
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY OF PURPOSE

This document is the 1990 update of the Tanana Basin Area Plan. The plan designates the uses that will occur on state lands within the Tanana Basin. It shows areas to be sold for private use and areas to be retained in state ownership. It does not direct land uses for private, borough, or federal land, nor does it direct land uses for areas already legislatively designated for specific purposes, such as parks or wildlife refuges.

Because more than one use is allowed on most state lands, the plan establishes guidelines that allow various uses to occur without serious conflicts. For example, on lands intended for residential use, the plan explains how public access to streams and trails will be maintained.

HOW THIS DOCUMENT IS ORGANIZED

This plan has four chapters. Chapter 1 includes a brief description of the planning area, the reasons why a plan is necessary for the Tanana Basin, the types of decisions made by the plan, an introduction to the planning process and the agencies involved in developing the plan, a brief description of plan implementation and modification, and a summary of the land designations for six major resources.

Chapter 2 includes an overview of the goals and management guidelines that affect each major resource or type of land use, and the basic policies for agriculture, cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat, forestry, lakeshore management, materials, public access, recreation and tourism, remote cabins, settlement, stream corridors and instream flow, subsurface resources, trail management, transportation, trapping cabins, and wetland management.

Chapter 3 includes detailed descriptions of the land use designations in the plan's eight subregions. The subregions are major geographic subdivisions of the Basin. Each subregion is divided into management units (of which there are 108 in the planning area), which are generally homogeneous with respect to their resources, topography, and land ownership.

For each management unit, there is a statement of management intent, management guidelines, a chart listing primary and secondary land uses, prohibited land uses, and recommended land classifications, and maps that show designated land uses.

Chapter 4 discusses specific actions necessary to implement the plan. These actions include recommendations for legislative designation, proposed state land selections, land use classifications, and mineral orders. The Public Trust Doctrine, management of the Tanana Valley State Forest, transportation corridors, and trail management are also discussed. This chapter also explains about municipal entitlements, discusses instream flow reservation studies, describes a proposed land trade, and lists issues to address in the next plan update. The last section of this chapter contains the procedures for changing the plan.

The appendices offer a variety of support materials for information presented in the plan: a glossary, a list of important trails in the planning area, mineral orders, settlement information, population figures, related publications, the Goodpaster Review Working Group, and an index.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Tanana River Basin is one of interior Alaska's largest drainages, encompassing over 21 million acres (see Map 1-1, page 1-3). The basin is bounded by the Yukon-Tanana Uplands on the north, the Canadian border on the east, the Alaska Range on the south, and the Kuskokwim Mountains on the west.

To organize the planning process for such a large and diverse region, the planning area was divided into seven major subregions. The boundaries of these subregions--Fairbanks North Star Borough, Lower Tanana, Kantishna, Parks Highway/West Alaska Range, East Alaska Range, Upper Tanana, and Delta-Salcha are shown on Map 3-1, page 3-1. An eighth subregion, Remnant Rivers, includes lands beneath navigable waters that are not adjacent to state lands.

The State of Alaska owns or has selected approximately 14.5 million acres in the planning area. In addition, 1.7 million acres of federal lands are proposed for selection by the state. The lands that the state has selected or has proposed for selection include approximately 1.6 million acres of land within military reservations.

Of the remaining land, approximately 112,000 acres are owned by the Fairbanks North Star Borough; 2.4 million acres are owned by Native village and regional corporations; 771,800 acres are within the Tetlin Indian Reservation; 739,360 acres are in federal Conservation System Units (the Tetlin Wildlife Refuge and the Delta Wild and Scenic River System); and over 250,000 acres are in other private ownership. Five areas within the planning area have been designated by the Alaska State Legislature: Tanana Valley State Forest, Chena River State Recreation Area, Minto Flats State Game Refuge, Creamers Field State Game Refuge, and the Goldstream Public Use Area. These areas are (or soon will be) specifically addressed by management plans.

The 1989 population of the planning area was approximately 79,396. Most people live within the Fairbanks North Star Borough. (See Appendix E; *Population of Communities within the Tanana Basin Planning Area*).

WHY PLAN FOR THE USE OF PUBLIC LAND

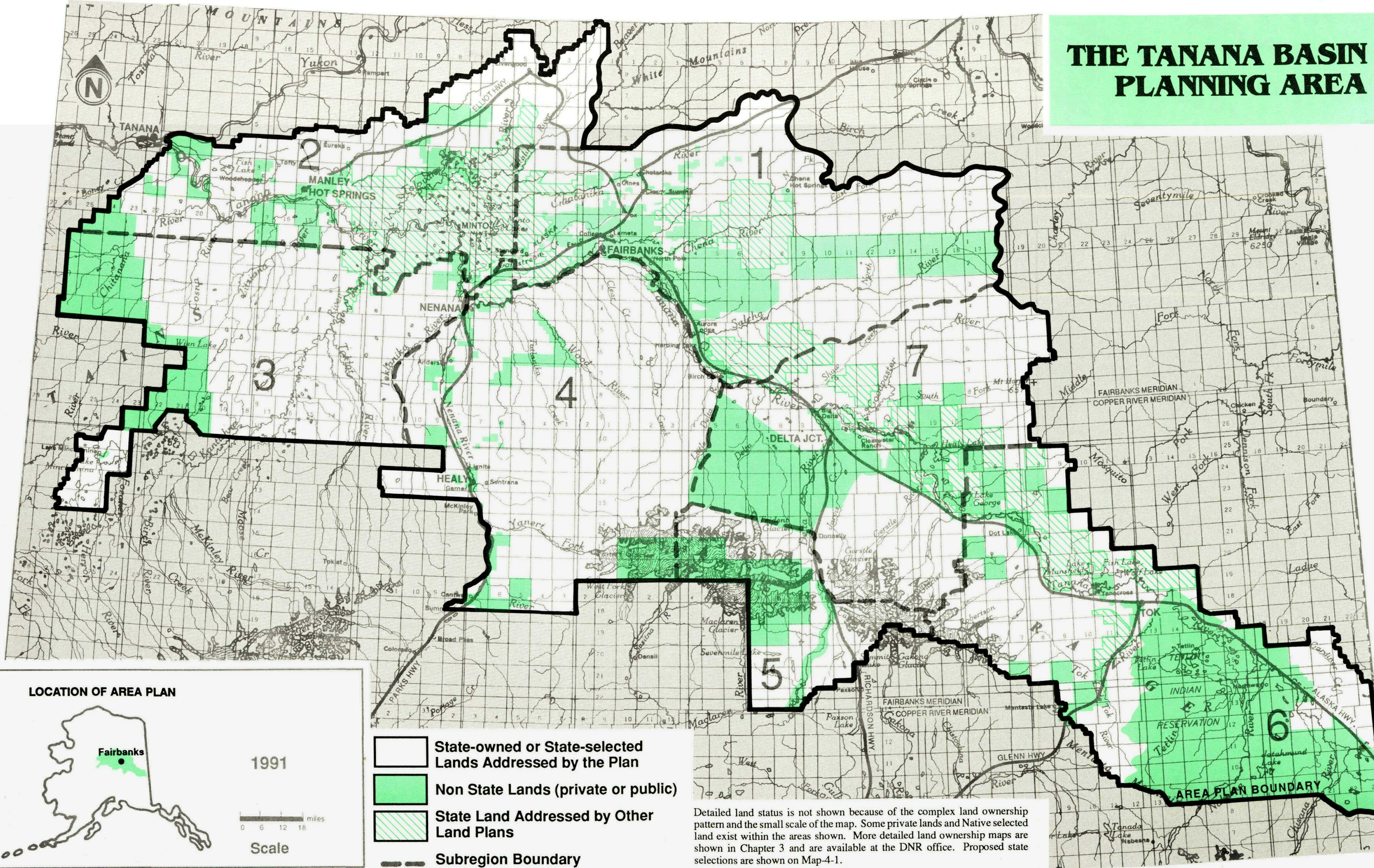
Management of state lands greatly influences physical development patterns and general quality of life in the Tanana Basin. Major development projects such as mining, timber harvests, and agriculture influence local job opportunities. Land sold for residential or private recreational use affects the character of community life, as does land retained for hunting, fishing, and other public uses. Because use of state land affects the physical landscape and quality of life, an open public process of deciding how to manage that land is essential.

The Tanana Basin planning process openly reviewed resource information and public concerns prior to making long-range decisions about public land management. It also resolved conflicting land use objectives and made clear to the public what choices were made and the reasons for those choices.

Public land managers make decisions about land use, such as whether to issue permits for roads, timber harvests, or sand and gravel extraction. Managers need clear, consistent guidelines for their decisions. Land use plans establish long-range commitments for the use of public land and provide clear policies for public land management.

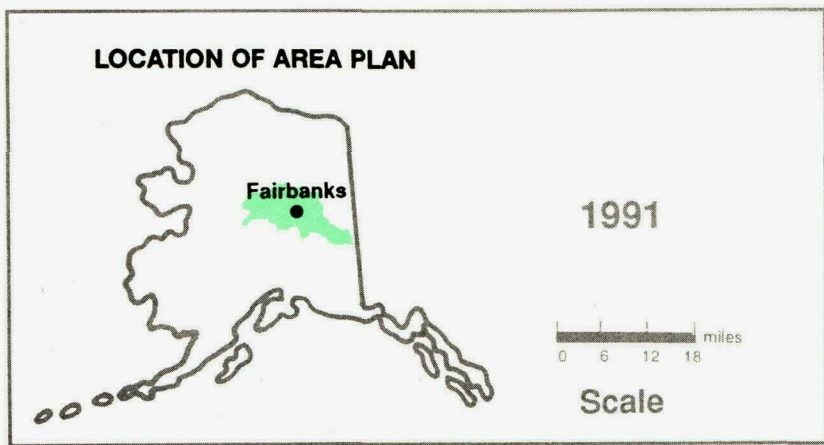
Land use plans can be valuable for private landowners. If the state is publicly committed to land use patterns and policies, private investors can make decisions about their own land. For example, if someone is contemplating developing a subdivision next to state or borough land, it is important to know if the public land is likely to become a gravel pit or a recreation area.

THE TANANA BASIN PLANNING AREA



- State-owned or State-selected Lands Addressed by the Plan
- Non State Lands (private or public)
- State Land Addressed by Other Land Plans
- Subregion Boundary

Detailed land status is not shown because of the complex land ownership pattern and the small scale of the map. Some private lands and Native selected land exist within the areas shown. More detailed land ownership maps are shown in Chapter 3 and are available at the DNR office. Proposed state selections are shown on Map 4-1.



WHAT DECISIONS ARE MADE BY THE PLAN

The Tanana Basin Area Plan determines major land uses on state lands within the planning area. These uses are described in a management intent statement

for each management unit. The plan also sets management guidelines for the various resources. The plan will serve as a preliminary decision on land use action on state lands within the Basin.

LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The plan designates surface and subsurface uses for each management unit. Surface uses are designated primary if they are major surface uses; the unit will be managed to encourage its use, conservation or development. A secondary use is permitted when its occurrence will not adversely affect achieving the objectives for the primary uses.

Generally few surface designations are made for minerals, because minerals are covered in subsurface designations, which are either "open" or "closed." Development of subsurface resources is covered by the plan according to statutory and constitutional laws for all lands open to mineral entry or lease. A surface designation for primary use minerals is made in certain cases where intensive mineral exploration or production of statewide sig-

nificance is occurring, or is likely to occur in the near term (5-10 years). In these cases, mining is a major surface use.

The plan also identifies prohibited uses within each management unit. These are uses that will not be allowed in the management unit without specific reconsideration and plan amendment through an open public process. In an area identified as critical habitat, for example, year-round roads are sometimes prohibited. Uses that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed on a case-by-case basis, if the Alaska Department of Natural Resources determines the proposed uses are consistent with the statement of management intent for the unit.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AREAS

In some remote areas, lands are designated for resource management rather than for a more specific designation, such as settlement or forestry. The resource management designation means that the land will be retained in public ownership until the plan is revised (approximately every five years), or until new roads, new information, or development proposals make it necessary to review the resource management designation and assign a more specific classification, such as agriculture or wildlife habitat. Until the designation is reviewed, the land will be managed for existing public uses. Changes in resource management designations must be reviewed by an interagency planning team and the public.

There are two types of resource management areas:

High Value Resource Management. Some lands have resources that can support different and conflicting land uses. However, the distance from road access or other factors make it unlikely that these lands will be developed in the near term. For example, areas with valuable agricultural soils often support good habitat or stands of timber suitable for long term forest management. Existing information is often inadequate to determine the best long range use of these lands. These lands are given a "high value resource management" designation, and the values associated with the particular area are listed.

Low Value Resource Management. Remote lands with no highly valuable resources identified (mainly high mountain areas, glaciers, and occasionally large bogs), are designated "low value resource management." These lands may contain one or more resource values, but none are of sufficiently high value to merit designation as a primary use.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Most public lands are intended to be managed for multiple use. The plan establishes management guidelines that allow various uses to occur without

serious conflicts. Management guidelines can direct the timing, amount, or specific location of different activities, making the allowed uses compatible.

HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The original plan was completed in 1985. Extensive public participation included 57 public meetings and workshops held throughout the planning area.

The updated Tanana Basin Area Plan is the product of one and a half years of work by the planning team, interest groups, and the general public. The planning

team includes eleven representatives from state agencies and the Fairbanks North Star Borough (see page ii). Seventeen public meetings and workshops were held throughout the planning area during the update process. The planning process is shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1. THE PLANNING PROCESS

1985 PLAN

Issues

- Issues identified by agencies and through public meetings (March 1982)

Alternatives

- Data collected and analyzed.
- Land use alternatives prepared.
- Public meetings held to review land use alternatives (May/June 1983)

Draft Plan

- Draft plan prepared.
- Public meetings held to review the draft plan (May/June 1984)

Final Plan

- Draft plan revised.
- Final plan adopted (June 1985)

1990 UPDATE

- Issues identified.
- Data collected and analyzed.
- Plan revisions prepared and reviewed at public meetings (May 1990)
- Final changes made.
- Final updated plan adopted (November 1990)

Changing social and economic conditions place different demands on state land. New technologies and new information could mean that some of the plan's policies might become outdated. DNR reviews each area plan once every five years to see if conditions have changed enough to warrant an update. New information, proposed legislation, and new issues in the Tanana Basin warranted an update of the area plan in 1990. In updating this plan, the planning team incorporated new resource information, clarified outdated or confusing plan policies, and resolved new issues. The following major issues were addressed by the update process:

- A review of updated resource information resulted in the modification of forestry and agriculture designations.
- Recommendations for legislative and administrative designations were reviewed. The recommendations for public reserves, state trails, and the

Robertson Lakes State Recreation Area were dropped. Recommendations for Delta Clearwater State Recreation River and the Delta River Critical Habitat Area were added.

- The Delta-Salcha Area Plan, the draft Little Chena Management Plan, and the Nenana-Totchaket Management Plan were updated and incorporated as parts of the Tanana Basin Area Plan.
- Management intent was revised for the Goodpaster and Nenana rivers.
- 1.7 million acres of new state selections were proposed, and management intent was described for all state-selected land (see Chapter 4, *Proposed State Selections*).
- Over 75 small parcels of land near Fairbanks were reviewed and assigned management intent.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is an essential part of the planning process. During the 1990 update process, 101 people attended 4 community workshops during Fall 1989, and more than 180 people attended 13 public meetings in Spring 1990.

During development of the original plan, three rounds of public workshops were held throughout the planning area and in every community in the Basin. More than three hundred people attended meetings in 1982 to identify land use concerns for the Tanana Basin. Approximately 170 people attended workshops in 1983 dealing with alternative land use plans, and 358 people commented on draft

plan in 1984. These workshops are summarized in separate documents available from the Department of Natural Resources. Throughout the planning process, members of the planning team and DNR staff met with representatives from many communities and interest groups, to inform them of the plan's progress and provide them the opportunity to review resource data and plan proposals.

Information gathered at these meetings and the written comments were instrumental in identifying important issues, gathering data on local resource values, developing and evaluating land use alternatives, and shaping the final plan.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

When signed by the commissioners of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, this plan became state policy for management of state lands in the Tanana Basin. Land use decisions (including land disposals, classifications, timber sales, mineral leasing and other actions on state lands) will comply with

the provisions of this plan. The plan does not affect fish and game regulations.

The land use designations in this plan are officially established in state records through the state's land classification system (see Chapter 4, *Land Use Classifications*). The system is a formal record of the

primary uses for which each parcel of state land will be managed. These classifications are shown on status plats (available for public use at various offices of the Department of Natural Resources).

These plats show the primary uses designated by this plan and refer the reader to the plan for more detailed information, including land management guidelines.

MODIFICATION OF THE PLAN

A plan can never provide solutions to all land use problems, nor can it be inflexible. Therefore, the land use designations, the policies, and the management guidelines of this plan may be changed if conditions warrant. The plan will be periodically updated as new data become available and as changing social and economic conditions place different demands on public lands. An interagency planning team will coordinate periodic review of this plan when the Alaska Department of Natural Resources considers it necessary. The plan review will include meetings with all interested groups and the general public.

In addition to periodic review, modification of the plan or exceptions to its provisions may be proposed at any time by members of the public or government agencies. Chapter 4, *Procedures for Plan Modification and Amendment*, includes procedures for amendments to and minor modifications of the plan which will be followed by the Department of Natural Resources for state-owned land within the Tanana Basin. Chapter 4 also includes procedures for making special exceptions to the provisions of the plan when modifications are not necessary or appropriate.

SUMMARY OF LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The following section summarizes the land use designations made for six resources: agriculture, fish and wildlife, forestry, subsurface, recreation, and settlement (land sales).

Agriculture

Most potential agricultural lands in the Tanana Basin lie in the Lower Tanana, Kantishna, Parks Highway/West Alaska Range, and Delta-Salcha subregions. These agricultural lands are primarily class II, III and IV soils, as defined by the Soil Conservation Service. These soils have the fewest natural limitations, such as wetness or steepness, for farming. Though not always suitable for farming because of extreme isolation, these soils are the state's best potential farm land. Estimates of cultivatable soils in most of the Basin are still tentative because they are based on exploratory rather than detailed soil surveys. For accessible portions of the Basin, this plan designates about 240,800 acres of state land for agriculture, of which 195,540 is recommended for private ownership (Table 1-1 page 1-10). See Appendix D for more detailed disposal information.

Agricultural soils in the planning area that are remote are not recommended for near term sale because of the expense of providing roads to these remote areas. This is consistent with the state's policy of emphasizing development of farm land already in private ownership or state lands close to the road system. The plan protects the option of using remote agricultural lands for future agricultural use through resource management designation. Over 500,000 acres have been designated high value resource management. Other uses on these lands, such as forestry, recreation, and habitat enhancement are allowed, but nothing may be done that precludes future agricultural use until the plan is amended and the land is reclassified (see also *Resource Management Areas*, page 1-5).

Improved pasture grazing is an allowed use on agricultural lands. Improved pasture grazing will be considered on a case-by-case basis in most of the remaining land in the Basin (see Chapter 2, *Agriculture and Grazing*). Unimproved pasture grazing is an allowed use in most road accessible areas, and in much of the lowland remote areas of the Basin. Unimproved pasture grazing is not allowed in many highland areas of the Basin because of conflicts with grizzly bears and other fish and wildlife values.

Fish and Wildlife

Most areas with high habitat values are protected through the designation of habitat as a primary use, and through the application of guidelines that mitigate the effects of development activities. As a result, under the land use pattern recommended in this plan, all significant areas of habitat will continue to support populations of fish and wildlife species. About 11.5 million acres have been designated primary use wildlife habitat. Other retained lands in multiple use management will also support wildlife values.

To reduce the negative effects of land sales on fish and wildlife, sales of public land are concentrated in currently accessible areas where considerable private land already exists, or in areas not of extremely high value to fish and wildlife.

Areas of principal concern for protection of fish and wildlife habitat (which have been designated fish and wildlife) include the wetlands south of Lake Minchumina, Fish Lake, the Tanana Flats, the Stampede Trail area and the Chena and Salcha river corridors. Three areas are recommended for legislative designation: the Toklat River and Delta River spawning habitat as proposed critical habitat areas, and the area around Mt. Neuberger (near Tok) as a state game refuge.

Forestry

In the Tanana Basin the majority of the best forested land was reserved in the Tanana Valley State Forest. The State Forest should adequately meet the need for commercial and personal use timber products over the next 20 years.

Most of the remaining high quality forested land in the Basin not included in the State Forest system has been retained in public ownership. About 1.4 million acres have been designated primary use forestry. Almost all retained lands are managed for multiple use including harvest of forest products.

Recreation

Recreational activities occur in most areas of the Basin. Areas of particular recreational interest, however, are trails, rivers, and certain large relatively untouched areas used for hunting, fishing, and trapping. Recreation values are protected mainly through public retention and multiple use management. All identified trails of local, regional, or

statewide significance in the Tanana Basin will be protected by the use of publicly owned buffers (see Chapter 2, *Trail Management* guidelines).

Easements are used to protect public access when land is sold near a waterbody (see Chapter 2, *Lakeshore Management* guidelines). Rivers with recreational value are generally protected by the use of publicly owned buffers (see Chapter 2, *Stream Corridors and Instream Flow* guidelines). A minimum building setback of 100 feet is also required for all disposals that occur near a river. In this plan, three rivers in the Basin have characteristics outstanding enough to warrant the protection of legislative designation. The rivers proposed for this status are the Delta-Clearwater, Chatanika, and the Nenana.

Fielding Lake has high value for public recreation and is recommended for designation as a state recreation area. Several smaller sites and access sites to recreational opportunities are also recommended for single use recreation management to the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

Recreation is designated as either a primary or secondary use in most areas of the Basin that receive significant recreational use. Under the land use pattern recommended in this plan, most significant recreation opportunities currently enjoyed by interior residents will continue to be available. About 4.8 million acres will be retained and managed for multiple use, emphasizing recreation. Other retained lands managed for multiple use will also be available for recreational use.

Settlement

This plan designates about 821,000 acres for settlement, and recommends about 69,600 acres of land being available for private ownership over the next 20 years. These lands are listed for each subregion and management unit in Chapter 3. Appendix D lists all the disposals alphabetically.

The public should have an opportunity each year to acquire some of the most suitable settlement land the plan has to offer. As a result, the best land should not all be offered in the near term but distributed over the life of the plan. This may require offering certain land disposals in phases, rather than all at once. The department should offer land disposals in a variety of locations, within the constraints of public demand and available funding.

Before land is sold, the Division of Land will conduct further review of proposed land disposals through the Land Availability Determination System (LADS). The LADS identifies, processes, and offers state land for sale to the general public under a variety of programs authorized by statute.

One of the objectives of LADS is to encourage further agency and public involvement in the land disposal process. Public and agency input is welcome throughout the LADS process, however, it is most critical during the first two phases; 1) the identification and nomination portion of Phase I; and 2) the design/development stage of Phase II. Phase III is the sale procedure. The LADS phases are described in more detail in Appendix D.

Lands classified for a disposal by this plan are subject to a LADS Phase I review. If there are notable differences between the original intent of the plan/classification and the LADS proposal, those differences must be resolved during the review process and/or by reclassification. For example, if an

area is classified for agriculture homesteads, but discovered not suitable for agriculture, it may be nominated for fee simple homesteads by the region. The project would undergo a plan amendment which requires review by the Planning Team (resource agencies) and public notice. Conflicts would have to be resolved prior to a plan amendment.

Table 1-1 presents the estimated net acreage recommended for private ownership in the basin's subregions. Net acreage is the amount of land that may actually be transferred to private ownership. About 11,400 of the 265,200 acre total will be for subdivisions and homesites, 58,200 acres for homesteading, and 195,500 acres for agriculture sales or homesteading. Lands designated Resource Management are not shown in the table, although some of those lands may contain settlement potential (see *Resource Management Areas*, page 1-5). Appendix D shows the estimated acreage available for each disposal.

Table 1-1.
SUBREGION SETTLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

SUBREGION	SUBDIVISIONS	FEE HOMESTEADS	AGRICULTURE	TOTAL
Fairbanks North Star Borough	4,748	14,400	28,930	48,078
Lower Tanana	800	12,550	6,100	19,450
Kantishna	2,100	20,920	147,000	170,020
Parks Highway	2,350	7,700	11,830	21,880
Alaska Range-	0	0	0	0
Upper Tanana	1,320	2,650	1,000	4,970
Delta Salcha	100	0	680	780
TOTALS	11,418	58,220	195,540	265,178

** This chart summarizes disposals proposed after 1990, and does not include the acreage offered from 1985 to 1990. Disposals shown in the 1985 Tanana Basin Area Plan that have been offered are listed in this update in Chapter 3 and in Appendix D.

Subsurface Resources

Ninety-eight percent of the known mineralized areas in the Basin are open to mineral entry. With few exceptions, the areas closed to mineral entry in this plan do not occur in areas with high mineral potential. The 1985 plan closed approximately 445,000 acres to mineral entry: about 140,000 due to very high recreation values, about 280,000 due to very important wildlife values, and about 25,000 for agriculture. The 1990 update opens 29,040 acres on the Nenana and Robertson rivers to mineral entry, and closes 20,017 acres on the Delta Clearwater River, the Delta river, and Fielding Lake to mineral entry (see Appendix C, *Mineral Orders*). An additional 821,000 acres of land designated for settlement or agriculture may be closed prior to land disposal (see *Settlement*, page 1-9).

Mineral entry will be allowed only through leasehold location on 172,960 acres to protect Dall sheep mineral licks in the Alaska Range. The leasehold location process allows miners to stake, explore, and develop a mineral property just as they would under a mining claim; however, under the leasehold process the miner must obtain a lease before commercial production begins. Leasehold location in these areas will protect the habitat values while still allowing for exploration and development.

Coal prospecting and leasing is allowed throughout the Basin except in areas proposed for sale. Oil and gas leasing is allowed throughout the Basin.