigation Channels, Canals, Boat Slips, and Boat Harbors. These types of improvements significantly alter stream banks, bank vegetation, river flow characteristics, and fish habitat. They are prohibited on the Recreation Rivers, except where channelization is necessary adjacent to public bridges.

Flood Control Levees. Flood control levees are prohibited in the Recreation Rivers unless they are found to be in the best public interest. They may be authorized in areas adjacent to communities such as Talkeetna with numerous public and private improvements subject to flooding. Temporary sand bagging during a flood may be allowed.

Dams. Under Section 41.23.440(2), the plan will develop long-range guidelines and management priorities to "protect, maintain, or enhance the free flowing nature of the river." Dams are prohibited on the main stem of the six rivers and their major tributaries. Major tributaries include those that are either boatable, have high value fish runs, or are frequently used for bank fishing. These include: Nancy Lake Creek and Government Creek (Little Susitna River); Kroto Creek, Moose Creek, Trapper Creek, No-name Creek (RM 14), Cabin Creek, Amber Lake Creek, and Gate Creek (Deshka River); Clear Creek, Larson Creek, Sheep River, Disappointment Creek, Iron Creek, Fish Creek, Prairie Creek, Cache Creek (Talkeetna River); Yenlo Creek, Camp Creek, Home Creek, Sunflower Creek, Coffee Creek, Friday Creek, Talachulitna Creek, Upper Talachulitna River, and Wolf Lake Creek (Talachulitna River); Sucker Creek, Pierce Creek, and Trail Creek (Alexander Creek). These guidelines apply only to these portions of the above-listed streams that are in the Recreation River designated boundaries.

Dams may be allowed on minor tributaries approved by DFG including for fisheries enhancement programs. Dams on minor tributaries containing fish must allow for fish passage.

Trams and Cables. Trams may be authorized under permit if there is a demonstrated public need, and the structure is not a hazard to river or air navigation.

Anchor Buoys and Anchor Markers. Because the rivers are generally too narrow to safely accommodate anchor buoys and markers and these devices are often used to reserve prime fishing spots or other high value areas, they are prohibited with a few exceptions. They may be allowed at the mouth of Lake Creek under the conditions listed below. They are also generally allowed on lakes if they are not a hazard to boat or float plane navigation, and they are clearly marked with the owner's name. These guidelines will be established by regulation.

Although the confluence area of Lake Creek and the Yentna River is wide enough to safely accommodate anchor buoys and markers, the public has expressed concern that these have been used in the past to reserve fishing spots. However, buoys are needed to safely fish in the fast-flowing water of the Yentna River. To address this concern, at the mouth of Lake Creek the following guidelines apply to anchor buoys and anchor marker buoys:

1. *Navigation.* Buoys shall not block the primary navigation channel to Lake Creek.

2. *Time.* Buoys and markers shall not remain in place for more than six hours after which they must be pulled and cannot be reset for one hour in the same vicinity from which they were removed.

3. *Unattended Buoys.* Buoys shall not remain unattached to boats for more than 30 minutes after which they will be subject to removal. Unoccupied boats shall not be attached to buoys for any length of time.

4. *Switching Occupants.* Boats may not switch off using the same buoy in the same location unless the buoy is pulled.

The buoy can not be reset in the same location for one hour.

5. *Marking Buoys.* Buoys shall have the name of the business or name of the individual using the buoy. If an individual or company has more than one buoy, each buoy shall have a different number to ensure that they can be monitored.

Other Types of Buoys. Buoys or signs on floats may be allowed by permit to mark floatplane landing areas and no-wake areas, or placed by agencies for resource or recreation management purposes. They may also be authorized for non-profit or other groups serving a public purpose if the use is consistent with the management intent for the subunit. Also see *Anchor Buoys and Anchor Markers* in this section and Education, Signs in this chapter.

Boat Storage. Boat storage is defined as keeping a boat in one place more than four days in summer (from May 15 to August 31) and more than 14 days in winter (from September 1 to May 14). This includes boat attached to the bank by a line, pulled up on the shorelands, or placed on the uplands. Boat storage does not include boats tied to anchor or marker buoys, anchored to the bottom, or attached to docks. See guidelines for *Docks, Buoys* and *Marinas* in this section. Keeping a boat in one spot for less than 4 days in summer and up to 14 days in winter does not require a permit. Storage of boats may be allowed for longer than these periods consistent with the following guidelines:

1. *Winter.* To avoid boats being washed away during spring break-up, during the period when waterbodies are frozen, boats may not be kept below ordinary high water.

2. *Private Land.* Boats may be stored on state shorelands or tied to the bank immediately adjacent to private land by the landowner without a permit during the ice-free season.

3. *Camps.* Boats may be stored by the permittee when the boats are adjacent to authorized commercial or resource management camps.

4. *Designated Storage Areas.* Any other boat storage shall be authorized by permit in designated areas. Any boat owner or agency may apply to designate an area for boat storage. Approved areas should be located so that boats: do not hinder navigation, are not likely to wash away, are consolidated as much as possible to avoid a proliferation of sites, do not block public access, and do not result in damage to the banks of waterbodies.

Boat storage guidelines shall be established by regulation. Boats that are not stored consistent with these guidelines may be impounded. The need for a designated boat storage areas has been identified in Chapter 3 by subunit for Neil Lake, the mouth of the Deshka, Chelatna Lake airstrip, and the middle Talachulitna River.

Boat Ramps. Boat ramps are prohibited in Class I areas. Ramps may be authorized in Class II areas, Class III areas, and special management areas. Boat ramps shall be designed and constructed consistent with the following guidelines:

1. No material shall be removed from the affected waterbody except that which is necessary for placement of the boat ramp.

2. Ramps will not be located in important fish spawning or rearing areas.

3. Ramps shall be designed so that little or no maintenance is required.

4. In-water construction work shall be completed in the shortest practicable time.

5. Ramps will be designed so as not to increase erosion or significantly alter hydraulic characteristics either upstream or downstream of the project.

Also see *Recreation, Public Facilities* in this chapter.

Floating Docks. Community docks, marinas, and docks located in public use sites may be authorized by permit if they meet the guidelines listed below. All other floating docks are generally allowed and do not need a DNR permit as long as they meet the guidelines listed below. All docks require a DFG Title 16 Permit if they are in waters containing anadromous fish.

Floating docks shall be removed prior to ice forming on the waterbody. During winter, docks and associated boats and equipment must be stored

consistent with the boat storage guidelines in this section. It is the responsibility of the boat owner to retrieve docks or parts of docks if they break loose from the site where they were stored.

The total surface area of the dock may not exceed 100 square feet. Docks shall not extend more than 15 feet from the edge of the water of a lake or river at any water level. Walkways or ladders extending beyond the ordinary-high-water for purposes of connecting docks with the shoreline shall not exceed four feet in width.

Docks shall be designed and the boats tied to them in a manner that they do not create a hazard to, or impede, or restrict water or air navigation. Boats tied to any docks in the water do not require a boat storage permit.

To avoid contaminating waterbodies, non-treated or pressure-treated construction materials are preferred over surface-treated materials that do not hold toxic preservatives well. Surface-treated or creosote-treated materials shall not be used in contact with bodies of water. Barrels used in the construction of floating docks shall be clean and sealed to prevent escape of hazardous materials into waterbodies.

Docks are prohibited on rivers in Class I areas. Docks are generally allowed or may be authorized by permit on lakes in Class I areas and in Special Management Areas as long as they are consistent with the dock guidelines. Docks in public use sites require a permit and will only be authorized if they are consistent with the dock guidelines and management intent for the public use site and are either located immediately adjacent to privately owned uplands or will be used for public purposes such as for a public campground. Also see *Floating Facilities, Commercial Marinas, and Floating Mobile Docks* in this section.

Stationary Docks. Cantilevered docks, and docks supported by fill, rocks, log cribbing, or other materials affixed to the shorelands are prohibited. Pile-supported docks may be allowed on lakes consistent with applicable floating dock guidelines.

Floating Facilities. The public was generally opposed to allowing floating facilities that provided overnight accommodations on the six rivers. They also opposed commercial operations that sold goods and food in the six rivers, particularly when these activities occurred in public use sites. The public thought that this type of activity was incompatible with the public use of state waterways and their recreation values. They also thought that there were already ample opportunities for this type of activity on private lands. Use or storage of floating facilities will not be authorized in the planning area. Floating facilities include floathomes, floating stores, floating food vendors, floatcamps, floating lodges, and floating residential or commercial facilities located on state waters or grounded on state shorelands. Floating facilities may, however, temporarily pass through the Recreation Rivers when enroute to other areas along the Susitna, Yentna, and Skwentna Rivers. Engaging in soliciting, selling, or peddling liquids or edibles for human consumption, or distributing circulars, or hawking, peddling, or vending goods, wares, services, or merchandise from floating facilities or boats is generally prohibited. There are some exceptions for marinas. Also see *Marinas* (below) and *Commercial, Prohibited Commercial Activities* elsewhere in this chapter.

Marinas and Community Docks. Marinas include docks used for commercial or public purposes, such as those associated with lodges or campgrounds. Marinas used for commercial purposes may provide limited services such as boat moorage, boat rentals, fuel, and oil which may be required by the public for access to the Recreation Rivers, particularly in those areas furthest from the railbelt. Community docks are docks built and maintained by more than one landowner. Adjoining property owners are encouraged to cooperatively design and construct community floating docks instead of building one dock for each landowner. All guidelines for floating docks, stationary docks, and floating facilities described in the previous sections apply. However, the minimum size of the dock may be larger than 100 square feet to serve more users. Also see *Commercial,* in this chapter.

Floating Mobile Docks. These are self-propelled floating, mobile docks which are often used for fishing. Their use is allowed if they have U.S. Coast Guard numbers and comply with DNR boating and commercial use regulations (if they are used for commercial use).

Ladders, Ramps, Walkways and Steps. These structures require DNR land use permits. Below ordinary high water the following guidelines apply. They are prohibited during the ice-free season and in Class I areas year-round. Surface-treated or creosote-treated materials shall not be used in contact with bodies of water. Their width shall not exceed 4 feet. They shall not block, impede, or be a hazard to public access and navigation. They require a DFG Title 16 Permit. They shall not be authorized if they cause significant disturbance to banks of waterbodies. Structures located in public use sites should be consistent with the management intent for those sites.

Existing Erosion Control Projects, Docks, Ladders, Walkways, Boat Ramps, Pedestrian Ramps, and Steps. The structures or parts of structures that were located below ordinary high water or on a waterbody prior to August 1989 when aerial photos were taken of the Recreation Rivers; and that met the guidelines for these types of structures may be authorized by permit, but may be required to be brought into compliance with plan guidelines. DFG Title 16 requirements have no statute of limitations and require compliance. Improvement or expansion of existing structures will require authorization from both DNR and DFG. Those constructed after this date must be brought into compliance. Unmaintained structures must be removed if they pose a threat to public safety or to navigation. This guideline may be modified in regulations without an amendment to the plan if, after review of regulations by the Attorney General's office, they are found inconsistent with water access statutes.

Stream Crossings. The findings and intent section of the Recreation Rivers Act states, "The designation of the six rivers and their corridors is not intended to become an undue impediment to .... the development of access within, across, and around the rivers and their corridors." The following guidelines are to accommodate stream crossings while mitigating effects on recreation, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat. (Also see *Trails Action Plan* in Chapter 4 and *Upland Access, Roads* in this chapter).

Preferred Type of Stream Crossing. In areas where there is frequent vehicle traffic, bridges or culverts are the preferred method for crossing streams, rather than fording. Fording should be avoided in spawning areas when spawning fish or eggs are present. If culverts are used, bottomless-arch culverts are preferred over round or elliptical culverts in fish spawning habitat. Any crossing of streams containing anadromous fish must be in compliance with Title 16.

Habitat. Road and trail crossings must provide for fish passage and habitat protection. All water crossings should be engineered to avoid interference with spawning areas.

Hydrology. At a minimum, bridges and culverts shall be designed to pass a 50-year flood event without damage to the structure or road. Any anticipated impact of bridge or culvert construction affecting stream volume, velocity, backwater, direction, sediment transport, or substrate characteristics shall be evaluated for significance. Bridges and culverts shall be designed to comply with all federal, state, and borough permit requirements. Where a regulatory floodway has been designated or where studies are underway to establish a regulatory floodway, the design of bridges and culverts shall be consistent with standards established by federal, state, and local government agencies for the administration of the National Flood Insurance Program. Freeboard shall be provided, where practicable, to protect bridge structures from debris and scour-related failure. Road drainage should not be discharged directly over the edges of a stream bank.

Clearance. Bridges and culverts shall provide adequate clearance for boat, pedestrian, horseback, and large game passage whenever these uses occur or are anticipated. All bridges shall be designed to provide adequate clearance for all watercraft that normally use the river during normal annual high water.

Construction Period. All in-water construction and maintenance shall occur normally between May 15 and July 15 when there is the least potential to damage fish habitat. This period may vary depending on the DFG Title 16 Permit.

Season. In-water construction work shall be completed in the shortest practicable time.

Materials and Fill. Only the minimum amount of material necessary to form the base for a bridge or culvert shall be removed from below the ordinary high water level in the immediate vicinity of the structure. All fill materials shall be obtained from upland sources. Fine sediments shall be prevented from entering the river by using clean fill, geotextile barriers, or other measures where necessary. Any waste material shall be disposed of outside the protection area.

Bank Disturbance. Bank protection measures may be allowed in areas where engineers have determined that erosion is excessive for that particular river.

Consolidation of Access. Where feasible and prudent, stream crossings shall be consolidated.

Bank Protection. Bank protection measures should be considered for all areas where disturbance has occurred. All exposed areas should be protected or revegetated.

Spawning and Rearing Areas. When feasible and prudent, crossings of waterbodies should be located outside of important spawning and rearing areas.

Priority for Bridge Sites. Where feasible and prudent, the following criteria for consideration of alternate bridge crossing sites should be used (listed below in descending order of priority).

1. Crossing outside rather than inside the Recreation Rivers.

2. Crossing in Class II or III areas or in special management areas.

3. Crossing in Class I areas where there are no restrictions on motorized transport.

4. Crossing in Class I areas where there are restrictions on motorized transport.

Private Bridges. Private bridges are prohibited across the following main stems of rivers frequently used for boating unless they are determined to be in the public interest. This guideline applies only to the portions of the below-listed streams that are in the Recreation River boundaries.

1. Little Susitna River - Downstream from the Shushana Road bridge and upriver from the Edgerton-Parks Road bridge

2. Deshka- Downstream of Amber Lake Creek on Kroto Creek and downstream from the Oilwell Road crossing on Moose Creek

3. Talkeetna River - Entire river

4. Lake Creek - Chelatna Lake downstream to the Yentna River

5. Talachulitna River - Forks downstream to the mouth

6. Talachulitna Creek - Judd Lake downstream to the Forks

7. Alexander Creek - Alexander Lake downstream to the Susitna River

Ice Bridges. Ice bridges may be authorized on a case-by-case basis and must be consistent with Title 16 guidelines. Ice bridges should be located in areas that require little or no disturbance to river banks.

Other Guidelines Affecting Shoreline Development. Several other guidelines may affect shoreline development. See the following sections of this chapter.

Upland Development
Commercial
Upland Access
Water & Solid Waste
Materials
Education

RECREATION

Goals

Quality Experience. Protect and enhance public use and enjoyment of the Recreation Rivers.

Areawide Opportunities. Provide for a spectrum of recreation opportunities on the six Recreation Rivers.

River-segment Opportunities. Provide specific recreation opportunities on river segments.

Signs of use. Improve overcrowding, litter, and human waste conditions in heavily used areas.

Scenic Qualities. Maintain and enhance for viewing the existing characteristic natural landscape within the Recreation Rivers.

Public Use Sites. Ensure the availability of public use sites to meet the needs of all users.

Public Facilities. Provide public facilities for the protection of the natural resources, and to provide for public access, convenience, and safety.

Challenge and Risk. Encourage self reliance and maintain the opportunity for users to encounter challenges and risks inherent in the natural environment, particularly on the more remote rivers.

Health and Safety. Minimize human-caused risks resulting from developments or particular activities which may endanger the public.

Education. Promote public understanding and appreciation of the resource values in the Recreation Rivers.

Monitoring. Monitor conditions to ensure that the desired recreation opportunities are maintained through time.

Management Guidelines

Recreation River Permits. The department shall develop regulations that require permits for certain uses in the Recreation Rivers. *Recreation Rivers Permits* may be issued for activities that are generally allowed activities on other state lands but are restricted in the Recreation Rivers. This type of permit may be issued for activities such as large events or for large assemblies that previously did not require a permit. Existing types of authorizations such as land use permits and rights-of-way may be used whenever possible. Proposed regulations for these permits are described in this section and other parts of this chapter. Also see *Appendix D, List of Regulations, and Appendix F, Authorizations for Use of State Land and Water.*

Primitive Tent Camps. Examples of primitive tent camps include portable camps such as pup tents, tarps supported by poles, and other similar designs. They require no authorization on state land throughout the Recreation Rivers under the following conditions. Between May 15 and August 31, primitive camps may remain in one place for up to 96 hours (four nights) before they must be disassembled and moved to another location at least one-mile away. Between September 1 and May 14, primitive camps may remain in one site for up to 14 days before they must be moved. Exceptions to this limit may be made for camping in developed public facilities (see next section). The department should promulgate regulations to enforce this limit. Also see *Commercial, Commercial Camps* in this chapter.

Storing Equipment and Vehicles. Storing equipment or parking vehicles is generally allowed in the Recreation Rivers under the following conditions. Between May 15 and August 31, vehicles and equipment may remain in one place for up to 96 hours (4 nights) before they must be moved to another location at least one-mile away unless authorized. Between September 1 and May 14, there is no limit on the time that these may be stored on state land. The department should promulgate regulations to enforce these limits. The department should also develop regulations to address abandoned equipment.

Storage of boats is addressed under *Shoreline Development, Boat Storage* in this chapter.

Public Facilities. Under Section 41.23.470(d), "To enhance public use and enjoyment of a recreation river corridor under a management plan adopted under AS 41.23.440, the commissioner may provide for the construction and operation of commercial facilities such as lodges, campgrounds, and boat launches."

The public generally opposed building developed public facilities in the Recreation Rivers. However, public facilities may be necessary for certain river mouths and road accessible areas where public use increases to the extent where degradation of the natural environment, public health, and the recreation experience may result without management actions.

Primitive Public Facilities. These include improvements such as privies, fire rings, log benches, and minimally developed campsites. These facilities are compatible in heavily used public use sites. The highest priority sites for primitive facilities are those where there is excessive site destruction including the proliferation of campsites multiple fire rings, compaction of soil, or damage to vegetation. However, each public use site should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Developed Public Facilities. These include significant improvements such as hardened campsites, parking areas (in road accessible areas), toilets, and caretaker facilities. Public docks and boat ramps are discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Developed public facilities are being considered in two areas at this time. The borough proposes building two public campgrounds -- one at the mouth of the Deshka River and one along the South Big Lake Road Extension.

Improved campsites in both primitive and developed public facilities shall not be constructed in a manner that blocks bank access along the river. When designing public facilities, the department will consider access for the handicapped. Public facilities shall be built consistent with general guidelines for upland development in this chapter. Also see *Commercial, Commercial Campgrounds* in this chapter and *Other Recommendations, Commercial Facilities* in Chapter 4.

Vandalism. The department should promulgate regulations prohibiting the disturbance, damage, defacement, or removal of state property, facilities, or signs.

Public Use Cabins. DNR will manage public-use cabins only if there are adequate funds to upgrade unauthorized cabins or build, maintain, and operate new cabins. Public use cabins may be constructed or rehabilitated to provide the public with recreational opportunities in the Recreation Rivers. Public use cabins are prohibited in Class I areas. Existing unauthorized cabins in Class II, III and special management areas will be evaluated for their conversion to public use cabins on a case-by-case basis. See *Upland Development, Unauthorized Cabins* in this chapter.

To minimize vandalism, cabins should not be located near the road system except where they are designed to provide opportunities for use by the handicapped. Cabins should be sited so they are not visually obtrusive from the river. However, some cabins may be visible from the river or lake, particularly unauthorized cabins which have been converted to public use cabins. Cabins should not be located in moose concentration areas identified by DFG, in public use sites, or in areas of intensive public use. On-site analysis by DNR in consultation with DFG will be required prior to construction or conversion. If a cabin becomes difficult to manage, the state maintains the option to remove it.

The department should promulgate regulations to limit occupation of public use cabins to those who have reserved and paid for their use. Agreements may be made with recreational groups for construction, maintenance, and operation of public use cabins. Groups who construct cabins under such an agreement may reserve the cabin at certain times for exclusive use by the group but will not have exclusive year-round use.

Camp Fires. The department should promulgate regulations similar to 11 AAC 12.180 to allow the department to restrict camp fires to fire rings or grills in certain areas. At present, this restriction should apply only to improved campgrounds or campsites. The intent of this regulation is to prevent damage to vegetation, soiling of

campsites with charcoal, or accumulation of unburnable garbage in heavily used areas.

Use of Weapons. Under Section AS 41.23.420, DNR may not restrict the use of weapons, including firearms, within the Recreation Rivers except in sites of high public use, such as picnic areas, boat ramps, campgrounds, and parking areas when it is determined that the use of weapons constitutes a threat to public safety. Under state law, discharge of firearms is prohibited from or across a highway or developed trail [AS 11.61.210(a)(2) and 11.81.900(a)(24)].

The most heavily used area in the Recreation Rivers is the mouth of the Deshka River. This area has intense fishing pressure, high public use, private residences, and public facilities. Between June 15 and August 31, discharge of weapons is prohibited within one-quarter mile of the Deshka River on state land and water between the mouth and the DFG camp. During restricted periods, weapons may be used in defense of life and property, or as a signalling device in emergencies. DNR may implement restrictions in other areas in the future consistent with AS 41.23.420 if the use of weapons constitutes a threat to public safety in high-use areas. The department should adopt a regulation to implement this restriction. The borough should consider a similar ordinance for the mouth of the Deshka.

Fireworks. Fireworks are prohibited unless authorized by a permit.

Assemblies and Events. The department should promulgate regulations that require a permit to organize or conduct an assembly of more than 15 people in Class I areas and more than 50 people in all other areas between May 15 and August 31. A permit will also be required for any promotional event or entertainment event, including an organized athletic event, race, fishing derby, or spectator event, whether or not an admission fee is charged, that occurs between May 15 and August 31. Bonding may be required at the discretion at the department. This will ensure that concerns such as public safety, natural resource protection, sanitation, and compatibility of events with the management intent for the river, including crowding during peak use periods, are addressed when large assemblies or events are planned. Permittees may be required to provide sanitation facilities, litter receptacles, fireplace, or other temporary improvements to accommodate participants.

Marking Natural Objects. Several trees and rocks in and along the Recreation Rivers have been spray-painted to mark mining locations, rocks, and trails. Natural objects such as trees and rocks within 100 feet of the river may not be painted, blazed, or similarly marked. When marking is necessary, flagging is encouraged, rather than marking natural objects, as long as it is removed at the end of the season. The department should promulgate regulations to implement this guideline.

Closures and Use Management. The department should develop regulations that allow closures and other management actions to ensure that:

1. Upon a determination that the action is necessary for the maintenance of public health and safety, protection of environmental or scenic values, protection of natural or cultural resources, aid to scientific research, implementation of management responsibilities, equitable allocation and use of facilities, or the avoidance of conflict among visitor use activities, the director may:

A. Establish, for all or a portion of the Recreation Rivers, a reasonable schedule of visiting hours, impose public use limits, or close all or a portion of a Recreation River to all public use or to a specific area or activity;

B. Designate areas for a specific use or activity, or impose conditions or restrictions on a use or activity; or

C. Terminate a restriction, limit, closure, designation, condition, or visiting hour restriction imposed under (1) or (2) of this subsection.

2. A closure, designation, use or activity restriction or condition, or the termination or relaxation of one, which is of a nature, magnitude and duration that will result in a significant alteration in the public use pattern of the Recreation River, will adversely affect the Recreation Rivers natural, aesthetic, scenic, or cultural values, or will require a long-term or significant modification in the resource management objectives of the unit, must be adopted as a regulation.

3. Except in emergency situations, before implementing or terminating a restriction, condition, public use limit, or closure, the director shall prepare a written determination justifying the action. That determination must set out the reasons the restriction, condition, public use limit, or closure authorized under (1) of this section has been established, and an explanation of why less restrictive measures will not suffice, or in the case of a termination of a restriction, condition, public use limit, or closure previously established under paragraph (1) of this section, a determination why the restriction is no longer necessary and a finding that the termination will not adversely impact Recreation River resources. This determination will be available to the public upon request.

4. To implement a public use limit, the director may establish a permit, registration, or reservation system.

5. No person may violate a closure, designation, use or activity restriction or condition, schedule of visiting hours, or public use limit. When a permit is used to implement a public use limit, violation of the terms and conditions of the permit is prohibited and may result in the suspension or revocation of the permit.

Volunteers. If funding and staffing allow, DNR should designate a coordinator for volunteers to assist recreation rivers staff. The coordinator would recruit volunteers and organize work projects. If volunteers or groups offer to construct public improvements in the corridor, DNR should work with them to develop a work plan with project standards, timeliness, and plans for long-term management of the improvements.

Crowding and Use Limits. Crowding and overuse were identified as problems by users on some river segments. Many users report more camping competition, fishing competition, or encounters with other groups than they desired. If use and impacts continue to increase on these segments, the type of experience currently provided will be compromised.

While the planning process has provided substantial information about users' standards for various impacts, there is less information about relationships between use levels and impacts. In addition, public opinion on use limits on most river segments is divided.

There are several different methods of reducing "interaction" impacts in order to meet users' tolerances or standards. One of the most direct methods is to limit use (develop a permit system). Use limits should only be implemented when the impacts from overuse cannot be mitigated in any other way, if the relationship between use and impacts are known, and if there is strong public support.

While use limits are one alternative for addressing crowding issues in the future, they are not proposed for any segment of the Recreation Rivers at this time. However, the following programs to reduce these conflicts are proposed:

Monitoring of Whitewater Stretches. Three of the Recreation Rivers offer wilderness-oriented whitewater opportunities: the Talkeetna River Canyon, stretches of the Talachulitna River, and Lake Creek. On these reaches there is a strong consensus among users about the type of experience desired, acceptable levels of impacts for types of experiences, and the appropriateness of use limits if use and impacts continue to increase. For these river segments, specific "impact standards" have been prescribed (see Chapter 3, *Talkeetna, Lake Creek, and Talachulitna subunits).* These standards are the targets for evaluating the need for a permit system. A monitoring program will be developed to observe changes in impact levels (see Chapter 4, *Monitoring).* If impact levels become greater than the prescribed standards, and mitigation efforts have been unsuccessful at reducing those impacts, a use limit system may be implemented.

Other River Segments. Standards for interaction impacts in other subunits are not proposed in this plan. No need for use limits is anticipated in the near future. However, future planning efforts should set standards for these other subunits. Standards focus attention on recreation experience quality, allow managers to define the type of experience to be provided, guide monitoring programs, and provide a way to measure the effectiveness of management alternatives. However, throughout the Recreation Rivers planning process, users emphasized addressing litter and resource damage impacts first. These impacts are less directly tied to use levels.

Use Allocation. If use limits are adopted, a use allocation or permit system will need to be developed. Developing a fair and workable permit system will require a number of decisions to be made, many of which depend upon the proposed use limit level, access characteristics, the type of use on the segment, and legal constraints. Extensive discussions with interested groups and the public will be needed. This plan defers specific decisions on any allocation to the time when a permit system is needed. Also see *Commercial, Allocation* in this chapter.

Any use allocation system for the Recreation Rivers should attempt to meet the following objectives:

1. Be simple and easy to understand and use;

2. Minimize "no shows" and make unused permits available to other users;

3. Be flexible (allow for reasonable changes in users' plans, group composition, weather, water levels, etc.);

4. Provide stability for guide businesses;

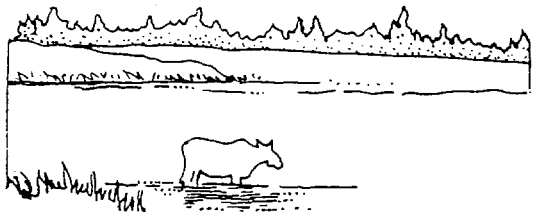
5. Give no preference based solely upon past use of a river;

6. Be responsive to the relative amount of use demanded by the private and commercial sectors; and

7. Be the same procedure for all users.

Other Guidelines Affecting Recreation. Several other guidelines may affect recreational activities. See the following sections of this chapter.

Shoreline Development	Heritage Resources
Commercial	Education
Upland Access	Enforcement
Water & Solid Waste	Phasing & Interim Management



FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT

Goals

Sustained Yield. Manage, protect, and maintain fish and wildlife populations and habitat on a sustained-yield basis.

Recreation and Economic Use. Ensure continued recreation and economic use of and enjoyment by the public including activities such as fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and trapping.

Ensure Access to State Lands and Waters. Ensure access to state lands and waters where appropriate to promote or enhance responsible public use and enjoyment of fish and wildlife resources.

Mitigate Habitat Loss. Avoid or minimize reduction in quality of fish and wildlife habitat where resource development projects occur.

Functional Integrity of Lands. Maintain the functional integrity of land supporting crucial life cycle stages of important fish and wildlife indicator species.

Management Guidelines

Eagles and Timber Harvesting. Under the Forest Resources Practices Act, timber harvesting is prohibited within 330 feet of eagle nesting trees. The Susitna Forestry Guidelines also prohibits forestry activities from March 15 through August 31 within 660 feet of known eagle nesting trees. If a nesting tree is not occupied by June 15, operations can occur between June 15 and August 31 between, 330 feet and 660 feet from the nest tree. Known eagle nests are shown on the plan resource assessment maps.

DNR, DFG, and the USFWS are reviewing existing eagle policies and may develop new statewide guidelines. If new guidelines are adopted by DNR, they can be applied to the Recreation Rivers areas without an amendment to the plan.

USFWS Authority over Eagles. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has authority for managing bald eagle populations. To protect bald eagle populations in the Recreation Rivers, USFWS will be notified of all planned timber harvests. Notification will occur through interagency notification of the five-year timber sale schedule and Forest Management Reports for individual sales. Where timber sales contain eagle nesting trees, the Division of Forestry will design the sale in consultation with DFG and USFWS. Nesting sites were mapped by USFWS from their bald eagle surveys and shown on the bald eagle nest site map used to develop the plan. Sites can be added to or deleted from the map based on new information from USFWS eagle surveys or inspection of specific sites. Additions or deletions will be made by DNR in concurrence with DFG and USFWS. Changes to the map will be based on physical characteristics for nesting and evidence of use.

Bears and Garbage. Management efforts will emphasize the prevention of bear/human conflicts.

Bear encounters should be minimized by:

1. Increasing public education on bear behavior, and how to deal with bears and garbage in the wild. This includes brochures, signs, and interpretive displays;

2. Increasing public information about areas of high bear density;

3. Recommending high density bear areas be avoided or temporarily prohibiting public use of such areas;

4. Closing Areas to public use on a temporary basis when there is a high likelihood of bear/human conflicts; and monitoring closed areas to determine when it is appropriate to reopen them;

5. Providing food caches, sealable drums, or bear wires to elevate food in high-use camping areas where there is a history of bear encounters.

Bear/human encounters are most common where bears regularly acquire human food or garbage. Once bears become habituated to human food or garbage, options for management become limited, expensive, ineffective, and unacceptable to some members of the public. To avoid this:

1. State and municipal policies and regulations regarding food storage and garbage disposal should be rigorously enforced. If staff become aware of violations, they should notify the offender and the appropriate enforcement agency. Improper storage of food, disposal of garbage, or a similar attractive nuisance [5 AAC 42.10(a)(1)] will not be considered as a justifiable defense of life or property. Persons who kill a bear that was attracted to improperly stored food or garbage may be subject to prosecution.

2. Large volumes of organic products generated by camps or other facilities that may attract bears shall be incinerated in a facility that meets DEC standards for combustion residue (less than 5 percent unburned combustibles).

3. Existing unauthorized open pit waste disposal sites on state land in the Recreation Rivers shall be closed. Solid waste disposal on state lands in the Recreation Rivers is prohibited.

4. Disposal of garbage from authorized facilities on state lands should be by incineration (daily preferred). Alternatively, garbage can be transported to a DEC-approved regional disposal site or borough waste transfer station. Temporary storage of garbage prior to incineration or backhaul should be in a bear-proof enclosure (building, container, or fence).

State regulations prohibit the feeding of bears and other large predators or intentionally leaving human food or garbage in a manner that attracts animals (5 AAC 92.230). Another state regulation defines a person's rights and responsibilities in defending himself or his property from wild animals (5 AAC 92.410). These regulations give the individual responsibility, guidance, and authority to deal with unavoidable bear/human conflicts. Problem bears can often be shot under normal hunting regulations.

Trumpeter Swan Nesting Areas. In trumpeter swan nesting areas, all land uses that would disturb nesting swans or detrimentally alter nesting habitat will be prohibited from April 1 through August 31 within at least one-quarter mile of waterbodies identified as trumpeter swan nesting sites. Nest sites are identified in the Plan Resource Assessment. The area where seasonal restrictions apply may be increased or decreased if the potential level of damage or disturbance warrants change. This determination will be made by DNR in consultation with DFG and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. If a waterbody that has been used for nesting is not occupied by June 15, potentially disturbing activities may be allowed within the one-quarter mile zone after June 15.

Construction of transmission lines in swan nesting habitat should be avoided. If transmission lines are constructed, they should be sited in forested areas and kept close to treetop level. Wires crossing rivers, marshes, and other open spaces should be marked so that they are visible to swans. Wires should be strung in one horizontal plane rather than in multiple, vertical stacks.

Harvest Regulations on Moose Creek. See Chapter 4, *Other Recommendations, Fishing Regulations.*

Habitat Enhancement. Habitat enhancement activities for fish or wildlife species may occur when biological or population data indicate improvements in survival, reproduction, or population numbers can and need to be increased through habitat enhancement or rehabilitation activities. Enhancement projects will be described in a habitat enhancement plan prepared by DFG and approved by DLW. Also see Chapter 4, *Other Recommendations, Fisheries Enhancement on Lake Creek.*

Moose Habitat Enhancement Moose habitat enhancement activities may only occur in vegetation types where regrowth of preferred moose browse species, including hardwood types is likely. DFG should first enhance areas outside the Recreation Rivers where these conditions can be met. If these conditions cannot be met outside the Recreation Rivers, enhancement may be considered for Class II and III areas and special management areas. If these conditions cannot be met in these areas, enhancement may be considered for Class I areas. Habitat enhancement in the Recreation Rivers shall be done in a manner that enough undisturbed vegetation is left along the rivers to provide visual screening from enhanced areas. Techniques may include hydroaxing, crushing, burning, and timber harvest, and shall be described in a moose habitat enhancement plan.

Mitigation. When issuing permits or leases, or otherwise authorizing the use or development of state lands, DNR will recognize the requirements of the activity or development and the benefits it may have to habitat when determining stipulations or measures needed to protect fish and wildlife or their habitats. The costs of mitigation relative to the benefits to be gained will be considered in the implementation of this policy.

All land use activities will be conducted with appropriate planning and implementation to avoid or minimize adverse effects on fish and wildlife or their habitats.

The department will enforce stipulations and measures, and will require the responsible party to remedy any significant damage to fish and wildlife, or their habitats, that may occur as a direct result of the party's failure to comply with applicable law, regulations, or the conditions of the permit or lease.

When determining appropriate stipulations and measures, the departments will apply, in order of priority, the following steps. Mitigation requirements listed in other guidelines in this plan will also follow these steps.

1. Avoid anticipated, significant adverse effects on fish and wildlife or their habitats through siting, timing, or other management options.

2. When significant adverse effects cannot be avoided by design, siting, timing, or other management options, the adverse effect of the use or development will be minimized.

3. If significant loss of fish or wildlife habitat occurs, the loss will be rectified, to the extent feasible and prudent, by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected area to a useful state.

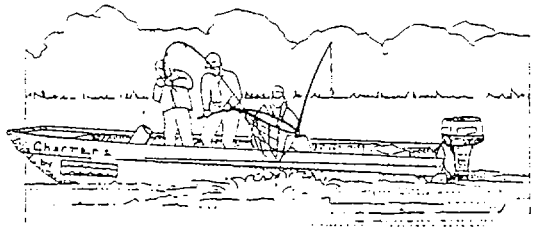
4. DNR will consider requiring replacement with or enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat when steps 1 through 3 cannot avoid

substantial and irreversible loss of habitat. DFG will clearly identify the species affected, the need for replacement or enhancement, and the suggested method for addressing the impact. Replacement or enhancement of similar habitats of the affected species in the same region is preferable. DNR will consider only those replacement and enhancement techniques that have either been proven to be, or are likely to be effective and that will result in a benefit to the species impacted by the development. Replacement or enhancement will only be required by DNR if it is determined to be in the best interest of the state either through AS 38.05.035(e) or the permit the review process. Replacement may include structural solutions, such as creating spawning or rearing ponds for salmon, creating wetlands for waterfowl; or non-structural measures, such as research or management of the species affected, legislative or administrative allocation of lands to a long-term level of habitat protection that is sufficiently greater than that which they would otherwise receive, or fire management to increase habitat productivity.

Grazing. Livestock grazing is prohibited in the Recreation Rivers, except in part of the Upper Little Susitna River Subunit 1c (see Chapter 3). Grazing as an incidental use, such as by pack animals or associated with horse travel, is allowed on state lands without a permit or lease.

Other Guidelines Affecting Fish and Wildlife Habitat. Other guidelines may affect fish and wildlife issues. See the following sections of this chapter.

Upland Development	Forestry
Shoreline Development	Subsurface Resources
Commercial	Materials
Upland Access	Enforcement
Water and Solid Waste	



COMMERCIAL

Goals

Opportunities. Provide a mix of commercial and noncommercial public use opportunities.

Economy. Contribute to the local, regional, and statewide economy.

Generate Revenue. Generate revenue to help manage the rivers.

Standards. Develop standards for commercial operators in order to protect public safety and natural resources.

Conflicts. Reduce apparent conflicts between user groups.

Management Guidelines

Commercial Use Permits. The department shall promulgate regulations which authorize the department to issue annual permits for recreation-related commercial use of state lands, waters, or resources. Permits will be issued annually. A commercial-use permit shall be required of commercial recreational use of state-owned land, water, or resources in the Recreation Rivers. Commercial recreation includes guiding, outfitting, flight, boat shuttle, and rental services or engaging in soliciting, selling, or peddling liquids or edibles for human consumption, or distributing circulars, or hawking, peddling, or vending goods, wares, services, or merchandise within the Recreation Rivers. This includes recreation businesses that may be based on private lands inside the corridors, such as lodges, that use state land or water in the Recreation Rivers. The permit system is intended to meet Recreation Rivers management objectives for protecting and enhancing recreational and natural values, and compensating the state for

the commercial use of its land and resources. Possession of a commercial permit does not grant a preference right for obtaining future commercial permits nor for obtaining land use permits, leases, or other types of authorization. Permits are non-transferrable. All recreation-related businesses operating in the Recreation Rivers, no matter how small, are required to have a commercial-use permit. There area exceptions for businesses operating exclusively on borough or private land (e.g., cottage industries), non-recreation related businesses (e.g., commercial trapping, mining, oil and gas exploration), or businesses that briefly cross the Recreation Rivers enroute to other areas such as businesses traveling up the Yentna, Skwentna, or Susitna rivers to areas outside the Recreation Rivers. The borough should be contacted for information on commercial permits required for use of borough lands.

Standards. The following standards are required of owners and employees of all recreation-related businesses operating in the Recreation Rivers:

1. Liability insurance: Insurance must be held (by owner with binder for employees). The level of insurance required will be established by DNR, may vary from year-to-year (depending on levels of insurance offered by commercial carriers), and the amount required will appear on the permit application.

2. First aid training: Current CPR and basic first aid certification, or equivalent. This requirement does not apply to employees who do not accompany clients in the Recreation Rivers.

3. Possession of applicable licenses (e.g., state business license, fishing or guiding license, US Coast Guard license, FAA license where required).

4. Possession of appropriate safety gear in the vessel (e.g., personal floatation devices, first aid kit).

5. Vessels must clearly display DNR commercial permit registration numbers and their business name.

6. Keep a log of the number of clients served.

7. Payment of commercial-use permit fees.

8. Physical address in the event the company must be contacted in an emergency.

Fees. The department shall promulgate regulations which establish fees for commercial-use permits. Fees should be reasonable and consistent with those used by other state agencies for similar purposes. The costs of managing the Recreation Rivers should not rely entirely on revenues from commercial-use permits. The cost of the permit shall be based on the following:

First Year of Program. During the first year the permit system is enacted, all in-state commercial businesses using the Recreation Rivers will be charged a flat rate of $150 per business; all out-of-state businesses will be charged a flat rate of $450 per business. During the first year of the program, there will be no per-client, drop-off, or boat-rental fee that are described below. Higher fees for non-resident commercial-use permits are intended to reflect the additional state cost of managing this area which is not borne by non-residents or other state governments. Charging higher fees for non-residents is not intended to discourage non-resident commercial activities in the Recreation Rivers.

Second and Succeeding Years of Program. During the second and succeeding years the permit system is implemented, the following will apply.

1. *Flat Rate Fee.* Each business must pay a flat rate per businesses (the same as described above).

2. *Drop-off and Pick-up Fee.* For clients that are not accompanied by an employee of the business after they are dropped off or before they are picked up, a drop-off and pick-up fee will be charged. The fee will be generally based on a percent of the total gross revenue from the trip, rather than the number of people transported. This will ensure that short-inexpensive trips do not pay a disproportionate percentage of revenues compared with longer and more costly trips.

3. *Per-client-day Fee.* Businesses will pay a per-client-day fee when clients are accompanied by an employee of the business.

4. *Boat Rentals.* Rental boats include all boats that are used for commercial operations in the Recreation Rivers that are operated primarily by clients, guests, or customers in exchange for payment or other compensation for use of the boat. Businesses renting boats for use on the

Recreation Rivers must have a commercial use permit and pay an additional charge for each rental vessel used in the Recreation Rivers, even if the business is located outside the Recreation Rivers. The commercial-use permit shall require that rental boats be in a safe condition and the boat rented with basic safety equipment such as life vests, oars, and lines. Boats shall also be equipped to conform with all applicable U.S. Coast Guard and state laws and regulations. Each boat shall be clearly marked with a company name and DNR boat registration number.

Criteria for Issuing Commercial Use Permits. DNR will consider the following criteria before issuing a commercial-use permit.

1. Recreational, natural, or heritage resources will not be adversely affected;

2. Public use values in the Recreation Rivers will be maintained and protected;

3. Public safety, health, and welfare will not be adversely affected, and

4. The activity is consistent with the goals and management intent in the plan.

Prohibited Commercial Activities. Commercial-use permits will generally not be authorized for engaging in soliciting, selling, or peddling liquids or edibles for human consumption; or distributing circulars, or hawking, peddling, or vending goods, wares, services, or merchandise to the general public in the Recreation Rivers. The intent of this guideline is based on concerns that these types of activities can significantly detract from the recreation experience, particularly when they occur in heavily used public use sites during the peak-use season. This guideline does not apply to businesses providing goods or services to clients who have made prior arrangements to purchase the goods or services with the business prior to entering the Recreation Rivers or who have made arrangements on private lands. Renting boats or providing limited services from marinas necessary for accessing the river in remote areas (such as providing boat moorage and selling fuel and oil) may be authorized. (See *Shoreline Development, Marinas* in this chapter.)

Grounds for Suspension or Revocation. The following are listed by two levels of violations of state laws, regulations, or permit stipulations which may result in permit revocation or suspension. These conditions will be implemented through regulations. Also see *Chapter 4, Other Recommendations, Denying Permits and Leases.*

Type I. The following will result in automatic suspension and may result in revocation of a commercial-use permit.

1. Loss of required level of liability insurance.

2. Loss or expiration of US Coast Guard license, if required.

3. For commercial-use permit holders:

   A. Loss of Alaska sport fishing license or hunting guide license by court action; or

   B. Conviction of a violation of state or federal fish or game regulations resulting in a fine of $350 or greater. Convictions include violation of laws prohibiting transportation of illegally harvested fish or game.

4. Conviction of gross public safety violation related to applicable activity (for example, a fish guide convicted for operating a boat or aircraft while intoxicated or reckless endangerment).

5. Failure to pay the commercial use permit fee.

6. Gross violation within the Recreation Rivers of laws or regulations protecting public safety and peace.

7. Repeated or willful non-compliance with permit stipulations.

8. Conviction for violation of two regulations established for the Recreation Rivers within a one-year period, or three convictions in a five-year period.

Type II. The following may result in suspension or revocation of a commercial-use permit.

1. Convictions for violation within the Recreation Rivers of laws protecting public safety or peace.

2. Conviction for violation of any state or federal fish or game law e.g., exceeding fish or game limits, allowing clients to exceed take-limits, wanton waste, fishing during a closed

season, retaining protected species, using illegal gear or methods, or transporting illegally harvested fish or game.

3. Allowing a non-permitted guide to operate a permitted vessel for commercial activities without a permitted operator aboard, except in an emergency.

4. Conviction for violation of regulations established for the Recreation Rivers.

5. Non-compliance with permit stipulations.

Allocation. Until the effects of a commercial-use permit program, boating regulations, and camping limitations have been assessed, the department will not limit the number of commercial-use permits issued. DNR should continue to monitor commercial use to determine if a limitation may be appropriate in the future. Criteria for determining unacceptably high levels of use may include standards such as numbers of encounters at campsites and number of encounters on the rivers. If use threatens to exceed standards, limits on the number of permits issued may be required. If limitations are required, only those types of commercial operations directly related to overcrowding or resource damage may be limited. Limitations should apply only to peak use periods. Also see Recreation, Use Allocation in this chapter.

In-Kind Services. The department should promulgate regulations similar to 11 AAC 05.010 (d)(1-3) which allow the director to waive all or a portion of fees for recreation-related permits where: DNR may accept goods or services in lieu of fees charged for authorizations within the Recreation Rivers when such goods or services are comparable in value. This option enables the state to provide expanded facilities or services to the public at no additional cost. Examples of in-kind renumeration are: providing building materials, transporting materials, assistance with construction projects, servicing privies, or assistance with litter patrols. The permit filing fee shall not be waived. A contract or formal agreement between the state and the applicant should be drafted specifying the services or materials the applicant will be providing and a timetable for completion of the contract. Also see Waiver of Fees above.

Accounting for Revenues. Under AS 41.23.470 (e), the Commissioner of the Department of Administration shall separately account for funds collected under the Recreation Rivers Act. The annual estimated balance in the account may be appropriated by the legislature to the department to carry out the purposes of the Recreation Rivers Act. An efficient accounting system should be established so that the total annual receipts from the Recreation Rivers can easily be estimated at the end of each fiscal year.

Lodges. Additional lodges on state land within the corridors are prohibited for the following reasons:

1. *Compatibility.* Lodges are not compatible with management intent for Class I areas, which is to maintain a primitive setting.

2. *Crowding.* Class II, Class III, and Special Management Areas contain an abundance of private land. Most of the 460 private parcels and all of the 30 lodges now operating in the corridors are located in these areas. More lodges are likely to be developed on these private lands in the future. Crowding is becoming a concern. Building additional lodges on state lands may result in significant overcrowding.

3. *Public Input.* Public comments at meetings and responses to the alternatives workbook demonstrated clear opposition to additional lodges on state lands.

4. *Review.* During the five-year plan update process, the issue of whether new lodge development on state lands within the corridors should be authorized will be re-evaluated.

Commercial Camps. Unlike primitive tent camps, commercial camps remain in one site for longer than 96 hours (4 nights) and require a land use permit. They generally serve as a center for commercial operations, providing overnight accommodations for guests, guides, and employees. They generally include tents for sleeping, a cook tent or shelter, a storage area, and human waste and gray-water disposal systems. Commercial camps do not include resource management camps or mining camps. See *Recreation, Primitive Tent Camps; Upland Development, Resource Management Camps; and Subsurface Resources, Siting of Structures* in this chapter.

The following guidelines apply to commercial camps on state land.

1. *Peak Season.* During the peak season, May 15 to August 31, the number of permits authorized for commercial camps on state lands in the Recreation Rivers will be limited to nine. This limitation is intended to provide for continued economic uses of the rivers, while addressing public concerns about over-crowding and a proliferation of development of long-term camps on state lands within the Recreation Rivers. The number of camps allowed are based on the number that were estimated to be in place during the summer in 1988 when a user survey was administered. At that time a large majority of respondents stated that they did not want to see additional "temporary base camps" on lands in the Recreation Rivers. Sites will be restricted to the following subunits: two on the Lower Deshka (2b), two on the Middle Deshka (2c), two on Neil Lake (2d) (subunit, not on the lake) and three on the Lower Alexander (6a). No more than one permit per river will be issued to a business. During the off-season period, from September 1 to May 14, a land use permit is required for commercial camps remaining at one site for longer than 14 days. An unlimited number of off-season camps may be allowed in all subunits.

2. *Term of Use.* A land use permit for a commercial camp will be issued for the term of actual use of the camp for the authorized activity, or the minimum length of time required by the applicant to carry out the intended use. Permits will not be authorized for use exceeding one year.

3. *Commercial Use.* Commercial camps will not be authorized for private camps. Permits may only be issued to commercial operations that have a Recreation Rivers commercial use permit.

4. *Siting Criteria.* Camps will be sited consistent with the management intent for the subunit and applicable guidelines. In order to protect public safety, minimize the negative impacts on water quality and public access, and to protect heritage sites, commercial camps will not be authorized:

A. in public use sites;

B. below ordinary high water;

C. within 100 feet of a waterbody or in a wetland;

D. near identified heritage sites;

E. if they do not minimize evidence of human as seen from the river, or

F. if they block public easements, heavily used trails, or seismic lines.

5. *Levels of Use.* The permit applicant shall be required to specify the estimated number of clients, guests, and employees that will occupy the camp at any one time and over the term of use. Following a review of the application by DNR, DFG, DEC, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, limitations on the number of clients using the camp may be attached to the permit, if in the opinion of the agencies, the number of clients represents a threat to the resource which can not be adequately mitigated through standard stipulations. A decision to limit the number of clients must describe the reason for the limitation.

6. *Fees.* During the peak season, when the number of permitted commercial camps is limited, fees for camps should provide a fair return to the state. Fees may be based on the number of clients using the camp or a set fee that is higher than the current statewide fee. Fees should not be so high that small operators can not afford them. If demand for permits exceeds supply, DNR may consider a lottery. During the off-season period, fees for commercial camps will be consistent with statewide fees for these types of camps.

Commercial Campgrounds. Privately built and operated campgrounds may be authorized under the following conditions (Also see Recreation, Public Facilities in this chapter):

1. *Class I Areas.* They are prohibited in Class I areas and public use sites in Class I areas.

2. *Construction Guidelines.* They must be constructed consistent with *Upland Development, Management Guidelines* listed in this chapter.

3. *Competition.* If leased under AS 38.05.070 or 38.05.073, campgrounds must be consistent with AS 41.23.470(d) which does not allow leasing of a campground if the facility is in competition with a private facility or enterprise. Competition is defined by this plan to include competition within (not between) each Recreation River. Also see *Other Recommendations, Commercial Facilities* in Chapter 4.

4. *Public Need.* The decision to authorize this type of facility shall include the availability of similar facilities nearby, the availability of private parcels nearby that could meet this need, existing levels of public use and crowding, and the public need for such a facility.

5. *Public Use.* Such facilities shall be open to the public although fees for use of improvements and services may be required.

6. *Improvements.* Because the public was opposed to additional lodges in the Recreation Rivers (see *Lodges* in this section), cabins, wall-tents, and other types of walled structures provided by the lessee to accommodate overnight guests will not be authorized in these campgrounds.

Other Guidelines Affecting Commercial Activities. Several other guidelines may affect commercial activities. See the following sections of this chapter.

Subsurface Resources
Enforcement
Phasing and Interim Management

GENERAL ACCESS

Goals

See *Boating, Upland Access, Air Access, and Special Management Areas* in this chapter.

Management Guidelines

Permits for Access to Private Land and Mining Locations. The department should promulgate a regulation requiring a permit for all motorized access to private land or active mine operations that crosses state land or water closed to motorized use[2]. Permits for motorized access may be issued across closed areas to private lands or mine operations when there is no feasible and prudent alternative to provide access for this use. The cost of these permits should be minimal. Fees may be waived in cases where they would constitute an undue hardship on the permittee or act to discourage compliance with the permit requirement. Filing fees may not be waived. Also see *Upland Access, Access to Private Land and Mining Camps.*

[2] "Motor Use" refers to motors associated with vessels, aircraft, and vehicles used for transportation, not use of motors such as chainsaws and generators.

Government Use of Motorized Transportation. The department should promulgate regulations that allow the operation of motorized vehicles including boats, aircraft, helicopters, and ground vehicles in non-motorized areas by governmental agency for the purposes of law enforcement, emergency search and rescue, medical evacuations, fire suppression; or for fish, game, recreation, or natural resource management.

Other Guidelines Affecting General Access. Several other guidelines may affect general access. See the following sections of this chapter:

Shoreline Development
Boat Access
Upland Access
Air Access
Subsurface Resources

BOAT ACCESS

Goals

Spectrum of Boating Opportunities. Provide for a spectrum of boating opportunities on the six Recreation Rivers.

Specific Opportunities on River Segments. Provide specific motorized and non-motorized boating opportunities on individual river segments.

Public Safety and Property. Protect public safety and property through the established of no-wake areas and float-plane landing areas.

Minimize Conflicts. Minimize conflicts between user groups while providing opportunities for boaters on all rivers.

Public Use Doctrine. Maintain consistency with the Public Trust Doctrine in the Alaska Constitution.

Management Guidelines

Overall Management Intent. Specific restrictions on boating have been developed to achieve two different goals. The primary goal is to provide for a range of recreation opportunities on the six rivers. This includes providing for motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences. The second goal concerns boating safety. Boating guidelines were not based on the protection of river banks and fish habitat from powerboat-caused erosion. Although these effects may be occurring, relationship between powerboats and these impacts has not been conclusively shown at any site in the Recreation Rivers at this time.

References to powerboats include all boats propelled by a motor, including jetboats, prop-driven boats, hovercraft, airboats, and hydroplanes. Personal water craft and floatplanes are exceptions. Personal watercraft are discussed later in this section. Floatplanes are covered under *Air Access* in this chapter.

The following section describes the relationships between boating guidelines and these goals, outlines the factors that were considered in developing guidelines, and identifies which river segments are affected.

Recreation Experience. Information from the user survey, alternatives workbook, and public meetings shows that a significant number of floaters and bank anglers believe their recreation experiences are compromised by the use of motorized boats. Specific concerns include: noise impacts, boat speeds, and wake sizes. Many floaters and bank anglers define high quality experience in terms of the absence of motorized use. However, powerboaters have expressed concern that opportunities for powerboat access should be maintained. To balance the concerns of these competing interests, provide quality floating and bank fishing, and provide for both powerboat and floatboat use, some river segments have been seasonally designated as "non-motorized," "powerboats only," or have been left unrestricted.

Safety. Boating safety is a prime concern on the Recreation Rivers. Although few boating fatalities or serious accidents have been documented, users have identified safety problems, particularly in congested areas. To address these problems, some river segments have been designated as "voluntary no-wake areas."

Erosion and Other Environmental Impacts. There is concern that erosion and damage to fish habitat may be increasing as a result of extensive powerboat use on some river segments. However, there is no conclusive quantitative evidence of a casual relationship. The US Department of the Interior, University of Alaska and DFG are working on a cooperative research project to study the effects of jetboats on fish. In addition, the Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys will examine the effects of powerboat use and its relationship to erosion on the Little Susitna River. The results of these studies will be used when updating or amending this plan.

Other Factors. In addition to the recreation experience and safety goals, other variables that were considered include:

1. *Accommodating Access to Private Land.* Non-motorized areas were not established in areas where property owners commonly reach their land by powerboat. If powerboats offer the only practical access to private property in or adjacent to the river corridors, landowners may be issued a permit to use powerboats in the non-motorized area to reach their land. See General Access, Permits for Access to Private Land and Mine Locations in this chapter.

2. *Minimizing Restrictions.* Non-motorized areas are only designated for segments where the current demand for non-motorized opportunities is considered significant. Similarly, no-wake areas are only proposed for areas where congestion is significant and safety risks are high.

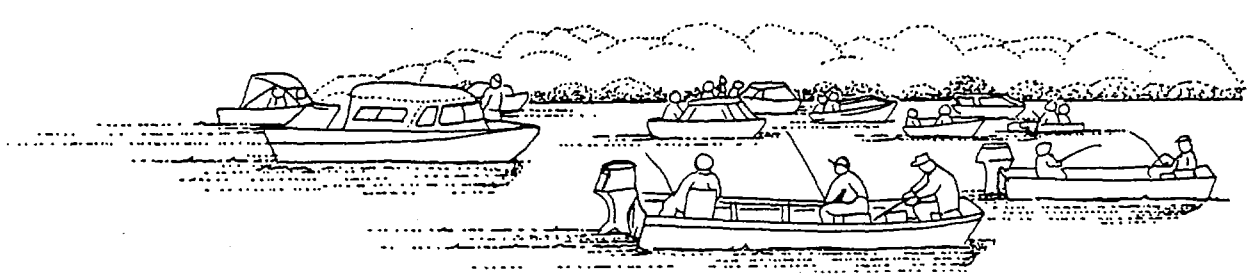
3. *Accommodating Use.* Non-motorized areas are generally designated in areas that receive relatively little or no powerboat use. These areas typically include the upper segments of rivers where there is considerable whitewater or other impediments to safe powerboat use. Conversely, frequent powerboat-use areas are not restricted to powerboat use. Exceptions include segments of the Little Susitna River where there is demand for both motorized and non-motorized use. On this river, the plan prescribes alternating non-motorized and powerboat-only weekends during the fishing season.

4. *Physical Characteristics of the Rivers.* Non-motorized areas generally begin and end at landmarks identified as common limits of most current powerboat travel. No-wake areas begin and end at landmarks identified as common limits of boat and bank angler congestion.

5. *Seasons.* Non-motorized and powerboat-only periods generally apply to fishing seasons when conflicts between users occur most often.

6. *Future Technologies and Potential conflicts.* Non-motorized areas on the Talachulitna River and Lake Creek are established on segments that do not currently receive powerboat use. This limitation on use is based on the concern that future technologies will allow powerboats access to traditionally non-motorized areas. Defining these areas before motorized access is possible will prevent future conflicts and preserve traditional use patterns.

Regulations. Under Section 41.23.420(c), the commissioner may, if necessary, regulate boating under the management plan. Non-motorized and powerboat-only areas will be established by regulation. No-wake areas are all voluntary and do not require regulations. Both voluntary and regulatory areas shall be marked by signs at their upper and lower limits . River segments, seasons, and justifications are described under *Management Guidelines* for each management unit in Chapter 3. Recommended boating regulations for areas not in the Recreation Rivers or proposed to be added to the Recreation Rivers are described in Chapter 4. Map 2.2 and Tables 2.1 and 2.2 summarize the regulations.



Types of Areas. Following is a description of the three types of areas shown on Map 2.2.

1. *Non-motorized Areas.* The operation of a powerboat is prohibited on designated river segments during designated non-motorized periods. Motors in or attached to boats are allowed as long as they are not operated in the non-motorized area.

2. *Powerboat-only Areas.* Boats that are not powered by motors are prohibited on the designated segment of the Little Susitna River on the second and fourth weekends of each month between May 15 and August 20.

3. *Voluntary No-wake Areas.* In these areas signs are placed to encourage boaters to operate at speeds less than five-miles per hour. Compliance is voluntary and these areas are not established by regulations.

Personal Watercraft. With the exceptions of where the Susitna, Skwentna, and Yentna rivers overlap with the Recreation Rivers, personal watercraft are prohibited. This prohibition is based on concerns for safety, recreation experience, and shore-nesting birds. This restriction should be established by regulation. Also see *Appendix A* for a definition of *Personal Watercraft.*

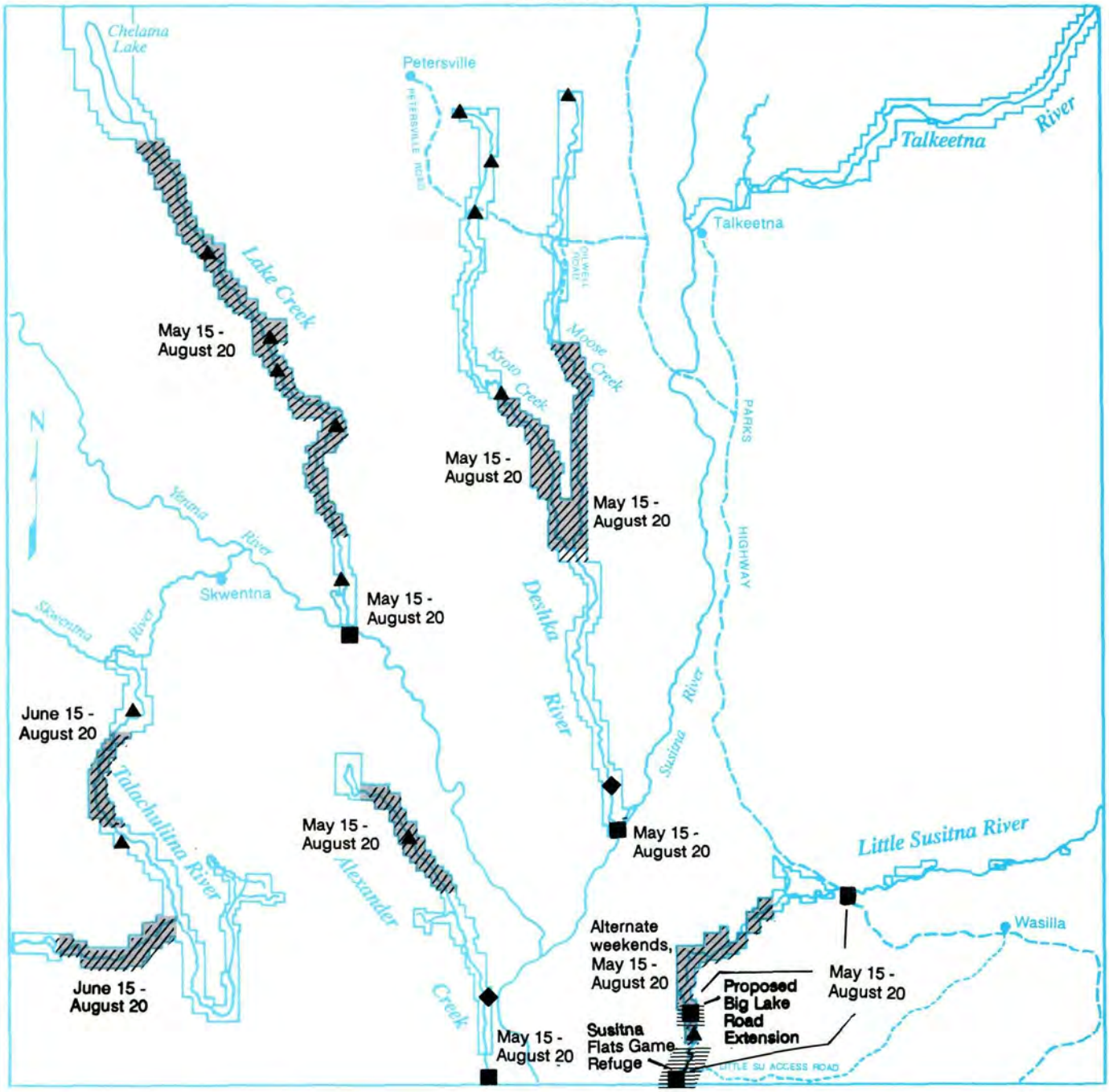
Registering Commercial Boats. See *Commercial, Standards* in this chapter.

Access to Private Lands. See *General Access, Permits for Access to Private Land and Mining Locations* in this chapter.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

BOATING

MAP 2.2



TYPES OF SEASONAL LIMITS

- Non-motorized Area
- Voluntary No-wake Area
- Place Warning Sign
- Proposal or Recommendations
- Recreation River Corridor
- Special Management Areas (motor restrictions do not apply)

TABLE 2.1
NON-MOTORIZED AREAS, VOLUNTARY NO-WAKE AREAS, AND SAFETY SIGNS

RIVER	SEGMENT	RIVER MILES	REGULATION OR SIGN	DATES
Little Susitna River	Parks Highway	67.5 - 69.6	No-Wake, Voluntary, One-Year Trial Basis	May 15 - August 20
Little Susitna River	Nancy Lake Creek to Game Refuge Boundary	33.2 - 60.5	Non-motorized	Alternating weekends May 15 - August 20
Deshka River	Mouth	0.0 - Island	No-wake, Voluntary	May 15 - August 20
Deshka River	Silver Hole	3.8 - 4.9	Place sign: "Reduce speed to 5 MPH when anglers present"	May 15 - August 20
Deshka River	Forks to 2 mi. below Amber Lake Creek and Forks to 3 mi. below Oilwell Road	0.0 - 19.1 (Kroto Creek) 29.7 - 54.2 (Moose Creek)	Non-motorized, Recommendation to Board of Fish to open lower Moose Creek to salmon fishing	May 15 - August 20
Lake Creek	Whitewater	8.1 - 51.2	Non-motorized	May 15 - August 20
Lake Creek	Mouth	0.0	Establish voluntary no-wake area at the mouth on a one-year trial basis	May 15 - August 20
Talachulitna Creek	Lower	0.0 - 17.0	Non-motorized	June 15 - August 20
Talachulitna River	Canyon	9.0 - 18.2	Non-motorized	June 15 - August 20
Alexander Creek	Upper	23.0 - 38.3	Non-motorized	May 15 - August 20
Alexander Creek	Pierce Creek Confluence	7.4	Place sign that cautions large boats above this point	May 15 - August 20

TABLE 2.2
PROPOSED NON-MOTORIZED AREAS, VOLUNTARY NO-WAKE AREAS, AND SAFETY SIGNS IN AREAS MANAGED BY ADF&G OR IN PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO RECREATION RIVERS[1]

RIVER	SEGMENT	RIVER MILES	REGULATION	DATES	COMMENTS
Little Susitna River	Proposed South Big Lake Road Junction	Within one mile of Junction	No-wake	May 15 - August 20	Takes effect when road is built
Little Susitna River	Plan boundary to Burma Road Access	28.6 - 33.1	Non-motorized	Alternating weekends May 15 - August 20	Recommendation to ADF&G
Little Susitna River	Burma Road Access	27.6 - 29.5	No-wake	May 15 - August 20	Recommendation to ADF&G
Little Susitna River	Above Old FAA Station on Game Refuge	17.0 - 33.1	Address Safety Concerns	Peak Use Season	Recommendation to ADF&G
Alexander Creek	Mouth	Susitna River and Alexander Creek from 0.0 - 0.2	No-wake, Voluntary	May 15 - August 20	Takes effect if lower river is added to corridors

[1]The following limits are proposed for lower Alexander Creek (recommended to the legislature as an addition to the Recreation Rivers) or are proposed to ADF&G for the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge.

Public Trust Doctrine. Under the Alaska Constitution the state has special duties and management constraints with respect to state-owned land underlying navigable waters. The Alaska Constitution contains principles commonly known as the public trust doctrine. This doctrine requires the state to exercise authority to ensure that the right of the public to use navigable waters for navigation, commerce, recreation, and related purposes is not substantially impaired.

The Alaska Constitution (Article VIII, sections 3, 13, and 14) and Alaska Statutes (38.05.127 and 38.05.128) are the legal basis for applying the public trust doctrine in Alaska. This doctrine guarantees the public right to engage in such things as commerce, navigation, fishing, hunting, swimming, and protection of areas for ecological study.

The Constitution provides that "free access to the navigable or public waters of the state, as defined by the legislature, shall not be denied any citizen of the United States or resident of the state, except that the legislature may by general law regulate and limit such access for other beneficial uses or public purposes." Eliminating private upland owners' reasonable access to navigable waters may result in compensation.

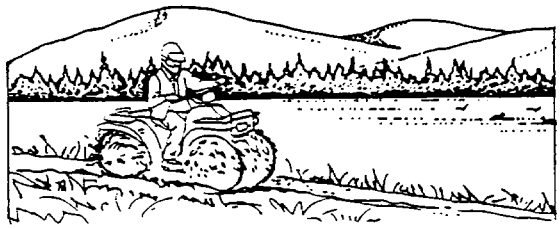
Both federal and state laws providing for the transfer of land to private parties also provide for public access to navigable waters. Implementing the state constitutional guarantee of access to navigable waters under Article VIII, Section 14, AS 38.05.127 requires that the state commissioner of natural resources must "provide for the specific easements or rights-of-way necessary to ensure free access to and along the body of water, unless the commissioner finds that regulating or eliminating access is necessary for other beneficial uses or public purposes."

It has never been held that any lands normally subject to the public trust doctrine in Alaska are exempt from it, including land occupied and developed.

These statutes and concepts are considered and used throughout this plan. Any management actions will be consistent with the public trust doctrine as defined by the Alaska Constitution, statutes, court decisions, and public involvement.

Other Guidelines Affecting Boat Access. Several other guidelines may affect boat access. See the following sections of this chapter:

Shoreline Development	Boat Access
Recreation	Air Access
Fish & Wildlife Habitat	Education
Commercial	Enforcement
General Access	Phasing & Interim Management



UPLAND ACCESS

Goals

Support Management Intent. Accommodate an upland transportation system that supports the management intent for each subunit and is integrated with other region-wide transportation needs.

Minimize Adverse Impact. Accommodate a transportation system with minimal adverse impacts on water quality, riparian and wetland areas, the terrestrial environment, and recreation uses.

Promote Efficiency. Accommodate a transportation system that uses energy efficiently and encourages compact, efficient development patterns including consolidating upland access routes.

Promote Public Safety. Ensure transportation systems are designed, constructed and maintained to an appropriate standard to accommodate the anticipated volume and type of use.

Protection of Special Trails. Protect high-value trails such as the Iditarod Race Trail and the Iditarod National Historical Trail.

Management Guidelines

Transportation Planning. When road transportation routes are proposed that may pass through the Recreation Rivers, interagency review should occur at the scoping phase of route planning to allow agencies to identify important habitat and recreation areas in order to assist with the selection of a route.

Consolidation of Access. Joint use and consolidation of surface access routes will be encouraged wherever feasible and prudent. Surface access should be designed and sited to accommodate future development and avoid unnecessary duplication. The feasibility of using an existing road or trail should be evaluated before the use of a new transportation route is authorized.

Large Vehicle Use in Winter. The department should promulgate a regulation requiring a permit for use of vehicles over 1,000 lbs. in winter. Travel should be restricted to periods when there is adequate snow or frost. See *ORV's, Snowcover* in this section. Permit stipulations will be consistent with existing DNR requirements for use of large ground contact vehicles in winter. Permits will be reviewed in consultation with DFG. Winter roads for timber harvest or transport should be consistent with the Forest Resources and Practices Act and the Susitna Forestry Guidelines.

Access Intent. Public comments and responses to the alternatives workbook show the public does not support additional roads to access the recreation resources in the corridors. Roads strictly for access to recreation opportunities within the Recreation Rivers are not proposed at this time. Public attitudes on this issue will be reassessed when the plan is updated in five years. There are, however, resources, private lands, and transportation needs in and adjacent to the corridors which may require land access.

There are four general classes of roads and trails in and adjacent to the corridors. Many guidelines in this section specify which of the four types of access they apply to.

1. *Pedestrian Trails.* These are designed to accommodate pedestrians and animals.

2. *Small Vehicular Trails.* These are designed to accommodate vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 1,000 lbs. or under, pedestrians, travel by dogsled, animals, snowmachines, two and three-wheeled vehicles, and small ORV's.

3. *Large Vehicular Trails.* These are designed to accommodate vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of over 1,000 lbs., pedestrians, travel by dogsled, animals, snowmachines, two- and three-wheeled vehicles, small or large ORVs, track vehicles, or four-wheel-drive vehicles.

4. *Roads.* These are designed to accommodate highway vehicles including pedestrians, travel by dogsleds, animals, snowmachines, two- and three-wheeled vehicles, small or large ORVs, track vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles, automobiles, or trucks.

Priority for Siting Roads (other than ice roads). Where feasible and prudent, the following criteria for consideration of alternative road locations should be used. These are listed below in descending order of priority:

1. Outside rather than inside the corridor.
2. In Class II or III areas or special management areas.
3. In Class I areas where there are no restric tions on motorized transport.
4. In Class I areas where there are restrictions on motorized transport.

Roads crossing rivers should be designed in accordance with the AASHTO design manual. When safe to do so, site distances should be minimized to enhance aesthetic qualities. Also see *Shoreline Development, Bridges* in this chapter.

Roads and Both Types of Vehicular Trails

Class I Areas. In Class I areas, roads and vehicular trail development shall be minimized to maintain the undeveloped character of the corridors and to minimize impacts on habitat, water quality, and vegetation.

Non-motorized Areas. Roads and both types of vehicular trails may be built in non-motorized areas if they are built with public funds or when they are in the public interest.

Access to Private Lands in Class I Areas. Private land owners may construct roads and vehicular trails to their property as long as the use provides a need for which there is no feasible and prudent alternative. A road or vehicular trail from private land to a Recreation River should not be permitted in Class I areas if the proposed route is not the primary form of access to the property. Also see *General Access, Permits to Private Land and Mineral Locations* and *Subsurface, Motorized Access* in this chapter.

Protection of Hydrologic Systems. To minimize adverse impacts to the environment, and risks of degradation to fish and wildlife habitat and water quality, roads and vehicular trails will not be approved in the protection area unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative route. Roads and vehicular trails may also be located in the protection area to access private land, a mining operation with a plan of operation or land use permit, to access a bridge crossing, or where the route is in the public interest. Road and vehicular trail construction will occur only where it can be demonstrated that road design, construction, use, and maintenance will avoid, minimize, or otherwise mitigate impacts to important fish and wildlife habitat. These types of access improvements should be located to avoid influencing the quality and quantity of water in adjacent rivers and lakes, or detracting from the recreational use of the waterway. When routing through wetlands or peat, culverts shall be installed to enable free cross-drainage. Construction should be minimized in areas where the seasonal water table is within four feet of the surface. Where feasible and prudent, topsoil from road or vehicle trail construction shall be used for restoration of disturbed areas.

Parallel Routes. Wherever possible, the siting of routes parallel to the rivers or directly uphill from any waterway should be avoided.

Roads, Vehicular Trails and Pedestrian Trails

Soils and Angle. Where feasible and prudent, confine construction to level, well-drained areas. In potential problem areas, excavation and soil disturbance should be minimized.

Erosion. Where feasible or prudent use methods to decrease runoff, erosion, and sedimentation by methods such as re-seeding, surface roughening, and diversion dikes.

Pedestrian Trails

Trail Damage. Foot trails are beginning to develop in road accessible areas, particularly near the Little Susitna Access in the Susitna Flats Game Refuge, and the Parks Highway on the Little Susitna River. Frequent foot traffic on riverbanks can trample vegetation and cause the loss of vegetation. This may result in increased bank erosion from riverflow and surface runoff, and the loss of fish habitat along the banks. Efforts should be made to locate pedestrian trails away from the river. Where this is not possible, trails should be stabilized through techniques such as constructing board walks or trail hardening.

Trails

Signs. Trail signs are necessary in several locations. These included areas with unclear trailheads and trail routes or where resource damage is likely to occur.

Iditarod Race Trail. The race trail passes through the lower Little Susitna River, upper Alexander Creek, and Alexander Lake subunits. Rerouting the trail may be permitted in specific instances in consultation with the Iditarod Trail Committee. A 400-foot wide (200 feet on either side of the centerline) buffer will be located along the trail corridor. No permanent structure or equipment should be placed in the trail corridor if it would adversely affect the trail experience or access along the trail. Where necessary, trail crossings may be permitted to allow access to lands on either side of the trail. Temporary facilities for the Iditarod race and other events that use the trail during the winter may be allowed provided they are removed during the ice-free season. An annual permit for Iditarod related events is not required. Also see *Forestry, Iditarod Trail, and Events* in this chapter. The location of these trails are shown on subunit maps in Chapter 3.

Bridges. See *Shoreline Development; Bridges, and Stream Crossings.*

Closures. Where detrimental to management of fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, or other resources, roads and trails may be closed to the public and rehabilitated when in the public interest.

Section Line Easements. Section line easements require a survey before improvements are built. The width depends on when the land was conveyed to the state. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has platting authority for section line easements within the corridors. Development of section line easements in Class I subunits is discouraged. When the plan is updated, vacating some particular section lines should be considered. No vacations are recommended at this time.

Parking Areas. Parking areas are prohibited below annual high water and in contiguous wetlands. All parking areas should be visually screened from the rivers with natural vegetation.

Off-Road Vehicles (ORV). The trend of increased ORV use in the corridors is likely to continue as more access is developed near the Recreation Rivers. To prevent damage to wetlands, streambanks, steep banks, areas with poorly drained soils, areas with sensitive vegetation, and the recreation experience in non-motorized areas, DNR will develop the following regulations:

1. *Permits.* To protect soils, water, vegetation, and habitat, ORV use is restricted to existing trails except when there is adequate snow cover (see 3 below). Permits for exceptions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

2. *Non-motorized Areas.* In areas adjacent to river segments subject to seasonal powerboat restrictions (see subunit maps in Chapter 3), ORV use is subject to the same seasonal limits on motorized travel, except when authorized by permit or the use occurs on designated trails. (See Designated Trails in this section.) This limit does not apply in special management areas. See *Boating Access, Regulations* in this chapter.

3. *Snow Cover.* Use of off-road vehicles 1,000 lbs. or under is allowed throughout the corridors when snow cover is sufficient to prevent damage to the vegetated ground mat. The general standard for adequate ground protection from vehicle damage will be one foot of snow and one foot of frost. This standard may be altered to allow for variation in winter conditions. For example, deep snow may prevent freezing but offer adequate ground protection. If the ground is not frozen to a depth of at least one foot, an additional foot of snow is needed for winter ORV travel. DNR will announce each year when there is adequate/ inadequate cover in the fall and spring through news releases or other means. Adequate cover may vary between rivers so more than one public announcement may be required each spring and fall depending on the snow conditions. Use of off-road vehicles in winter over 1,000 lbs. requires a permit. See *Large Vehicle Use in Winter* in this section.

Access to Private Land and Mining Locations Permits for exceptions to restrictions on off-road vehicle uses described in the previous section may be issued to allow access to mining activities or to private property when there is no feasible and prudent alternative to provide access for this use. Permit applicants shall apply to use a designated trail (see next section). Permits for off-road access to active mining locations will only be issued for purposes of carrying out mining operations authorized by a land use permit or an approved plan of operations. In addition, "dozers, sleighs, tracked vehicles, and rubber tired equipment" must comply with the statewide Coastal Management Program guidelines for cross-country winter travel. Also see *General Access, Permits for Access to Private Land and Mining Locations* in this chapter.

Designated Trails. Previous sections refer to travel restricted to designated trails in non-motorized areas. To designate a trail, an individual or organization must submit a map and a written description which includes:

1. how the trail will be used;

2. how damage to state land and water such as rutting and damage to fragile vegetated areas will be prevented; and

3. how the construction and use of the trail will be compatible with other uses;

4. where materials to be used are located;

5. how timber will be disposed of; and

6. how the trail will be constructed.

DLW through the interagency review process will review trail applications and decide on the need for and suitability of the proposed route, and its compatibility with other recreation uses and management policies. When a trail is designated, a right-of-way should be issued and recorded on status plats so that the trail can be properly located. Bearings and distances should be included in the description of the trail. Centerlines may be necessary in areas where land status is complex. As more trails are designated, DLW shall restrict ORV's to designated trails during the snow-free season throughout the corridors rather than just existing trails. Also see *Trails Action Plan* in Chapter 4.

At this time, ORV use is restricted to existing trails. However, even repeated use by all ground-pressure vehicles in sensitive environments on existing trails may result in long-term damage. Such areas include wetlands, erodible soils, or steep banks. After suitable trails are identified, and designated through the trails action plan (see Chapter 4) or other means, off-road vehicles during the snow-free season should be restricted to designated trails throughout the planning area rather than just existing trails. See *Trails Action Plan* in Chapter 4.

If an application for a designated trail is approved from a private land owner or mine claimant for motorized access through a non-motorized area, DNR may consider designating the trail for public access if:

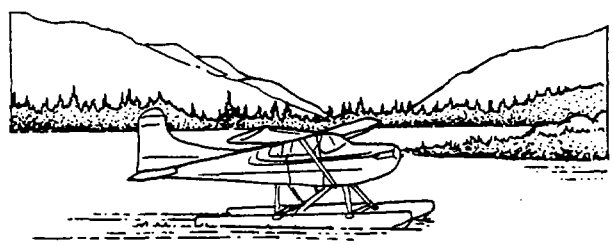
1. a determination is made that increased public use will not significantly contribute to the deterioration of the trail;

2. the trail or its use is consistent with the management intent for the area.

DLW, in consultation with the borough and DFG, may designate special purpose trails in motorized areas to provide new recreational opportunities or to resolve conflicts between uses. Where possible, consultation with affected user groups will be conducted prior to designation of such trails, and users will be encouraged to construct and maintain such special purpose trails.

Other Guidelines Affecting Upland Access
Several other guidelines may affect upland access. See the following sections of this chapter:

Shoreline Development	Subsurface Resources
General Access	Heritage Resources
Boat Access	



AIR ACCESS

Goals

Access. Allow development of public air access to the Recreation Rivers when it is consistent with the management intent of the plan.

Liability. Minimize liability to the state from unsafe airstrips or floatplane landing areas or the proliferation of public airstrips.

Management Guidelines

Public Airstrips. The Recreation Rivers currently have good air access. However, this plan does not preclude development of additional airstrips. With the exceptions listed below for private airstrips, airstrips developed on state land should be made available for use by the general public. If an applicant requests airstrip development associated with some other type of land-use

authorization, the applicant must submit the application for the airstrip with the application for the associated use. Federal Aviation Regulation, Part 157, requires FAA notification before construction, establishment, alteration, or deactivation of civil airports, including floatplane bases. Specific airstrips are discussed in Chapter 3 for subunit 2a (mouth of Deshka) and 4e (Chelatna Lake).

Airstrip by Class Areas. Airstrip development may be authorized in Class II, Class III, and Special Management Areas. Airstrip development may be allowed in these areas if:

1. There is a demonstrated significant public need for the airstrip; and

2. There are no feasible alternatives to meet the public need for increased access that would not significantly impact habitat, recreation or other uses.

Airstrip development is discouraged in Class I areas and non-motorized areas because they are inconsistent with the management intent for these areas. In general, airstrips developed entirely on public land should be made available for use by the general public.

Private Airstrips. Private airstrips are discouraged throughout the Recreation Rivers. Exceptions to this policy may be considered on a case-by-case basis. In considering exceptions, the division will consider the plan goals, management intent, and:

1. Opportunities for alternate access;

2. Analysis of surrounding terrain and topographic features;

3. Habitat values, recreation uses in the area, and riparian vegetation and hydrology;

4. Existence of previously or naturally cleared areas;

5. Benefits to the public including reciprocal easements for public use;

6. Opportunities for consolidating airstrips or joint-use airstrips when more than one applicant is likely to apply for airstrips in adjacent areas;

7. FAA input and requirements and;

8. Other public and agency comments.

A written decision must be prepared that addresses each airstrip application stating the reasons for approving or denying the use. The factors listed above will be considered along with any other relevant information when reaching a decision. Renewal of expired rights-of-way for airstrips will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Floatplane Landing Areas. See Chapter 3, Subunit 2a, *Floatplane Landing Area.*

Airstrips for Mining Operations. Since airstrips for mining operations are usually for restricted use, and most active mining occurs in Class I areas where motorized access is seasonally limited, construction of new airstrips will not be permitted for mining operations. This does not preclude mine claimants from applying for airstrips for exclusive use outside the corridors.

Blocking Airstrips. Public use airstrips shall not be blocked by individuals without the prior authorization from DNR (AS 02.20.050). This does not preclude DNR from closing existing airstrips for safety reasons or other management concerns.

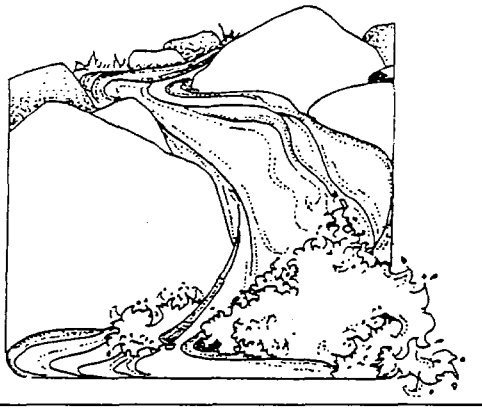
Aircraft and Helicopter Landing. On the land and water in river segments subject to seasonal powerboat restrictions shown on maps in Chapter 3, aircraft and helicopter landings are subject to the same seasonal motor prohibitions. The intent is to provide for a non-motorized recreation experience during the fishing season along these river segments. (See *Boat Access, Regulations* in this chapter and in Chapter 3.) This restriction does not apply to Special Management Areas (also shown on maps in Chapter 3) where aircraft and helicopter landings are allowed. There are also exceptions for access to private lands and mining locations. See *General Access, Permits for Access to Private Land and Mining Locations* in this chapter. The department should promulgate regulations to implement this section. When non-motorized area regulations are developed, the Federal Aviation Administration should be contacted by the department to ensure that these areas are shown on the *NOAA Sectional Maps* and the *NOAA Government Flight Information Publication Supplement, Alaska.*

Aircraft Storage. Floatplanes and wheel planes kept below ordinary high water shall be stored consis-

tent with the boat storage guidelines. See *Shoreline Development, Boat Storage* in this chapter.

Other Guidelines Affecting Air Access. Several other guidelines may affect air access. See the following sections of this chapter:

Upland Development
Shoreline Development
General Access
Boat Access
Subsurface Resources



WATER & SOLID WASTE

Goals

Water Quantity. Reserve adequate water quantity to provide for recreation and fish and wildlife habitat for each river system throughout the year.

Water Quality. Manage upland activities for multiple use within the corridors using mitigation measures to alleviate potential adverse effects on water quality.

Wetlands. Protect the hydrologic, habitat, and recreational values of public wetlands.

Litter and Solid Waste. Reduce litter, solid waste, and human waste deposition in the corridors in order to protect recreational values, water quality, and public health.

Management Guidelines

Litter. Litter and other signs of use were identified as a serious problem in the Recreation Rivers. Users were almost unanimous in saying that a "no litter" standard should be in place throughout the Recreation Rivers. To address this concern, the department should adopt a regulation prohibiting littering or bringing waste or refuse into the Recreation Rivers for its disposal. A public education program should be developed by DNR, in cooperation with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and user groups, which stresses the "pack-it-in - pack-it-out" ethic. Other management tools to reduce litter should include providing staff for litter pick-up patrols and working with volunteer groups to expand this effort. The department should also work with commercial operators interested in picking up litter, in lieu of paying commercial-use permit fees (also see *Commercial, In-Kind Services).* DNR and the borough should consider contracting for litter pick-up if staff is short and funding is available. Funding these management options is a high priority.

Providing dumpsters or trash cans in remote locations in the corridors is not encouraged at this time. However, as funding allows, the borough, DFG, and DOPOR should continue to provide dumpsters at major road accessible boat launches such as the Deshka Landing, Susitna Landing, Little Susitna Access, and the Talkeetna boat launch, to encourage private landowners and the public not to dispose of garbage within the Recreation Rivers. Operators of private boat launches are also encouraged to provide these facilities for their customers.

Solid Waste. Land fills, dumps, and burial of solid waste and litter will not be authorized on state lands in the Recreation Rivers. DNR should identify unauthorized disposal sites and, in coordination with DEC, close these sites.

Waste Water Disposal Systems. All commercial guide camps on state lands are required to meet DEC regulations for wastewater systems. No wastewater disposal systems such as leach fields and septic systems will be allowed on the

shorelands. Wastewater disposal systems elsewhere in the Recreation Rivers shall comply with DEC regulations.

Other Signs of Use. Other than litter, the most common signs of use along the rivers is the accumulation of toilet paper and unburied human waste. DEC recommends that for one-time individual use, human defecation should be at least 100 feet from any stream or waterbody and away from campsites or other areas frequented by people. All fecal materials and tissues should be buried in a small hole, covered with soil, packed down, and vegetation replaced. To protect public health, the public education program proposed for the Recreation Rivers should include information on the proper disposal of human waste. (See Public Education.)

Privies. Consistent with DEC regulations, privies must be located at least 100 feet from the nearest waterbody, and the bottom of the pit must be at least 4 feet above the water table.

Drinking Water. Commercial facilities are required to provide water from an approved drinking water source. In addition, approved public drinking water sources are necessary at the mouths of the Deshka River, Clear Creek, Lake Creek, Talachulitna River, and Alexander Creek. The cost of providing public sources of drinking water at these sites with public funds is prohibitively expensive because of new EPA regulations. Until approved public drinking water sources are developed at these locations, the public should be warned, through a public education program, not to drink untreated surface water.

Waste Treatment Plants. Large-scale waste treatment plants for municipalities, subdivisions, manufacturing, or industry are prohibited in the Recreation Rivers.

Fuel Storage. No more than 55 gallons of fuel, oil, and other liquid petroleum products may be stored on state land or water, or associated structures, within 100 feet of any waterbody. Fifty-five gallon drums stored within 100 feet of the river must be within an impermeable-diked area with a capacity of 110 percent of the largest amount of fuel stored. Underground storage of petroleum products in the Recreation River is prohibited.

Bears and Garbage. (See *Fish and Wildlife* in this chapter.)

Storm Drains. Private storm drains may not discharge into the Recreation Rivers or their tributaries. Public storm drains may be allowed if settling ponds and grease separators are used to maintain water quality, a maintenance schedule is planned and undertaken, appropriate erosion control measures are taken (where erosion is a problem), and pre-existing contours are maintained. When storm drains discharge into wetland, perforated pipe to dissipate water should be used.

Water Intake Structures. When issuing appropriations for waters in fish-bearing streams, DNR will require that water intake structures be installed that do not entrap, impinge, or injure fish. Water intake structures will be screened and intake velocities will be limited. Support structures should be designed to prevent fish from being led into the intake. Other effective techniques may also be used to achieve the intent of this guideline. Screen size, water velocity, and intake design will be determined in consultation with DFG.

Instream Flow. In accordance with AS 41.23.420(b), "The commissioner shall reserve to the state under AS 46.15.145 an instream flow (see glossary) level for the water in the rivers described in AS 41.23.500 that is adequate to achieve the purposes of AS 41.23.400." DNR will establish these reservations of water (instream flows) through an instream flow application in accordance with AS 46.15.145 and 11 AAC 93.141-147. An expanded continuous stream flow monitoring and data collection program should be established on all six recreational rivers with special attention to Lake Creek, Talachulitna River, and Alexander Creek where historical flows are poorly documented or non-existent. The stream flow data collected will be used to establish or modify the initial reservation of water, to update and review the reservation in 10 years, in accordance with AS 46.15.145(f) and to monitor and enforce instream flow reservations.

Contingent on funding and staff, instream flow reservation applications for the Recreation Rivers will be filed within one year after the plan takes effect as defined by AS 41.23.440(c). Because some of the applications will be based on hydrological estimates, it may be necessary to

amend these applications under 11 AAC 93 as additional data are acquired and analyzed.

Until an instream flow reservation is filed, out-of-stream applications will be adjudicated consistent with AS 46.15 with consideration given to fish and wildlife, recreation, and other stream values. Notice will be given to DFG, DEC, and other interested parties as required by AS 46.15.133.

Water Discharge from Mining Operations. Zero discharge of pipe effluent will be allowed into the rivers or their tributaries from mining operations.

Wetlands Drainage and Associated Discharge. Wetlands serve to filter nutrients and sediments from upland runoff. They also stabilize water supplies by storing excessive water during flooding and by recharging groundwater during dry periods. In addition, wetlands provide important feeding, rearing, nesting, and breeding grounds for many species, selected recreational uses, and aesthetic values.

The location of wetlands are shown in Appendix H under a separate cover. To protect these values, drainage into wetlands will be authorized only in a manner that:

1. There shall be no impediment to fish passage.
2. Ditches shall not physically connect to any natural bodies of water.
3. Settling ponds and grease separators shall be used to maintain water quality. A strict maintenance schedule shall be undertaken.
4. Disturbed soil areas shall be revegetated by the next growing season. Natural revegetation is acceptable if the site is suitable and will revegetate itself within the next growing season.
5. Discharged waters shall not exceed the state water quality standards.
6. Excess material excavated from the site that is not needed for site development shall be disposed of at an upland site or outside the Recreation Rivers.
7. Side slopes shall not exceed 2:1.

Other Guidelines Affecting Water and Solid Waste. Several other guidelines may affect waste and solid waste. See the following sections of this chapter:

Shoreline Development
Fish and Wildlife Habitat
Commercial
Subsurface Resources
Education

FORESTRY

Goals

Personal Use. DNR will continue to make wood available for personal use within the constraints of budget, access, and habitat and recreation values and the Recreation Rivers Act. Sources of wood for personal use may include permits or sales in remote areas, personal use harvesting areas in road-accessible regions, use of wood residues incident to clearing for other purposes, and harvest of dead and down wood.

Commercial Use. Make wood products available for use incidental to the construction of access or for habitat enhancement.

Forested Land Base. Maintain in public ownership a forested land base that is adequate to meet the needs for personal use harvest, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, soil, and water.

Fire. Protect from wildfire, human life, valuable public and private forest lands, and significant human improvements.

Management Guidelines

Restrictions in the Act. The Recreation Rivers Act provides specific guidance on timber harvest on state lands. This does not apply to harvest on private or borough lands. AS 41.23.470(b) states that, "The commissioner may conduct only a negotiated timber or material sale under AS 38.05.115 to provide for personal use, including house logs and firewood, or for a use incidental to the construction of access, or for habitat enhancement.

Regulations for Personal Use. Negotiated personal-use sales are subject to the regulations in 11 AAC 71.050. Wood obtained for personal use may not be sold, bartered or used for commercial purposes. In the Recreation Rivers, contracts for personal-use wood will be limited to 3200 linear feet of houselogs, 10 thousand board feet of sawlogs, or 10 cords of fuelwood. For each established personal-use harvesting area, the Division of Forestry sets the number of cords allowed per permit.

Commercial Use. Negotiated timber sales for commercial use are allowed under AS 41.23.470(b) and 11 AAC 71.045 as long as harvest is incidental to the construction of access or for habitat enhancement.

Forest Resources and Practices Act. All timber harvests must comply with the Forest Resources and Practices Act. That act and implementing regulations guide forest management, reforestation, and protection of non-timber forest resources. For more information, see *AS 41.17 and 11 AAC 95.*

Dead and Down Wood. A regulation will be promulgated that limits cutting small amounts of wood for recreation uses to dead-and-down wood. To protect woody debris on the river bottoms which is important for fish habitat, cutting, burning, or removal of dead-and-down wood that is larger than seven inches in diameter and is located below ordinary high water is prohibited except under the provisions for hazard trees. See *Hazard Trees* in this section.

Hazard Trees. Cutting of any size tree that is a hazard to river navigation or public safety may be authorized.

Personal Use in Road Accessible Areas. Personal use harvest of standing timber in road accessible areas may only be allowed on the upland parcel south of Bench Lake on the upper Little Susitna River. The Division of Forestry will revegetate these areas consistent with the Susitna Forestry Guidelines and AS 41.17. Negotiated sales will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Personal Use in Non-road Accessible Areas. Harvest of standing timber for personal use in non-road accessible areas may be allowed by negotiated personal use sales. Harvests will be by group-selection cut and revegetated with woody species including birch, spruce, aspen and willow (see *Regeneration* below). *Group Selection Cut* is a method of cutting where all the trees are harvested within a cutting unit, and where the cutting unit is less than five acres. Harvest of house logs may be harvested by the individual tree selection method.

Regeneration. Personal wood harvest users in non-road accessible areas will be required to revegetate the site after harvest. Site preparation ensures prompt reforestation and benefits habitat and visual quality. Where natural regeneration, artificial seeding, or planting will be used for reforestation, a bed adequate for regeneration will be required after timber harvest. The site preparation method used will depend on site characteristics and vegetation required for reforestation and habitat. Recommended reforestation techniques will be included in the personal-use-sale contract.

Plan Update. When the plan is updated in five years, the planning team and advisory board will consider methods of regenerating forests including whether to recommend to the legislature that the corridors be open to commercial timber harvest. Commercial harvest in the corridors is prohibited now except under the conditions outlined in Section 41.23.470 (b).

Timber Harvest on Borough Lands. For forest management policies on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Commercial Use. Harvest of timber for personal use does not include use of wood for constructing or heating commercial facilities such as lodges. Wood obtained from personal-use permits may be used to heat or construct a lodge owner's personal residence. In no case may the

wood obtained through a personal use permit be bought, sold, or bartered.

Harvest for Habitat Enhancement. Commercial or personal use harvest may be allowed for habitat enhancement. Habitat enhancement may only occur with concurrence from DFG.

Harvest Incidental to the Construction of Access. Harvest incidental to the construction of access may allow adequate clearing to ensure drying of the roadbed. Clearing shall be minimized where roads cross rivers.

Timber Salvage. Timber with commercial or personal-use value should be salvaged from lands that will be cleared for other uses, such as moose habitat enhancement or for transportation or utility corridors. This will be accomplished by:

1. *Review.* The Division of Forestry will review proposals for significant land clearing actions to evaluate whether the timber is worth salvaging and to advise the Director of the Division of Land and Water on appropriate salvage methods.

2. *Scheduling*. Major projects that involve clearing large amounts of forested land, such as for moose habitat enhancement, will be planned in advance to allow a reasonable period to arrange for and conduct salvage of the timber. This advance planning includes sufficient time to conduct inventories and harvest.

Public Notice. Contracts for personal-use wood harvest are exempt from notice requirements for commercial timber sales. Designated personal-use harvest areas that will be open for multiple personal use contracts, or areas where timber cutting is for habitat enhancement, should be included in the five-year schedule of timber sales. They will be subject to the notice requirements for commercial sales consistent with the Susitna Forestry Guidelines.

Public Use Sites. Because of the high public use in certain areas, the intensity of harvest of dead and down wood, and the difficulty of regeneration in areas heavily used by the public, personal use wood contracts will not be authorized in public use sites, except when cutting is necessary to construct authorized improvements. Resource agencies may remove hazard trees (e.g., standing dead trees near popular campsites).

Buffers. The Forest Resources and Practices Act does not allow commercial cutting on state lands within 30 meters of anadromous and high-value resident fish waters. Harvest between 30 and 90 meters along anadromous and high-value resident fish waters must be consistent with the maintenance of important fish and wildlife habitat.

Iditarod Trail. The buffer width for the Iditarod Race Trail is described under *Upland Access, Iditarod Race Trail* in this chapter. The buffer width for the Iditarod National Historic Trail is described under *Heritage Resources, Iditarod National Historic Trail* in this chapter. Timber harvest for uses incidental to the construction of access or for habitat enhancement may be permitted in the trail corridor only if such harvests protect or enhance the visual and other characteristics of the trail. Harvesting in the Iditarod National Historic Trail corridor will be designed in consultation with the State Office of History and Archeology. The approximate location of the Iditarod Race Trail and the Iditarod National Historic Trail are shown on subunit maps in Chapter 3.

Unauthorized Access. Timber cutting for personal use or incident to the construction of access shall not be for purposes of creating unauthorized access. This type harvest will be contingent upon receiving required authorization for constructing airstrips, roads, or other types of access improvements.

Fire Management. Fire suppression intensities are determined by the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan for the Susitna Basin. Fire management practices, including suppression and prescribed burning, are designed to implement the land management policies laid out in the land use plans for the area. Use and storage of fire retardants is allowed throughout the Recreation Rivers.

Use of motorized equipment including boats, aircraft, and ground vehicles, for fire-suppression purposes is allowed in non-motorized areas. Because it would be difficult to manage fires in the one-mile wide corridors different from fires on adjacent lands, fire suppression levels for the corridors will be consistent with those for adjacent areas.

Seasonal Scheduling. To avoid conflicts with recreational uses of the river, harvest should not occur during the peak fishing season. The peak use periods for each subunit are listed for each subunit in Chapter 3. Seasonal restrictions on harvest does not apply to areas where there is little boating or fishing, such as the upland parcel south of Bench Lake on the upper Little Susitna River. Timber harvesting during the snow-free season will be directed to well-drained sites where summer harvest can aid site preparation and reduce damage to wetlands.



Other Guidelines Affecting Forestry. Several other guidelines may affect Forestry. See the following sections of this chapter:

Fish and Wildlife Habitat
Upland Access
Heritage Resources

SUBSURFACE RESOURCES

Goals

Mineral and Energy Supplies. Make metallic minerals, oil, and gas available to contribute to the energy and mineral supplies, and to the economy.

Environmental Quality and Recreation Values. When developing subsurface resources, minimize surface disturbance, degradation of water quality, and impairment and conflicts with recreation uses.

Recreation Mining. Make metallic minerals available for recreation mining.

Management Guidelines - Mining

Restrictions in the Act. Under AS 41.23.470(c), "the commissioner may permit mining leasing under AS 38.05.205 on uplands within a recreation river corridor if leasing is allowed under a management plan that has been adopted by the commissioner. The commissioner shall establish appropriate conditions for permits, operating plans, and leases to mitigate the effects of mineral development activities on the environment and to prevent, to the extent practicable, degradation of the recreation uses of the river." Map 2.3 shows the existing mineral locations and areas that will be effected by mineral orders.

Existing Claims. Existing claims are currently located in the following subunits: Middle Lake Creek (4c), Talachulitna Canyon (5b), Talachulitna Mouth (5a), and Clear Creek (3c).

Mineral Leasehold Location Order. Between RM 42.2 and RM 45.8 along Lake Creek rights to locatable minerals may be acquired only under the leasehold location system, AS 36.05.205, and may not be acquired by locating a mining claimunder AS 38.05.145. This will be implemented by both a leasehold location order and a mineral opening order which includes approximately 3,360 acres. There will be a 300-foot staking setback from the ordinary high water mark on Lake, Camp, and Sunflower creeks. In addition, leasehold locations may not be staked in the public use sites at the mouth of Camp and Sunflower creeks (PU 4d.1 and PU 4d.2). Leases will be restricted to 5-year periods. The Recreation Rivers Advisory Board will have the opportunity to review the leases and plans of operation in this area as part of the Alaska Coastal Manage-

ment Program review process. The lease should also include language that states that if at any time the lease is in effect, the lessee has defaulted on the lease, or upon termination of the lease for any reason, the state may take possession of the property, improvements, and equipment of the lessee on the leased area as security for payment of rent due, or to indemnify lease.

Mineral Orders. As a result of mineral closing orders prescribed by the Susitna Area Plan and Willow Subbasin Plan, most of the Recreation Rivers are closed to new mineral entry. Exceptions include the upper Little Susitna River that was open to mineral entry under lease under the Willow Subbasin Area Plan. Also, there are some discrepancies between the legal descriptions in the area plans, the mineral orders, and the Recreation River boundaries. These discrepancies will be rectified by additional mineral orders. All lands within the Recreation Rivers legal boundaries (and additions approved by the legislature) will be closed to new mineral entry (except where noted above for upper Lake Creek). Closures will prevent surface use conflicts and protect high public use values. Areas that were recommended for designation as Recreation Rivers by the Susitna Area Plan but were not designated by the legislature, shall be reopened to new mineral entry (approximately 640 acres). Mineral closing orders for the four proposed additions (Upper Moose Creek, mouth of Alexander Creek, Upper Nancy Lake Creek, and upper Talkeetna Canyon) will be null and void on August 1, 1992 if these areas are not added to the Recreation Rivers by the legislature.

Land Use Permits for Mining. Under existing regulations, mining operations that use heavy equipment, disturb the riverbed, restrict public access, or build or use a surface structure require approval by the Division of Mining. This approval is generally authorized by a Land Use Permit. To simplify the permitting process, mine operators can file the Annual Placer Mining Application which serves as a combined permit application for several agencies. For mining operations in the Coastal Zone, the Annual Placer Mining Application will be reviewed for consistency through the Coastal Zone Management program. Copies of the Annual Placer Mining Applications and issued Land Use Permits will be distributed to agencies that request copies.

Data Needs. The application for a Land Use Permit will include, in addition to the standard Annual Placer Mining Application questionnaire, sufficient explanation to show how the mine operator plans to comply with the plan guidelines for mineral development, rehabilitation of mine sites, relationship to scenic and heritage resources, and public access.

Plan of Operations for Mineral Leases. An approved plan of operations for a mineral lease takes the place of the Land Use Permit required for unleased land. If proposed lease activities are so minor that they could take place without a Land Use Permit on unleased land, a plan of operations is not required (11 AAC 86.800).

The plan of operations must show how the operator proposes to comply with the lease stipulations and other pertinent guidelines in this plan.

Data Needs. Plans of operation will follow existing regulations given in 11 AAC 86.800. In addition, the following information will be required:

1. Justification for vegetation clearing.

2. Delineation of proposed access roads within the lease or accessing the lease on a topographic map.

3. Location, size and purpose of any proposed structures and description of how visual guidelines will be met.

Approval of Plan of Operations. DNR will approve plans of operation required for locatable mineral leases and Land Use Permits if the plans or permit applications adequately address the guidelines of this plan, state laws and regulations, and if DNR has consulted with and given careful consideration to the recommendations of DFG and DEC. If after a reasonable period of time a negotiated solution cannot be reached with the operator, or in the event of repeated violations, violation of the plan of operations or Land Use Permits is cause for enforced cessation of operations.

Best Management Practices. DFG will utilize its manual, *Best Management Practices for Placer Mining* when issuing Title 16 permits and reviewing of and commenting on the Division of Mining's plans of operations and Land Use Permits for mining. DFG recommendations for rejection or modification of a Land Use Permit or a plan

of operations for placer mining will be based on Title 16 and the DFG Best Management Practices. (This document is available from DFG or DNR).

1. *Removal of Vegetation.* Vegetation may be removed no more than one year ahead of mining unless unusual circumstances exist. The area of vegetation removal will be for the immediate areas of the excavations, and sites for overburden storage, settling ponds, access roads, equipment storage, and other authorized structures. The timing and extent of vegetation removal must be outlined in the mining plan.

2. *Tailings and Overburden.* Overburden and tailings will be stockpiled and/or deposited in accordance with the mining plans.

3. *Control of Run-off, Siltation and /or Pollution.* The area must be managed to minimize non-point sources of pollution.

4. *Mine Site Consultation.* To assist the mine operator in developing the operation in a manner that is as compatible as possible with public use of the area in the vicinity of the mine, an on-site pre-development conference should be held with the mine operator and DNR, DFG, and DEC officials. If agencies are unable to perform the on-site consultation due to budget or staff constraints, the plan of operations may be approved without it.

Reclamation of Mine Sites

1. *Reclamation.* Mine sites will be reclaimed consistent with the state reclamation law (AS 29.17) and regulations adopted to implement the law. Requirements in the law and proposed regulations that provide for bonding, reclamation plans, and reclamation standards will be applied to all mining leases or locations including operations under five acres or those that move less than 50,000 cubic yards of earth.

2. *Reclamation Plan Required.* Reclamation plans will be required for mining activities authorized by a mining lease or location.

3. *Phased Reclamation.* Disturbed acreage should be minimized. Disturbed areas should be reclaimed as phases of the mine operations are completed unless this is not feasible or prudent.

4. *Rehabilitation Requirement.* Excavated areas and waste disposal sites will be recontoured to a natural appearing state at an average slope of no more than 3:1 or equivalent to the original slope. Topsoil will be replaced and the area revegetated. DFG and the Division of Agriculture Plant Materials Center should be consulted as to types of vegetation most conducive for returning the mined area to a state which approaches the "pre-mining" natural conditions. Use of native plant species is preferred.

Water Discharge. Zero discharge of waste water will be allowed into the rivers or their tributaries from mining operations. Also see *Agency Implementation Responsibilities, DGGS*, in Chapter 4.

Siting of Structures. Special care will be taken to site mining camps. Minimizing visual prominence of structures provides a benefit to miners by making them less noticeable to potential vandals and by promoting public acceptance of surface alterations to state lands. The following guidelines will be followed in locating mining structures, unless no feasible or prudent alternative exists.

1. For existing locations, living accommodations for mineral exploration, annual assessment, or production must be setback at least one-fourth mile from ordinary high water in the main river. Living accommodations associated with locations in the area open for new mineral entry under the leasehold location system on upper Lake Creek must be located outside the corridor.

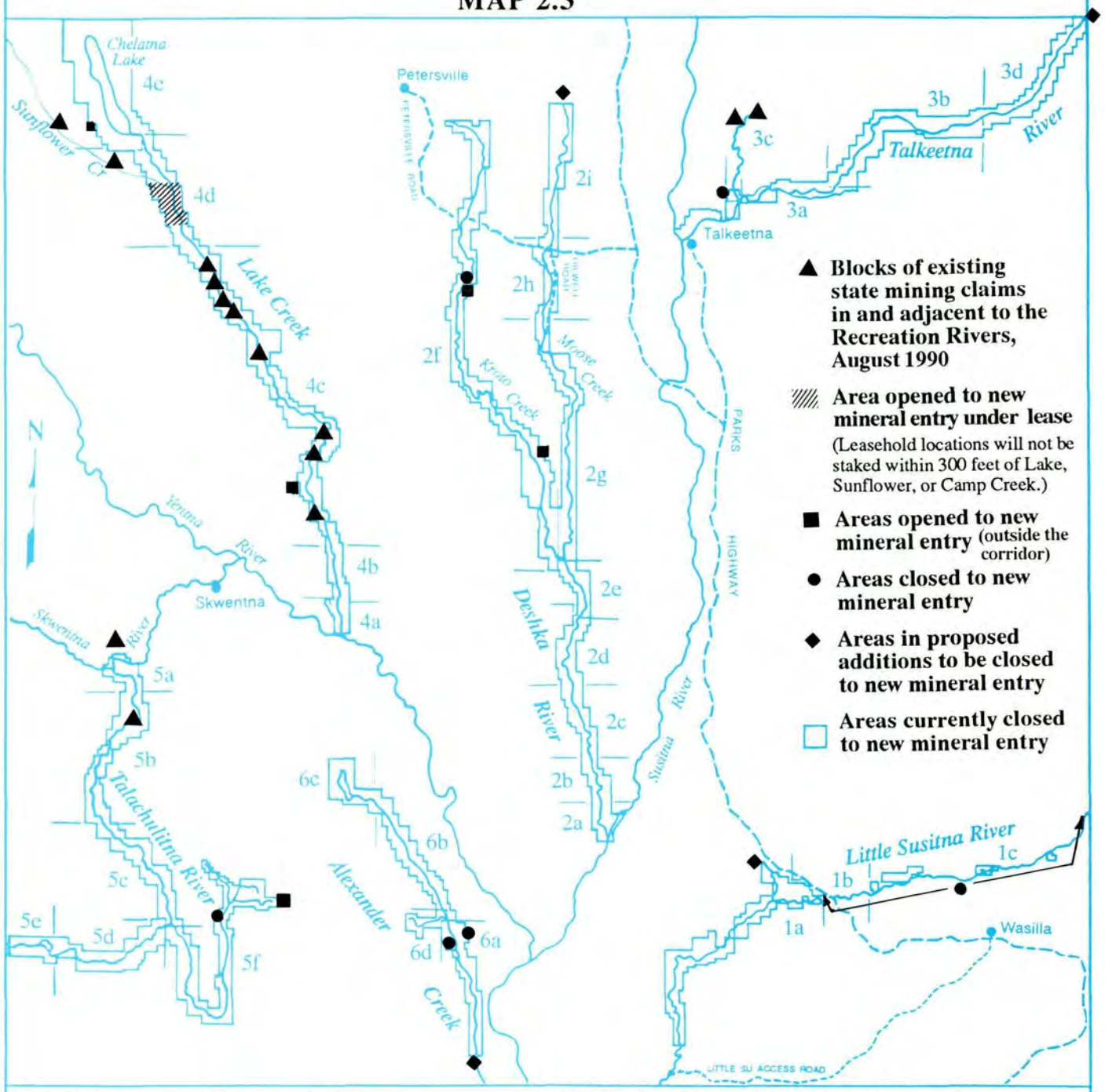
2. No full-time residences will be allowed on either existing or new locations inside the Recreation Rivers. Living accommodations must be removed at the end of each season. Use of mining locations for homesites, non-mining related business, or recreation sites is prohibited. Camps associated with recreational mining should comply with regulations for *primitive tent camps* described under *Recreation* in this chapter.

3. Structures that are not used for living accommodations may be allowed on mining operations, if, in the judgment of the Division of Mining, they are necessary for the operation. These may remain for more than one work season but must be removed at the end of the term of use. Abandoned or unusable construction materials, equipment, or structures should be removed annually.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan

Area Proposed to be open to New Mineral Entry under Lease

MAP 2.3



MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS

1. Little Susitna River
- 1a. Lower Little Susitna River
- 1b. Middle Little Susitna River
- 1c. Upper Little Susitna River

2. Deshka River
- 2a. Mouth Of Deshka River
- 2b. Lower Deshka River
- 2c. Middle Deshka River
- 2d. Neil Lake
- 2e. The Forks
- 2f. Kroto Creek
- 2g. Lower Moose Creek
- 2h. Oilwell Road
- 2i. Upper Moose Creek

3. Talkeetna River
- 3a. Lower Talkeetna River
- 3b. Middle Talkeetna River
- 3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek
- 3d. Talkeetna Canyon

4. Lake Creek
- 4a. Lake Creek Mouth
- 4b. Lower Lake Creek
- 4c. Middle Lake Creek
- 4d. Upper Lake Creek
- 4e. Chelatna Lake

5. Talachulitna River
- 5a. Mouth Of Talachulitna River
- 5b. Talachulitna River Canyon
- 5c. Middle Talachulitna River
- 5d. Talachulitna Creek
- 5e. Judd Lake
- 5f. Upper Talachulitna River

6. Alexander Creek
- 6a. Lower Alexander Creek
- 6b. Upper Alexander Creek
- 6c. Alexander Lake
- 6d. Sucker Creek

4. Structures and construction materials should be consolidated behind natural contours rather than on prominent points, or behind vegetative screens. Visibility of structures from the rivers should be minimized to the extent practical.

5. Structures should be grouped together where possible.

6. Structures should be kept to the minimum number necessary to perform mining operations.

7. Structures should blend with the landscape to the extent possible. For example, structures should be rustic in nature or painted a dark color to blend with the terrain. Shiny metal roofs and walls are discouraged.

8. Trash should be neatly contained and removed from public view. It should not be an attractive nuisance for bears. Disposal should be consistent with the solid waste guidelines in this chapter.

Public Access Across Mining Locations. Public access across mining locations is usually unrestricted. Public access within an actively mined area may be restricted if authorized under an approved plan of operation, to protect public safety, or to prevent unreasonable interference with the rights of the miner. *No trespass* signs may only be posted in the immediate working area or on structures after access restrictions have been authorized by DNR. Signs may not be used to block the public's use of legal access or intimidate the public. Facilities will not be located where they would block public access to state lands or waters.

Motorized Access. Seasonal motorized transport restrictions will not apply to the use of motors or powered transport associated with assessment work or commercial production on active mining claims. See *General Access, Permits for Access to Private Land and Mine Claims*, and *Upland Access*. For recreational mining, motor transport or use of motorized equipment shall not be allowed in the non-motorized areas during the period when those prohibitions apply.

Leases for Tourism Gold Mining. Leases for tourism-related gold-mining businesses will not be issued in the Recreation Rivers.

Suction Dredges. Recreational mining is defined as using a suction dredge with a nozzle of six inches or less, powered by a 16 HP motor or less. Although a permit for recreational mining is not required from DNR, a Title 16 Permit is required from DFG if the use is to occur in a designated anadromous waterbody. DFG should not allow suction dredging in the active river channels where water is flowing during the time of the activity. The use of a suction dredge larger than 6" requires an annual placer mining application or plan of operation from DNR. Also see *Upland Access* in this section.

Signs. Marking mining locations should be consistent with the guidelines under *Recreation, Marking Natural Objects and Public Educations, Signs.*

Leasable Minerals other than Oil and Gas. Coal and other leasable minerals, with the exception of oil and gas, will not be available for leasing.

Management Guidelines - Oil and Gas

Oil and Gas Leasing. With the exception of guidelines listed below, the plan defers decisions regarding leasing for oil and gas to DNR's existing leasing processes. The department's statewide policies for oil and gas are found in the Five Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program. Specific stipulations for oil and gas exploration, development, and production activities will be developed and applied on a case-by-case basis for each oil and gas lease sale using the lease sale process.

Siting Facilities. The siting of onshore facilities, other than roads, docks, or pipeline crossings, will be prohibited within 500 feet of all fishbearing streams and lakes unless it is shown to the satisfaction of the director of the Division of Oil and Gas, after consultation with the Department of Fish and Game, that the alternative site locations outside this buffer zone are not feasible or prudent.

Additionally, to the extent feasible, the siting of facilities within one-half mile of the banks of the main stems of the six Recreation Rivers is prohibited. Pipeline crossings must be aligned perpendicular or near perpendicular to the watercourse.

Seismic Exploration. The plan defers to existing DNR seismic exploration permitting processes. To avoid conflicts with recreation users, damage to sensitive habitats, and to protect scenic qualities of the rivers, techniques that can occur in winter and that minimize clearing of vegetation are preferred.

Other Guidelines Affecting Materials. Several other guidelines may affect materials extraction. See the following sections of this chapter:

Shoreline Development	General Access
Recreation	Upland Access
Commercial	Land and Water

MATERIALS

Material Supplies. Make materials available for personal use, use incidental to the construction of access, or for habitat enhancement.

Environmental Quality and Recreation Resources. When developing material sources, minimize surface disturbance, degradation of water quality, and visual impairment.

Management Guidelines

Restrictions in the Act. Materials include the common varieties of sand, gravel, rock, peat, pumice, pumicite, clay, and sod. The Recreation Rivers Act authorizes negotiated material sales within the corridors under AS 38.05.115 to provide for personal use and for use incidental to the construction of access or for habitat enhancement. Personal use is limited to 100 cubic yards. Negotiated material sales for non-personal use are limited to 25,000 cubic yards of materials per year. Consistent with the Recreation Rivers Act, negotiated sales to state or federal agencies, political subdivisions, and charitable organizations authorized under AS 38.05.810 may be allowed.

Location. If feasible and prudent, material sites outside the corridors should be utilized before developing material sites located within the Recreation Rivers.

Extraction Below Ordinary High Water. Material extraction will not be allowed below ordinary high water (OHW) or in the protection area. Exceptions to allow extraction for habitat enhancement may occur for sites identified by DFG or to move a minimal amount of materials which may be necessary to provide a flat base for the toe of a structure. Elsewhere in the corridors material sales will be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

Reclamation. Reclamation of a material site shall be consistent with state reclamation law. At the discretion of DLW, a bond will be required of the site developer.

Existing DOTPF Pits. There are two active DOTPF materials sites in the Recreation Rivers. One is a 90-acre site located in T18N, R1E, Sec. 8, on the upper Little Susitna River, off the Palmer-Fishhook Road. The eastern half of this tract has been transferred to DOTPF under an Interagency Land Management Transfer (ILMT ADL 59287) for an undetermined duration. It is one of the most important state material sites in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. The second site is located on 1.3 acres on Oilwell Road where the road crosses Kroto Creek.

DOTPF is authorized to remove 10,000 cubic yards of material from this site for work on the Kroto Creek Bridge. Materials extraction may continue from these sites under the existing authorizations. The sites will be reclaimed consistent with state reclamation law and DOTPF Standard Stipulations for material sources after extraction is completed. Also see *DOTPF Materials Site, Subunit 3c* in Chapter 3.

Other Guidelines Affecting Subsurface Resources. Several other guidelines may affect subsurface resources. See the following sections of this chapter:

Shoreline Development
Upland Access

LAND STATUS

Goals

Land Retention. Retain state lands within the Recreation Rivers in state ownership.

Land Acquisition. Acquire private lands through purchase, lease, gift, exchange or other means when the parcel could significantly contribute to the public values and uses in the Recreation Rivers.

Cooperation. Cooperate between state, federal, and municipal agencies to ensure that land and water within the Recreation Rivers is managed efficiently. Cooperate, at the request of a municipality, in the planning for municipal land adjacent to the Recreation Rivers.

Authority. The authority under the Recreation Rivers Act only applies to those lands designated as Recreation Rivers by the legislation (AS 41.23.420(f)).

Municipal Land. If a municipality commits land for inclusion in the Recreation River Plan or management, the department will receive the concurrence of the municipality to the management plan proposed as it applies to municipal land. Municipal land not committed by a municipality for inclusion in a Recreation River corridor is excluded from the operation of the plan.

Management Guidelines

Retention in State Ownership. State lands in the Recreation Rivers will be retained in state ownership and will be managed in accordance with the management intent and guidelines intent in the plan. One parcel at the mouth of the Deshka River may, however, be conveyed to the Matanuska Borough. This intent is described in Chapter 3, Subunit 2a.

Land Acquisition. Under AS 41.23.460, DNR may acquire isolated parcels of private land in the corridor by purchase, lease, gift, or exchange. Land may not be acquired for inclusion in the corridors by eminent domain. Private land may be returned to the state or borough through foreclosure, escheat, or other circumstances. DFG may use federal-share and matching state funds for land purchases to enhance recreational boating and sport fishing. Land purchased by DFG may be noted as OSL (Other State Land) on the status plat and managed by DNR under an MOU or management agreement. Federally mandated criteria for use of parcels purchased with federal funds must be followed.

It is not the goal of the plan to acquire all private land in the Recreation River corridors. Only land that significantly contributes to the management intent for the Recreation Rivers should be proposed for acquisition. Criteria for identifying and prioritizing potential parcels for acquisition are listed below.

1. The parcel has been identified in the resource inventory or by a site inspection as containing unique habitat.

2. The parcel provides needed access to other state land or water.

3. The parcel can be used by many members of the public, thereby dispersing user pressure from other areas or increasing recreation opportunities.

4. Public ownership of the parcel would preclude uses not consistent with management intent and guidelines for the Recreation River.

Parcels should meet most of the following site criteria:

1. Topography and soil are suited to what the parcel will be managed for. For example, acquiring important wetlands for habitat protection would be consistent with this guideline.

2. The parcel should be free of toxic wastes, garbage, and contamination from septic systems. An environmental risk assessment should be conducted unless the parcel has had no evidence of prior use or development that may result in the disposal of wastes. The applicant may be required to collect soil samples and conduct surface and subsurface water quality tests.

3. The parcel has no significant erosion or accretion problems that could eventually render the site unusable or require expensive soil stabilization work.

4. The site does not include structures or facilities that are not suitable for public use or are not needed to fulfill the plan's management intent and guidelines.

5. The site is not surrounded by private land, unless the site will be used for access.
Four areas where acquisition of private land is being considered include lands in the following subunits, Neil Lake (2d), Alexander Lake (6c), Judd Lake (5e), and the mouth of Clear Creek (3c). Areas recommended for designation as Recreation Rivers are discussed in Chapter 4.

Land Exchanges. Land exchanges between the state and private landowners may be pursued to improve access to state lands or to protect important resources. The land exchange process is lengthy and staff intensive. When the same objective can be achieved through a cooperative agreement, it is the preferred management tool. Criteria for acquiring new lands in the corridors through an exchange are described in the previous section.

State Selections. All townships in the Recreation Rivers were selected by the state under Section 6(b) of the Alaska Statehood Act. Most of this land has been conveyed to the state. Any selected tracts of land that are available or become available in the future should be identified and placed on the state's land conveyance priority list (tentative approval) as a BLM high priority. Only two parcels, both at the south end of Chelatna Lake, have been identified at this time.

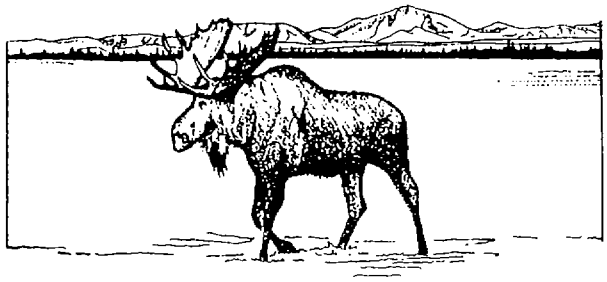
Susitna Flats State Game Refuge. As part of plan implementation, DNR, DFG, Department of Public Safety, and the borough will consider entering into a management agreement for land and water in the Recreation Rivers plan and Game Refuge on the lower Little Susitna River. When the Recreation Rivers plan is updated in approximately five years, the management of this area will be reviewed to determine whether additional measures, including changes in existing statutes and designation boundaries, are needed.

Classifications. Consistent with the Recreation Rivers Act and management intent in this plan, all state lands within the Recreation Rivers shall be classified under categories in 11 AAC 55 as Public Recreation Land, Water Resources Land, and Wildlife Habitat Land. Borough-owned lands in the Recreation Rivers were classified by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly in October, 1990. Borough classifications are noted under *Management Guidelines, Borough Lands* in Chapter 3 for each subunit where there is borough-owned land.

Mental Health Lands. Mental health lands are located on the lower Little Susitna River and near Talkeetna. Until the management of Mental Health Trust land is further defined through court decisions and new state laws, this plan, in conjunction with Department Order 121, reflects the department's interim management guidelines for all Mental Health Trust land within the boundaries of the Recreation Rivers. These lands are an integral part of two Recreation Rivers and will be managed consistent with the management intent for the subunits in which they are located. However, to the extent that the plan conflicts with the Alaska Mental Health Enabling Act of 1956, court decisions, and new state laws, the plan will not apply to Mental Health Trust lands.

University Lands. Under AS 38.04.005(f), the land owned by the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska is not subject to Chapter 4 statutes of Title 38 which includes planning, classification, and inventorying processes. This plan does not apply to the 284 acres of University lands in the Recreation Rivers including those located on the upper Little Susitna River (Subunit 1c) and at the mouth of the Talkeetna River (Subunit 3a).

Cooperative Agreement. To ensure efficient and consistent management of lands in and adjacent to the Recreation Rivers, DNR may enter into management agreement with different agencies and municipalities. Also see *Chapter 4, Agency Implementation Responsibilities.*



HERITAGE RESOURCES

Goals

Heritage Resources. The Alaska Historic Preservation Act establishes the state's basic goal: to preserve and protect the historic, prehistoric, and archaeological resources of Alaska. This plan will provide management consistent with that goal.

Management Guidelines

Site Identification. Historic and prehistoric resources should be identified by:

1. pre-activity surveys to identify and evaluate sites in areas of high potential or known resources; or

2. surveys conducted by DNR archaeologists or historians in compliance with the Alaska Historic Preservation Act.

Site Protection. Historic and prehistoric sites should be preserved and protected by:

1. review of development plans in the Recreation Rivers for impacts on historic and prehistoric sites;

2. review of permit, lease, and special use applications for impacts on historic and prehistoric sites, or probability of impacts in high and moderate potential areas; and

3. monitoring of known sites for impacts in areas of intensive fishing, camping, or other uses.

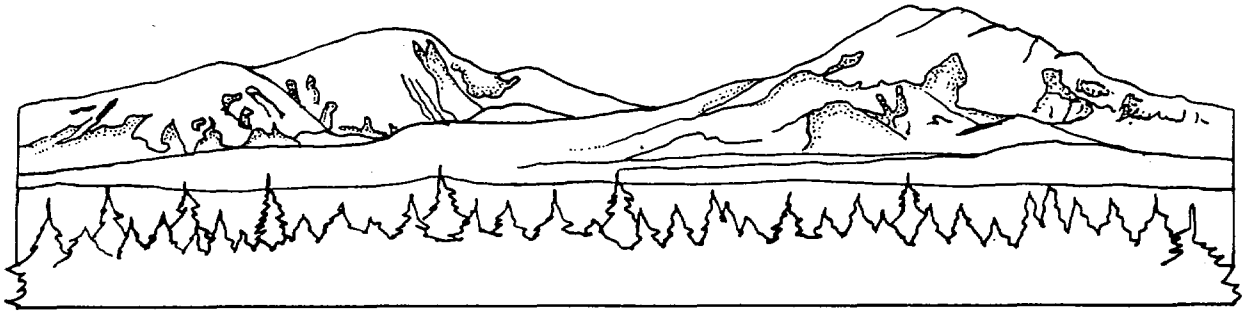
Public Education. Historic and prehistoric sites should be evaluated for their interpretative value. Where suitable, interpretive signs or board displays may be erected on heritage sites for the purpose of providing public education or to enhance tourism opportunities. Known heritage sites on the Little Susitna River, the mouth of the Deshka River, and the lower Talkeetna River should receive first priority because they have good public access and a high concentration of sites. (See also Education, Signs in this chapter.)

Disturbance or Removal of Heritage Resources. The department should promulgate regulations to prevent the disturbance or removal of cultural, archaeological, or historical material in the Recreation Rivers, unless authorized by the State Office of History and Archeology.

Iditarod National Historic Trail. The Iditarod National Historic Trail crosses the following subunits: Lower Little Susitna River (1a), Lake Creek Mouth (4a), Talachulitna River Mouth (5a), Upper Alexander Creek (6b), and Alexander Lake (6c). For exact locations, see the subunits in Chapter 3. Minimum trail buffers should be 100 feet (50 feet on either side of the centerline). Permits and leases within the buffer should be designed in consultation with the State Office of History and Archaeology. Also see *Forestry, and Iditarod Trail,* in this chapter.

Table 2.1 **Other Guidelines Affecting Heritage Resources.** Several other guidelines may affect Heritage Resources. See the following sections of this chapter:

Forestry
Education



EDUCATION

Goals

Provide Information. Provide adequate and accurate orientation and direction for visitors.

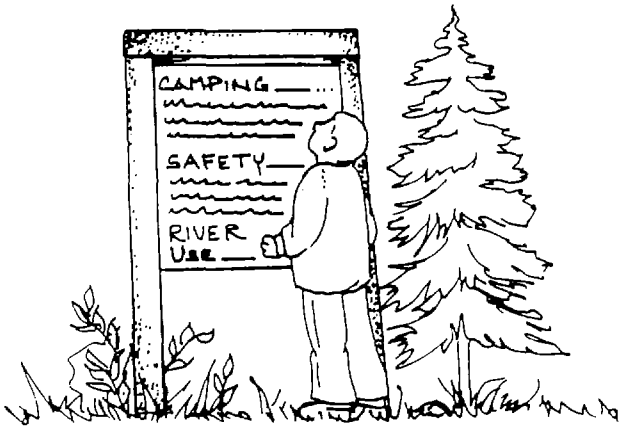
Provide for Safety. Promote safe recreation through informational brochures, programs, and regulations.

Provide Awareness of Habitat Values. Promote public awareness of habitat values, the activities which may adversely affect such areas, and potential management actions required to prevent habitat degradation.

Provide Awareness of Regulations. Promote public awareness of regulations and permits and the resource values upon which they are based. Also promote public awareness of the diverse opportunities within the Recreation Rivers to reduce conflicts between user groups.

Landowner Programs. Design and initiate an educational program on shoreline land-use practices to assist shoreline landowners in safely developing their property and adjacent state lands, while protecting river resources.

Interpretation. Provide interpretation services to highlight and explain points of interest such as heritage sites.



Management Guidelines

General Education. Throughout the planning process education was identified by the public as an effective management tool for enhancing recreation opportunities, reducing resource damage, and minimizing user conflicts. To meet these goals, education materials should be developed cooperatively by state agencies, the borough, interested user groups, and other individuals or organizations with relevant expertise. The following education materials are appropriate in the Recreation Rivers.

1. *Public Outreach.* DNR field staff should be made available to contact users in the Recreation Rivers and make public presentations to user groups. Information displays should be made available for loan to organizations or for special events. Education videos and slide programs should also be developed and available for viewing by interested groups.

2. *Brochures.* Informational brochures should be developed on subjects relevant to the use and management of the Recreation Rivers. This may include a brochure describing each river. Topics for brochures may include, area-wide regulations, boating safety, minimum impact camping techniques, legal access, and land ownership. Efforts should be made to make brochures available in foreign languages. Brochures should be made available at boat launches, businesses, and information offices.

3. *Kiosks or Bulletin Boards.* Kiosks or bulletin boards displaying information on the Recreation Rivers should be established at key entry and exit points, and at developed facilities within or adjacent to the Recreation Rivers.

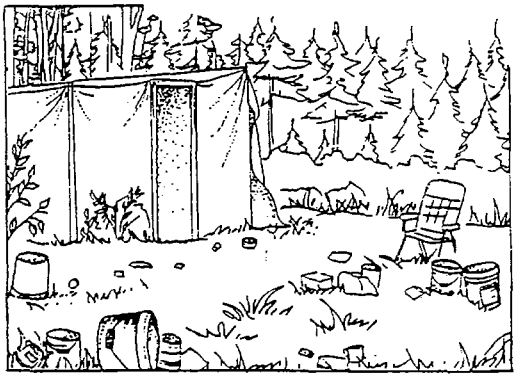
4. *Signs.* The use of signs as a management tool or for public education should be minimized in Class I areas, and elsewhere in the Recreation Rivers. Other than signs on roads, signs should be constructed of natural materials, particularly in Class I areas. Signs should be used judiciously for identifying management area boundaries, important heritage sites, safety hazards, regulations, and

other important public information, as determined by the department and other public agencies. The placement of signs on state lands shall be restricted to those placed by the state and other public agencies, or required by agencies, such as legal descriptions on mining claims, or a land use permit posted on a temporary camp. Commercial, "no trespassing," and other private signs are prohibited on state lands within the Recreation Rivers. However, "No trespassing" signs may be allowed on active mining locations or safety signs for improvements under state authorization. (See Subsurface Resources, Public Access Across Mining Claims.)

The DLW director may authorize the use of other signs, under permit, for non-profit or other groups serving a public purpose, if the use is consistent with the management of the subunit. The restrictions on signs shall be implemented through regulations. Also see *Shoreline Development, Other Types of Buoys.*

Other Guidelines Affecting Education. Several other guidelines may affect education issues. See the following sections of this chapter:

Shoreline Development
Recreation
Boat Access
Subsurface Resources



ENFORCEMENT

Public Concerns. Throughout the planning process, the public stated that enforcement should be a high priority. They thought that many of the problems in the Recreation Rivers could only be addressed through a combination of better education and enforcement (education needs are described in the previous section). The public cited a number of areas where enforcement was needed to enforce existing and proposed regulations including those addressing: fish and game harvest, littering, long-term camps, abandonment of property, intoxication, and reckless operation of boats.

Citation Authority. The Recreation Rivers Act grants the commissioner authority to designate peace officers to enforce provisions of the act under AS 41.23.440(b).

DNR should seek statutory authority and draft regulations which provide citation authority to DLW so the plan can be fully implemented. Until this occurs, DLW should work with the Department of Public Safety to address the public concerns described in the above section. Also see *Other Recommendations, Enforcement* in Chapter 4.

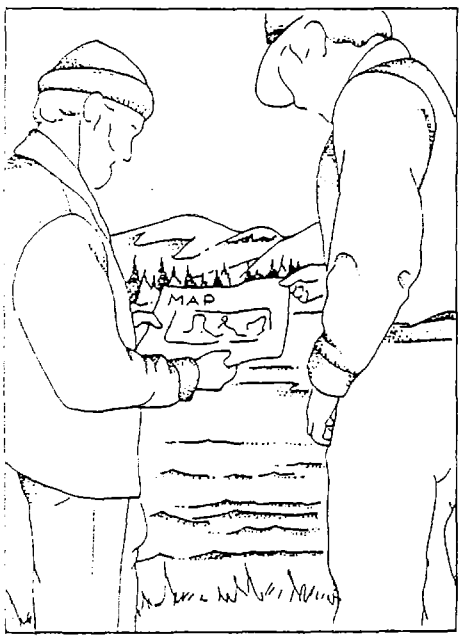
Other Guidelines Affecting Enforcement. Several other guidelines may affect education. See the following sections of this chapter:

Recreation
Commercial
Boat Access
Education
Phasing and Interim Management

PHASING & INTERIM MANAGEMENT

Phased Implementation. Several management actions in the plan require additional funding, field staff, facilities, or regulations. It is unlikely that these resources will be immediately available when the plan is signed. For this reason, proposed actions will be phased as these resources become available. DLW implementation priorities are described in Appendix G.

After the plan takes effect and before the adoption of regulations recommended by the plan, the Recreation Rivers or parts thereof may be designated a "Special Use Area" under 11 AAC 96.010. This statute allows the department to require a permit for, "activities that may result in unnecessary harm to land having special scenic, historic, archeological, scientific, biological, recreational, or other special values." For the department to require a permit, users must receive written notice of the special-use designation or it cannot take effect for 90 days. A special-use-area designation will not require a plan amendment.



Phasing Regulations. Because of the number of new regulations proposed and the staff, time, and resources need to develop them, DNR should consider promulgating regulations in two or three phases. If regulations are phased, those pertaining to camping limits, commercial use permits, boating regulations, littering and vandalism should be addressed first. See Appendix G, *Priorities for the Implementation of the Recreation Rivers Management Plan.*

Other Guidelines Affecting Phasing and Interim Management. Several other guidelines may affect phasing and interim management. See the following sections of this chapter:

Recreation
Commercial
Boat Access

CHAPTER 3

Land & Water Management Policies for each Management Unit

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CHAPTER 3

Land & Water Management Policies for Each Unit

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes background information, management intent, and management guidelines for management units, subunits, public use sites, and special management areas.

MANAGEMENT INTENT

Management intent for state land and water in the planning area is based on a three class system, where each class represents a point on a spectrum of possible levels of development and use of state lands. The management intent for a specific subunit, special management area, or public use site reflects the desired future condition of that area. The three classes of management intent for the 31 subunits are described in Table 3.1. More specific management intent for each subunit, public use site, and special management area is described under each unit. When making management decisions for activities taking place in these areas, the management intent for the specific subunit, public use site, or special management area, **and** the management intent described in Table 3.1 and below should be taken into consideration. When the general management intent described here varies from the specific intent described under each subunit, the more specific management intent takes precedence.

Special Management Areas. There are fifteen (15) special management areas (SMAs) on state land and water in the planning area. These are areas of existing or proposed isolated developments, or clusters of private land in Class I areas. Their designation as special areas acknowledges these circumstances; and the need to manage them for different levels of development and recreation experiences than on the surrounding public lands. Special management areas will be managed as Class II areas. Motorized access is allowed in these areas even when they are located along non-motorized river segments. See Map 2.1 and the unit maps following each unit in this chapter for the location of special management areas. Also see *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2.

Public Use Sites. Public use (PU) sites are site-specific designations for state land and water used to identify and provide management intent for areas that receive high public use or have unique resource values or require special management attention. There are seventy-three (73) public use sites within the Recreation Rivers. These sites have been identified as possessing important access, fishing, camping, other recreation, or public use values. The designation is intended to protect the opportunity for the public to use these sites and to protect the public values of these sites. The guidelines for specific sites are outlined in Chapter 3. When making management decisions about public use sites, consideration should be given to: the general management intent for public use sites described here; specific management intent for the site; and the management intent for the subunit. Public use sites in Class I areas are generally managed for a more primitive recreation experience than those located in Class

II and III areas. The management intent for public use sites does not apply to borough or private lands adjacent to these sites. Maps at the end of each unit in Chapter 3 show the location of these sites. Also see *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2.

DELINEATION OF MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS

There are six management units within the planning area (one for each river system) and 31 subunits. Each subunit includes a river segment and its associated uplands. Subunit boundaries are based on river-use patterns, resources, management concerns and constraints, river charactristics, and land ownership. Management intent and guidelines are provided for each subunit.

BOROUGH LANDS

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough owns land in the following subunits: Lower Little Susitna River (1a), Mouth of Deshka River (2a), Lower Deshka River (2b), Middle Deshka River (2c), Kroto Creek (2f), Oilwell Road (2h), Upper Moose Creek (2i), Lake Creek Mouth (4a), Judd Lake (5e), and Lower Alexander Creek (6a). Borough classifications for these lands are noted in Chapter 3 under Management Guidelines for each subunit. To obtain management intent for borough lands, contact athe Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

TABLE 3-1 RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM

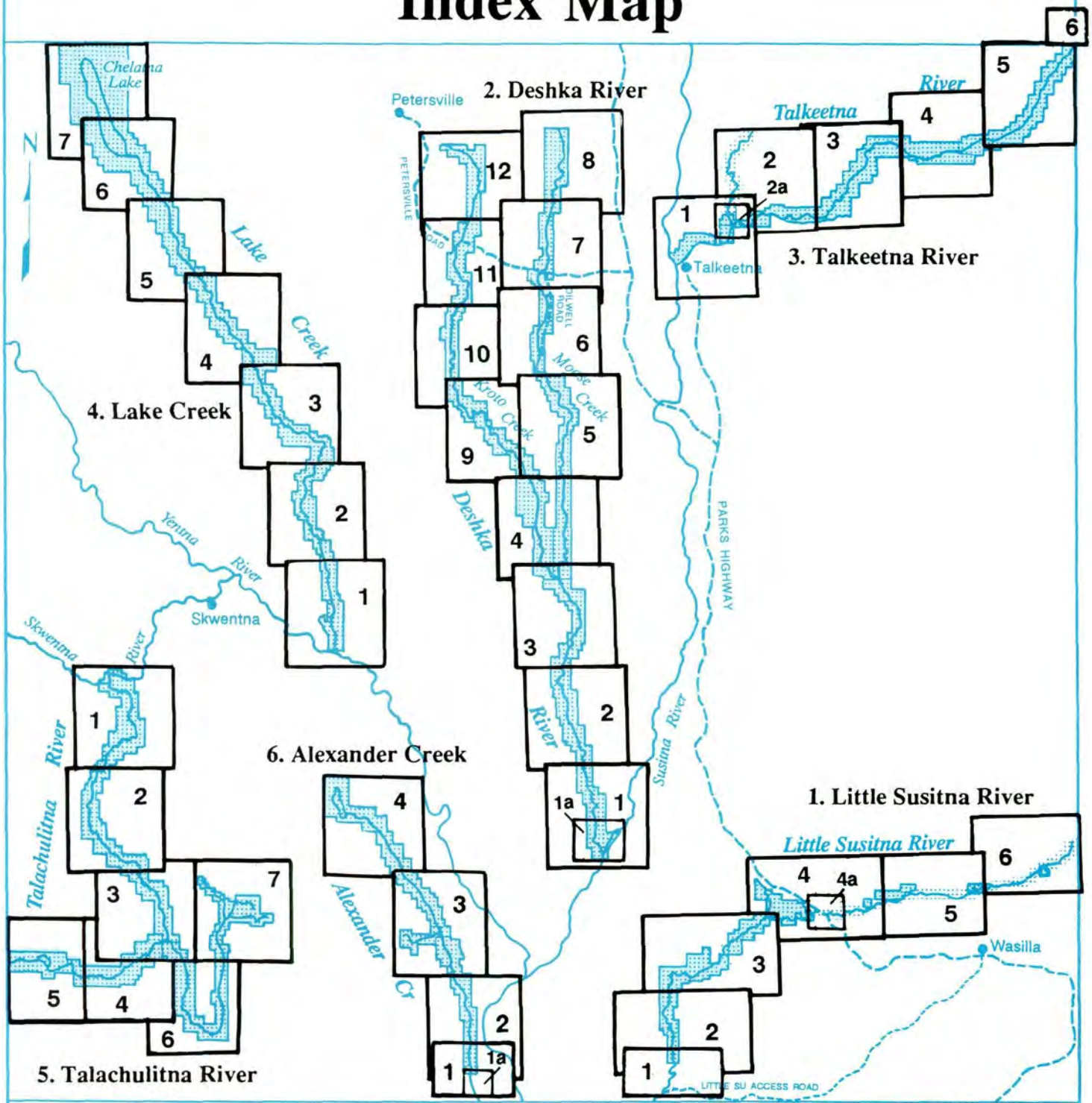
VARIABLE	CLASS I	CLASS II	CLASS III
Development	There are generally no facilities[1] for user convenience or comfort.	There are generally limited and isolated facilities for user convenience or comfort.	Facilities exist for user convenience or comfort, although these are generally rustic in design.
Environment	Area is characterized by little or no modifications to natural environment. In many, but not all places, the opportunity is provided for isolation from the sights and sound of man, to feel a part of the natural environment.	Area is characterized by limited and isolated modifications to the natural environment. Provides some opportunity for isolation from sights and sounds of man, but this is not as important as for Class I areas.	Area is characterized by moderate alterations to the natural environment. Little opportunity for isolation from the sights and sounds of man, although opportunity for a high degree of interaction with the environment still exists.
Signs of Use	Apparent signs of use such as litter or unburied human waste are few and isolated without management attention.	Apparent signs of use such as litter or unburied human waste are more frequent and noticeable, although they remain low with some management attention.	Apparent signs of use such as litter or unburied human waste are more frequent and noticeable, although they remain low with special management attention.
Social Interaction	Interaction levels between groups are low.	Interaction between groups is moderate.	Interaction between groups is high.
Risk	Provides the opportunity to have a high degree of physical (natural) challenge and risk, and to use outdoor skills.	Provides opportunity for moderate physical (natural) challenge and risk, and to use outdoor skills.	Opportunities for physical (natural) challenge and risk are less important.
Management Presence[2]	Management presence is low.	Management presence is higher.	A relatively high degree of management presence may be necessary for safety or resource protection reasons.
Access (Does not include winter travel)	Primitive or non-existent transportation improvements. Fewer opportunities for motorized access. There may be some seasonal restrictions on motorized access. However, many Class I areas have no restrictions on motorized access.	Moderate number and scale of transportation improvements. Few restrictions on seasonal motorized access except to protect public safety in congested areas.	More transportation improvements and higher standards for facilities such as public airstrips and trails. In general, no restrictions on seasonal motorized access except no-wake areas to protect public safety in congested areas.

[1] Facilities include camps authorized for more than 4 days in summer and public facilities (including improvements such as toilets, campgrounds in summer, and signs). Camps used for research or resource management are case-by-case.

[2] "Management Presence" refers to the levels of management required to manage public use including litter patrols, providing public information, and maintaining public facilities. Management presence does not refer to the degree of regulation required.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Index Map



1 Index To Adjoining Maps

Recreation Rivers

Management Units

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Little Susitna River Management Unit

PAGE 3 - 8 **Background**

3 - 10 **Management Guidelines for the Unit**

3 - 11 **1a. Lower Little Susitna River Subunit**

3 - 15 **1b. Middle Little Susitna River Subunit**

3 - 17 **1c. Upper Little Susitna River Subunit**

1. Little Susitna River Management Unit

BACKGROUND

MILES OF RIVER

This unit includes approximately 67 river miles of the Little Susitna River and 5.5 miles of Nancy Lake Creek. The management unit extends from the northern Susitna Flats Game Refuge boundary (RM 33.2) to the south boundary of the Hatcher Pass Management Area (RM 100).

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	13,518 acres
University of Alaska	80 acres
Mental Health Trust	2,680 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1,680 acres
Total	**18,218 acres**

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

From the headwaters to the mouth, the Little Susitna River changes from a clear, rushing mountain stream to a slowly meandering muddy river draining marshy lowlands. Channel widths range from 75 to 200 feet. The ice-free season is generally from May through October. The average streamflow at the Fishhook Road crossing (RM 99.5) is 211 cubic feet per second (cfs.), with winter lows under 50 cfs., and summer high flows near 1,000 cfs. The estimated year-round flows at the Parks Highway and the Burma Road are 300 and 400 cfs, respectively. The 100-year floodplain ranges in width from 1,200 feet to 4,000 feet, and is of considerable width in the Houston area.

The terrain within the Little Susitna Recreation River ranges from steep hillsides on the upper river to flat and rolling lowlands on the lower river. Contiguous wetlands are the prevalent land feature in middle sections, particularly in the Nancy Lake Creek area.

Scenic values are highest on the upper river where the water is clear and there are views of the Talkeetna Mountains. The lower river is silty and slow-moving and visibility is reduced by rolling terrain and tall trees. In the middle reaches, near the Parks Highway, the visual quality is diminished by powerlines, bridges, and other structures.

FISHERIES

Species Present

Chum salmon	Burbot
Coho salmon	Dolly Varden
King salmon	Rainbow trout
Pink salmon	Whitefish
Sockeye salmon	

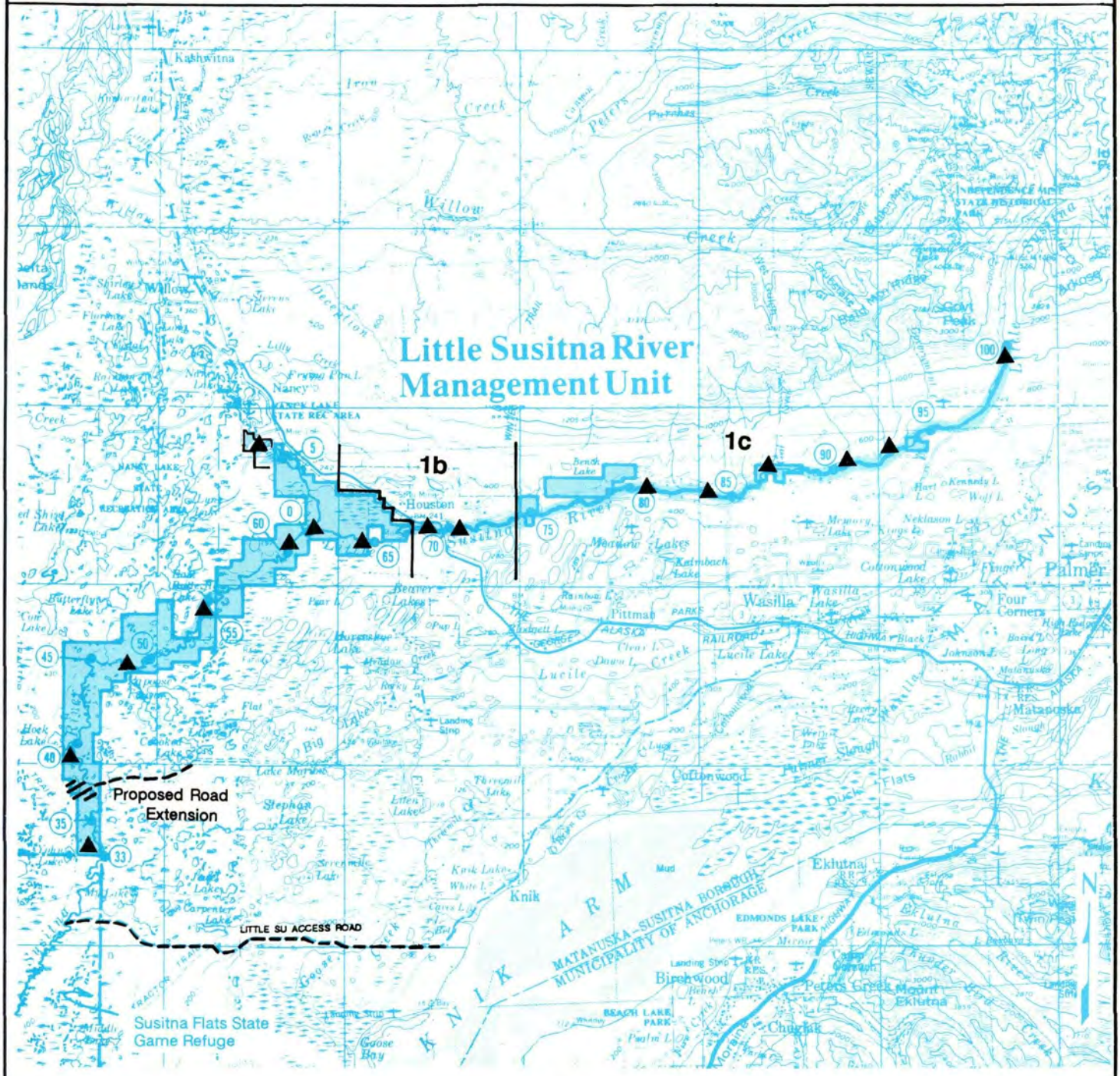
King, coho, and chum salmon spawn throughout the management unit. Pink salmon are common below the Parks Highway. Sockeye salmon spawn in many lakes draining into the river, including Nancy Lake. They are not found in large numbers above Nancy Lake Creek. Burbot and whitefish are found in the lower river. Resident Dolly Varden are present in the upper reaches of the management unit. Small numbers of rainbow trout can be found throughout the ice-free season.

Sport Fishing

The Little Susitna River receives the highest angling effort of the six rivers because it is easily accessible and is closest to population centers in Southcentral Alaska. The peak recreation and fishing activities on the Little Susitna River correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately May 21 to July 4, and July 4 to September 1. Sockeye salmon are also caught in large numbers, approximately July 15 to August 30. Rainbow trout are caught throughout the ice-free season.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

LITTLE SUSITNA RIVER



Management Unit

Subunits

- **1a.** Lower Little Susitna River
- **1b.** Middle Little Susitna River
- **1c.** Upper Little Susitna River

River Miles

Public Use Sites

Proposed Addition to Management Unit

Special Management Areas

The most popular fishing area on the river is adjacent to the Little Susitna Access Road. Although most of this use occurs on the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge, some extends into the lower part of Subunit 1a in the Recreation River. Fishing is also popular at the mouth of Nancy Lake Creek and adjacent to the Parks Highway Bridge. Above the Parks Highway, the river is closed to salmon fishing, so use by anglers is low. Visitor use is estimated to be growing about 9 percent per year on the Little Susitna River.

Special Regulations

The Little Susitna River is closed to salmon fishing above the Parks Highway. Special regulations, which vary annually depending on salmon returns; also govern the fishery for coho salmon.

WILDLIFE

Moose

Because of their importance as game and for wildlife viewing, moose are the most economically important wildlife species in the planning area. They are particularly important in this management unit because the Little Susitna River is relatively accessible. The unit provides moose with food, forest cover, and water. Associated wetlands are critical for moose calving in the spring. Riparian habitat is critical to winter survival of moose and also provide travel corridors. Upland coniferous forests provide thermal cover and shallower snow depths.

Bear

Because brown bear are less tolerant of human modifications to the environment, black bear are more common in this drainage than brown bear. Black bear begin to frequent the lowlands and river flats in early May. High spring densities can be found near the mouth of the river. During June and July, bear are attracted to the river by salmon. The river also provides travel corridors which are an important component of brown bear habitat.

Bald Eagles

No known nesting sites are documented along the river. However eagles are known to feed on spawning salmon and perch in trees within the unit.

Trumpeter Swans

Swans are not known to nest within the corridor. Lakes with suitable nesting habitat, however, occur adjacent to the unit.

Hunting

The most heavily hunted areas are road-accessible areas, followed by off-road vehicle, boat, and aircraft-accessible areas. The Parks Highway and the Little Susitna River Access are the primary access points to the Little Susitna River. Moose and black bear are the primary species harvested. A significant amount of the black bear harvest Game Management Subunits 14A occurs along the Little Susitna River. Most of this harvest occurs in May, June, and September with June being the peak harvest period.

Trapping

Recreational trapping for muskrat, mink and beaver occurs in the corridor during spring and winter open seasons.

CAMPING

Recreational use of this unit is very high, because of good, accessible fishing. A 1989 survey estimated that 800 people per day use the Little Susitna River during the peak season in mid-June. Day use is more common than overnight use. There are two commercial campgrounds and one public campground in Houston. There are numerous undeveloped campsites along the river. Most are located at trail and creek junctions.

ACCESS

The Little Susitna River is accessible by several roads. Boats are widely used on the Little Susitna River. Power boats and jet boats are common below the Parks Highway. Use of rafts and canoes is common below Schrock Road. Power boats gain access from the Little Susitna River Access, the Parks Highway access, or across Cook Inlet from Anchorage. Floaters often begin at the Parks Highway and float to the Nancy Lakes Recreation Area portage or to the Little Susitna River Access Road. Kayaks are common in the spring on the upper river above the Edgerton-Parks Road. Airboat use is infrequent.

Management Guidelines for the Unit

BOATING RESTRICTIONS

1. *Voluntary no-wake area* — From the oxbow just below the rail road bridge to the Parks Highway Bridge *(RM 67.5 - 0-69.6).*

Season: May 15 - August 20.

Justification: The boat launch in this area is heavily used. The area is also heavily used by bank anglers. The voluntary no-wake area will reduce conflicts between powerboaters and bank anglers and reduce safety risks between powerboaters. The river segment is narrow and includes several blind bends. The upper and lower limits of the zone were designed to include the area where heavy powerboat and bank angling use overlap. Signs identifying the voluntary no-wake area shall be established on a one-year trial basis and their effectiveness shall be evaluated at the end of the trial period. If establishing no-wake signs is shown to be effective in protecting public safety, they may be posted during succeeding seasons.

2. *Non-motorized area* — From the Plan Boundary above the Little Susitna Access Road (RM 33.1) to the rock one river-mile below Nancy Lake Creek (RM 60.4).

Weekends: The first and third weekends of each month. (12:01 a.m. Saturday to midnight Sunday).

Season: May 15 to August 20.

Power-boats-only area — River segment is the same as above non-motorized area.

Weekends: The second and fourth weekends of each month (12:01 a.m. on Saturday to midnight Sunday).

Justification: This area is popular with both powerboaters and floaters, particularly during the salmon runs. At these times, there are conflicts between the two groups. The "alternating weekends" will provide high quality float and powerboat opportunities regularly through the summer. The fifth weekend of each month and weekdays from May 15-August 20 have no restrictions.

The restrictions end in mid-August when there are fewer boaters and fewer conflicts on the river.

The upper limit of the non-motorized area is at a rock below Nancy Lake Creek which is a popular fishing hole. The non-motorized area does not constrain the area above the fishing hole that is traditionally used by powerboats from Houston and Miller's Reach.

3. *Voluntary no-wake area* — Adjacent to proposed South Big Lake Road junction no-wake area (approximately one-half river mile above and below this road junction).

Season: May 15 - August 20.

Justification: The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is planning to extend the South Big Lake Road. The first phase of the project may end at the river or a short distance from the river. If the South Big Lake extension is developed, bank anglers are expected to use the area. A voluntary no-wake area will be designated when the road is completed to help reduce conflicts between powerboats and bank anglers and to avoid safety problems.

1a. Lower Little Susitna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 33.2 to RM 65.5 and Nancy Lake Creek RM 0 to RM 5.5

The subunit extends from the Susitna Flats Game Refuge to the City of Houston western boundary. It also includes the lower 5.5 miles of Nancy Lake Creek.

The river meanders through this subunit, and moves slower than in the subunits upstream. Contiguous wetlands cover 75 to 80 percent of the subunit above Nancy Lake Creek, and 15 to 20 percent of the area in the lower third of the subunit.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	10,945 acres
State/Mental Health	2,400 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1,680 acres
Total	**15,025 acres**

CAMPING

The following numbers of undeveloped campsites along the river were identified in a 1989 survey:

Primary Campsites[1]	1
Secondary Campsites	38
Marginal Campsites	30

ACCESS

There are three roads that provide access to this part of the Little Susitna River and its tributary, Nancy Lake Creek. The Little Susitna Access Road, to the south of the subunit, serves as the primary access and boat launch for the lower river. Floaters also take out there. Considerable pedestrian and off-road vehicle traffic extends up the river from this road. The George Parks Highway, just above this subunit, also provides access for boats and off-road vehicles that use this subunit. Finally, a road at RM 7 on Nancy Lake Creek provides boat access to the creek.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough proposes to extend the South Big Lake Road to the Little Susitna River at the lower end of the subunit. This may eventually cross the Little Susitna River and connect to the proposed Winnebego Road and areas west of the river.

Two float plane landing areas are located adjacent to the subunit at Hock and Yohn Lakes. Primitive foot trails connect the river with these lakes. The river is too narrow and shallow to accommodate floatplanes.

The frozen Little Susitna River and Nancy Lake Creek are used for winter travel. There are interconnecting winter trails in the subunit between Nancy Lakes, Houston, Willow, and Big Lake that are used primarily by snowmachines and dog teams. The trails follow seismic lines, powerlines, or open swamps west of the Parks Highway. The Iditarod race trail crosses the Little Susitna River near Yohn Lake.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

This section of the river is particularly rich in traditionally-harvested resources and the potential for heritage sites is very high. The Iditarod National Historic Trail, which crosses this subunit, was the winter route used to transport mail and supplies from Seward to Nome during the early part of this century.

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit is used by a variety of users year-round, because of its proximity to the railbeltand because it is rich in Recreation Resources. The subunit features high quality fishing, huntingand camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank fishermen in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. In the winter, the

[1] See glossary for definition of primary, secondary, and marginal campsites.

subunit features numerous snowmachine, dog-mushing, and cross-country skiing trails. It also includes winter moose habitat and salmon spawning habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining levels of low development and an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. While Class I intent is generally defined as having low levels of social interaction between users, higher levels of use are accessible in this popular subunit, including accommodating road access at athe upper and lower ends of this subunit and on Upper Nancy Lake Creek. Management of this subunit is expected to be higher than in other Class I areas because of the level of public use. Management includes some seasonal restrictions on powerboat and floatboat use in order to provide both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Public Recreation." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. See management guidelines for the Little Susitna River Management Unit in this chapter.

South Big Lake Road Extension. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is evaluating the feasibility of building a boat launch and campground on the Little Susitna River at the terminus of the proposed South Big Lake Road extension (RM 39.5). The construction of the road and eventual bridging of the river are compatible with the management intent for this area and consistent with guidelines in Chapter 2 *(Upland Access, Roads and Shoreline Development, Bridges).*

A boat launch that can accommodate powerboats on trailers is not compatible in this subunit for the following reasons:

1. *Existing Boat Launch.* There is already a powerboat launch within eight river miles of the proposed location of the bridge.
2. *Safety.* The river depth in the vicinity of the proposed boat launch is shallow. Encouraging large boats to use this area by building a boat launch would result in numerous groundings and more boats using constricted river channels.
3. *Salmon.* Additional powerboats in this area would affect salmon spawning and schooling behavior. The increased success of powerboat anglers in this area may also result in fewer fishing opportunities upriver.

If the proposed road is built, the public will attempt to launch boats with or without a developed boat launch. The resulting congestion on the roadway may be hazardous. To mitigate this, a small-scale, walk-in boat launch may be authorized. In addition, a small parking area should be provided to prevent parking along the roadway.

After the road is completed, increased public use of this area is likely. To protect natural resource values from degradation, developed sanitation facilities, foot paths, and a modestly sized campground are recommended for this area. A kiosk and signs should be constructed to provide information on the Little Susitna Recreation River.

Iditarod Trail. The Iditarod Race Trail and Iditarod National Historic Trail cross this subunit on borough lands near Yohn Lake. The race trail route varies from year-to-year and may one day cross state land. For guidelines on activities near these trails on state lands see Chapter 2: *Trails, Iditarod Race Trail* and *Heritage Resources, Iditarod National Historic Trail.*

Heritage Resources. Historic and prehistoric sites in this subunit should be evaluated for their interpretative values for tourism or general interest sites because of easy public access and the concentration of sites.

Unauthorized Cabin. An unauthorized cabin is located on state land just northwest of the confluence of Nancy Lake Creek and the Little Susitna River. Its use and condition should be evaluated consistent with public use cabin guidelines on Chapter 2 and removed if necessary.

Public Information. At both the Little Susitna River Access Road and the South Big Lake Extension Road a kiosk should be established to pro-

vide information on the Recreation Rivers. A sign should also mark the lower limit of the Recreation River near RM 33.2.

Additions to and Deletions from the Recreation River.

1. *Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area:* There is an inadvertent overlap between the Little Susitna Recreation River Management Unit and the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area. This error should be corrected in the statutes. Areas that remain in the Recreation Rivers should be managed consistent with this subunit.
2. *Upper Nancy Lake Creek:* Because of its values for sport fishing, habitat, and recreation, state land and water on upper Nancy Lake Creek, a 480-acre parcel, is recommended for addition to the Recreation Rivers. Recommending adding these borough-selected lands to the Recreation Rivers is pending the adjudication of the borough entitlement.
3. *Susitna Flats State Game Refuge:* When the plan is updated, DNR and DFG should consider whether the lower Little Susitna River on the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge should be recommended for designation as a Recreation River. Also see Chapter 4, *Areas Recommended for Designation as Recreation Rivers, Upper Nancy Lake Creek and Other Recommendations, Future Additions, Upper Nancy Lake Creek.*

Regulations in the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area. DNR shall promulgate boating regulations that can be enforced by both DLW and DOPOR for the Little Susitna River flowing through the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area. This river segment has dual designation as a Recreation River and a State Recreation Area. Boating regulations shall be consistent with those proposed for the Little Susitna River non-motorized zone. DNR shall also adopt camping regulations for the areas within one-half mile of the Little Susitna River in the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area. Regulations shall be consistent with the four-day camping regulations proposed for all the Recreation Rivers.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 1a.1 **Iditarod Trail Crossing** (RM 34). This is a popular campsite.

PU 1a.2 **Hock Lake Trail** (RM 39.5). This is a well-used access point to Hock Lake.

PU 1a.3 **Papoose Creek** (RM 47.5). This is a popular area for camping and fishing.

PU 1a.4 **Skeetna Lake Portage** (RM 55). This site includes the trail portage to Skeetna Lake in the Nancy Lakes Recreation Area. This is also a popular camping spot.

PU 1a.5 **Campsite by the Big Rock Fishing Hole** (RM 60). This is a popular fishing hole and camping area.

PU 1a.6 **Nancy Lake Creek Junction** (RM 61.5). This is a popular area for fishing and camping. Red salmon linger at this confluence before ascending Lake Creek to Nancy Lake where they spawn.

PU 1a.7 **Miller's Reach Boat Launch** (RM 65.5). This site includes a side road in this subdivision that is used as a powerboat launch.

PU 1a.8 **Nancy Lake Creek Bridge** (RM 7). This area is in a proposed addition to the Recreation Rivers. The bridge site is used for access to fishing and launching small boats on Nancy Lake. Nearby roadside pull-offs are used for car camping

Special Management Areas

See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. The specific location of this site is shown on the maps at the end of this unit.

SMA 1a.1 **Proposed South Big Lake Extension Road** (RM 36.5). This Special Management Area includes the state-owned shorelands and water adjacent to the proposed South Big Lake Extension Road crossing. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply.

The management of the SMA is to accommodate limited public facility development associated with the proposed road while providing for and enhancing public recreation values, and fish and wildlife habitat. Seasonal restrictions on powerboats and floatboats apply within the SMA. The location of the SMA is only approximate because alternate road locations are being considered at this time. The SMA will apply to the final location of the road without a plan amendment.

Recommendations for this Subunit

Cooperative Management Agreement. The DLW, DOPOR, DFG, and the borough should work cooperatively on recreation management along the Little Susitna River between Hock Lake and the Little Susitna River Access Road. High public use and the close proximity of the boat launch, campground, refuge, weir, harvest survey station, proposed road exten- sion, and borough lands warrant cooperative recreation management in the area. Cooperative management agreements should address issues such as facility maintenance, regulations, use of facilities and equipment, funding, and field staff resposibilities. Also see Chapter 4, *Agency Responsibilities.*

Additions to the Recreation Rivers. Because of high recreation use, the lower Little Susitna River on the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge may be considered for recommended designation as a Recreation River when the plan is updated. Also see *Other Recommendations, Future Additions* in Chapter 4.

1b. Middle Little Susitna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 65.5 to RM 74

This subunit includes that portion of the Little Susitna River within the city of Houston boundaries. all but one river mile of the subunit is shorelands with no associated uplands. this segment of the river is about 50 feet wide. The upland tract in this subunit has little dry land; it is 60 to 75 percent contiguous wetland, and three- to five-percent non-contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	433 acres
Mental health trust	280 acres
Total	**713 acres**

CAMPING

There are three developed campgrounds adjacent to this subunit. One is run by the city of Houston and two by businesses.

The following undeveloped sites on the river have been identified:

primary campsites	8
secondary campsites	8
marginal campsites	18

DEVELOPMENT

There are numerous homes and businesses adjacent to this subunit. The George Parks Highway and Alaska Railroad bridges cross the river. two major boat launches are located in the vicinity of the Parks Highway bridge.

ACCESS

The George Parks Highway crosses the river at RM 69.5 and parallels the river for about a mile.

Management Intent

Class II. Because of its proximity to the George Parks Highway, the City of Houston, and recreation areas, this subunit receives high public use year-round. In the summer there are high quality fishing and camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank users in an accessible, moderately developed natural area. In the winter, the subunit is used by snowmachiners, dog mushers, and skiers. Salmon spawning habitat is located in this subunit. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands adjacent to the subunit. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. Because of high public use, maintaining existing public use sites and facilities will be the management focus. There are several residences and businesses in the Houston area adjacent to the subunit. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. A voluntary no-wake area is proposed near Houston to protect public safety.

Management Guidelines

Voluntary No-wake Area. See management guidelines for the Little Susitna River Management Unit in this chapter.

Trails. To discourage trespass on private lands, public pedestrian access should be clearly marked adjacent to the George Parks Highway. Heavily used trails that are causing erosion or bank failure may need to be relocated or reconstructed.

Public Information. At the public parking area adjacent to the George Parks Highway, a kiosk should be established which displays information on the Recreation Rivers. Signs should also be placed on the north and south side of the George Parks Highway Bridge identifying it as a Recreation River.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 1b.1 **George Parks Highway Bridge** (RM 69.8). Public use is heavy on both sides of the road between the highway and railroad bridges. There is one developed and one undeveloped parking area on the north side of the highway bridge. Bank fishing and day use are common. Floatboats are also launched from the parking areas.

PU 1b.2 **Houston Campground** (RM 70.5). The river banks in this area are used for fishing and day use.

1c. Upper Little Susitna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 74 to RM 100

The subunit extends from the City of Houston's east boundary to the Hatcher Pass Management Unit, just above the Hatcher Pass Bridge. The river is generally shallow and relatively swift in this subunit. Below RM 81.4 the river becomes silty. The uplands within this subunit contain no significant wetlands.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,400 acres
University of Alaska	80 acres
Total	**2,480 acres**

CAMPING

Due to access provided by Schrock, Schrock-Pittman, Fishhook, and Wasilla-Fishhook Roads, there are several popular day-use sites along the river.

Below RM 84 many undeveloped campsites were identified in a 1989 survey:

Primary Campsites	0
Secondary Campsites	45
Marginal Campsites	14

DEVELOPMENT

While there are no lodges or cabins within the subunit, there are at least 85 homes and associated structures adjacent to the subunit. Five bridges cross the river in this subunit. Only the Shushana Bridge is located where there are state-owned uplands. The other four bridges span the Little Susitna shorelands and water column but the adjacent uplands are not state-owned.

ACCESS

This subunit is accessible from three paved, well-traveled roads. Schrock Road and Fishhook Road are important routes between Wasilla and Palmer and are key residential areas in the Matanuska Valley. A series of unpaved roads parallel the river outside the subunit to the north and south, with many spur roads to access private residences. Boat traffic is minimal. Float boats can launch at Schrock Road or Fishhook Road. The upper portion of the river is too rocky for powerboats. It is used by white-water kayakers when the water is high enough. The lower portion of the subunit is seldom used by powerboaters because of log jams and the closure to salmon fishing.

Winter use of the area is primarily by snowmachine on or adjacent to the river. Several off-road vehicle trails and seismic lines cross the subunit.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

While only one known site exists in this subunit, the potential for more is high. Considerable historic mining activity has occurred in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There is a DOTPF gravel pit located within the subunit at RM 84.5. Car dumps are located near the subunit at RM 81 on both sides of the river.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit includes mostly shorelands and the water column bounded by private land. It features fishing (trout and Dolly Varden only) and camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank users in an accessible, moderately developed area. It also features salmon spawning habitat and winter moose habitat. Numerous developed and undeveloped private parcels are adjacent to the subunit. The subunit will be managed to maintain and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands in the subunit. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Grazing. Livestock grazing may be authorized in part of this subunit by permit. The area includes the upland parcel just south of Bench Lake in Sections 15, 16, and 17. Grazing guidelines in the Deception Creek Land Use Plan which apply to the Deception Creek Plan, Subunit 4 (Bench Lake) will apply in this subunit with the following exceptions:

A. Grazing is not allowed in the protection area as defined in Chapter under *Riparian Management Areas.*

B. Pens and holding areas for livestock are prohibited in this area.

C. Livestock may not have access to the Little Susitna River.

Personal-Use Forestry. The Division of Forestry may designate personal-use cutting areas on the upland parcel just south of Bench Lake in sections 15, 16, and 17 on the upper Little Susitna River. See *Forestry, Personal Use in Road-Accessible Areas.*

Public Information. Signs should be placed on either side of the Hatcher Pass bridge, identifying the Little Susitna Recreation River.

DOTPF Materials Site. There is an existing DOTPF material site in this subunit near RM 14. DOTPF manages this site under an interagency land management transfer (ILMT) from DNR (ADL 59287). The site will be managed consistent with the ILMT which allows DOTPF to construct, maintain or improve, and remove buildings, roads, airports, and works of any description, and to use or remove sand, gravel, timber, or other materials necessary to make use of the lands for public purposes. Plan guidelines and management intent do not apply to this site. However, management of the site must be consistent with the Recreation Rivers Act. After materials extraction is completed, the site will be rehabilitated consistent with the DOTPF standards. If surface jurisdiction and management of the site returns to DNR, it will be managed consistent with the plan guidelines and management intent for the subunit.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 1c.1 **Day Use Site** (RM 81). This site is accessed by road on the south side of the river and is used for fishing and camping.

PU 1c.2 **Schrock Road** (RM 84.5). This road crossing is used for accessing the river, launching floatboats, fishing, and day use. There are primitive roads and cleared areas adjacent to the bridge used by vehicles for overnight camping.

PU 1c.3 **Shushana Road Bridge** (RM 87.7). This is a popular fishing spot.

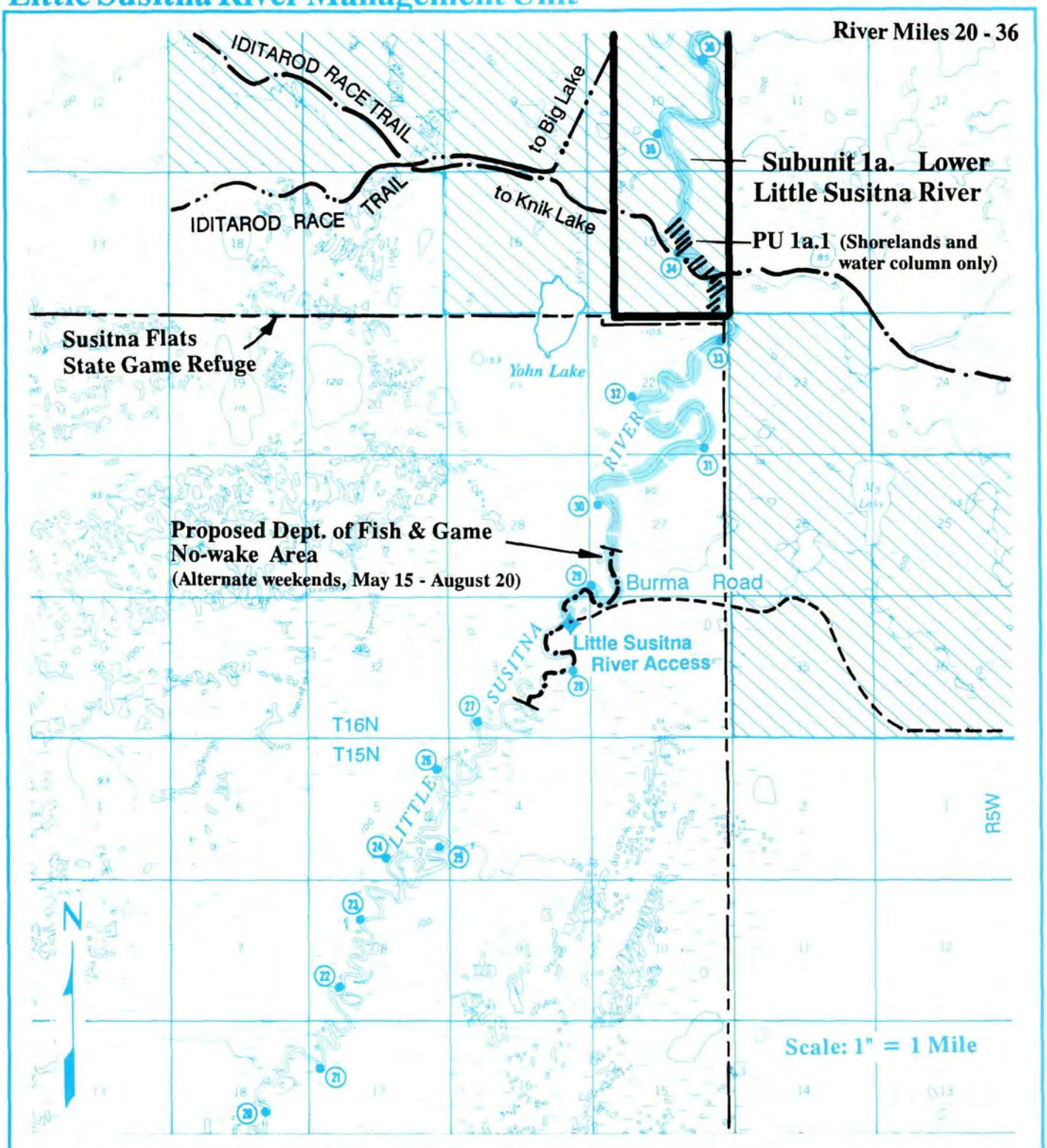
PU 1c.4 **Carney Road Bridge** (RM 90.5). This is a popular fishing spot.

PU 1c.5 **Welch Road Bridge** (RM 92.8). This site is popular for fishing.

PU 1c.6 **Hatcher Pass Bridge** (RM 99.5). This is the entrance to the scenic Little Susitna River canyon, running through the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. Sightseeing from the bridge is popular, and DOTPF has recently provided a parking area for sightseers. The banks adjacent to the bridge are also used for taking out kayaks.

Little Susitna River Management Unit

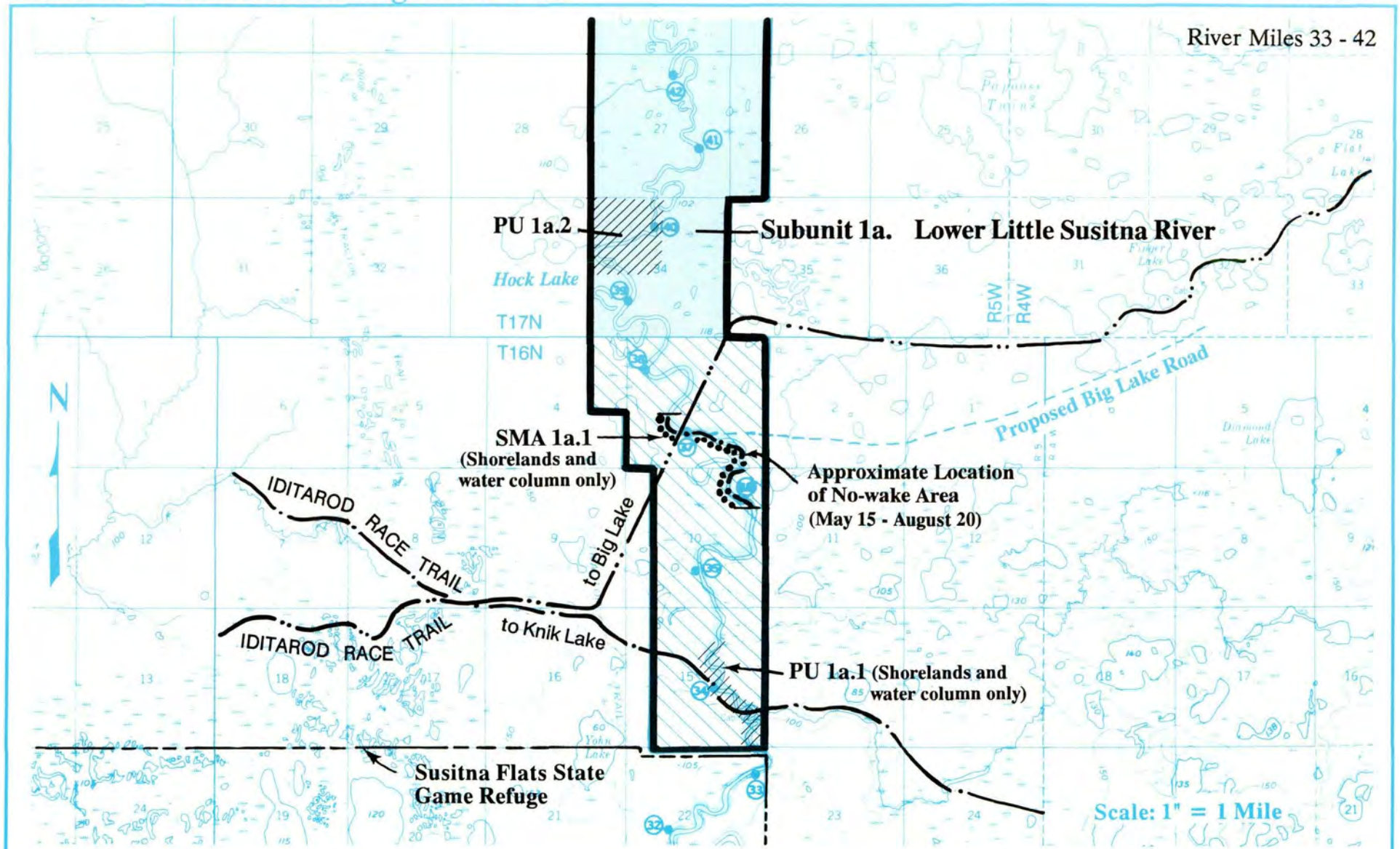
MAP 1



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- Borough Land
- State Land
- Public Use Site
- Non-motorized Area (Alternate weekends, May 15 - August 20
- Proposed Dept. of Fish & Game Non-motorized Area (Alternate weekends, May 15 - August 20)

Little Susitna River Management Unit

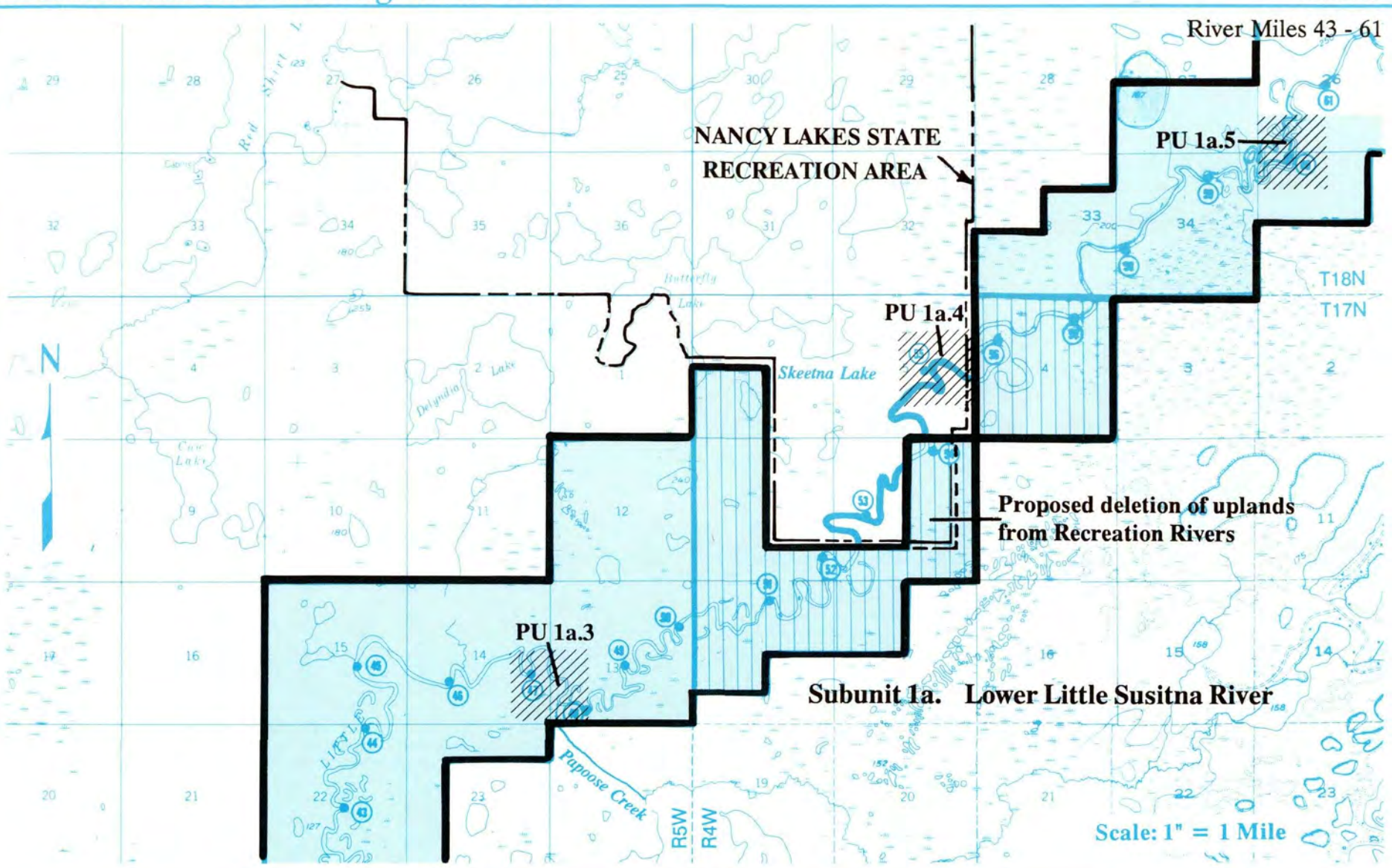
MAP 2



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- State Land
- Borough Land
- Public Use Sites
- Special Management Area
- Non-motorized Area (Alternate weekends, May 15 - August 20
- Proposed Dept. of Fish & Game Non-motorized Area (Alternate weekends, May 15 - August 20)

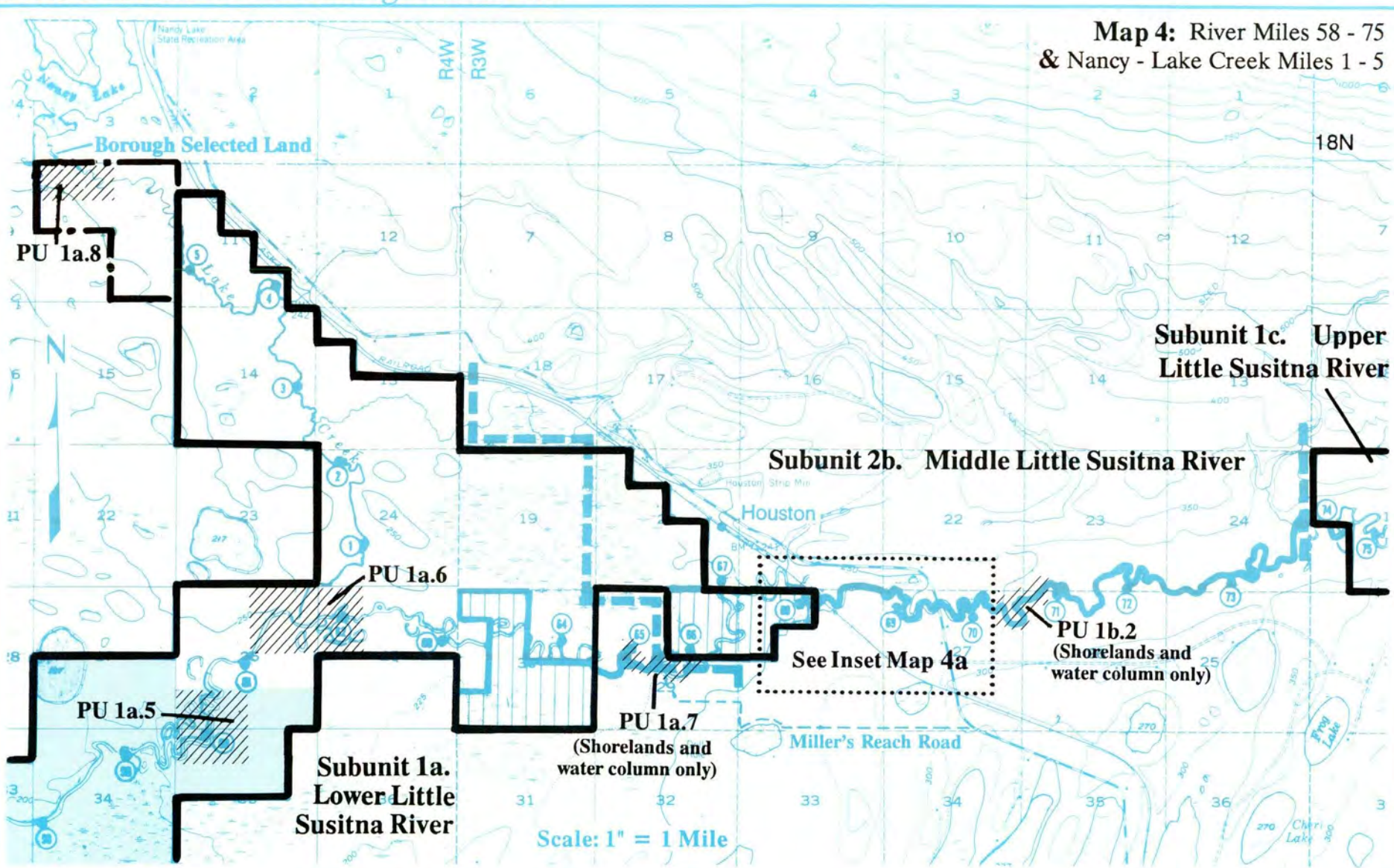
Little Susitna River Management Unit

MAP 3

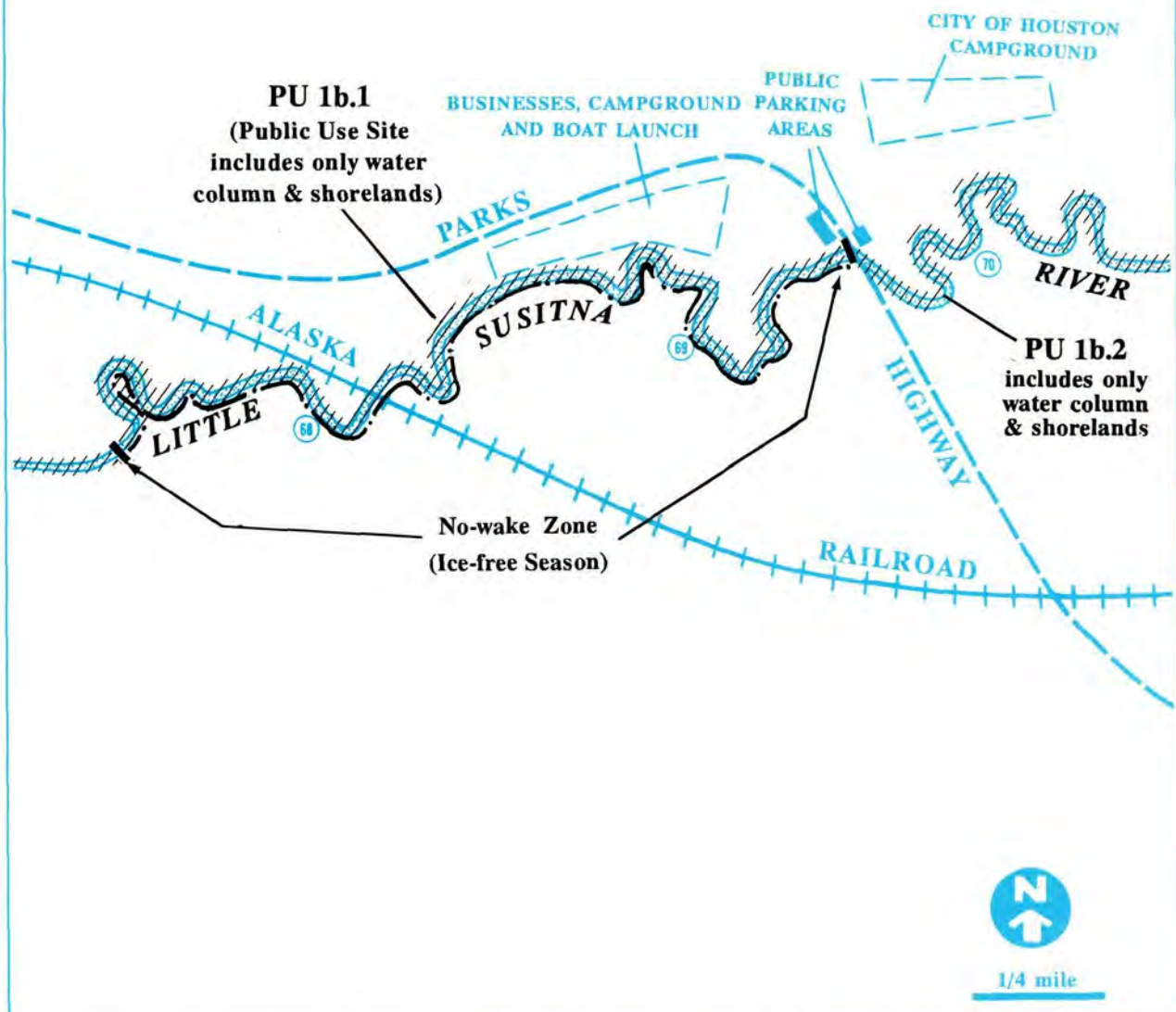


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- State Land
- State Mental Health Land
- Public Use Sites
- Non-motorized Area (Alternate weekends, May 15 - August 20)

Little Susitna River Management Unit



Inset Map 4a Houston Area



Public Use Sites

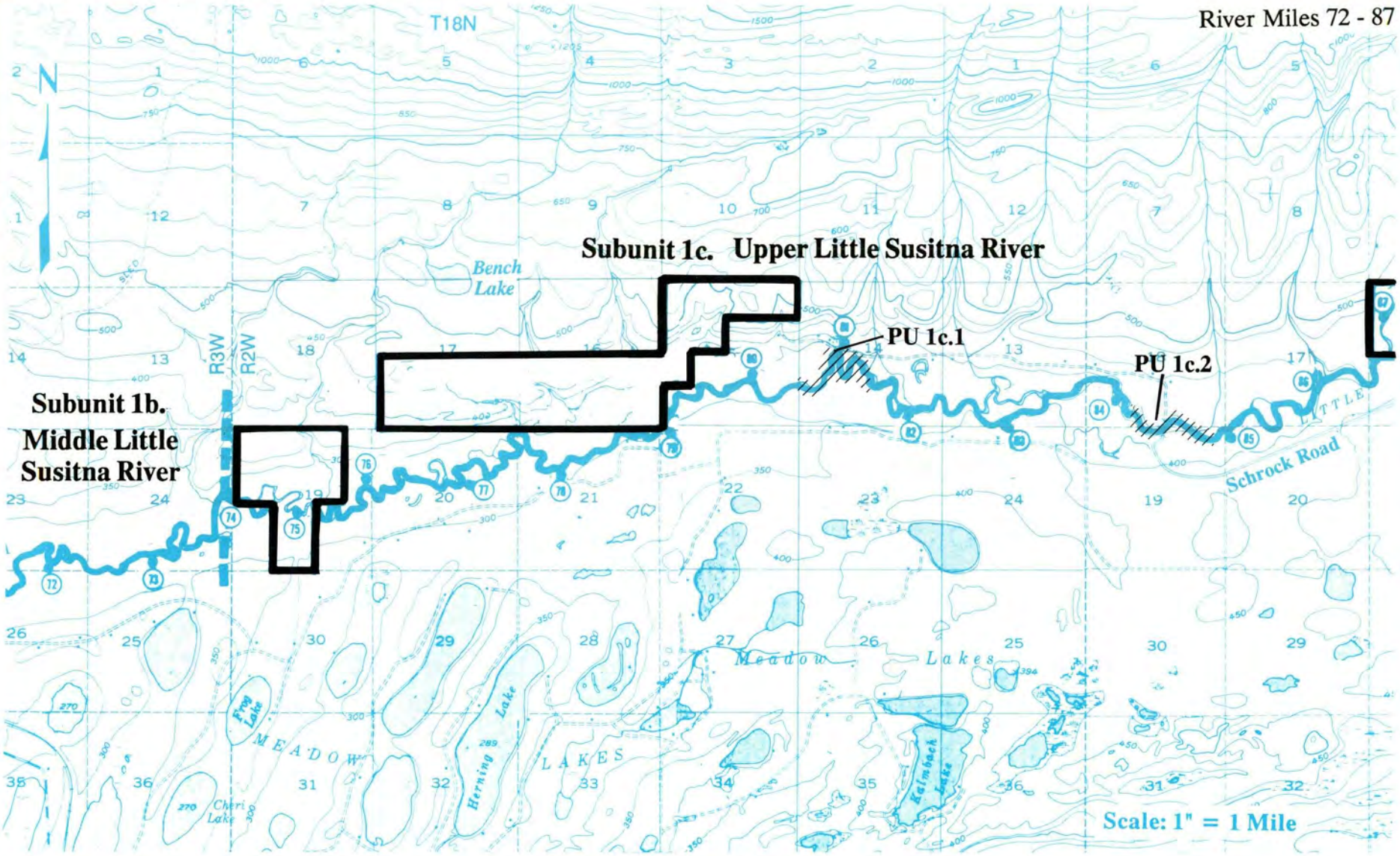
Voluntary No-wake Area
(May 15 - August 20)

(68) **River Miles**

Note: Lands outside theRecreation River on this map are primarily in private and city ownership.

Little Susitna River Management Unit

MAP 5



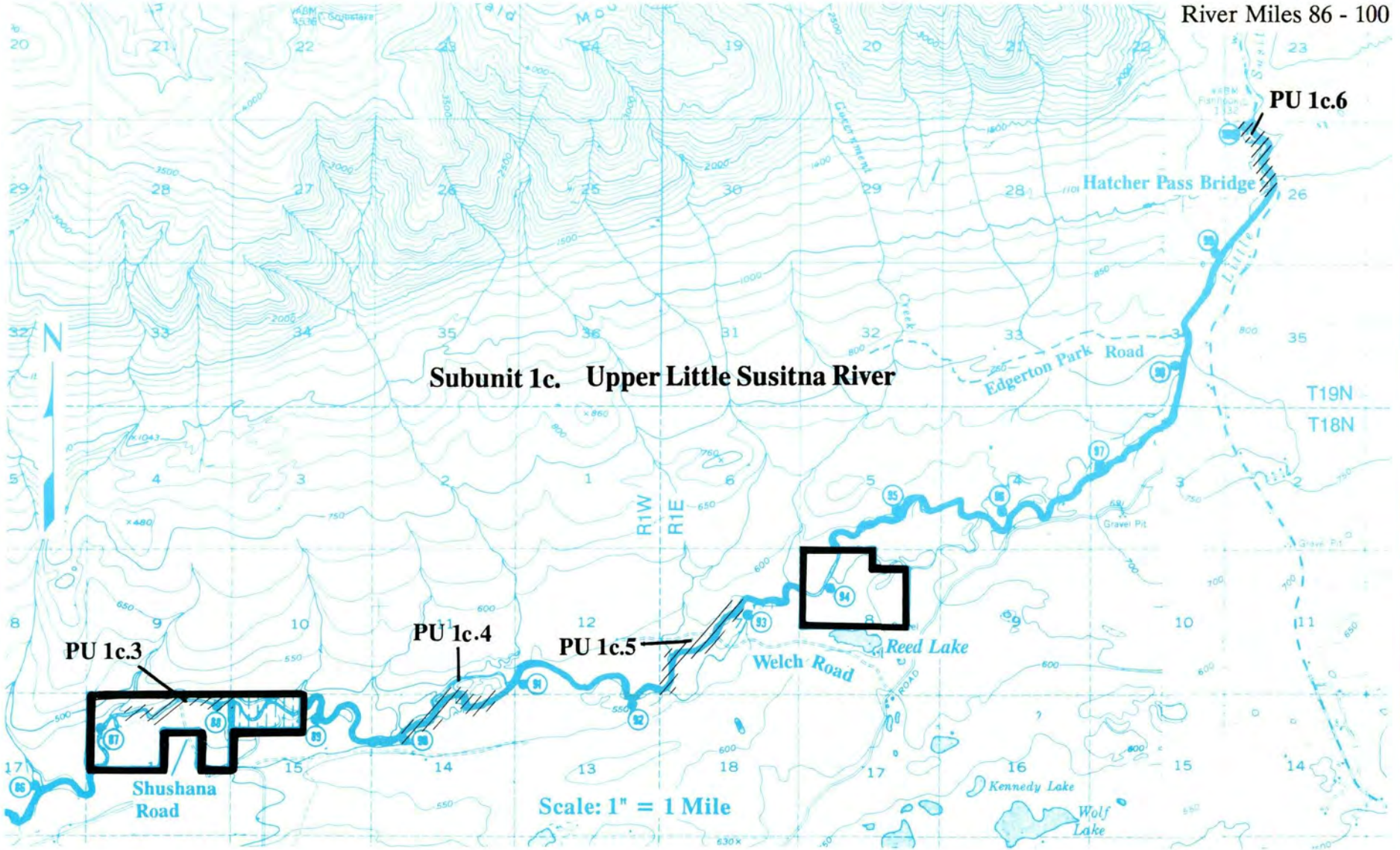
- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- State Land

Public Use Sites (Shorelands and water column only)

Note: Lands outside theRecreation River on this map are primarily in private ownership.

Little Susitna River Management Unit

MAP 6



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- State Land
- Public Use Sites (Shorelands and water column only)
- State University Land

Note: Lands outside theRecreation River on this map are primarily in private ownership.

Deshka River Management Unit

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3 - 28 **2c. Middle Deshka River Subunit**
3 - 29 **2d. Neil Lake Subunit**
3 - 31 **2e. The Forks Subunit**
3 - 32 **2f. Kroto Creek Subunit**
3 - 35 **2g. Lower Moose Creek Subunit**
3 - 36 **2h. Oilwell Subunit**
3 - 37 **2i. Upper Moose Creek Subunit**

2. Deshka River Management Unit

Background

MILES OF RIVER

This unit includes over 140 river miles including the Deshka River[2] from its confluence with Susitna River (RM 0.0) to (RM 82.4) and 59 miles of Kroto Creek above the Forks.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	62,117 acres
Matanuska/Susitna Borough	10,110 acres
119 Private Parcels	1,467 acres
Total	**73,694 acres**

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

The Deshka River meanders with mid-channel bars and riffles throughout. Channel width varies along the river. Near the mouth the normal channel width is about 300 feet, in Subunits 2b and 3c it is 100 feet, in Subunits 2d and 2e it is 50 feet, and upstream of the forks it is 30 feet. The average stream flow near the mouth is 892 cubic feet per second. Winter low flows are 200 to 300 cfs. Peak summer flows are 600 to 1500 cfs. The average depth is 2 to 8 feet. The width of the 100-year floodplain at the mouth of the Deshka River is approximately 1.5 miles, primarily to the east side of the river, meeting the floodplain of the Susitna River. Over half of this corridor is wetlands. Wetlands are particularly extensive near the Moose-Kroto creek confluence. The terrain in the remainder of the corridor is rolling to flat with moderately dense tree cover.

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

FISHERIES

Species Present

Chum Salmon	Pink Salmon
Arctic Grayling	Coho Salmon
Sockeye Salmon	Rainbow Trout
King Salmon	

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

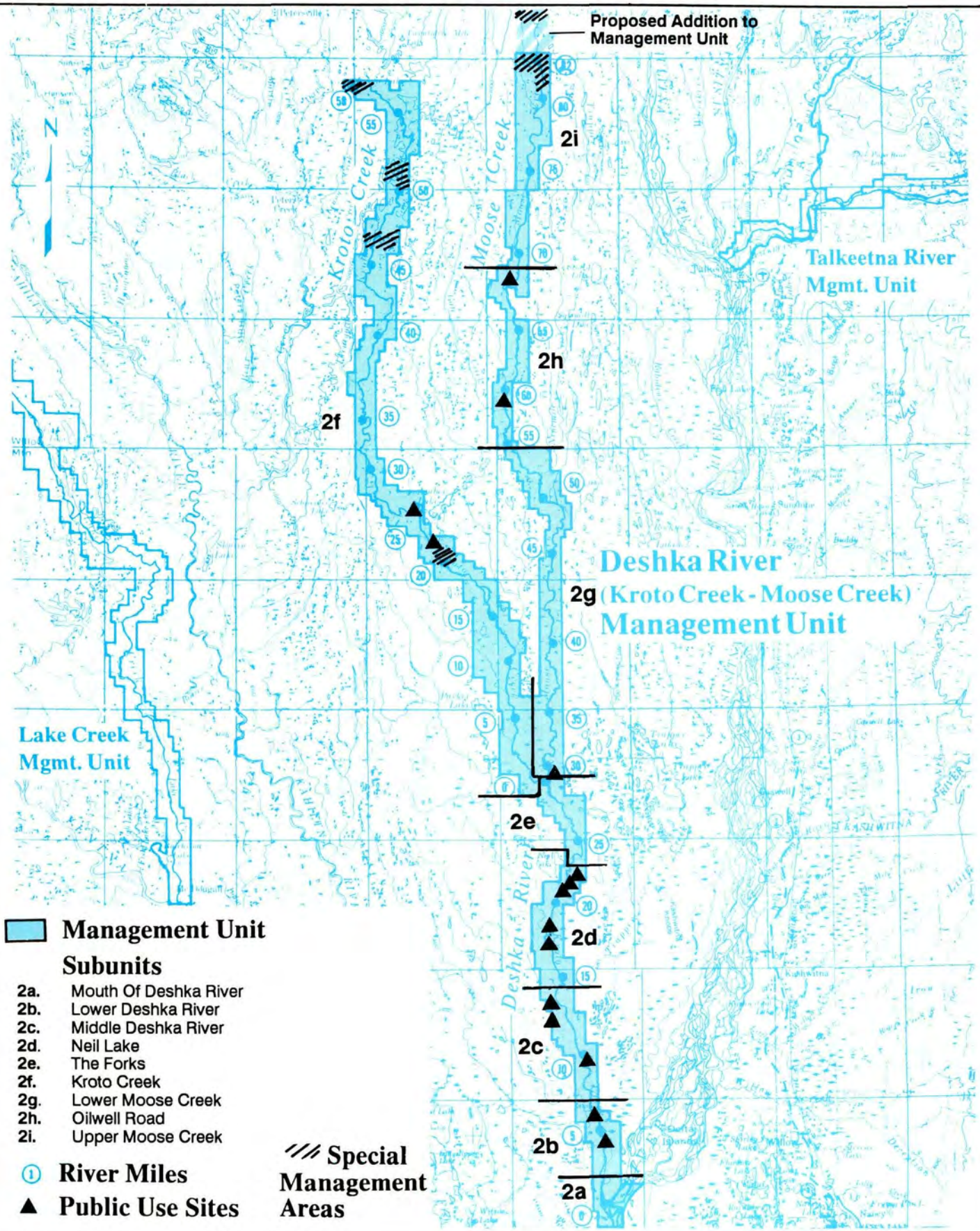
Sport Fishing

The level of sport fishing on the Deshka River is second only to the Little Susitna River in the planning area. Peaks in recreation and fishing activities on the Deshka River correspond with the king and coho salmon runs; approximately May 29 to July 4. Many people fish for rainbow trout from July 15 to August 15. The most popular fishing areas are the mouth of the Deshka, the Forks, and the mouths of Trapper and No Name creeks.

[2] 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 Mosse Creeks. Above the confluence of Moose and Kroto creeks, these creeks are called by their respective names.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

DESHKA RIVER



Special Regulations

Moose and Kroto creeks have been designated by DFG as a catch and release special management area for rainbow trout. They are closed to king salmon fishing.

WILDLIFE

Moose

Moose and Kroto creeks have high moose densities in the winter. Riparian habitat is critical for the winter survival of moose. Riparian willow stands provide a large portion of the winter forage. The river provides established travel corridors which are enhanced by upland coniferous forests that provide thermal cover and shallower snow depths. Radio telemetry studies conducted by DFG indicate high concentrations of moose occur in and along the corridor during late fall and winter seasons.

Bear

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

Bald eagles

Five bald eagle nests have been identified within or immediately adjacent to the management unit. Nest trees are primarily black cottonwood, always over 50 feet tall, and usually within 20 feet of the river.

Trumpeter swans

Three trumpeter swan nests were identified in surveys taken between 1968 and 1985.

Hunting

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

Trapping

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

CAMPING

Because the average length of trip or stay on the Deshka River is 3 days, camping is common in this management unit. Most overnight use occurs on public land. Undeveloped campsites along the river were inventoried in a survey of the river in 1989. The number of sites are noted for each subunit.

ACCESS

Moose and Kroto creeks are accessible by automobile from the Petersville and Oilwell roads. Foot and off-road vehicle trails along the river and seismic lines also are common. Powerboats generally access the lower river from the Deshka or Susitna landings. With adequate flows, they can travel up to the confluence of Moose and Kroto creeks. Travel by powerboat is low above the confluence. Float trips originate from several locations on the upper river. Floatplanes land on the Susitna River, the lower Deshka River, and several other places along the corridor. Airplanes use several strips located along the lower river. The Deshka River is used extensively for winter travel by private property owners and other recreationists. Snowmachines are the primary method of transportation but dog mushing is also common. A commercial dog mushing business offers trips up the river.

Management Guidelines for the Unit

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 should reduce safety hazards.
2.	*Warning sign:*	Silver Hole (RM 3.8 - RM 4.9).
	Season:	May 15 - August 20.
	Justification:	This is a heavily used area for fishing and camping. A sign will be placed at the upper and lower reaches of this area to warn boaters to reduce speed when anglers are present. The intent is to protect public safety.
3.	*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. To provide opportunities to harvest king salmon in a non-motorized area, lower Moose Creek will be recommended to the Board of Fisheries to be open to king salmon harvest. Also see *Other Recommendations, Fishing Regulations* in Chapter 4.
4.	*Safety warning sign*	East slough of Deshka River (RM 23 - RM 24.2).
	Season:	May 15 - August 20.
	Justification:	A slough forms the east branch of the Deshka River. There is concern that the slough is too narrow to accommodate both floatboats and powerboats. Signs should be placed warning powerboats to use the west branch of the river to avoid hazards in the east branch. The east branch may become the major branch of the river, in which case the signs should be removed.

2a. Mouth of Deshka River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, Susitna River Confluence (RM 0.0) to RM 1.9

This subunit extends from above the confluence of the Deshka and Susitna rivers to 0.5 miles above the DFG camp.

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

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	1,270 acres
Matanuska/Susitna Borough	811 acres
10 Private Parcels	60 acres
Total	**2,090 acres**

Private Land

Several parcels of private land are located along the west bank of the river near the mouth. There is also private land on the east bank, including the land on which Deshka River Lodge is located. DFG and Fish & Wildlife Protection cabins are located on sites authorized by an Interim Land Management Agreement with DNR. They are surrounded by state land.

FISHERIES

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

WILDLIFE

A bald eagle nest is located just east of the subunit, on the Susitna River east of RM 1.5. Active trumpeter swan nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

There have been well over 100 camps set up at the mouth during the fishing season. The borough now maintains a campground at the mouth and issues permits to camp on its land.

The following undeveloped campsites have been identified:

Primary campsites	4
Secondary campsites	7
Marginal Campsites	0

DEVELOPMENT

Upland Structures and Improvements

There is extensive development in this subunit. All of the private parcels have some level of development. There are three commercial lodges and nine cabins in this subunit. Lodges include the Deshka River Lodge, Silver King Lodge, and Mike and Mert's. There are also two cabins just outside the boundary downstream on the Susitna River. The DFG and Fish and Wildlife Protection each have cabins.

Prior to 1990, there were numerous unauthorized temporary camps in this subunit, primarily on the large bar on the east side of the Susitna River, on the islands in the Deshka, and along the east bank of the Deshka River. Most of these camps were located on borough land. However, a significant number were located on state land. Temporary camps are established in May as soon as ice leaves the river. These camps remain through the summer and many improvements are left through the winter. There are also a number of camps established for just one to three nights peaks during king salmon season. These camps are often located away from the river in less desirable places because of the lack of space on the shoreline. The same areas used for camps are used for boat and equipment storage. Many river users are flown to the mouth of the Deshka, or charter larger boats to access the area and use smaller boats stored in the subunit to travel along the river. Some of the abandoned and stored debris is washed away by spring flooding. However, these storage areas are not flooded on a regular basis and abandoned boats and camps that have accumulated over the years. The borough established a campground in

1990 and now requires a permit for camping in the remainder of the area. This has altered the use patterns and largely eliminated the practice of abandoning camps and equipment on public lands.

Water-Dependent Structures

Five docks are associated with cabins and lodges in this subunit. Many of the cabins and lodges have small shelters or storage areas adjacent to the river for equipment and gasoline. There are also some access stairways, particularly along the steep west banks of the river. A large stone wall to reduce erosion is located in front of the Deshka River Lodge. In the past, the Alaska Boating Association has maintained buoys signs for a voluntary no-wake area.

ACCESS

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

Floatplanes and wheelplanes land near the mouth of the river. An airstrip is located at the Silver King Lodge (at the Susitna River confluence). Floatplanes also frequently land on the Susitna and Deshka rivers. There are also primitive landing areas on gravel bars.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

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

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Small-scale timber cutting has occurred in this area to clear the two airstrips, and for firewood and houselogs. There is also extensive wood gathering by campers.

Management Intent

Class III. This subunit is notable for its high concentration of anglers in a relatively small area during the king and silver salmon runs. The subunit features high quality fishing and camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank users in an accessible moderately developed area. Lodges and residences are located on either side of the river. With good wheel and floatplane access, this subunit receives more air traffic than any other area in the Recreation Rivers. Winter use is by snowmachiners, skiers, and dog mushers. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Management presence is expected to be high. Managing for concentrated public and commercial use will be the focus of management activities. Proposed actions include providing public facilities such as a campground and privies to minimize unsanitary conditions, reducing damage to natural resources from over-use, and preventing unauthorized use of public lands. Because of the concentration of use, public education through signs and a visitor contact station is recommended. There will be a voluntary no-wake area at the mouth to protect public safety during the fishing season. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. Because of the proximity of state and borough lands and intense public use, cooperative management or conveyance of part of this area to the borough should be considered.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Public Recreation." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

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

Boat Storage. A public boat storage area(s) should be designated near the mouth of the Deshka River. See *Shoreline Development, Boat Storage* in Chapter 2.

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

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

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

Wheelplane Landing Strips. One lodge in this subunit has authorization for a private airstrip. The only public wheelplane access is on a primitive landing area on a state-owned island at the mouth of the Deshka River, and a similar one on the other side of the Susitna River. To improve public wheelplane access and to protect the public, DNR and the borough should:

1. *Consider closing the primitive landing strip.* The primitive landing strip located on the state-owned island on the east bank of the Deshka River mouth (Landing Area "B" on Map 1a at the end of this section) has never been authorized by DNR. DNR will consider closing this airstrip. If the airstrip is closed, it will be marked by FAA-approved methods. The FAA will then be contacted and the closure noted in the Notice to Airmen, maps, and other FAA publications. DNR is not currently proposing to close the primitive undeveloped landing area ("D" on Map 1a) on the southeast side of the Susitna River.
2. *Develop a landing pattern.* To reduce the potential for midair collisions, DNR supports FAA's efforts to identify takeoff and landing patterns over the mouth of the Deshka River in their Notice to Airmen.
3. *Establish a public airstrip.* The Matanuska-Susitna Borough should provide a public-use airstrip on the east side of the Deshka River in this subunit. This area is the first choice for a public airstrip because it is adjacent to the borough campground and an area suitable for launching boats.
4. *Exercise option to convert private strip to public strip.* If the borough does not develop a public airstrip at the above-mentioned site, DNR should consider converting the airstrip on the west side of the river (currently under a private, non-exclusive right-of-way with the state) to a public airstrip. This option is less desirable because the airstrip is on the opposite side of the river from the campground. In addition, construction of a stairway and a public dock would be required to access the river.

Consistent Management of the Mouth Area. One of the goals of the plan is to provide consistent management of lands within the planning area. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is the major landowner at the mouth of the Deshka River and has initiated a recreation management plan for their lands. The borough also had a land-use permit in 1990 and 1991 to use state lands at the mouth. If the borough agrees to manage state land in Section 35 consistent with the general

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

Department of Fish and Game Site. DFG manages a site near RM 2 under an Interagency Land Management Agreement (ILMA) with DNR. The site will be managed consistent with the ILMA. DFG and the Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection currently have cabins on the site. Agency management cabins and storage areas should be consolidated as much as possible. Cabins for DNR field staff and equipment may be constructed near the DFG camp. Since well-drained uplands adjacent to the river in state ownership are limited within this subunit, these lands should be retained in state ownership. See guidelines for *Resource Management Camps* in Chapter 2.

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

Public Information. A sign should be placed at the mouth of the Deshka River identifying the boundary of the Recreation River. A kiosk or visitor contact station should be established in cooperation with the borough to provide information on the use of the river. In addition, a kiosk or other informational display should be located at the Susitna Landing (in cooperation with DFG) and the Deshka Landing (in cooperation with the private landowner).

Weapons. Between June 15 and August 31, discharge of weapons is prohibited within one-quarter mile of the river on state land and water between the mouth of the Deshka River and the DFG camp. See *Recreation, Use of Weapons* in Chapter 3.

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

2b. Lower Deshka River Subunit

Background

RIVER MILES/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 1.9 to RM 6.8

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

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,084 acres
Matanuska/Susitna Borough	686 acres
3 Private Parcels	254 acres
Total	**3,020 acres**

FISHERIES

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

WILDLIFE

There is a trumpeter swan nest on a pond near RM 6. Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

Camping is concentrated between RM 2 and RM 5, particularity near Silver Hole. The following undeveloped campsites have been identified:

Primary	0
Secondary	15
Marginal	3

DEVELOPMENT

There are five cabins and one large homestead in the subunit. The homestead has been used in the past for commercial recreation.

ACCESS

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

HERITAGE RESOURCES

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

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Timber has been cleared for the two airstrips under permits.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit receives high public use because of its proximity to the mouth of the Deshka River, and the opportunities it provides for a variety of recreation uses. This subunit features fishing, camping, powerboating, and floating opportunities in a moderately accessible natural setting. In winter the subunit is used by snowmachiners, dog mushers and skiers. The area contains salmon spawning and moose wintering habitat. Private lands are located along the river in the northern half of the subunit. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. A limited number of commercial camps may be authorized. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. Warning signs will be placed at the Silver Hole (PU 2b.1) to warn boaters to reduce speed when anglers are present.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Public Recreation." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None

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

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

Public Use Sites

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

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 **Walk-in Fishing Hole** (RM 6). This is a popular fishing and camping site.

2c. Middle Deshka River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 6.8 to RM 14.4

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

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,617 acres
Matanuska/Susitna Borough	1,600 acres
32 Private Parcels	148 acres
Total	**4,365 acres**

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

Good campsites are scarce in this subunit. Only 3 secondary campsites were observed.

DEVELOPMENT

Nine cabins and three lodges are located in this subunit. All the cabins are located in the northern half of this subunit along the river.

ACCESS

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

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The potential to locate heritage sites in this subunit is high.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for powerboaters and floaters in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. In winter the subunit is used by snowmachiners, dog mushers, and skiers. There are also a number of private parcels in the subunit. The subunit contains salmon spawning and moose wintering habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands. A limited number of temporary camps will be allowed. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. A voluntary no-wake area is

proposed at the Silver Hole public use site to protect public safety. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Borough Land Bank." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

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

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

Public Use Sites

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

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

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

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

2d. Neil Lake Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 14.4 to RM 23.3

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

LAND OWNERSHIP

The land ownership is as follows:

State	5,182 acres
17 Private Parcels	81 acres
Total	**5,263 acres**

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

This subunit is very popular for camping. Twenty-nine secondary campsites have been identified, mostly on gravel bars.

DEVELOPMENT

There are many cabins around Neil Lake which is adjacent to the subunit. One is used commercially as a lodge for airboat fishing trips. Another lodge is located at the south end of the subunit. Five docks are located on the lake. Signs mark some of the trailheads on both the river and lake.

Management Intent

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

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

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

Access to Neil Lake. The only state-owned parcels on Neil Lake are wetlands. The primary access points currently used by the public are three trails on the southeast end of the lake. Two trails connect with the Deshka River, the other with a slough of the Deshka River. There is an existing 18-foot easement. However, the best trails do not follow this easement. In addition, the 18-foot easement on the shore of Neil Lake is not wide enough to accommodate the numerous floatplanes that beach at the trailhead. In the near term, signs should be placed to mark the legal access. Over the longer term, private land should be purchased for better shore and trail access on Neil Lake. (Also see Chapter 3, *Land Acquisition.*)

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

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

Public Use Sites

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

PU 2d.1 **No-Name or Lynx Creek** (RM 17.7). This is a popular fishing and camping site.

PU 2d.2 **Eagle's Nest Camp** (RM 17.8). Fishing and camping spots are popular at this site.

PU 2d.3 **Middle King Fishing Hole** (RM 20.7). This site provides good fishing and camping.

PU 2d.4 **Upper King Hole** (RM 21.8). This is a popular fishing and camping site.

PU 2d.5 **Neil Lake** (RM 23). There are several camp sites and trails associated with this public use site. The public use site includes three trails connecting the lake with a slough and the river, and areas used for dropping-off parties, camping, and for tying up floatplanes or boats.

2e. The Forks Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 23.3 to RM 29.8

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	3,618 acres
2 Private Parcels	10 acres
Total	**3,628 acres**

WILDLIFE

Active bald eagle or trumpeter swan nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

The Forks are the first place where floaters, coming downstream, can catch and keep king salmon, so fishing pressure is high in this subunit. Several camps have been established here in past years.

The following undeveloped campsites have been identified:

Primary campsites	1
Secondary campsites	14
Marginal campsites	1

DEVELOPMENT

A cabin and dock is located on a lake east of the river at RM 26. There is another cabin near the river at RM 23.5.

ACCESS

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

Management Intent

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

Management Guidelines

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

Public Use Sites

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

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

2f. Kroto Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 0 (Kroto-Moose Creek Confluence), to RM 58 (Kroto Lake)

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

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	29,159 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1,040 acres
55 Private Parcels	257 acres
Total	**30,456 acres**

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

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

DEVELOPMENT

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

The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities recently built a new bridge across Kroto Creek on the Petersville Road. There is a dock on a lake at RM 51 in this subunit and a dock on Amber Lake, adjacent to but outside the subunit.

ACCESS

Summer

Kroto Creek users access Amber Lake by floatplane and float Amber Lake Creek for one mile before entering Kroto Creek. The extension of the Oilwell Road passes by Amber Lake, crosses Kroto Creek, and eventually parallels Lake Creek, before it crosses the Yentna River. Because of the bridge over Moose Creek has not yet been completed, this road is primarily used in winter. There is also a major trail south of the Oilwell Road that avoids a dogleg in the road where it crosses Kroto Creek. There are extensive off-road vehicle trails between RM 43 (just downriver from the Petersville Road) to Kroto Lake. Because of the combination of heavy use and extensive wetlands, this area has the most evidence of off-road vehicle use in the Recreation Rivers. In

several places there are dozens of parallel tracks. Most of this damage may be a result of one property owner near Safari Lake who uses a track vehicle to access the Petersville Road by passing through the Kroto Creek subunit. The nine seismic lines that cross the river do not appear to be receiving summer use. Within the corridor there is floatplane access to a lake west of the river at RM 51 and Lake 295' at RM 14. Amber Lake and Parker Lake (outside but adjacent to the subunit) are also used by floatplanes.

Winter

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

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

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit features fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank fishermen. Fishing for king salmon is prohibited and rainbow trout fishing is catch-and-release only. However, the creek provides important fish habitat. Powerboat navigation becomes marginal later in the summer due to low water levels. In the winter, the subunit features numerous snowmachine, dog mushing, and cross-country ski trails, particularly between the Petersville Road and Kroto Lake. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. The lower part of this subunit will be managed to provide non-motorized opportunities during the fishing season.

Management Guidelines

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Borough Land Bank." For management intent on borough-owned lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

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

DOTPF Materials Site. There is an existing DOTPF materials site in this subunit. See Chapter 2, Materials.

Public Information. A kiosk should be constructed on Amber Lake where the public is dropped-off for float trips down Amber Lake and Kroto creeks. If the Oilwell Road is extended to Kroto Creek, the kiosk should be moved to the area where the public congregates near the creek. Signs identifying Kroto Creek as a Recreation River should be placed on either side of the Petersville Road bridge and near Amber Lake.

Boat Launch. If the Oilwell Road is extended to Kroto Creek, a boat launch that accommodates trailers should not be built. The river is too shallow and rocky to safely accommodate large power boats. A primitive launch may be constructed to accommodate boats carried on rooftops.

Public Use Sites

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

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.

PU 2f.2 **Amber Lake** (RM 24). Currently there is no well-developed trail between Amber Lake and Amber Creek. However, as more cabins are built on the lake, and if a road is built to the lake, a public trail is likely to develop.

Special Management Areas

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

SMA 2f.1 **Proposed Oilwell Road Crossing of Kroto Creek** (RM 21.5) This special management area includes the proposed 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 proposed 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. With the exception of the bridge, this road crossing is undeveloped. 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.

2g. Lower Moose Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 29.8 to RM 54.2

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

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	12,055 acres
Total	**12,055 acres**

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites were identified in the subunit:

Primary campsites	none
Secondary campsites	80
Marginal campsites	8

DEVELOPMENT

There is no private land within this subunit. There is one unauthorized A-frame cabin along the river.

ACCESS

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

Management Intent

Class I. Because of extensive wetlands and the relatively remote location of this subunit, it is visited primarily by floaters in summer and snow travelers in winter. This subunit also features fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities. Although the subunit contains salmon spawning habitat, fishing for king salmon is prohibited. Rainbow trout fishing is catch-and-release only. Powerboat navigation becomes marginal due to low water levels later in the summer. In winter, the subunit features snowmachine and dogmushing trails. There is no private land in the subunit

The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, the primitive quality of the area, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The lower part of the subunit will be managed to provide non-motorized opportunities during the fishing season. Opportunities for harvesting king salmon should be provided by the Board of Fisheries in the lower part of this subunit.

Management Guidelines

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

Unauthorized Cabins. There is one unauthorized cabin on the river in this subunit. It was built by the US Air Force, is visible from the river, and is in poor condition. DNR should take appropriate actions to have it removed. Also see Chapter 2, Unauthorized Cabins.

Fishing Regulations. See *Other Recommendations, Fishing Regulations* in Chapter 4.

2h. Oilwell Road Subunit

Background

RIVER MILES/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 54.2 to RM 69.5

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

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	3,407 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	4,640 acres
104 Private Parcels	633 acres
Total	**8,600 acres**

WILDLIFE

There is a bald eagle nest about one mile below the Petersville Road. Active trumpeter swan nests have not been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites were identified:

Primary campsites	1
Secondary campsites	6
Marginal campsites	3

DEVELOPMENT

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

Three bridges cross Moose Creek. The Petersville Road bridge is heavily used in both summer and winter. The Oilwell Road bridge abutments have been completed but the span has not been built. A foot-bridge is located at RM 61.5.

ACCESS

Road access is by the Petersville (RM 69) and Oilwell roads (RM 57.5). There are several foot and off-road vehicle trails along Oilwell Road to access private land. Most trails are concentrated along the creek between Nine-mile Creek (RM 51.5) and one mile north of the Petersville Road. Oilwell Road is the most popular float put-in on the Deshka River, with as many as 150 people starting trips per week in early and mid-June. Above Oilwell Road the river is seldom floated. There are no aircraft landing areas.

Moose Creek is extensively used in winter by snowmachiners and dog mushers. Most of the use is between RM 57 and RM 69. Several seismic lines that cross Moose Creek are used in winter. Snowmachine trail rides and dog mushing races (including the Moose Creek 200) pass through this subunit. Above the Petersville Road the subunit is heavily wooded and receives light winter use.

Management Intent

Class II. Because of its proximity to the Petersville Road and numerous parcels of private land, the subunit is used for a variety of purposes. It features fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities, and uses associated with the road. The river is navigable below the Oilwell Road terminus, except in late summer when water levels usually drop. Although the subunit contains fish spawning habitat, fishing for king salmon is prohibited. Rainbow trout fishing is catch-and-release only. In winter, the subunit features snowmachining, skiing, and dogmushing trails. There are numerous private parcels of land, particularly on the east side of the river along the Oilwell Road. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands on the road.

Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The river will be managed to provide both motorized and non-motorized opportunities. There are no non-motorized areas in the subunit.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Forest Management." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

Boating restrictions. None.

Public Information. A kiosk should be placed at the end of the Oilwell Road providing information on the Recreation Rivers. Signs should also be placed on either side of the Moose Creek bridge on the Petersville Road and at the end of the Oilwell Road, identifying Moose Creek as a Recreation River.

Public Facilities. Moose Creek is too shallow through most of the season for prop or jetboats. A boat launch able to accommodate trailers should not be built off the Petersville or Oilwell roads. A primitive access point may be constructed off the Oilwell Road to accommodate boats carried on rooftops. Because of high public use and problems with littering and sanitation in the past, developing a campground may be compatible at the end of the Oilwell Road on Moose Creek.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 2h.1 **End of Oilwell Road** (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. A parcel adjacent to the bridge may be acquired from a willing seller to provide public access to the creek in this high-use area.

2i. Upper Moose Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 69.5 to RM 82.5

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

LAND STATUS

State	2,725 acres
Borough	1,333 acres
15 Private Parcels	75 acres
Total	**4,133 acres**

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

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

DEVELOPMENT

Several cabins and associated docks are located on Loon and "S" lakes.

ACCESS

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

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit features limited fishing and camping opportunities during the summer months. The river is not navigable. Although the subunit contains salmon spawning habitat, king salmon fishing is prohibited. Rainbow trout fishing is catch-and-release only. The subunit is primarily used in the fall for hunting and by private property owners. Winter uses include snowmachining, dog mushing, and skiing. Private lands are located near "S" Lake, Loon Lake, and K'da Lake. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fishing and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. If K'da Lake is added to the Recreation Rivers, it will be managed consistent with this subunit and the Special Management Area. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Forest Management." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Upper Moose Creek Addition. The headwaters of Moose Creek (including K'da Lake and a small lake that runs into Loon Lake) should be added to the planning area and managed as part of K'da.

Lake Special Management Area. (See below, and Chapter 4, *Areas Recommended for Designation as the Recreation Rivers.*)

Special Management Areas

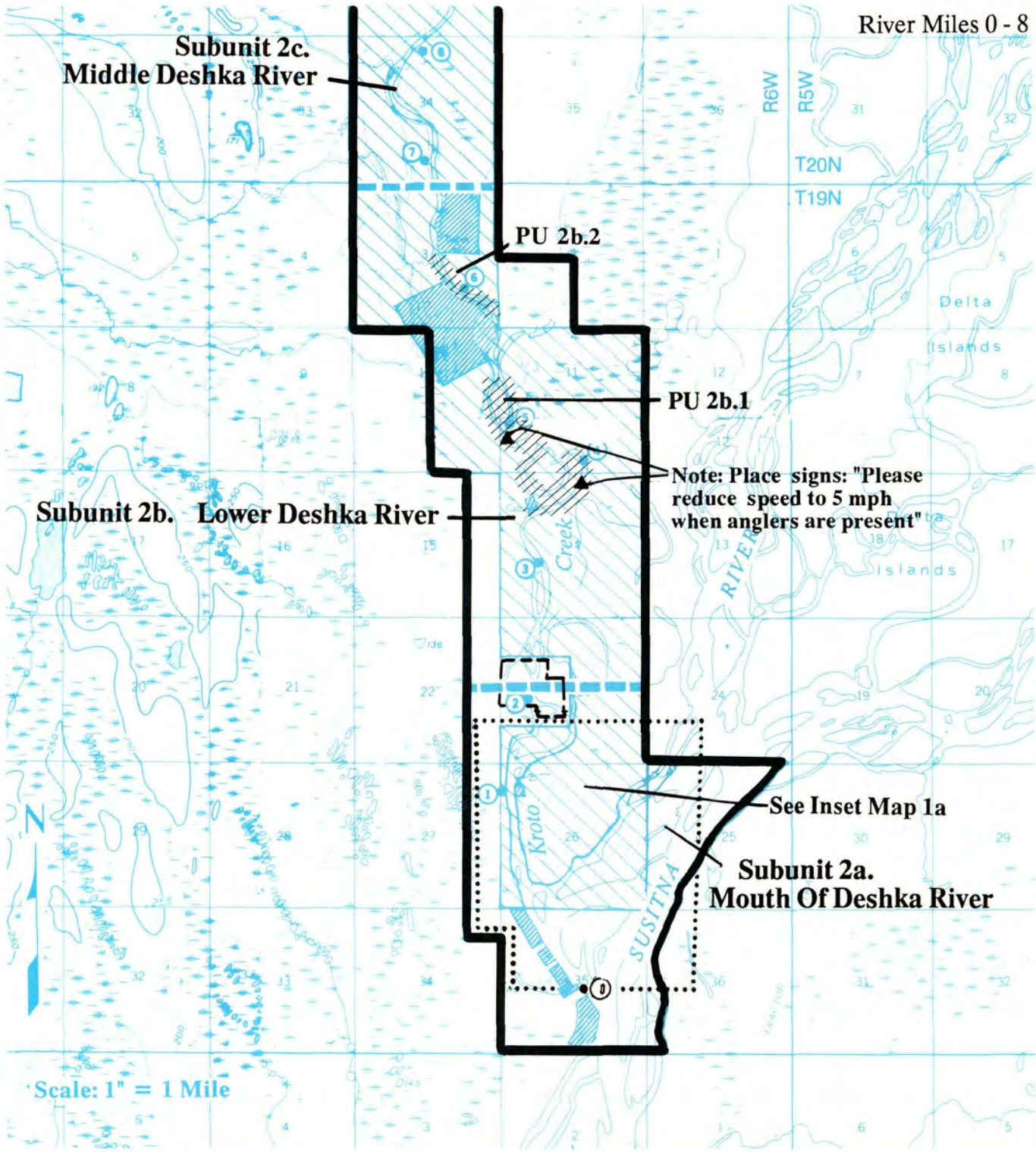
See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations of sites are shown on the map at the end of this unit.

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.

SMA 2i.2 **K'da Lake** (RM 84). This lake is proposed for addition to the Recreation Rivers. The lake is surrounded by private land with a few cabins. The lake is accessed by floatplane in summer. If it is added to the Recreation Rivers, the SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II 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.

Deshka River Management Unit

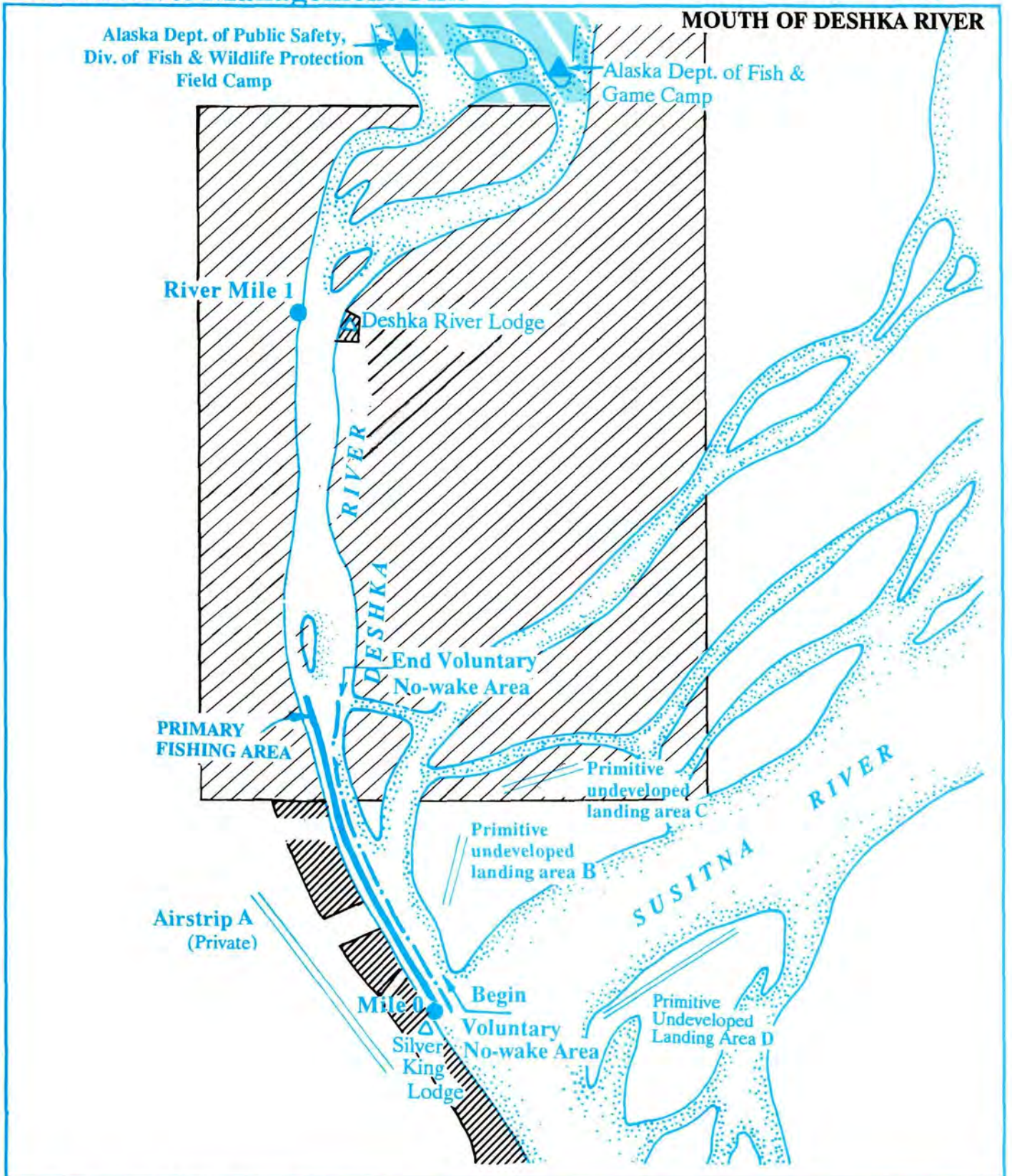
Map 1



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Borough Land
- Public Use Sites (Shorelands and water column only)
- Dept. of Fish & Game ILMA

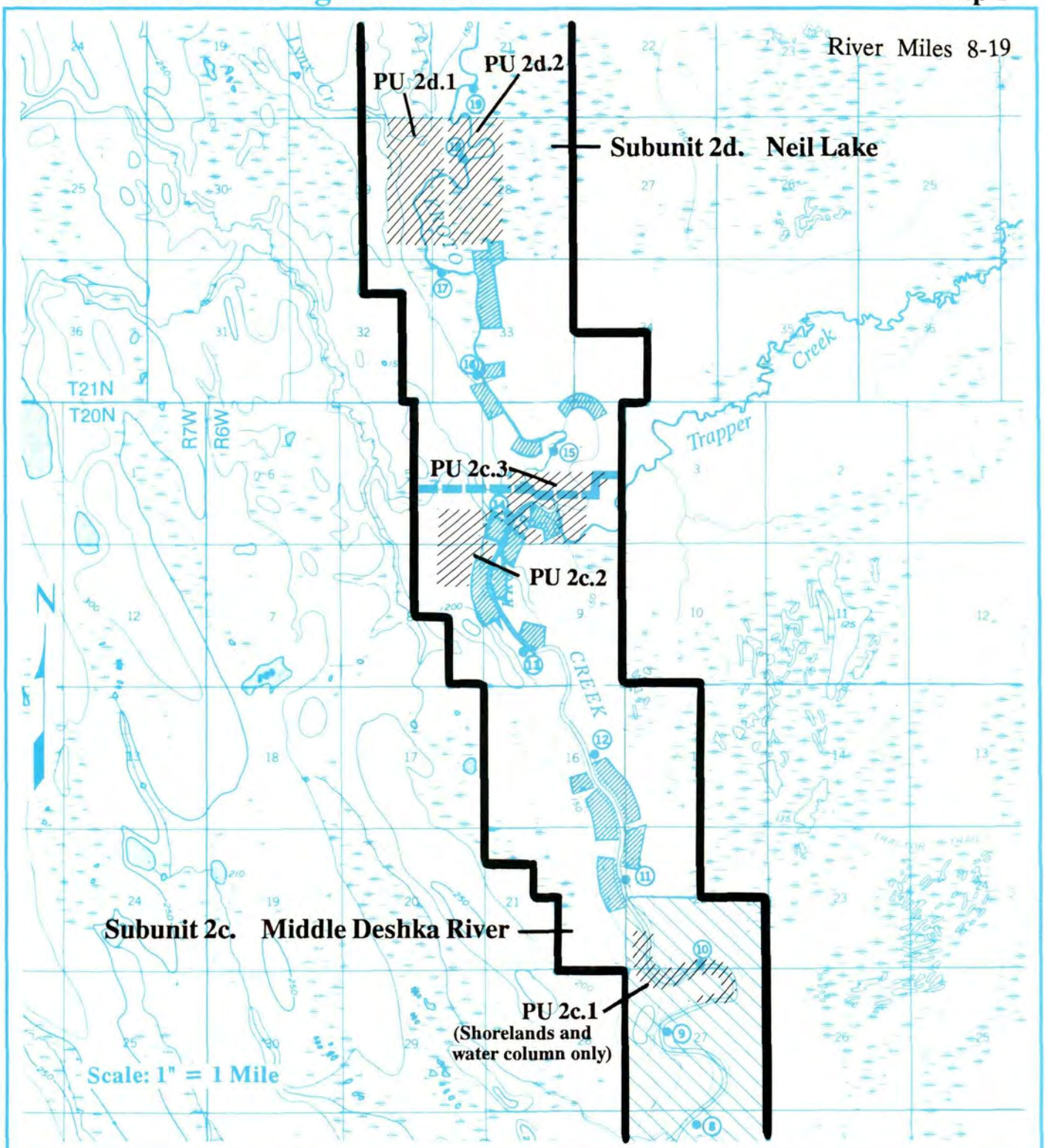
Deshka River Management Unit

Inset Map 1a



Deshka River Management Unit

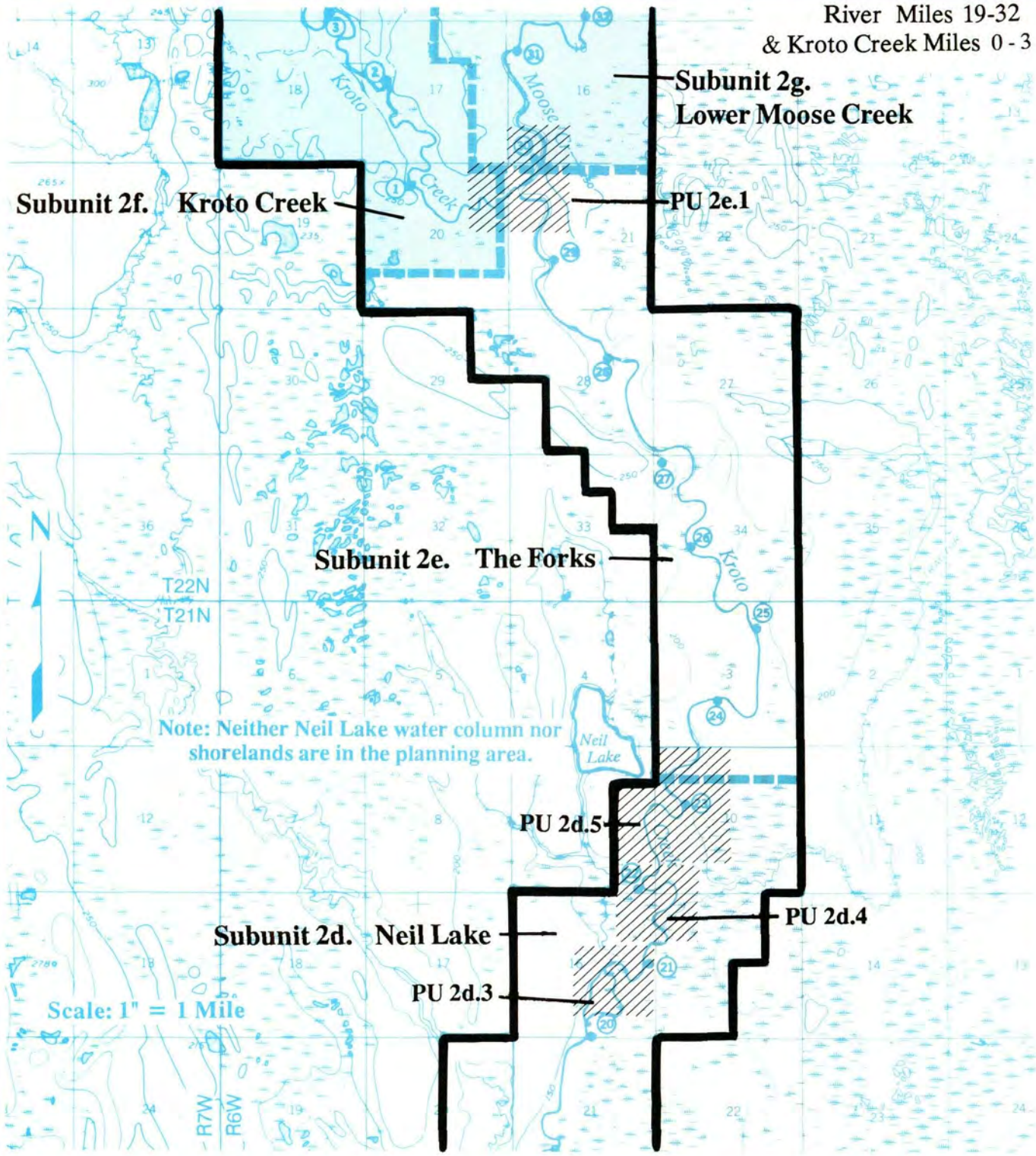
Map 2



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Borough Land
- Public Use Sites

Deshka River Management Unit

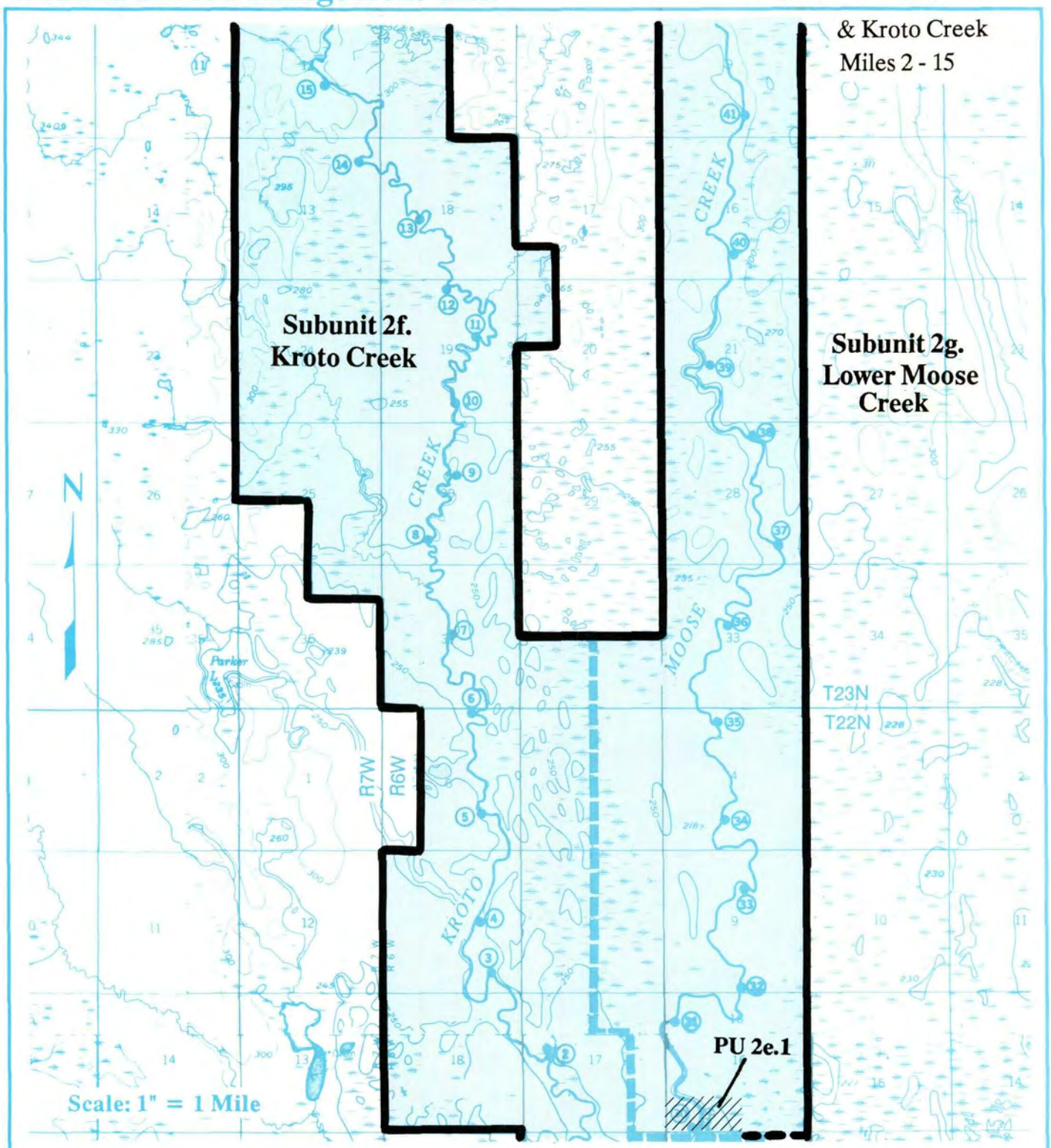
Map 3



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Non-motorized Area (May 15 - August 20)

Deshka River Management Unit

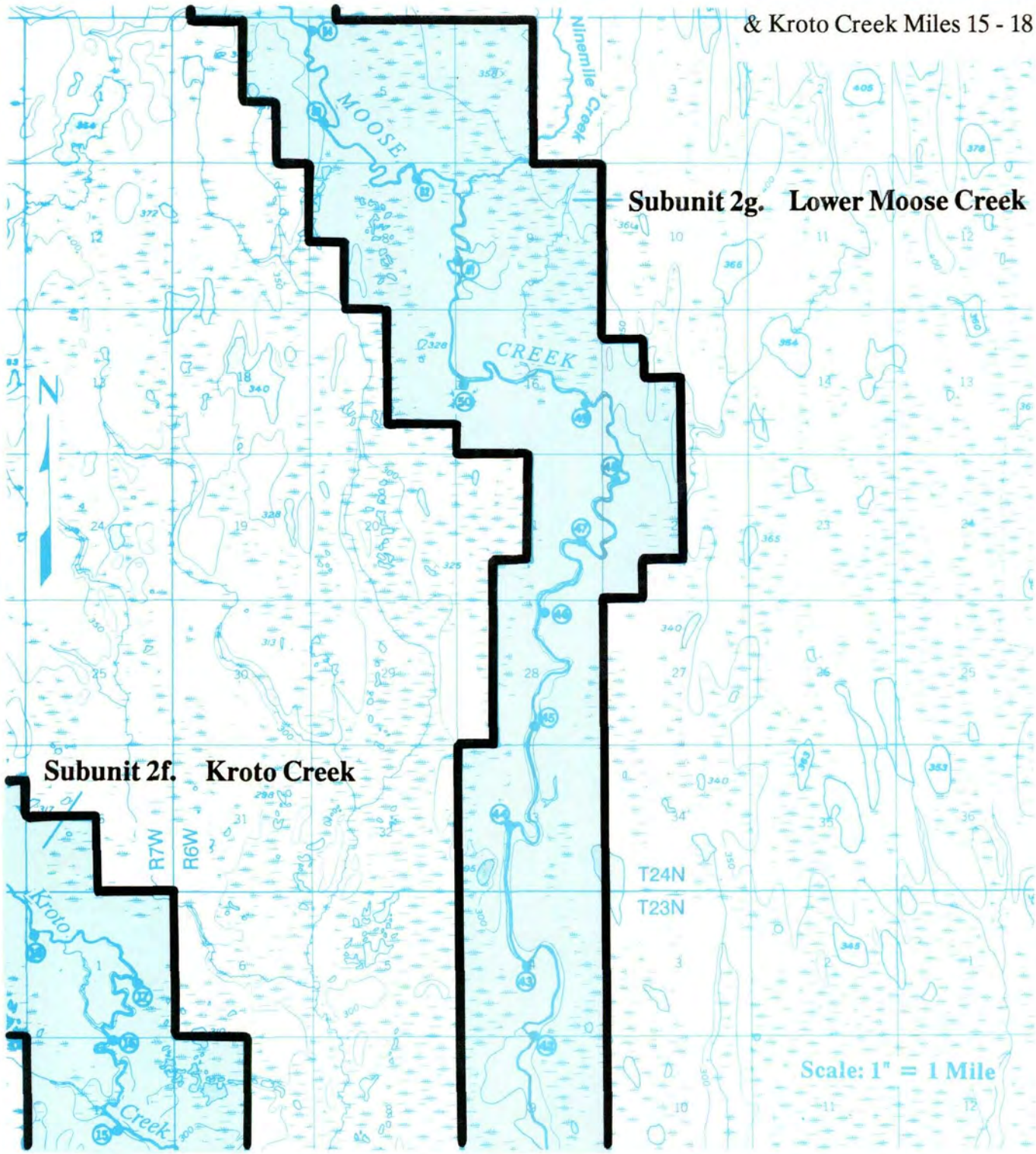
Map 4: River Miles 30 - 41 & Kroto Creek Miles 2 - 15



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Non-motorized Area (June 15 - August 20)

Deshka River Management Unit

Map 5: River Miles 42 - 54 & Kroto Creek Miles 15 - 18



Management Unit Boundary

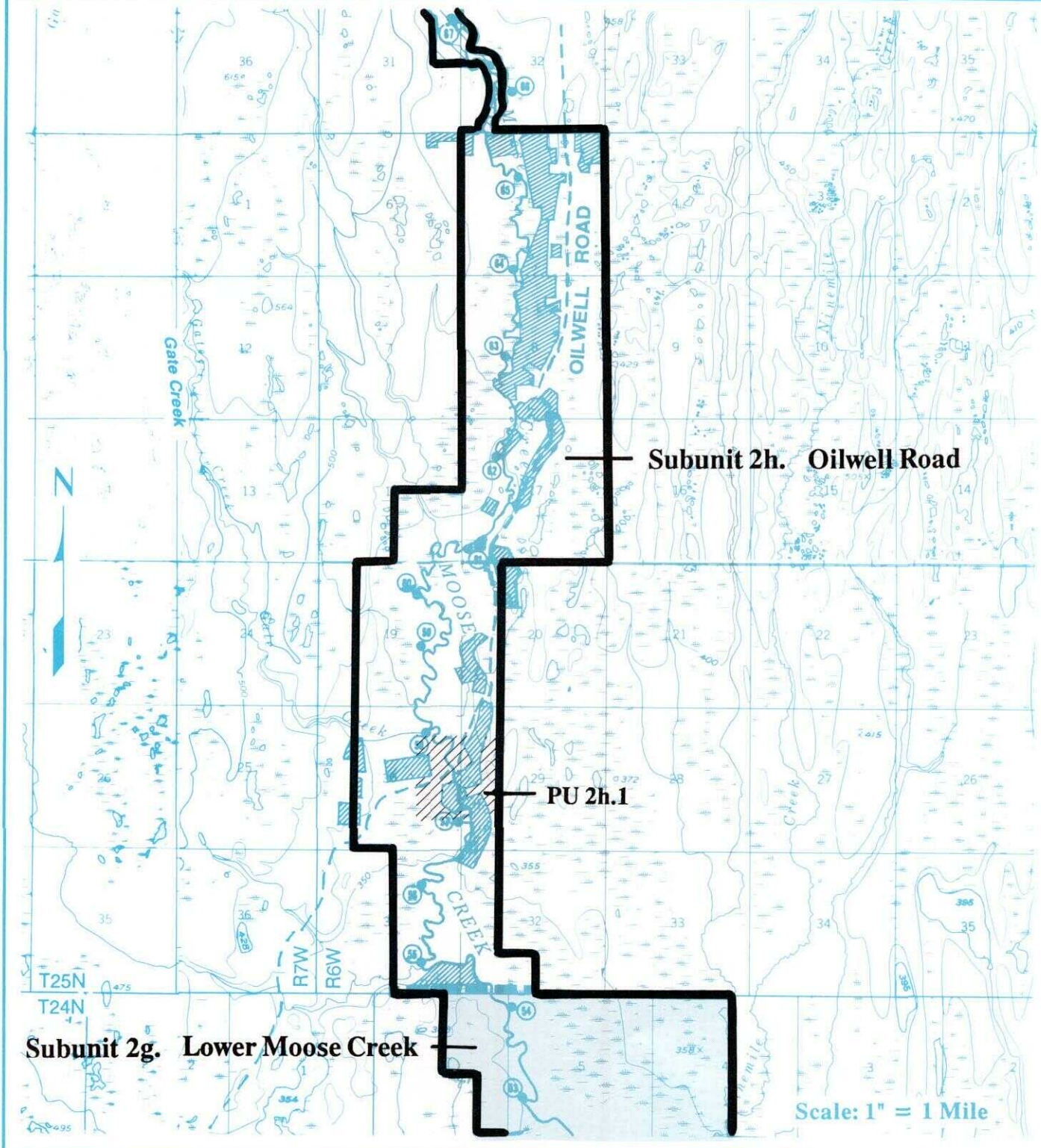
State Land

River Mile

Non-motorized Area
(May 15 - August 20)

Deshka River Management Unit

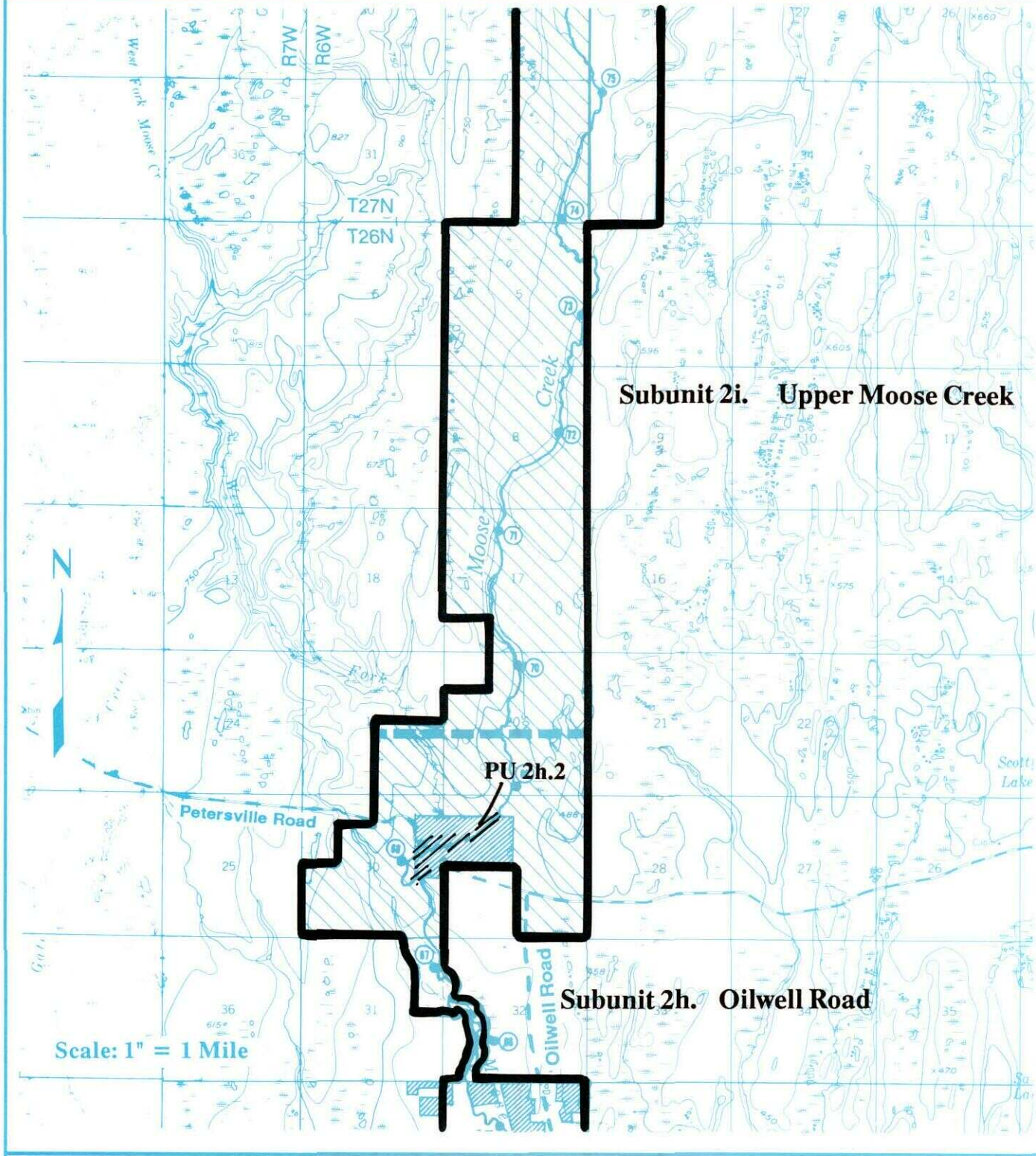
Map 6: River Miles 53 - 67



- Management Unit Boundary
- State Land
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- Borough Land
- Public Use Sites
- Non-motorized Area (May 15 - August 20)

Deshka River Management Unit

Map 7: River Miles 66 - 75

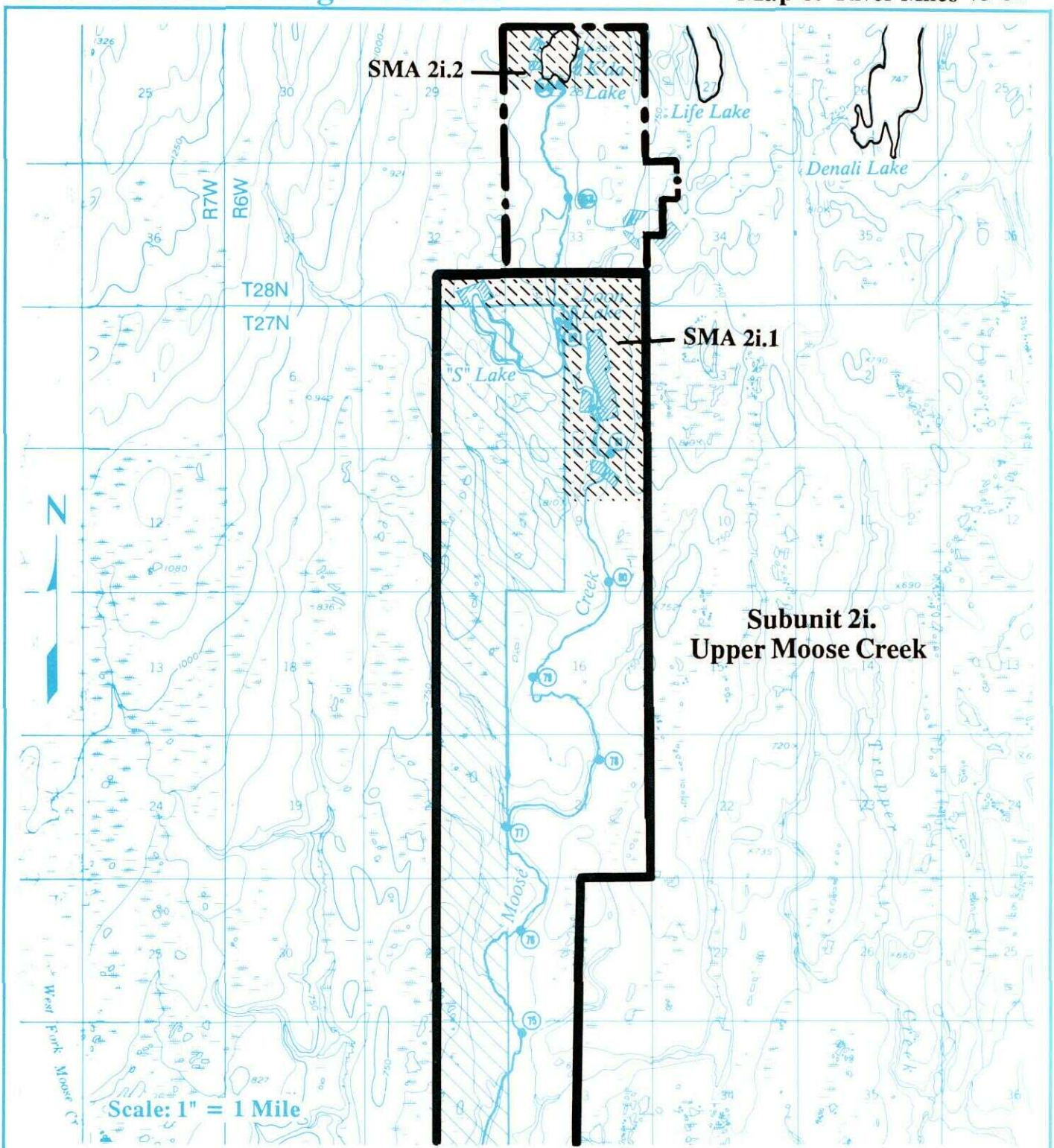


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- Borough Land
- State Land

Public Use Site
(Shorelands and water column only)

Deshka River Management Unit

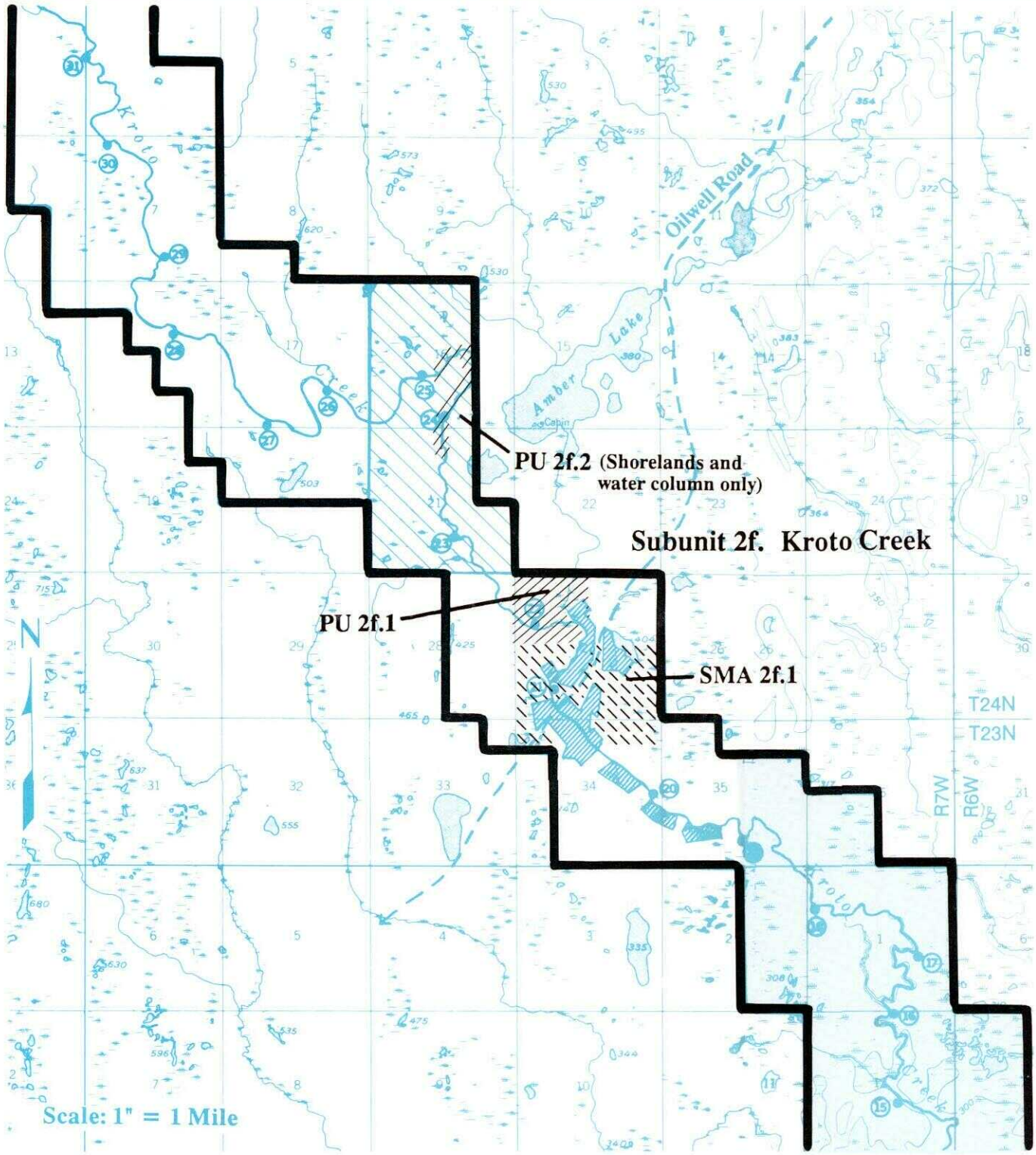
Map 8: River Miles 75-84



- Management Unit Boundary
- State Land
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- Borough Land
- Proposed addition to Management Unit
- Special Management Areas

Deshka River Management Unit

Map 9: Kroto Creek Miles 15 - 31

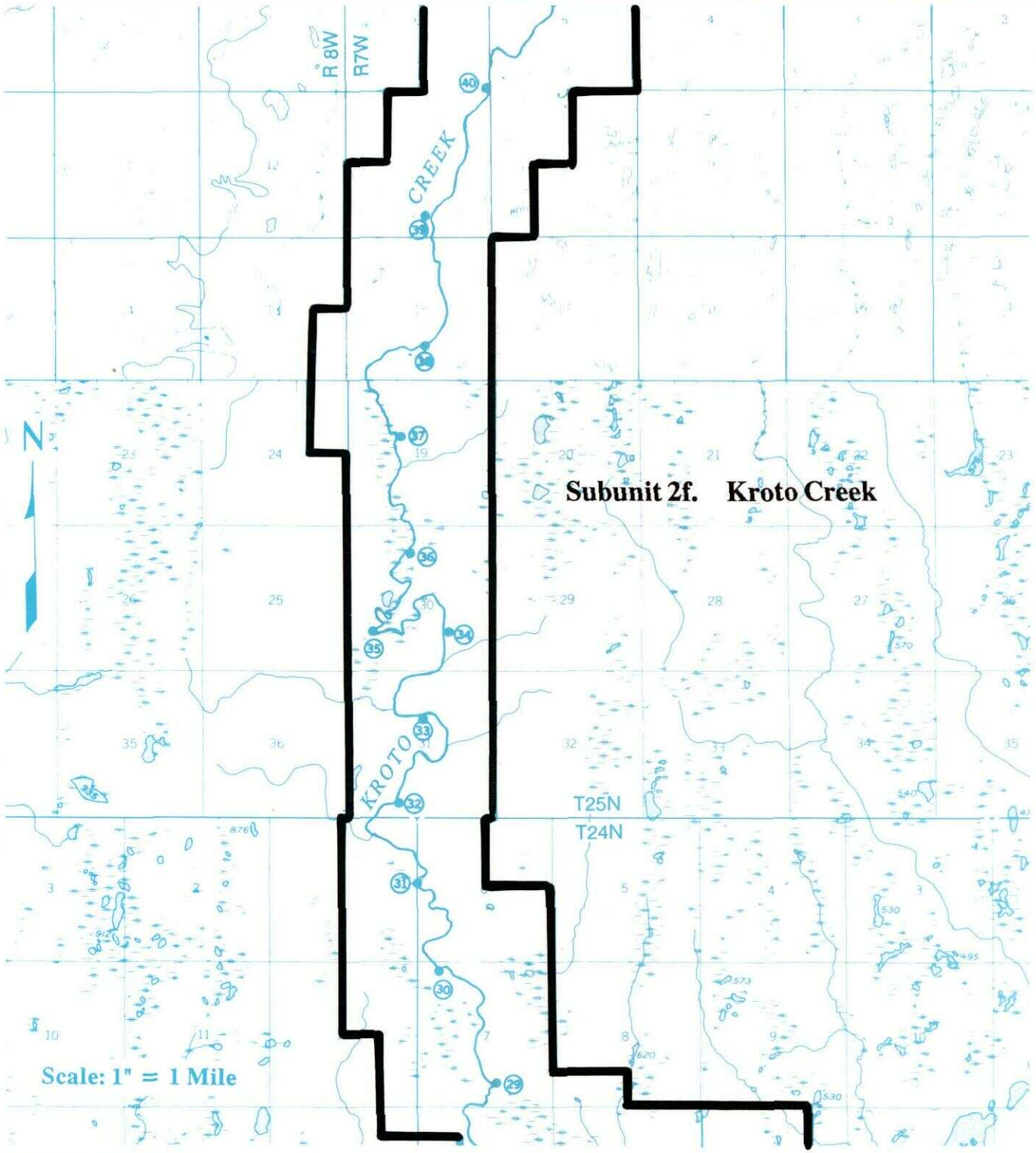


- Management Unit Boundary
- State Land
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- Borough Land

- Public Use Sites
- Special Management Areas
- Non-motorized Area (May 15 - August 20)

Deshka River Management Unit

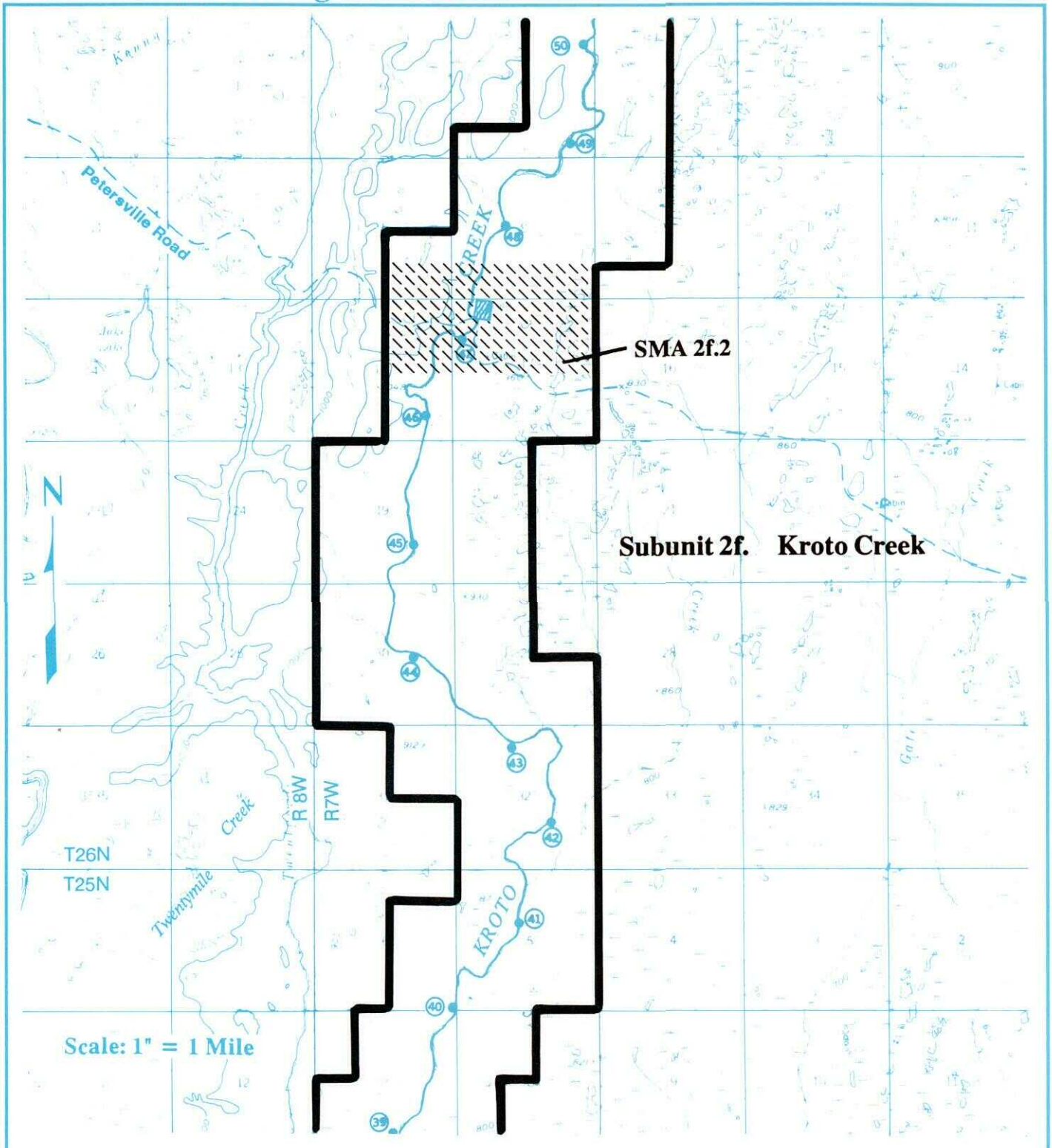
Map 10: Kroto Creek Miles 29 - 40



Management Unit Boundary
State Land
① River Mile
Private Land

Deshka River Management Unit

Map 11: Kroto Creek Miles 39 - 50



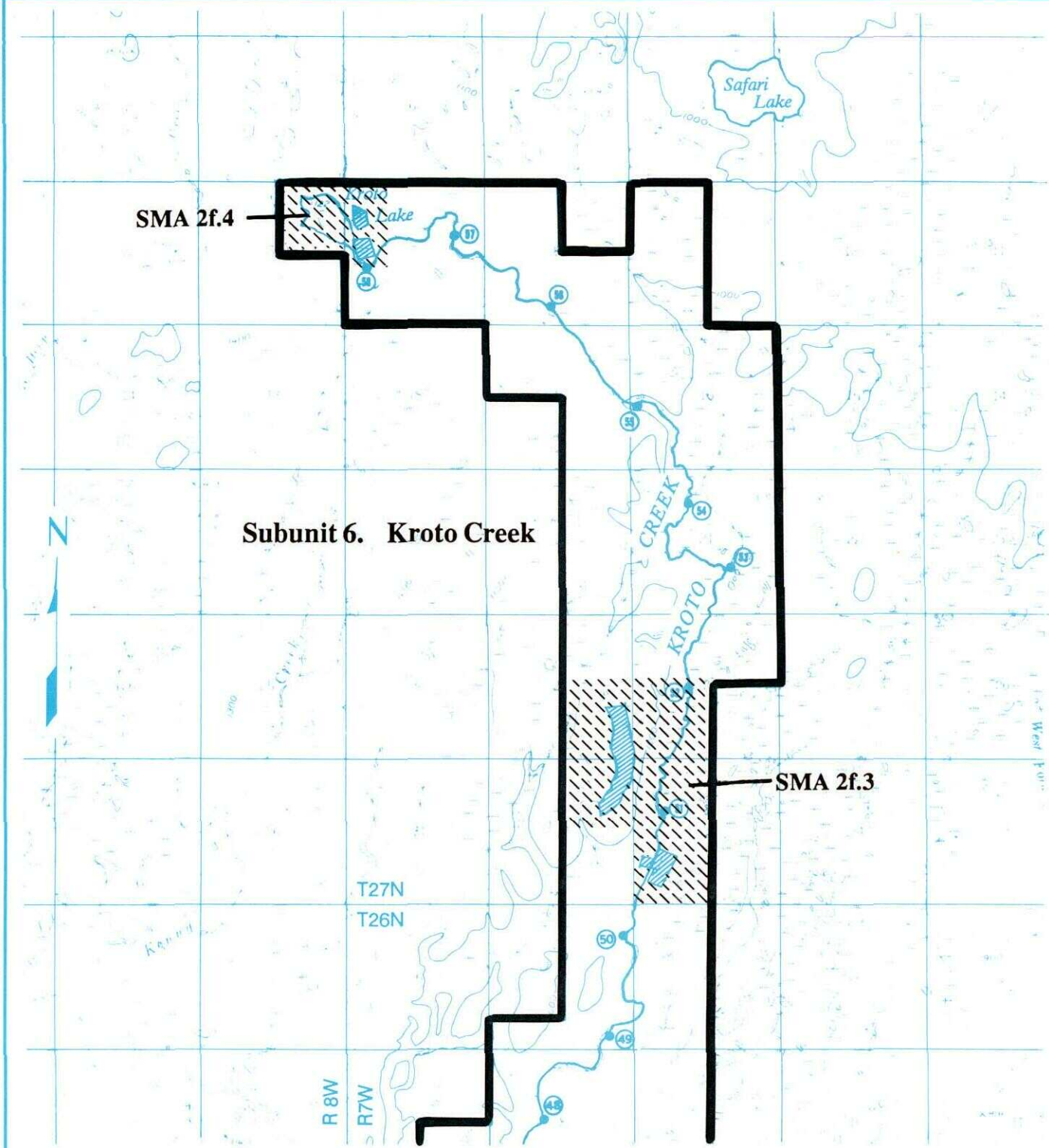
Management Unit Boundary

State Land

① River Mile

Special Management Areas

Map 12: Kroto Creek Miles 48 - 58



Management Unit Boundary
State Land
① River Mile
Private Land

Special Management Areas

Talkeetna River Management Unit

PAGE 3 - 40 **Background**

3 - 41 **3a. Lower Talkeetna River Subunit**

3 - 43 **3b. Middle Talkeetna River Subunit**

3 - 45 **3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek Subunit**

3 - 46 **3d. Talkeetna Canyon Subunit**

3. Talkeetna River Management Unit

Background

MILES OF RIVER

This unit includes 44.5 miles of the Talkeetna River from its confluence with the Susitna River to the upper Talkeetna River Canyon, and 9.5 miles Clear (Chunilna) Creek from its confluence with the Talkeetna River (RM 0) to RM 9.5. The unit also includes the mouths of Sheep River, Iron Creek, Disappointment Creek, and Larson Creek.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	29,004 acres
Mental Health	1,077 acres
University of Alaska	204 acres
19 Private Parcels	216 acres
Total	**30,501 acres**

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

The volume and velocity of the Talkeetna is greater than the other five Recreation Rivers. The river in the Canyon is narrow and fast-moving. Below the Talkeetna River Canyon, the river is wide and braided, with numerous large, forested islands. Because the river is glacial in origin, it is laden with silt during the summer months. Summer streamflow depths vary from 1 to 6 feet, and the lower river channel varies in width from 200 to 500 feet. The mean annual flow is 4,047 cfs, with winter low flows of 509 cfs and summer highs of 11,000 cfs. A 100-year flood of 121,000 cfs could result in a river width of one mile, and depths up to 20 feet near the mouth.

This unit is highly scenic because of the canyon on the upper river and views of the Talkeetna Mountains and Alaska Range from the lower river. Most human modifications in the unit are not visible from the river with the exception of those along Clear Creek and in the vicinity of Talkeetna which somewhat diminish the visual quality of the river.

FISHERIES

Species Present

Chum Salmon	Pink Salmon
Burbot	Coho Salmon
Sockeye Salmon	Dolly Varden
King Salmon	Arctic Grayling
Rainbow Trout	

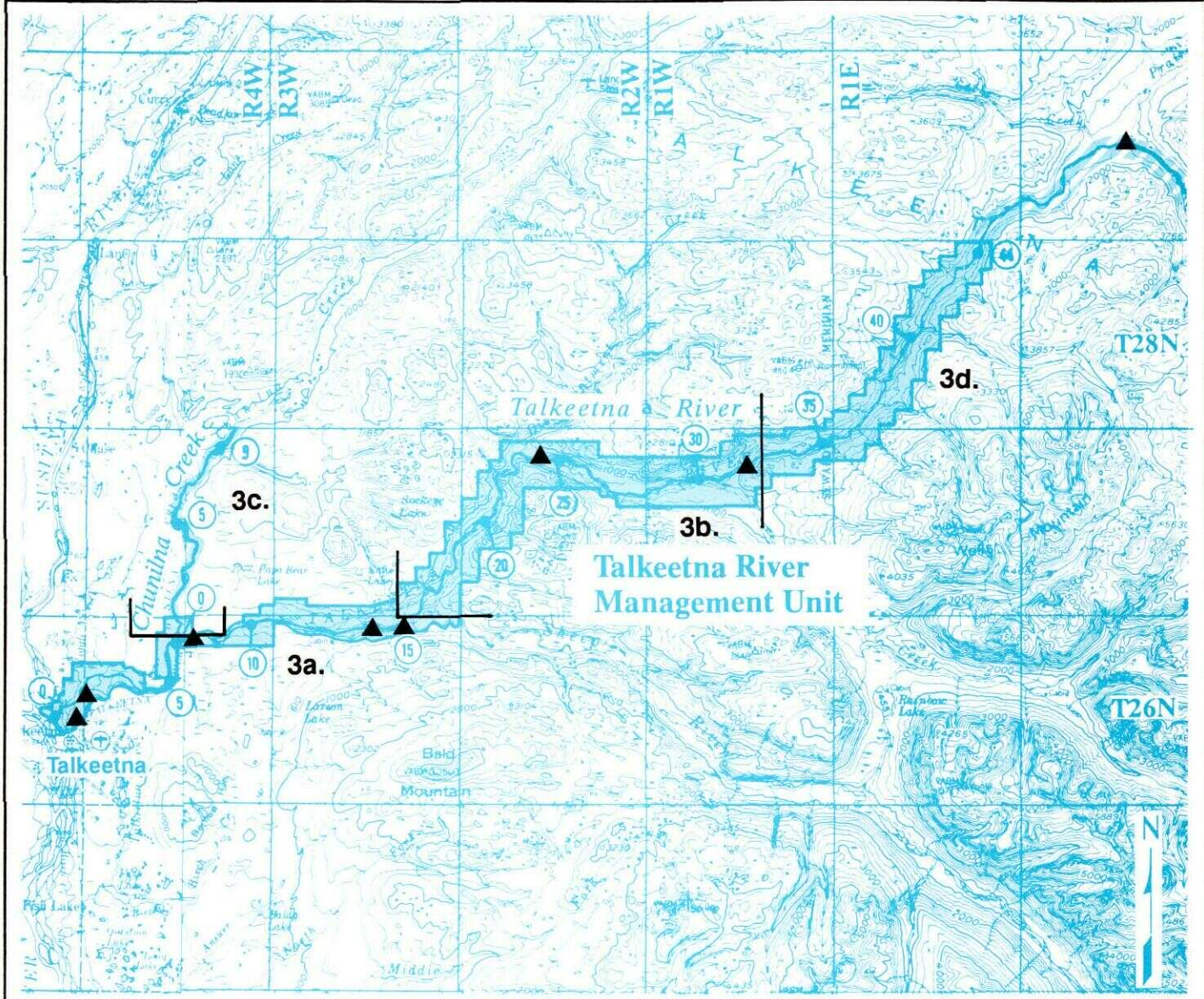
Chum, coho, king, and pink salmon spawn in Clear Creek. Grayling and rainbow trout, are found throughout the Clear Creek and Lower Talkeetna River subunits. Throughout the remainder of the management unit, chum, coho, sockeye, and king salmon are present, along with Dolly Varden, rainbow trout, and grayling. While chum and pink salmon occasionally spawn in the river itself, the remaining pink, chum, king, and coho salmon spawn in clear tributaries. Sockeye salmon spawn in several lakes draining into the Talkeetna River, including Larson Lake.

Sport Fishing

The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on the Talkeetna River correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately June 15 to July 15, and July 15 to September 15, respectively. The most popular fishing spot is the mouth of Clear Creek, where all species of sport fish found in the river are caught. Near the railroad bridge and the mouth of Disappointment Creek receive less use.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

TALKEETNA RIVER



Management Unit

Proposed Addition to Management Unit

Subunits

- **3a.** Lower Talkeetna River
- **3b.** Middle Talkeetna River
- **3c.** Clear (Chunilna) Creek
- **3d.** Talkeetna Canyon

River Miles

Public Use Sites

Special Regulations

Fish Creek, a tributary of Clear Creek, is designated a catch and release special management area for rainbow trout. Only unbaited, single-hook artificial lures can be used.

WILDLIFE

Moose

A resident moose population occurs throughout the unit. Moose from other areas migrate into the lower portion of the unit during the fall and winter seasons.

Bear

The unit provides food and cover for bears. Black bear and brown bear begin to frequent the lowlands in early May, with high spring densities of black bear at the mouth of the river. During June, July, and August bear concentrate along portions of the unit where salmon can be caught. Brown bears cover large areas in search of food, and depend on the river as a transportation corridor.

Bald eagles

There are two known bald eagle nests on the lower Talkeetna River and another just outside the unit on the Susitna River. Nest trees are primarily black cottonwood over fifty-feet tall that are within twenty feet of the river.

Trumpeter Swans

No swan nests are known to occur in the unit. However, the unit probably serves as a migration and staging area in the fall.

Hunting

Moose and bear hunting is concentrated in the lower reaches of the management unit, where foot, boat and off-road vehicle access is possible. The river also serves as a transportation corridor for hunters using boats to access upriver and tributary hunting areas, including Sheep River, Wiggle, and Iron creeks. These upriver locations receive significant use. Wildlife viewing, particularly of moose, is important in the Talkeetna area.

ACCESS

The Talkeetna Spur Road connects the town of Talkeetna to the Parks Highway. In Talkeetna, there are boat launches where powerboats can access the river and floaters can take-out. There are several airstrips in the Talkeetna area but none in the management unit. Some gravel bars on the lower river are infrequently used for landing. There are no lakes in the management unit and the river is too swift for floatplane landings. Powerboaters use the river up to the mouth of Iron Creek. Because of Class IV whitewater, the canyon is accessible only by rafts and kayaks.

3a. Lower Talkeetna River

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 0 to RM 15.5 (excluding the mouth of Clear Creek)

This subunit begins at the confluence of the Talkeetna River with the Susitna River and extends to the mouth of Sheep River. The mouth of Clear Creek is in a different subunit. The subunit includes the wide floodplain between the hills and bluffs along the river. Less than 5 percent of this subunit is contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	5,907 acres
State/Mental Health	1,077 acres
University of Alaska	204 acres
13 Private Parcels	124 acres
Total	**7,312 acres**

WILDLIFE

There are two bald eagle nests located near the mouth of the river. One is in the subunit, one is just downriver from the subunit on the Susitna River.

CAMPING

There are two public campgrounds adjacent to this subunit near the town of Talkeetna. In addition, several undeveloped campsites have been identified:

Primary campsites	2
Secondary campsites	9

An unlimited number of marginal campsites are available because of the large number of gravel bars.

DEVELOPMENT

There is little development in the unit. One cabin on the north side of the river by the railroad bridge, and the ruins of another cabin are nearby. The railroad bridge is the only bridge within the subunit. Some earthwork has been done and old railroad cars have been buried to make a slow-water area to launch boats at the Talkeetna boat launch. Existing erosion control structures include rip-rap at RM 4. The USGS maintains a gauging station just upriver from the town of Talkeetna. There is also a cable crossing the river at this location. Numerous cabins and businesses are adjacent to this subunit in Talkeetna and in the Chase and Talkeetna Bluffs subdivisions. There are two public facilities in Talkeetna, the Talkeetna boat launch/campground on the river and another campground on the west side of town. The Talkeetna sewage plant is adjacent to, but not in, the management unit. The all-terrain vehicle bridge across Larson Creek is just outside the subunit.

ACCESS

The Talkeetna Spur Road and the Alaska Railroad provide the primary access to the mouth of the Talkeetna River. There are a number of roads associated with private lands in town that parallel the river, and an ORV trail from the Bartlett Earth Station to Larson Creek. From there, trails branch out to Larson Lake, Bald Mountain, and Sheep River. Branches of this ORV trail also lead to cabins in the two major subdivisions in the area. The intertie transmission line has been used to access the Talkeetna River from the south. There are also a number of trails on the north side of the river between the railroad and Clear Creek. The Talkeetna River and associated trails are used extensively in winter, particularly below Clear Creek. Powerboats launch at Talkeetna and travel upriver as far as Iron Creek. The primary destination during the peak fishing season is the mouth of Clear Creek.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high and includes the Alaska Railroad bridge, historical features near Talkeetna, and remnants of an old Tanaina settlement.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are some materials extraction sites in Talkeetna adjacent to the subunit.

Management Intent

Class II. Because of its proximity to the town of Talkeetna, the river is easily accessed by a variety of summer and winter users. This subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for powerboaters and floaters. A boat launch, roads and trails along the south side of the river, and several subdivisions are located within the subunit. In winter, the subunit is heavily used for snowmachining, dogmushing, and cross-country skiing. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None

Heritage Resources. Historic and prehistoric sites should be evaluated for their interpretive values for tourism and general public interest. This par-ticularly applies to the lower Talkeetna River because of ready public access and concentration of sites.

Public Information. A kiosk which includes information on Talkeetna Recreation River should be constructed at the Talkeetna boat launch.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 3a.1 **River Mouth and Railroad Bridge** (RM 0.0). The river mouth and railroad bridge are heavily used by Talkeetna residents and visitors to the area for fishing and recreation.

PU 3a.2 **Boat Launch and Campground** (RM 1.0). This site is heavily used for boat launching, parking, and public uses associated with the campground.

PU 3a.3 **Larson Creek Mouth** (RM 12.8) This site provides public access to the river by road from the Bartlett Earth Station. The area is used for fishing, camping, and launching boats. The site is also one of the most popular areas for recreational use by the residents of nearby subdivisions. Because the area receives such wide use, no permits or leases should be issued which provide exclusive use of any portion of the site.

PU 3a.4 **Sheep River** (RM 15). This site is used for fishing and camping.

3b. Middle Talkeetna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 15.5 to RM 31.1

This subunit begins above the mouth of Sheep River and extends to and includes the mouth of Iron Creek. Less than 5 percent of the area is contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	13,438 acres
4 Private Parcels	82 acres
Total	**13,520 acres**

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites have been identified:

Primary campsites 3
Secondary campsites 15
Marginal campsites 9 isolated sites and several segments of the river where there is an unlimited number of campsites on gravel bars.

DEVELOPMENT

There are 3 cabins and one known cabin ruin on private land between RM 17 and RM 20.

ACCESS

Access to this portion of the river is by powerboat or by floating from points upstream. There is no air access in the subunit although lakes north of the river are used by floatplanes.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high due to the high level of historic and prehistoric use.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There is one trapping cabin authorization in this subunit.

Management Intent

Class I. Because of the limited fishing opportunities and the limited number of clear water tributaries, this subunit receives moderate use. The area includes important moose winter habitat. It is also used for camping and hunting. In winter, the subunit receives limited use by snowmachiners, dogmushers, and skiers. Only a few private parcels are within the subunit. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Trapping Cabins. There is one valid trapping cabin permit on the Talkeetna River. This permit may be renewed if there are no significant conflicts with fish and wildlife habitat, or recreation.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 3b.1 **Disappointment Creek Junction** (RM 23.5). This is an site important creek junction frequently used for camping and day use.

PU 3b.2 **Iron Creek Junction** (RM 31). This is an important site frequently used for camping and day use.

3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, Clear Creek RM 0 to RM 9.5

This subunit includes the uplands around the mouth of Clear Creek, and the water column and shorelands for the first 9.5 miles of Clear Creek. Clear Creek is a clear-water stream which is only marginally navigable by powerboat for the first few miles.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	522 acres
2 Private Parcels	10 acres
Total	**532 acres**

WILDLIFE

Black bear concentrate over the length of the subunit during salmon season. Brown bear also concentrate on the uppermost section of the subunit. Although active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit, a nest was located near the mouth in surveys prior to 1988.

CAMPING

Private uplands limit public camping areas to the vicinity of the mouth, where the public camps on state-owned gravelbars. There are also some marginal campsite areas on state-owned uplands.

DEVELOPMENT

Clear Creek Lodge is the only development in the subunit. Several cabins are located adjacent to the subunit. Because the creek is entrenched in a canyon, these cabins are located on high banks and are generally not visible from the river.

ACCESS

Primary access to the mouth of Clear Creek is by powerboat from Talkeetna. Above the mouth, Clear Creek is not easily navigated by boat; the primary access is by trail. Trails along the west side of Clear Creek connect private cabins with the railroad tracks north of Talkeetna. A foot trail from the mouth of Clear Creek to Fish Creek crosses private land.

There are three small and one large airstrips along Clear Creek on uplands outside the subunit. The largest strip, at the Clear Creek headwaters, is private.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential at the mouth of Clear Creek is high.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are several active mineral locations along Clear Creek between RM 6 and RM 9.5. However, the majority of mining locations and tractor roads on Clear Creek are north of the subunit.

Management Intent

Class II. Public use of this subunit is primarily during the king and silver salmon runs near the mouth of Clear Creek. Because most of the subunit includes only the Clear Creek water column and shorelands, the subunit also serves as a greenbelt adjacent to several parcels of private land that line the creek. The subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities. Boaters primarily use the Talkeetna River and the lower half-mile of Clear Creek. Upper Clear Creek is only marginally navigable by floatboats,and has poor access for dropoffs. Winter use includes snowmachining, skiing, and dogmushing. The subunit contains winter-moose and salmon-spawning habitat. There are several mineral locations on upper Clear Creek. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities and fish and wildlife habitat. With the exception of uses associated with mining, maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Land Exchange. The owner of the Clear Creek Lodge, at the mouth of Clear Creek, is interested in a land exchange with the state. However, there are concerns that this parcel is subject to flooding and erosion. There may also be problems with the drinking water supply and septic system. DNR or DFG may consider an exchange or purchase of this land. Consistent with the management intent for the Clear Creek subunit, permanent facilities including structures for accommodating guests or employees will not be allowed on exchange land. Septic systems on state land may be allowed as long as they are outside the protection area, meet stipulations in the plan, and meet all other agency requirements. (Also see Chapter 2)

Public Use Sites

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

PU 3c.1 **Clear Creek and Fish Creek Mouths** (RM 6.8). The state land and water in this area is heavily used during the peak fishing season for fishing and camping. Trail access to Fish Creek should be improved.

3d. Talkeetna River Canyon Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 32.25 to RM 44.5

This subunit extends upstream from the mouth of Iron Creek to the middle of the Talkeetna Canyon, and the south boundary of land owned by the Knikatnu Corporation. The river in the canyon drops approximately 29 feet per mile, and for most of this subunit the river is entrenched in a steep-walled canyon. Talkeetna Canyon is one of the premier stretches of whitewater in North America. It offers nearly 14 miles of continuous Class III rapids and several Class IV areas. There are no significant wetlands within the subunit.

LAND STATUS

State	9,137 acres
Total	**9,137 acres**

WILDLIFE

Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit.

CAMPING

There are only two or three marginal campsites at the upper end of the subunit. Campsites are limited because of steep terrain and because there are few places where the river slows enough for a boat to safely land.

ACCESS

There are a few short foot trails for scouting the rapids in the canyon. There are no airstrips or floatplane landing areas in the subunit. Float trips typically begin at Yellow Jacket Creek landing area, outside the Recreation Rivers. Alternately, there are lakes used by floatplanes on upper Prairie Creek.

Use of the mouth of Prairie Creek by floatplanes is infrequent. Wheelplanes occasionally use a primitive landing area on a river bar (RM 48.5) downstream from the mouth of Prairie Creek.

Management Intent

Class I. Public use of this subunit is primarily by whitewater floaters. The canyon is very scenic and provides high quality opportunities for Class II, III, and IV whitewater boating. The subunit also provides primitive camping opportunities. There is open water year-round, so the subunit receives little winter use. Because of the primitive nature of the recreation opportunities, the number of camp encounters in the canyon will be managed to maintain a low levels of encounters. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Emergency Caches. Permits for storage of emergency caches may be issued in Talkeetna Canyon. These caches may contain equipment, clothing, cover, food, and reserve gear to be used in the event of a boating accident in the canyon. These caches should be bear-resistant, and out of sight of the river and campsites.

Recommended Addition. The Talkeetna Recreation River should be expanded to include up to RM 51.5. If added, it should be managed as part of this subunit. Prairie Creek is not recommended for designation as a Recreation River at this time. See Chapter 4, *Areas Recommended for Designation as Recreation Rivers, Upper Talkeetna River*, and *Other Recommendations, Future Additions, Prairie Creek.*

Public Information. A sign should be placed on the public easement at the mouth of Prairie Creek to clearly identify the site. The sign may also provide information on the Recreation Rivers. The eastern boundary of the Talkeetna River should be marked with a sign identifying it as a Recreation River.

Standards for Interaction Impacts. The 14 miles of Class III and IV whitewater in the Talkeetna Canyon is one of the longest stretches of continuous whitewater in North America. The technical skill required to float this stretch limits use to a small, specialized group of users. Among these users, there is a strong consensus about the type of experience offered in the canyon, the impact levels acceptable for that experience, and the need for a permit system if impacts rise above those defined levels.

Key indicators for the type of experience desired by these floaters include camp encounters (or camp sharings -- the percentage of nights camping within sight or sound of another party) and river encounters (the number of other parties seen on the river). Users define the Talkeetna Canyon as a remote, wilderness, whitewater float trip. Excessive river and camp encounters can detract from this experience.

In order to preserve the type of experience Talkeetna floaters currently have, the following standards should be applied.

1. No camp encounters in Talkeetna Canyon.
2. Less than two river encounters on the same day.

Monitoring river encounters, and establishing a relationship between river encounters and use levels, can be administratively difficult. Camp encounters are more easily measured and their relationship to use levels in Talkeetna Canyon appears direct. The geography of the canyon limits the number of usable campsites to two. Current use levels are low, and competition for these campsites is light. However, use is increasing, and competition is anticipated in the near future. If users are forced to share camps (or continue through the canyon when campsites are full result-

ing, in safety hazards) on more than twenty percent of trips, a use limit system should be developed and implemented.

Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program. For most users, current use levels do not cause impacts greater than the standards described above. However, a minority of trips experience greater impact levels than users consider acceptable. If use increases, this problem will continue until a use limit is developed. To prevent the mandatory trip scheduling associated with a use limit, a voluntary trip scheduling program administered by DNR should be implemented for the Talkeetna Canyon at this time.

Commercial and private trip leaders will be encouraged to register proposed trips as soon as they have been planned. DNR will maintain a list and notify trip leaders when more than one trip has been scheduled for the same day (experience indicates that paired launches result in unacceptable impacts). It will be the trip leaders' responsibility to reschedule or otherwise alter trips if they so desire.

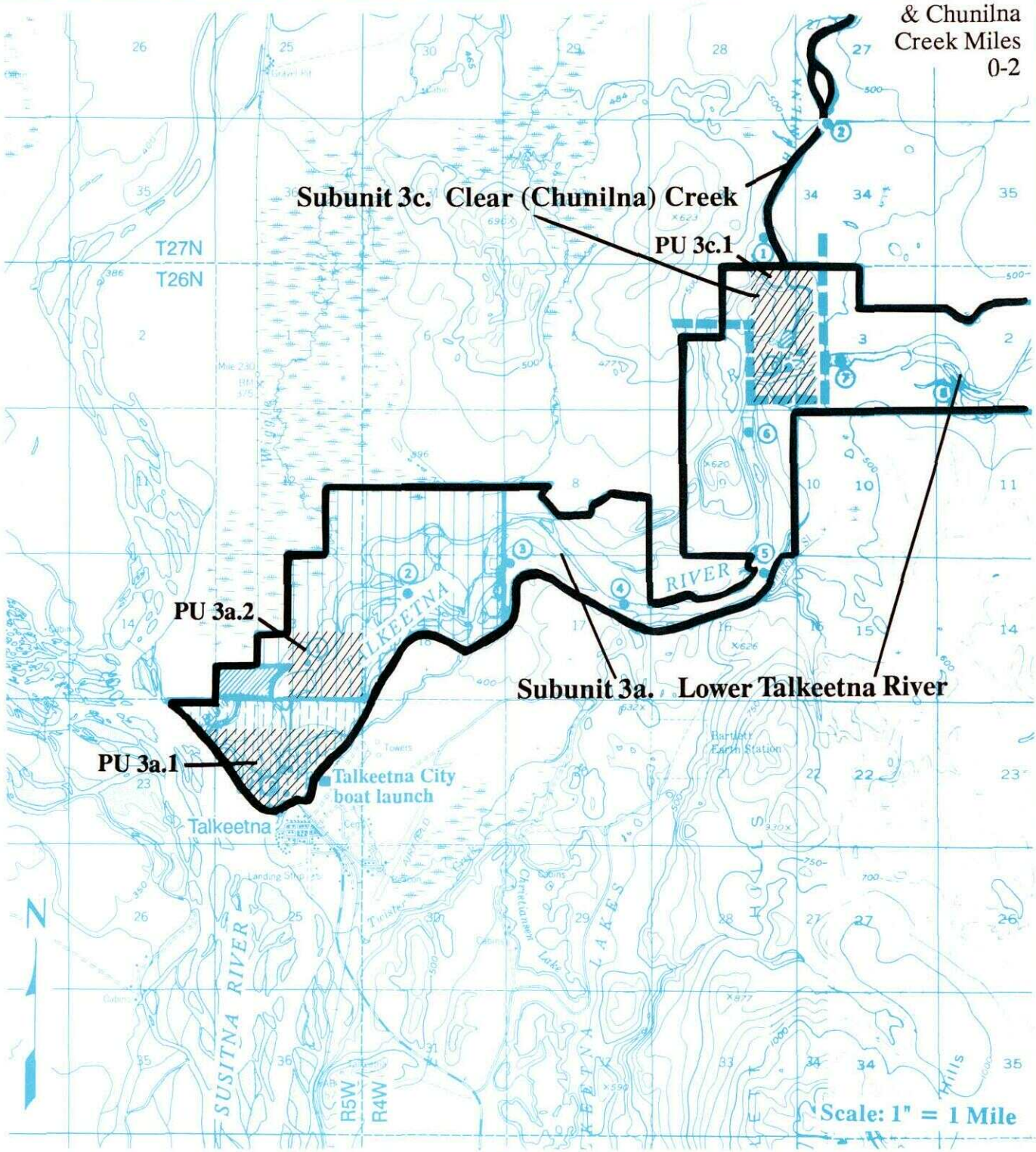
Public Use Sites

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

PU 3d.1 **Mouth of Prairie Creek** (RM 51.5). If the upper Talkeetna Canyon is added to the Recreation River, the one-acre public site easement at the mouth of Prairie Creek will be a public use site. This site is located just downstream of the confluence on the north side of the Talkeetna River. It includes a one-acre site-easement and adjacent Talkeetna River shorelands. All the uplands in the area are Native-owned and this is the only site where the public can camp. There is also a private five-acre parcel between the site easement and the Talkeetna River - Prairie Creek confluence. The grant of site easement (Talkeetna Recording District, Book 124, pages 587-590) restricts the use of the site as follows: only members of the public traversing the Talkeetna River by watercraft may use the site. The use of the site is exclusivly for use as a temporary site for camping. Use is limited to a maximum of twenty-four hours. The site cannot be used for fishing, unlimited camping, or other purposes not associated with the use described above. Signs shall be posted at the site defining both the use and area restrictions of the easement. The site cannot be improved except for those improvements appropriate for a primitive campsite (e.g. sanitary facilities, fire-rings, etc.)

Talkeetna River Management Unit

Map 1: River Miles 0-8 & Chunilna Creek Miles 0-2

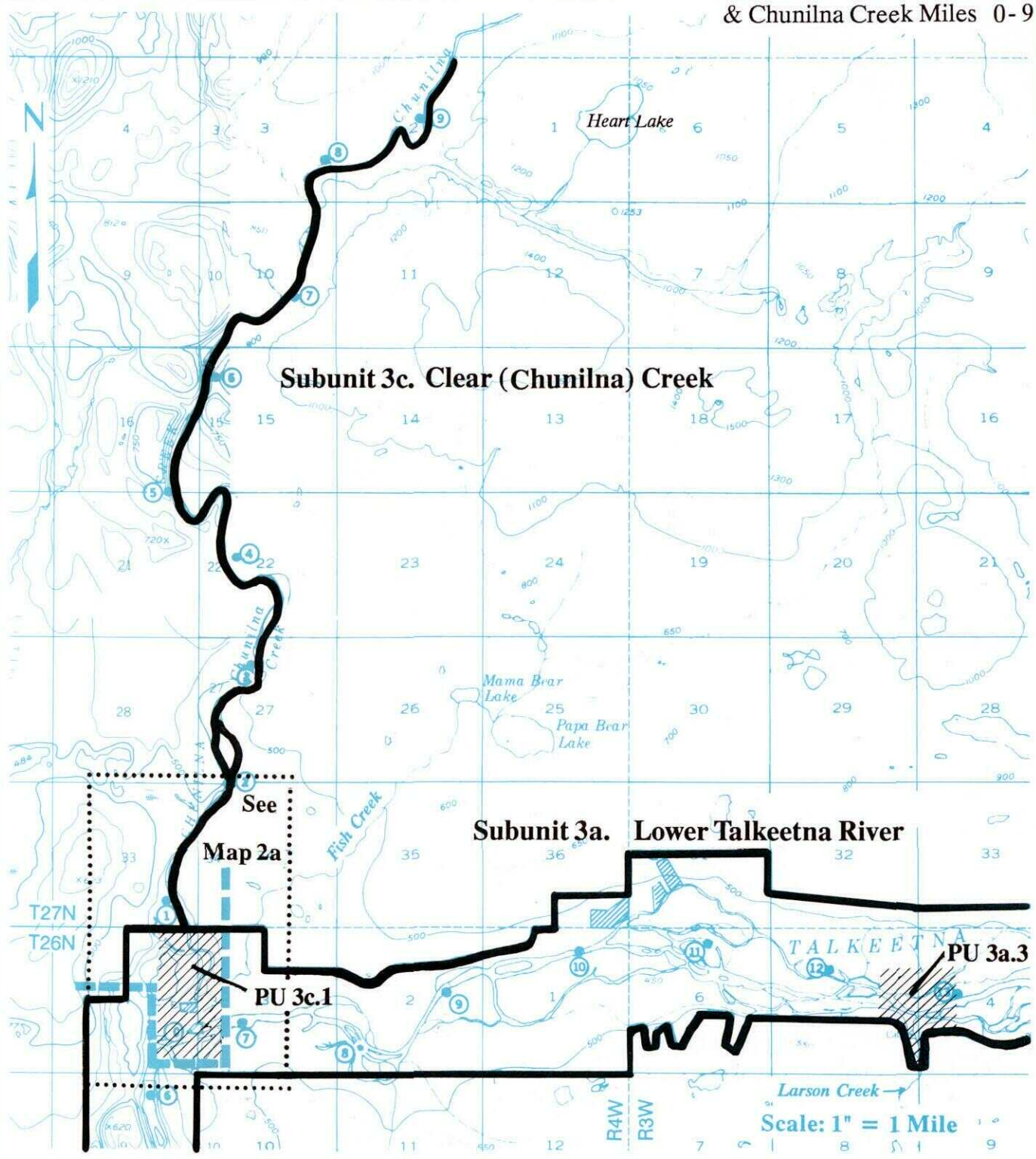


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- State Mental Health Land
- State University Land
- /// Public Use Sites

NOTE: There are many private parcels of land adjacent to the Talkeetna State Recreation River which are not shown on this map

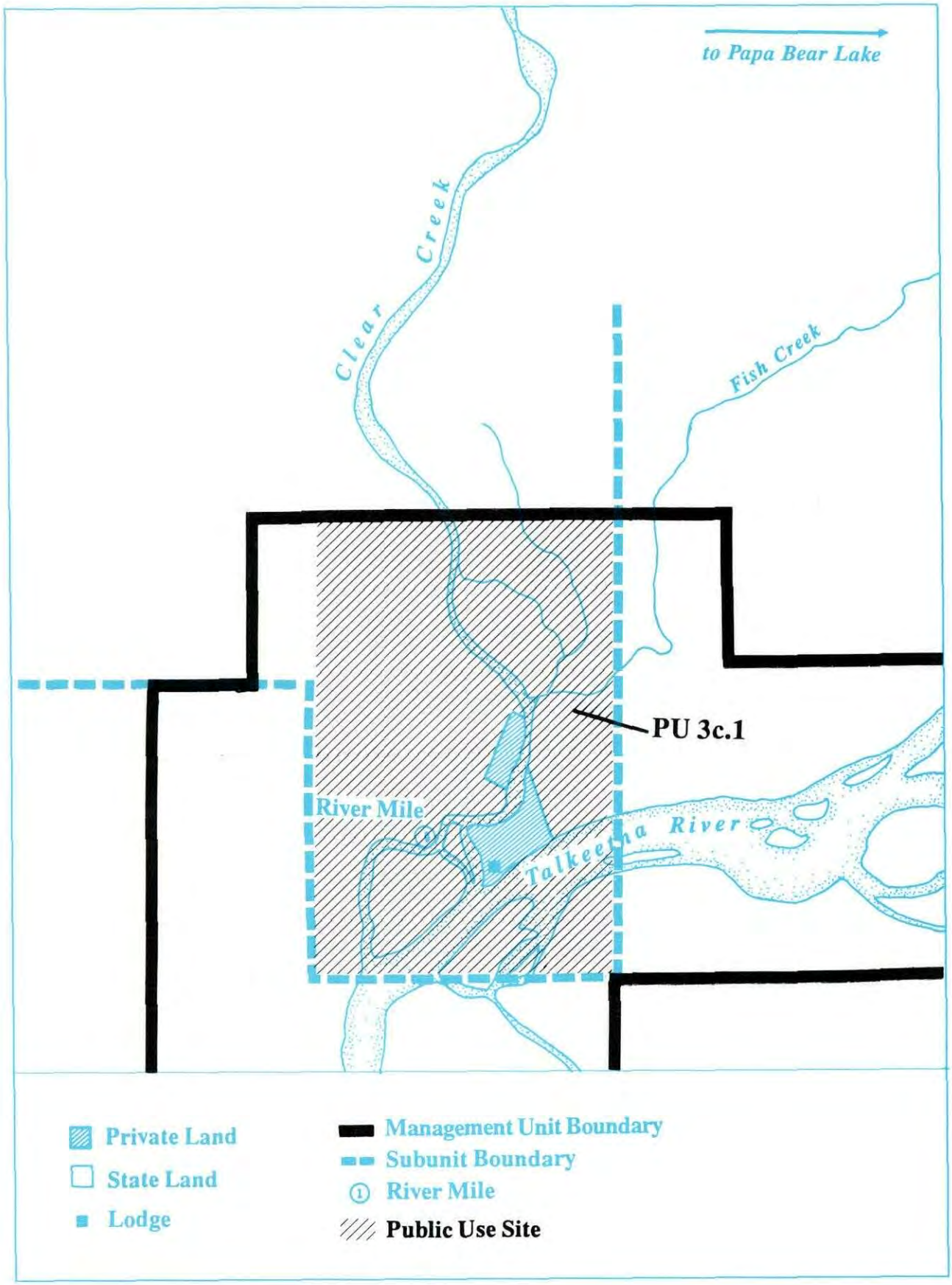
Talkeetna River Management Unit

Map 2: River Miles 6 - 13 & Chunilna Creek Miles 0 - 9



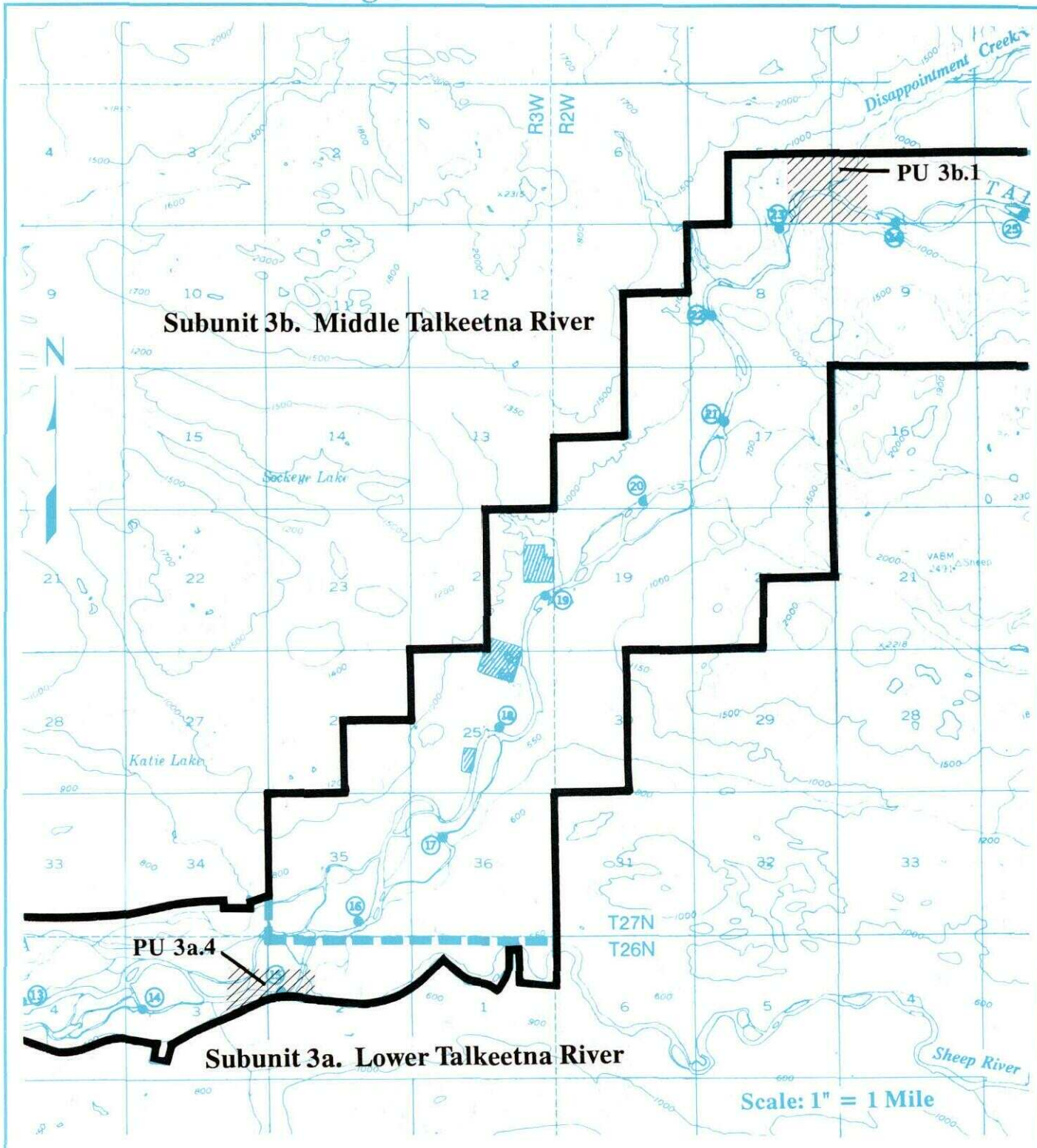
- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites

Inset Map 2a. Mouth of Clear Creek Area



Talkeetna River Management Unit

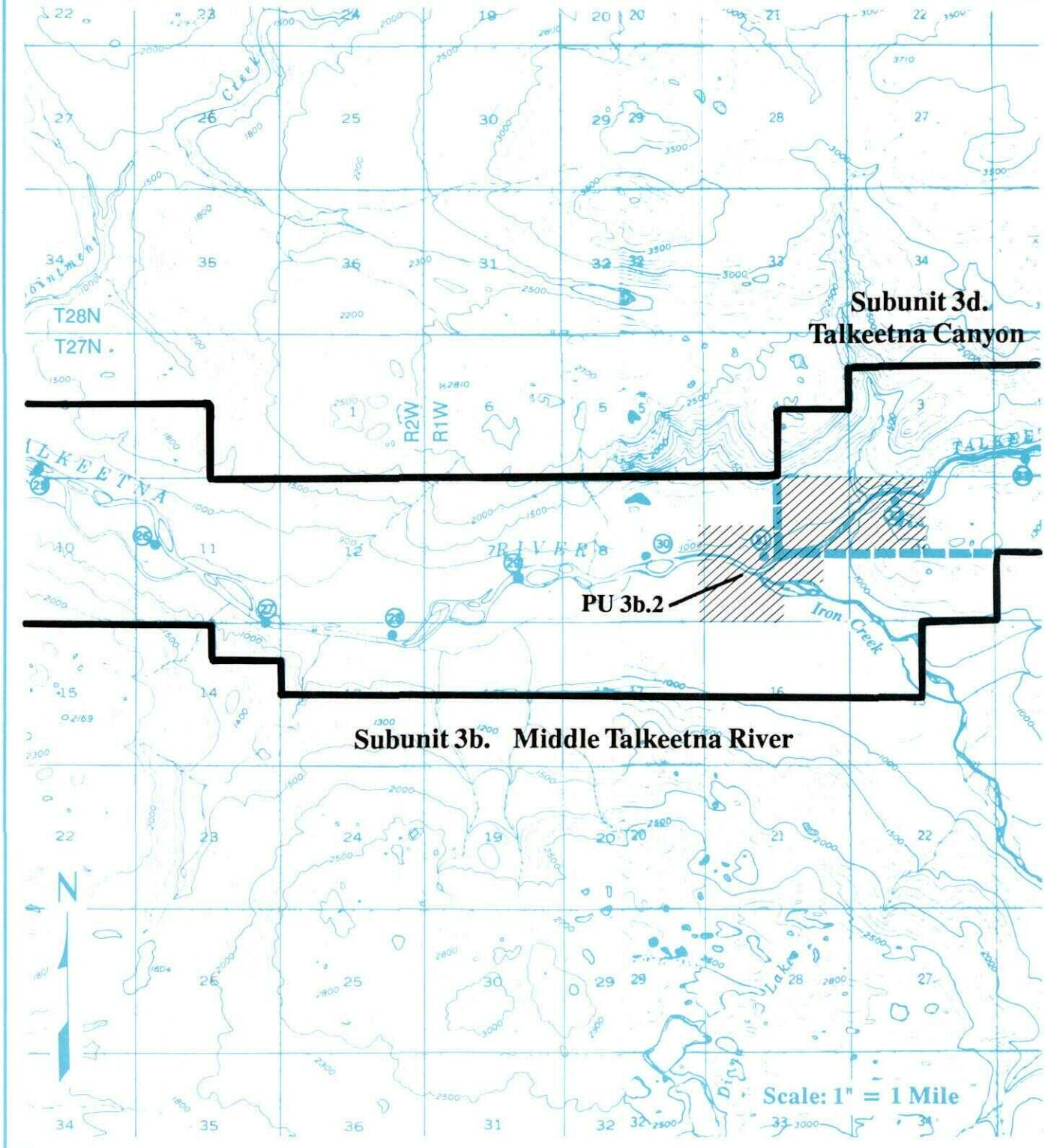
Map 3 River Miles 13 - 25



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites

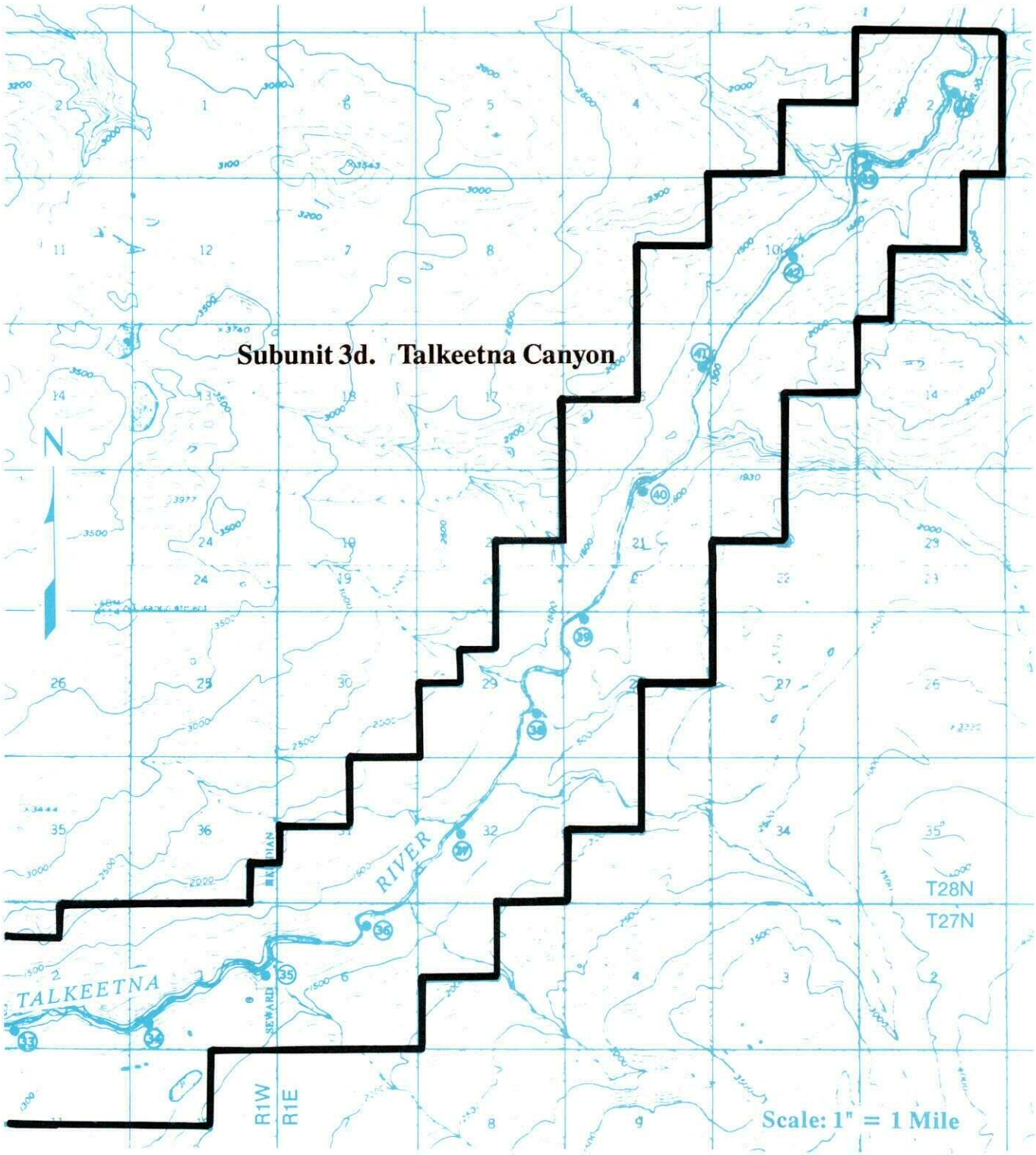
Talkeetna River Management Unit

Map 4: River Miles 25 - 33



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites

Map 5: River Miles 33 - 44

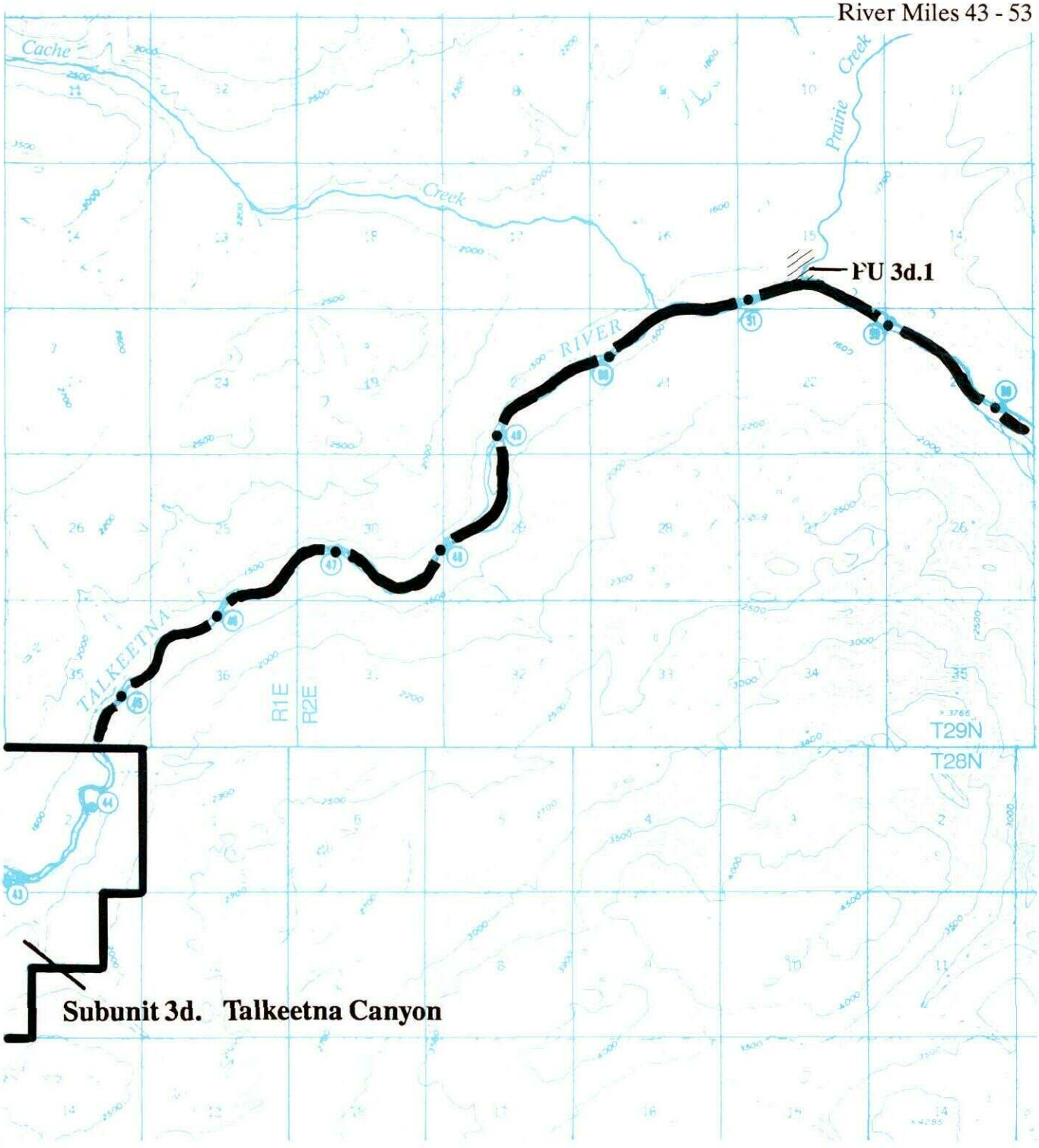


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land

Talkeetna River Management Unit

Map 6: Proposed Addition

River Miles 43 - 53



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- State Land
- Proposed Addition to Management Unit

Public Use Sites

Lake Creek Management Unit

PAGE 3 - 50 **Background**

3 - 52 **4a. Lake Creek Mouth Subunit**

3 - 54 **4b. Lower Lake Creek Subunit**

3 - 56 **4c. Middle Lake Creek Subunit**

3 - 59 **4d. Upper Lake Creek Subunit**

3 - 61 **4e. Chelatna Lake Subunit**

4. Lake Creek Management Unit

Background

MILES OF RIVER, RM 0 to RM 64

The Lake Creek management unit begins at the confluence of Lake Creek and the Yentna River, and extends to a point about 2 miles above Chelatna Lake on Snowslide Creek. In addition to including a mile-wide corridor along Lake Creek, the Recreation River includes Chelatna and Shovel lakes and their adjacent uplands, and the shorelands under Bulchitna Lake, near the mouth.

LAND STATUS

State	63,825 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	4 acres
76 Private Parcels	481 acres
Total	**64,310 acres**

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

Lake Creek begins at Chelatna Lake which is surrounded by the Alaska Range. The creek is moderately narrow and swift-moving, dropping 24 feet per mile until it reaches the RM 8, where it widens and slows down. The creek ranges in width from 75 to 250 feet, and from 2 to 6 feet in depth. A meandering stream with a point bar and cutbank channel, the estimated winter low flows are between 50 and 200 cfs. Summer highs are between 600 and 2000 cfs. Because most of the upper river runs through a canyon, most flooding in a 100-year flood event would occur below RM 12.5.

The scenic qualities of Lake Creek are perhaps the highest of all the Recreation Rivers. Starting at Chelatna Lake, there are many good views of the Alaska Range. The steep walls of the canyon and the clear water also contribute to the creek's scenic qualities. Some human modifications at Chelatna Lake and the mouth detract slightly from the visual quality of Lake Creek.

FISHERIES

Species Present

Chum Salmon	Pink Salmon
Burbot	Coho Salmon
Sockeye Salmon	Rainbow Trout
King Salmon	Arctic Grayling

Sockeye salmon run the length of Lake Creek and spawn in Chelatna Lake, and tributary lakes and streams. Coho, king, and pink salmon run up to Chelatna Lake and begin to spawn as far downstream as the mouth of Lake Creek. Chum salmon spawn from the mouth to the canyon. The tributaries of Camp and Sunflower creeks provide extensive king and coho salmon spawning habitat. Burbot, trout and grayling are present throughout the management unit, particularly at the mouths of tributaries.

Sport Fishing

The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on Lake Creek correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately June 4 to July 4, and July 4 to August 20, respectively. Also, in the late summer, many people fish for rainbow trout.

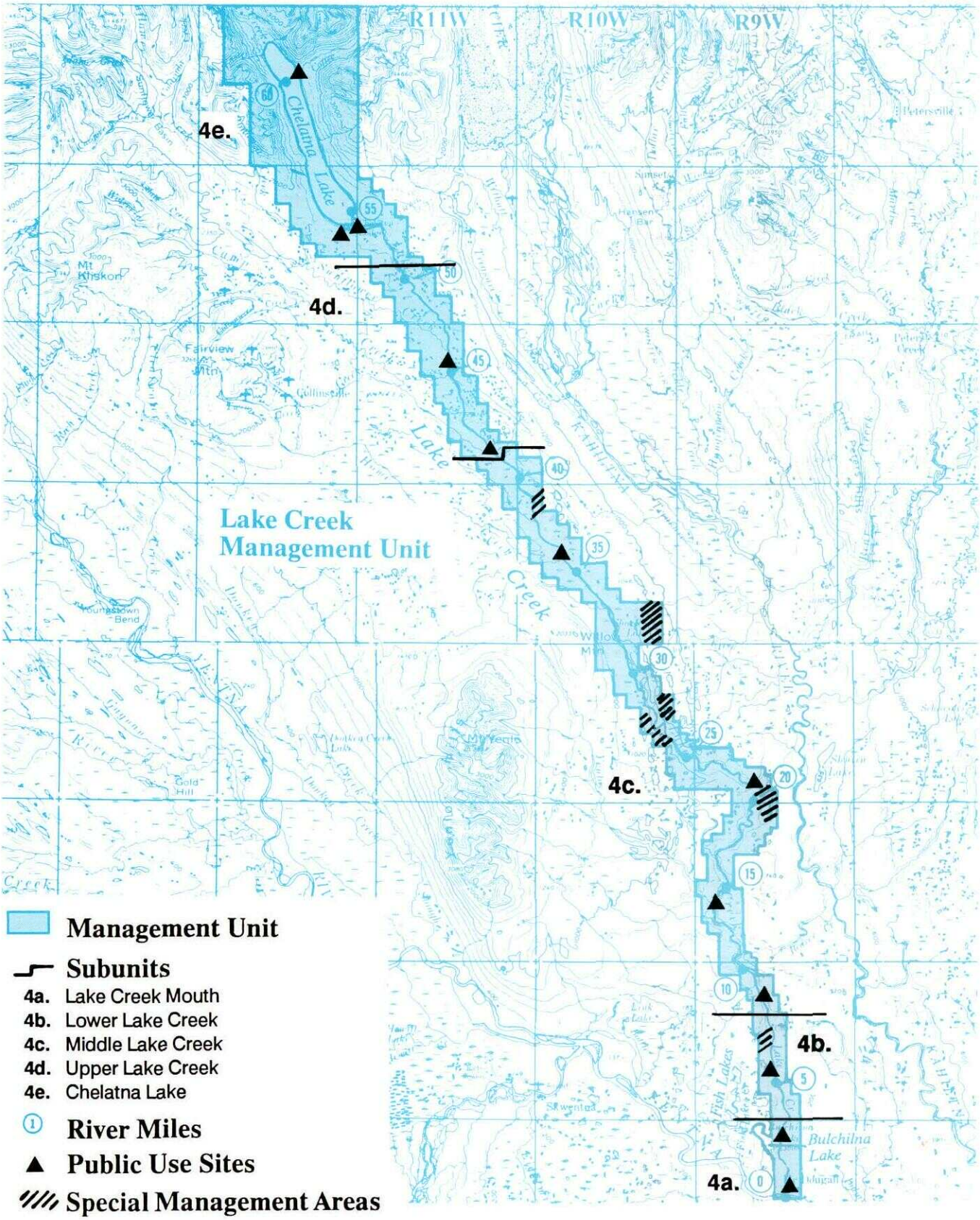
The more popular fishing areas are the mouth of Lake Creek and the Bulchitna Lake outlet. Other popular spots include the mouths of Coffee, Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks. The outflow of Lake Creek and some deep holes near Quiet Lake are also regularly fished.

Special Regulations

The Department of Fish and Game manages a catch-and-release area for rainbow trout that is ¼ mile upstream from the outlet of Bulchitna Lake. Only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used upstream of this marker.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

LAKE CREEK



Management Unit

Subunits

- **4a.** Lake Creek Mouth
- **4b.** Lower Lake Creek
- **4c.** Middle Lake Creek
- **4d.** Upper Lake Creek
- **4e.** Chelatna Lake

River Miles

Public Use Sites

Special Management Areas

WILDLIFE

Moose

Moose are distributed throughout the management unit year-round. There are significant fall and winter concentrations of moose in the sections of the corridor adjacent to the Yenlo Hills area. Other important moose concentration areas are located in Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks.

Bear

Black bear and brown bear are also distributed throughout the unit, brown bear being perhaps more prevalent. Brown bear tend to concentrate along portions of Lake Creek when the salmon are in the creek. Brown bear concentrate along Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks during salmon spawning seasons.

Bald eagles

There are three bald eagle nests within the unit and two that are immediately adjacent to it. Nest trees are primarily in black cottonwood, always over fifty-feet tall, and usually within twenty feet of the river.

Trumpeter Swans

There are no known swan nests within the corridor. However, significant nesting habitat occurs in areas northwest of the corridor.

Hunting

Moose and bear hunting occurs along the upper and lower portion of Lake Creek and along Sunflower, Camp, Home and Yenlo creeks.

Trapping

Recreational trapping for otter, muskrat, mink, beaver, fox, coyote, wolf and possibly marten occurs along Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks.

CAMPING

Lake Creek provides a popular four- or five-day float trip. The campsites that receive the heaviest use are on Chelatna Lake, major tributary junctions, and below Bulchitna Lake.

ACCESS

Lake Creek is accessible primarily by air. Boaters also travel up the Yentna River to the mouth of Lake Creek from the Deshka or Susitna landings on the Susitna River. Due to numerous rocks and a steep gradient, powerboat access is currently limited to the lower river and Chelatna Lake.

Management Guidelines for the Unit

Boating Restrictions

1.	*Non-motorized area*	Exit of Lake Creek canyon where whitewater ends to exit of Chelatna Lake where whitewater begins (RM 8.1 - 51.2).
	Season:	May 15 - August 20.
	Justification:	This segment provides high quality float trips and is not currently used by powerboats. This restriction is intended to protect high quality whitewater trips from future technologies which could provide powerboat access and result in use conflicts. Although there is private property along this segment, it is better accessed by air or ground vehicles rather than boats because of the whitewater. The flatwater stretches on Chelatna Lake and the lower creek are used by powerboats. There are no boating restrictions on these sections.

2. *Voluntary no-wake area* Along north bank of the Yentna River near the mouth of Lake Creek.

   Season: May 15 - August 20.

   Justification: Boat anglers are concentrated near the mouth of Lake Creek during the fishing season. To protect public safety, signs will be placed on a one-year trial basis in this area. The effectiveness of these signs will be evaluated at the end of the trial period. If the signs are found to be effective in protecting public safety, they will be posted during succeeding seasons. Because the Yentna River is so wide, the no-wake area is not intended to apply to most of the southern 3/4 of the Yentna River used for floatplane landings and powerboat travel up and down the main river where wakes are unlikely to be a hazard to fishermen at the mouth of Lake Creek.

4a. Lake Creek Mouth Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 0 to RM 3.5

This subunit extends from the confluence of Lake Creek and the Yentna River to a point just above the outlet of Bulchitna Lake. It also includes Bulchitna Lake shorelands and a one-mile section of the Yentna River. The Yentna River is wide and turbid while Lake Creek is generally clear. Contiguous wetlands make up about half of the uplands in this subunit.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,722	acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	4	acres
12 Private Parcels	51	acres
Total	**2,777**	**acres**

FISHERIES

Most of the salmon fishing on Lake Creek is within this subunit and centers near the mouth of Lake Creek and the outlet of Bulchitna Lake.

WILDLIFE

Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites have been identified in the subunit:

Primary campsites	1
Secondary campsites	10
Marginal campsites	2

DEVELOPMENT

There are four lodges and three cabins in the subunit. One lodge and 26 cabins are adjacent to the subunit. Many of the cabins are used commercially and host at least a few clients every year.

There is a dock at the King Point Lodge and on Bulchitna Lake. Several docks are located just outside the subunit on Fish Lakes and along the Yentna River.

ACCESS

There are several local footpaths and three-wheeler trails associated with lodges, cabins, and public use near the mouth. There are also four section or seismic lines near the mouth. Only one of these appears to be used during the summer. A historic wagon road that runs north from McDougall is located just east of the subunit.

The entire Lake Creek subunit receives ample snowcover during most years. The Iditarod, Iditaski, and Iron Dog Classic races have been run on the Yentna River through this subunit in recent years. Riversong Lodge (adjacent to the subunit) is used as a checkpoint for some of the races. There is extensive winter travel by snowmachine and dog teams during the winter months. The Yentna River is a winter highway for both local residents and recreation users originating from points along the Parks Highway, and Petersville and Knik roads. A series of seismic lines and tractor trails connecting Shulin, Amber, and Trapper lakes is used to transport heavy equipment. In Winter, private property owners and recreational users also travel up the lower part of Lake Creek. Open water prevents snowmachines from running through the canyon.

Floatplane landing areas in the subunit include Bulchitna Lake and the Yentna River. Floatplanes are often moored along the Yentna River in the subunit. There is one airstrip just upstream from the mouth of Lake Creek on a bar in the Yentna River (outside the subunit) by Lake Creek Lodge.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high. There are historic mining trails, the nearby settlement of McDougall, and signs of historic cabins.

Management Intent

Class III. This subunit receives intense public use in a relatively small area during the king and silver salmon runs. The area with the highest concentration of lodges in or adjacent to and of the Recreation Rivers is at the mouth of Lake Creek. A large proportion of the use is from fly-in commercial use. Bulchitna Lake is a popular fly-in access point for bank fishing. The subunit provides high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank users. It also supports salmon spawning and winter moose habitat. There are winter opportunities for snowmachining, dogmushing, and cross-country skiing, particularly along the Yentna River. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands. The subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized use. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. A voluntary no-wake area on a trial basis will be established at the mouth to protect public safety in this high-use fishing area.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Borough Land Bank." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Iditarod National Historic Trail. A connecting trail from this historic trail passes through the subunit and terminates at McDougall (See Chapter 2 guidelines on *Heritage Resources, Iditarod National Historic Trail).*

Public Access. There is currently no public access between Bulchitna Lake and Lake Creek. The trail currently used crosses private land. DNR will not encourage trespass on private land by marking the trail or trailheads that are on private land. However, obtaining public access between the Bulchitna Lake and the Lake Creek is a high priority.

Public Information. Because of intense use by bank fishermen, a kiosk should be established near Bulchitna Lake that displays information on the Recreation Rivers. A sign should be established near the mouth of Lake Creek identifying Lake Creek as a Recreation River.

Field Staff Cabin. A cabin for recreation rivers field staff should be constructed near the DFG

camp on the Yentna River. The site may also be used for storage of signs and equipment.

Anchor Buoys. Anchor buoys are allowed at the mouth under the regulations proposed in Chapter 2, *Shoreline Development, Anchor Buoys.*

Public Use Sites

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

PU 4a.1 **Lake Creek Mouth** (RM 0). This is a heavily used area for fishing and camping. Numerous boats and floatplanes tie up on the banks.

PU 4a.2 **Bulchitna Lake** (RM 3.5). The lake is state owned. The lands around the lake are in borough and private ownership. The trail to the lake and the shorelands along the river adjacent tothe lake are heavily used for fishing, camping, hiking, and access to the lake.

4b. Lower Lake Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 3.5 to RM 6.8

This subunit extends from just above Bulchitna Lake to the canyon exit. There are considerable contiguous wetlands in the lower half of the subunit, and no significant wetlands above RM 5.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	1,962	acres
8 Private Parcels	38	acres
Total	**2,000**	**acres**

WILDLIFE

There is a bald eagle nest near the creek at RM 4.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites were identified:

Primary campsites	none
Secondary campsites	numerous
Marginal campsites	numerous

DEVELOPMENT

There is one cabin and a dock on the lake near RM 6.

ACCESS

The Oilwell Trail parallels the subunit on the east side and is used for winter access by snowmachines and cat trains. Floatplanes may access the area on a small lake near RM 6. A trail leads from it to the creek. Winter use is light. Snowmachines are used to access private property. Several seismic lines that cross the subunit are used in the winter.

Management Intent

Class I. Most of the summer use of this subunit is from powerboaters seeking alternate fishing holes upstream from the mouth and by floaters ending float trips originating on Chelatna Lake. The subunit features high quality fishing, camping, and hunting opportunities in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. The creek contains salmon spawning habitat. In winter, the subunit receives limited snowmachine, dog mushing, and skiing use. There are some private lands along the west bank of the river. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities,primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. The numbers of encounters on the river and at campsites will be managed to provide a remote recreation experience. The subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for motorized and non-motorized access. There are no restrictions on motorized access in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Standards for Interaction Impacts. See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper Lake Creek.

Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program. See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper Lake Creek.

Special Management Areas

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

SMA 4b.1 **Unnamed Lake** (RM 6) This special management area (SMA) includes the land and water in and adjacent to an unnamed lake. A private parcel and structural improvements are located in the SMA, including a cabin and dock. 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 and adjacent to the SMA while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities and fish and wildlife habitat.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 4b.1 **Unnamed Campsite** (RM 6). This campsite shows evidence of frequent use throughout the fishing season.

4c. Middle Lake Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 6.8 to RM 41.8

This subunit extends from the canyon exit to the mouth of Camp Creek. Below RM 25, there is no significant amount of wetlands. From RM 25 to RM 30, 20 to 30 percent of the area is wetland, mostly contiguous. Above RM 30, 75 to 90 percent of the uplands are contiguous wetlands.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	25,858	acres
32 Private Parcels	143	acres
Total	**26,001**	**acres**

WILDLIFE

Recent surveys have found bald eagle nests near the creek at RM 19.5 and RM 39. Brown bear densities along Yenlo Creek are high during the summer and fall when salmon are running. The Yenlo Hills and Yenlo Creek area have high fall and winter densities of moose.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites were identified in this reach:

Primary campsites	8
Secondary campsites	20
Marginal campsites	37

DEVELOPMENT

There are six cabins and three docks on Quiet Lake, and three cabins and a dock on Lake 1,015', near RM 27.

ACCESS

There is an extensive system of off-road vehicle trails in the wetlands along the northeast side of the creek (from RM 32 to RM 42 and from RM 17 to RM 21 [the Quiet Lake area]) which receive year-round use. These trails are used heavily during hunting season. There are a few airstrips associated with private cabins adjacent to the subunit, but these are not used for activities associated with the creek. The Oilwell Trail extension parallels the Lake Creek unit on the east side from RM 0 to RM 14. It is used as a tractor trail and off-road vehicle trail. Several lakes in the subunit are used for floatplane access including Quiet Lake, Shovel Lake, Lake 1,015' (RM 27), and Martana Lake (RM 26).

There are extensive areas of open bogs adjacent to the subunit used for snowmachines travel. Two long seismic lines crossing the lower subunit are used in winter, in conjunction with the summer off-road vehicle trails. In previous winters snowmachines were used for trapping in the area.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high due, in part, to the history of mining in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are over 100 existing mining claims within the subunit. These claims are located between RM 9.9 and 11.5, RM 16 and RM 21 (Quiet Lake area), and between RM 30 and RM 42 (Camp Creek area). The historic and currently active mining community of Collinsville is located above Camp Creek 8 miles northwest of the subunit. A dredge, cabin ruins, and cables, visible at RM 7.5, are remnants of historic mining activity in the corridor.

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit is primarily used by floaters during the ice-free season. The subunit provides high quality fishing, camping, whitewater, and hunting opportunities in a remote, scenic setting. Class II, III, and IV whitewater provide risk values when floating the river. Private lands are located primarily around lakes. There are also over 100 mining claims along the river. Because the canyon has open water in winter, there is little winter use. The creek and its tributaries contain salmon spawning habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands and mining claims. With the exception of uses associated with mining claims and private lands, the focus of management will be on maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment. The numbers of encounters on the river and at campsites should be maintained at a low level to provide for a remote recreation experience. Management of activities on existing mine locations will focus on providing opportunities for mineral extraction while avoiding or minimizing negative impacts on recreation, public access, habitat, and water quality. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide non-motorized opportunities during the fishing season with the exception of access to mine locations, private lands, and special management areas.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. See management guidelines for the Lake Creek Management Unit in this chapter.

Mining Locations. There are active mining claims in this subunit. Guidelines for mining claims are described in Chapter 2, *Subsurface*.

Standards for Interaction Impacts. See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper Lake Creek.

Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program. See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper Lake Creek.

Unauthorized Cabin. An unauthorized cabin is located on the west bank of Shovel Lake. The cabin is in poor condition, located on a poorly drained site surrounded by wetlands, and is the only structure on this lake. Its removal is a high priority.

Special Management Areas

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

SMA 4c.1 **Quiet Lake** (RM 20). This SMA includes the land and water in and adjacent to Quiet Lake. Several private parcels and structural improvements are located in the SMA including cabins, docks, and trails connecting with Lake Creek. 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 recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Seasonal motor restrictions do not apply within the SMA.

Special Management Areas (cont.)

SMA 4c.2 **Martana Lake and Two Unnamed Lakes** (RM 24-28). This SMA includes the land and water in and adjacent to Martana Lake, and two unnamed lakes. Several private parcels and structural improvements are located in the SMA including cabins, docks, and trails. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate uses associated with private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Seasonal motor restrictions do not apply within the SMA.

SMA 4c.3 **Shovel Lake** (RM 32). This SMA includes the land and water in and adjacent to Shovel Lake. Several private parcels and structural improvements are located adjacent the SMA. There is a primitive trail connecting Shovel Lake with the river. 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 adjacent to the SMA while providing for and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Seasonal motor restrictions do not apply within the SMA.

SMA 4c.4 **Primitive Landing Area** (RM 39). This SMA includes only a large gravel bar in the middle of the creek that has been traditionally used for wheelplane landings. This SMA will be managed as a Class I area and Class I guidelines will apply. Although the landing area may not be improved, wheelplane landings on this bar will continue to be allowed although upper Lake Creek is designated a non-motorized area. This exception for wheelplane landings does not apply to helicopters or boats on the river adjacent to the gravel bar.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 4c.1 **Upper Hole** (RM 7.9). This side provides fishing and camping opportunities at the point where motor restrictions begin upstream.

PU 4c.2 **Yenlo Creek Junction** (RM 13.5). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips down the river.

PU 4c.3 **Two Unnamed Campsites** (RM 20.8 and RM 21). These are frequently used for fishing and camping.

PU 4c.4 **Home Creek Junction** (RM 35.5). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips down the river.

4d. Upper Lake Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS RM 41.8 to RM 51.2

This subunit extends from a point just above the mouth of Camp Creek to a point below Chelatna Lake. Seventy-five to ninety percent of the uplands in this subunit are contiguous wetlands.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	8,040 acres
Total	**8,040 acres**

WILDLIFE

One active bald eagle nest has been sighted in recent surveys just outside this subunit on upper Sunflower Creek.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites were identified:

Primary campsites	2
Secondary campsites	5
Marginal campsites	4

DEVELOPMENT

There is a derelict cabin on state land (on the east side of the river) at RM 46.5, above the mouth of Sunflower Creek.

ACCESS

Two old tractor trails, originating in the Petersville area, cross the river at RM 43 and RM 46. These trails are used to support mining activities and are used in winter. Some winter recreation users travel from the Petersville Road area, via the Forks Roadhouse and Pickle Creek, and to access the upper creek and Chelatna Lake. Travel is dependent on overflow on the Kahiltna River. There is a floatplane landing area on Rock Lake west of RM 45 is used by floatplanes. It is connected by a trail to Lake Creek, and is used as a pick-up point for commercial float trips beginning at Chelatna Lake.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high due in part to the mining history in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are several active mining claims on upper Sunflower Creek just northwest of this subunit.

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit is primarily used by floaters during the ice-free season. The subunit provides high quality fishing, camping, whitewater, hunting, and other recreation opportunities in a remote scenic setting. Class II, III, and IV whitewater provide risk values when floating the river. The creek and its tributaries support salmon spawning habitat. There are no private lands or mining claims in the subunit. Because of its remote location, there is only limited winter use by snowmachiners. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat. Some limited development may occur associated with an area that is open to new mineral entry under lease. Management of activities on active mining locations will focus on providing opportunities for mineral extraction while avoiding or minimizing impacts on recreation, public access, habitat, and water quality. With the exception of uses associated with mining locations, the focus of management will be to maintain an essentially unmodified natural environment. The numbers of encounters on the river and at campsites should be maintained at a low level to provide for a remote recreation experience. Maintaining sites for public use will be a high priority. With the exception of the area open to mineral entry, the subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for a non-motorized experience during the fishing season.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. See management guidelines for the Lake Creek Management Unit described earlier in this chapter.

Mining. There are currently no mining locations in this subunit and it is closed to new mineral entry. The uplands between Camp Creek (RM 41) and Sunflower Creek (RM 46) will be open to new mineral entry under lease. A 300-foot staking setback from ordinary high water from Lake, Camp, and Sunflower creeks. The public use sites at the mouth of Camp and Sunflower creeks will remain closed to new mineral entry. Mining guidelines listed in Chapter 2 under *Surface Resources*, will apply. These guidelines are designed to protect water quality, recreation, and habitat values.

Standards for Interaction Impacts. The upper section of Lake Creek has among the lowest use levels and offers one of the most remote, wilderness-oriented float trips in the Recreation Rivers system. The cost, logistics, and technical skill required to float the river limit use to experienced whitewater floaters. Key indicators for the type of experience desired by these floaters include camp encounters (or camp sharing -- the percentage of nights camping within sight or sound of another party) and river encounters (the number of other parties seen on the river). Users define Upper Lake Creek as a remote, wilderness whitewater float trip, and excessive river and camp encounters can detract from this experience.

In order to provide for the type of experience Lake Creek floaters currently receive and prefer, prescribed standards for these impacts are:

1. No camp encounters on Lower, Middle, and Upper Lake Creek (Subunits 4b, 4c and 4d).
2. Less than five river encounters per day.

Monitoring these impacts and establishing a relationship between them and use levels can be administratively difficult. However, through a monitoring program, it is possible to generate the necessary information.

At current use levels, these standards are rarely exceeded. However, use is increasing, and competition is anticipated in the near future. If this occurs, and users are forced to share camps or see more than three groups per day on more than twenty percent of trips, a use limit system should be developed and implemented.

Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program. For most users, current use levels do not cause impacts greater than the standards described above. However, a minority of parties experience greater impact levels than users consider acceptable particularly at public use sites. If use increases, this problem will continue until a use limit is developed. To prevent the mandatory trip scheduling associated with a use limit, a voluntary trip scheduling program administrated by DNR should be implemented for Lower, Middle and Upper Lake Creek (Subunits 4b, 4c, and 4d) before limits are implemented.

Commercial and private trip leaders will be encouraged to register proposed trips as soon as they have been planned. DNR will maintain a list and notify trip leaders when more than one trip has been scheduled for the same day (experience indicates that paired launches result in unacceptable impacts). It will be the trip leaders' responsibility to reschedule or otherwise alter trips if they so desire.

Unauthorized Cabin. There is one known unauthorized cabin ruin at RM 46.5, on the east side of the river. This log cabin is unusable, barely visible from the river, and does not present any significant conflicts at this time. Unless the cabin causes a significant conflict, as described in Chapter 2, *Unauthorized Cabins*, its removal is a low priority.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 4d.1 **Camp Creek Junction** (RM 41.8). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips.

PU 4d.2 **Sunflower Creek Junction** (two sites) (RM 46). These two sites are located on either side of the river. They receive high public use for camping and fishing. The junction is a well-known destination point for float trips.

4e. Chelatna Lake Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 51.2 to RM 64

This subunit includes Chelatna Lake and the lower 2.5 miles of Snowslide Creek which drain into Chelatna Lake. The subunit also includes the uplands within a mile of the lake, and the uppermost segment of Lake Creek, downstream to a point where it begins to narrow and gain speed. Chelatna Lake is 7 miles long and less that a mile wide and is the largest lake in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. The Alaska Range rises from its shores and Denali National Park borders on the north half of this subunit. The upper section of Lake Creek in this subunit is about 500 feet wide, slow, and placid. The areas around the south end of the lake and headwaters of the creek are about 90 percent contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	25,243 acres	(includes 20-40 acres of state-selected land)
24 Private parcels	249 acres	
Total	**25,492 acres**	

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

Two primary campsites have been identified on Chelatna Lake.

DEVELOPMENT

There are two lodges on Chelatna Lake: Chelatna Lake Lodge at the outlet, and the Chelatna ShoresResort, about two miles north of the lake outlet. Eighteen cabins are scattered around the lake, mostly on the north and east shores. Near the Chelatna Lake Lodge, there is a dock, a boat storage area, and an airstrip. The Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association has a temporary camp and fish counting station at the outlet of the lake, adjacent to an old cable that extends over the river.

ACCESS

Most trails are concentrated near the south end of the lake. Regional trails connect with Collinsville and the Kahiltna River/Petersville Road. There are also a number of foot, off-road-vehicle, and truck trails adjacent to the Chelatna Lake Lodge and nearby cabins. The slopes near the remainder of the lake support only primitive game trails. Access to the cabins on the north and east sides of the lake is by boat or floatplane. Some recreation users travel from the Petersville Road in winter, via the Forks Roadhouse and Pickle Creek, to access upper Lake Creek and Chelatna Lake areas. Winter travel is dependent on overflow on the Kahiltna River.

The primary areas of the lake used for floatplane landing are by Chelatna Lake Lodge, the lagoon just downstream from the lodge, and near the mouth of Coffee Creek. The first two areas are used as drop-off and pickup points for lodge clients and the public. Coffee Creek is used as a stopover picnic area for Alaska Range flightseeing trips.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high due to a long history of activity in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There has been some recent earth moving associated with road/trail improvement at the south end of the lake. Winter use by cat trains has occurred in recent years.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit is primarily used by floaters beginning their descent of Lake Creek, sightseeing flights, and lodge-based recreation users. The lake contains important salmon spawning habitat. The subunit provides high quality fishing, camping, and hunting opportunities. The subunit is the most scenic in the Recreation Rivers, and is bounded on the north by Denali National Park and the Alaska Range. Private lands are located along the south and east shores of the lake. Because of its remote location, there is little winter use. The subunit will be managed toprovide and enhance recreation opportunities, a scenic setting, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Boat Storage. A public boat storage area should be designated near the Chelatna Lake airstrip. See *Shoreline Development, Boat Storage* in Chapter 2.

Chelatna Airstrip (T27N, R12W, Sec. 13, SM) The Chelatna airstrip provides important public access to Lake Creek, and surrounding land and water. It is strategically located at the head of Lake Creek, and serves as the drop-off point for float trips and access to private lands around the lake. No other wheelplane landing area exists in the vicinity. The airport parcel is currently in BLM ownership and is high priority for state selection.

When conveyed to the state, the airstrip should be retained in public ownership. It should be managed as a remote, unmaintained public airstrip. As an unmaintained airstrip, it should be improved or upgraded. It will only receive maintenance on an as-needed basis, if included as a line-item in a state agency's budget. The shoreline adjacent the west end of the airstrip is also important for mooring boats, inflating rafts, and as a drop-off point for floatplanes. Actions in this area should ensure that public access to this area.

Unauthorized Cabin. There is a trespass cabin on an invalid federal mine claim at the mouth of Snowslide Creek (RM 61.8). It has the highest potential of any known unauthorized cabin in the planning area for a public use cabin. This cabin should be evaluated for its suitability as a public use cabin under the guidelines described in Chapter 2.

Public Information. A kiosk should be established near the Chelatna Airstrip and at one of the primary floatplane drop-off points on Chelatna Lake to display information on the Recreation Rivers. A sign should also be established near the outlet of the lake identifying Lake Creek as a Recreation River.

Foot Trails. Development of hiking trails from the lakeshore to above treeline will provide access to open tundra areas and Denali National Park which surrounds Chelatna Lake. Development of these trails is a low priority for DNR. Proposals to build hiking trails from applicants or the National Park Service should be considered particularly if they provide pedestrian access to the scenic high country around the lake.

Public Use Sites

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

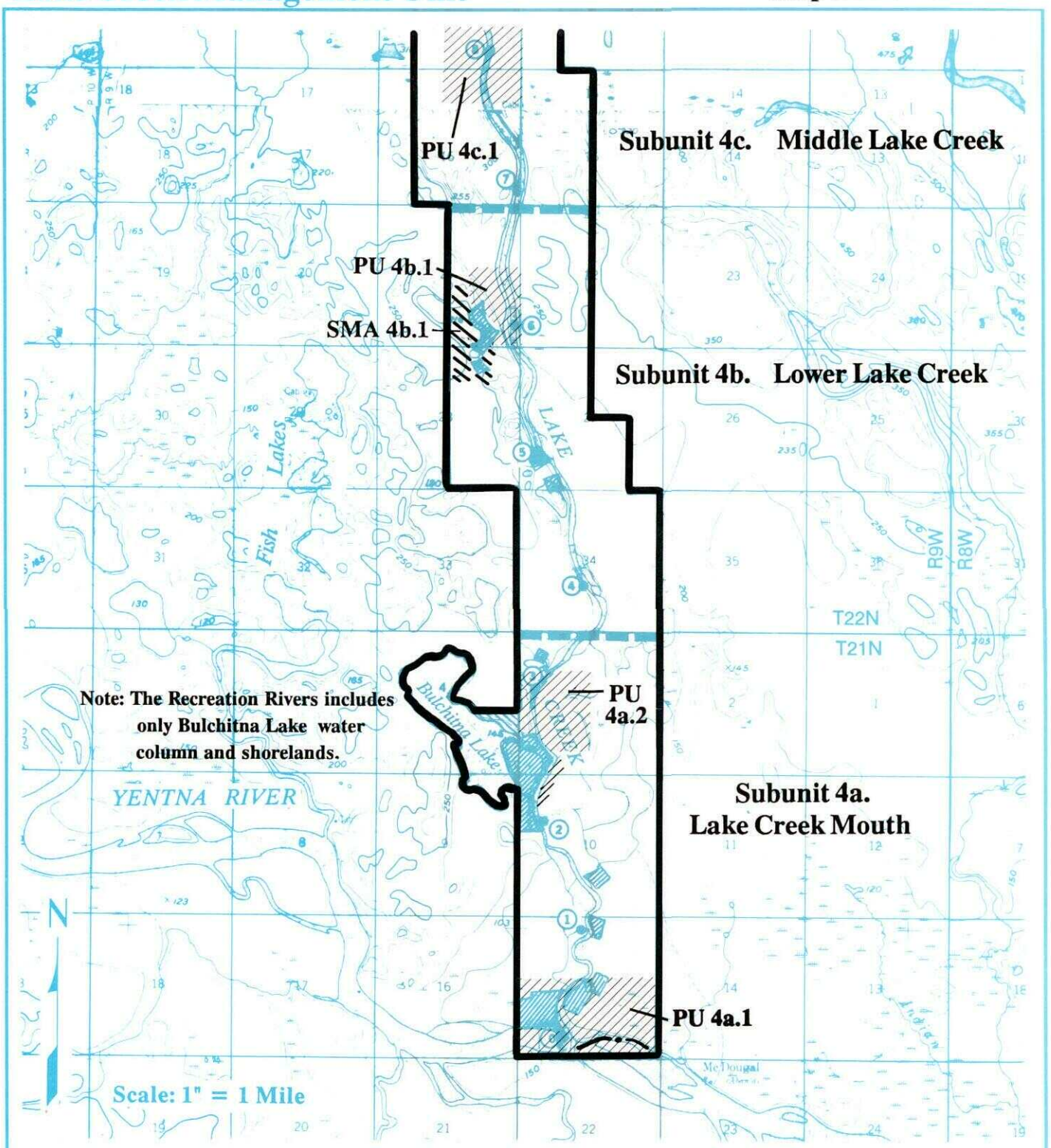
PU 4e.1 **Unnamed Campsite** (RM 54.0). This site is frequently used by floatplanes to drop off floaters. Floaters often camp at this site.

PU 4e.2 **Chelatna Airstrip** (RM 54.3). This site is frequently used by both wheel and floatplanes for dropping off recreationists, private land owners, and lodge clients. Residents of the lake also store their boats on the banks adjacent to this airstrip. The site is also used for camping prior to float trips.

PU 4e.3 **Coffee Creek** (RM 60.5). The mouth of this creek is frequently used by floatplane pilots and their passengers as a stopover during sightseeing trips of Denali.

Lake Creek Management Unit

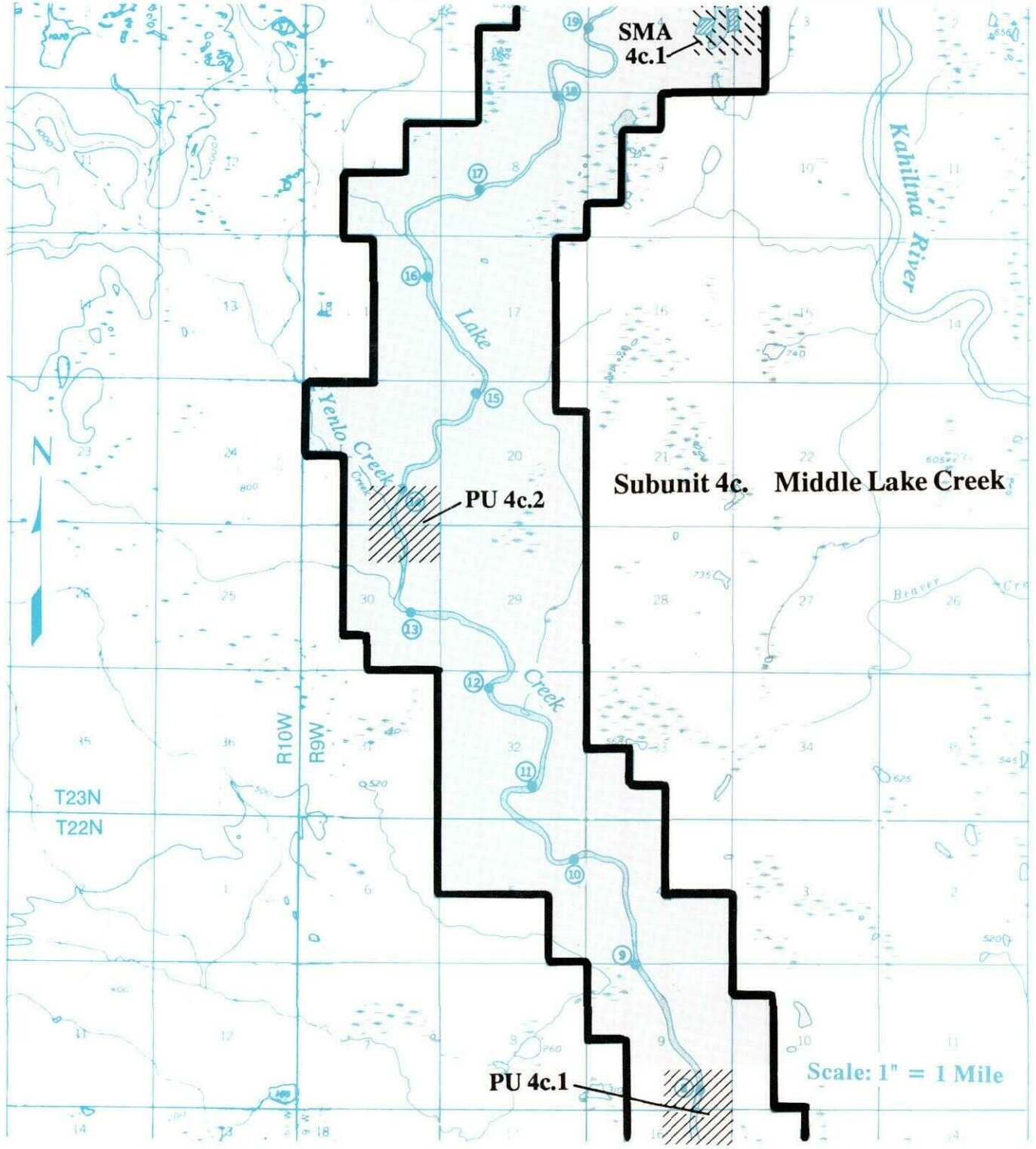
Map 1 River Miles 0 - 8



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Voluntary No-wake Area (May 15 - August 20)
- Borough Land
- Special Management Areas

Lake Creek Management Unit

Map 2: River Miles 8 - 19



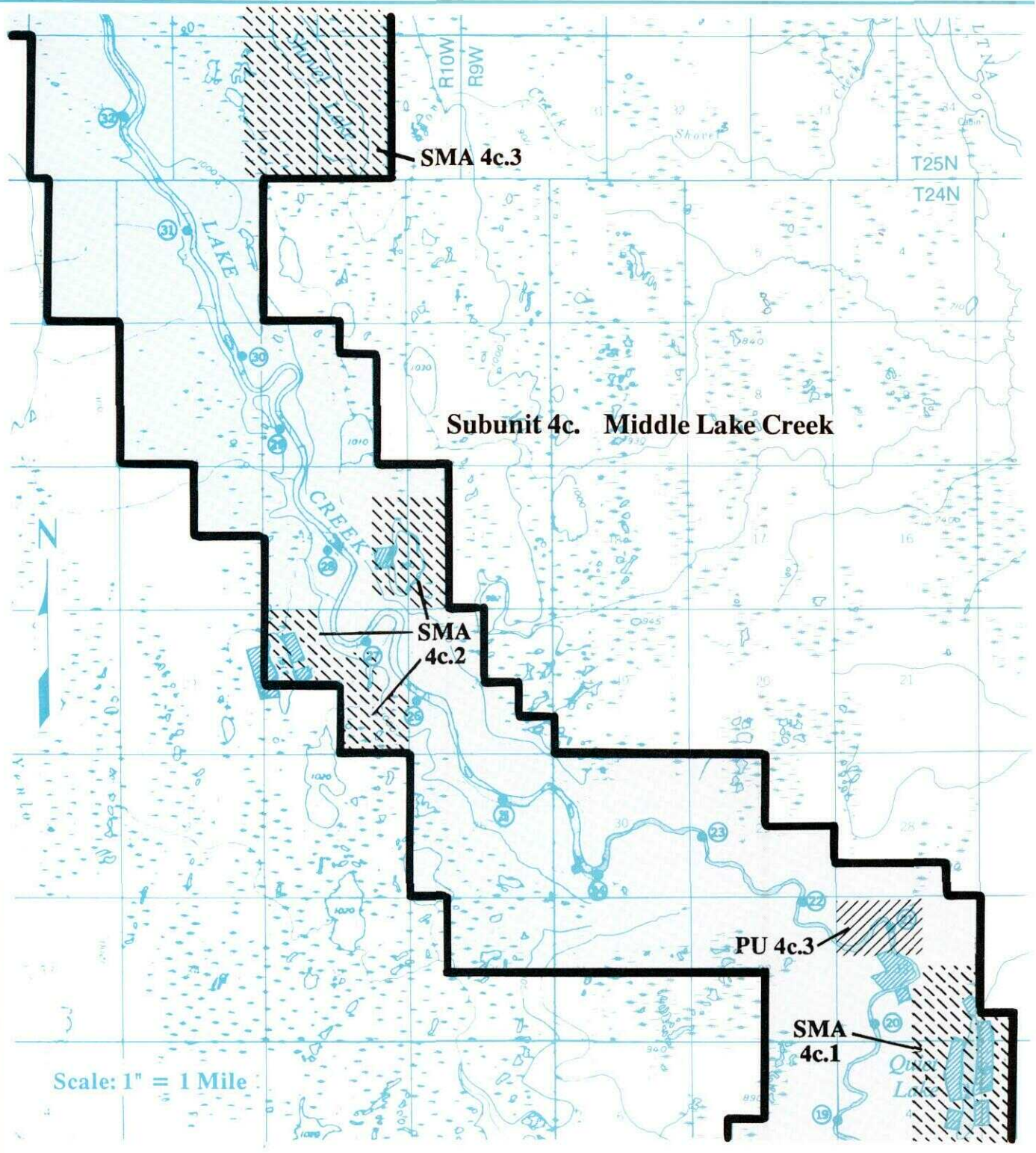
- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land

- Public Use Sites
- Special Management Areas

Non-motorized Area
(May 15 - August 20)

Lake Creek Management Unit

Map 3: River Miles 19 - 32



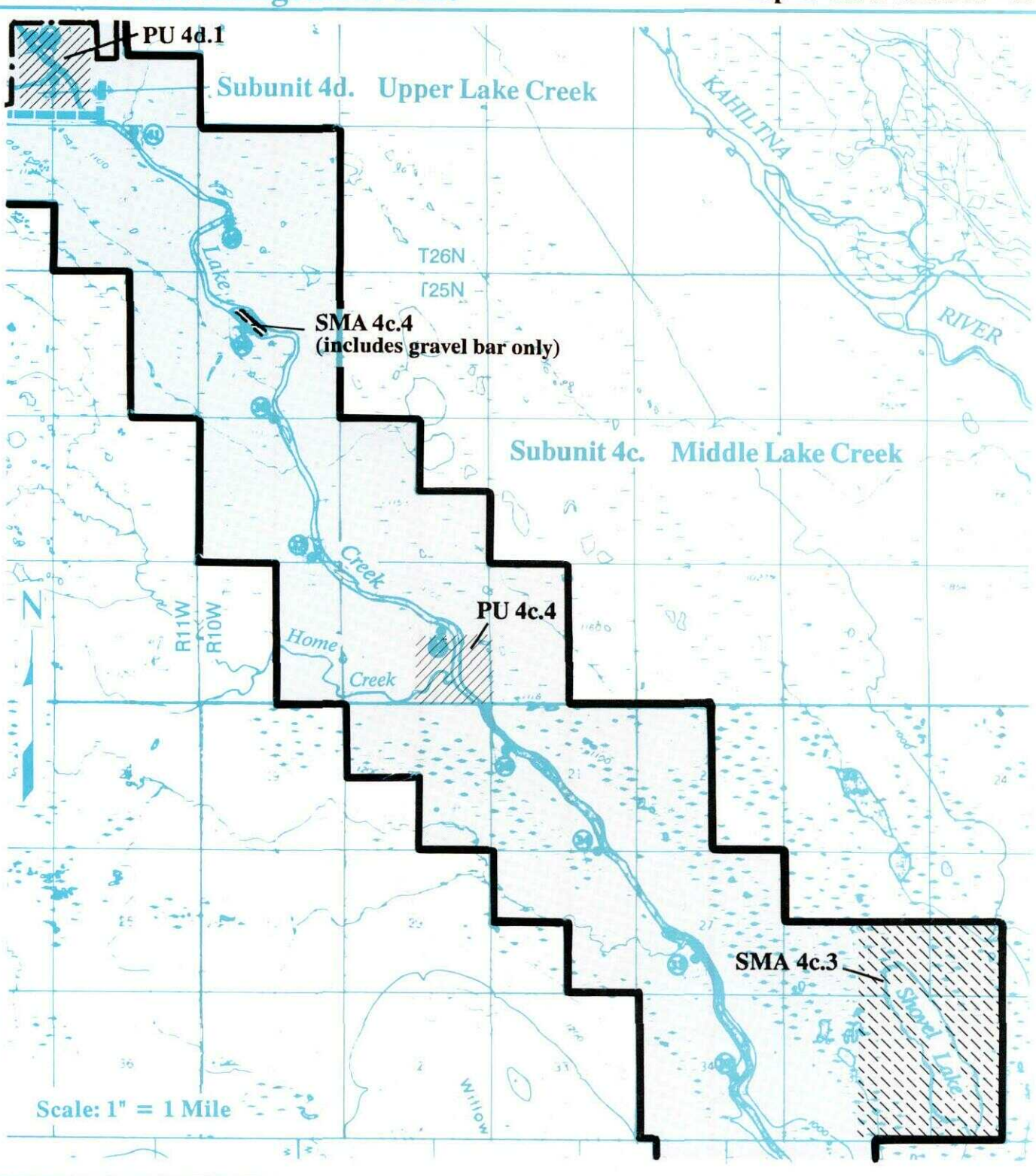
- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land

- Public Use Sites
- Special Management Areas

Non-motorized Area
(May 15 - August 20)

Lake Creek Management Unit

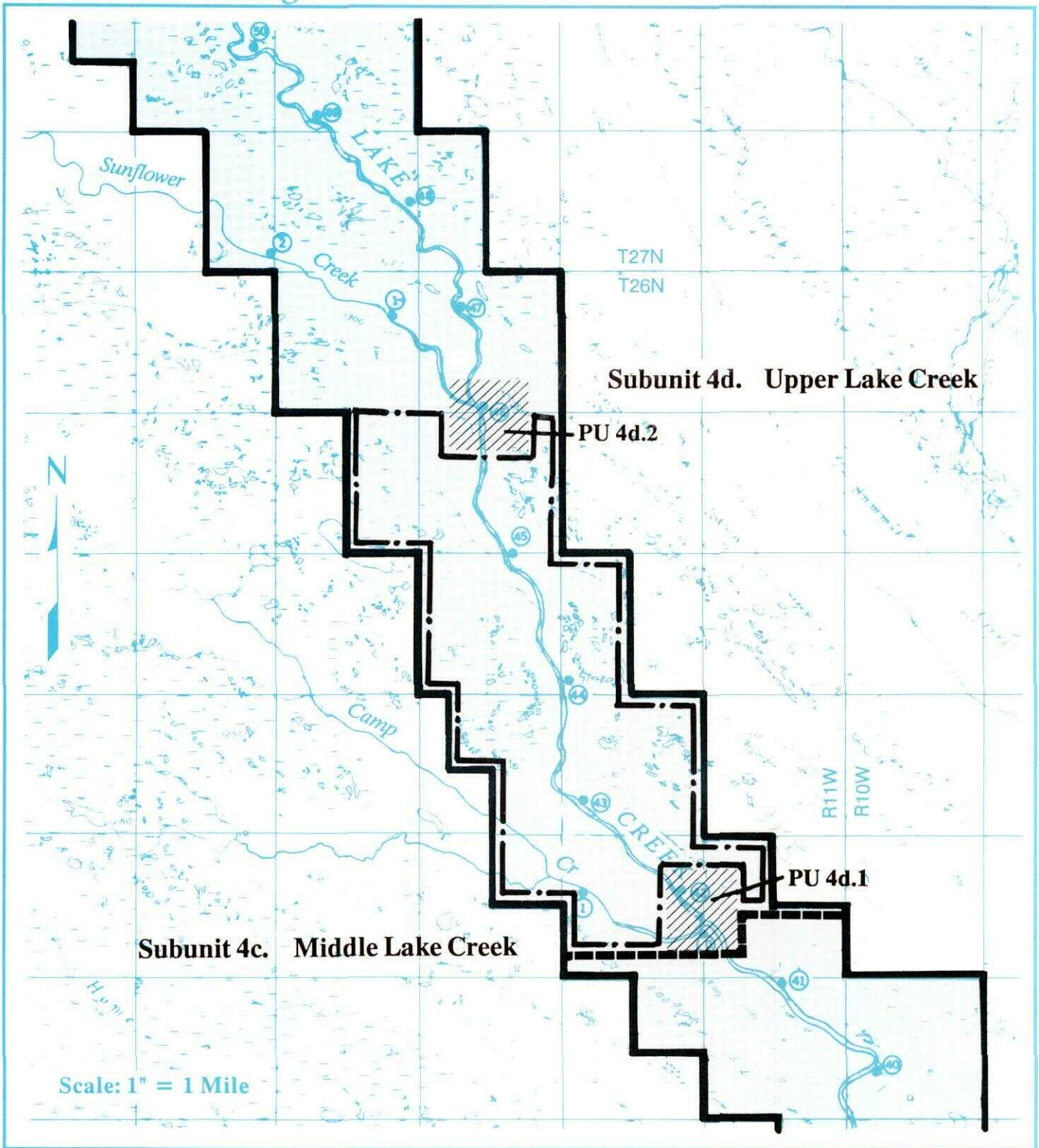
Map 4: River Miles 32 - 42



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Special Management Areas
- Non-motorized Area (May 15-August 20)
- Area where rights to locatable minerals may be acquired only under the leasehold location system AS38.05.195

Lake Creek Management Unit

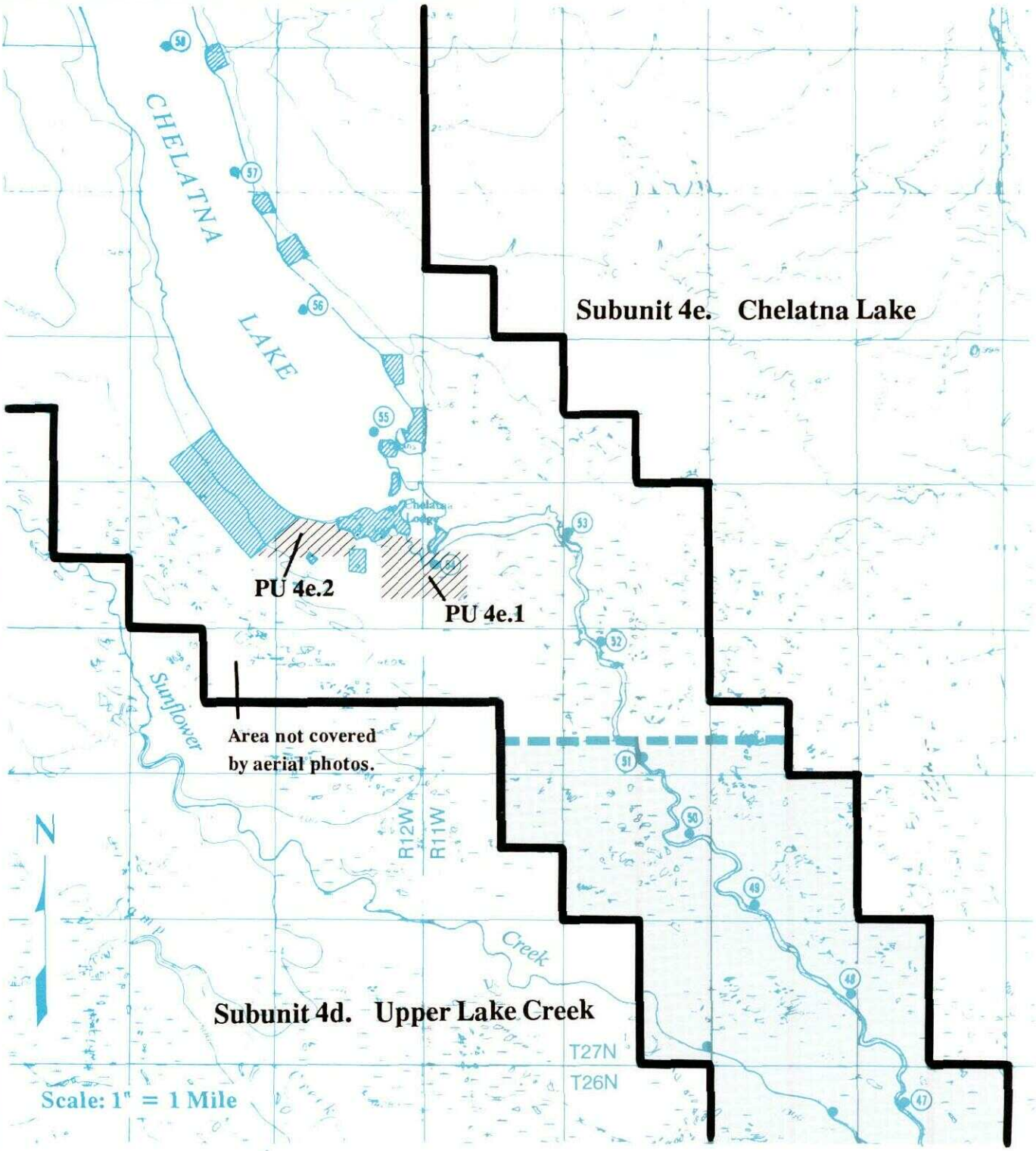
Map 5: River Miles 40 - 50



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- State Land

- **Public Use Sites**
- **Non-motorized Area (May 15 - August 20)**
- Area where rights to locatable minerals may be acquired only under the leasehold location system AS38.05.195

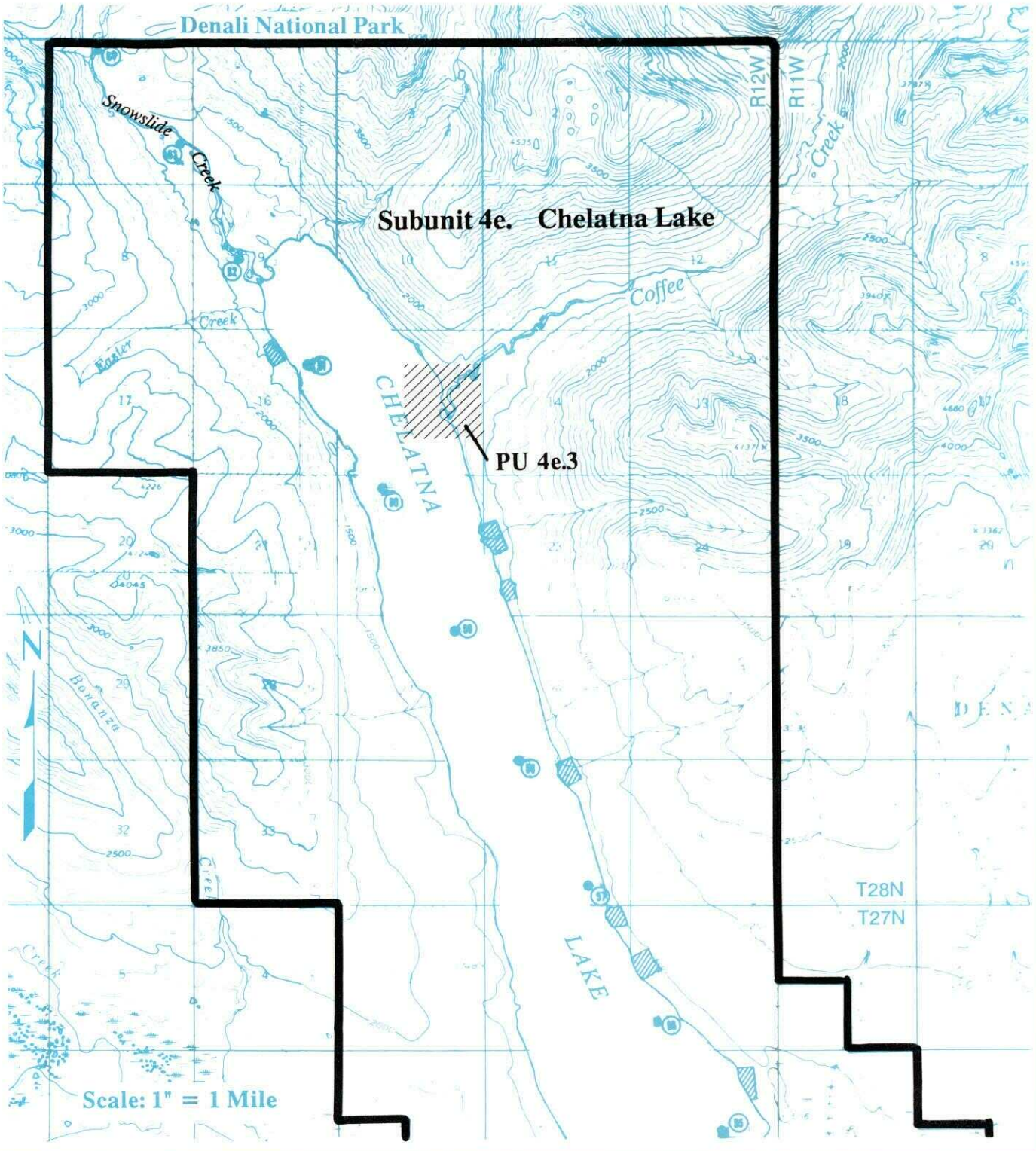
Map 6: River Miles 47 - 58



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Non-motorized Area (May 15 - August 20)

Lake Creek Management Unit

Map 7: River Miles 55 - 64



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- /// **Public Use Sites**

Talachulitna River Management Unit

PAGE 3 - 66 **Background**

3 - 68 **5a. Mouth of Talachulitna River Subunit**

3 - 70 **5b. Talachulitna River Canyon Subunit**

3 - 73 **5c. Middle Talachulitna River Subunit**

3 - 75 **5d. Talachulitna Creek Subunit**

3 - 76 **5e. Judd Lake Subunit**

3 - 78 **5f. Upper Talachulitna River Subunit**

5. Talachulitna River Management Unit

Background

MILES OF RIVER

This unit includes 64.5 miles of the Talachulitna River and 22 miles of Talachulitna Creek.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	50,258	acres
Matanuska Susitna Borough	900	acres
23 Private Parcels	118	acres
Total	**51,276**	**acres**

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

The Talachulitna River begins in the Beluga Mountains and runs 65 miles to join the Skwentna River. Talachulitna Creek is the main tributary of the Talachulitna River. The lower half-mile of the following major tributaries are also included in the Recreation River: Grayling, Friday, Deep, and Thursday creeks. The management unit also includes about 3 miles of the Skwentna River. Important lakes include Judd, Talachulitna, and Wolf lakes.

The clear water of Talachulitna Creek, good views of the Alaska Range and Beluga Mountain, and the steep-walled canyon of the Talachulitna River make this unit very scenic. The limited number of man-made improvements detract only slightly from the visual character.

FISHERIES

Species Present

Chum Salmon	Sockeye Salmon
Coho Salmon	Arctic Grayling
King Salmon	Rainbow Trout
Pink Salmon	

Chum, coho, and pink salmon begin spawning at the mouth, and reach as far up as RM 39, the confluence of Talachulitna Creek and Talachulitna River. Sockeye salmon reach Talachulitna Lake. King salmon migrate most of the way up the Talachulitna River, and as high as Judd Lake on Talachulitna Creek. Rainbow trout and grayling are found throughout the management unit.

Sport Fishing

The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on the Talachulitna River correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately June 20 to July 4, and August 1 to August 21, respectively. The more popular fishing areas are the mouth, tributary junctions, the confluence with Talachulitna Creek, and the outlet of Judd Lake.

Special Regulations

The Talachulitna River is designated as a catch-and-release special management area for rainbow trout. Sport fishing is by unbaited, artificial lure, single hook only.

DEVELOPMENT

In 1989, eight lodges were operating on the river. Most private cabins and commercial lodges are around Judd Lake, at RM 20, and near the mouth. Water-dependent improvements such as docks, stairs, and storage sheds are associated with most of these lodges and cabins. There is one private airstrip near the mouth.

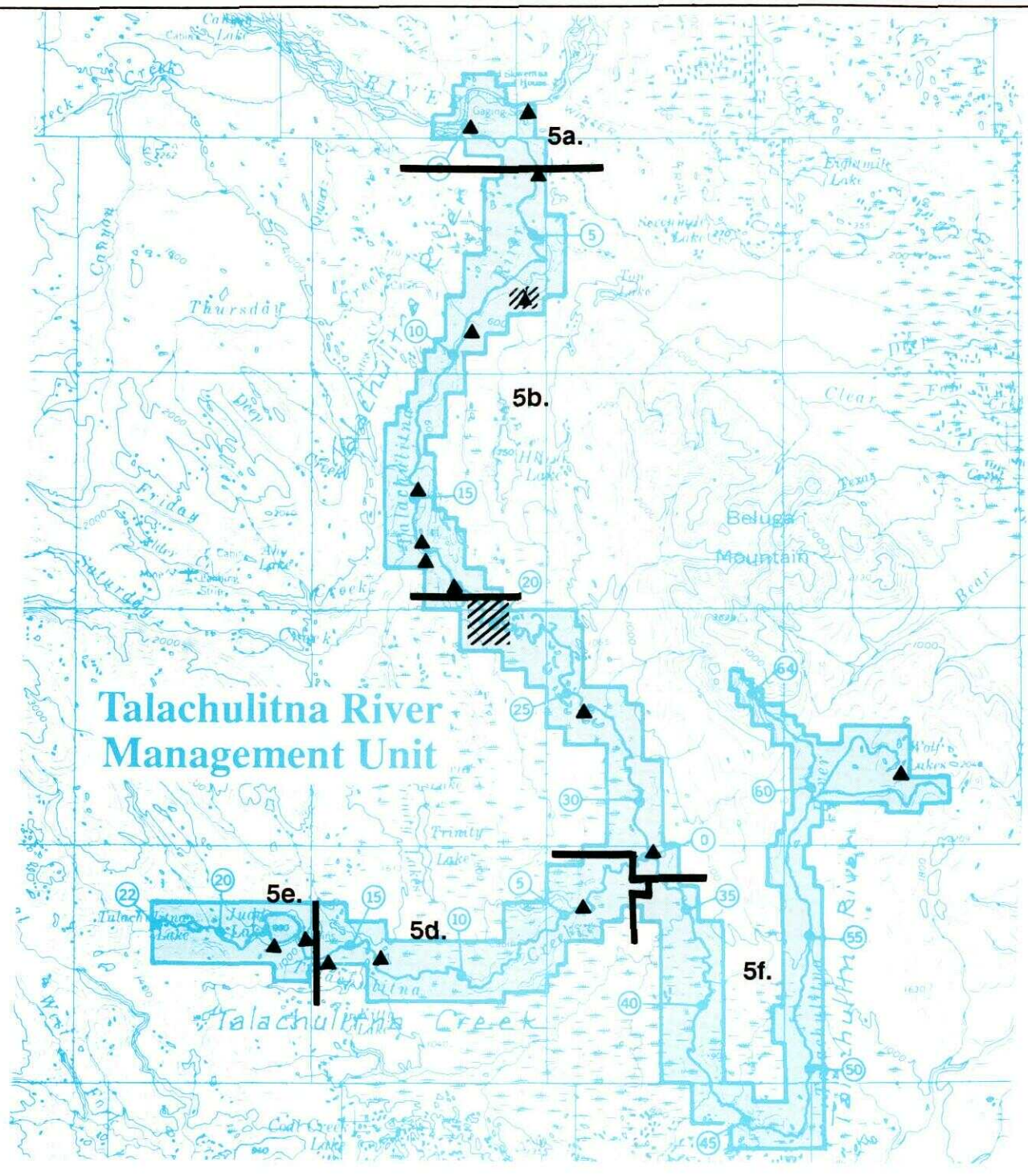
WILDLIFE

Moose

Moose are generally distributed throughout the unit. Fall moose hunting occurs along the upper and middle reaches of the unit. There are significant fall concentrations of moose in the upper reaches of the Talachulitna Creek below Judd Lake. Hunters fly in and float the river to a lower pick-up point.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

TALACHULITNA RIVER



Management Unit

Special Management Areas

Public Use Sites

River Miles

Subunits

- **5a.** Mouth Of Talachulitna River
- **5b.** Talachulitna River Canyon
- **5c.** Middle Talachulitna River
- **5d.** Talachulitna Creek
- **5e.** Judd Lake
- **5f.** Upper Talachulitna River

Bear

Guided brown and black bear hunting occurs along the upper river. During the salmon spawning season, black bear concentrate on the Talachulitna River between the confluence with the Skwentna River and Talachulitna Creek .

Bald Eagles

There are a few bald eagle nests in the unit. However, eagles are known to roost along the river and feed on salmon when available.

Trumpeter Swans

Swans are known to nest within the corridor. Lakes with suitable nesting habitat also occur adjacent to the corridor.

Hunting

The Talachulitna River and Creek are important for moose and bear hunting from Judd Lake to the Skwentna River confluence. Most of the hunting occurs from rafts or boats or from tree stands along the river.

Trapping

Trapping for otter, muskrat, mink, beaver, fox, coyote, wolf and wolverine occur in the corridor during spring and winter seasons.

CAMPING

The Talachulitna River receives mostly overnight use. Undeveloped campsites along the river were inventoried in a survey of the river in 1989 and the number of sites are noted in each subunit. Camps mostly occur at sites identified by the plan as the public use sites on the upper river. Camping is also common at the mouth.

ACCESS

The river mouth is accessible to powerboaters traveling up the Skwentna River, and by floatplanes and wheelplanes. The airstrip is in private ownership. ORV use is primarily by private landowners. The middle river is accessible by floatplanes, wheelplanes, and powerboats. Judd Lake supports frequent floatplane traffic associated with lodges and float trips. Small powerboats are also used on the lake. Float trips typically start at Judd Lake and end at RM 19 or at the Skwentna River. Winter travel is limited primarily to local residents because of the area's distance to the railbelt.

Management Guidelines for the Unit

BOATING RESTRICTIONS

1.	*Non-motorized area*	Talachulitna Creek mouth to exit of Judd Lake (RM 0.0 - 17.1)
	Season:	June 15 and August 20.
	Justification:	This segment is rarely used by powerboaters. This river segment provides high quality float trips. This restriction will protect high quality float trips from future technologies which could allow powerboat access, resulting in conflicts. Restrictions were not proposed for the mouth or the middle portion of the Talachulitna River because of frequent use by powerboats and private property. The Talachulitna River above the forks has no restrictions because it is used infrequently by powerboaters but is inaccessible to floaters.
2.	*Non-motorized area*	From the Talachulitna River confluence with Thursday Creek to Hell's Gate (RM 9.0 to 18.0).
	Season:	June 15 and August 20.
	Justification:	See justification above.

5a. Mouth of Talachulitna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 0 to RM 2.8

This reach extends from the confluence of the Talachulitna and Skwentna rivers to the bottom of the Talachulitna River canyon. The river here is from 75 to 120 feet wide. Upland areas contain few wetlands: 10 percent contiguous, and 5 percent non-contiguous. The subunit also includes 3 miles of the Skwentna River.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,242	acres
12 Private Parcels	65	acres
Total	**2,307**	acres

FISHERIES

This is a very popular fishing area.

WILDLIFE

There are two bald eagle nests in this subunit. One is on the edge of the unit on the banks of the Skwentna River, the other on the Talachulitna River at about RM 2. Bears concentrate near the mouth during the summer. Active trumpeter swan nests have not been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites have been identified:

Primary campsites	1
Secondary campsites	5
Marginal campsites	1

DEVELOPMENT

There are 5 lodges on the river between RM 0 and RM 1.5. Private cabins are located near RM 3 and RM 0.4. DFG has a cabin on the east side of the river at RM 0.5. There are various improvements along the river associated with the lodges including steps, ramps, equipment storage, and platforms. They are particularly prevalent on the east side of the river where banks are steep and improvements were needed to access private uplands. Boats are stored adjacent to each lodge. The US Geological Survey (USGS) maintains a gauging station on the Skwentna River. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources has also installed a temporary river gauge near the mouth. Boats are stored by the public at the mouth of the Talachulitna River and at the mouth of Shell Creek. Floatplanes have established primitive tie-ups on a beach on the north side of the Skwentna River near the USGS gauging station.

ACCESS

There are several local foot trails associated with the lodges and cabins, including trails connecting lodges on either side of the Talachulitna River. There is one private airstrip adjacent to the Talachulitna River Lodge. Although some of the other lodges have permission to use this airstrip, it is not open to the public. The other landing area is on a bar at the mouth of Shell Creek at low water. Floatplanes also land adjacent to the USGS gauging station on the Skwentna River and near the mouth of the Talachulitna River. In the winter, the mouth of the river is used primarily by local residents for snowmachining. Recreation use is low because of its distance from Skwentna and the railbelt.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high because several ancient house pits have been found in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are some mining claims on the north side of the Skwentna River.

Management Intent

Class II. Because of its relatively remote setting, this subunit receives only moderate use by recreationists during the snow-free seasons. This subunit features high quality bank and boat fishing for lodge-based users and powerboater users in a scenic, natural setting. The area also features camping opportunities and important take-out points for float trips. The area is moderately developed with commercial recreation lodges located to take advantage of the remote, wilderness setting of adjacent areas. This subunit receives higher use than other areas along the Talachulitna River. The subunit contains salmon spawning and moose wintering habitat. It will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Iditarod National Historic Trail. The primary trail and a connecting trail passes through this sub unit paralleling the north side of the Skwentna River. See guidelines in Chapter 2, *Heritage Resources, Iditarod National Historic Trail.*

Public Use Sites

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

PU 5a.1 **USGS Gaging Station** A small bar across from this station on the Skwentna River is frequently used by floatplanes to pickup floaters. The river adjacent to the site is straight and deep, and some pilots prefer landing there rather than at the mouth of the Talachulitna River.

PU 5a.2 **Mouth of the Talachulitna River** (RM 0.0). This site is frequently used for fishing and camping. It is also used by floatplanes. During late season when the river is low, the banks and trails along the banks are frequently used because the river is too low to navigate.

PU 5a.3 **Exit of Canyon** (RM 2.9). This site is used by people who walk up from the river mouth and from lodges.

5b. Talachulitna River Canyon Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 2.8 to RM 18.3

This subunit extends the length of the Talachulitna River canyon. The channel width is 40 to 60 feet, and the current is relatively swift. The uplands include steep hillsides and cliffs. Less than five percent of the subunit is wetlands.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	10,570 acres
1 Private Parcel	5 acres
Total	**10,575 acres**

WILDLIFE

Black bears concentrate along the river throughout this subunit during salmon season. There are three bald eagle nests in the canyon (RM 7, 8, and 13), and a swan nest at the south end of the subunit (RM 17).

CAMPING

The canyon is a frequent overnight stop-over point for float trips. However, there are fewer campsites than on the upper segments, because of the steep walls of the canyon.

The following undeveloped campsites were identified in this subunit.

Primary campsites	2
Secondary campsites	30
Marginal campsites	15

ACCESS

There is one off-road vehicle trail in this subunit around Dog Lake (RM 5). There is also a foot trail from Lake 430' (RM 3) to the river at RM 2.8. Because of the Class III rapids, boat use is primarily by raft or kayak. Dog Lake (RM 5) is used by floatplanes. A lake at RM 3, adjacent to the subunit, is used by floatplanes to access private cabins. A small landing area at RM 6.8 is used to access private land and fishing areas.

Management Intent

Class I. Because of its remote setting and difficult access, this subunit receives only moderate use by floaters during the snow-free season. This subunit features scenic floating, fishing, and camping opportunities. There is also potential for an adventurous powerboating opportunity during periods of high water. The area is remote, undeveloped, and has important wilderness, and fish and wildlife values. Two sets of Class II-III rapids enhance risk values associated when floating the river. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities and fisheries values while protecting the primitive qualities of the area. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management attention. Social interaction levels will also be managed for low encounters to protect the quality of users' experiences. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. There are seasonal motor restrictions in the southern part of this subunit to provide a non-motorized experience.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. See management guidelines for the Talachulitna River Management Unit described earlier in this section.

Landing Area in Canyon. A large gravel bar at RM 6.8 is used by wheelplanes for landing. This landing area should remain unimproved and continue to be available for wheelplane access.

Standards for Interaction Impacts. The non-motorized sections of the Talachulitna Creek and Talachulitna Canyon subunits have among the lowest use levels on the Recreation Rivers. They also offer one of the most remote, wilderness-oriented float trips in the planning area. The cost, logistics, and technical skill required to float the river limits use to experienced whitewater floaters. Among these users, there is strong consensus about the type of experience offered on Talachulitna Creek and in the canyon, the impact levels acceptable for that experience, and the need for a permit system if impacts rise above those defined levels.

Key indicators for the type of experience desired by these floaters include camp encounters (or camp sharing -- the percentage of nights camping within sight or sound of another party) and river encounters (the number of other parties seen on the river). Users define the Talachulitna as a remote, wilderness-like, whitewater float trip. Excessive river and camp encounters would detract from this experience.

In order to provide for the type of experience Talachulitna floaters currently receive and prefer, prescribed standards for these impacts are:

1. No camp encounters on Talachulitna Creek (Subunit 5d) and in Talachulitna Canyon (Subunit 5b).
2. Less than three river encounters per day in the above two subunits.

Monitoring these impacts, and establishing a relationship between them and use levels, can be administratively difficult. However, through a monitoring program, it is possible to generate the necessary information.

At current use levels, these standards are rarely exceeded. However, use is increasing, and competition is anticipated in the near future. If this occurs, and the users are forced to share camps or more than three groups per day on more than twenty percent of trips, a use limit system should be developed and implemented.

Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program. For most users, current use levels do not cause impacts greater than the standards described above. However, a minority of trips experience greater impact levels than users consider acceptable, particularly at public use sites. If use increases, this problem will continue until a use limit is developed. To prevent the mandatory trip scheduling associated with a use limit, a voluntary trip scheduling program administered by DNR should be implemented for the Talachulitna Canyon (Subunit 5b) and Talachulitna Creek (Subunit 5d) before limits are implemented.

Commercial and private trip leaders will be encouraged to register proposed trips as soon as they have been planned. DNR will maintain a list and notify trip leaders when more than one trip has been scheduled for the same day (experience indicates that paired launches result in unacceptable impacts). It will be the trip leaders' responsibility to reschedule or otherwise alter trips if they so desire.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 5b.1 **Landing Area** (RM 6.8). The natural gravel bar at this site is flat and frequently used by pilots as a landing strip. The landing area should continue to be available for public use.

PU 5b.2 **Thursday Creek Junction** (RM 9). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips down the river.

PU 5b.3 **Deep Creek Junction** (RM 14). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips down the river.

PU 5b.4 **Friday Creek Junction** (RM 16). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips down the river.

PU 5b.5 **Fishing Hole** (RM 16.5). This site includes a popular fishing hole.

PU 5b.6 **Hell's Gate** (RM 18). This rapid is usually portaged all season because of the large, narrow drop. The site is highly scenic with high walls and large rapids. A portage trail follows the west bank. Floaters camp both above and below the drop. Powerboaters tie up just above the drop and walk down to Friday Creek to fish.

Special Management Areas

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

SMA 5b.1 **Primitive Landing Area** (RM 6.8). This area includes a primitive landing area used by wheelplanes to access private land and by the public to access fishing areas. Extensive camping also occurs in the area. The Special Management Area will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area management intent and guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate uses associated with private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities and fish and wildlife habitat.

5c. Middle Talachulitna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 18.3 to RM 32.5

This subunit extends from the top of the canyon up to the junction of the Talachulitna River and Creek. The river is winding and slower-moving, with oxbow sloughs. The river here is 40 to 60 feet wide. Contiguous wetlands encompass less than 5 percent of the corridor below RM 20, and about 50 percent from RM 20 to RM 32.5. Several oxbow lakes are adjacent to the river.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	7,999 acres
5 Private Parcels	24 acres
Total	**8,023 acres**

WILDLIFE

Active bald eagle nests have been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit. Several trumpeter swan nests have been observed near river miles 18.5, 21, 22, 26, 26.5 and 27 on the oxbow lakes and sloughs. High concentrations of black bears occur along the river during salmon season.

CAMPING

There are numerous campsites that are used, the following have been identified:

Primary campsites	5
Secondary campsites	54
Marginal campsites	8

DEVELOPMENT

Two lodges and three private cabins are located at the midpoint (RM 20). Lodge and cabin owners store boats and boat-related equipment along the river. One of the lodges has a drinking water uptake pipe and filter in the river. There is an unauthorized cabin on state land near the RM 6 on Talachulitna Creek.

ACCESS

Most of the trails in the subunit are in the immediate vicinity of the existing lodges and cabins. They are used to access the river, a primitive landing area, woodlots, and adjacent cabins. There are also trails used in the winter by local residents that parallel the river. Fishermen also walk up tributaries on primitive trails or on river bars. Just downstream of the midpoint lodges is a floatplane landing area (RM 19). Some floaters from Judd Land end their trip here. Boats and floatplanes are stored at the south end of this floatplane landing area. Powerboats are used to shuttle clients and local residents upstream to the cabins and lodges. During high water, floatplanes can taxi and land in front of the lodges. There is also a primitive landing area in a swamp behind the Talaheim Lodge used by the lodge owner. In addition, Talaheim Lodge uses a helicopter and stores it between the lodge and the river. At RM 32 there is a primitive landing area on a river bar. Hiline Lake (adjacent to and east of the corridor) is used by floatplanes to access private land around the lake.

Winter access is mostly by local residents who live at the midpoint of the river. There is some trapping in the winter. Residents on adjacent lakes such as Trinity and Hiline lakes also use snowmachines. In the past heavy equipment has been transported to Coal, Friday, and Saturday creeks.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high for this area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Timber has been harvested adjacent to all the cabins and the lodges at the midpoint for houselogs, firewood, and milled wood.

Management Intent

Class I. Because of the overlapping use between floaters and powerboaters, this subunit receives higher use than adjacent subunits. This subunit features high quality fishing and camping opportunities for floaters and lodge-based powerboaters. The area is moderately developed with commercial lodges located to take advantage of the remote, primitive setting. The subunit contains important salmon spawning habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. While existing development at moderate levels is consistent with this intent, new development on state lands will be minimized. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. The management intent for the special management area location in this subunit is described below.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None

Boat Storage. A public boat storage area should be designated near the cluster of private land in this subunit and the floatplane landing area at RM 19. See *Shoreline Development, Boat Storage* in Chapter 2.

Special Management Areas

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

SMA 5c.1 **Private Lands** (RM 20). There are several private parcels and a state lease in this area. As many as four lodges have operated in this area. Floatplanes, wheelplanes, and helicopters land in the aea. There are also a number of boats and planes moored on the banks in the summer. The Special Management Area (SMA) will be managed as a Class II area. ClassII area guidelines will apply. This area will be managed to accommodate uses associated with private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 5c.1 **Grayling Creek Junction** (RM 25.5). This site is a frequent destination point for floaters and powerboaters. The site is a well-known fishing hole. There is a prominent, sheltered campsite nearby and gravel for campsites immediately downstream of the confluence.

PU 5c.2 **The Forks** (RM 32.5). This site is a popular destination point for floaters and powerboaters. The site is a well-known fishing hole. There is also a large gravel bar used for camping.

5d. Talachulitna Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, TALACHULITNA CREEK, RM 0 to RM 17

This subunit extends from the confluence of Talachulitna Creek and the Talachulitna River, up Talachulitna Creek to a point just below Judd Lake. Talachulitna Creek is clear and shallow, and about 20 to 30 feet wide. The corridor contains about 60 percent contiguous wetlands and 5 percent non-contiguous wetlands.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	9,440	acres
1 Private Parcel	5	acres
Total	**9,445**	**acres**

WILDLIFE

Three trumpeter swan nests have been identified in ponds near RM 7, RM 8.5, and RM 14. Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites are spread out throughout the area:

Primary campsites	0
Secondary campsites	60
Marginal campsites	20

DEVELOPMENT

There is an abandoned caterpillar on the south bank of the river at RM 7.0. This vehicle was being transported from upper Saturday or Friday Creek to upper Coal Creek when it broke down and was abandoned. There is one cabin on private land in this subunit on the north bank of the Creek at RM 6.8.

ACCESS

Primitive trails have developed from the Silver Tip Lodge to points downstream. The lodge has also cut a loop trail on the north side of the river. There is evidence of heavy off-road vehicle use between the cabin at RM 6.8 and the cabins on the east side of Trinity Lakes. Off-road vehicle trails between RM 6 and RM 9 also parallel the river on the north side. Winter access to Trinity Lakes and Judd Lake is limited to snomachines. Winter use is low because Beluga Mountain is a major obstacle to recreation travel from Alexander Creek. Some winter trapping and spring bear hunting occurs in the area.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high in this subunit.

Management Intent

Class I. Because of its remote setting, this subunit receives only moderate use by floaters who start their trips at Judd Lake and by bank fishermen who walk downstream from Judd Lake. This subunit features high quality floating, fishing, and camping opportunities. The area is remote, undeveloped, and has high wilderness and wildlife values. Sweepers and other hazards present risk values associated with floating the river. The river contains important spawning habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, wilderness, fish, and wildlife qualities of the area. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management attention. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. Social interaction levels will also be managed for low levels to protect the quality of users' experiences. There are seasonal motorized restrictions in this unit to provide a non-motorized experience.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. See management guidelines for the Talachulitna River Management Unit described earlier in this section.

Standards for Interaction Impacts. See Subunit 5b, Talachulitna River Canyon.

Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program. See Subunit 5b, Talachulitna River Canyon.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 5d.1 **Trinity Creek Junction** (RM 4.5). This ite is popular for fishing and camping.

PU 5d.2 **Unnamed Campsite** (RM 14). This site is frequently used for fishing and camping.

PU 5d.3 **Unnamed site** (RM 16.5). This site is a popular fishing area used by clients who walk down from the lodge on Judd Lake.

5e. Judd Lake Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, Talachulitna Creek RM 17 to RM 22

This subunit includes Judd and Talachulitna lakes. Less than 10 percent of the area around the lakes is contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,376 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	900 acres
4 Private Parcels	19 acres
Total	**3,295 acres**

FISHERIES

The Talachulitna Creek inlet and outlet on Judd Lake are popular fishing areas.

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

The most heavily used campsite is at the inlet to Judd Lake.

DEVELOPMENT

There are four cabins on the lake and the remnants of a burned cabin. Silvertip Lodge has a large dock and equipment storage shed at the creek outlet.

ACCESS

Judd Lake is accessible in summer only by floatplane. The lake is the primary put-in for float trips down the river. Silvertip Lodge has brushed

a foot trail from the west end of the lake along the creek to Talachulitna Lake. The lodge has also cut a loop trail that extends approximately two miles downriver. There are also foot trails around the lake associated with the private cabins and the lodge and some short foot trails associated with the sandy area at the inlet to the lake.

HERITAGE RESOURCE

The heritage site potential is high.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for lodge-based or airplane-based users in a scenic setting. The lake is also a staging point for Talachulitna River float trips. One lodge and a few private cabins are sited in the lake area take advantage of the remote, primitive setting. Both Judd Lake and Talachulitna Lake contain salmon spawning habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining moderate levels of development in a natural environment will be the focus of management attention. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Borough Lands. Borough lands in this subunit are classified "Borough Land Bank." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

Boating restrictions. None.

Public Information. A kiosk which provides information on the Recreation Rivers should be established at a prominent location on Judd Lake. A sign should be established at the outlet of the lake identifying the Talachulitna River as a Recreation River.

Acquisition of Private Lands. A private parcel is located at the inlet of Judd Lake. This site has never been developed. It is currently being used as a drop-off point for floaters and as a campsite. This parcel or easement should be acquired for public use. See Chapter 2, *Land Acquisition Priorities.*

Public Use Sites

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

PU 5e.1 **Judd Lake** (two sites) (RM 18). Public lands near the inlet and the outlet are drop-off points for float trips. These two sites are also heavily used for fishing. The inlet is mostly wetlands, in private ownership, and undeveloped. This parcel should be acquired for public use. See Chapter 2, *Land Acquisition Priorities.*

5f. Upper Talachulitna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 32.5 to RM 64.5

The river in this subunit is shallow, meandering, and less that 20 feet wide. There are several beaver dams across the main channel. There is a narrow, steep gorge with a waterfall and RM 38. The terrain is flat to rolling except at its headwaters on the shoulder of Beluga Mountain. Thirty to 50 percent of the area is contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	17,631 acres
Total	**17,631 acres**

WILDLIFE

Two trumpeter swan nests have been identified in this subunit, near RM 43 and RM 45. Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

The use of this subunit is limited with little access to the area. Moose hunters are known to camp at Wolf Lakes.

DEVELOPMENT

There are at least three unauthorized cabins on the upper Talachulitna River. These are located at approximately RM 36, RM 47, and RM 56. They are primarily used in winter for trapping.

ACCESS

There are off-road vehicle trails between RM 46 and RM 54, on the east and south sides of the river. The largest of the Wolf Lakes, at the headwaters of the river, is used by floatplanes during hunting season. This subunit is used for snowmachining by a local trapper and residents along the Talachulitna River. To the east is Beluga Mountain which prevents access from Alexander Creek.

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit receives minimal summer public use because of its distance from the railbelt and has minimal boat or plane access. It is used infrequently by airplane-based hunters in fall and powerboat-based hunters during periods of high water. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Little active management is expected in this subunit. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Unauthorized Cabins. There are three known unauthorized cabins along the river in this subunit. They are in a low use area, receive little use even in winter, and do not present any known conflicts. Until these cabins present significant conflicts as identified in Chapter 2 guidelines on *Unauthorized Cabins*, their removal is a low priority.

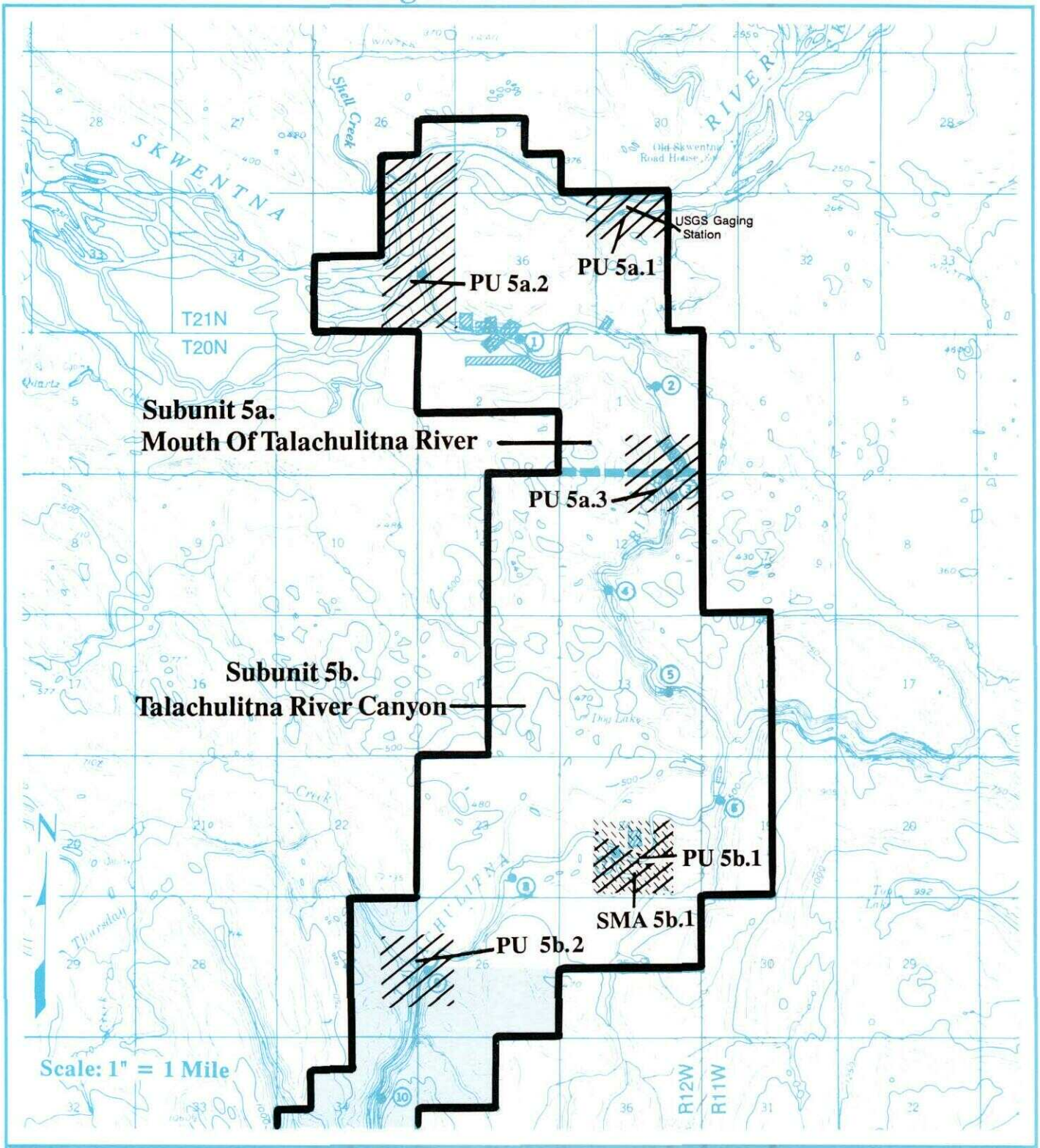
Public Use Sites

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

PU 5f.1 **Wolf Lakes** (RM 64). There are only a few campsites adjacent to the lakes. These are used during the moose hunting season.

Talachulitna River Management Unit

Map 1: River Miles 1 - 10

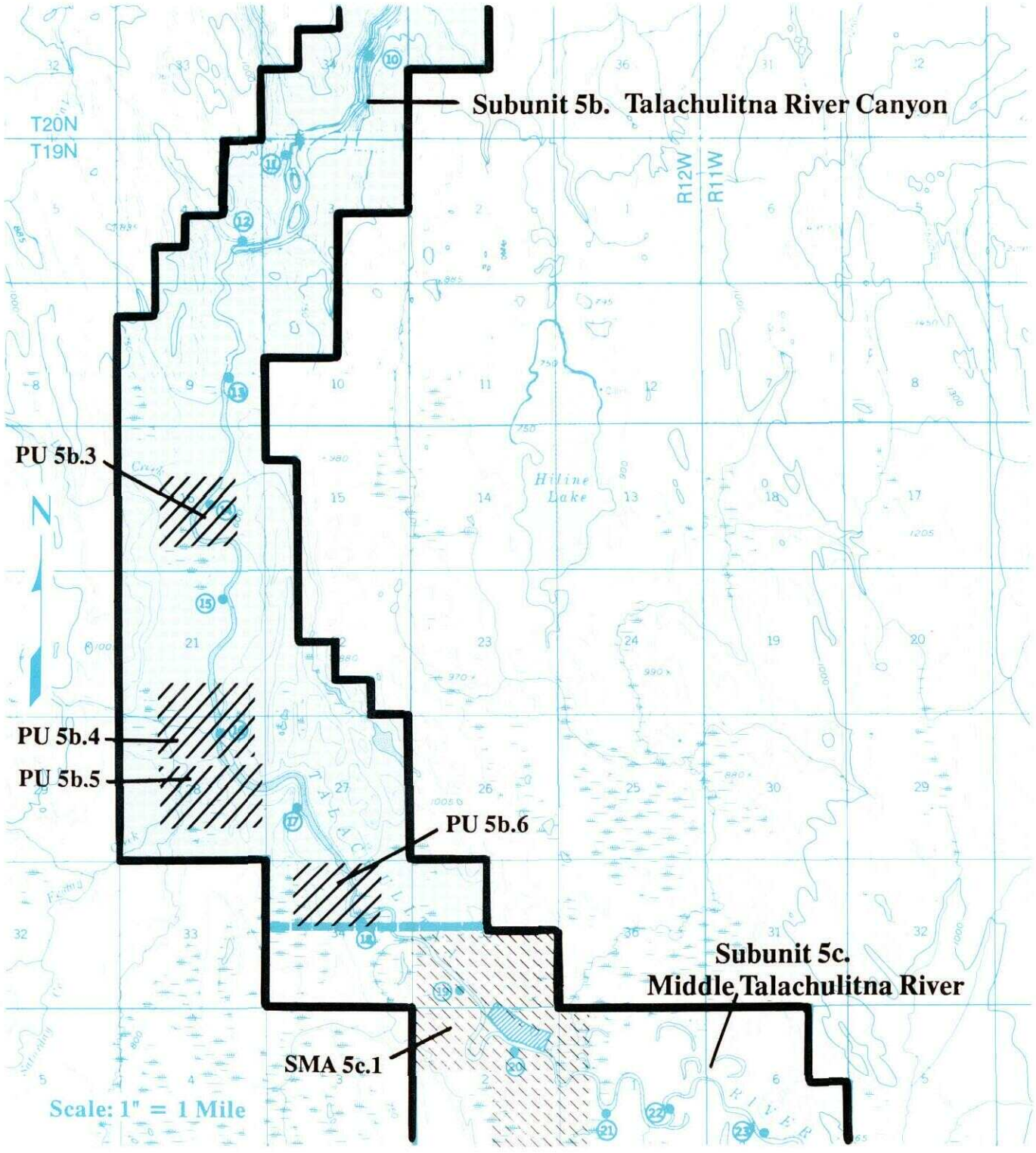


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land

- Public Use Sites
- Non-motorized Area (June 15 - August 20)
- Special Management Area

Talachulitna River Management Unit

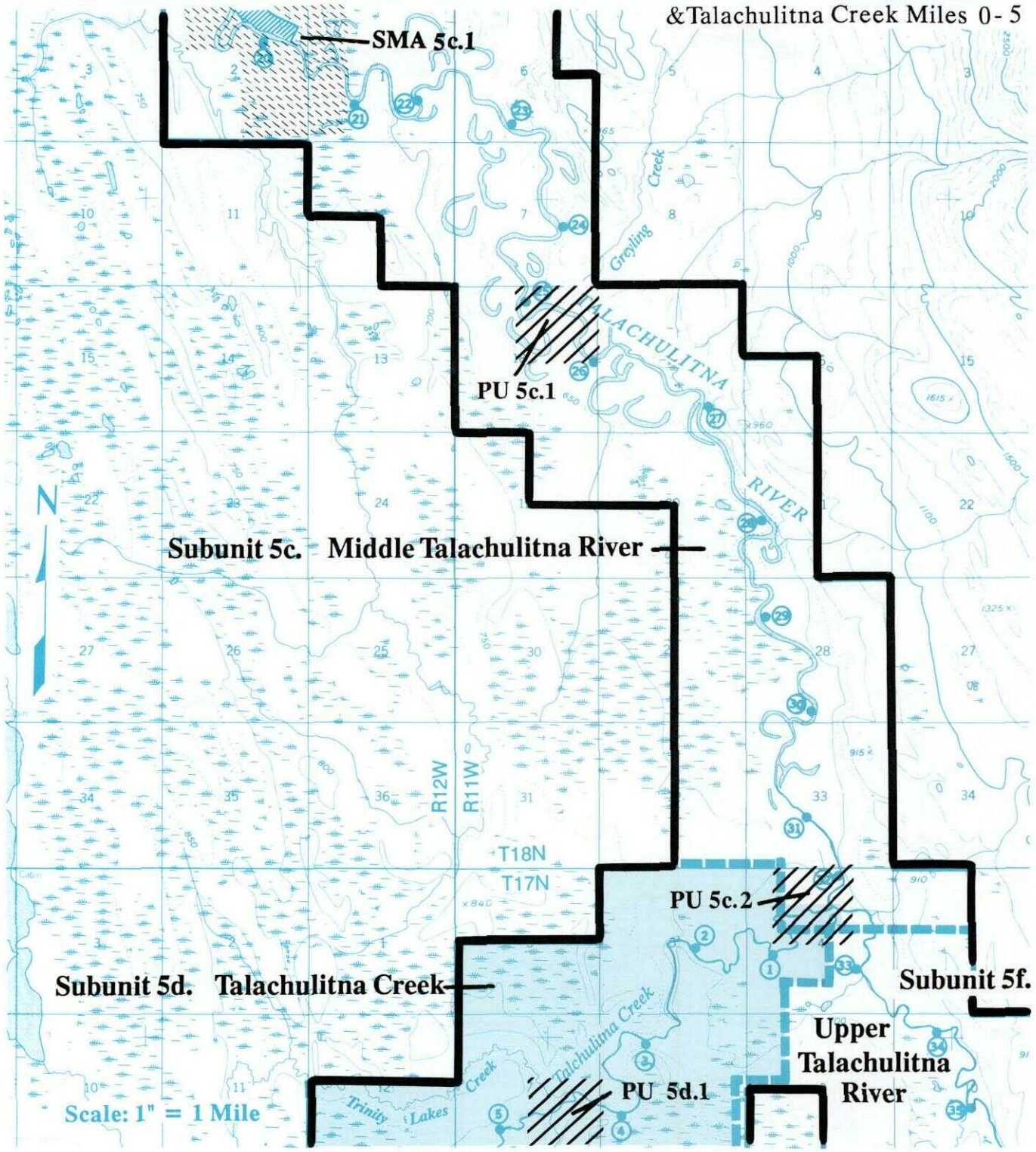
Map 2: River Miles 10 - 23



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Special Management Areas
- Non-motorized Area (June 15 - August 20)

Talachulitna River Management Unit

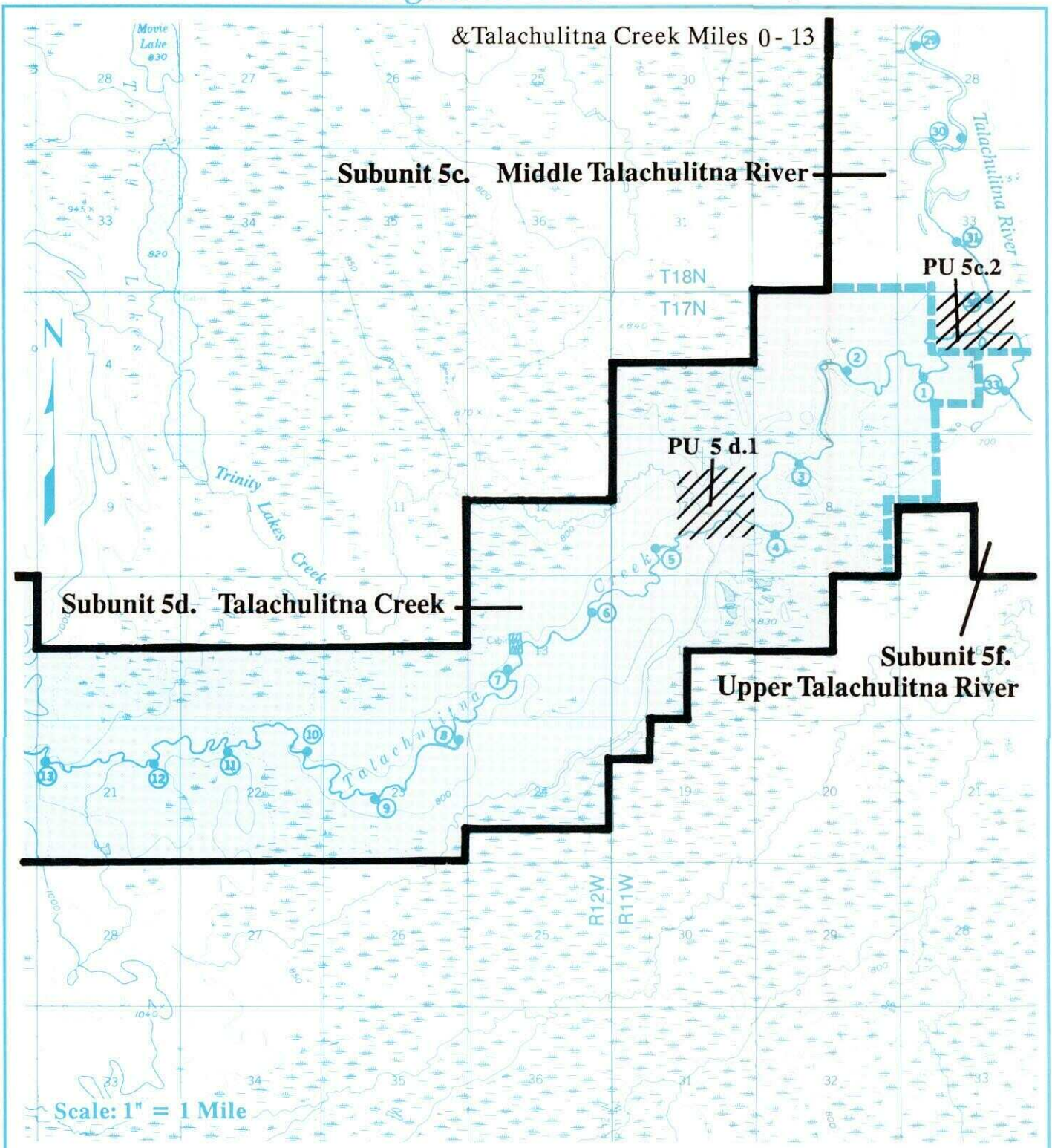
Map 3: River Miles 20 - 35 &Talachulitna Creek Miles 0 - 5



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Non-motorized Area (June 15 - August 20)
- Special Management Areas

Talachulitna River Management Unit

Map 4: River Miles 29 - 33

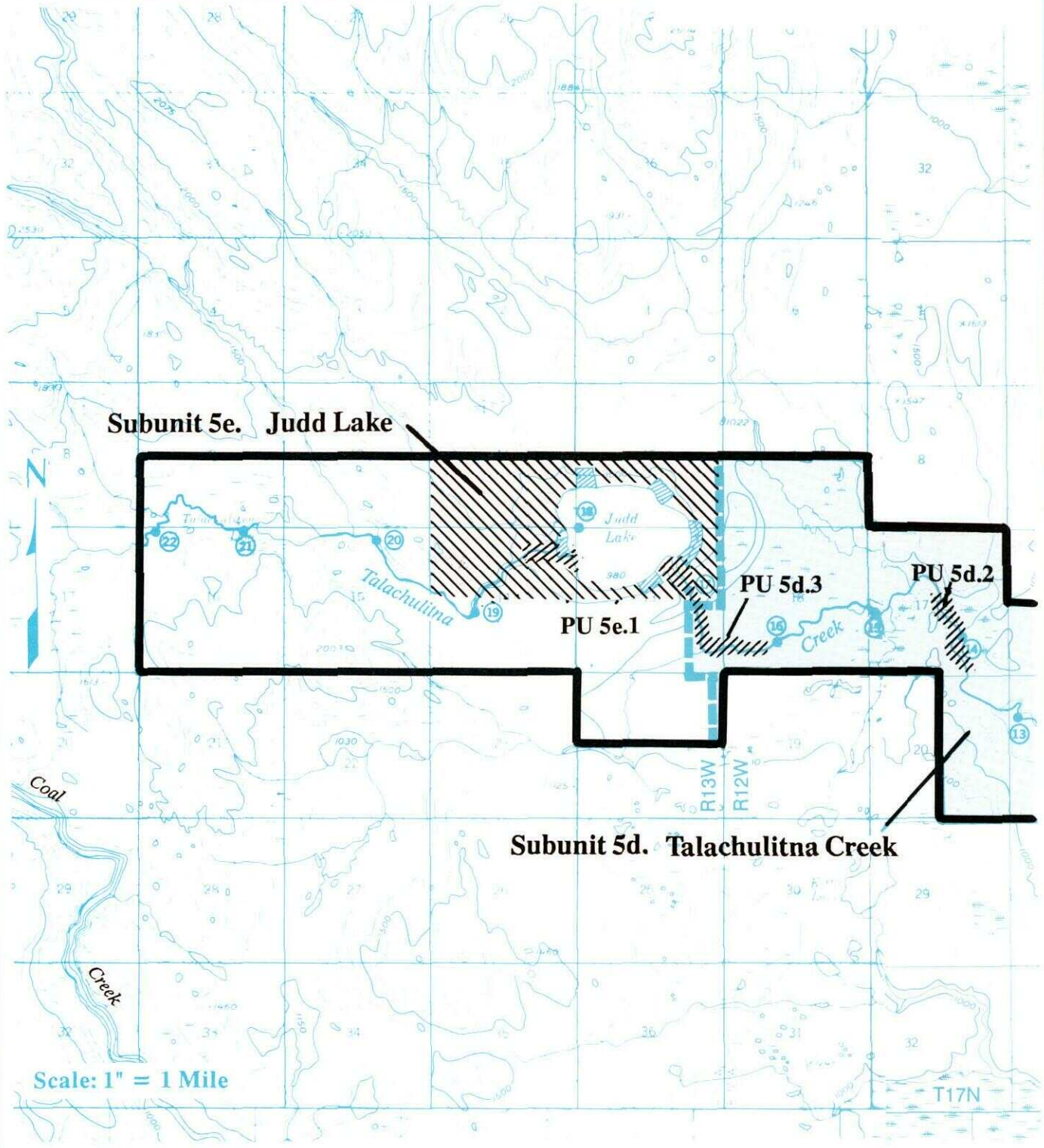


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land

Public Use Sites

Non-motorized Area
(June 15 - August 20)

Map 5: Talachulitna Creek Miles 13 - 22



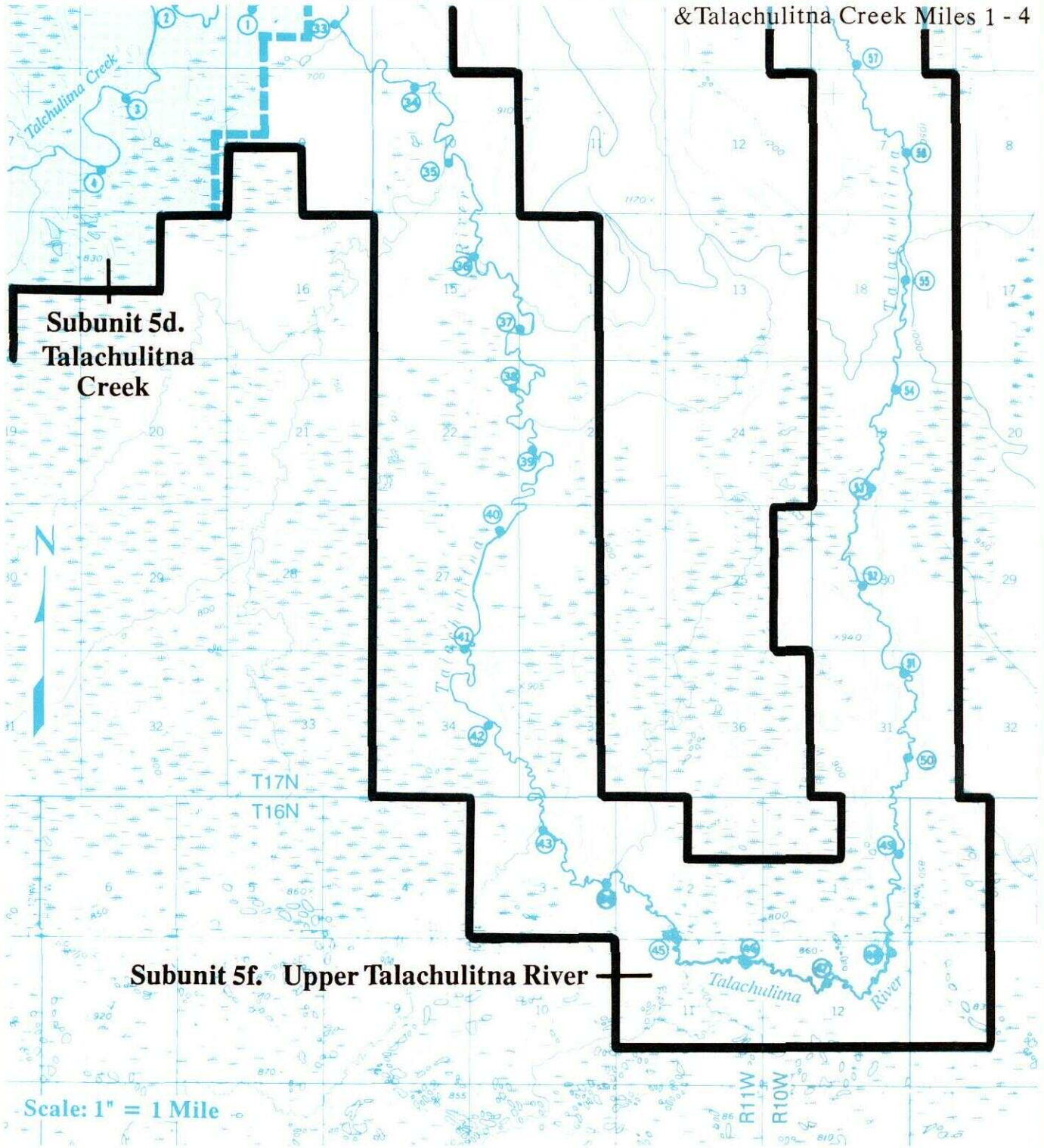
- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Borough Land

Public Use Sites (Shorelands and water column only)

Non-motorized Area
(June 15 - August 20)

Talachulitna River Management Unit

Map 6: Talachulitna River Miles 33 - 57 &Talachulitna Creek Miles 1 - 4

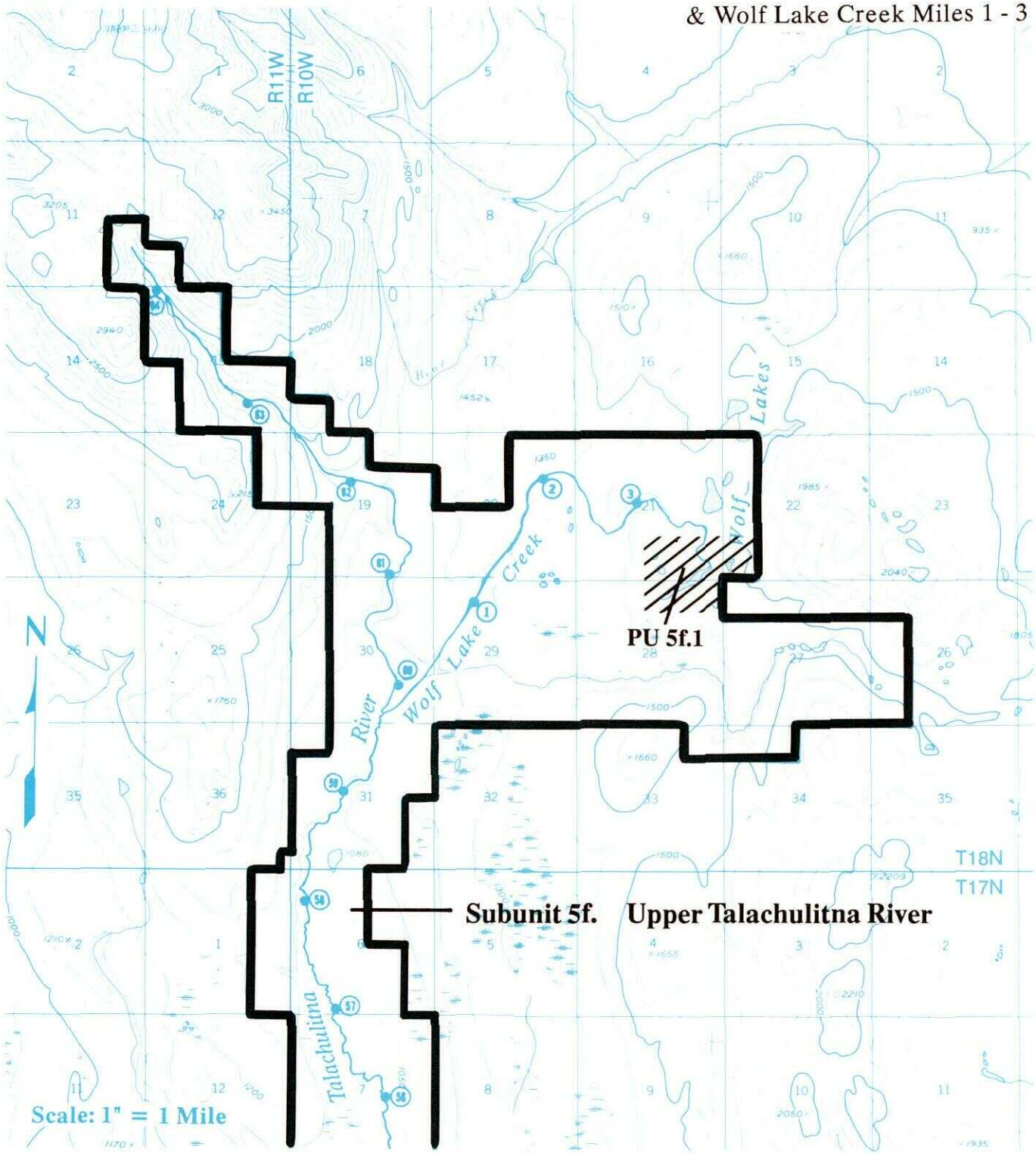


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- State Land

Non-motorized Area
(June 15 - August 20)

Talachulitna River Management Unit

Map 7: River Miles 56 - 64 & Wolf Lake Creek Miles 1 - 3



Management Unit Boundary
Subunit Boundary
① River Mile
State Land
Public Use Sites

Alexander Creek Management Unit

PAGE 3 - 80 **Background**

3 - 83 **6a. Lower Alexander Creek Subunit**

3 - 85 **6b. Upper Alexander Creek Subunit**

3 - 87 **6c. Alexander Lake Subunit**

3 - 89 **6d. Sucker Creek Subunit**

6. Alexander Creek Management Unit

Background

MILES OF RIVER

This unit includes 40.2 miles of Alexander Creek from RM 3.8 to RM 44.0. The unit also includes 5.5 miles of Sucker Creek.

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

Alexander Creek is a slow, meandering stream that originates in Alexander Lake and flows south to the Susitna River. The terrain is generally flat to occasionally rolling. The management unit begins 3.5 miles above the confluence with the Susitna, and extends up to Alexander Lake and the surrounding uplands. The lower 5 miles of Sucker Creek are also in the unit. The Alexander Creek channel is 1 to 5 feet deep and from 50 to 200 feet wide. A typical summer flow is 271 cfs. Waters from a 100-year flood can cover a considerable area in sections of the upper and lower river because the river is slow moving and the surrounding area is relatively flat.

Around Alexander Lake the visual qualities are high with good views of the Alaska Range, including Denali. Downstream visual qualities are lower because views are confined by high banks and there are more man-made improvements.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	19,995 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	2,260 acres
74 Private Parcels	381 acres
Total	**22,636 acres**

FISHERIES

Species Present

King Salmon	Pink Salmon
Rainbow Trout	Coho Salmon
Chum Salmon	Arctic Grayling
Sockeye Salmon	Burbot
Northern Pike	

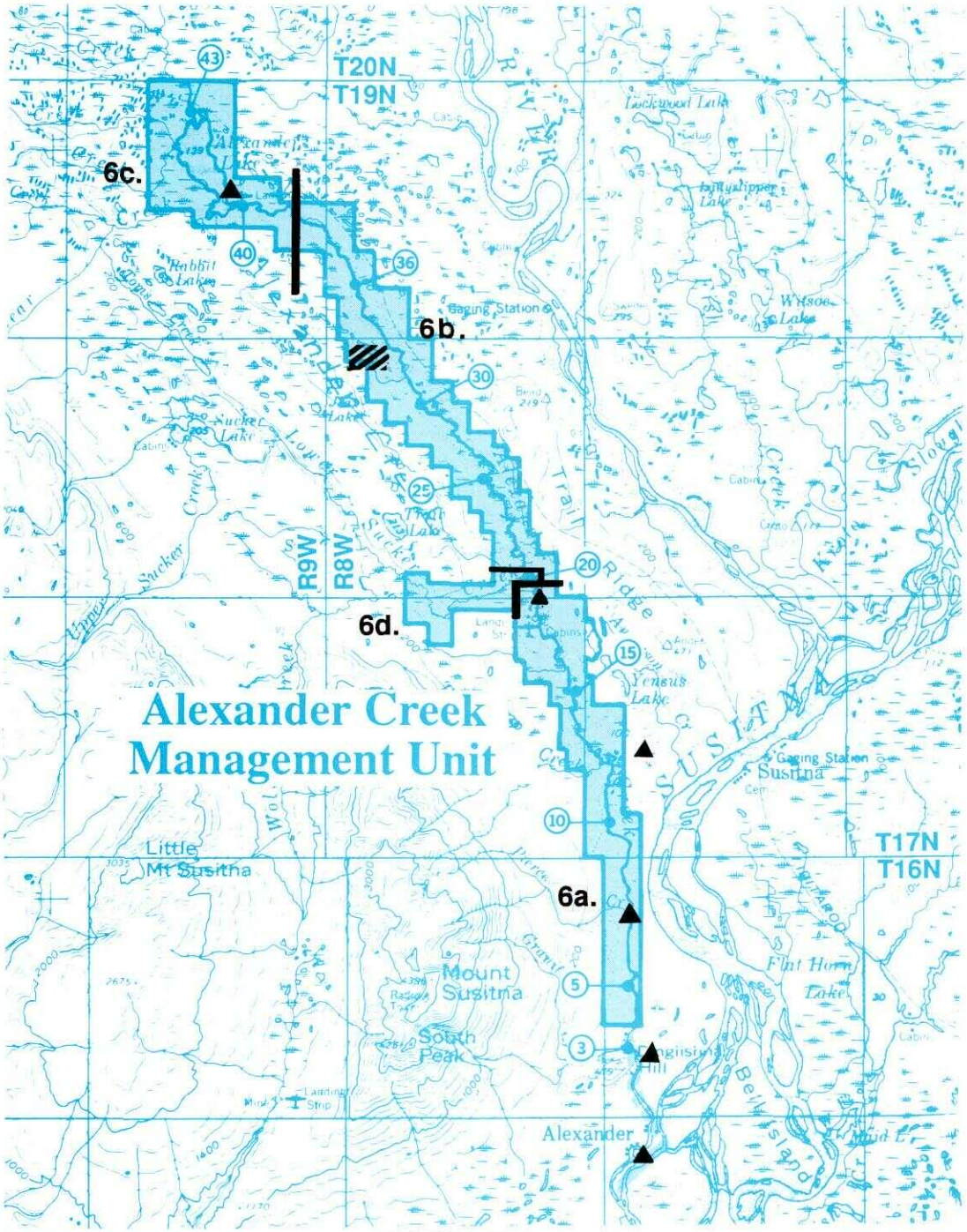
All species of salmon are present throughout the management unit. The majority of king, coho, and pink salmon spawn all along the river above RM 8. Sockeye salmon spawn in the lakes and sloughs feeding Sucker Creek and Alexander Lake. Small numbers of chum salmon have been observed by local residents in the vicinity of the mouth of Pierce Creek but the spawning area has not been documented by DFG.

Sport Fishing

The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on Alexander Creek correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately May 20 to June 25, and July 4 to August 21, respectively. Also, throughout the summer and particularly in the late summer, people fishing for arctic grayling and rainbow trout is common. The more popular fishing spots are the mouths of Pierce, Trail, and Sucker creeks. The most popular fishing area is at the mouth of Alexander Creek which is in the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

ALEXANDER CREEK



N

Management Unit

Subunits

- **6a.** Lower Alexander Creek
- **6b.** Upper Alexander Creek
- **6c.** Alexander Lake
- **6d.** Sucker Creek

(12) **River Miles**

▲ **Public Use Sites**

Special Management Areas

Proposed Addition to Management Unit

WILDLIFE

Moose

Winter densities of moose along Sucker Creek and the lower portions of Alexander Creek are very high. The extensive wetlands are important for moose calving in spring. Large numbers of moose summer on Mount Susitna and Beluga Mountain, and other adjoining areas.

Bear

Brown bear and black bear are distributed throughout the unit. Brown bear concentrate on the upper creek to feed on spawning salmon when available. Black bear concentrated on the lower creek during the same period.

Bald Eagles

At least one bald eagle nest is located in the unit, near Sucker Creek.

Trumpeter Swans

Three swan nests are located on Alexander Lake.

Hunting

Moose and bear hunting are very popular in this corridor during the fall. Alexander Creek receives some of the heaviest use by hunters of all the Recreation Rivers. The entire river is floatable and hunted from Alexander Lake to its confluence with the Susitna River. Hunters using power boats generally hunt the lower 20 miles.

Trapping

Recreational trapping for otter, muskrat, marten, mink, beaver, fox, coyote, wolf, and wolverine occur in the corridor during spring and winter seasons.

DEVELOPMENT

Most of the cabins and lodges on Alexander Creek are concentrated downstream of the planning area boundary, near the mouth of the creek. However, there are a number of cabins on the river below Trail Creek and around Alexander Lake.

ACCESS

Most of the boat traffic on Alexander Creek is near the mouth which is outside the unit. Powerboats travel from Anchorage or Deshka Landing to access the creek. Alexander Creek is also a popular rafting trip, particularly during the salmon fishing season. Most float trips begin at Alexander Lake and last 3 to 5 days. Both float- and wheel-planes land at several places in the unit, particularly at Alexander Lake.

Management Guidelines for the Unit

BOATING RESTRICTIONS

1.	*Non-motorized area*	Point just above Sucker Creek (RM 23.0) to a point just below exit of Alexander Lake (RM 38.3)
	Season:	May 15 - August 20.
	Justification:	This river segment has the potential to provide high quality non-motorized recreation opportunities for which there is a high demand. This river segment is so shallow that it is seldom used by powerboaters. The restriction will be established to ensure that the opportunities for non-motorized whitewater trips are maintained, regardless of technological changes which could allow powerboat use in the future. Restrictions do not cover the motorized trail along the outlet of Alexander Lake nor the area just above the Sucker Creek confluence that contains camping areas used by powerboaters and wheelplanes.
2.	*Voluntary no-wake*	Mouth of Alexander Creek (northwest side of Susitna River and area from RM 0.0 - 0.2 on Alexander Creek.
	Season:	May 15 - August 20.
	Justification:	A 3.8 mile segment of Lower Alexander Creek is proposed for addition to the Alexander Creek Recreation River. See Chapter 4, *Areas Recommended for Designation as Recreation Rivers* and *Other Recommendations*. The voluntary no-wake area would take effect if the segment is approved by the legislature for destination. The Alexander Creek and Susitna River confluence is a highly congested area during fishing season and the intent of the no-wake area is to protect public safety.
3.	*Safety Warning sign*	Mouth of Pierce Creek (RM 7.4).
	Season:	May 15 - August 20.
	Justification:	Above this point Alexander Creek is narrow, shallow, and winding. Several large boats have grounded above this point. A warning sign will be placed at this point warning large boats about hazards above Pierce Creek.

6a. Lower Alexander Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 3.8 to RM 19.8

This subunit extends from Granite Creek to just above the mouth of Sucker Creek. Alexander Creek is 50 feet wide, widening to 150 feet towards the downstream end of the subunit. Contiguous wetlands make up 20 percent of the area, non-contiguous another 10 percent.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	6,588 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	2,260 acres
63 Private Parcels	315 acres
Total	**9,163 acres**

WILDLIFE.

Lower Alexander Creek has some of the highest winter and spring densities of moose in the planning area. Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites were identified:

Primary campsites	none
Secondary campsites	18
Marginal campsites	13; also 2 miles of river with continuous marginal campsites

DEVELOPMENT

The subunit includes 11 cabins. Two of these cabins are used commercially as fishing lodges. One is located just below Trail Creek at RM 10.5. The other is located at RM 15.5. Private landowners just west of the subunit use a trail and dock at RM 4.6 to access the creek. There are also numerous cabins outside the subunit around Otter and Weenie lakes.

ACCESS

A prominent summer trail near RM 12 parallels Trail Creek for at least one mile. A section line on the east side of the subunit and parallel to river appears to be receiving heavy summer use and connects a block of private land at RM 5 with an airstrip. Another airstrip lies west of RM 18. There is a dock and major trail at RM 4.6 on the west side of the river that is used by private landowners west of the subunit.

There is extensive winter travel along Alexander Creek below Sucker Creek. Snowmachine use is by both recreational users and private property owners. The Beluga gas line from the Knik Road is occasionally used by trucks to access Alexander Creek in winter. Snowmachines also travel to lower Alexander Creek from the Iditarod race trail and from Deshka Landing. In previous years, the Iditarod race has run through this subunit on a trail paralleling the river just west of Otter Lake.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high due to historic subsistence use, and the proximity to the village of Alexander near the mouth.

Management Intent

Class II. Most recreation use in this subunit occurs during the king and silver salmon runs. Because of strong salmon runs, relatively inexpensive air access from the railbelt, and the placid nature of the river, the subunit receives heavy use by both powerboaters and floaters. The subunit provides high quality opportunities for boaters in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. The subunit also contains salmon spawning and winter moose habitat. The mouth, which is proposed as an addition to the Recreation Rivers, receives similar use but in greater numbers because of

lodges and numerous parcels of private land located there. The subunit and the proposed addition (if it becomes part of the Alexander Creek Recreation River), will be managed to provide and enhance recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Some temporary camps will be allowed. Because of high public use, amount of private land, and the absence of state uplands, temporary camps will not be allowed below RM 4 ifthe mouth is added to the Recreation Rivers. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority.The subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. There is a proposed voluntary no-wake area at the mouth to protect public safety in this congested area. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. A sign will be posted above Pierce Creek warning large boats about navigation hazards.

Borough Lands. Borough land in this subunit is classified "Borough Land Bank." For management intent on borough lands, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Management Guidelines

No-wake Area. See management guidelines for the Alexander Creek Management Unit described earlier in this section.

Temporary Camps. Up to three temporary camps may be permitted in this subunit. They will not be authorized in public use sites nor below RM 4 if the river mouth is added to the Recreation Rivers.

Addition to the Recreation River. Because of their high use for recreation, the shorelands and the water column from the confluence of the Susitna River to the current southern boundary of Alexander Creek Recreation River is proposed for addition to the Recreation Rivers. This includes approximately 115 acres of state shorelands. If added, this area will be managed consistent with this subunit. Also see *Areas Recommended for Designation as Recreation Rivers* in Chapter 4. Because of its high recreation values and the concentrated sport fishing that occurs there, the confluence of Alexander Creek and the Susitna River (320 acres) may also be considered for recommended designation when the plan is updated. Also see *Other Recommendations, Future Additions* in Chapter 4.

Public Information. A sign should be placed at the south boundary of the Alexander Creek corridor identifying it as a Recreation River.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 6a.1 **Alexander Creek Mouth** (0.0). If the lower section of the river is added to the Recreation Rivers, the mouth should be designated a public use site. The gravel bar at the mouth is heavily used for wheelplane landing and storage of boats and equipment. It is flooded yearly so it is unsuitable for any year-round use.

PU 6a.2 **Granite Creek** (RM 3). This is a popular fishing area. If the lower section of the river is added to the Alexander Creek Recreation River, this site should be designated as a public use site.

PU 6a.3 **Pierce Creek** (RM 7.4). This is a popular fishing and camping area.

PU 6a.4 **Trail Creek** (RM 12.2). This is a popular fishing and camping area.

6b. Upper Alexander Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 20.1 to RM 38.3

The subunit begins above the mouth of Sucker Creek and extends to the south end of a trail downstream from Alexander Lake. The creek is 3 to 4 feet deep, and 20 to 50 feet wide. The water is generally clear above RM 25 but becomes silty below this point. The terrain is gently rolling. Contiguous wetlands cover about half of the area.

LAND OWNERSHIP

There are 8,085 acres of state land in this subunit.

WILDLIFE

Active bald eagle or trumpeter swan nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

There are numerous secondary and marginal campsites along the entire length of the subunit.

DEVELOPMENT

There are two cabins and docks under state lease on Rose Lake at RM 33. A cabin ruin is located at RM 31.

ACCESS

There is a short trail between Rose Lake and the Alexander Creek. The lake is also used by floatplanes, often to drop off floaters. In past years the Iditarod dogsled race has been run on the trail which crosses Alexander Creek near RM 21. This trail is still used for the Iditaski and Iron Dog races. Seismic lines along the river are also used for winter access. There are extensive open bogs adjacent to the river that are used for snow-machining.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high.

Management Intent

Class I. Most recreation use in this subunit occurs during the king and silver salmon runs. Because of good fishing, relatively inexpensive air transportation from the railbelt, and the placid nature of the river, this subunit receives moderate use by floaters. Suitability for powerboat use is marginal because of low water volumes. The subunit provides high quality floatboat opportunities in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. The area contains important winter moose habitat and supports salmon spawning. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. With the exception of the Rose Lake special management area, the subunit will be managed to provide a non-motorized experience during the fishing season.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. See management guidelines for the Alexander Creek Management Unit described earlier in this section.

Iditarod National Historic Trail and Iditarod Race Trail. Both trail systems parallel the river in this subunit between Yensus Lake and Alexander Lake. See guidelines in Chapter 2, *Upland Access, Trails, Iditarod National Historic Trail* and *Iditarod Race Trail.*

Special Management Areas

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

SMA 6b.1 **Rose Lake** (RM 33). There are two parcels under state lease on the lake which contain cabins and docks. Floatplanes use the lake. The Special Management Area (SMA) will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area management intent and guidelines will apply. This area will be managed to accommodate uses associated with existing state leases in the SMA while providing and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat.

6c. Alexander Lake Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 38.3 to RM 44.0

Alexander Lake is about 2.5 miles long and 0.5 miles wide. The terrain around the lake is flat. Contiguous wetlands make up at least 90 percent of the area within the subunit. Well-drained sites are mostly in private ownership.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	4,276 acres
11 Private Parcels	94 acres
Total	**4,370 acres**

WILDLIFE

In recent years, three trumpeter swan nests are located along Alexander Lake, two on the west, and one on the east shore. Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites have been identified:

Primary campsites	3 on the Lake
Secondary campsites	numerous along the entire creek
Marginal campsites	numerous along the entire creek

DEVELOPMENT

Alexander Lake Lodge is located on the south end of the lake. There are a number of improvements associated with the lodge. There are also equipment storage and boat storage areas adjacent to the river used by the lodge. A large dump is located behind the lodge. Six cabins are scattered around the lake, mostly on the south end. A primitive platform has been installed by air services on the southeast end of the lake to provide a dry area for floaters to inflate rafts. The platform was installed because there is little dry ground on public lands near the exit of the lake suitable for this purpose.

ACCESS

There is a major off-road vehicle trail from the lodge along the east shore of the lake. Most of this trail is in wetlands. Another trail used by the lodge is in the woods on the north side of the creek. The trail is used to transport clients who take a short float trip down the creek. Seismic lines in this subunit do not appear to be heavily used in summer. Floaters are usually dropped off by floatplanes at one of three primitive campsites around the lake. The most commonly used landing area is near the lake exit where the previously mentioned platform is located. The other floatplanes drop-off area is on the northwest side of the lake. This second site is more commonly used in late summer when the lake becomes clogged with weeds.

In previous years the Iditarod race trail crossed the lake. In 1989 this course was not used. This route is also used for the Iditaski ski race and Iron Dog snowmachine race. Private property owners around the lake use snowmachines on the lake and on the river.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit is used primarily as a put-in point for float trips down Alexander Creek and for lodge-based recreation. This subunit provides high quality fishing and hunting opportunities. The subunit contains winter moose and salmon spawning habitat. Camping opportunities are limited because well-drained sites around the lake are in private ownership. Private lands are located on the south half of the lake and along the creek. Winter use of the subunit is primarily by snowmachines, skiers, and dogmushers following the Iditarod Trail. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Developing a suitable dry access point for the public is a high priority. Wetlands compose over 90 percent of the public lands in this subunit. Development of, or activities on, wetlands that would result in significant damage should be avoided or minimized. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized access. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Iditarod National Historic Trail and Iditarod Race Trail. Both trail systems pass through this subunit. See guidelines in Chapter 2, *National Historic Trail and Trails, Iditarod Race Trail.*

Public Information. A kiosk should be established to provide information on the river at the most commonly used public air-taxi drop-off point on Alexander Lake. A sign should be established at the outlet of the lake identifying it as a Recreation River.

Land Acquisition. Most of the land around Alexander Lake is wetlands. Most, if not all, the well-drained upland sites are in private ownership. There is one site now used by air charters for drop-off. This site is on public lands and is poorly drained. A field survey of the upland sites in public ownership should be conducted to find a site suitable for air taxi drop-offs, boat launching, camping, information signs, and privies. Over the long-term, an upland parcel should be acquired which provides adequate space for these activities. If no such site is found, the primitive platform on the southeast side of the lake (in PU 6c.1) should be upgraded as an interim measure.

Solid Waste. A large solid waste dump is located behind the Alexander Lake Lodge. DNR should work with DEC to ensure that this use complies with state regulations. If it is located on state lands DNR shall also ensure that the dump is managed consistent with plan guidelines. See *Water and Solid Waste* in Chapter 2.

Public Use Sites

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

PU 6c.1 **Unnamed Put-in Site** (RM 41.2). Most of the well-drained upland sites around the lake are in private ownership. A small platform has been constructed on the east side of the lake. The platform allows floaters to inflate their rafts on dry ground before descending the river. This platform should be improved or an alternate upland site selected.

6d. Sucker Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, Sucker Creek, RM 0.0 to RM 5.5

Sucker Creek is a clear-running tributary about 20 feet wide near the mouth. The subunit contains a few contiguous wetlands, less than 20 percent of the area.

LAND STATUS

There are 1,046 acres of state land.

WILDLIFE

A bald eagle nest is situated near Sucker Creek (RM 5.5). Active trumpeter swan nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

FISHERIES

The mouth of Sucker Creek (just outside the subunit) is a popular fishing and camping area for boaters on Alexander Creek. The creek is also fished by floaters originating on Trail or Sucker lakes.

CAMPING

Three marginal campsites exist near the mouth of Sucker Creek (in adjacent subunits).

ACCESS

There is a foot trail from Trail Lake to Sucker Creek. This trail is used by floaters who carry their gear from the floatplane drop-off on Trail Lake to Sucker Creek. The trail is through wetlands, making it difficult to carry heavy gear including rafts. There is only limited winter use of this subunit. Small wheel planes land on a gravel bar at RM 20.6, and fishermen walk down to the mouth.

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit is used primarily by powerboaters coming upriver, floaters descending Alexander and Sucker creeks and users who access the area by wheelplane. The subunit provides high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities. In winter the subunit receives some snowmachine use. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be focus of management. Maintaining the public use site at the mouth of Sucker Creek will be a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide both motorized and non-motorized opportunities. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Iditarod Race Trail. The Iditarod Race Trail passes through this subunit. See Chapter 2, *Trails, Iditarod Race Trail.*

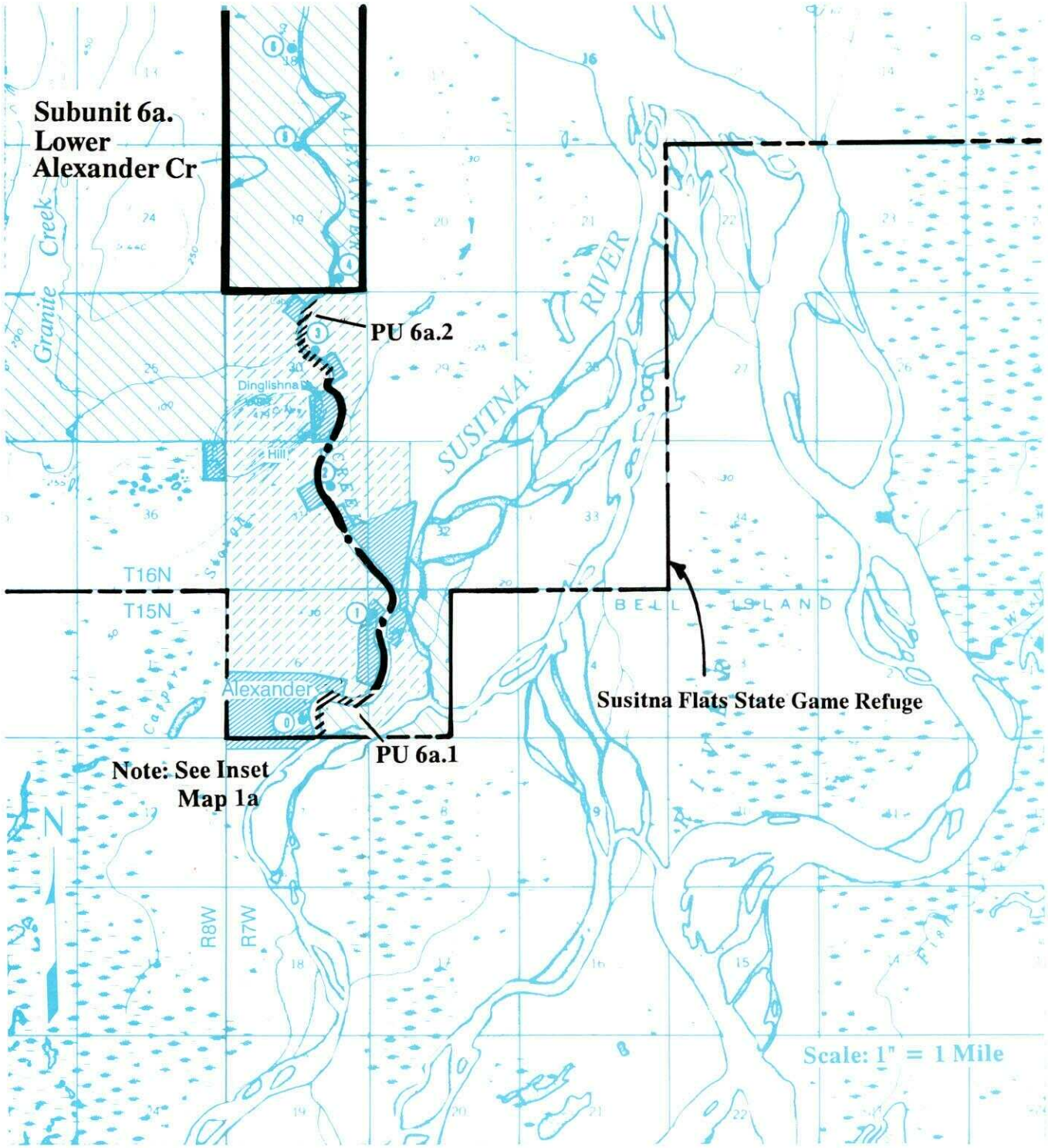
Public Use Sites

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

PU **6d.1** **Sucker Creek Junction** (RM 2.0). The area along both Alexander and Sucker creeks within one-quarter mile of the confluence is frequently used for fishing and camping.

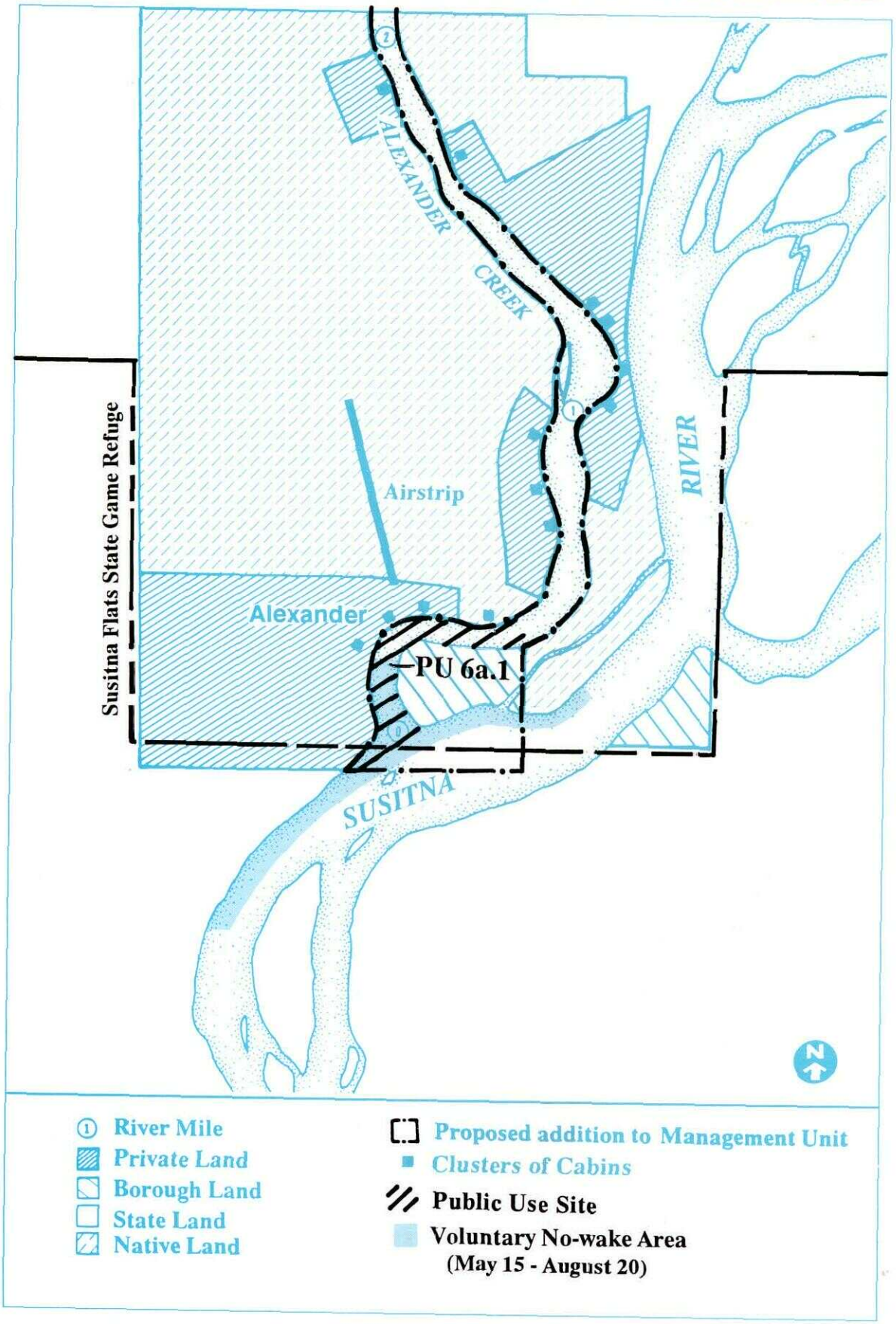
Alexander Creek Management Unit

Map 1: River Miles 0 - 6



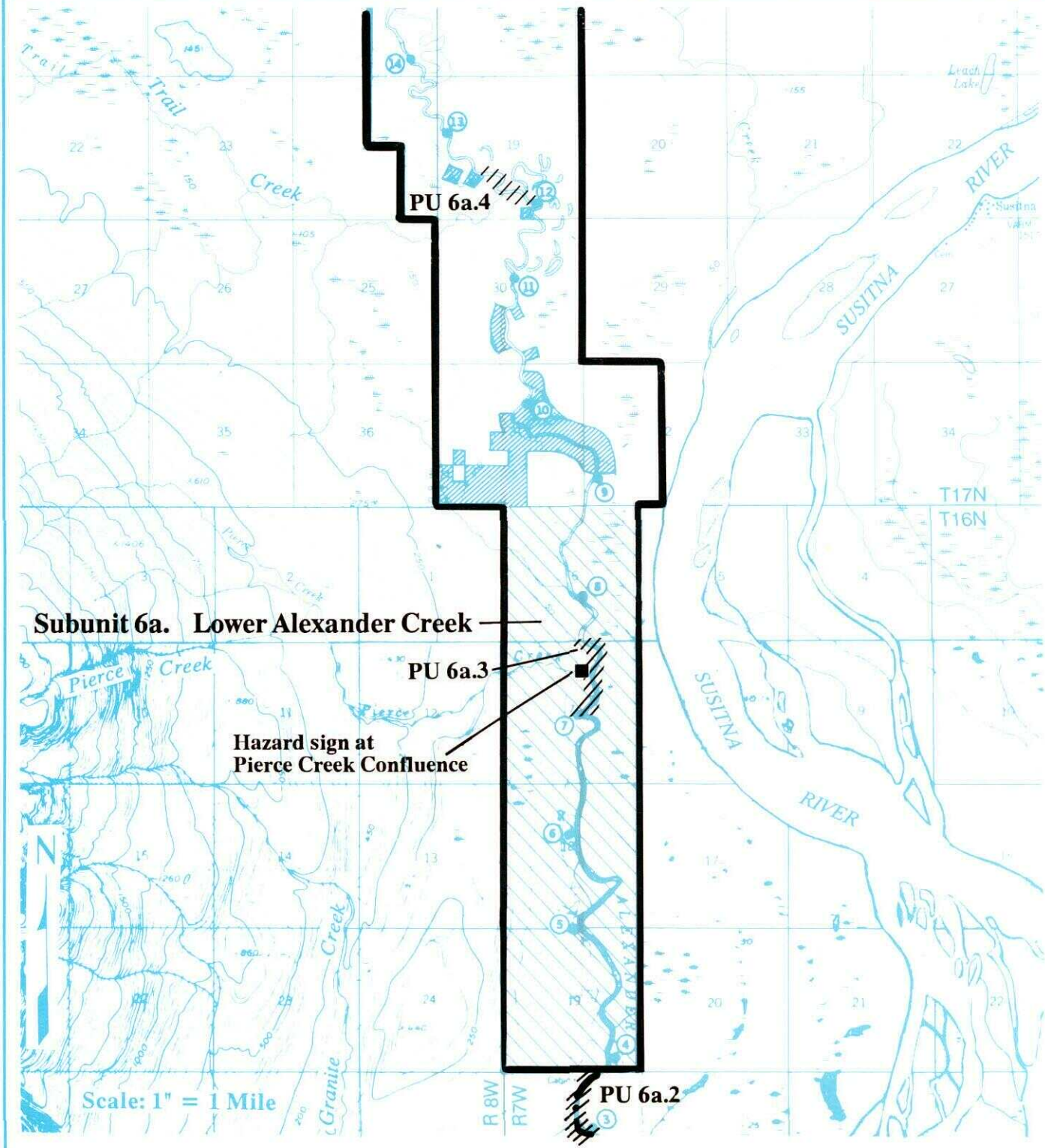
- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- Private Land
- Borough Land
- State Land
- Native Land
- Proposed addition to Management Unit
- **Public Use Sites**
  (Shorelands and water column only)

Map 1a Proposed Addition to the Alexander Creek Recreation River



Alexander Creek Management Unit

Map 2: River Miles 3 - 14



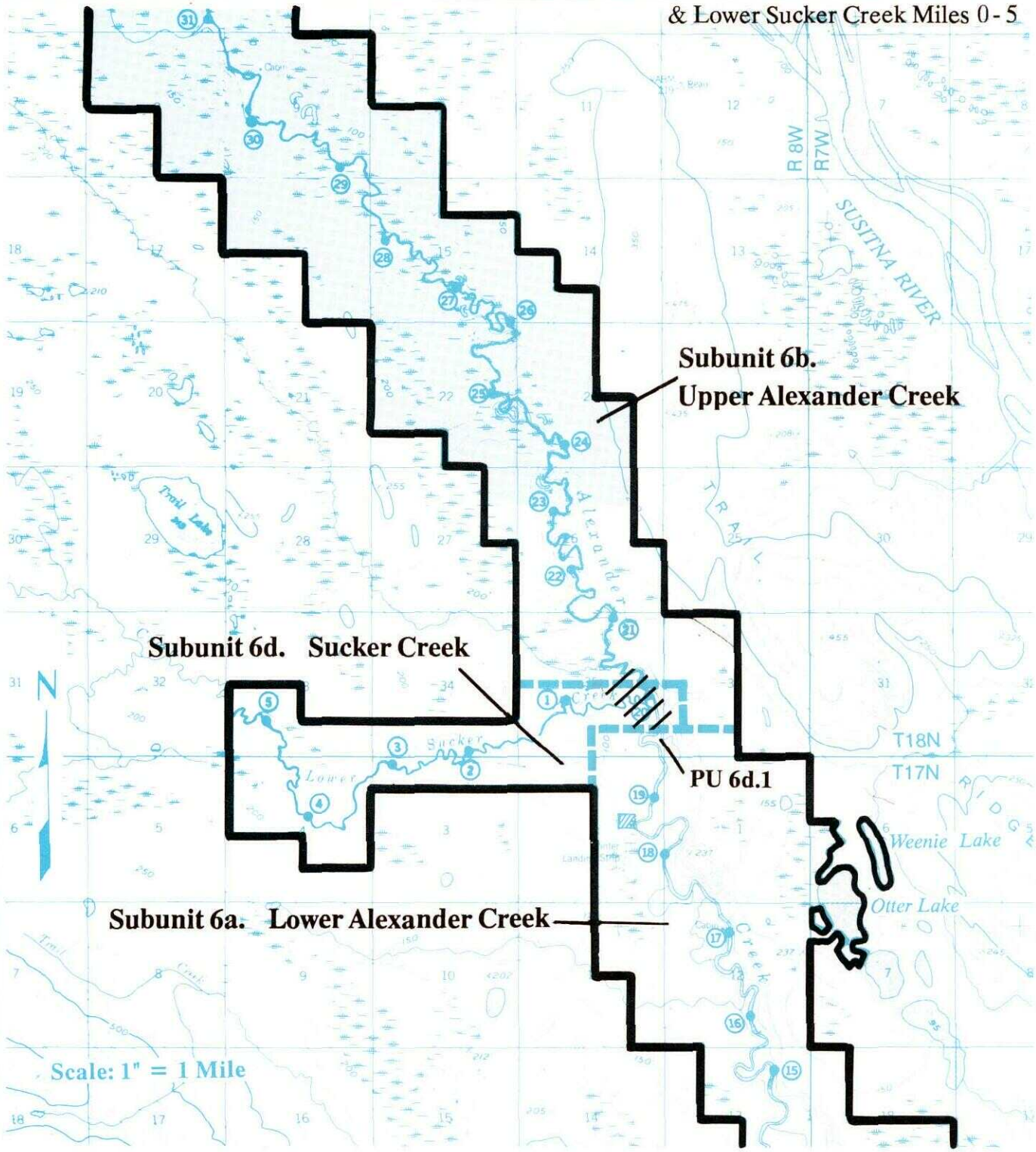
- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- River Mile
- Private Land
- Borough Land
- State Land

Public Use Sites
(Shorelands and water column only)

Proposed addition to Management Unit

Alexander Creek Management Unit

Map 3: River Miles 15 - 31 & Lower Sucker Creek Miles 0 - 5

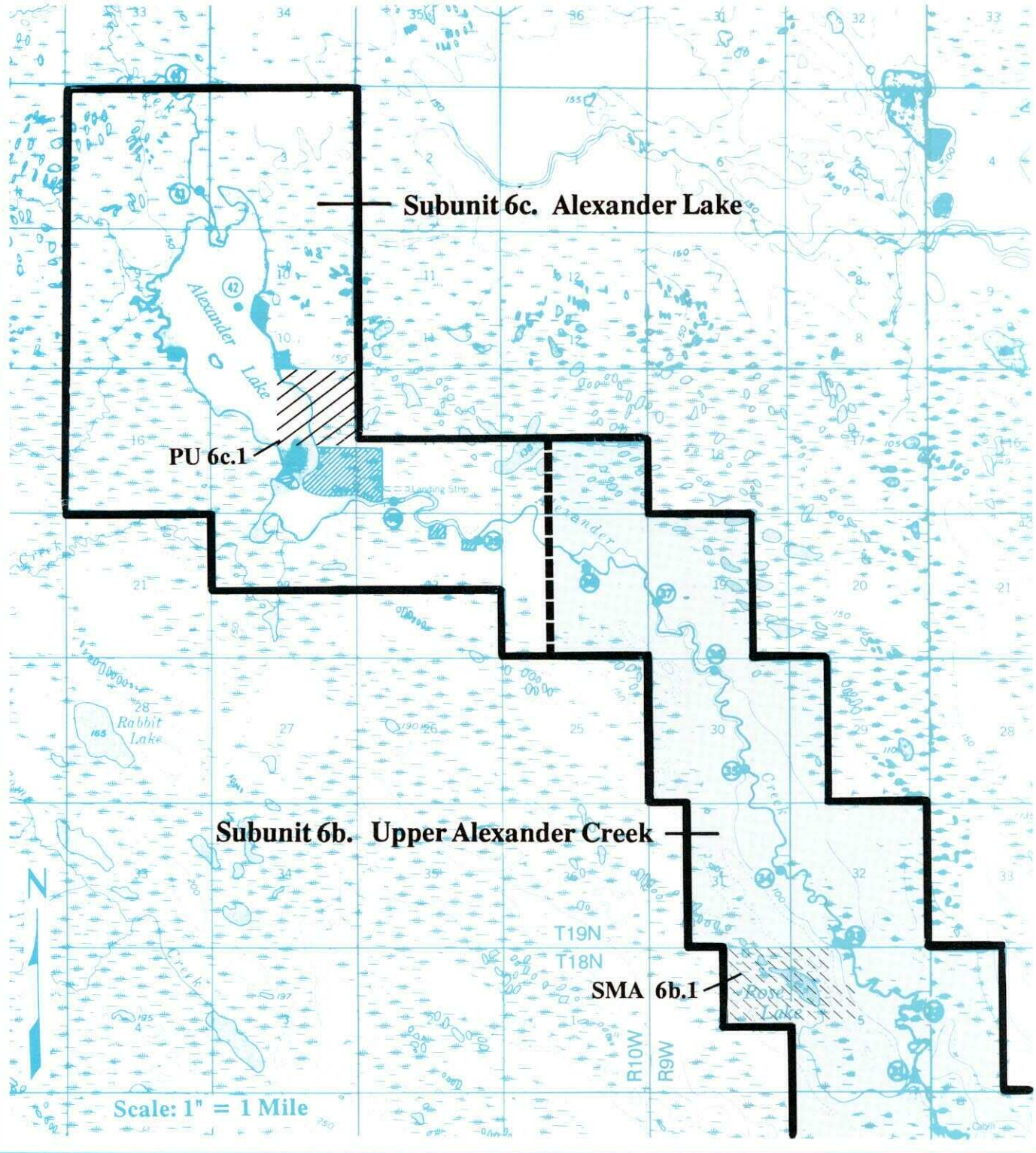


- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land

/// **Public Use Sites**
Non-motorized Area
(May 15 - August 20)

Alexander Creek Management Unit

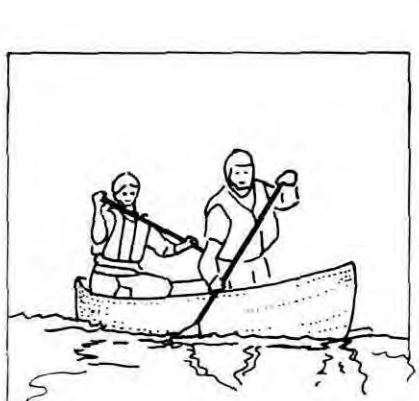
Map 4: River Miles 31 - 41



- Management Unit Boundary
- Subunit Boundary
- ① River Mile
- Private Land
- State Land
- Public Use Sites
- Special Management Areas
- Non-motorized Zone (Ice-free Season)

CHAPTER 4
Implementation

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CHAPTER 4

Implementation

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the actions necessary to implement the land use policies and actions described by the plan. These actions include proposals for legislation, a list of agency responsibilities, and recommendations for cooperation or coordination with other agencies and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

These implementation actions will be used as a basis for budget preparations, requests for legislative funding of capital improvement projects or designations, data collection, and other actions necessary to implement the plan.

These actions will take place over the 20-year life of the plan as the need develops. In some cases, the need exists now because of public safety. In other cases, the need may be years away (such as building public use cabins). Most of the projects depend on funding, although some could be done with volunteer help, such as litter patrols or the placement of signs.

AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION AS RECREATION RIVERS

Background

Under AS 41.23.490, state-owned land and water may be established as a Recreation River only by the legislature. This section recommends adding approximately 1,865 acres and just over 14 river miles to the Recreation Rivers. Designation will ensure that these lands are retained in public ownership and managed consistent with the adjacent subunits. This section also recommends deleting 350 acres from the Recreation Rivers which overlap with the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area. Additions are shown on Map 4.1. Additional recommended designations are also described under *Other Recommendations, Future Additions* in this chapter.

1. Upper Nancy Lake Creek (add 480 acres). This parcel includes Upper Nancy Lake Creek, a key road access point. Bank fishing is common here and the parcel is particularly important during the sockeye run in August. Camping occurs adjacent to a bridge. The parcel is mostly contiguous wetlands and includes 1.5 river miles. The area should be managed as part of the lower Little Susitna River subunit. The legal description of the proposed addition follows: Township 18 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian, Section 10: N½, SE¼

2. Middle Little Susitna River (delete 350 acres). A three-mile length of the Little Susitna River shorelands and water column has been designated as both part of the State Recreation Rivers and the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area (Township 17 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian, Sections 5, 7, and 8). The dual designa-

tion of the shorelands and the water column should remain. DLW and DOPOR should develop a management agreement for this area. The uplands that have dual designation should be deleted from the Recreation Rivers. The legal description of proposed changes are as follows:

Existing Recreation Rivers description:
Township 17 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian
Section 7: W½, S½, S½, SE¼
Section 8: E½, S½SW¼

Change Recreation Rivers description to:
Township 17 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian
Section 7: W½, S½S½SE¼
Section 8: E½E½E½, SW¼SE¼SE¼, S½SW¼SE¼, S½S½SW¼

3. Upper Moose Creek (add 1,120 acres). The proposed addition extends from the north boundary of the Upper Moose Creek subunit to the section line just north of K'da Lake. The addition would add two river miles and include the headwaters of Moose Creek and all of K'da Lake. With the exception of this proposed addition, the entire mainstream of both Moose and Kroto creeks are in the planning area. The proposed addition should include:

The shorelands, uplands and water column in T. 28 N., R. 6 W., S.M.
Section 28
Section 33: N½, N½S½
Section 34: NW¼NW¼, W½SW¼NW¼

4. Lower Alexander Creek (add approximately 115 acres of public land). Lower Alexander Creek is heavily used for recreation and sportfishing. Because of these values, public land and water in this area should be added to the Lower Alexander Creek Subunit (6a). This proposed addition would include four river miles and includes borough-owned uplands at the mouth and the state-owned shorelands and water column on the lower creek and part of the Susitna River. The proposed addition should include:

The shorelands and water column of Alexander Creek from ordinary high water mark to ordinary high water mark from the point at which it crosses the line dividing sections 19 and 30, T. 16 N., R. 7 W., S.M. downstream to the line dividing sections 6 and 7, T. 15 N., R. 7 W., S.M.

Also including those uplands, shorelands, and water column lying southeast of Alexander Creek within Section 6, T. 15 N., R. 7 W., S.M.

5. Upper Talkeetna River (add approximately 150 acres). The scenic Talkeetna Canyon extends to just above the mouth of Prairie Creek (RM 51.5). The uplands on the upper portion of the canyon are Native-owned. Because of its values for whitewater boating, the subunit should be extended to the upper end of the canyon. The proposed addition would add seven river miles to the Recreation Rivers and include the shorelands, river column, and public easement between the existing Talkeetna Recreation River boundary and the upper end of the canyon above the mouth of Prairie Creek. The addition should be managed as part of the Upper Talkeetna River Subunit (3d). Because the Talkeetna above this point is wide, braided, and contains several mining operations, it is not recommended for addition. The proposed addition should include:

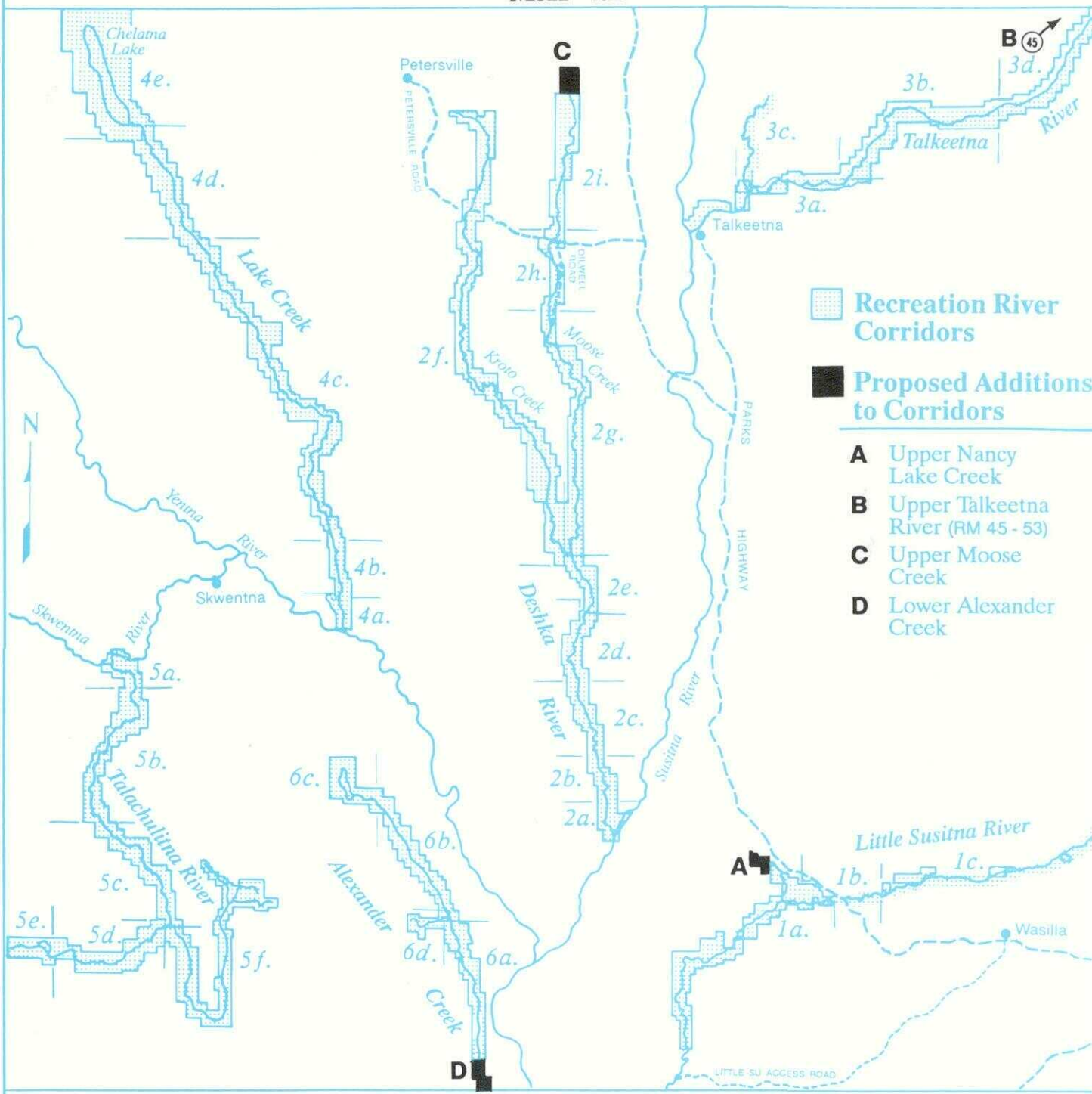
The shorelands and the water column of the Talkeetna River from mean high water mark to mean high water mark from the point at which it crosses the line dividing Townships 28 and 29 North, Seward Meridian, upstream to the point at which it crosses the line dividing sections 23 and 24, Township 29 North, Range 2 East, Seward Meridian.

6. Error in Legal Description. A typographic error in the legal description for the Talkeetna Recreation River should be corrected. Change AS 41.23.500(6)(J) from Section 16: E½SW¼ to Section 16: E½, SW¼.

SUSITNA BASIN RECREATION RIVERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Proposed Additions to Recreation River Corridors

MAP 4.1



MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS

1. Little Susitna River
- 1a. Lower Little Susitna River
- 1b. Middle Little Susitna River
- 1c. Upper Little Susitna River

2. Deshka River
- 2a. Mouth Of Deshka River
- 2b. Lower Deshka River
- 2c. Middle Deshka River
- 2d. Neil Lake
- 2e. The Forks
- 2f. Kroto Creek
- 2g. Lower Moose Creek
- 2h. Oilwell Road
- 2i. Upper Moose Creek

3. Talkeetna River
- 3a. Lower Talkeetna River
- 3b. Middle Talkeetna River
- 3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek
- 3d. Talkeetna Canyon

4. Lake Creek
- 4a. Lake Creek Mouth
- 4b. Lower Lake Creek
- 4c. Middle Lake Creek
- 4d. Upper Lake Creek
- 4e. Chelatna Lake

5. Talachulitna River
- 5a. Mouth Of Talachulitna River
- 5b. Talachulitna River Canyon
- 5c. Middle Talachulitna River
- 5d. Talachulitna Creek
- 5e. Judd Lake
- 5f. Upper Talachulitna River

6. Alexander Creek
- 6a. Lower Alexander Creek
- 6b. Upper Alexander Creek
- 6c. Alexander Lake
- 6d. Sucker Creek

PROCEDURES FOR PLAN REVIEW, MODIFICATION, & AMENDMENT

Introduction

Land-use designations, policies, implementation actions, and management guidelines in this plan may be changed if conditions warrant. The plan will be updated periodically as new data and new technologies become available, and as changing social or economic conditions place different demands on state lands within the planning area. This section discusses three elements of plan modification: periodic review, changes to the plan, and discretion within guidelines.

Periodic Review. The planning team and advisory board should be consulted annually to evaluate plan implementation. The plan will be reviewed approximately once every five years to determine if revisions are necessary. An interagency planning team and the Recreation Rivers advisory board will coordinate this review. This revision should be consistent with AS 41.23.430 - .440 in the Recreation Rivers Act.

Changes to the Plan. There are three types of changes to a plan: amendments, special exceptions, and minor changes. Amendments and special exceptions are plan revisions subject to the planning process requirements of AS 38.04.065; minor changes are not. The director will review proposed changes and determine whether they qualified as an amendment, special exception, or a minor change. Changes to the plan may be proposed by agencies, municipalities, the Recreation Rivers advisory board, or members of the public. Requests for changes should be submitted to the Southcentral Regional Office of the Division of Land and Water, Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

The regulation that defines the three types of plan modifications, 11 AAC 55.030, is proposed to be revised. It is expected that the present regulations will be expanded to include procedures similar to those described below. When new regulations are adopted, they will supersede the section that follows. In the interim, current regulations and procedures below will guide plan modifications.

1. Plan Amendment

An amendment is a plan revision under AS 38.04.065 and permanently changes the land use plan by adding to or modifying the basic intent of the plan. Changes to the management intent for a subunit; changing the allowed or prohibited uses, policies, or guidelines; reclassification; and changing some implementation actions, constitute amendments.

The following actions are examples of changes that would require an amendment:

- a proposal to prohibit a use that is now a designated use, or, conversely to allow a prohibited use;
- a proposal to open an area to mineral entry; or
- allowing leasing for a lodge anywhere in the planning area.

According to AS 38.04.065, amendments must be adopted by the commissioner. The Department of Natural Resources will convene the planning team and Recreation Rivers advisory board as needed to make recommendations on plan amendments.

Procedures for Plan Amendments

A. Taking into account the requirements of AS 38.04.065(b), the commissioner will prepare a written document that specifies:

- the reasons for the amendment, such as changed social or economic conditions;
- the alternative course of action (what the plan is being changed to); and
- why the plan amendment is in the public interest.

B. Where practical, the document should be part of or circulated with a finding required by AS 38.05.035(e).

C. Before making the final decision on the amendment, the department will provide for meaningful public participation in the planning process and public notice consistent with AS 38.04.065(b)(8), AS 38.05.945, and AS 41.23.440(a). The department will also request comments from the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board, unless it has previously convened the board to make recommendations on the amendment. If warranted, the commissioner may hold public meetings before making a decision.

2. Special Exceptions

A special exception does not permanently change the provisions of the plan. Instead, it allows a one-time limited-purpose variance of the plan's provisions, without changing the plan's general management intent or guidelines. Special exceptions may be made if complying with the plan is excessively burdensome, impractical, or inequitable to a third party, and if the purposes and spirit of the plan can be achieved despite the exception.

Special exceptions may also occur when the proposed activity requires only a small part of a management subunit, does not change or modify the general management intent, and serves to clarify or facilitate the implementation of the plan. A special exception cannot be used to reclassify an area. Special exceptions may apply to prohibited uses or guidelines.

The following actions are examples of changes that would be a special exception:

- based on more detailed data, allowing a prohibited use in a small area on the edge of a management subunit next to a subunit where that use is allowed; or
- a preference right granted under AS 38.05.035(e), where the director determines such an action is necessary to correct an injustice and will not significantly affect the intent of the plan.

A special exception is a plan revision under AS 38.04.065 to a land use plan and must be adopted by the commissioner. The Department of Natural Resources will convene the planning team and advisory board as needed to make recommendations on special exceptions.

Special Exceptions to Guidelines Modified by "Will"

Special exceptions to guidelines modified by the phrase "will" may be allowed for individual actions. The decision not to follow a pertinent guideline modified by the term "will" will be consistent with the procedures for special exceptions.

Procedures for Special Exceptions

A. Taking into account the requirements of AS 38.04.065(b), the director will prepare a written document that specifies:

- the reasons for the special exception (i.e., why a variance of the plan's provisions is needed);
- the alternative action or course of action to be followed;
- why the special exception is in the public interest; and
- how the general intent of the plan and management unit will be met by the alternative course of action.

B. Where practical, the document should be part of or circulated with a finding required by AS 38.05.035(e).

C. Before making the final decision on the special exception, the department will provide for meaningful public participation in the planning process, and public notice consistent with AS 38.04.065(b)(8), AS 38.05.945, and AS 41.23.440(a). The department will also request comments from the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board, unless it has previously convened the board to make recommendations on the special exception. If warranted by the degree of controversy, the commissioner may hold public meetings before making a decision.



3. Minor Changes

Minor changes do not modify or change the basic intent of the plan or a management unit. Minor changes may be needed for clarification, to make technical corrections, or to facilitate implementation of the plan. Minor changes may be proposed by agencies or the public.

Minor changes are made at the discretion of the regional manager and do not require public review. Affected agencies will be notified and have an opportunity to comment; the comment period may be provided through existing interagency review processes for associated actions. The regional manager's decision may be appealed to the director. The director's decision may be appealed to the commissioner.

4. Discretion within Guidelines

Some policies in the plan, such as those modified by the terms "feasible and prudent," "feasible," and "should" are written to allow for exceptions if the conditions described in the policy are met. The definitions of these terms are given in Appendix A. The procedures for allowing exceptions to these guidelines are given in this section. Allowing an exception following these procedures is neither a revision nor a change to the plan.

Guidelines Modified by "Feasible and Prudent" or "Feasible"

Exceptions to guidelines modified by the phrase "feasible and prudent" or "feasible" (see definitions in Appendix A) may be allowed after following the steps outlined below.

A. The regional manager will prepare a written document that specifies:

- the conditions that make compliance with the guideline not feasible or not feasible and prudent;
- the alternative course of action to be followed; and
- how the intent of the plan and management unit will be met by the alternative course of action.

B. Where practical, the document should be part of or circulated with a finding required by AS 38.05.035(e).

C. Before making the final determination, the director will give notification required by the applicable permitting procedure and request comments on the proposed action. This notification will include the points described in A.

Guidelines Modified by "Should"

Exceptions to guidelines modified by the word "should" can be made by the DNR Regional Manager, or his designees. The guideline does, however, state an intent of the plan that should be met, using the best managerial practices for the given situation. These exceptions require a written justification in the administrative record. The justification should briefly outline how the action meets the intent of the guideline or why the particular circumstances justify deviation from the intended action or conditions.

5. Recommended Statute Changes for Public Notice Requirements

AS 41.23.440(a) requires extensive public participation and public notice in preparing and revising management plans for the Recreation Rivers. This requirement is appropriate for preparing or updating the plan. However, the requirement makes it difficult to make small changes in the plan, changes that may be necessary to facilitate management or enforcement, and that are noncontroversial.

From AS 41.23.440(a), "In preparation *or revision* of the plan, the commissioner shall comply with the notice requirements of AS 38.05.945 and provide *written notice by first-class mail to private property owners in the Recreation Rivers corridors* and shall hold at least two public hearings in municipalities and communities near the Recreation River and the Recreation River corridor." Amendments and special exceptions to the plan are revisions. The requirement that revisions include two public hearings, and wide-spread notice by mail (over and above the requirement AS 38.05.945) will make it expensive to do small changes that are non-controversial but are necessary to facilitate management, enforcement, or correct errors in the plan.

AS 38.04.065(b)(8) already requires meaningful participation by affected local governments, state and federal agencies, adjacent landowners, and the general public. AS 38.05.945 already requires the department to publish notice in newspapers of general and local circulation. It also requires public service announcements, posting in conspicuous locations, notification of parties likely to be affected, or another method calculated to reach affected persons. This level of notice should be sufficient for actions expected to be only of limited effect or controversy. In addition, all amendments and special exceptions require notice to the Recreation Rivers advisory board and planning team.

Therefore, to facilitate non-controversial changes to the plan, the requirements of AS 41.23.440(a) should be limited to preparing the plan, updating the plan, or changes expected to be controversial. Non-controversial amendments and special exceptions should be guided by the existing department procedures established for other department plans under AS 38.04.065 and AS 38.05.945.

To implement this recommendation, AS 41.23.440(a) should be changed by adding the language in italics: "In preparation or *a major* revision of the plan, the commissioner shall comply with the notice requirements of AS 38.05.945, provide written notice by first-class mail to private property owners in the Recreation Rivers planning area, and hold at least two public hearings in municipalities and communities near the Recreation River. *The commissioner will also hold one or more public hearing on any revision to the plan if requested by an affected local government.*"

TRAILS ACTION PLAN

Trails cross through a mix of land ownerships and agency jurisdictions within the planning area and trails are essential to transportation and recreation in the Susitna Basin. Consistent trail management policies are needed to ensure that trails continue to be available for public use, and that trail use does not adversely affect other resources, such as wetlands and anadromous streams. DNR, in consultation with DFG and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, should prepare a trails plan for the Susitna Basin. Specific tasks for the trails plan are:

1. Public participation

- Develop a public participation program to involve trail users groups in plan development.
- Develop public information materials explaining plan decisions (e.g., trailhead kiosks, brochures).
- Coordinate volunteers to help implement the plan

2. Trail mapping

- Map existing trails and legal access
- Identify current use of the trails
- Identify trails capable of sustaining summer ORV use, and identify areas susceptible to damage from summer ORV use (e.g., wetlands or erosive slopes).
- Determine appropriate management of ORVs in susceptible areas (e.g., designated trails for summer ORV use)
- Identify areas where additional trails are needed

3. Stream crossing

- Identify sites where trails cross anadromous streams
- Determine the appropriate method for stream crossing at these sites (e.g., bridge, individual DFG permit, general DFG permit)
- Work with DFG to establish general Title 16 permits for stream crossings where appropriate

4. Trail management

- Develop management guidelines for public trails.
- Establish regulations or a special use area to manage summer ORV use. Identify whether new authorities are needed for trail management.
- Set priorities for needed trail maintenance or construction projects, including trailhead facilities and bridges.

- Set priorities for enforcement of trail policies and regulations.
- Identify funding needed for trail management.
- Develop trail management program including considering all possible sources of management assistance, including state and borough agencies, federal assistance, and volunteer groups.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreation Rivers Advisory Board. Consistent with AS 41.23.430 (b) the commissioner shall consult with the advisory board in preparing, adopting, and revising the Recreation Rivers management plan and regulations affecting use and management of the Recreation Rivers. DNR and the advisory board will adopt and periodically update bylaws which outline the responsibilities of the commissioner and the board, and rules of order.

Public Notice Statute Changes. See Part 5 in this chapter under *Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment.*

Susitna Area Plan Update. The floodplain and contiguous wetlands associated with the Recreation Rivers extend outside the plan boundaries in some areas. Land and water use in these areas may directly affect water quality and fish habitat in the corridors. When the Susitna Area Plan is updated, water quality and fisheries habitat protection measures should be considered. In addition, where the legal description varied between the Susitna River Plan and the Recreation Rivers Act, the reclassification of state lands should be considered.

The Susitna Area Plan should consider recommending that the mouth of Yellow Jacket Creek on the Upper Talkeetna River be reserved for public access. The landing area located there is one of the few public access points for float trips down the Talkeetna River.

Statewide Boating Safety Legislation. The plan supports a statewide recreational boating safety law. Alaska is the only state which does not have such a law. Consequently, this is the only state where the U.S. Coast Guard is responsible for registration and numbering of recreational vessels. Coast Guard patrols of the area in the past have been minimal. The new law would allow Alaska to receive federal funds to develop and implement a boating safety education program, vessel registration system, establish minimum boating equipment standards, accident reporting system, increased uniform patrols, in-service training for enforcement officers, search and rescue, and Coast Guard Auxiliary assistance.

Denying Permits and Leases. The planning team and advisory board recommend that applicants with a past record of serious fish and game violations (such as same-day airborne hunting, wanton waste of fish or game, or over-harvesting) be denied permits and leases to use state lands or facilities for commercial use.

Enforcement. The Recreation Rivers Act grants the commissioner authority to designate peace officers to enforce the provisions of the act under AS 41.23.440(b). DNR should seek citation authority and draft regulations which describe the authorities of peace officers in the Recreation Rivers. The regulations should also describe the citation authority and procedures for setting a bail bond schedule. Also see *Enforcement* in Chapter 4.

Monitoring. Successful management programs require systematic monitoring. Monitoring enables managers to document how impacts or uses are changing and, respond to those charges. A monitoring program for the Recreation Rivers will focus on: use levels (trips per day), litter (volume collected by patrols per river mile and percentage of sites with significant levels), camp encounters (percentage of nights users camp within sight and sound of other camps), and river encounters (number of groups seen per day).

While use monitoring is needed for all segments, the department will begin with the three whitewater reaches of the Talkeetna River, Talachulitna River, and Lake Creek. Because the number of trips on these rivers is relatively small (less than two hundred per year on each), the staff cost of collecting and analyzing this information would be low.

Use information areawide should continue to be collected by the Department of Fish and Game creel census and statewide survey efforts.

FUTURE ADDITIONS

1. Upper Nancy Lake Creek. A small parcel of borough-selected land is located at the exit of Nancy Lake Creek. This parcel is not recommended by the plan for addition to the Recreation Rivers at this time. However, when the plan is updated, if the parcel is no longer borough selected, it should be considered for addition to the Recreation Rivers. The legal description of the proposed addition is: Township 18 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian, Section 3: S½SW¼SW¼, W½SW¼NW¼SW¼SW¼. This area receives high sport fishing use and includes important habitat.

2. Lower Little Susitna River. When the plan is updated, DNR and DFG should consider whether the Lower Little Susitna on the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge should be recommended for designation as a Recreation River. This area is currently receiving the highest sport fishing and boating use on the Little Susitna River.

3. Lower Alexander Creek. When the plan is updated, DNR and DFG should consider whether the mouth of Alexander Creek on the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge should be recommended for designation as a Recreation River. This includes the land and water in Township 15 North, Range 7 West, Section 7: N½. This area includes the confluence of Alexander Creek and the Susitna River which receives heavy use for sport fishing.

4. Prairie Creek. Prairie Creek has been suggested as an addition to the Recreation Rivers because it serves as access to the Talkeetna Canyon and is an excellent whitewater float in its own right. Access is limited because the uplands are Native-owned. The creek also has high value as a bear concentration area during the king salmon run. There are concerns that a designation as a Recreation River may create conflicts between recreationists and bears during the king salmon run. In addition, under 41.23.480(c), "The commissioner may not manage a Recreation River corridor described in AS 41.23.500 as a unit of the state park system or as a game refuge, game sanctuary, or as critical habitat." This may preclude DFG management of uses in the proposed addition to protect bears.

As an alternative to adding Prairie Creek to the Talkeetna Recreation River, information on public access should be available including the locations of one-acre 17(b) easements on Stephan Lake and at the mouth, trail easements, the rights of the public to use the water column, and the rights of the public to use the land below the ordinary high water. Information on how to reduce conflicts with bears should also be provided. This may include discouraging the public from using Prairie Creek during the king salmon run. Finally, if the river is proposed as critical habitat area, language should be included to allow for recreation use, including floating, when bears are not concentrated in the area.

Commercial Facilities. AS 41.23.470(d) should be amended to delete "If the facility is not in competition with a private facility or enterprise." This clause is too broad, difficult to adjudicate, and may subject the state to litigation if competition develops after a facility is built. The section essentially prohibits all types of leasing under AS 38.05.070 (and .073) within the Recreation Rivers. The planning team and advisory board thought that there may be cases where leasing a commercial campground or boat launch may be in the best public interest even if the facility competes with another private facility or enterprise.

Fisheries Enhancement on Lake Creek. The Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association should provide the public and the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board the opportunity to comment on fisheries enhancement activities on Lake Creek.

Fishing Regulations. Consistent with conserving fisheries resources, the Board of Fisheries should open lower Moose Creek (just above the confluence of Moose and Kroto creeks) to king salmon fishing with similar bag, possession, and size limits as the Deshka River below the forks.

Road accessible stretches of Moose Creek (adjacent to the Oilwell and Petersville roads) should not be open to king salmon fishing to avoid overharvest. This recommendation is intended to provide floaters fishing opportunities on a non-motorized section of the Deshka River.

Definitions. To clarify the intent of proposed regulations to implement the plan, some terms for the glossary should be adopted into regulation. These definitions are consistent with their usage in the Recreation Rivers Act. Terms include: Recreation Rivers, river corridor, corridor, river, uplands, and shorelands.

AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Alaska Department of Natural Resources

A. DEPARTMENT

Promulgate Regulations. Promulgate regulations needed to implement the policies and guidelines recommended for the Recreation Rivers by this plan.

Adopt consistent regulations in the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area. Adopt regulations for the alternating weekends motorized and non-motorized weekends for boats on the Little Susitna River and the 96 hour camping limit for the river where it passes through the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area. The camping limit should apply to an area within one-half mile of the Little Susitna River in the Nancy Lakes State Recreation Area.

B. DIVISION OF LAND & WATER (DLW)

The Division of Land and Water is the division within DNR charged with the management of state land and water within the planning area. The division will prioritize the following implementation items based upon the level of funding, staffing, and other resources allocated for management:

1. Designate special use areas. As an interim measure, until the regulations recommended by the plan are in place, the division will identify important public use sites requiring immediate management and designate them as special use areas.

2. Develop policies and procedures. After DNR has promulgated regulations establishing the necessary authorities, the division will develop the policies and procedures needed to implement programs recommended in the plan, such as the commercial use permit and enforcement responsibilities.

3. Education. The DLW will take the lead, in cooperation with other agencies, in developing brochures to inform river users of regulations specific to Recreation Rivers, boater safety, and disposal of waste and litter. Informational signs and kiosks will also be developed and posted by the division.

4. Provide trained staff. Provide equipment, training, field housing, and office space for staff to perform management duties at the level consistent with funding levels. Office staff will be responsible for administering the commercial use permit program, adjudication of land use authorizations, and field support and coordination. Field staff will enforce plan regulations, post trespass structures, and maintain public facilities.

5. Monitor whitewater river use. Work with boaters to monitor use and impacts on these rivers. The division may institute a voluntary reservation system for the use of the Talkeetna Canyon and later Lake Creek and the Talachulitna River.

6. Enter into cooperative management agreements. Where needed, the division should enter into cooperative management agreements with other state, federal, or local agencies for management of specific sites or areas in the Recreation Rivers.

7. Instream flow. DLW will coordinate an instream flow technical working group which includes representatives from DLW, DGGS, DFG, and NPS. DLW should seek a state position to prepare the applications. DLW will also supply graphics assistance. This group will combine fisheries, recreation, and hydrology information into a recommended instream flow application. Contingent on funding and staff, the applications will be filed jointly by DNR and DFG and will be adjudicated by DLW.

8. Establish public facilities. The division will work with the advisory board to establish priorities for the development of public facilities identified by the plan.

C. DIVISION OF MINING (DOM)

1. Field inspections. Make at least annual field inspections of active mining claims on Lake Creek.

D. DIVISION OF GEOLOGICAL & GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS (DGGS)

1. Initiate boat erosion study. Initiate a study of the effects of boat-induced erosion on the Little Susitna River. This river was selected for study because of its high level of boat use, narrow width, erodible banks, and accessibility.

2. Instream flow. Continue to monitor stream flow on Lake Creek, the Talachulitna River, and Alexander Creek.

3. Evaluate erosion control structures. The division will assist in evaluating erosion control structures and the effects on flow regime. In addition, the division will continue to evaluate stream flow on all Recreation Rivers as necessary for instream flow reservations.

4. Lake Creek. Conduct base-line monitoring of water quality of Lake, Camp, and Sunflower creeks (in cooperation with DEC) adjacent to the area open to new mineral entry under the leasehold location system.

E. DIVISION OF PARKS AND OUTDOORS RECREATION (DOPOR)

A. Cooperative management agreement. DLW and DOPOR should develop a cooperative management agreement(s) to ensure efficient management of state land and waters in areas managed by either of the two divisions in or adjacent to the Recreation Rivers.

2. Alaska Department of Fish and Game

The Department of Fish and Game has several ongoing and proposed research projects to obtain information on fish and wildlife populations, and human uses of fish and wildlife resources in the Susitna Recreation Rivers. The information generated by these projects is essential for managing the river. In addition, DFG should initiate management actions that ensure consistent and efficient management between the DFG and DNR on the Recreation Rivers.

A. DIVISION OF HABITAT

1. Identify sites for general stream crossing. To reduce the need for construction of additional bridges within the Recreation Rivers, the division should work with user groups to identify appropriate crossing points that may be authorized for use under a general permit (AS 16.05.870).

2. Adopt consistent camping regulations. Adopt camping regulations similar to those applied to the Little Susitna Recreation River within the Susitna Flats Game Refuge, to provide consistent management for all along the Little Susitna River.

3. Initiate cooperative management agreement. Develop a cooperative management agreement with DLW for the management of the areas below ordinary high water and adjacent to the Little Susitna River within the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge.

4. Boating regulations for the Susitna Flats Game Refuge. Adopt the following boating regulations for the Susitna Flats Game Refuge to make them consistent with boating regulations in the Recreation Rivers and to protect public safety in congested areas.

NON-MOTORIZED AREA: Plan Boundary to Little Susitna River access Road (RM 28.6 - 33.1)

Weekends: The first and third weekend of each month. (12:01 a.m Saturday to midnight Sunday).

Season: May 15 to August 20.

POWERBOATS-ONLY AREA: River segment is the same as above non-motorized area.

Weekends: The second and fourth weekends of each month (12:01 a.m. Saturday to midnight Sunday).

Season: May 15 to August 20.

Justification: To provide consistent management of boating between the Little Susitna Recreation River and the Game Refuge. The week days and fifth weekend in each month during this period shall have no-boating restrictions. See justification for non-motorized and powerboats-only areas for the Little Susitna River in Chapter 3.

NO-WAKE AREA: One mile below the Little Susitna River Access Road and just above My Creek (RM 27.6 - 29.5).

Season: May 15 to August 20.

Justification: This area is heavily used by bank anglers. The only boat launch on the lower Little Susitna River is located in this area. The river segment is narrow and includes several blind bends. The no-wake area will reduce conflicts between powerboaters and bank anglers, and reduce the risk of collisions near the boat launch. DFG may adjust the size of this proposed no-wake area to meet this management intent.

SAFETY CONCERNS IN THE SUSITNA FLATS STATE GAME REFUGE. DFG should address the following safety concerns:

Location: Old FAA station on lower Little Susitna River to just above the weir (RM 17.0 - 33.1)

Season: Peak-use season

Justification: More complaints were heard from the public concerning boating-related accidents within the game refuge than in any other part of the Recreation Rivers. The primary area of concern is above the old FAA station. The Department of Fish and Game should address these concerns. Horsepower limits and hull size limitations were discussed by the advisory board but no specific solution is recommended at this time.

B. DIVISION OF SPORT FISHERIES

1. Initiate research on effects of boats on fisheries. Conduct a cooperate study with the University of Alaska to evaluate the effects of jet boat use on fish habitat.

2. Cook Inlet rainbow trout studies. Conduct study on the biology and harvest of wild rainbow trout in several Susitna Basin streams. Studies should focus on Lake Creek, Talachulitna River, and Deshka River.

3. Stock origins of coho salmon in Upper Cook Inlet. Develop a research plan to identify wild and hatchery coho salmon stocks in Cook Inlet sport and commercial fisheries. Identification of coho salmon stocks is required to improve the management of both commercial and sport fisheries.

4. Creel and escapement studies of chinook and coho salmon stocks of the Little Susitna River. Provide information on the sport harvest, escapement, and biology of chinook and coho salmon in the Little Susitna River. Estimates of the contribution of stocked coho salmon to sport harvest and enhancement will also be obtained.

5. Creel and escapement studies of chinook salmon in northern Cook Inlet. Provide information on sport harvest, escapement, and biology of chinook salmon in Lake Creek and several other Susitna Basin streams. Counted chinook salmon spawners will be in the Talachulitna, Deshka, and Alexander Rivers and in Clear Creek, among other northern Cook Inlet streams.

6. Northern Cook Inlet chinook and coho salmon escapement. In cooperation with project 3, above, evaluate the return of hatchery-reared coho salmon to the Little Susitna River.

7. Instream flow. The division will supply information on fisheries resource location, timing, and flow needs in cooperation with the Division of Habitat.

8. Recommendation to Board of Fish. Consistent with conserving fisheries resources, the division should recommend to the Board of Fish that lower Moose Creek be open to king salmon harvest.

C. DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

1. Lower Susitna moose population identification and movements study. This study will provide information on moose populations, movements, biology, and habitat preferences in the Susitna Valley including in all of the Recreation River corridors.

3. Department of Public Safety

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Enforcement. Provide enforcement staff on the rivers as budget and staffing allow.

4. Matanuska-Susitna Borough

A. PARKS AND RECREATION

Initiate cooperative management agreement. Enter into a cooperative management agreement with DNR to ensure compatible management of public lands on the lower Deshka River (including the mouth).

B. PLANNING

Develop comprehensive plans. Develop a comprehensive plan (in addition to the Talkeetna River plan currently underway) for areas within the Recreation Rivers, to ensure that uses of private lands within the corridors do not significantly degrade fish, wildlife, or recreation values.

5. United States Coast Guard

A. ENFORCEMENT

Increase patrols on the six Recreation Rivers, especially during the peak fishing season near the river mouths.

B. NAVIGABILITY DETERMINATION

Clarify which of the Recreation Rivers are navigable.

6. National Park Service

INSTREAM FLOW

Complete its report "Instream Flow Needs for Recreation" which includes information to be used in the instream flow applications.

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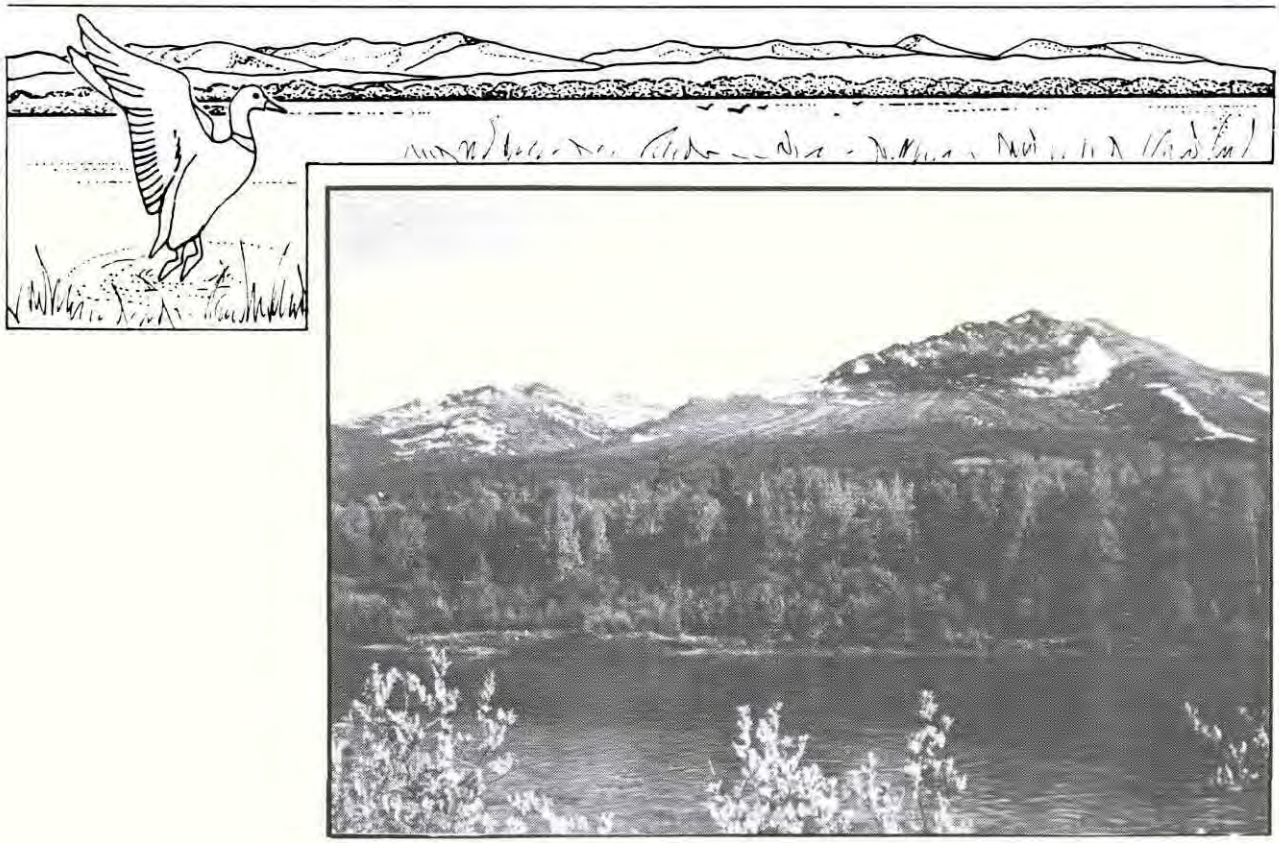
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APPENDIX A

Glossary

AAC. Alaska Administrative Code.

Airboat. A boat driven by an aircraft propeller and steered by a rudder. This does not include aircraft or hovercraft.

Aircraft. Any device that is used or intended for flight or movement of people or goods in the air. This does not include a hovercraft.

Airstrip development. Construction of a landing strip for airplanes that involves levelling the ground or removing or modifying a substantial amount of vegetation.

Anadromous fish stream. A waterbody supporting anadromous fish, including rivers, lakes, or streams from their mouth to their uppermost reaches, including all sloughs and backwaters adjoining the waters, and that portion of the streambeds or lakebeds covered by ordinary high water. Anadromous streams are shown in "The Atlas to the Catalog of Waters Important for Spawning, Rearing, or Migration of Salmon" (referred to as the Anadromous Fish Stream Catalog) compiled by DFG.

Anchor buoy. A float attached to the bottom by anchors, lines, or chains for making fast a vessel.

AS. Alaska Statute.

Boat storage. Keeping a boat in one place more than four days on state land and water during the ice-free season and more than 14 days during the winter. This includes attaching a boat to the bank by a line, pulled up on the shorelands, or placed on the uplands. Boat storage does not include boats tied to mooring buoys, anchored to the bottom, or attached to docks.

Boat. Any type of watercraft used or capable of use being used as a means of transportation on water. This does not include aircraft equipped to land on water or floating facilities.

Buffer. An area of land between two activities or resources used to reduce the effect of one activity upon another.

Camp(ing). See *Primitive tent camps.*

Campground. See the examples of the types of improvements that may be included in a campground in the definitions for *Recreation, Developed Public Facility* in Chapter 2.

Campsite. An area suitable or used for camping.

CFS. Cubic feet per second.

Class 1. Moving water with a few riffles and small waves. Few or no obstructions.

Class 2. Easy rapids with waves up to three feet, and wide, clear channels that are obvious without scouting. Some maneuvering is required.

Class 3. Rapids with high, irregular waves often capable of swamping an open canoe. Narrow passages that often require scouting from shore.

Class 4. Long, difficult rapids with constricted passages that often require precise manufacturing in very turbulent waters. Scouting from shore is often necessary, and conditions make rescue difficult. Generally not possible for open canoes and kayakers should be able to Eskimo roll.

Class 5. Extremely difficult, long and very violent rapids with highly congested routes which nearly always must be scouted from shore. Rescue conditions are difficult and there is significant hazard to life in event of a mishap. Ability to Eskimo roll is essential for kayakers.

Class 6. Difficulties of Class 5 carried to the extreme of navigability. Nearly impossible and very dangerous. For teams of experts only, after close study and with all precautions taken.

Clean fill. Fill that is free of organics, human refuse, and toxic pollutants.

Closed to mineral entry. Areas where mining has been determined to be in conflict with significant surface uses in the area and the staking of new mineral locations is prohibited. Existing mineral locations at the time of plan adoption are not affected by mineral closures.

Commercial. An action or operation that generates income from the buying, selling, renting, bartering, or trading goods or services.

Commercial camp. A camp authorized by a land use permit that may remain at one site for longer than 96 hours (4 nights) between May 15 and August 31 (more than 14 days between September 1 and May 14) but no more than one year. They are for commercial operations, and provide temporary habitation and facilities for guests, guides, and employees. Temporary camps must be removed at the end of their permitted period of use. They do not include resource management camps or mining camps.

Commercial recreational uses. Recreational uses of lands, waters, and resources for business or financial gain, such as guided sport fishing, guided and outfitted sport hunting, guided recreation, or air and water taxi services.

Commissioner. The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources.

Concurrence. Under existing statues, regulations, and procedures, the Department of Natural Resources is required to obtain the approval of other groups before taking a specific action. Concurrence binds all parties to conduct activities consistent with the approved course of action.

Conservation buffer (or area). See *Riparian Management Areas, Conservation Area* in Chapter 2.

Consultation. Under existing statutes, regulations, and procedures, the Department of Natural Resources informs other groups of its intention to take a specific action, and seeks their advice or assistance. Consultation is not intended to be binding. It is a means of informing affected organizations and individuals about forthcoming decisions and getting the benefit of their expertise. DNR replies to parties offering advice or assistance by informing them the decision and the reasons for which the decision was made, or notifying them that the decision and finding are available upon request.

Corridor. See *River corridor.*

DEC. Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

Department. Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

Developed public facility. May include any of the following: boat ramp, campground, picnic area, flush or vault toilets, visitor information center, or parking area. Also see *Primitive Public Facility.*

DFG. Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Director. Director of the Division of Land and Water.

Division. Division of Land and Water, a division of DNR.

DLW. Division of Land and Water, a division of DNR.

DNR. Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

DOPOR. Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, a division of DNR.

DOTPF. Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

Due deference. That deference which is appropriate in the context of the commenter's expertise and area of responsibility, and all the evidence available to support any factual assertions. Where due deference is given, if the commissioner does not agree with a commenting agency, the commissioner shall prepare a written statement of the reasons for the disagreement. (AS 41.17.098)

Easement. An interest in land owned by another that entitles its holder to a specific limited use.

EPA. Environmental Protection Agency.

Evidence of human use. Physical signs of human activity that include man-made changes to the environment from development and other signs of human activity not associated with development (such as litter, campfire rings, and trails), or other alterations to the existing environment.

Feasible. Capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, technical, and safety factors. See also, *Procedures for Plan Reviews, Modification, and Amendment* in Chapter 4.

Feasible and prudent. Consistent with sound engineering practice and not causing environmental, social, or economic problems that outweigh the public benefit to be derived from compliance with the guideline. See also, *Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment* in Chapter 4.

Fish and wildlife. Any species of aquatic fish, invertebrates, and amphibians, in any stage of their life cycle, and all species of birds and mammals, found or that may be introduced in Alaska, except domestic birds and mammals. The term "area(s)" in association with the term "fish and wildlife" refers to both harvest and habitat areas.

Floating residential and commercial facilities. A general phrase used to encompass floating caretaker facilities, floathomes, and floatlodges (see individual definitions of these terms).

Floating lodge. A floating commercial facility providing overnight accommodations to the public for a fee that is moored, anchored, or grounded on state land or water.

Floating facility. Includes floathomes, floatcamps, floating lodges, floating caretaker facilities, and other similar floating residential or commercial facilities anchored, moored, or grounded on state land or water. Floating mobile docks for fishing are not included in this definition.

Floating dock. A floating structure generally attached to the bank by ropes, chains, or other types of lines or by hinged walkways or ladders, used for loading or unloading aircraft or boats or for recreation.

Floating mobile docks. Floating structures used for fishing that are not attached to the bank. Floating mobile docks are usually supported by barrels, styrofoam, or logs rather than a hull(s). They are often used for fishing.

Floathome or floatcamp. These are floathouses, house boats, tents on floats, or cabins on floats that are moved, anchored, or grounded on state land or water.

Freeboard. The vertical clearance of the lowest structural member of the bridge superstructure above the water surface elevation of an overtopping flood.

Generally allowed activities. Refers to uses of state land or water for which no permit or other authorization is required.

Goal. A statement of basic intent or general condition desired in the long term. Goals usually are not quantifiable and do not have specified dates for achievement.

Guideline. A course of action to be followed by DNR resource managers or required of land users when the manager permits, leases, or otherwise authorizes the use of state land or resources. Guidelines also range in their level of specificity from giving general guidance for decision making or identifying factors that need to be considered, to setting detailed standards for on-the-ground decisions. Some guidelines state the intent that must be followed and allow flexibility in achieving it.

Helicopter. An aircraft deriving its lift from blades above the vessel that rotate around an approximate vertical axis.

Hovercraft. A vehicle supported above the surface of the land or water by a cushion of air produced by downward-direction fans. This does not include helicopters or hovercraft.

Hydroplane. A high speed boat with hydrofoils or a stepped bottom, so that the hull is raised wholly or partially out of the water allowing it to skim along the water at a high rate of speed.

Instream flow. Water flowing past a given point during one second. [From 11 AAC 93.970(19)].

Interagency land management agreement (ILMA). An agreement between two state agencies that transfers management responsibility of land from one agency to the other.

Land manager. A representative of the state agency or division responsible for managing state land.

Land use permit. A Department of Natural Resources authorization for the temporary use of state land or resources. It conveys no right in the land, but it authorizes the holder of the permit to conduct an activity under the terms of the permit, and provides immunity from prosecution for trespass while conducting the authorized activity. It does not constitute waiver of any other state laws regarding trespass, water use, waste, or water or air pollution. A permit is, by its terms, revocable at will by the state (from AS 38.05.850, 11 AAC 96).

Leasable mineral. Leasable minerals include deposits of coal, sulfur phosphates, oil shale, sodium potassium, oil, and gas.

Lease. An agreement which gives rise to relationship of landlord and tenant. AS 38.05.070 and AS 38.05.073 describe types of leases for state land.

Legislative designation. An action by the state legislature that sets aside a specific area for special management actions and ensures the area is kept in public ownership.

Level of encounters. The number of people or groups of people seen during a specified time.

Life of the plan. The plan uses a 20-year planning period to guide land management. However, the plan is a flexible tool and may be changed if conditions warrant. The plan will be reviewed approximately every five years to determine if revisions are necessary. See Chapter 4, *Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment.*

Locatable mineral. Includes both metallic (such as gold, silver, lead) and nonmetallic (such as spar, asbestos, and mica) minerals.

Lodge. A place of temporary habitation, usually for let or a public house that provides lodging and usually meals and other services. Lodges on state land are authorized by lease. They may be solid wall buildings or frame tents that do not need to be removed, nor the site restored to its natural state, after each season of use.

Management intent. A statement that defines the department's near and long-term management objectives and the methods to achieve those objectives.

Marina. Docks used for commercial or public purposes, such as those associated with lodges or campgrounds.

Marginal campsite. Sites capable of supporting tents without additional brush clearing but seldom used because of the abundance of better sites nearby.

Marker buoy. A float attached to the bottom by anchors, lines, or chains for making fast a vessel.

Materials. Includes common varieties of sand, gravel, rock, peat, pumice, pumicite, cinders, clay, and sod.

Mining. Any structure or activity for commercial exploration and recovery of minerals, including resource transfer facilities, camps, and other support facilities associated with mineral development.

Mining camps. Structures built by mine claimants for mineral exploration, annual assessment, or production in the Recreation Rivers. Mining camps do not include commercial camps, resource management camps, or camps associated with recreational mining.

Mining location. A property right to locatable minerals established by discovery, location, and filing under AS 38.05.195 or 38.05.205.

Navigable. Used in its land title context, refers to lakes and rivers that meet federal or state criteria for navigability. Under the Equal Footing Doctrine, the Alaska State Act, and the Submerged Lands Act, the state owns land under navigable waterbodies.

No-wake area. Areas where powerboaters are encouraged to operate at less than five-miles per hour.

Non-motorized area. See Chapter 2, *General Access, Boat Access; Upland Access*; and *Air Access.*

NPS. National Park Service.

Off-road vehicle (ORV). A vehicle designed or adapted for cross country operation over unimproved terrain, which has been declared by its owner at the time of registration, or determined by the Department of Public Safety, to be unsuitable for general highway use.

Ordinary high water (mark). The mark along the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of the nontidal water are so common and usual, and so long continued in all ordinary years, as to leave a natural line impressed on the bank or shore and indicated by erosion, shelving, changes in soil characteristics, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, or other distinctive physical characteristics [from 11 AAC 53.900(23)].

Overtopping flood. A flood described by the probability of exceedance and water surface elevation at which flow occurs over highway, over the watershed divide, or through structure(s) provided for emergency relief.

Permit. *See Land Use Permit.*

Personal watercraft. Small motorized craft capable of carrying between one and four people who stand or ride saddle-style. These craft are powered by jet pump engines which generally do not exceed 650 cc. Three examples of personal watercraft brands and models sold at this time include Bombardier Seadoos, Kawasaki jetskis, and Yamaha Waverunners.

Plan(ning) area. See *Recreation Rivers.*

Policy. An intended course of action or a principle for guiding actions. In this plan, DNR policies for land and resource management include goals, management intent statements, management guidelines, implementation plans and procedures, and various other statements of DNR's intentions.

Powerboat. Any type of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water, not including personal watercraft and aircraft equipped to land on water.

Powerboats-only area. See Chapter 2, *Boat Access.*

Primary campsites. Sites that show evidence of frequent use. These sites are generally well known and offer amenities, such as scenic qualities or good fishing, that make them popular destination points.

Primitive tent camp. Include portable camps such as pup tents, tarps supported by poles, and other similar designs.

Primitive public facility. Includes minimal improvements such as privies, fire-rings, log benches, and cleared campsites. Also see *Developed public facility.*

Prohibited use. A use not allowed because of conflicts with the plan management intent or management guidelines. Uses not specifically prohibited are allowed if compatible with the management intent statements for the subunit and plan guidelines. Changing a prohibited use to an allowable use requires a plan amendment.

Protection area. See *Riparian Management Areas, Protection Areas* in Chapter 2.

Public facility. Improvements constructed with public funding that provide amenities for recreation. In the Recreation Rivers these could include campgrounds, boat launches, privies and firerings.

Public trust doctrine. A doctrine that directs the state to manage tidelands, shorelands, and submerged lands for the benefit of the people so that they may engage in such things as commerce, navigation, fishing, hunting, swimming, and ecological study, or other uses.

Public use. Any human use of state land, including commercial or non-commercial uses.

Public use site. Designated sites on state land in the planning area identified as important public access (including float and wheeled plane landing areas), camping, hunting, fishing, or other recreation or public use areas.

Recreation. Any activity for recreational purposes, including, but not limited to, hiking, camping, boating, hunting, fishing, and sightseeing.

Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS). A three class system used by the Bureau of Land Management and other agencies to describe a range of recreation opportunities and settings that an area will be managed for.

Recreation River(s). All land and water (including uplands and shorelands) designated under 41.23.500(1-6).

Recreational mining. Recreational mining is the extraction of placer gold primarily for the purposes of enjoyment, pleasure, and experience, rather than for profit or use. Recreational mining does not require participants to have exclusive rights to the minerals through a mine lease. Recreational mining is not mining or a surface use under the state mining law. With the exception of suction dredging, recreational mining does not require a permit. Recreational mining must occur either in unstaked areas or by permission of the location holder.

Regulatory floodway. The flood-plain area that is reserved in an open manner by federal, state, or local requirements, i.e., unconfined or unobstructed either horizontally or vertically, to provide for the discharge of the base flood so that the cumulative increase in water surface elevation is no more than a designated amount (not to exceed 1 foot as established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for administering the National Flood Insurance Program.

Reservation of water. Water appropriate for maintaining a specified instream flow or level of water at a specified point on a stream or waterbody or in a specified part of a stream of waterbody, for specified periods of time for permissible purposes.

Resource assessment. A document completed for this plan that contains background information, analyses, and resource data important for making the land management decisions in this plan.

Resource management camps. Facilities established for resource or recreation management, or for scientific study. They are generally built by natural resource agencies such as DNR or DFG, the borough, or non-profit groups and the university. They do not include commercial camps or mining camps.

River corridor. Uplands designated within the Recreation Rivers under AS 41.23.500(1-6).

Rivers. The water column designated under 41.23.500(1-6).

RM, River mile. System for measuring the river miles, beginning at the river mouth. Some tributaries also have river miles shown in the plan measured from the tributary confluence with the main river to the headwaters of the tributary.

Roads. Designated routes for pedestrians or vehicles including, dogsleds, animals, snowmachines, two-and three-wheeled vehicles, small and large ORVs, track vehicles, four-wheel-drive vehicles, automobiles, and trucks.

SCRO. Southcentral Regional Office of the Division of Land and Water, Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

Secondary campsite. A site that has desirable qualities, such as good gravel or an open area, but is not a primary destination point because it lacks good fishing or other recreation qualities.

Segment, river. A division of a Recreation River which may include uplands, shorelands, and the river column. *Segment* is not synonymous with *subunit*. *Segment* is typically used to refer to areas which include a part of a subunit or more than one subunit.

Shall. Same as "will."

Shoreland. Land belonging to the state that is covered by navigable, nontidal water up to the ordinary high water mark as modified by accretion, erosion or reliction (see definitions for *Navigable* and *Ordinary High Water*).

Shoreline development. Any development below or within 100-feet of ordinary high water.

Should. States intent for a course of action or a set of conditions to be achieved. Guidelines modified by this word state the plan's intent, yet allows the land manager to use discretion in deciding the specific means for best achieving the intent, or whether circumstances justify deviation from the intended action or set of conditions. A guideline may include criteria for deciding if such a deviation is justified. See *Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment* in Chapter 4.

Significant impact, effect, conflict, or loss (adapted from the Alaska Coastal Management Plan statutes, AS 46.40.210). A use or an activity associated with that use, which proximately contributes to a material change or alteration in the natural or social characteristic of the land and in which:

(a) the use, or activity associated with it, would have a net adverse effect on the quality of the resources;

(b) the use, or activity associated with it, would limit the range of alternative uses of the resources; or

(c) the use would, of itself, constitute a tolerable change or alteration of the resources but which, cumulatively, would have an adverse effect.

Snow vehicle or snowmachine. A motor vehicle with a gross weight of 1000 pounds or less, designed to travel primarily over ice or snow, and supported in part by skis, belts, cleats, or low pressure tires.

Special management area (SMA). Areas with existing or proposed development, or clusters of private land. They will be managed as Class II areas if they are surrounded by a Class I area. They will be managed as Class III areas if they are surrounded by a Class II area. See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2.

State-owned land. See *State land.*

State land. All lands, including uplands, tidelands, submerged lands and shorelands belonging to or acquired by the State of Alaska, excluding lands owned by the University of Alaska.

Stretch, river. See *Segment.*

Trails, large vehicular. Trails designed for vehicles with a gross weight of over 1,000 lbs., pedestrians, dogsled, animals, snowmachines, two- and three-wheeled vehicles, small and large ORVs, track vehicles, and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Trails, small vehicular. Trails designed for vehicles with a gross weight of 1,000 lbs or under., pedestrians, dogsleds, animals, snowmachines, two and three-wheeled vehicles, and small ORVs.

Trails, pedestrian. Trails designed for pedestrian and animal use.

Trapping cabin. A cabin constructed under a trapping cabin construction permit, as authorized and described in AS 38.95.075, AS 38.95.080 and 11 AAC 94.

Trespass. Any unauthorized use or structure on public land.

Upland Development. Any development more than 100-feet from ordinary high water.

Uplands. Lands above ordinary high water.

Vehicle. Any device for carrying persons or objects over land, water, or through air, such as automobiles, snowmachines, bicycles, off-road vehicle, motorized boat, non-motorized boat, and aircraft.

Vessel. Includes boats and aircraft.

Water-dependent. A use or activity which can be carried out only on, in, or adjacent to water areas, because the use requires access to the waterbody [from 6 AAC 80.900(17)].

Water-related. A use or activity which is not directly dependent upon access to a waterbody, but which provides goods or services that are directly associated with water-dependence and which, if not located adjacent to water, would result in a public loss of quality in the goods or services offered [from 6 AAC 80.900(18)].

Waterbody. Includes rivers, lakes, and streams.

Weapon. Includes mechanical, gas, or air-operated guns; pistols; rifles; shotguns; revolvers; bow and arrows; slingshots; or crossbows.

Wetlands. Lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. For purposes of this definition wetlands must have one or more of the following three attributes: (1) at least periodically, the land supports predominantly hydrophytes, (2) the substrate is predominantly undrained hydric soil, and (3) the substrate is nonsoil and is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year. This definition includes both vegetated and non-vegetated wetlands, recognizing that some types of wetlands lack vegetation (e.g., sandbars).

For purposes of this management plan, wetlands are further divided into two classes. *Contiguous wetlands* have visible surface water connections with the Recreation Rivers or their tributaries. *Non-contiguous wetlands* have no apparent surface water connection. From U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Classification of and Deep-water Habitats of the United States" (Cowardin, et al. 1979). Also see Chapter 2, *Riparian Management Areas.*

Will. Requires a course of action or a set of conditions to be achieved. A guideline modified by this word must be followed by land managers and users. If such a guideline is not complied with, a written decision justifying the noncompliance is required. See Chapter 4, *Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment.*

APPENDIX B

Recreation Rivers Act

SECTION

400.	Purposes	460.	Acquisition of additional land
410.	Compatible activities	470.	Application of public land laws
420.	General management of recreation rivers and corridors	480.	Cooperative management agreements
430.	Advisory board	490.	Limitation on establishment
440.	Management plan	500.	Establishment of recreation rivers and recreation corridors
450.	Management of municipal land	510.	Definition

Sec. 41.23.400. Purposes. (a) The purpose of AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510 is to establish as recreation rivers the land and water now owned by the state and the land and water acquired in the future by the state that lies within the recreation rivers and the river corridors described in AS 41.23.500.

(b) The primary purpose for the establishment of the six recreation rivers is the maintenance and enhancement of the land and water described in AS 41.23.500 for recreation.

(c) The primary purpose for the management of the six recreation rivers are:

(1) the management, protection, and maintenance of the fish and wildlife populations and habitat on a sustained-yield basis;

(2) continued recreation and economic use, including the uses described in (3) and (4) of this subsection, and enjoyment by the public and individuals of recreational activities that include hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, boating, hiking, snowmachining, skiing, dog mushing, and wildlife viewing, while ensuring the scenic and natural integrity of the recreation river;

(3) multiple use management of upland activities within the recreation river corridor to ensure that mitigation measures to alleviate potential adverse effects on water quality and stream flow will take place; and

(4) accommodation of access for resource uses, including recreation and tourism, within or adjacent to the river corridor. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.410. Compatible activities. The commissioner shall allow the following activities on a recreation river or within a recreation corridor when they are compatible with AS 41.23.400 and consistent with a management plan adopted under AS 41.23.440;

(1) the use of aircraft, powerboats, snowmachines, all-terrain vehicles, motorized transportation, and transportation by animal;

(2) the sale and harvest of wood products under AS 41.23.470(b);

(3) sand and gravel extraction under AS 41.23.470(b);

(4) the construction and operation of recreation facilities; and

(5) other uses permitted in the management plan required by AS 41.23.440, including mining and mineral development. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988).

Sec. 41.23.420. General management of recreation rivers and corridors. (a) The state-owned land and water within the area established as a recreation river under AS 41.23.500, including the recreation river corridor, is assigned to the commissioner for management consistent with the purposes of AS 41.23.400.

(b) The commissioner shall reserve to the state under AS 46.15.145 an instream flow or level for the water in the rivers described in AS 41.23.500 that is adequate to achieve the purposes of AS 41.23.400.

(c) The commissioner may regulate boating, if necessary, under the management plan adopted under AS 41.23.440.

(d) The provisions of AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510 do not affect the authority of:

(1) the Department of Fish and Game, the Board of Fisheries, the Board of Game, or the Guide Licensing and Control Board under AS 08.54, AS 16, or AS 41.99.010;

(2) the Department of Environmental Conservation under AS 46.03; or

(3) state agencies and municipalities under AS 44.19.145(a)(11) and AS 46.40.100.

(e) The commissioner may not restrict the use of weapons, including firearms, within a recreation river and a recreation river corridor except in sites of high public use such as picnic areas, boat ramps, camping grounds, and parking areas when the commissioner determines that the use of weapons constitutes a threat to public safety. Except as provided in this subsection, the commissioner may not restrict fishing, hunting, or trapping with a recreation river and its recreation river corridor.

(f) The authority of the commissioner under AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510 ceases where the land and water established as a recreation river under AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510 meets land and water that is not established as a recreation river. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.430. Advisory Board.

(a) A thirteen-member Recreation Rivers Advisory Board is established. Board members serve without compensation and are not entitled to per diem and travel expenses authorized by law for boards and commissions under AS 39.20.180. The governor shall appoint members representing:

(1) commercial fishing;

(2) sport fishing;

(3) sport hunting;

(4) conservation;

(5) subsistence;

(6) forest products;

(7) mining;

(8) powerboat users;

(9) recreationally-oriented commercial users;

(10) other recreational users;

(11) private property owners within the recreation river corridors;

(12) the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission from the membership of the planning commission; and

(13) the mayor of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough or the designee of the mayor.

(b) The commissioner shall consult with the advisory board in preparing, adopting, and revising the recreation river management plan and regulations affecting use and management of the recreation rivers. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.440. Management Plan. (a) The commissioner, in consultation with representatives of affected municipalities, shall prepare and adopt and may revise a management plan for each of the six recreation rivers and their recreation river corridors. In preparing or revising the plan, the commissioner and each affected municipality shall consult with the public and state agencies, including the commissioner of fish and game and the advisory board established under AS 41.23.430. In preparation or revision of the plan, the commissioner shall comply with he notice requirements of AS 38.05.945 and provide written

notice by first-class mail to private property owners in the recreation river corridors and shall hold at least two public hearings in municipalities and communities near the recreation river and the recreation river corridor. The management plan shall establish long-range guidelines and management practices consistent with AS 41.23.400 to:

(1) establish guidelines and restrictions, if necessary, for an activity occurring under AS 41.23.410 to implement the purposes of AS 41.23.400;

(2) protect, maintain, or enhance the fish and wildlife habitat and the free-flowing nature of the river;

(3) identify special recreation values and manage the level of intensity and types of recreation uses;

(4) designate management guidelines for development activities;

(5) designate management guidelines for commercial recreation activities or development, including recreation services;

(6) provide for necessary public services, such as transportation and utility corridors, crossing or fording corridors, public safety, and law enforcement;

(7) allow reasonable access to public land and private inholdings, including municipal land that is offered for sale or lease, and to land beyond or adjacent to the recreation river and the recreation river corridor;

(8) establish criteria and expedient timelines to review future proposed uses for compatibility with AS 41.23.400.

(b) The commissioner shall adopt regulations necessary to implement the management plan. The commissioner may not adopt regulations before a management plan takes effect. The commissioner may designate employees of the department as peace officers to enforce the provisions of AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510.

(c) A management plan proposed by the commissioner under (a) of this section shall be submitted to the legislature for review within the first 10 days of the first regular session of the legislature to convene after completion of the plan by the commissioner. The plan takes effect 100 days after submission of the plan to the legislature unless rejected by an act of the legislature. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.450. Management of municipal land. If a municipality commits land for inclusion in a recreation river corridor described in AS 41.23.500, the commissioner shall obtain the concurrence of the municipality to the management plan proposed under AS 41.23.440 as it applies to municipal land. The commissioner shall cooperate, at the request of a municipality, in planning for municipal land adjacent to a recreation river corridor. Municipal land not committed by a municipality for inclusion in a recreation river corridor is excluded from the operation of the management plan. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.460. Acquisition of additional land

(a) The commissioner may acquire in the name of the state land that is adjacent to or located within the land descried in AS 41.23.500 by purchase, lease, gift, or exchange for inclusion within a recreation river corridor.

(b) The commissioner may not acquire land for inclusion in a recreation river corridor by eminent domain. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.470. Application of public land laws. (a) The provisions of AS 38.04, AS 38.05, AS 38.35 and AS 38.95 apply to land described in AS 41.23.500 except to the extent that a provision of AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510 is inconsistent.

(b) The commissioner may conduct only a negotiated timber or material sale under AS 38.05.115 to provide for personal use, including house logs and firewood, or for a use incidental to the construction of access, or for habitat enhancement.

(c) The commissioner may permit mining leasing under AS 38.05.205 on upland within a recreation river corridor if leasing is allowed under a management plan that has been adopted by the commissioner. The commissioner shall establish appropriate conditions for permits,

operating plans, and leases to mitigate the effects of mineral development activities on the environment and to prevent to the extent practicable degradation of the recreation uses of the river.

(d) To enhance public use and enjoyment of a recreation river corridor under a management plan adopted under AS 41.23.440, the commissioner may provide for the construction and operation of commercial facilities such as lodges, campgrounds, and boat launches by:

(1) leasing land under AS 38.05.070, including competitive leasing to a prequalified bidder; and

(2) contracting for the construction and operation of a facility under AS 36.30 so long as the facility is not in competition with a private facility or enterprise.

(e) The commissioner of administration shall separately account for funds collected under this section and deposited in the general fund. The annual estimated balance in the account may be appropriated by the legislature to the department to carry out the purposes of AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.480. Cooperative management agreements. (a) The commissioner may enter into a cooperative management agreement for the management of land and water described in AS 41.23.500 or of other adjacent land and water with a federal agency, a municipality, another agency of the state, or a private landowner.

(b) The commissioner may transfer the management of a specific site within a recreation river corridor described in AS 41.23.500 to a state agency, a municipality, or a private entity to carry out a program authorized by law or to enhance the objectives of the management plan adopted under AS 41.23.440.

(c) The commissioner may not manage a recreation river corridor described in AS 41.23.500 as a unit of the state park system or as a game refuge, game sanctuary, or a critical habitat. The commissioner may assign management of a recreation facility or site such as a campground or a boat launch to the division of parks. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.490. Limitation on establishment. State-owned land and water may be established as a recreation river corridor only by the legislature. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

Sec. 41.23.500. Establishment of recreation rivers and recreation river corridors. Subject to valid existing rights, the state-owned land and water acquired by the state in the future, including shore and submerged land that lies within the following described parcels, is established as a recreation river and reserved as a special purpose area under art. VII, sec. 7, Constitution of the State of Alaska and shall be retained by the state and be managed under AS 41.23.400 - 42.23.510;

(1) Alexander Creek State Recreation River

(2) Kroto Creek and Moose Creek State Recreation River

(3) Lake Creek State Recreation River

(4) Little Susitna State Recreation River

(5) Talachulitna State Recreation River

(6) Talkeetna State Recreation River

Sec. 41.23.510. Definition. In AS 41.23.400 - 41.23.510. "recreation river corridor" means the uplands within a recreation river established under AS 41.23.500. (§ 2 ch 122 SLA 1988)

APPENDIX C

Publications Related to the Management Plan

Planning Documents

Willow Subbasin Area Plan. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. October, 1982.

Susitna Basin Area Plan. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. June, 1985.

Draft Susitna Forest Guidelines. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. December, 1990.

Planning Reports and Procedures

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Brochure. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. November, 1988.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - User Survey Results. Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service. March, 1990.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Resource Assessment. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. August, 1991.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Management Alternatives Workbook. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. December, 1989.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Comments on Recreation Rivers Alternatives, Part I. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. March, 1990.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Comments on Recreation Rivers Alternatives, Part II. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. March, 1990.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Visitor Use and Trends. Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service. March, 1990.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Newsletter (I - VII) Alaska Department of Natural Resources. July, 1989; November, 1989; and May, 1990, September, 1990, November, 1990, December 1990, June 1991.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Draft List of Plan Issues and Questions. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. April, 1989.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - White Papers on Critical Planning Issues. National Park Service. Spring, 1990.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Public Comments on the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan. November 1990

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan - Public Comments on the proposed changes to the Draft Plan. January, 1991

Background Data and Reports

Susitna Basin Small Scale Transportation Study. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. September, 1988.

Fish and Wildlife Resource Element for the Susitna Basin Area Plan. Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 1984.

Susitna Regional Forest Plan - Fish and Wildlife Resources. Alaska Department of Fish and Game. January, 1989.

Southcentral Alaska Sport Fishing Economic Study. Jones and Stokes Associates for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. November, 1987.

APPENDIX D

List of Proposed Regulations & Statutes

Background

New statutes, regulations, or both are necessary to implement each of the following guidelines in the plan. While most of the proposed regulations and statutes listed below apply to recreation use, some apply to additions to the Recreation Rivers and commercial use.

TABLE D-1. LIST OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS

Regulation	Chapter	Section	Subsection
Temporary Camp Fee Schedule	2	Upland Development	Fees and Allocation
Anchor Buoys	2	Shoreline Development	Anchor Buoys
	2	Shoreline Development	Other Types of Buoys
Recreation River Permits	2	Recreation	Recreation River Permits
Camping and Equipment Storage	2	Recreation	Camping and Equipment Storage
	2	Upland Development	Primitive Tent Camps
Vandalism	2	Recreation	Vandalism
Public Use Cabins	2	Recreation	Public Use Cabins
Campfires	2	Recreation	Fires
Use of Weapons	2	Recreation	Use of Weapons
Fireworks	2	Recreation	Fireworks
Assembly and Events	2	Recreation	Assembly
	2	Recreation	Events
Marking Natural Objects	2	Recreation	Marking Natural Objects
Closures and Use Management	2	Recreation	Closures
Commercial-Use Permits	2	Commercial	Permits

TABLE D-1. LIST OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS (cont.)

Regulation	Chapter	Section	Subsection
Commercial-Use Permit Fees	2	Commercial	Fees
Waiver of Fees	2	Commercial	Waiver of Fees
Access to Private Land	2	General Access	Permits for Access to Private Land
Government Use of Motorized Transportation	2	General Access	Government Use of Motorized Transportation
Boating	2	Boating	Regulations
Boating	3	Boating	All Management Units
Personal Watercraft	2	Boating	Personal Watercraft
Winter Travel	2	Upland Access	Large Modes of Transportation in the Winter
Off-Road Vehicles	2	Upland Access	Off-Road Vehicles
Air Access	2	Air Access	Aircraft and Helicopter Landings
Litter	2	Water and Solid Waste	Litter
Disturbance or Removal of Cultural Resources	2	Cultural Resources	Disturbance or Removal of Cultural Resources
Boating (DFG Recommendation)	4	Agency Responsibilities	DFG, Habitat Division
Definitions	4	Definitions	Definitions

TABLE D-2. LIST OF PROPOSED STATUTES

Regulation	Chapter	Section	Subsection
Additions to Recreation Rivers	4	Designation	Listed by River
Public Notice Requirements	4	Procedures for Plan Review, Modification, and Amendment	Recommended Statute Changes for Public Notice Requirements
Commercial Facilities	4	Other Recommendations	Commercial Facilities

APPENDIX E

River Miles by Unit & Subunit

TABLE E.1. MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS BY RIVER MILES

MANAGEMENT UNIT	LOWER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	UPPER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	RIVER MILES
UNIT 1 LITTLE SUSITNA RIVER	33.2	100.0	66.8
Subunit 1a Lower Little Susitna River	33.2	65.5	32.3
Nancy Lake Creek	00.0	5.5	5.5
Subunit 1b Middle Little Susitna River	65.5	74.0	8.5
Subunit 1c Upper Little Susitna River	74.0	100.0	26.0
UNIT 2 DESHKA RIVER	00.0	82.4	82.4
Subunit 2a Mouth of Deshka River	00.0	1.9	1.9
Subunit 2b Lower Deshka River	1.9	6.8	4.9
Subunit 2c Middle Deshka River	6.8	14.4	7.6
Subunit 2d Neil Lake	14.4	23.3	8.9
Subunit 2e The Forks	23.3	29.8	6.5

TABLE E.1. MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS BY RIVER MILES

MANAGEMENT UNIT	LOWER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	UPPER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	RIVER MILES
Subunit 2f Kroto Creek	00.0	58.0	58.0
Subunit 2g Lower Moose Creek	29.8	54.2	24.2
Subunit 2h Oilwell Road	54.2	69.5	15.5
Subunit 2i Upper Moose Creek	69.5	82.4	12.9
UNIT 3 TALKEETNA RIVER	00.0	44.5	44.5
Subunit 3a Lower Talkeetna River	00.0	15.5	15.5
Subunit 3b Middle Talkeetna River	15.5	31.1	16.7
Subunit 3c Clear Creek	00.0	9.5	9.5
Subunit 3d Talkeetna Canyon	32.2	44.5	12.3
UNIT 4. LAKE CREEK	00.0	64.0	64.0
Subunit 4a Lake Creek Mouth	00.0	3.5	3.5
Subunit 4b Lower Lake Cr.	3.5	6.8	3.3
Subunit 4c Middle Lake Creek	6.8	41.8	35.0

TABLE E.1. MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS BY RIVER MILES

MANAGEMENT UNIT	LOWER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	UPPER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	RIVER MILES
Subunit 4d Upper Lake Creek	41.8	51.2	9.4
Subunit 4e Chelatna Lake	51.2	64.0	12.5
UNIT 5 TALACHULITNA RIVER	00.0	64.5	64.5
Subunit 5a Mouth of Talachulitna River	00.0	2.8	2.8
Subunit 5b Talachulitna River Canyon	2.8	18.3	15.5
Subunit 5c Middle Talachulitna River	18.3	32.5	14.2
Subunit 5d Talachulitna Creek	00.0	17.0	17.0
Subunit 5e Judd Lake	17.0	22.0	5.0
Subunit 5f Upper Talachulitna River	32.5	64.5	32.0
UNIT 6 ALEXANDER CREEK	3.8	44.0	40.2
Subunit 6a Lower Alexander Creek	3.8	19.8	16.0

TABLE E.1. MANAGEMENT UNITS & SUBUNITS BY RIVER MILES

MANAGEMENT UNIT	LOWER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	UPPER LIMIT (RIVER MILES)	RIVER MILES
Subunit 6b Upper Alexander Creek	20.1	38.3	18.2
Subunit 6c Alexander Lake	38.3	44.0	5.7
Subunit 6d Sucker Creek	0.0	5.5	5.5

APPENDIX F

Authorizations for Use of State Land & Water

Introduction

The data in this appendices is for general information only. This appendix summarizes the different types of authorizations required in the Recreation Rivers.

For specific policies, guidelines, laws, and regulations that apply in the Recreation Rivers see Chapter 2 or contact the appropriate agency.

State Land

Under Recreation Rivers guidelines and regulations, some activities are not allowed on state land within the planning area (e.g., leases for lodges). Among the allowed uses there are two types, those that require authorization and those that do not. Allowed uses that do not require authorization are called "generally allowed activities."

Generally Allowed Activities on State Land. The following is a partial list of activities allowed on an occasional or intermittent basis on state land or water in the Recreation Rivers:

- Hiking and backpacking, horse or dog-team travel, cross-country skiing, warming fires, and mountain climbing.
- Helicopter and plane landings, and use of boats, rafts, and canoes in unrestricted areas. Snow-machining when there is adequate snowcover.
- Hunting, fishing, trapping, temporary fishing and hunting camps for one's own use for 4 days or less.
- Harvesting a small number of wild plants for personal use; securing dead and down firewood for cooking or warming fires associated with hiking and camping, harvesting mushrooms, berries and other plant material for personal use as food.
- Non-exclusive recreational or other use for 4 days or less that has no noticeable effect on vegetation, drainage, or soil stability, and does not involve harassment of wildlife other than lawful hunting, trapping, and fishing.
- Recreational gold panning.
- Boat storage for 4 days or less.

The following activities are generally allowed on state land and water within the planning area on a longer-term basis:

- Mineral prospecting using pick and shovel; hard rock prospecting by backpacking; gold or other mineral recovery utilizing small hand held or floating suction dredging apparatus.
- Use of vehicles such as 4-wheel drive vehicles, pickups and all terrain vehicles (wheeled and tracked) on existing trails in unrestricted areas.
- Brushing survey lines or trails less than three feet wide where there is no disturbance of the root system and when such trails do not constitute a right-of-way.
- A livestock drive of less than 100 animals.
- Floating docks under 100 square feet.

Land Use Requiring Authorization. Uses of Recreation Rivers other than those listed above, may require formal authorization. A partial list of activities that require authorization, and the type of authorization processed follows this section. To ensure legal use of state lands, Recreation Rivers users should contact the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Game before entering onto state lands.

Persons receiving authorization are responsible for making sure the activity is confined to state land or water, will minimize disturbance to the land and water resources, and is in compliance with all federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Users are responsible for acquiring any other permits or authorization that may be necessary.

Activities Requiring Authorization

The following chart is a partial list of activities that require authorization in the Recreation Rivers. The authorization type required, and the issuing agency is also listed.

Activity	Authorization Required	Agency/Division
Commercial use	Commercial Use Permit	DNR-DLW
Commercial tent camp (more than 4 days)	Land Use Permit	DNR-DLW
Material extraction	Negotiated Material Sale	DNR-DLW
Easement	Right-of-Way	DNR-DLW
Dock construction (commercial marina)	Right-of-Way	DNR-DLW
Erosion control project	Right-of-Way	DNR-DLW
Other uses of state land identified by the plan as requiring authorization	Recreation Rivers Special Use Permit	DNR-DLW
Personal timber harvest	Negotiated personal use sale	DNR-DOF
Any work (digging, constructing, or fording below ordinary high water (OHW) in any anadromous stream	Fish Habitat (Title 16) Permit	DFG-Habitat
Any activity affecting navigable waters	Section 10 Permit	US Army Corps of Engineers
Discharge or fill into navigable watersof	Section 404 Permit	US Army Corps Engineers

Borough Land

A partial list of activities on borough land that require authorization by the borough follows. Borough zoning ordinances also require permits for some activities on borough, private, and some state lands.

To ensure legal use of borough lands, Recreation Rivers users should contact the borough's land management office before entering onto borough lands.

Activity	Authorization Required	Agency/Division
Fireworks display	Firework Display Permit	MSB-Code Compliance
Construction within an easement or right-of-way	Construction Permit	MSB-Public Works
Construction of a public utility	Public Utility Permit	MSB-Public Works
Development within the flood hazard zone	Development	Permit Mat-Su Borough

Coastal Zone

Because most of the planning area lies within the coastal zone, most applicants will also be required to complete a Coastal Zone Consistency Questionnaire. This questionnaire is available from agencies and will clarify the need for any additional authorizations. If permits from more than one agency are required, a coordinated, multiple agency review will be initiated, and the applicant informed of any additional information needed to ensure all required permits are applied for.

A determination as to whether the desired use is consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program can then be made. An example of a use requiring multiple permits is for the construction of a dock over 100 square feet. This use would require an Army Corps permit(s), a fish habitat permit, and a right-of-way.

Process

Recreation Rivers users should contact the appropriate state or borough office for specific information on use allowed and obtain applications required for their intended use. Applicants should submit completed applications well in advance of their period of use.

APPENDIX G

Priorities for Implementation of the Recreation Rivers Management Plan

Following are priorities for DNR and the Division of Land and Water to implement the plan. These are intended to provide general guidance and are subject to obtaining adequate funding and other agency priorities.

Priority 1

1. Education Program

A. Develop public education program, pamphlets, videos, etc. in cooperation with the MSB, DF&G, user groups, and others.

B. Prioritize the placement of informational and interpretive signs, and contract for their design and construction.

2. New Regulations

A. Promulgate the following regulations necessary to institute a commercial-use permit program:

1. Regulation to authorize DNR to issue commercial-use permits, and conditions for revocation or suspension.

2. Regulation to establish fees for commercial-use permit: in-state operator fees and higher fees for out of state operators.

3. Regulation which allow the director of DLW to waive all or a portion of fees for recreation related permits.

4. Regulation to allow operators to preform in-kind services, in lieu of fees.

B. Promulgate regulations to change generally allowed activities

1. Regulation establishing a 4-day camping limit in the planning area between May 15 - August 25, and penalties for non-compliance.

2. Regulation establishing a 4-day limit on boat and equipment storage (other than in designated storage areas) between May 15 - August 25, and establish penalties for non-compliance.

C. Promulgate the following regulations necessary to implement and enforce non-motorized and no-wake areas within the planning area:

1. Regulation establishing non-motorized and no-wake areas.

2. Regulation outlining penalties for non-compliance with non-motorized and no-wake areas.

3. Regulation requiring a permit for all motorized access to private land or active mining claim that crosses state land or water closed to motorized use, and to allow operation of motorized vehicles including boats, aircraft, helicopters and ground vehicles in non-motorized areas by governmental agencies for the purpose of law enforcement, emergency search and rescue, medical evacuations, etc., and penalties for non-compliance.

D. Other

1. Regulation prohibiting littering or bringing waste or refuse into the area for disposal, and penalties for non-compliance.

2. Regulation prohibiting the disturbance, damage, defacement, or removal of state property, facilities, or signs.

3. Commercial-Use Permit Program Develop and initiate a commercial use permit program. Monitor compliance, collect and account for fees. Monitor commercial use to provide baseline information that may be useful if limitations are considered in the future.

4. Adjudicate Applications

A. Adjudicate pending land applications based on plan guidelines.

B. For rivers with sufficient data, complete applications for instream flow reservation (if funding allows).

C. Work with FAA and DOT to initiate study of floatplane landing area at the mouth of the Deshka.

D. Address wheelplane access issues at mouth of the Deshka, close unauthorized airstrip, consider options for a public airstrip.

E. Designate boat storage areas.

5. Volunteer Program Coordinator position to work with user groups and commercial operators on litter patrols, maintenance programs, etc. (Work with commercial operators to pick up litter in lieu of fees).

Priority 2

1. New Regulations Promulgate the following regulations:

A. Regulation to allow closures and other use management techniques to provide the land manager flexibility and responsiveness to changing conditions (see plan).

B. Regulation prohibiting littering or bringing waste or refuge into the area for disposal and penalties for non-compliance.

C. Regulation to prohibit private bridges across selected streams.

D. Regulation to increase the fee structure for summer temporary camps in corridors.

E. Regulation defining conditions for which a permit for winter use is required and penalties for non-compliance.

F. Regulation to prohibit floating facilities and penalties for non-compliance.

G. Regulation prohibiting mooring buoys on the Recreation Rivers and penalties for non-compliance.

2. Administrative

A. Enter into a cooperative management agreements with the DOPOR, DF&G, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to manage the lower Little Susitna River. Enter into cooperative management agreement with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough for the mouth of the Deshka River.

B. Develop land acquisition and land exchange priorities(e.g., Bulchitna, Neil, and Judd lakes public access, conservation easements).

C. Initiate a Trails Action Plan to review trail proposals, and decide on need and suitability of trails. In consultation with MSB and DFG, designate special purpose trails to provide new recreation opportunities or resolve conflicts between users.

D. Develop public facility development priorities, and contract for their design and construction.

3. Trespass Abatement Work with the Department of Law to remove trespass developments and close unauthorized open dumps.

4. Discharge of Weapons Seek commissioner's determination on whether the use discharge of weapons at the mouth of the Deshka constitutes a threat to public safety. If so, implement restrictions on the discharge of weapons at mouth of Deshka between June 15 and August 31.

5. Data Needs If funding allows, work with DGGS and DF&G to compile data needed to complete instream flow reservation applications. Jointly file instream flow application with DFG. DLW will adjudicate the application.

Priority 3

1. New Regulations

A. Regulation requiring a permit for organized events or assemblies and a permit for any promotional or entertainment event.

B. Regulation establishing procedures for awarding use of public use cabins.

C. Regulation to allow the department to restrict camp fires to fire rings or grills in certain areas.

D. Regulations to prohibit the marking of natural objects within 100 feet of the rivers and to establish penalties for non-compliance.

2. Public Use Cabin Program Institute a public use cabin program. Select trespass cabin(s) for conversion or determine where new cabins will be built. Monitor reservations, collect fees, maintain facilities.

3. Whitewater Monitoring Program Develop and implement a monitoring and voluntary trip scheduling program for the Talkeetna River Canyon to observe changes in campsite encounters and evaluate need for a permit system. Secondarily monitor use on Lake Creek and the Talachulitna River.

4. Education Announce each year when there is adequate snowcover for ORV use through news releases, etc.

5. Facility Development

A. Repair drop-off platform on Alexander Lake (if funding allows).

B. Construct cabins for field staff near DF&G camps on the lower Deshka River and on the Yentna River at mouth of Lake Creek (if funding allows).

C. Develop primitive public facilities (privies, hardened campsites, fire-rings, and primitive boat launches).

APPENDIX H

Wetlands and Floodplains

This appendix is under separate cover, entitled *Wetlands and Floodplains in the Recreation Rivers, 1991.*

Copies are available at the Anchorage offices of the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Land, Land and Resources Section.

APPENDIX I

List of Public Use Sites & Special Management Areas

TABLE I.1
List of Public Use Sites [1]

Public Use Site #	River	River Mile	Name	Land Ownership in and adjacent to site	Management Intent Class for surrounding subunits
1a.1	Little Susitna	34	Iditarod Trail Crossing	State/Borough	I
1a.2	Little Susitna	40	Hock Lake Trail	State	I
1a.3	Little Susitna	47	Papoose Creek	State	I
1a.4	Little Susitna	55	Skeetna Lake Portage	State	I
1a.5	Little Susitna	60	Big Rock Fishing Hole	State	I
1a.6	Little Susitna	62	Nancy Lake Creek Junction	State	I
1a.7	Little Susitna	66	Miller's Reach Boat Launch	State/Private	I
1a.8	Nancy Lake Creek	7	Nancy Lake Creek Bridge	State	I
1b.1	Little Susitna	68	Parks Highway Bridge	State/Private	II
1b.2	Little Susitna	71	Houston Campground	Private	II
1c.1	Little Susitna	18	Day Use Site	State/Private	II
1c.2	Little Susitna	85	Schrock Road	State/Private	II
1c.3	Little Susitna	88	Sushanna Bridge	State/Private	II
1c.4	Little Susitna	91	Carney Road Bridge	State/Private	II
1c.5	Little Susitna	93	Welch Road Bridge	State/Private	II
1c.6	Little Susitna	100	Hatcher Pass Bridge	State	II
2b.1	Deshka	4	Silver Hole	State/Borough	II
2b.2	Deshka	6	Walk-in Fishing Hole	State/Private	II
2c.1	Deshka	10	Unnamed	State/Borough	II
2c.2	Deshka	14	Unnamed	State/Private	II
2c.3	Deshka	15	Trapper Creek	State/Private	II
2d.1	Deshka	18	No-Name Creek	State	II
2d.2	Deshka	18	Eagle's Nest Camp	State	II
2d.3	Deshka	21	Middle King Fishing Hole	State	II
2d.4	Deshka	22	Upper King Fishing Hole	State	II
2d.5	Deshka	23	Neil Lake	State	II
2e.1	Deshka	30	The Forks	State	I
2f.1	Kroto Creek	22	Amber Lake Creek	State/private	I
2f.2	Kroto Creek	24	Amber Lake	State/Borough	I
2h.1	Moose Creek	58	End of Oilwell Road	State/private	II

[1] This is a list of public use sites and special management areas in the Recreation Rivers. For a definition of these, see the introductory sections of Chapter 2 and 3. For locations of these, see Management Unit maps in Chapter 3.

Public Use Site #	River	River Mile	Name	Land Ownership in and adjacent to site	Management Intent Class for surrounding subunits
2h.2	Moose Creek	69	Petersville Road Crossing	State/Private	II
3a.1	Talkeetna	0	River Mouth and Railroad	State/University	II
3a.2	Talkeetna	1	Boat Launch and Campground	State/Mental Health	II
3a.3	Talkeetna	13	Larson Creek Mouth	State	II
3a.4	Talkeetna	15	Sheep River Mouth	State	II
3b.1	Talkeetna	24	Disappointment Creek Mouth	State	I
3b.2	Talkeetna	31	Iron Creek Mouth	State	I
3c.1	Talkeetna	7	Clear and Fish Creek Mouths	State/private	II
3d.1	Talkeetna	52	Prairie Creek Mouth	State/Native	I
4a.1	Lake	0	Lake Creek Mouth	State/private	III
4a.2	Lake	4	Bulchitna Lake	State/private	III
4b.1	Lake	6	Unnamed Campsite	State/private	III
4c.1	Lake	8	Upper Hole	State	I
4c.2	Lake	14	Yenlo Creek Junction	State	I
4c.3	Lake	21	Two Unnamed Campsite	State/private	I
4c.4	Lake	36	Home Creek Junction	State	I
4d.1	Lake	42	Camp Creek Junction	State	I
4d.2	Lake	46	Sunflower Creek Junction	State	I
4e.1	Lake	54	Unnamed Campsite	State/private	II
4e.2	Lake	54	Chelatna Airstrip	State/private	II
4e.3	Lake	61	Coffee Creek	State	II
5a.1	Talachulitna	-	USGS Gaging Station	State	II
5a.2	Talachulitna	0	Mouth of Talachulitna	State	II
5a.3	Talachulitna	3	Exit of Canyon	State/Private	II
5b.1	Talachulitna	7	Landing Area	State/Private	I
5b.2	Talachulitna	9	Thursday Creek	State	I
5b.3	Talachulitna	14	Deep Creek	State	I
5b.4	Talachulitna	16	Friday Creek	State	I
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6c.1	Alexander Creek	41	Put-in site	State	II
6d.1	Alexander Creek	2	Sucker Creek	State	I

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Special Management Area	River	River Mile	Name	Land Ownership in and adjacent to Area	Management Intent Class for surrounding Subunits
1a.1	Little Susitna	37	Big Lake Extension Road	State/Borough	I
2f.1	Kroto	22	Oilwell Road Crossing	State/Private	I
2f.2	Kroto	47	Petersville Road Crossing	State/Private	I
2f.3	Kroto	51	Unnamed Lake	State/Private	I
2f.4	Kroto	59	Kroto Lake	State/Private	I
2i.1	Moose	83	"S" and Loon lakes	State/Private	I
2i.2	Moose	84	K'da Lake	State/Private	I
4b.1	Lake	6	Unnamed Lake	State/Private	I
4c.1	Lake	20	Quiet Lake	State/Private	I
4c.2	Lake	27	Martana Lake	State/Private	I
4c.3	Lake	32	Shovel	State	I
4c.4	Lake	39	Primitive Landing Area	State	I
5b.1	Talachulitna	7	Primitive Landing Area	State	I
5c.1	Talachulitna	20	Private Lands	State/Private	I
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This publication was released by the Department of Natural Resources, produced at a cost of $16.40 per copy, and printed in Anchorage, Alaska, for the purpose of providing the Legislature and the public an opportunity to review the contents of the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan.

Susitna Basin RECREATION RIVERS

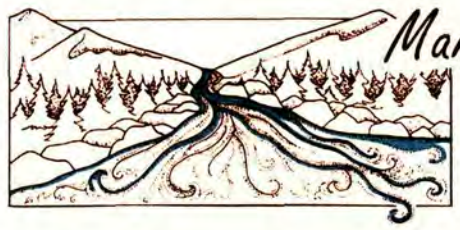
Management Plan SUMMARY

Background

In 1988, the Alaska Legislature passed the Recreation Rivers Act (AS 41.23.400-.510). The Act established mile-wide river corridors along the Little Susitna River, the Deshka River (including Moose and Kroto creeks), Talkeetna River, Talachulitna River, Lake Creek, and Alexander Creek. The Act keeps the Recreation Rivers in public ownership, identifies purposes, provides general management intent, and establishes an advisory board. The Act also requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a management plan for the Recreation Rivers. This brochure summarizes the contents of the plan.

ALASKA DIVISION OF LAND

What is the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan?



The plan describes how the Alaska Department of Natural Resources will manage approximately 243,000 acres of state-owned land along 460 river miles in the Susitna Basin. The plan does not make decisions on borough, private, or Native lands.

The plan addresses key issues of concern along the rivers and provides a blueprint for long-term management. The planning process provided the means for deciding whether some river reaches should be left in a relatively undeveloped state or whether certain types of development are consistent with management intent for the river segment. The plan also establishes guidelines to reduce conflicts between users, provides opportunities for public use of the rivers, and protects the fish, wildlife, water, and other resources that attract people to the rivers.

How was the Plan Developed?

A planning team and the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board worked closely together to develop the management plan. The planning team included representatives from state agencies, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the City of Houston. The advisory board included representatives from interest groups, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and different users of the Recreation Rivers. Designated advisors from towns and community councils near the corridors also received information on the planning process and relayed community concerns to the planning team and advisory board.

The team and board began working on this plan in 1988. In that year, public meetings were held in order to identify issues along the rivers. Next, information was gathered on the resources in the corridors, and on how people use the rivers. From this information, the planning team and advisory board developed alternatives for managing the rivers. The public reviewed the alternatives at meetings in December 1989. The team and board considered the public comments and developed a draft plan that was presented at public meetings in September, 1990. Changes were made to the plan and distributed for written public comment in December 1990. In response to public comments, additional changes were made and a final plan was developed and transmitted to the legislature for their review (as required by the Recreation Rivers Act). The legislature completed its review in May 1991 and the commissioner adopted the plan as department policy.

How will the Plan be Implemented?

The plan provides management intent for the rivers. This intent will apply to land use activities that currently require written authorization from DNR. Restrictions on other activities will require promulgation of regulations. Implementation of non-regulatory actions such as placing signs, collecting litter, and improving campsites will depend on budget and staffing.

What Does the Plan Include?

The following section summarizes policies and guidelines that are included in the plan. These only apply to state land and water.

General Management Intent. Each of the 31 river segments will be managed to reflect desired future conditions. Management intent ranges along a spectrum from areas that will be managed for more primitive settings (shown as Class I areas on the map) to areas that can accommodate high use and improvements (Class III areas on the map).

Public Use Sites. Numerous public use sites have been identified. These sites are places on state lands that are important for access, fishing, camping, or other recreation or public uses. Sites will be managed to protect access and public values.

Special Management Areas. Special management areas are small areas of state land that either include clusters of private land or are areas where roads have been proposed by the borough and public improvements may be needed. State lands in special management areas will be managed to accommodate access to public and private land. Seasonal motor restrictions on aircraft landings and land vehicles will not apply in these areas (also see the General Access section later in this brochure).

Riparian Management Areas. These areas include lakes, rivers, beds of waterbodies, floodplains, wetlands, and buffers along waterways. They provide important recreation opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, and water resources. Guidelines in the plan ensure that potential harmful effects from overuse and development are mitigated.

Recreation. To ensure that there are an adequate number of camp sites, the length of stays at any one site will be 4 days during the fishing season. Permits are not required for this type of camping. A limited number of longer-term camps may be offered under permit on the lower Deshka River and Alexander Creek. Guidelines for longer-term camps are designed to reduce conflicts with other resources and uses and to generate revenue to help manage the rivers. No new campgrounds are proposed on state lands. Primitive facilities such as privies may be established on state lands at some sites where there is high public use. Regulations on littering, dumping waste, and vandalism are also recommended.

Fish & Wildlife Habitat. One of the main purposes of the Recreation Rivers is to manage, protect, and maintain fish and wildlife populations and habitat on a sustained-yield basis. Areas that are important for fish and wildlife are identified and specific guidelines are designed to protect these important areas. The plan also sets guidelines for reducing bear conflicts, protecting eagle and swan nesting sites, and enhancing habitat. The plan does not affect fish and game regulations.

Enforcement. Throughout the planning process the public has been concerned about enforcement of fish and game regulations and laws applying to state lands. The plan recommends additional enforcement and that DNR seek citation authority. There are also stipulations on commercial permits that discourage commercial operators from transporting clients with illegally harvested fish and wildlife. The production and distribution of education materials to help reduce violations is also recommended.

Commercial. There are over one-hundred businesses operating within the Recreation River corridors. To ensure that commercial businesses operate safely, provide quality service to the public, and protect resources along the rivers, all recreation-oriented commercial businesses operating on state land or water within the planning area will be required to have a commercial-use permit. Standards require that all commercial operators have first aid training, applicable licenses, appropriate safety gear, and liability insurance. These requirements will vary depending on the type of business. To help cover the cost of managing the rivers, each business must also pay a fee.

The commercial-permit program will be phased in. During the first year of the program, only a basic fee is recommended. The fee for out-of-state applicants will be higher than for Alaska residents. During the second and succeeding years of the program, the plan recommends fees for dropoffs and pickups for unaccompanied clients or a per-day fee for clients accompanied by a guide. Revenue generated from permit fees will assist in covering the expense of managing the rivers. To be implemented, this program requires developing regulations. No limits on the number of private or commercial operations are proposed at this time.

Shoreline Development. The plan includes guidelines for erosion control structures, boat ramps, diversion channels, docks, anchor buoys, bridges, culverts, dams, and river crossings. These guidelines will ensure that projects are sited, designed, and constructed in a manner that minimizes degradation of water, the quality of recreation, navigation, and fish and wildlife habitats.

Upland Development. Because of the availability of private land for commercial development and concerns about overcrowding, new leases for lodges are prohibited on state lands. To reduce impacts on recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and potential safety hazards, the plan includes guidelines for construction of improvements such as powerlines, pipelines, and airstrips.

How does the Plan Address Access?

BOATING & GENERAL ACCESS

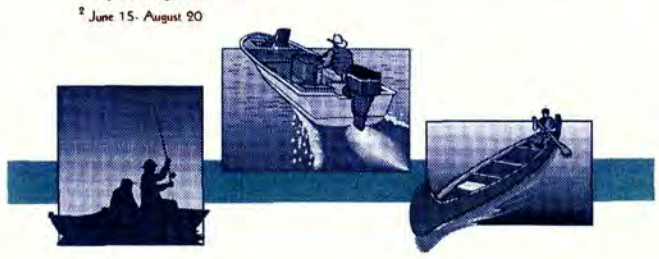
General Access. In order to provide a non-motorized experience on parts of some rivers, the plan proposes limits on motorized forms of transportation during the fishing season. Restrictions apply to boats, ground vehicles, and aircraft during time periods listed below. For small ground vehicles such as snowmachines, access in winter when there is adequate snow cover is not restricted. Methods of access are generally not restricted in Special Management Areas where private lands are concentrated. The plan allows for reasonable access to private lands and mine claims, for resource or recreation management, search and rescue, and law enforcement.

Boat Access. To provide for a range of recreation experiences on the rivers, non-motorized and motorized zones are identified. To protect public safety, voluntary no-wake zones are established. Finally to reduce safety concerns, safety signs are proposed for two sections of Alexander Creek and the Deshka River.

NON-MOTORIZED AREAS & VOLUNTARY NO-WAKE AREAS

RIVER	SEGMENT	BY REGULATION OR VOLUNTARY
Little Susitna River	Parks Highway	Voluntary no-Wake[1]
Little Susitna River	Middle Little Susitna River	Non-motorized (alternating weekends)[1]
Deshka River	River Mouth	Voluntary no-wake[1]
Deshka River	Lower Moose and Kroto Creeks	Non-motorized[1]
Lake Creek	Whitewater sections	Non-motorized[1]
Lake Creek	River mouth	Voluntary no-wake[1]
Talachulitna Creek	Judd Lake to Forks	Non-motorized[2]
Talachulitna River	Canyon	Non-motorized[2]
Alexander Creek	Alexander Lake to Sucker Creek	Non-motorized[1]

[1] May 15 - August 20
[2] June 15- August 20



Upland Access. Accommodating access to natural and recreation resources in and adjacent to the planning area is a primary purpose of the Recreation Rivers Act. The plan allows for access to most upland areas adjacent to the rivers. New roads and trails will also be allowed within the Recreation River corridors. However, the plan includes guidelines in non-motorized areas, riparian management areas, and Class I areas to minimize detrimental effects on recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat. The public has expressed concern that unrestricted use of off-road vehicles is causing long-lasting environmental damage. During the snow-free season, off-road vehicle use will be limited to existing trails.

Air Access. Aircraft provide important access to the Recreation Rivers. Areas where additional public air access is needed are identified. Because many boats and floatplanes compete for use of the mouth of the Deshka River during peak fishing season, a floatplane landing area is proposed. The need for a public wheelplane airstrip at the mouth is also addressed. Construction of new private or public airstrips within the planning area may be authorized in some areas. Landings by aircraft are restricted in non-motorized areas. However, there are exceptions described under "General Access" in the previous section.

What Other Issues are Addressed by the Plan?

Subsurface. Most of the corridors will remain closed to new mineral entry. However, a four-mile stretch of upper Lake Creek will be reopened to new mineral entry under lease. This area is located between Camp and Sunflower creeks. Staking will not be allowed within 300 feet of creeks. Leases will also include requirements for reclamation, clearing vegetation, siting structures, and discharging water into the river.

Solid Waste. The plan proposes an education program to encourage users to pack-out what they pack-in. It also supports agency and volunteer litter patrols and the placement and maintenance of dumpsters and trash cans at boat launches. Regulations will be developed that prohibit littering or bringing solid waste into the area for disposal. Land fills, dumps, and solid waste disposal will not be authorized in the corridor.

Water. The plan calls for filing an instream flow application in order to reserve adequate stream flows for recreation and fish habitat. Consistent with the act's requirement that the free-flowing nature of the rivers be maintained, dams are prohibited on the main stems of the six rivers and their major tributaries. Discharge from mining operations into the rivers is prohibited. Measures are also prescribed for protecting water quality in rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

Forestry. The Recreation Rivers Act allows timber sales only for personal use, including houselogs and firewood, use incidental to construction of access, or for habitat enhancement. To prevent damage to areas used for camping, the plan proposes regulations that limit harvest to dead and down wood for campfires. Individuals may still receive personal-use firewood and houselog permits for homes or other uses. Revegetation is required in most cases.

Additions to the Recreation Rivers. Four additions to the Recreation Rivers are recommended: the mouth of Alexander Creek, Upper Moose Creek, Upper Nancy Lake Creek, and the Upper Talkeetna River. If the legislature acts on these proposals, consistent management along longer segments of these rivers will be assured.

Education. Throughout the planning process, the public emphasized the need for education to enhance recreation opportunities, reduce resource damage, and minimize user conflicts. The plan recommends agencies cooperatively develop educational materials; distribute brochures; erect signs, kiosks, and bulletin boards; and work with user groups. Topics recommended to be addressed by educational materials include minimum impact camping, safety, and river etiquette.

How can the Plan be Changed?

The plan must be flexible in order to address changing uses along the rivers, economies, and access. The plan will periodically be reviewed to see if it needs to be updated. DNR may also amend the plan at shorter intervals as necessary. Under the Recreation Rivers Act, public review, and consultation with affected agencies and the advisory board is required before revising the plan.



Where can I get a Copy of the Plan?

This brochure is a summary of the plan. Copies of the full plan may be purchased at DNR offices listed below. Public libraries in the Anchorage and Mat-Su areas also have copies of the plan.

Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Public Information Office
3601 C St. (Frontier Bldg.) Suite 200
Anchorage, AK 99510-7005
Phone 762-2261

Copies can also be purchased from the DNR Division of Land offices in Juneau (400 Willoughby Ave., Suite 400) & Fairbanks (3700 Airport Way).



This brochure was released by the State Department of Natural Resources, printed in Anchorage, Alaska at a cost of 98 cents per copy, for the purpose of providing the public an opportunity to review a summary of the Recreation Rivers Management Plan.

Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan

The Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan includes corridors approximately one-mile wide along six rivers. The corridors exclude private and borough lands. This map shows land ownership within the corridors, however some small parcels are not shown due to the limitations of this map scale. For more detailed land ownership information, see the official status plats at the Department of Natural Resources or the Matanuska-Susitna Borough office.

















STATE OWNED LAND - MANAGEMENT INTENT

- CLASS I AREA
- CLASS II AREA
- CLASS III AREA
- PUBLIC USE SITE
- SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA (motor restrictions do not apply if in non-motorized area)

BOATING

- SEASONAL NON-MOTORIZED AREAS
- VOLUNTARY NO-WAKE AREAS

- BOROUGH LAND (within RR Corridor)
- PRIVATE LAND (within RR Corridor)
- RIVER MILE
- MANAGEMENT UNIT BOUNDARY
- 1a. / 1b. SUBUNIT BOUNDARY
- PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE RECREATION RIVERS



Alaska Department of Natural Resources
May 1994