

## MANAGEMENT UNIT 2 – PALMER HAY FLATS

### MANAGEMENT INTENT

This unit includes the tidal flats at the far eastern end of Knik Arm and the lower segments of the Knik and Matanuska Rivers. The area will be managed to preserve or enhance waterfowl and other types of fish and wildlife habitat and to protect and allow use of fish and game populations within its boundaries. The majority of this unit is within the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge established by the legislature. Uses allowed within the game refuge are only those which are compatible with the objectives of protection and use of fish and wildlife populations. All public lands within this unit are available for oil and gas leasing. Public lands in this unit will remain open to mineral location and be available for coal leasing except for the state game refuge (subunit 2a), which is open to mineral entry by leasehold location.

Management Unit 2 has five subunits: the game refuge (2a), private land north of the refuge (2b), the confluence of the Knik and Matanuska rivers (2c), and units along the Matanuska (2d) and Knik (2e) rivers. See the maps at the end of this section for boundaries of these areas and the accompanying chart for a summary of land uses.

**Subunit 2a**, Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge was set aside by the legislature as a hunting and wildlife habitat protection area. For the most accurate definition of permitted uses in this area see the original enabling legislation (A.S. 16.20.032).

**Subunit 2b** is mostly in private ownership. The area is largely a wetland and serves similar biological and habitat functions as land within the adjacent game refuge. Borough, federal and state governments should use zoning power and coastal zone, wetlands and other applicable laws to protect the visual and environmental values of this area. This plan supports public purchase of land to enhance public enjoyment of the area, particularly of land directly along the highway. Such purchases should occur, however, only from willing sellers. They are contingent upon the availability of funds and inclusion of purchased areas within the boundaries of the refuge. As this plan goes to print the Alaska Legislature is considering legislation that would expand the refuge boundaries to include this area and subunit 2c, and to allocate funds to purchase private land within the expanded boundaries.

**Subunit 2c** is located at the confluence of the Knik and Matanuska rivers, between the boundary of the Palmer Hays Flats refuge and the Alaska Railroad. This

area will be managed generally the same as land within the refuge and will be proposed as an addition to be added to the refuge (see note above on pending legislation).

**Subunit 2d** is made up of the bed of Matanuska River below the upriver limit of tidal influence. Also included is a large tract of borough land on the south side of the river. This latter area, while not located in the active bed of the river, is essentially a large gravel bar. The subunit will be managed to protect habitat values in the river bed and downstream in the Palmer Hay Flats Refuge while simultaneously permitting recreation use and gravel extraction. Another important objective is protection of visual quality, particularly within the area visible from the train and highway crossings.

**Subunit 2e** along the Knik River is primarily in private ownership. It is recommended that this area be managed similar to public lands in subunit 2d.

### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The complete set of areawide management guidelines is presented in Chapter 2 of this plan. All of the guidelines potentially could apply to uses within this management unit; however, those that are most likely to be applicable are indicated with asterisks in the list below.

- Agriculture
- Fish & Wildlife Habitat
- Forestry
- Recreation
- Settlement
- \*Subsurface (Materials)
- Transportation
- Instream Flow
- Lakeshore Management
- \*Public Access
- Remote Cabin Permits
- \*Stream Corridors
- \*Trail Management
- \*Wetlands Management
- Resource Management

Management guidelines that apply to just this management unit are presented below, by subunit.

#### **Subunits 2c, 2d, and 2e (Knik-Matanuska Confluence, Matanuska R., and Knik R.)**

##### **Habitat Protection and Gravel Extraction**

A detailed, comprehensive plan for gravel extraction

# LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

SUBREGION Glenn HighwayMANAGEMENT UNIT 2 – Palmer Hay Flats

SUBUNIT	LAND OWNERSHIP (GENERALIZED)	LAND USE DESIGNATIONS				PROHIBITED SURFACE USE(S)*	COMMENTS
		SURFACE		SUBSURFACE			
		PRIMARY USE(S)	SECONDARY USE(S)	LOCATABLE MINERALS	LEASEABLE MINERALS		
2a Palmer Highway Flats	State	Wildlife Habitat	Public Rec.	Open under Leasehold Location	Not available for coal leasing or prospecting	Grazing Remote Cabins Trapper Cabins Land Disposals	Existing State Game Refuge
2b Private Land North of Refuge	Private/ Borough	Primarily Private Land— Recommended Uses: Wildlife Habitat, Water Resources, Public Recreation		---	---	---	---
2c Knik/ Matanuska Confluence	State	Public Recreation Wildlife Habitat	Gravel Extraction	Open	Available for leasing	Remote Cabins Land Disposals Trapper Cabins	Proposed for legislative designation as an addition to the Palmer Hay Flats Refuge
2d Matanuska River	State/ Borough	Public Recreation Wildlife Habitat	Gravel Extraction	Open	Available for leasing	Remote Cabins Land Disposals Trapper Cabins	
2e Knik River	Native/ Private	Primarily Private Land—Recommended Land Uses: Wildlife Habitat, Water Resources, Public Recreation, Gravel Extraction		---	---	---	---

\*Other uses such as material sales, land leases, remote cabin permits, etc., that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed. Such uses will be allowed if consistent with the management intent statement and management guidelines of this unit, and with the relevant management guidelines in chapter 2.

in this area should be prepared by DNR and private owners in consultation with the Department of Fish and Game and DOT/PF. As part of the completion of such a plan more information should be collected on gravel deposition, recreation and habitat values, and other related concerns.

**Protection of Visual Quality**

This area provides attractive views to motorists and is an important visual buffer between more developed area to the north and south. Subunit 2c and the western part of 2e are of particular importance. Any developments proposed for this area, such as electrical transmission lines, transportation corridors, pipelines or related supporting developments, should be designed to minimize adverse visual impacts.