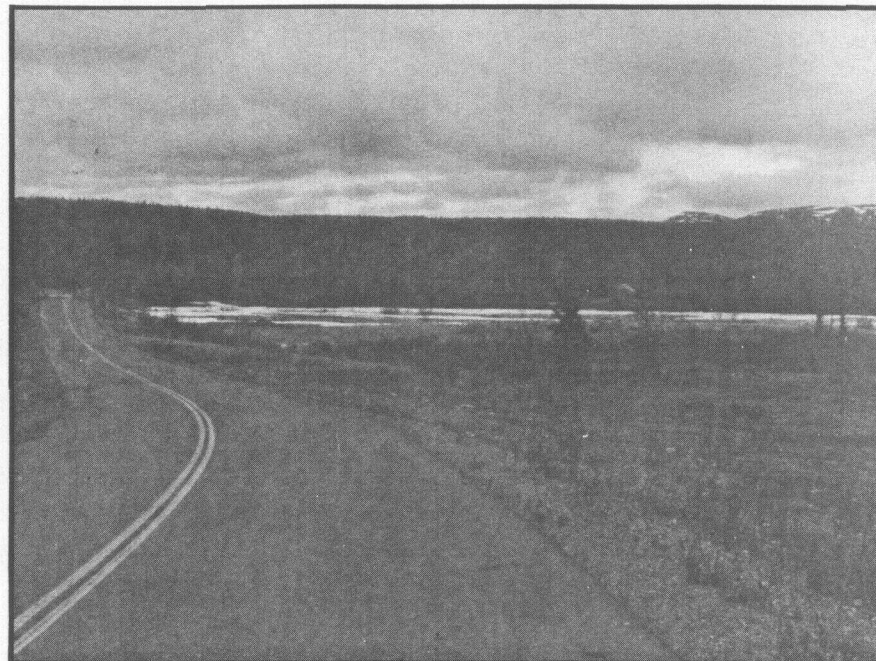


Management Unit 10

Paxson Junction



The site recommended for the Denali/Richardson junction turnout is located just to the west of the Gulkana River crossing where there is available space, safe access and egress, and proximity to river recreation.

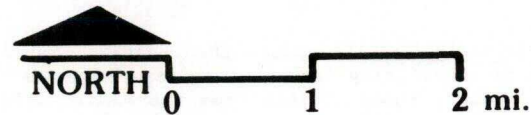
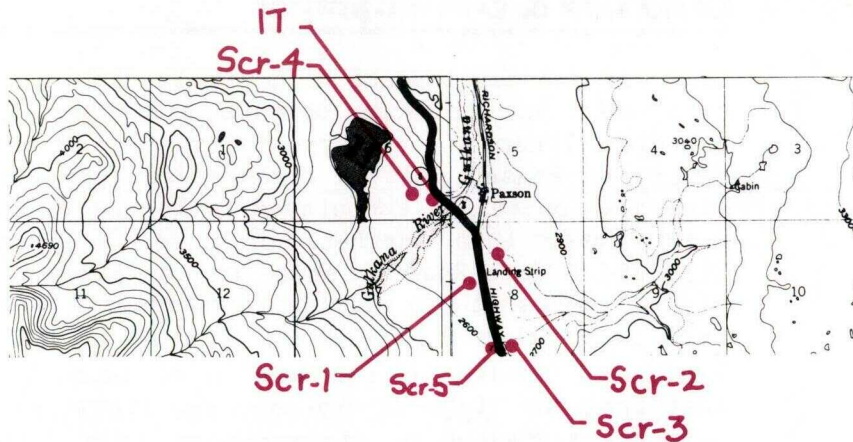
General Description

Management Unit 10 consists of short segments of the Denali Road and Richardson Highway around their junction at the small community of Paxson. Nearby natural landscape features include Mud Lake, Paxson Mountain, and the Gulkana River. At the western end of the unit the predominant vegetation is tall brush which changes to spruce forest as the road drops down into Paxson. Although scenic resource values are moderate in this unit, there are some nice views of the Alaska Range, surrounding ridges, and Paxson Lake.

Human activity is the primary focus of visual attention in this unit; some of the more dominant human elements are Paxson Lodge, the pipeline, an airfield, a radio tower, and assorted residential structures. Land use is concentrated at the junction or radiates south from Paxson on the Richardson Highway.

10 Paxson Junction

Assessment Units D66-R1



KEY

- IT- Information Turnout
- Scr- Screening

 Federal Land

Land Ownership & Management Responsibility

Land ownership patterns within Unit 10 are complex. Most state lands are in material sites, airfield leases, and temporary use permits. Additionally, there is some BLM land and considerable private land adjacent to the road. The state DOTPF manages a 300 foot right-of-way on both roads.

Visual Resource Management Objectives

Objectives for the management of scenic resources within this unit relate to the themes of sensitive land use and development, retention, impact mitigation, and entry.

Sensitive Land Use and Development: To encourage roadside land uses to take advantage of the

landscape's ability to visually absorb development impacts and to use appropriate design tools and techniques to make the additions attractive to the area.

Retention-To retain those characteristics which contribute to existing scenic resource values.

Impact Mitigation-To reduce the negative visual impacts of existing land uses and developments—particularly those visible from the Denali Wild and Scenic Road.

Entry-To create an appropriate entry experience that is expressive of the overall theme of the Denali Wild and Scenic Road.

Management Recommendations

Right-of-Way Management

Due to the complex patterns of ownership in this unit and the various roadside land uses, right-of-way management is a primary tool for implementing the above four objectives. Existing right-of-way management practices allow vegetation to grow close to the road; these practices should be continued. Management crews should take advantage of taller vegetation to help screen those areas where roadside activities such as gravel extraction and the airfield significantly detract from the visual experience.

Right-of-way management practices for the Denali Wild and Scenic Road should be sensitive to the overall theme of the road and its reduced

traffic volume and speeds. Vegetation should be allowed to grow as closely as possible to the road edge to make this an appropriate entry for a "wild and scenic road."

Land Use & Development

Land use and development will likely continue in this unit due to some private ownership, the junction location, and proximity to the community of Paxson. It is recommended that roadside development be encouraged to locate in this unit rather than further north on the Denali Wild and Scenic Road or south on the Richardson Highway since these adjacent management units have particularly high scenic values. Future land uses should be set back a minimum of 25 feet from the right-of-way edge and little or no vegetation should be disturbed to help reduce impact of the activity. This 25 foot visual resource management strip should be officially incorporated in public land management. Land use and development on public land should set an example for private landowners who would hopefully follow these standards in their own development.

Information Turnouts (IT)

At major highway junctions information turnouts are needed to provide direction to travellers.

IT-1 Roadway information should be provided at Paxson junction to assist travelers planning to drive the Denali Wild and Scenic Road as well as those heading either north or south on the Richardson Highway. An information turnout is recommended at a site on the Denali Road approximately 1/4

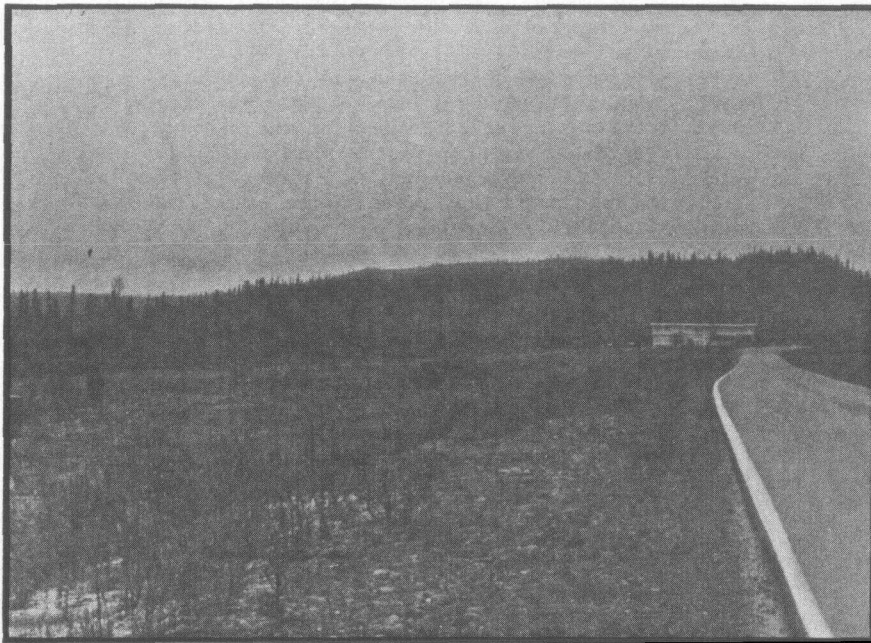
mile from the junction. The site is on the south side of the road, near the west bank of the Gulkana River. This is one of the most scenic sites near the junction, providing a nice view down the wide gravel bed of the Gulkana River. An information turnout could be inexpensively developed at this site as a nearly level gravel extraction site already exists there. Entry visibility is safe, and this location is within view from the junction. Development of this site would consist of parking space for two to three cars and a kiosk with information relating to road conditions, available services, and recreational opportunities along the Denali Wild and Scenic Road. Signs should also be placed on both highways to direct travelers to the information turnout. A sign should be located 500 feet from the junction for both north and south bound travelers on the Richardson, and 500 feet on either side of the turnout to notify Denali Road travelers.

Screening (Scr)

Roadside vegetation can be a useful tool to enhance the foreground views as well as to screen the visibility of unsightly adjacent land uses.

Scr-1 The airfield at Paxson is immediately adjacent to the Richardson Highway for over one half mile south of the junction. This airfield is visually dominant throughout most of the unit and strongly contrasts with surrounding lines, colors, and texture. Visibility of the airfield could be significantly reduced by encouraging tall brush to grow in the right-of-way immediately adjacent to the road edge. Some old barrels which visually clutter the airfield should be removed or screened from view.

Scr-2 A large "garage" building and its extensive gravel parking area are openly visible. Access



Low brush planted along the edge of the road would help screen the stubbled expanse of the airfield and define the arrival at Paxson Lodge and the junction.

to this site should be limited to one driveway and the remainder of the road edge should be planted in tall brush to help screen it from view. If possible, brush should also be planted around the edges of the area.

Scr-3 Small material sites on either side of the road on the eastern end of the unit could be effectively screened with tall brush adjacent to the road and around the edges of the sites. These sites should also be closed to vehicular access and encouraged to revegetate.

Scr-4 A dumpsite located near the proposed information turnout at the Gulkana River crossing should be screened from view of the road and turnout with tall brush planted along its edges. Berming would increase the effectiveness of the screen, especially in the winter months when the brush would not be dense enough to affect visibility. An alternative screened site would be preferable to this location.

Scr-5 Also located at the southeastern end of the unit, this pipeline access road is no longer in use and reclamation efforts have apparently been made, primarily through the establishment of grasses. At the moment, this vegetation has a high visual impact because it is in marked contrast to the surrounding natural landcover. If the road is no longer needed, reclamation efforts should concentrate on establishing brush and trees in the area so that it blends in with the surroundings.