
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: N $\frac{1}{2}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$

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: $W\frac{1}{2}$, $S\frac{1}{2}$, $S\frac{1}{2}$, $SE\frac{1}{4}$
Section 8: $E\frac{1}{2}$, $S\frac{1}{2}SW\frac{1}{4}$

Change Recreation Rivers description to:
Township 17 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian
Section 7: $W\frac{1}{2}$, $S\frac{1}{2}S\frac{1}{2}SE\frac{1}{4}$
Section 8: $E\frac{1}{2}E\frac{1}{2}E\frac{1}{2}$, $SW\frac{1}{4}SE\frac{1}{4}SE\frac{1}{4}$, $S\frac{1}{2}SW\frac{1}{4}SE\frac{1}{4}$, $S\frac{1}{2}S\frac{1}{2}SW\frac{1}{4}$

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: $N\frac{1}{2}$, $N\frac{1}{2}S\frac{1}{2}$
Section 34: $NW\frac{1}{4}NW\frac{1}{4}$, $W\frac{1}{2}SW\frac{1}{4}NW\frac{1}{4}$

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:

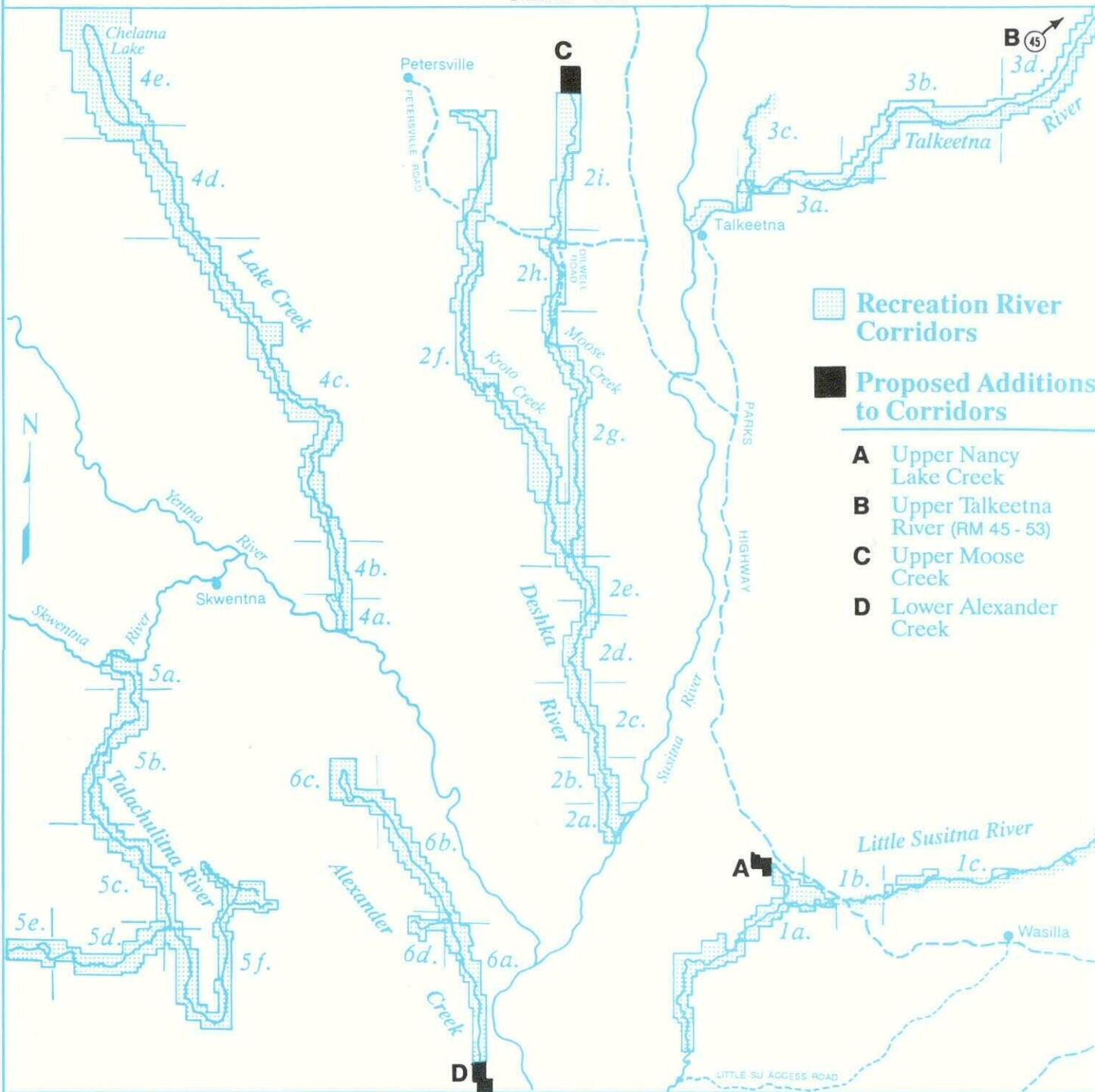
The shorelands and the water column of the Talkeetna River from mean high water mark to mean high water mark from the point at which it crosses the line dividing Townships 28 and 29 North, Seward Meridian, upstream to the point at which it crosses the line dividing sections 23 and 24, Township 29 North, 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: $E\frac{1}{2}SW\frac{1}{4}$ to Section 16: $E\frac{1}{2}$, $SW\frac{1}{4}$.

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 inter-agency 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.

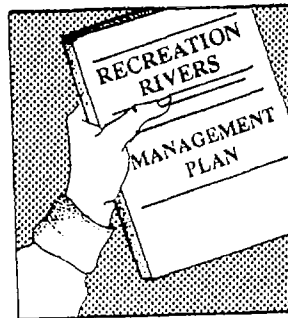
Procedures for Special Exceptions

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 inter-agency 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 changes. 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: S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$. 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: N $\frac{1}{2}$. 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 over-harvest. 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 cooperative 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.