

Region 2 : North Fork

Regional Summary

Background

This region is the second largest and constitutes most of the northern half of the planning area. The City of Eagle and Eagle Village are situated on the shores of the Yukon River. Most of the land in this region is either owned by the federal government and managed by the Bureau of Land Management or owned by Doyon, Ltd. The State of Alaska or Doyon, Ltd. has selected nearly all of the available federal land. Some land around the City of Eagle and Eagle Village is in private ownership. The eastern boundary of the region is the U.S. - Canada border, and the northern boundary is formed by the southern limits of the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

The City of Eagle is a second-class city with a long history as a Han Kutchin Indian settlement and later as a trading post for gold miners and a U.S. army camp. Today, roughly 170 people live in the City of Eagle and another 30 people live in Eagle Village. Many of the structures within the City are part of the Eagle Historic District. The need for additional commercial development and public facilities is very low at this time as the majority of employment is provided by a few retail businesses, the school, mining and seasonal employment such as tourism and BLM fire-fighting. Subsistence activities supplement some food sources.

The City of Eagle and Eagle Village has access to the state road system and Canada only during summer months via the Taylor and Top of the World Highways. In addition, a State-owned 4,500 foot gravel airstrip is available; scheduled commercial flights originate from Fairbanks and Tok. Float planes land on the Yukon River. While there is no dock, a public boat landing is available. During the summer, boat tours are available between Dawson City and Eagle on the Yukon River.

Most residents haul water from the community well, dug by hand in 1909. The school uses its own well and septic system. Several households have individual wells and septic tanks. The City landfill has been closed by the BLM; residents use the landfill in Eagle Village. The City has a small school, electric company and health clinic.

State Lands

Within Region 2, approximately 165,000 acres are in state ownership, and approximately 603,000 acres have been selected by the state. Land in Region 2 was selected for its mineral potential and its habitat and recreational values. A portion of the land owned by the state is located in the southwest corner of the region, and is fragmented by the National Wild and Scenic River corridor along Hutchinson Creek and the North Fork (for more information regarding the National Wild and Scenic River corridors, refer to the *Navigable Waterbodies*

section of this chapter). A small block of state-owned land is at the northern edge of this region, adjacent to the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. The remainder of state-owned land in this region is near and around the City of Eagle and Eagle Village, interspersed with land owned by Doyon, Ltd., the regional native corporation in this area (see *Land Status map* at the end of Chapter 1). State-selected land is interspersed throughout the region. The majority of the land selected by the state has also been selected by Doyon, Ltd.

Physical Features

This region is composed of rounded low mountains rising to 2,000 – 4,000 feet in altitude, along with plateaus and highlands of rolling topography and gentle slopes interspersed with frequent valleys. They are underlain by a complex geologic matrix of metamorphic, igneous, and sedimentary rocks. The entire area is underlain by discontinuous permafrost.

Region 2 encompasses the main stem of the North Fork, the lower segment of the Middle Fork, O'Brien Creek, Champion Creek, and the Seventymile River. In addition, a short section of the Yukon River weaves into the northeast corner of the planning area from the Alaska-Canada border. Some of the higher peaks in the region include: Glacier Mountain, Mount Eldridge, North Peak, and Wallcutt Mountain. Elevations are upward of 6,200 feet.

The City of Eagle sits above the Yukon River on fairly high ground. Nevertheless, in May 1962, an ice jam caused flooding to an elevation of 35.94 feet, and 70 percent of the town was damaged. On June 12, 1964, an open water flood reached an elevation of 33.85 feet causing damage to 60 percent of the town. The 1937 flood was reported to have caused water depths of up to 5 feet (Eagle - from Corps of Engineers Flood Data for Alaskan Communities available from DCBD or COE websites). According to a report prepared by Arctic Hydrologic Consultants (1984), the maximum annual water surface elevations have been over the top of the bank at the village of Eagle during four events since 1927. On two other occasions during this period, the maximum water surface has apparently had an elevation approximately equal to the top of the bank.

Bank erosion along the Yukon River is a problem as well. The erosion rate is variable; in some years no erosion occurs while in other years as much as 10-15 feet of erosion can occur in localized areas. The erosion appears to occur mainly during spring breakup in years with large discharges of water or ice jams.

Access

Access to and within this region is mainly by road on the Taylor Highway, by boat on the Yukon River and its tributaries, or by aircraft into Eagle or several of the remote ridges and landing strips. In addition, a fairly extensive network of trails exists, many of which have been used since the early part of the last century. Among the four regions in the planning area, Region 2 ranks high with respect to the number of trails that are well documented and have RS 2477 status. This can mostly be attributed to the history associated with Fort Egbert and the

WAMCATS communication line and the Fortymile mining district.

RS 2477 Trails in the North Fork Region:

Eagle-Alder Creek Trail. This trail was established by the Alaska Road Commission (ARC) beginning in 1907 to facilitate the route for miners and prospectors into the Seventymile River district. The trail is described in early ARC documents as 4 miles of wagon road, 16 miles of sled road ending in 40 miles of pack trail.

Eagle–Circle Mail Trail. This trail served as the primary winter mail, travel, and supply route between the communities of Circle and Eagle. Supplies and mail from Fairbanks would be freighted to Circle, and then to Eagle, which would then supply the smaller communities in the Fortymile region.

Mission Creek Trail. This trail was historically used to access mining claims in the upper Seventymile River area.

Teddy’s Fork Trail. This trail was used as a mining transportation within the Fortymile mining district since the turn of the century.

Fortymile Station-Eagle Trail. This trail is part of the old Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System and was necessary for the operations of military forts in Alaska.

Fortymile Station-Eagle Trail (Government Supply Route). This trail was historically used as a supply route to the Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) line.

Fortymile Dome–Boundary Creek Trail. This trail is a historic mining access and transportation route. The route is described by quartermaster's clerk John F. Rice in his 1900 account of an 1899 journey from Valdez to Eagle and is depicted on an 1899 USGS reconnaissance map of the Fortymile quadrangle.

Liberty Cabin–Dome Creek Trail. This trail is a historic trail which was a part of an extended system of trails from the Yukon River to the Fortymile River.

Fortymile–Franklin Trail. This trail is a historic trail which was used as a connecting route for the mining operations along the Fortymile River.

Dome Creek–Steele Creek Trail. This trails is a historic trail, which was part of a summer pack trail to Chicken.

Steele Creek–Fortymile Trail. This trail was used as a mining transportation route in the Fortymile mining district since the turn of the century (1899-1900).

North Fork of the Fortymile–Big Delta Trail. This trail is a historic trail that connected the Fortymile district with the Fairbanks/Valdez military road. Portions of the trail are also

segments of the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS).

Resources and Uses

Fish and Wildlife, Habitat, and Harvest. As seasons progress from spring to fall, the Fortymile caribou herd extends its range into much of the North Fork Region, west of the Taylor Highway. During the post-calving season, the herd's concentration generally moves eastward into the areas around Glacier Mountain and north of Champion Creek. The herd is also distributed throughout the North Fork drainage during summer. Dall sheep use the higher elevations around Glacier Mountain. There are also many raptor nesting sites distributed throughout the watercourses in this region.

Residents of the planning area and nearby communities harvest a variety of resources for subsistence purposes in the North Fork Region, including moose, caribou, sheep, bear, small game, furbearers, plants, and wood. The Taylor Highway corridor and areas accessible from the highway are most heavily utilized. Non-local residents also hunt big and small game in this region, primarily during the fall months.

ADF&G is currently conducting a fish study to determine the extent of anadromous fish in the Seventymile River. If anadromous fish are present in the river, the river will be nominated to catalog it as an anadromous river. In general, the fish and wildlife populations are sparse in this region. In addition, during the past two years, salmon returns on the Yukon River have significantly dropped thereby affecting harvest. Residents of the region occasionally fish for grayling in areas accessible from the Taylor Highway.

Several guided moose hunts occur in the Seventymile River drainage and most of the harvest activities are concentrated around Glacier Mountain and along the highway corridor from just south of the American Summit to the Upper Seventymile River.

Forestry. Vegetation in this region is largely comprised of alpine tundra with a variety of forest types depending on localized factors such as slope, aspect, soils, and fire patterns. These forest communities are characteristic of interior Alaska spruce-hardwood forest, containing white and black spruce, balsam poplar, birch, and aspen in various combinations. Harvest of timber in this region is limited to personal use, for house logs and firewood. Conditions related to market proximity and stand characteristics make commercial timber harvest unlikely, or at least limited to a small scale if it should occur.

Heritage Resources. The North Fork Region is rich in heritage resources of both a historical and paleontological nature. Evidence of the early mining, military presence, trading center, and native Alaskan occupation in this region is widespread. Mining camps, trails, historic cabins, historic and prehistoric native camp sites have been recorded in the Alaska Historic Resources Survey, maintained by the State Historic Preservation Office within the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, DNR. The Eagle Historic District National Historic Landmark includes portions of the City of Eagle, Fort Egbert, part of the Yukon River and surrounding areas. This nationally significant site was the first incorporated city in interior Alaska (1901) and played a

significant role in the turn of the 20th century (Klondike Gold Rush era) development of transportation, communications, and military networks of the state. Several islands in the Yukon River adjacent to the City of Eagle are of historical significance as well. One of these islands, Belle Isle, is reportedly the site of the fur trading post that was Eagle's genesis. Since RS 2477 trails are historic trails, they are also considered heritage resources. Refer to the RS 2477 trails listed in this region.

Materials. There are many sites along the Taylor Highway and the Top of the World Highway that DOT/PF uses for materials. Most of these are within the highway right of way, but there are some sites outside the right of way that DOT/PF has under contract with DNR. Usually, material sites are located fairly close to the road and are spaced as frequently as practical to minimize haul distances for materials. Since they are cleared and level, they are often used for other purposes, both authorized and unauthorized. These characteristics also make the sites desirable for other uses after DOT/PF no longer needs them for materials.

Mineral Resources. The geology of this region is similar to the rest of the planning area, consisting primarily of felsic and mafic intrusive and metamorphic rock including schist and gneiss. It is within the Tintina Gold Belt and has been actively mined since the late 1800's. Mining has mostly focused on placer deposits of gold-bearing gravel and colluvium. Mineral exploration is occurring in Region 2, as it is generally considered to have excellent potential for hard rock minerals. The southern portion of the Yukon-Kandik oil and gas basin extends into this region from the north, and the Seventymile River drainage northwest of Eagle contains known coal deposits. The quality and accessibility of these coal deposits are not economical for commercial extraction, but have historically been used for heating by locals in the area.

Recreation. Local residents of the City of Eagle and Eagle Village recreate in a variety of ways on state land. Telegraph Hill is a popular area because of its proximity to the town and access for hiking, skiing, and snowboarding. Residents use trails for snowmachining and riding all-terrain vehicles. Boating is also popular on the Yukon River. The City of Eagle is a popular take-out point for float trips on the Fortymile River.

Settlement. The City of Eagle and Eagle Village are surrounded by State-owned land that at one time was set aside for community expansion. The demand for saleable land is not great as some private land is on the market. The private land that is available is usually in large acreages of 40 acres or more or small lots in the City area. State land near the City of Eagle and Eagle Village that is designated for settlement could satisfy the current and future demand for land. This land was designated for settlement because of its location, accessibility, suitability for building, and lack of competing uses.

Tourism. The City of Eagle attracts a growing number of tourists because of the quaint historical nature of the town and the organized trips scheduled by some of the larger tour companies. A popular trip is a boat ride on the Yukon Queen from Dawson City, Canada to the City of Eagle then a bus ride to Tok. Independent travelers often make the long drive on the Taylor Highway in a day from Tok. There are no RV campgrounds in the City of Eagle.

Transportation. The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has resurfaced most of

the Taylor Highway from Tetlin Junction to Jack Wade Junction, and is scheduled to resurface the Top of the World Highway to the Canadian border. There is currently no schedule for work on the Taylor Highway from Jack Wade Junction to Eagle.

Management Constraints and Considerations

There are no state management plans or site specific plans for this region.

In addition to ANCSA corporation owned land and private land, Champion Creek, Hutchinson Creek, O'Brien Creek, the Middle Fork, the North Fork, and the main stem of the Fortymile River are within the National Wild and Scenic River corridor. The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for management of these lands, which is guided by the *River Management Plan for the Fortymile River Component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System* (1983). There are conflicts between management of the federally owned uplands and the mining activity permitted on the adjacent state-owned shorelands (for further information on this issue, see the discussion in the *Navigable Rivers* section of this chapter). Resolution of this issue is outside the scope of this area plan. The Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Natural Resources are working to develop appropriate solutions.

Under Alaska Hunting Regulations, Game Management Unit 20 contains the Glacier Mountain Controlled Use Area. This area is closed to any motorized vehicle hunting, including transportation of hunters, their hunting gear, and/or parts of game, from August 5 to September 20. This does not include transportation on the Taylor Highway.

State land near Eagle and Eagle Village is rather limited, and surrounded by private lands (Doyon, Ltd.). Because of this, state land plays a critical role in providing for public uses such as harvest and recreation.

Management Intent for Region 2

Management intent in this section applies to state-owned and state-selected land. Also refer to Chapter 2, *Areawide Land Management Policies*.

Management unit R-02 consists of all lands in Region 2 that are not within the smaller management units near the City of Eagle and Eagle Village. Refer to the management units listed in the Resource Allocation table and delineated on the maps at the end of this section.

All lands within unit R-02 are designated General Use (Gu). This is to maintain flexibility in management, since these lands consist of large amounts of acreage, current levels of demand for their use is relatively low, and a variety of uses can be accommodated with appropriate siting and design considerations.

The North Fork region does not have any lands designated for fish and wildlife habitat and harvest. However, these resources will be recognized and considered when authorizing

activities on state land. The Glacier Mountain area has populations of several important species of wildlife. The harvest in this area is managed by ADF&G.

The management intent for this region is to facilitate the transportation needs related to state maintained roads and airports. There are several materials sites along the Taylor Highway and one site near Eagle Village. These sites are managed by or under contract with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. The Northern Region Office will work with ADOT/PF to authorize additional material sites as the present site along the highway no longer meets the need and cannot be expanded beyond the highway right-of-way.

The management units around the City of Eagle that are designated Settlement will be managed to provide for expansion of the community and an opportunity for individuals to purchase mid-sized parcels of land.

Access to state land should be facilitated through authorizations for travel and/or construction of existing and new trails or roads.

The management intent for Region 2 is to preserve scenic values along the Taylor Highway, minimize the number of access points onto the Taylor Highway, and reduce impacts to wildlife and other natural resources.

Commercial development should be kept to a minimum in unit R-02. Commercial and residential development should be restricted to management units near the City of Eagle and Eagle Village that are designated Settlement (Se). Resource development activities, most of which are likely to be related to mining, are appropriate only if the impacts from these uses can be addressed. If construction of a road is necessary for any DNR authorization, it should use an existing RS 2477 route whenever feasible and prudent.

Management Intent for Management units E-18 and E-19

State land within the management units indicated on the Eagle inset map as E-18 and E-19 are designated Settlement (Se) to accommodate the potential need for residential land in the future. Although immediate demand for settlement land in this vicinity is anticipated to be relatively low, sufficient land is designated settlement to allow flexibility in siting, design, lot size and density, and to provide a pool of state land that would be available for private ownership over the long term. These areas are community settlement areas and considered appropriate for land sale programs that offer pre-surveyed parcels. However, programs that offer land for staking may also be implemented in these areas.

Before land can be offered in these areas, DNR is required to prepare a best interest finding in accordance with AS 38.05.035. At that time, the areas are examined more closely to determine which portions are most suitable to offer, and to resolve site specific issues. Public notice is issued, and comments from the public are taken into consideration.

The management intent for conveyance of land is to use a land sales program that has been or

will be established by DNR or the legislature. DNR uses these programs to issue public notice, conduct agency review, solicit public comment, and resolve site specific issues that may not have been addressed by the area plan. This results in a more efficient and cost effective means of land disposal. Land is not to be conveyed in response to individual requests.

Land sales are to be done in phases. Making land available in increments will provide opportunity to examine impacts of each previous disposal, and ensure long-term availability of land suitable for settlement.

When DNR implements a land disposal program, it will ensure that existing access and RS 2477 trails are protected. For guidelines regarding access and trails, refer to the *Public Access* section in Chapter 2.

Prospective purchasers of state land should be made aware that much of the Upper Yukon planning area has historically been used for mining, and that it is considered to have good mineral potential for the future. Although land prepared for sale will be closed to mineral entry prior to conveyance, other lands are open to mineral entry, and mining activity can be conducted. Refer to the Mineral Resources and Settlement sections in Chapter 2 for further guidelines.

Management Intent for Management Units E-20, E-21, and E-22 - Yukon River Shorelands Adjacent to or Near the City of Eagle and Eagle Village

These management units include the shorelands adjacent to or near the City of Eagle and Eagle Village. It is intended that the more centrally situated shoreland unit, E-20, will accommodate uses and structures that support upland water-dependent or water-related uses and facilities, both commercial and recreational. Residential uses that are ancillary to the principal commercial and public uses are also considered appropriate, but floathomes are not allowed. Presently three boat landing sites are being used for public and commercial use. Shoreland units E-21 and E-22 are not intended for intensive development, being more peripherally situated, although development related to adjoining areas in management unit E-20 is considered appropriate. See *Resource Management Table* for more detailed information on these units.

Resource Allocation Summary for Region 2 : North Fork

| Unit Number | Unit Name or Location | Designation | Acres | Management Intent | Resources / Uses / Additional Information |
|-------------|--|-------------|---------|--|--|
| R 02 | Predominant state land base in the North Fork Region | Gu | 758,961 | See <i>Management Intent for Region 2</i> in this chapter. | See <i>Regional Summary</i> for Region 2. This unit consists of all state-owned and state-selected lands in Region 2 that are not within specific management units listed below. |
| E 01 | Eagle | Pr | 37 | To be retained in state ownership. | Lease for Public and Charitable Use to the City of Eagle (ADL 34008 and OSL 192). |
| E 02 | Eagle | Gu | 28 | Retain in state ownership. | Reserve Use Request (ADL 67663). |
| E 03 | Eagle Airport | Pr | 5 | To be retained in state ownership, and managed for airstrip purposes. | Interagency Land Management Agreement (ADL 414009) with DOT/PF for the Eagle Airport. |
| E 04 | Land near Eagle Airport | Pr | 103 | To be retained in state ownership, and managed for airstrip purposes. | Other State Land (OSL 37 and U.S. Survey 3190) for the Eagle Airport which is managed by DOT/PF. |
| E 05 | Land near Eagle Airport | Pr | 41 | To be retained in state ownership, and managed for airstrip purposes. | Interagency Land Management Agreement (ADL 414009) for the Eagle Airport. |
| E 06 | Eagle | Pr | 35 | To be used for future expansion of apron for the Eagle Airport. Unit is to be retained in state ownership. | Management unit is located on the south side of the Eagle Airport, near the west end. |

Resource Allocation Summary for Region 2 : North Fork

| Unit Number | Unit Name or Location | Designation | Acres | Management Intent | Resources / Uses / Additional Information |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------|---|--|
| E 07 | Eagle | Pr | 22 | Management unit is proposed to be used for future expansion of apron for the Eagle Airport (long term). Unit is to be retained in state ownership. | Management unit is located on the south side of the Eagle Airport, near the east end. |
| E 08 | Eagle | Gu | 8 | May be included with unit E-7 under an Interagency Land Management Agreement for the Eagle Airport. | Management unit of state land adjacent to the Eagle Airport. |
| E 09 | Eagle | Gu | 105 | Residential and/or commercial use is not expected to occur on this management unit in the near term, but because of its level terrain and proximity to the airport, portions may be suitable for such uses if and when there is sufficient demand. | Level terrain south and southwest of Eagle Village. |
| E 10 | Old Eagle school site | Pr | 2 | To be retained in state ownership. | Other State Land (OSL 439 and U.S. Survey 4060) for school site. |
| E 11 | Eagle materials site | Gu | 5 | To be managed as a materials site during the time that it is under contract with DOT/PF. During this time, other uses may be authorized if they do not conflict with or cause impediment to fulfillment of the contract. After the contract is either expired or terminated, this management unit may be suitable for other purposes, including but not limited to residential or commercial use. Reclamation work shall take future uses into consideration. | Under contract (ADL 411940) with DOT/PF for materials. Sale of all or any portion of this management unit would require reclassification to Settlement (Se). |

Resource Allocation Summary for Region 2 : North Fork

| Unit Number | Unit Name or Location | Designation | Acres | Management Intent | Resources / Uses / Additional Information |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|--|--|
| E 12 | Eagle school disposal site | Pr | 1 | To be retained in state ownership. | Disposal site for asbestos from old Eagle school. (ADL 416105, ASLS 97-67) |
| E 13 | Eagle | Pr | 62 | To be retained in state ownership as buffer for asbestos landfill and materials site. | Management unit is located south of Eagle Village, near Buckeye Creek. |
| E 14 | North side of Yukon River at Eagle | Gu | 2,116 | Manage for dispersed recreation. To be retained in state ownership, and reevaluated at the end of the planning horizon for possible re-designation to Settlement (Se). | Management unit is on the north side of the Yukon River, east of Eagle Bluff. |
| E 15 | Yukon River islands near Eagle | Ru | 70 | To be retained in state ownership and preserved for historic values. | Islands in the Yukon River east of Eagle. Important to Eagle and Eagle Village for recreational, heritage and scenic values. |
| E 16 | Eagle | Ru | 1,120 | Manage for dispersed recreation. To be retained in state ownership. | Management unit is located south of the City of Eagle and the Eagle Airport. Much of it consists of low, wet soils, and is used by local residents for recreation. |
| E 17 | Eagle | Gu | 3,137 | To be managed for dispersed recreation, harvest, and woodcutting. | This unit consists of both high ridges and low flat areas south of Eagle, and is used mostly for recreation. |
| E 18 | Eagle | Se | 360 | Manage for settlement purposes. | Located adjacent to the Taylor Highway, south of Eagle. |

Resource Allocation Summary for Region 2 : North Fork

| Unit Number | Unit Name or Location | Designation | Acres | Management Intent | Resources / Uses / Additional Information |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|--|---|
| E 19 | Eagle | Se | 1,120 | Portions of this management unit may be appropriate for dispersed settlement offerings, such as “remote staking” or “open to entry” types of programs. Further analysis and siting considerations will be done to determine most appropriate locations prior to land being offered for sale. See also <i>Management Intent for the North Fork Region</i> . | Located west of Eagle. For the most part, this is level but well drained land. |
| E 20 | Yukon Rivers shorelands near Eagle | Rh | 713 | To be managed to accommodate adjacent upland uses that are water-dependent or water-related, including commercial and public. Residential uses ancillary to a principal commercial or public use are considered appropriate as well. Floathomes are prohibited. See also <i>Management Intent for the North Fork Region</i> . | This unit includes the shorelands adjacent to the City of Eagle and Eagle Village. Presently there are three boat landing sites being used for public and commercial use. |
| E 21 | Yukon River shorelands | Gu | 3,000 | Management unit is designated General Use in order to classify this section of the Yukon River into Resource Management Land. It is anticipated that more intensive water related uses will occur in shoreland unit E-20, although portions of the shorelands adjacent to unit E-20 may also be appropriate for such more intensive uses. | Consists of shorelands of the Yukon River, extending from the north edge of unit E-20 to the boundary of the planning area. There are no known present structures within the shorelands of this unit. |

Resource Allocation Summary for Region 2 : North Fork

| Unit Number | Unit Name or Location | Designation | Acres | Management Intent | Resources / Uses / Additional Information |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------|-------|---|--|
| E 22 | Yukon River shorelands | Gu | 2,117 | Management unit is designated General Use in order to classify this section of the Yukon River into Resource Management Land. It is anticipated that more intensive water related uses will occur in shoreland unit E-20, although portions of the shorelands adjacent to unit E-20 may also be appropriate for such more intensive uses. | Consists of shorelands of the Yukon River, extending from the east edge of unit E-20 to the boundary of the planning area. There are no known present structures within the shorelands of this unit. |
| E 23 | Eagle | Gu | 2,090 | To be managed for dispersed recreation, harvest and woodcutting. | Located west of the City of Eagle. |

Map - Region 2 : North Fork

Map - Eagle Inset