

## Willow Lake



*Willow Lake is a memorable landscape feature and serves as the foreground to a panorama of the Wrangell Mountains.*

### General Description

Management Unit 20 includes 6.6 miles of the central Richardson Highway between Willow Lake and the Edgerton Road cutoff. The highway skirts the base of Willow Mountain and runs close to the shores of both Willow Lake and Pippin Lake.

Land development is scattered along this section of the Richardson, and predominantly consists of residential structures situated near the lakes or highway and pipeline associated land uses. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline is a distinguishing visual feature and closely parallels the highway.

The area's scenic resource values are high. Willow Lake plays a dominant role in the foreground and middleground views throughout most of

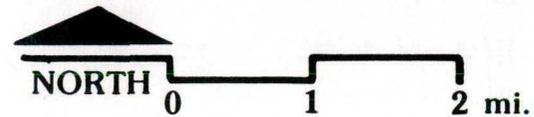
the unit, particularly for northbound travelers. The alignment of the highway along the terraces of Willow Mountain provides dramatic views across Willow Lake and the surrounding Copper River Lowlands to the majestic peaks of the Wrangell Mountains.

### Land Ownership & Management Responsibility

Most of the land adjacent to the highway is owned by Native corporations and other private indivi-

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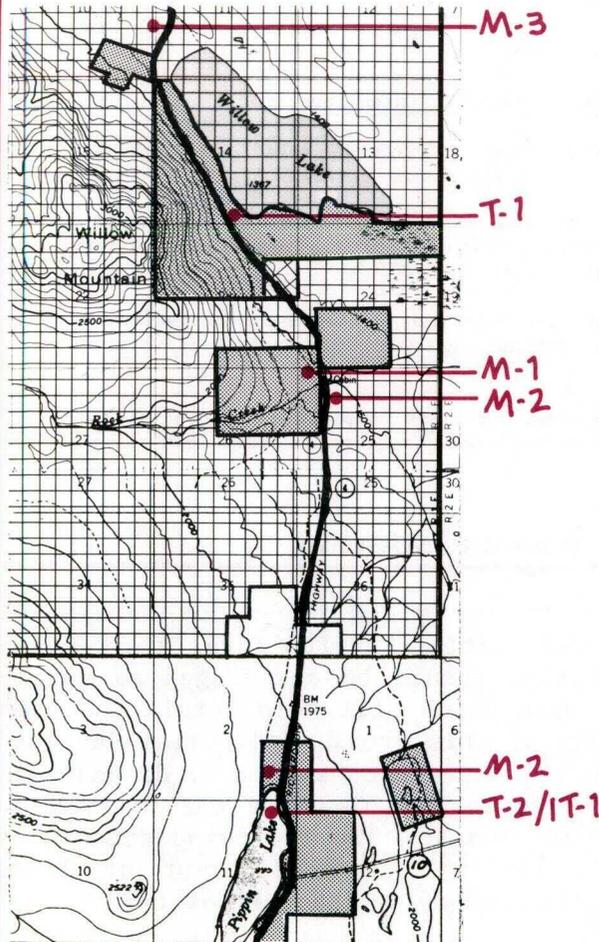
Assessment Units R58 – R61



## KEY

- T- Turnout
- M- Impact Mitigation
- IT- Information Turnout

-  Native Corp. Land
-  Federal Land
-  Private Land



duals, except a relatively small tract of oil and gas right-of-way land and the Alaska Pipeline route and some federal land shown in the map above. The DOTPF manages a 300 foot highway right-of-way throughout this unit unless the adjacent private land was patented before 1952. In this case the right-of-way is narrower.

## Visual Objectives Management Goals

The management recommendations which are presented for this unit focus on the themes of retention, impact mitigation, sensitive land use and development, and enhancement.

**Retention:** To retain the existing high quality of the visual resources which may be seen from the highway.

**Impact Mitigation:** To mitigate the impact of land management practices which are not sensitive to these scenic resources.

**Sensitive Land Use and Development:** To encourage sensitive land use and development which takes advantage of landscape opportunities to minimize visual impacts.

**Enhancement:** To respond to the traveler's need for information and to enhance the opportunities to experience the landscape's natural and man-made features.

## Management Recommendations

### Greenbelts

Throughout most of this rather densely vegetated corridor, a narrow greenbelt would be adequate to maintain scenic resource values. However, the area around Willow Lake requires special considerations because of its greater visual exposure.

Due to the lack of any means of implementing a greenbelt classification on private lands, a number of guidelines are suggested for private landowners to follow in their development plans.

#### Greenbelt Width

- Willow Lake - a 100 foot greenbelt should be extended around the shore of the lake.
- For one mile on either side of Willow Lake a 100 foot greenbelt should be extended beyond the right-of-way on the east side of the road.

- For the remainder of the corridor, a minimum of 25 feet beyond the right-of-way is an appropriate greenbelt width.

#### Greenbelt Management Guidelines

- Locate permanent structures outside the greenbelt.
- Remove no more than 25% of the natural vegetation, except where there are opportunities for opening distant views.
- Utilize greenbelt and right-of-way vegetation to screen parking areas and other unattractive land uses.
- Retain deciduous trees to provide filtered views; retain spruce trees to block or screen views.

### Land Use & Development

In keeping with the visual resource management objectives, residential, agricultural and recreational activities should be encouraged as appropriate land uses which will help retain the high scenic quality of this area. Industrial development or material extraction should be discouraged where they would be visible from the highway or other high use areas. The following guidelines should apply to the development of lands adjacent to the highway and to Willow Lake:

- Respond to the greenbelts consideration to guide development setback distances and vegetation management.
- Incorporate colors, materials and building forms which complement or blend in with the natural landscape, and which create diversity in the man-made features of the landscape.
- Site lakeside development to take advantage of views of the lake while minimizing the visibility of structures from the highway or from the lake itself.

- Encourage industrial development to locate in areas of lower scenic quality (e.g. further north on the Richardson Highway).
- Site structures to take advantage of areas with high visual absorption capability (e.g. dense vegetation on level to gently rolling topography).

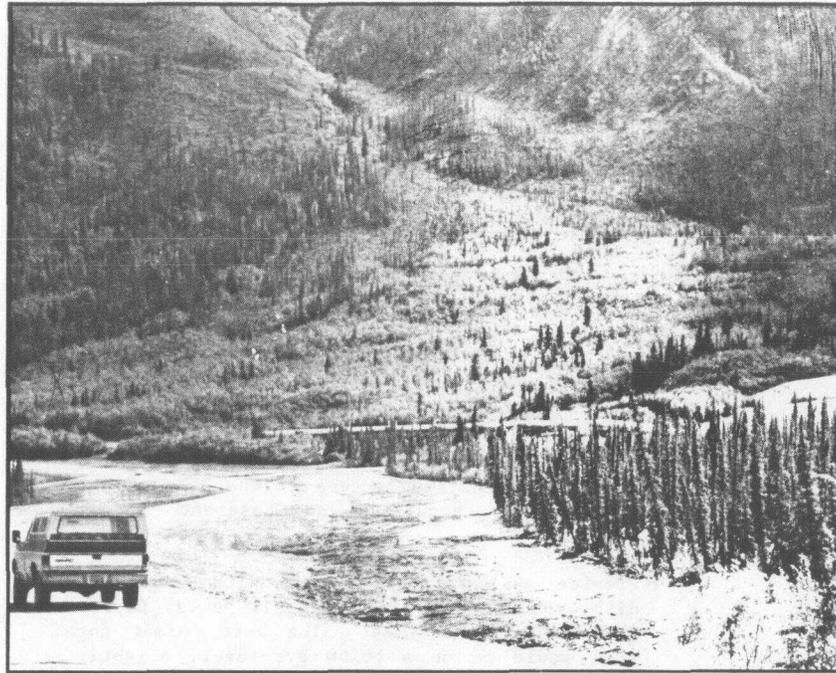
## Right-of-Way Management

Sensitive management of the right-of-way can play a major role in maintaining the scenic resources of this area. Because most of the land beyond the right-of-way is privately owned, only land within the right-of-way can be publicly managed to enhance scenic resource values. It is recommended that, because of the unit's particularly high scenic resource values, retention and enhancement of these qualities be a priority.

Today, there are wide, cleared areas adjacent to the road which visually isolate the highway from the surrounding landscape. Vacated alignments which have not been reclaimed accentuate this quality. Additionally, the exposed soils on cut banks and fill slopes emphasize the highway's intrusion on the landscape. Right-of-way land should be managed to better integrate the road in the landscape and utilize the right-of-way as a buffer for adjacent land uses.

The following recommendations have been developed to guide this management scheme.

- Encourage revegetation within the cleared lands adjacent to the roadside. Initial seeding with vetch, lupine and alder could provide soil conditioning and encourage more rapid establishment of taller vegetation as well as add immediate visual diversity.



*Wide right of way clearings tend to separate the highway from the surrounding landscape.*

- Establish both scattered trees and masses of trees within the cleared area, especially between the existing and vacated alignments.
- Vary the width of future clearings in response to site specific needs (i.e. clear only the inside of curves for visibility or around known moose crossing areas).
- Clear selected vegetation only when necessary to meet specific objectives rather than clearing all vegetation.
- Utilize right-of-way vegetation as a visual buffer for adjacent land by maintaining at least 75 feet in natural vegetation, except in those situations where there are opportunities to open views.