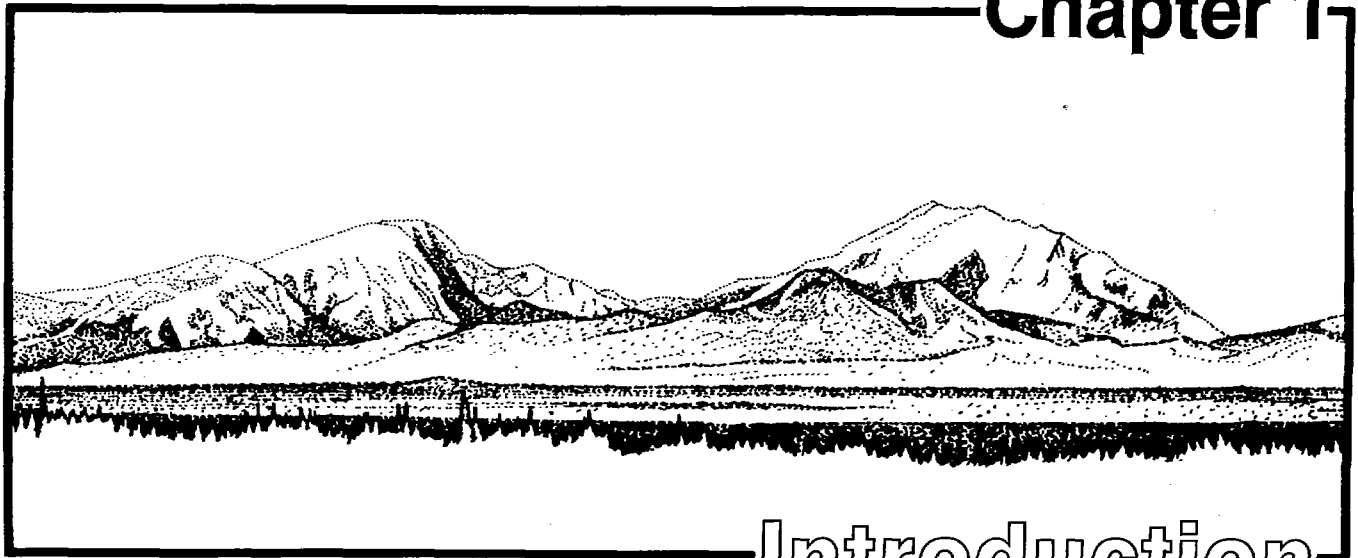


Chapter 1



Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Summary of Purpose

This plan describes how the Department of Natural Resources will manage state land in the Copper River Basin. The plan determines land disposal locations, land use classifications, administrative designations, and land selections, relinquishments and exchanges.

A draft of this plan was circulated for public review in September of 1986. Public meetings were held in 14 communities and public comment was received through November 10, 1986. These comments were used as the basis for revisions which resulted in this final plan.

How this Document is Organized

Chapter 1 discusses why the Copper River Basin Area Plan was developed and summarizes the planning process, implementation procedures, and steps for future plan modification.

Chapter 2 presents state policies on land management that guide implementation of the area plan. These policies are generally consistent for all state lands where area plans have been prepared. However, because this region is unique, some policies were modified to reflect particular conditions that occur in the Copper River area.

Chapter 3 contains detailed descriptions of the plan's land use designations. For convenience, the study area is organized into 33 management units. A management unit is an area that is generally homogeneous with respect to its resources, topography, and land ownership. Each unit includes a statement of management intent, a table that indicates major resource values, and a table that lists land use designations.

Chapter 4 discusses specific actions needed to implement the plan: recommended legislative designations; relinquishment of state selected land; selection of additional land by the state; and cooperative agreements. This chapter also discusses procedures for plan modification.

Appendix A briefly explains the rationale for the policies in the final plan. Appendix B is a glossary; and appendix C lists various reports written as background for this plan: the resource elements (one report for each seven resource types) and a 'Summary of public comments on alternatives.' Appendix D contains maps that show important trails in the planning area.

Description of Planning Area

The Copper River Basin planning area, 15.9 million acres of land, is located in the eastern portion of southcentral Alaska. The majority of this land is under federal

ownership and is managed by the National Park Service or Bureau of Land Management. The Copper River Basin Area Plan addresses the management of approximately 3.3 million acres of state lands. Native corporations within the planning area are entitled to approximately 1.8 million acres of land. Numerous small tracts of privately owned land, particularly near Glennallen, Copper Center, and Kenny Lake, exist within the area, and the University of Alaska also manages several small tracts of land near Glennallen and McCarthy.

The Prince William Sound Area Plan (currently underway) and the Susitna Basin Area Plan are guides for management of state lands south and west of the Copper River Basin, respectively. The Tanana Basin Area Plan is a guide for management of state land north of the Copper River Basin.

Why Plan for Public Land?

The Copper River Basin is rich in natural resources, and there are many different ideas as to how these natural resources should be used. Although some uses are in direct conflict with each other, different uses can occur on the same piece of land provided the uses are properly managed.

The planning process provides a means for openly reviewing all resource information and public concerns before long-range decisions are made on state land-use issues. The planning process resolves conflicting ideas on land use and lets the public know what choices were made and why.

Preparation of land use plans for state lands is required under Title 38 of the Alaska Statutes. State agencies that are responsible for implementing the plan use a variety of methods such as permits, leases, land sales, or negotiated agreements with adjacent land owners to manage the land and its resources. Actions of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be based on the approved area plan.

This final plan describes the intended uses of state lands. The plan contains recommendations on which tracts of land should be retained by the state, sold to private citizens, or exchanged for other tracts of land. In addition, the plan includes a process to identify how the plan will be revised and updated. Maps and legal descriptions are used to clarify the plan.

Planning Process and Management Structure

The planning process was designed to ensure full participation by the public and government agencies; to provide opportunities for review and revision of the plan; and to include consideration of a wide variety of ideas. The steps in the planning process have been:

1. Public and agencies identified issues.
2. Resource information was compiled.
3. Plan alternatives were prepared.
4. Alternatives were reviewed with the public.
5. Draft plan was prepared for state lands.
6. Draft plan was reviewed with the public.
7. Final plan was prepared.
8. Plan is adopted and implemented.

The planning team for the Copper River basin is responsible for developing this area plan. The team is composed of representatives from the agencies or groups listed below:

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Divisions of Land and Water Management, Agriculture, Forestry, Oil and Gas, Mining and Geological and Geophysical Surveys, and Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Ahtna, Incorporated

In addition, private citizens, citizens' groups, private organizations, and other state, federal, and local agencies participate in the planning process by attending workshops and providing comments. The planning process included three major efforts to involve the public. Fourteen public meetings were held in November 1984 to identify issues. A public-attitude survey of Copper River basin residents and users was conducted during the summer 1985. Twelve public meetings were held to solicit comments on alternatives during the spring 1986, and a summary brochure was distributed through the mail. Fourteen public meetings were held as part of the public review of the draft plan. Summaries of these meetings are available from DNR.

Summary of Plan Implementation

Plan implementation will occur primarily through administrative actions: land designations; land sales, leases, permits; relinquishments of state selected land; additional selections of land; interagency memorandums of agreement; classification orders; and mineral closing orders. In addition, the department makes recommendations to the state legislature on legislative designations.

Land use classifications and mineral closing orders will be signed for state lands in the basin. These classifications and orders are the formal record of primary and secondary uses allowed on state land and are recorded on status plats. (See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of plan implementation.)

Summary of Process for Modifying the Plan

The Copper River Basin Area Plan must be a flexible tool so that it can change as economic and social conditions change. The plan will be reviewed every 5 years to determine if revisions are required.

The plan may be amended on approval by the Commissioner of DNR followed by public review and consultation with appropriate agencies. A minor change to the plan, such as clarifying intent or correcting an inconsistency, does not require public review. Special exceptions to the plan can occur when compliance with the plan is impossible or impractical. However, a request for a special exception must follow certain procedures. (See Chapter 4.)

PLANNING AREA

Location Map

