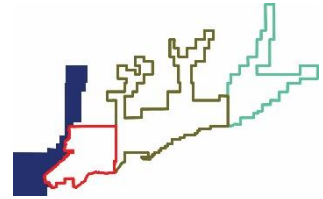


126 The Western Management Subunit



127 Background

128 The Western Management Subunit includes portions of the Moose Range that lie east of Fishhook Road
129 and west of Moose Creek. The subunit includes the entire Moose Creek drainage within the Talkeetna
130 Mountains and the headwaters and adjacent wetlands of Wasilla Creek, an anadromous stream. The
131 subunit is accessed by Wendt Road from the west, Buffalo Mine Road from the east, and Soapstone Road
132 from the south. Lower elevations of this subunit have high potential for personal and commercial firewood
133 harvest, while upper elevations, above 2,000 feet, have minimal timber value.

134 The Western Management Subunit is closest to the highest density of residential land in Palmer resulting
135 in increased recreational use over the past 10-15 years. Community groups groom a system of trails for
136 winter use. Public lands in the Western Management Subunit are used at moderate levels for dispersed
137 outdoor recreational activities in the summer months and higher levels in the winter. There are few
138 existing developed outdoor recreational facilities inside the Moose Range in this subunit including an
139 undeveloped trailhead at Wendt Road and a few bridges over Wasilla Creek. The predominant scenic
140 values in this subunit, as viewed from the Glenn Highway, include Arkose Ridge. Although there are no
141 active leases/permits, and there haven't been for many years, the best potential grazing lands in the
142 Range are found in the subunit.

143 Planning and Land Management Issues

144 Due to the proximity to residential development and with some of the most developed access routes, the
145 lands in the Western Management Subunit receive some of the highest motorized and non-motorized
146 recreational trail use. Additionally, the easy access for hunting from Buffalo Mine Road and Fishhook Road
147 put motorized pressure on the Western Management Subunit during the fall when soil conditions are
148 generally saturated. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized trail users are a significant issue and
149 solutions are required to allow multiple use to continue while protecting wetland habitat and anadromous
150 streams.

151 Incompatible Uses

152 The enabling legislation of the Moose Range directs DNR and ADF&G to manage multiple uses that are
153 compatible with its enabling legislation to maintain, improve, and enhance moose populations and habitat
154 and other wildlife resources of the area. Existing damage to wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitat from
155 motorized recreational use is significant in the Western Management Subunit and the management
156 guidelines below are intended to mitigate the resource damage.

157 Land Use Designations

158 State land will be managed consistent with its designation(s); as specifically articulated through
159 management intent described below and applicable goals and management guidelines found in Chapters
160 2 and 3. Some lands have one designation while other lands are co-designated for a variety of uses. Table
161 1 provides a quick reference of the designations and co-designations used in this management subunit,
162 and the acreages of designation(s).

163 *Table 1: Western Management Subunit Designations and Acreages*

<i>Designation or Co-Designation</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
<i>W1: Habitat, Public Recreation-Dispersed</i>	<i>Ha, Rd</i>	<i>19,467</i>
<i>W2: Habitat, Public Recreation-Dispersed, Forestry</i>	<i>Ha, Rd, F</i>	<i>2,235</i>
<i>W3: Coal, Habitat, Public Recreation-Dispersed</i>	<i>Co, Ha, Rd</i>	<i>320</i>

164 **Management Intent**

165
 166 **Unit W1: Ha, Rd.** The management intent for Unit W1 in the Western Management Subunit is to enhance
 167 browse-producing habitat. Manage the unit to protect and maintain fish and wildlife habitat and
 168 associated wetlands, streams and waterbodies. Additionally, Unit W1 will be managed for dispersed
 169 outdoor recreational activities. Popular activities such as hunting big and small game, trapping, wildlife
 170 viewing, horseback riding, hiking, skiing, winter biking, and fishing will continue. To protect wildlife habitat
 171 including wetlands and anadromous streams, this plan recommends restricting the use of motorized
 172 vehicles to be more restrictive than the Generally Allowed Uses on State Land (11 AAC 96.020). The plan
 173 recommends restricting motorized use to designated, hardened routes⁷ as identified in a subsequent
 174 Trails Management Plan (See Chapter 2, Trails).

175 Proposed recreational facility development in the subunit includes trail hardening and bridge and culvert
 176 installations to protect wetlands and habitat in the vicinity of the Wasilla Creek headwaters. Trailhead
 177 facilities should only be authorized as an access point if specific management guidelines are met.

178 **Unit W2: Ha, Rd, F.** Same intent as Unit W1 with the following addition:

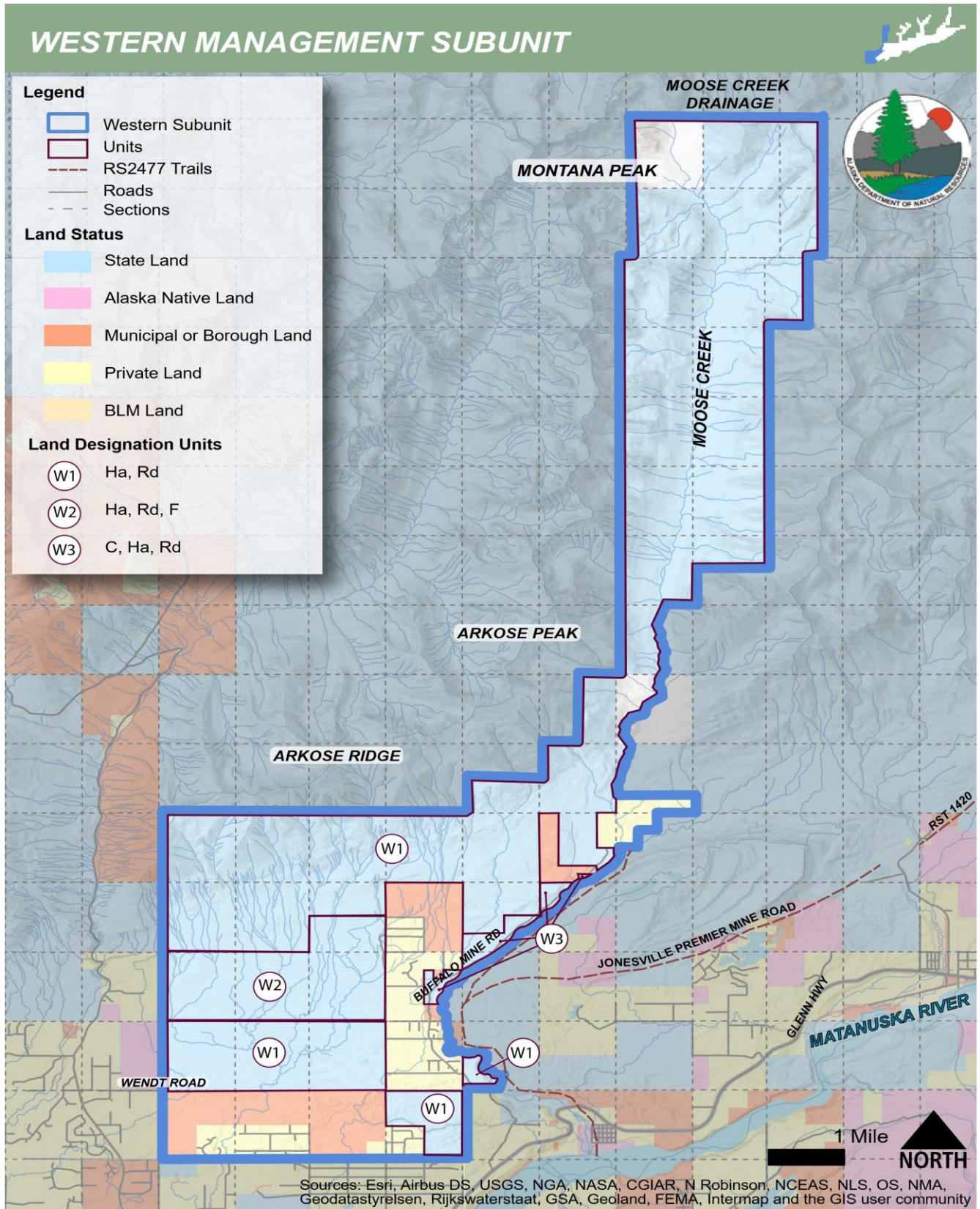
179 There is a local need for personal firewood, and this need may be met to the extent possible by
 180 improving fish and wildlife habitat in conjunction with timber harvest. Timber harvest is allowed only if
 181 the activity enhances fish and wildlife habitat.

182 **Unit W3: Co, Ha, Rd.** Same intent as Unit W1 with the following addition:

183 Coal development is allowed according to existing authorizations. The primary post-mining land use in
 184 this unit is designated as Public Recreation-Dispersed (Rd) if the location is appropriate and if the
 185 recreation use is consistent with the definition of recreation land in the Surface Mining Control and
 186 Reclamation Act and the Alaska Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. The secondary post-mining
 187 land use is designated as Habitat (Ha) and reclamation efforts will be directed toward producing habitat
 188 that is primarily beneficial to moose.

189

⁷ This management guideline requires the promulgation of regulations for implementation.



191 **Subunit Management Guidelines**

192 **1. Access and Trails**

- 193 a. Public Lands. Public access into the Western Management Subunit is necessary for maintaining
194 multiple use. The state will maintain public rights-of-way and/or easements for public access to
195 Moose and Wasilla Creeks, Tsadaka Canyon along Moose Creek, and to public lands along
196 Fishhook, Wendt, Soapstone, Buffalo Mine and Murphy Roads.
- 197 b. Public Use of Existing Access.
- 198 i. Areas of Open Access. Public sections of the Buffalo Mine and Wendt Roads will remain
199 open to motorized and non-motorized uses.
- 200 ii. Area of Unimproved, Closed, or Revegetated Roads. To help manage potential human
201 conflicts with habitat enhancement research efforts, the Division of Forestry (DOF) timber
202 harvest roads in the southwest corner of the Western Management Subunit will not be
203 upgraded, improved, or posted with recreational signs. Roads or trails that are required
204 for timber harvest and/or habitat enhancement projects are not necessarily intended for
205 public access and may be closed or revegetated as part of the habitat maintenance or
206 enhancement efforts.
- 207 c. New Access.
- 208 i. Public input indicates upper Moose Creek drainage should be left undisturbed. No new
209 trails or roads shall be built beyond or north of the knoll located north of the southern
210 section line of Sec. 1 and 2, T19N, R2E, S.M., for recreation, timber management or
211 wildlife habitat enhancement activities.
- 212 ii. Wendt Road Trailhead. Access to the Western Management Subunit from Fishhook Road
213 is possible via Wendt Road. An upgraded trailhead may be developed at the end of Wendt
214 Road for multiple use access to the Moose Range. DNR DMLW and ADF&G should work
215 cooperatively to develop a trailhead designed to be consistent with the intent of the
216 management plan. The trailhead should minimize negative impacts on neighboring
217 private property and land uses. If a trailhead at this location is proposed by an entity other
218 than DNR, a management agreement for active site management, maintenance, and
219 enforcement is required to be in place prior to authorization. Additionally, a trailhead
220 should not be authorized until the Trail Management Plan (TMP) for the Moose Range
221 and JPUA is complete and there is a more thorough understanding of the capacity of the
222 trail system in the Western Management Subunit for increased use.
- 223 d. Trails. In addition to the areawide management guidelines established for trails in Chapter 2, the
224 following guidelines are specific to the Western Management Subunit.
- 225 i. Wasilla Creek Headwaters Trail System. ADF&G and DNR should continue to authorize
226 the construction of hardened routes and sustainable creek crossings. To protect wetland
227 resources and habitat, motorized and mechanized trail use should be restricted during
228 snow-free and ice-free seasons to authorized hardened routes that will be established by

229 the TMP defined in Chapter 2. Vehicle use restrictions may be necessary to protect
230 habitat⁸.

231 ii. Trail Kiosks, Signage, and Wayfinding. Trailhead maps, kiosks, wayfinding signage, and
232 trail use information may be developed. Signs should clearly display trail use information,
233 regulatory information, and allowed trail uses. Wayfinding and trail use signs may be used
234 to appropriately guide trails users.

235 2. Cultural and Heritage Resources

236 h. Known Sites. One heritage resource site is recorded on the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey in
237 the Western Management Subunit. This site will be managed according to the guidelines in
238 Chapter 2.

239 i. Undiscovered Sites. The Western Management Subunit has been used historically by Alaska
240 Native people primarily traveling along the Matanuska River and up into the Moose Creek
241 Drainage. With the extent of past cultural use, it is likely that additional cultural resources may be
242 located. Areas in the Western Management Subunit designated by SHPO as known and high
243 potential areas for containing heritage resources should be surveyed for heritage values as
244 funding and staffing allow.

245 3. Fish, Wildlife, and Forestry

246 a. Resource Management. This subunit will be managed primarily to maintain, protect and, if
247 necessary, enhance the following fish and wildlife resources and habitats:

- 248 i. Moose throughout the subunit.
- 249 ii. Ruffed grouse throughout the subunit.
- 250 iii. Brown bear in upper Moose Creek drainage.
- 251 iv. Black bear throughout the subunit.
- 252 v. Dall sheep in upper Moose Creek and in higher elevations.
- 253 vi. Small game and fur bearers.
- 254 vii. Riparian habitats and instream flow along Moose and Wasilla Creeks.
- 255 viii. Chinook and coho salmon and Dolly Varden in Moose Creek.
- 256 ix. Coho and Chinook salmon, Dolly Varden and rainbow trout in upper Wasilla Creek.
- 257 x. Habitat for moose and other wildlife species.
- 258 xi. Buffer areas around Moose and Wasilla Creeks.
- 259 xii. Other species and habitats identified by ADF&G.

260 b. Fish and Wildlife Utilization. The subunit will be managed to allow continuation of the following
261 activities:

- 262 i. Hunting of big and small game and trapping throughout the subunit.
- 263 ii. Sportfishing for anadromous, resident, and stocked fish.
- 264 iii. Wildlife viewing throughout the subunit.

⁸ This management guideline requires the promulgation of regulations for implementation.

- 265 c. Habitat Enhancement. The Western Management Subunit may be managed to produce moose
266 habitat. Secondly, DNR, in consultation with ADF&G, may authorize research to identify
267 preferred methods for habitat enhancement and regeneration of browse. DNR, ADF&G, and
268 others will work cooperatively on research efforts whenever possible. Techniques may include
269 willow bundle planting, scarification, use of seed trees, selective cutting of spruce, and variations
270 in the size and shape of cuts. Techniques to be tested include, but are not limited to, overstory
271 removal, burning, pesticides, and plant trimming to promote sprouting.
- 272 d. Fisheries. ADF&G will maintain, protect, and enhance the fisheries and habitats of Wasilla and
273 Moose Creeks. To accomplish this, ADF&G may conduct spawning and escapement surveys,
274 monitor trends in harvest angler effort, and develop recommendations for field investigations
275 and/or Board of Fisheries consideration, as time and funds allow. ADF&G will adjust stocking
276 levels in stocked lakes based on health and survival of stocked fish and changes in use patterns
277 and pursuant to the annual public review of the statewide stocking plan. ADF&G will manage sport
278 fisheries for sustained yield and angler satisfaction, work closely with enforcement staff in
279 adherence to regulations, and assist in habitat conservation and restoration.

2804. Forestry

281 Timber harvest operations that enhance fish and wildlife habitat may be authorized in the Western
282 Management Subunit. Specific sales locations and dates will be identified by DOF in consultation with
283 ADF&G. The criteria for determining the location of cutting units includes access on existing roads/trails
284 to allow the public to obtain firewood. Commercial timber harvests will occur in areas where cost
285 effectiveness and habitat enhancement methods justify such harvests.

286 a. Timber Harvest and/or Habitat Enhancement Location.

- 287 i. Elevation. No timber may be harvested above 1,100 feet elevation.
- 288 ii. Schedule. The schedule for forest product harvest in the Western Management Subunit
289 should be identified by DOF in consultation with ADF&G.
- 290 iii. Buffers. See Buffer guidelines in Chapter 2.

291 5. Public Use Sites

292 There are no identified Public Use Sites in the Western Management Subunit.

293 6. Recreation

294 Follow the areawide management guidelines in Chapter 2.

295 7. Subsurface Resources

296 The Western Management Subunit is open to locatable and leasable mineral development. There is no
297 known coal potential in upper Moose Creek.

298 8. Water, Wetlands, and Waterbodies

299 a. Lakeshores and Stream Corridors.

- 300 i. Wasilla Creek. There is a 200-foot buffer on each side of Wasilla Creek above ordinary
301 high water. Any habitat enhancement activity altering the habitat/vegetation within the

302 buffer shall require concurrence by DNR and ADF&G. See Chapter 2 guidelines on stream
303 corridors and lakeshores for other allowed activities within buffers.

304 ii. Other Streams and Lakes. Habitat enhancement efforts in riparian zones along Moose
305 Creek may take place according to the Chapter 2 guidelines on buffers.

306 b. Wetland Buffers. Large wetlands, more than 700 acres, exist in the southwestern end of this
307 subunit in the headwaters of Wasilla Creek. A buffer will be retained around them as described in
308 Chapter 2.

309 c. Instream Flow Reservations. ADF&G may establish instream flow needs on Wasilla Creek and
310 Moose Creek to maintain fish and wildlife resources, riparian habitat, and associated recreational
311 opportunities as funding and staff are available. The DMLW shall work closely with ADF&G to
312 establish the instream flow reservations as necessary.

313