
Overview

The findings and recommendations of this study are presented at four levels of specificity or detail. First, the overall findings and recommendations address issues of overriding importance that are common to the entire study area. Next are those recommendations which relate to each of the four individual highways and roads within the study area - the Denali, central Richardson, and Edgerton highways and the McCarthy Road. Each of these highways is divided into visual resource management units, or road segments, which have similar scenic resource characteristics and, therefore, call for similar management responses. These units comprise the third level. Finally, there are the individual assessment units - those short (approximately two mile long) stretches of road which are the foundation of the field inventory and observations and the more general recommendations and findings. Part one of this report described the study methodology and presented an example of a field inventory sheet. A complete set of the field assessment sheets is on file at the BLM Alaska Resources Library in Anchorage.

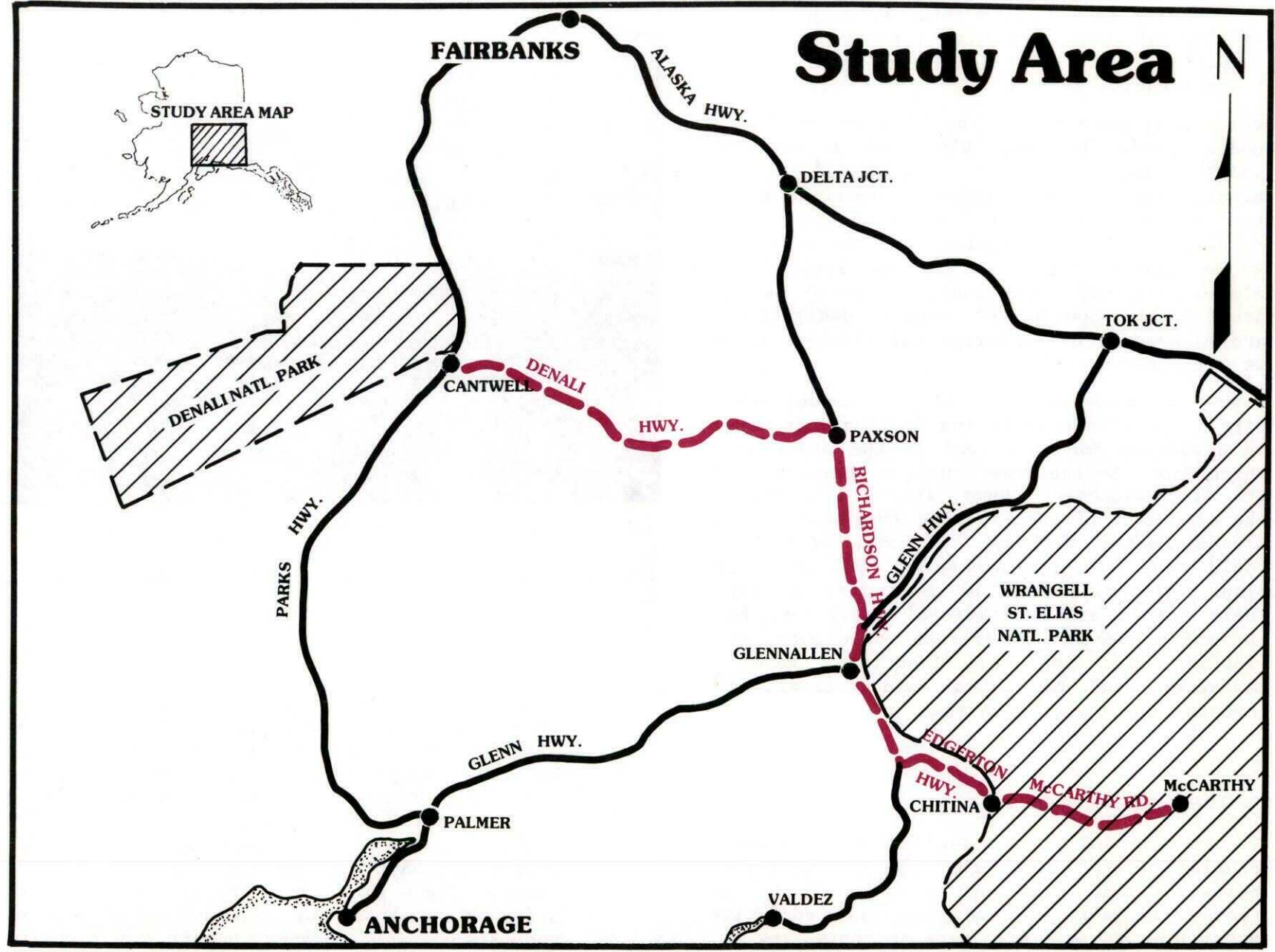
The study area findings and recommendations discuss the desirability of designating all or part of the Denali to Wrangell-St. Elias route as a scenic highway or recreational corridor. In addition, the section describes the management program, a recommended highway rest area system and a system of roadway information turnouts, as well as summarizes the responsibilities, policy changes, and

actions required of various land managers and owners in order to implement the recommendations outlined here.

Denali to Wrangell - St. Elias National Park Scenic and Recreation Corridor Designation

This study was prefaced on the question of whether or not the scenic and recreation resources along the corridor between Denali and Wrangell-St. Elias National Parks deserve special protection and/or official designation as a symbolic link between the parks. The results of the scenic resource inventory and management recommendations indicate that no formal linkage or corridor should be established. This conclusion is based on several study findings. First, few people use, or are likely to use, this corridor as the exclusive route between the parks; travel via the Parks and the Glenn highways will probably be just as common. Moreover, it is unlikely that large numbers of people will visit both parks in one trip. Instead most will travel only on several segments of this corridor at any one time, taking other roads to go to their final destination. Finally, formally designating this as a "scenic" or "recreational" corridor would suggest - inappropriately - that other equally scenic routes should be given less attention. Since Alaska's existing road system is so limited, it is more

Study Area



appropriate to call attention to each highway or road in a manner that reflects its use, character, and relationship to the overall transportation system.

While many portions of the highways and roads under study do have high scenic resource values, they are not recommended for a traditional "scenic highways" designation by the federal or state governments. The descriptor, "scenic highway" and the associated management responses are too limited for Alaska's unique conditions. Instead, a new look at the concept of special designations and management of roadsides and adjacent lands is warranted.

A new two-prong approach is recommended here. First, specific descriptive designations would be developed for each road in the study area which describe the road's unique character and set its management theme, somewhat following the precedent of the Pipeline Haul Road or the Alaska Marine Highway. Second, each road would have its own management policies and plan. All roads would be managed to maintain their scenic and recreational qualities, but use and management guidelines would vary, reflecting differing road functions, general character, and the scenic and recreational resource quality of each road.

• Descriptive Designations

The recommended descriptive designations would consist of two parts: the type of the transportation link based upon its position in the road hierarchy and a name or adjective describing the overall theme for this link.



A relatively straight alignment, paved bed and graded shoulders allow faster, high volume travel and give this section of the Richardson its "highway" character.

Presently, Alaska's road hierarchy consists of three levels: "highways", "roads", and "trails", of which the first two are important here. Highways are multi-purpose, paved, modern, all-weather transportation and supply routes linking major population centers. The Parks, Richardson, and Glenn are appropriately called highways. Roads constitute the second level. These are transportation routes which are used primarily for local access or special purposes such as logging, mining, or pipeline

roads. They may be unpaved, often see only seasonal use, and are not as intensively maintained or frequently upgraded as are highways. Grades, alignments, and surfacing standards are designed for slower paced travel. This term can be appropriately applied to the Denali, McCarthy, and the Edgerton. In certain instances, trails can be added as a third level of special use which receive limited maintenance and are typically used only by special vehicles.

For the second part of each highway designation, names or appropriate adjectives describing the transportation link need to be identified and used. Wherever possible these should include commonly accepted names and words that capture the essence of the road. Thus the Richardson Highway and Edgerton Road should continue to be used for these routes. It is recommended that the Denali Highway be changed to Denali Wild and Scenic Road to better describe its character, and the road between Chitina and McCarthy should be designated the McCarthy Wild and Historic Road. These are more accurate descriptors and establish the theme for the existing and desired character of the roads.

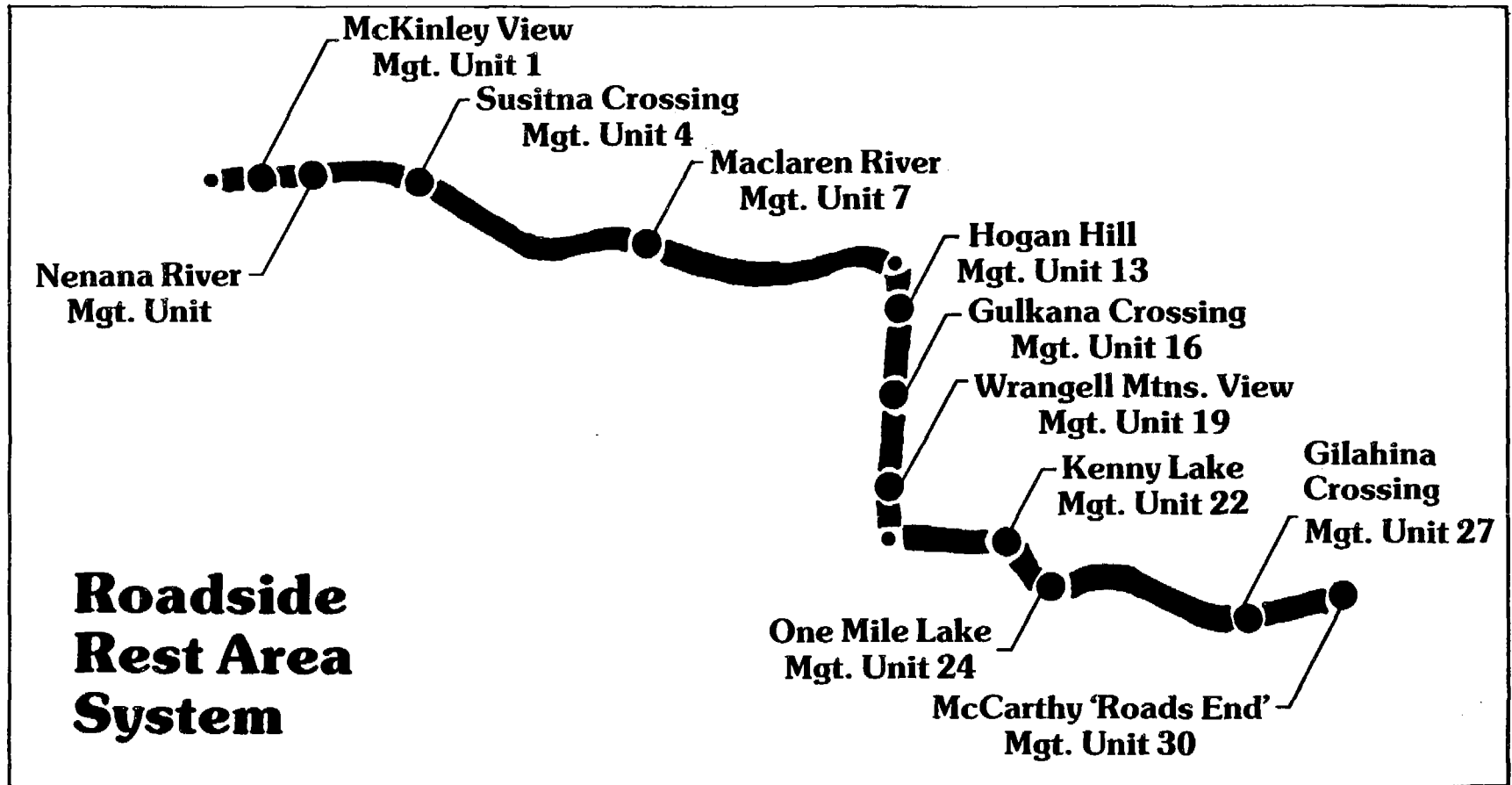
This study recommends that the State take action to officially name the roads in the study area as the Denali Wild and Scenic Road, the Richardson Highway, the Edgerton Road, and the McCarthy Wild and Historic Road. These designations, coupled with the design and management programs specific to the theme of each road, should become the guide for all future land and development decisions along each road and would be used by all land managers. It is also recommended that the State develop ap-

propriate nomenclature and management themes for all other Alaskan roads and highways.

Although this study does not recommend a formal scenic corridor status for the four roads, the scenic resources along both the Denali Wild and Scenic Road and the McCarthy Wild and Historic Road have national significance. Therefore, they merit further study to determine if federal scenic designation and management of just these two roads is necessary or appropriate to protect their unique qualities.

● Road Design and Management Programs

Separate management programs would be tailored to the character of each road. Current road maintenance practices in Alaska are generally guided by needs for public safety, road visibility, efficiency, and cost effectiveness. Road and curve alignment, design, grading, paving, right of way clearing, and turnout location often do not consider the individual or cumulative impacts of these management actions on the scenic qualities of the road and surrounding landscape. It is important however, to manage all roads and lands adjacent to them in a manner that protects their scenic and recreational values. Therefore, visual resource management goals and practices should be incorporated in the development of a management program that is appropriate for the character of each road. This study presents management guidelines tailored to the four roads within the study area. Each program addresses those individual management activities that will have the greatest affect on



scenic quality and, taken together, form the overall management program. These activities include:

- Right-of-way management (including brush clearing, road side vegetation management, grading etc.)
- Materials site location and reclamation
- View management
- Greenbelts

Roadside Rest Area System

Travelers have come to expect a system of roadside rest areas along highways and roads which include facilities such as restrooms, trash receptacles, traveler information, picnic areas, and trails. Given Alaska's wilderness and undeveloped character, large amounts of public land, and relatively few travelers, such facilities did not seem needed until recent years. However, as more roadside lands