



# Matanuska Valley Moose Range & Jonesville Public Use Area Management Plans PUBLIC SCOPING SUMMARY

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** December 8, 2022

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**To:** Don Perrin, Project Coordinator, DNR

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**From:** Holly Spoth-Torres, Huddle AK

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**Subject:** Public Scoping Summary

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## PUBLIC SCOPING SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

The State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Mining, Land and Water (DNR DMLW) launched the public scoping period for the Matanuska Valley Moose Range (Moose Range) and Jonesville Public Use Area (JPUA) Management Plans on Friday, September 2, 2022. Scoping lasted for 8 weeks and closed on Monday, October 31, 2022. The following activities occurred to gather information during the scoping period:

- Scoping Letter
- Public Open House Meetings (5)
- Project Website
- Online Questionnaire
- Public Comment Portal
- Agency Meetings
- Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

During the scoping period, 464 individual comments were received from more than 200 individuals. Substantive comments have been documented in a scoping period comment table and are attached to this memorandum.

More information about each scoping period information gathering activity, followed by the methods of advertising these activities statewide, are detailed below.

### Key Takeaways

- Public Safety – Public safety is the primary concern of stakeholders who provided comments during the Scoping Period. Those who live near the JPUA and other areas of the Moose Range stated that they do not feel safe. Commenters are very concerned about stray bullets; residents report

being disturbed by the sounds of gunfire at all hours. Many indicated that they visit the Moose Range and JPUA less or not at all because of safety concerns. Commenters are frustrated with encountering trash, human waste, abandoned carcasses and gunfire. Many express frustrations with a lack of enforcement of any kind in the area.

- **Facilities** – Comments suggest a desire for additional facilities that improve public safety, management and enforcement, and public use of the JPUA and the Moose Range. There is a strong desire for a designated shooting range to address public safety concerns related to gunfire. Many comments suggest the need for vault toilets and better parking at certain access points. Some responses wish there were better trailheads and wayfinding throughout the management area although a few comments do not want any signage or development.
- **Trail Use** – The comments overwhelmingly express frustration and concern with motorized use that damages trails and surrounding habitat. Although many commenters do not want to see a complete motorized use ban in the area, many think that motorized use should be restricted by weight, location, or season. Many comments would like to see a ban on jeeps or trucks being used on trails. There are many comments describing concerns about damage to habitat and trail condition from motorized vehicles. Some commenters do not want any trail use restrictions.
- **Wildlife** – Commenters are concerned about habitat, specifically degradation of wetlands in the area by motorized use. Commenters value wildlife and want to continue to use this area for wildlife viewing and hunting.
- **Enforcement** – Stakeholders want DNR to update the JPUA and Moose Range Management Plans with policies and management recommendations that are actionable and enforceable including funds and human resources to do so.

### Project Scoping Letter

On Friday, September 2, 2022, DNR DMLW published an official scoping notice. The letter was posted on the project website and officially noticed through the State of Alaska's public notice system (attached). Additionally, an eNewsletter was sent to DNR DMLW's email distribution list for planning projects.

### Public Open House Meetings

Between September 19 – 21, 2022, four (4) in-person open houses and one (1) virtual open house were held in multiple communities near the Moose Range and JPUA.

- Anchorage: Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 2 PM, Room 102 Robert B. Atwood Building
- Chickaloon: Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 6 – 8 PM, Chickaloon Community Center
- Wasilla/Palmer: Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 – 8:30 PM, Wasilla Middle School
- Virtual: Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 1:30 PM, Online via Microsoft Teams
- Sutton: Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 6-8 PM, Sutton Elementary School

The project team had a series of project maps and boards available for public review. Multiple members of the project team were available to listen to comments and answer questions. There were public comment forms available for attendees to be able to write and submit public comments. Additionally,

many people made annotations on project maps that were provided. Attendees were encouraged to visit the project website to take the online questionnaire and to submit comments in writing by the end of the scoping period. Open house presentation materials are available as an attachment.

54 people participated in the public open house meetings.

### **Project Website**

On Friday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, DNR, DMLW published a project website located at: <https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/mgtplans/jonesville-moosorange/>. The website included a project overview, the scoping letter, a map of the project area, the public open house details and schedule, information about the planning process, project team contacts, information about how to submit comments, a link to the online comment portal, and a link to the online questionnaire.

### **Online Questionnaire**

An online project questionnaire was developed to provide an opportunity for people to engage in the process who could not participate in the in-person or virtual public meetings. 264 people completed the online questionnaire. The survey summary is available as an attachment. If the questionnaire respondent chose to leave an open-ended comment, those comments have been captured in the scoping period comment table.

### **Public Comment Portal**

The website provided a link to a comment portal where comments could be submitted online. In addition to the comment portal, comments were also collected in writing via letter or via email to any project team member. All comments received via letter or email have been captured in the scoping period comment table.

### **Agency Meetings**

The project team hosted an introductory meeting with an interagency state planning team. Representatives from the following agencies were invited:

- DNR Lands Section
- DNR Water Section
- DNR Mining Section\*
- DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- State Historic Preservation Office\*
- DNR Division of Forestry\*
- Alaska Department of Fish & Game\*
- Alaska Department of Law
- Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska Department of Public Safety

Following the initial meeting, individual scoping meetings were held with agencies who manage assets and/or resources in the Moose Range and JPUA and will be significant contributors to the management plan. Individual meetings were held with the agencies above containing an asterisk.

### Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

The project team also met with a handful of organizations, groups and/or individuals including:

- Matanuska-Susitna Borough Land Management Office
- Buffalo Mine Road Neighborhood
- Chickaloon Native Tribe
- Motorized Users Focus Group
- Non-motorized Users Focus Group
- Alaska Miners Association

### ADVERTISEMENTS

#### Email Campaigns

An email newsletter was sent out to 200 recipients comprised of DNR DMLW project contacts on September 12, 2022, announcing the scoping period and advertising the open house meetings. On September 30, 2022, another email was sent to the same group of contacts thanking those who attended the open houses, providing a reminder about the scoping period, the online questionnaire and to provide scoping comments by October 31, 2022. Two additional emails were sent to this email distribution list to remind individuals about the scoping period on October 11 and October 25, 2022. Those emails are attached.

#### Social Media

DNR used its Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AKDNR>) as another method advertising the scoping period. DNR posted content three times (September 3<sup>rd</sup>, September 7<sup>th</sup>, September 20<sup>th</sup>), and included information about the planning process, the open house meetings, and the online questionnaire.

#### Scoping Period Comments were categorized into the following key themes:

- History/Cultural
- Public Safety
  - Enforcement
  - Private Property
  - Shooting
  - Signs
  - Toilets

- Trash
- Facilities
  - Campground
  - Parking
  - Shooting Range
  - Signs
  - Trailheads
- Trail Use
  - Equestrian
  - Habitat
  - Limited Motorized
  - Motorized
  - Non-Motorized
  - Trail Condition
- Wildlife
  - Habitat
  - Hunting
  - Populations
  - Trapping
- Mining
- Management/Policy Recommendations