
INTRODUCTION

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I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Matanuska Valley Moose Range (Moose Range or Range) is an area rich in natural resource values. The lands within the Range support abundant fish and wildlife populations, contain marketable timber products and high-valued coal reserves and provide a variety of outdoor recreational and cultural opportunities. The area also has abundant water resources and can provide for limited grazing opportunities.

The use of natural resources often leads to resource use conflicts. In the Moose Range such issues involve the maintenance of wildlife habitat, heritage, water, recreational and scenic values while allowing utilization of forest products, mineral and grazing resources. A comprehensive management plan will play an essential role in the orderly use and protection of these resources.

The development and utilization of the natural resources within the Matanuska Valley Moose Range could also have dramatic effects on the local economy: creation of more jobs; expansion of support services; and possible improvements in schools, health and public services. Adverse effects of resource-related growth and development could result in increased local population; crowded schools and services; increased traffic on highways; as well as changes in air, water and scenic qualities; public overuse of the resources; and possible changes in rural lifestyles. By using a carefully developed plan for managing all of the resources, it is expected that many of the negative effects will be greatly reduced.

In response to the increasing need to utilize yet protect the areas' resources, the Alaska State Legislature in 1984 passed the act which created the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. AS 16.20.350(b) requires that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) shall develop and adopt a management plan for the Matanuska Valley Moose Range that shall reflect the concurrence of the Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Both DNR and ADF&G will adopt and comply with this management plan.

The Moose Range was established to maintain, improve and enhance moose populations and habitat and other wildlife resources of the area, and to perpetuate public multiple use of the area, including fishing, grazing, forest management, hunting, trapping, mineral and coal entry and development, and other forms of public use of public land not incompatible with the purposes stated. (See Appendix I for the complete version of the legislation). The purpose of the plan is to determine how these various uses will coexist. The plan provides guidelines which lay-out how a given use will occur so that its impact on other resources is minimized. Where two or more uses cannot occur on the same parcel without detrimental effects, the plan separates these uses. Through these methods, the plan resolves resource-use conflicts, and provides for the orderly use and protection of the Moose Range's varied natural resources.

The plan is intended to direct the use of state lands for the next twenty years. This document is meant to be flexible enough to meet future land use needs. Procedures for revision are included in Appendix IV, on page 225, to provide flexibility for unforeseen land use needs. As elsewhere on state land, DNR will manage the surface and subsurface resources and ADF&G will manage the fish and wildlife. (The plan does not specify how private or Matauska-Susitna Borough lands are to be managed.)

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The plan is organized in five main chapters. The first chapter provides the reader with the general purpose and organization of the management plan, and an overall description of the management area.

The second chapter provides a description and evaluation of the resources within the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. Resource maps are provided to clarify the location of the key resource values.

The third chapter describes the rangewide land management policies that will apply to the Moose Range. In the fourth chapter, the management intent and subunit specific land management policies are described for the three management subunits.

Implementation of the management plan is covered in the fifth chapter. This section describes the priorities for actions the agencies need to take to manage the Moose Range. Where possible, the estimated costs for the key actions are shown.

The Appendices are located at the end of the document. The appendices include the enabling legislation, list of acronyms, definitions, revision procedures, the summary of public involvement, water resource information, geology related maps, summary of applicable state laws and a bibliography.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE

LOCATION

The Matanuska Valley Moose Range in Southcentral Alaska is a legislatively-designated area that is nestled in the southern foothills of the Talkeetna Mountains east of the Little Susitna River and north of the Glenn Highway. One of the Glenn Highway signs designating the Moose Range is located twelve miles northeast of Palmer, at Mile Post (MP) 59. The Range continues through portions of the drainages of Moose, Eska, Granite, Young, California and Boulder Creeks, as well as the drainages of the Kings and Chickaloon Rivers. A second boundary sign for the Moose Range is located at MP 80 of the Glenn Highway. Two rural communities lie within the area. They are Sutton and Chickaloon (see Map 1, page 11).

LAND OWNERSHIP

There are approximately 132,500 acres of land within the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. Although the Moose Range is located in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the land within the Range is owned by the state, the borough, private citizens and Native groups. The policies in this plan apply only to state land. A breakdown as to the numbers of acres owned, tentatively approved and selected by these groups is shown in Figure 1 on page 5.

The state has management authority for approximately 76% of the land in the Moose Range (the state has patent to 42% and tentative approval to 34%). The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has patent and tentative approval to almost 1% of the land. Private individuals have patent to 8% of the land, while Native corporations have patent to 4%. The land status of 16% of the area has not yet been determined, with 11% of the land selected by both the state and Native corporations, and 5% of the land tentatively approved to the state but selected by Native groups. With only 4,483 acres of over-selected lands and rights to over 69,000 acres, it is likely the Chickaloon Moose Creek Native Association, Inc. will receive ownership of a majority of the lands they have selected.

MENTAL HEALTH LANDS

In July 1956, Congress passed Alaska's Mental Health Enabling Act (MHEA). The Act is quoted as follows:

Sec. 202 (e) "All lands granted to the Territory of Alaska under this section, together with the income therefrom and the proceeds from any dispositions thereof, shall be administered by the Territory of Alaska as a public trust and such proceeds and income shall first be applied to meet the necessary expenses of the mental health program of Alaska..."

Approximately 34,595 acres of land now within the Moose Range were selected for this trust under the Mental Health Enabling Act (see Map 1, page 11 and

Figure 2, page 6). In 1978, the legislature redesignated mental health trust lands as general grant lands and provided an alternative funding mechanism for mental health programs. However, the appropriations authorized in this legislation were never made. In 1982, mental health advocates sued the state (Weiss v. Alaska) to return these lands to their former trust status and to gain monetary compensation for the trust.

In October 1985, the Alaska Supreme Court invalidated the 1978 act and returned mental health lands to the trust and ordered compensation for lands which had been alienated. However, the Supreme Court did not resolve the issue of the disposition of lands which had been legislatively designated. The case was remanded to the Superior Court for eventual clarification of these and other issues.

The state believes that mental health land within legislative designations did not return to the trust, but instead is a part of the state's liability. As a consequence, this plan identifies the highest and best uses for all lands within the legislatively designated boundaries of the Moose Range. In the event that the lands within the Moose Range are returned to trust status, then the policies and guidelines of this plan may not be applicable to those trust lands.

The plan contains the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) recommendations for managing the mental health lands. The final decision on management of mental health lands will be dependent upon the final decision made by the Mental Health Commission and the Supreme Court.

SPECIAL USE DISTRICTS

Portions of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Moose Creek Reserve Special Use District and Talkeetna Mountain Special Use District lie within the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. Many uses in both districts require the issuance of a permit by the Planning Commission after a public hearing.

The Purpose of the Moose Creek Reserve Special Use District is to assure the continuing presence of moose in the district and surrounding areas, to subordinate uses of the public lands within the district to the purposes of the management program of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for this district, and to otherwise preserve and develop moose habitat in the Lower Matanuska River Valley area. The purpose of the Talkeetna Mountain Special Use District is to permit the multiple use of land within the district. It is further the purpose to conserve the unspoiled beauty of the mountains and the alpine region, to be consistent with the historic and continual use as a mining district as well as a water resource district; and to aid wildlife habitat while permitting resource development, recreation, grazing and related activities where appropriate. (Map 5a, page 33 shows the present district boundaries.)

Figure 1: LAND OWNERSHIP
(as of 1/1/85)

OWNER	ACRES	PERCENTAGE
State (Patent)	55,525	42
(T.A.)*	45,440	34
(Select)*	14,740	11
TOTAL	115,705	87
Borough (Patent)	1,040	.8
(T.A.)*	40	(less than) .1
TOTAL	1,080	.8
Private		
Non-Native (Patent)	10,850	8
Native (Patent)	4,910	4
(Select)*	21,760	16
TOTAL	37,520	28

Total Acres in the MMR are approximately 132,500

*Non-patented borough and native lands overlay state patented, T.A. or selected lands. Since these lands are counted more than once, the total acreage exceeds 100%.
 -14,720 acres of native selections are on state selected lands
 - 7,040 acres of native selections are on state T.A. lands
 - all borough selections are on state T.A. lands

The management plan will apply to land for which the state has patent or tentative approval

Lands the management plan will not directly affect

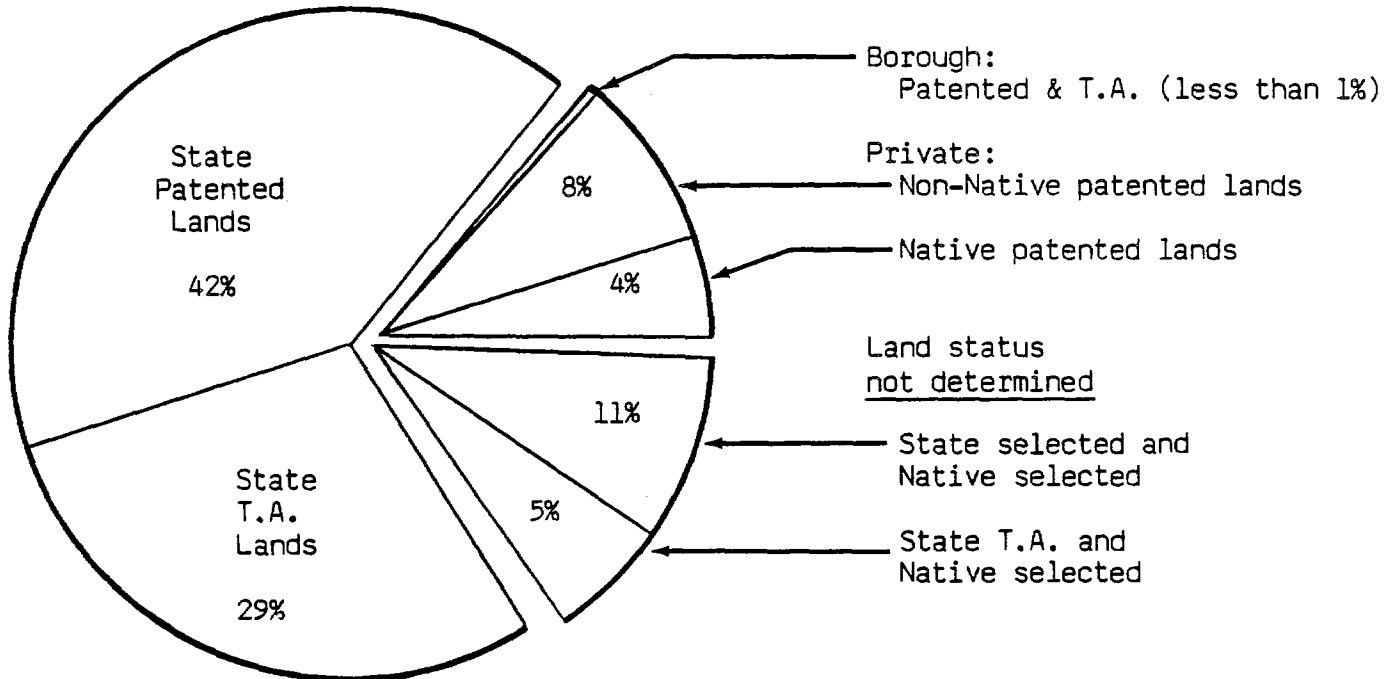


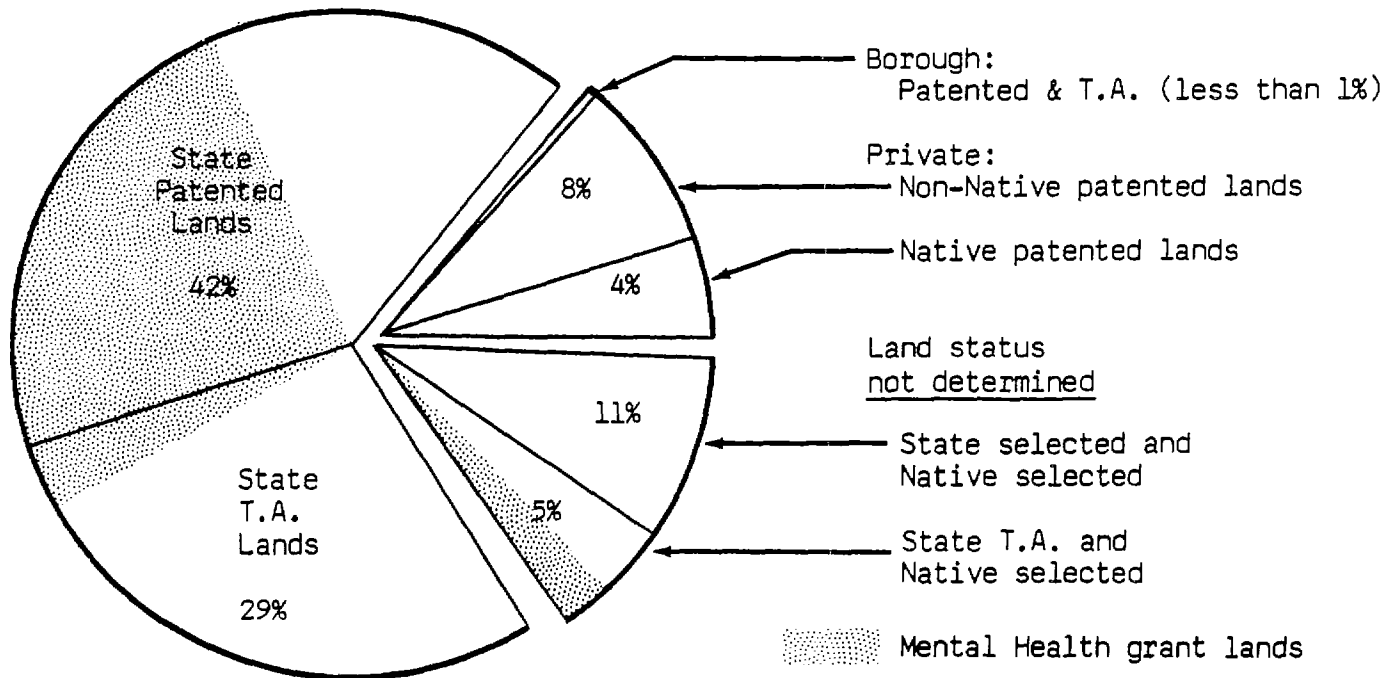
Figure 2: MENTAL HEALTH LANDS

Total Mental Health Acres within the Moose Range	34,615 acres
Patent	30,455 acres
T.A.	4,160 acres
Native Selected	3,500 acres
Coal Lease	3,410 acres
Grazing Lease	210 acres

NOTE: Although outside of the Moose Range, mental health grant lands lie north of the Glenn Highway and adjacent to the Moose Range in portions of Sec. 33 & 34, T20N, R5E and Sec. 3, T19N, R5E. (These are identified in the Susitna Area Plan as potential settlement lands.)

Additional areas now private, that were originally Mental Health grant lands include:

Private 1,149 acres
Native 2,511 acres



CLIMATE

The diversity of climate in the Moose Range has a direct effect on the potential growing season and habitat enhancement efforts for native vegetation. The Matanuska Valley Moose Range lies within a transitional zone between coastal and interior climates. The average summer temperatures are 40 to 69°F and average winter temperatures are -3 to 39°F. These averages do vary with temperatures becoming more extreme as one moves north and east into the Moose Range. Extreme temperatures recorded for this area are -42 to 90°F.

The yearly average precipitation is 14 inches, including an average 69 inches of snowfall. The heaviest periods of rainfall are in late summer and early fall. The Talkeetna Mountains to the north and Chugach Mountains and Matanuska River to the south have a great influence upon climate. These mountains generally create conditions which produce precipitation on the windward slopes.

Some of the most predominant climatic features of the area are the strong winds channeled out of the Matanuska River Valley canyons. The winds are generally seasonal and most pronounced from November through March.

Daylight hours within the Moose Range reflect the state's northern latitudes, with 19 hours of daylight in the summer and only 5 hours of daylight in mid-winter.

POPULATION

In 1985, the Department of Community and Regional Affairs certified the Matanuska-Susitna Borough population to be 41,093. Seven thousand, four hundred seven residents live in the three incorporated cities within the borough, 3,666 for the City of Wasilla, 3,016 for the City of Palmer and 725 residents for the City of Houston. Exact figures for the communities of Sutton and Chickaloon are not available. The fire service area of Sutton for 1985 has 667 residents.

Although the Municipality of Anchorage is located two hours driving time from the Moose Range, Anchorage residents use the area's resources. According to the Municipality of Anchorage figures the 1985 population for the municipality was 248,263.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Most of the southern boundary of the Moose Range is accessible by road and within a short drive of the majority of the state's population. The main transportation corridor accessing the Matanuska Valley Moose Range is the Glenn Highway from MP 57 to MP 80. Additional subdivision and upgraded homestead, mining and railroad spur roads also provide access into the Range. A few of these roads are maintained by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Map 1 on page 11 shows the major access routes. Some trails which were used historically are now surrounded by private lands and are closed to the public. Upgrading, improvement and possible realignment of the Glenn Highway

is planned and local citizens of the Sutton and Chickaloon communities are concerned about effects on their lifestyles. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF) has identified a corridor along this section of the Glenn Highway in which the highway developments will occur. The corridor is displayed on Map 2, page 13.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY

The Sutton and Chickaloon communities are presently supported economically by service-related businesses, private guiding enterprises and a few government positions. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough economy began to rise as a whole in 1981 due to the influence of state loan funds being made available for home purchase and business loans. In the borough, government-based positions account for 30% of the employment, followed by the services and trade sectors. Approximately 37% of the borough residents are employed outside of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Some Sutton and Chickaloon residents commute to Palmer, Wasilla and Anchorage for work.

As mentioned in the introduction, the development, utilization or preservation of natural resources within the area could have significant effects on the local economy. Time will tell as to the nature and extent of these impacts, but regardless, economic growth does mean changes will occur.

DECISIONS MADE THROUGH THE PLAN

This plan is signed by the Commissioners of Natural Resources and Fish and Game and is state policy for management of the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. The Matanuska Valley Moose Range Management Plan determines how DNR and ADF&G will manage state-owned resources for the next twenty years. The plan does not specify how private or Matnauksa-Susitna lands will be managed. The plan identifies the types and locations of resource development that should occur on the land. This is done in the following manner. The plan lists the rangewide management guidelines which direct all land management decisions. Then the Moose Range is divided into three management subunits for which a statement of the management intent is provided. Next, site-specific management guidelines are described for each management subunit. In the implementation chapter, specific agency responsibilities are described. These responsibilities are necessary for cooperative, multiple-use management of the Moose Range. Map 10, the Land Use Plan, summarizes these key resource decisions on page 199.

Continued, cooperative management efforts by DNR and ADF&G will include expanding specific timber harvest areas, habitat enhancement areas and reviewing mining operation plans. The detailed, site-by-site location of logging roads, timber cut designs, etc. will be designed by the Area Forester and his/her staff with ADF&G while continuing to develop the forest management schedules for 1991 - 2005. The Division of Mining and Geology will be responsible for approving the mining operation plans through their established procedures including ADF&G review. The details of these follow-up efforts are described in the Implementation Chapter.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Department of Natural Resources develops plans at three levels: Statewide, Area and Management. The Statewide Natural Resources Plan develops the Department's long-term goals and objectives for resource management. Area plans are developed to determine the resource uses that will occur on public lands. Management plans are developed to coordinate the site-specific resource development actions. The overall goals, objectives and policies which are developed in the Statewide and Area plans provide guidance to the Management Plans.

The DNR, Division of Land and Water Management developed the Susitna Area Plan in 1985 to designate specific land uses for the entire Susitna basin. The policies and guidelines developed in Susitna Area Plan apply to most of the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. The Matanuska Valley Moose Range Management Plan is consistent with the Susitna Area Plan and provides more detailed management guidance by deciding where and how the resource uses will occur in the Range. A small portion of the west end of the Moose Range falls under the Willow Sub-basin Area Plan. The policies and guidelines developed in Willow Sub-basin Area Plan also apply to that portion of the Moose Range. This draft is consistent with the Willow Sub-basin Area Plan.

According to the Alaska Coastal Management Program, Biophysical Boundaries for Alaska's Coastal Zone, the Moose Range is outside of the direct interaction zone, direct influence zone, and the indirect influence zone. Therefore, the Range is outside of the interim coastal zone boundaries.

The major steps used in developing the Matanuska Valley Moose Range Management Plan are as follows:

1. Public issues are identified.

In April 1985, public meetings were held in Sutton, Anchorage and Palmer to learn about local knowledge of the Range, local problems, land use preferences, and concerns about uses of state lands. Approximately eighty people attended these meetings.

2. Information is gathered and analyzed.

Information about natural resources, existing land uses, land ownership, economic and social characteristics was gathered, mapped and analyzed. A summary of this information is located in Chapter Two - Resource Description and Evaluation. This step was completed in September 1985.

3. Management alternatives are prepared.

Alternative plans for use of the resources in the Moose Range were developed. These alternative plans were based on legislative intent, existing state policies, public comments and resource characteristics.

4. Public review of alternatives.

In November 1985, public comments and preferences on the alternatives were obtained at public meetings. Approximately eighty people reviewed these alternatives at Sutton, Anchorage and Palmer.

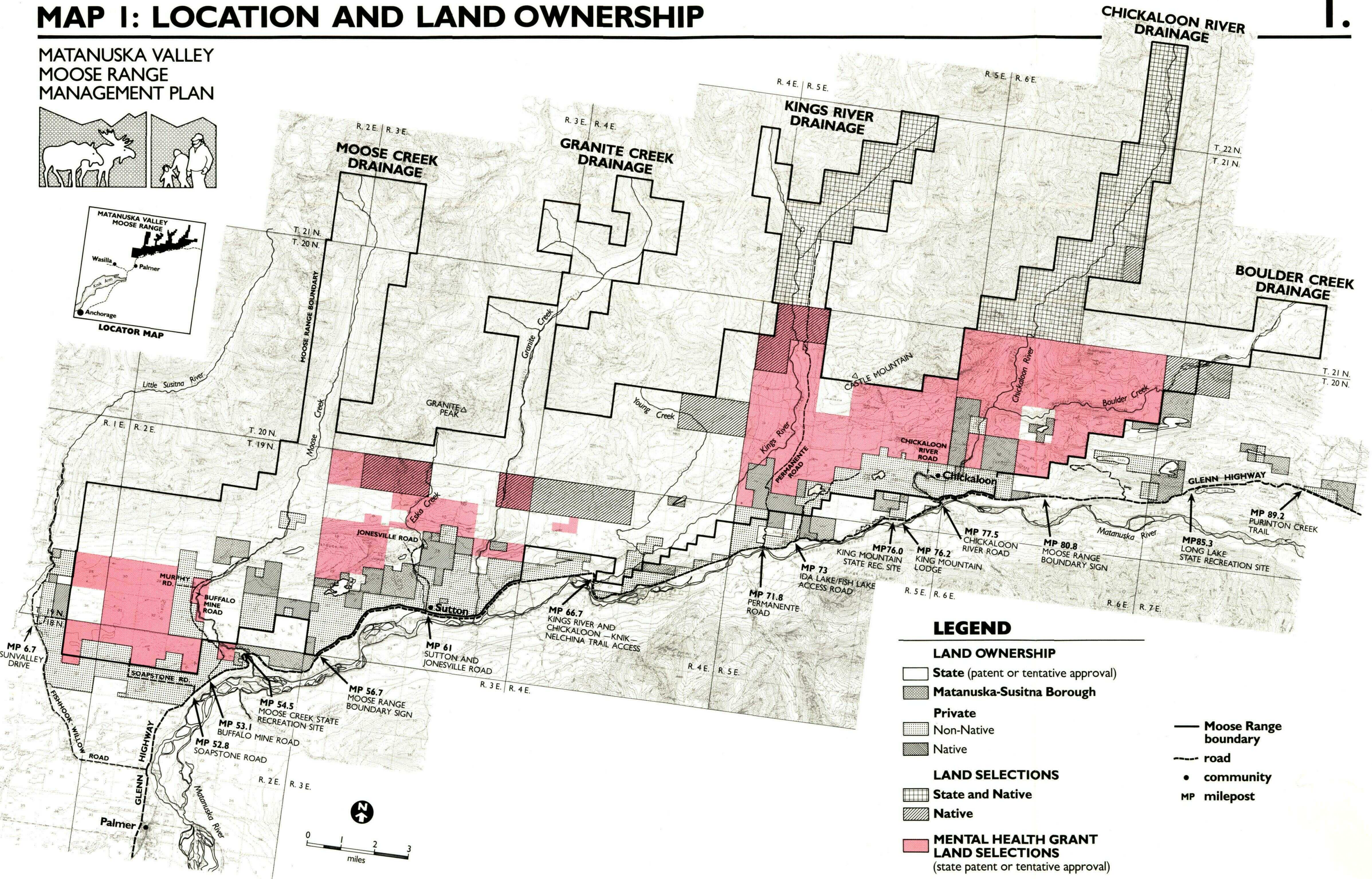
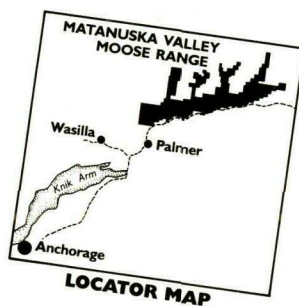
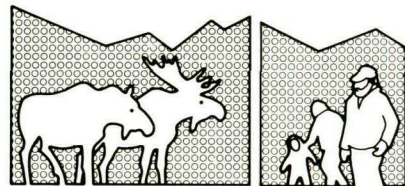
5. Draft Plan for State Lands is Prepared.
Using public and agency comments, land uses were determined and the draft management plan was developed. Public review of the draft management plan took place in May 1986.
6. Public Draft Plan is Reviewed.
Public hearings were held to receive comments on the draft management plan in late May of 1986. Meetings were held in Sutton, Anchorage and Palmer. Approximately sixty people attended the meetings.
7. Final plan is prepared.
The final plan recommending management actions and management guidelines was developed in June and July of 1986 and is based on agency and public comments.
8. Plan is adopted and implemented.
The Commissioners of the DNR and ADF&G approved and adopted the final plan in August 1986. All uses of the state's land and resources in the Matanuska Valley Moose Range over the next twenty years must be consistent with the plan or its ammendments.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVISION PROCEDURES

The implementation actions for the management plan are addressed in Chapter Five of this document. The plan may be revised, based upon the established DNR procedures, which are described in Appendix IV on page 225.

MAP I: LOCATION AND LAND OWNERSHIP

MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN



LEGEND

LAND OWNERSHIP

- State (patent or tentative approval)
- ▩ Matanuska-Susitna Borough
- Private
 - ▨ Non-Native
 - ▩ Native

LAND SELECTIONS

- ▩ State and Native
- ▨ Native

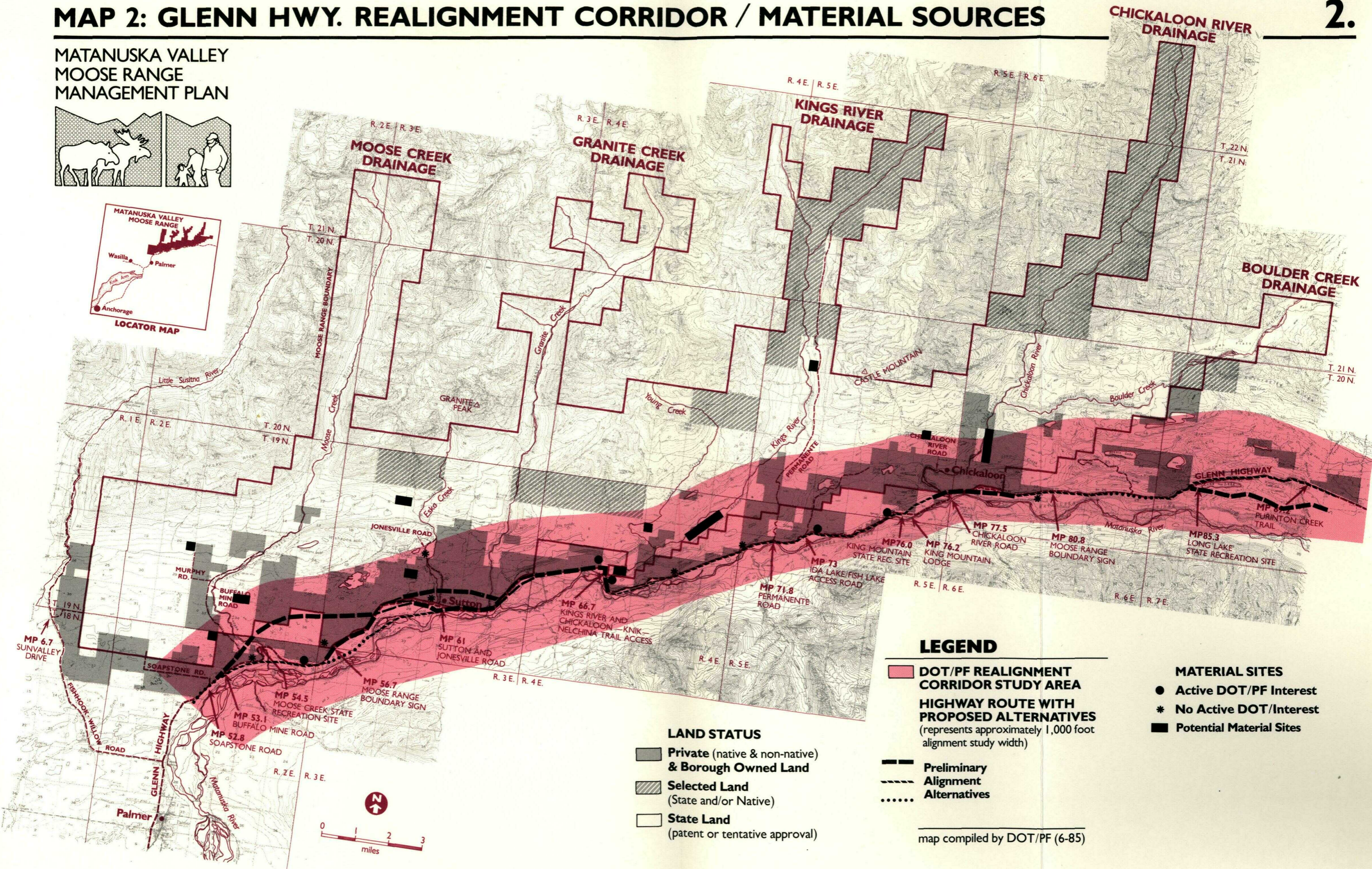
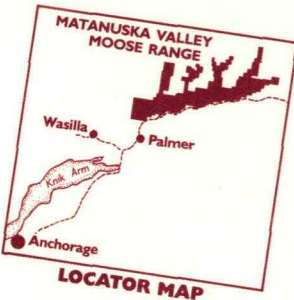
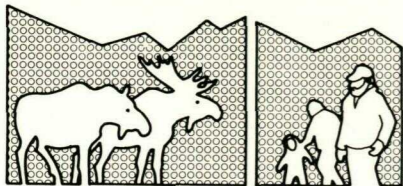
MENTAL HEALTH GRANT LAND SELECTIONS (state patent or tentative approval)

- Moose Range boundary
- road
- community
- MP milepost










MAP 2: GLENN HWY. REALIGNMENT CORRIDOR / MATERIAL SOURCES

MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN



LEGEND

-  DOT/PF REALIGNMENT CORRIDOR STUDY AREA
-  HIGHWAY ROUTE WITH PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES (represents approximately 1,000 foot alignment study width)
-  Preliminary Alignment Alternatives
-  MATERIAL SITES
-  Active DOT/PF Interest
-  No Active DOT/Interest
-  Potential Material Sites

- ### LAND STATUS
-  Private (native & non-native) & Borough Owned Land
 -  Selected Land (State and/or Native)
 -  State Land (patent or tentative approval)

map compiled by DOT/PF (6-85)