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6. Alexander Creek Management Unit

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1
2 **6. Alexander Creek Management Unit**

3
4 **Background**

5
6 **Miles of River**

7
8 This unit includes 40.2 miles of Alexander Creek from RM 3.8 to RM 44.0. The unit also
9 includes 5.5 miles of Sucker Creek.

10
11 **River Characteristics**

12
13 Alexander Creek is a slow, meandering stream that originates in Alexander Lake and flows
14 south to the Susitna River. The creek temperature has been increasing over time and there has
15 been an increase in vegetative growth. The terrain is generally flat to occasionally rolling.
16 The management unit begins 3.5 miles above the confluence with the Susitna and extends up
17 to Alexander Lake and the surrounding uplands. The lower 5 miles of Sucker Creek are also
18 in the unit. The Alexander Creek channel is 1 to 5 feet deep and from 50 to 200 feet wide.
19 Multiple measurements were taken from 1989 to 1992 with discharges ranging from 160 cfs
20 to 473 cfs. Waters from a 100-year flood can cover a considerable area in sections of the
21 upper and lower river because the river is slow moving and the surrounding area is relatively
22 flat.

23
24 Around Alexander Lake the visual qualities are high with good views of the Alaska Range,
25 including Denali. Downstream visual qualities are lower because views are confined by high
26 banks and there are more man-made improvements.

27
28 **Land Ownership**

29

State	20,266 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	2,261 acres
Private & Other	411 acres
Total	22,938 acres

30
31 **Fisheries**

32
33 *Species Present*

34

Arctic grayling	Northern pike
Chinook salmon	Pink salmon
Chum salmon	Rainbow trout
Coho salmon	Sockeye salmon

35
36 All species of salmon are present throughout the management unit. The majority of Chinook,
37 coho, and pink salmon spawn all along the river above RM 8. In addition, Sucker Creek and

1 its upper Wolverine Creek branch provide major spawning grounds for Chinook salmon.
2 Small numbers of chum salmon have been observed by local residents in the vicinity of the
3 mouth of Pierce Creek but the spawning area has not been documented by ADF&G.
4 Northern pike are prolific throughout the drainage, heavily concentrated in Alexander Lake
5 and side channel habitats.

6 7 *Sport Fishing*

8
9 The peak of fishing activity on Alexander Creek corresponds with the coho salmon run from
10 approximately July 15 to August 25. The once popular Chinook salmon fishery has been
11 closed since 2008 due to impacts from northern pike predation. Also, throughout the summer
12 and particularly in the late summer, people fishing for Arctic grayling and rainbow trout is
13 common. Popular fishing spots are the mouths of Pierce, Trail, and Sucker creeks. The most
14 popular fishing area for salmon is at the mouth of Alexander Creek which is in the Susitna
15 Flats State Game Refuge. Alexander Lake supports a popular fishery for northern pike during
16 the winter and summer months.

17 18 *Special Regulations*

19
20 The whole of Alexander Creek has been designated special management waters for rainbow
21 trout. Retention of rainbow trout is prohibited. Retention of Arctic grayling and Dolly
22 Varden is also prohibited. Only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used upstream
23 of a marker located 400 yards upstream of Trail Creek.

24 25 **Wildlife**

26 27 *Moose*

28
29 Winter densities of moose along Sucker Creek and the lower portions of Alexander Creek are
30 very high. The extensive wetlands are important for moose calving in spring. Large numbers
31 of moose summer on Mount Susitna and Beluga Mountain, and other adjoining areas.

32 33 *Bear*

34
35 Brown bear and black bear are distributed throughout the unit. Brown bear concentrate on the
36 upper creek to feed on spawning salmon when available. Black bear concentrate on the lower
37 creek during the same period. Both species of bear target moose calves as prey in May and
38 early June.

39 40 *Bald Eagles*

41
42 Bald eagle nests have not been observed in recent surveys of the management unit.
43
44

1 *Trumpeter Swans*

2
3 Trumpeter swans have been observed along the corridor and adjacent lakes/ponds.

4
5 *Hunting*

6
7 Moose and bear hunting are very popular in this corridor during the fall. Alexander Creek
8 receives some of the heaviest use by hunters of all the Recreation Rivers. The entire river is
9 floatable and hunted from Alexander Lake to its confluence with the Susitna River. Hunters
10 using power boats generally hunt the lower 20 miles.

11
12 *Trapping*

13
14 Recreational trapping for otter, muskrat, marten, mink, beaver, fox, coyote, wolf, and
15 wolverine occurs in the corridor during spring and winter seasons.

16
17 **Subsistence**

18
19 Located in Game Management Unit 16B, this is an area that Susitna residents utilize for
20 subsistence. Subsistence harvest may occur for moose and black bear, as well as birds and
21 eggs, and plants and berries.

22
23 **Invasive Species**

24
25 *Elodea*

26
27 *Elodea* was first identified in Alexander Lake in 2014 and in Sucker Lake in 2016, and by
28 2018 both lakes were fully infested. The Alaska Division of Agriculture began implementing
29 an eradication plan for the watershed in 2018.

30
31 *Northern Pike*

32
33 Alexander Creek was known for its run of Chinook salmon and was one of the most popular
34 fisheries in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. However, due to heavy pike predation on juvenile
35 Chinook salmon, minimum escapement hasn't been met since 2005, and the fishery has been
36 closed since 2008. It's estimated that the Chinook salmon return in the Alexander watershed
37 has been reduced 77% as a result of pike predation. Beginning in 2011, ADF&G began a
38 northern pike suppression program where crews gillnet side sloughs in the spring, targeting
39 northern pike. To date, ADF&G has removed over 30,000 northern pike from Alexander
40 Creek. Unfortunately, Alexander Creek provides ideal habitat for pike, and Alexander
41 Lake/Sucker Lake at the headwaters are completely dominated by northern pike.

1 **Development**

2
3 Most of the cabins on Alexander Creek are concentrated downstream of the planning area
4 boundary, near the mouth of the creek. However, there are a number of cabins on the river
5 below Trail Creek and around Alexander Lake. In the last 30 years, the number of
6 recreational cabins has increased, however, there has been a decline in the number of
7 residents that live along the corridor year-round. In addition, several lodges were once
8 located along Alexander Creek but have since been closed.

9
10 **Access**

11
12 Most of the boat traffic on Alexander Creek is near the mouth which is outside the unit.
13 Powerboats travel from Doshka Landing to access the creek. Alexander Creek is not as
14 popular a rafting trip as it once was, though it is still floated. Most float trips begin at
15 Alexander Lake and last 3 to 5 days. Both float- and wheel-planes land at several places in
16 the unit, particularly at Alexander Lake. Airboats and jetboats are often taken up Alexander
17 Creek to access Alexander Lake.

18
19
20 **Management Guidelines for the Unit**

21

22 **Boating Restrictions**

23

1. *Non-motorized area* Point just above Sucker Creek (RM 23.0) to a point just below exit of Alexander Lake (RM 38.3)
 Season: May 15 - August 20.
 Justification: This river segment provides non-motorized recreation opportunities. This river segment is so shallow that it is seldom used by powerboaters. The restriction ensures that the opportunities for non-motorized whitewater trips are maintained, regardless of technological changes which could allow powerboat use in the future. Restrictions do not cover the motorized trail along the outlet of Alexander Lake nor the area just above the Sucker Creek confluence that contains camping areas used by powerboaters and wheelplanes.

2. *Safety Warning sign* Mouth of Pierce Creek (RM 7.4).
 Season: May 15 - August 20.
 Justification: Above this point Alexander Creek is narrow, shallow, and winding. Several large boats have grounded above this point. A warning sign will be placed at this point warning large boats about hazards above Pierce Creek.

1 **6a. Lower Alexander Creek Subunit**

2
3 **Background**

4
5 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 3.8 to RM 19.8

6
7 This subunit extends from Granite Creek to just above the mouth of Sucker Creek. Alexander
8 Creek is 50 feet wide, widening to 150 feet towards the downstream end of the subunit.
9 Contiguous wetlands make up 20 percent of the area, non-contiguous another 10 percent.

10
11 **Land Ownership**

12

State	5,252 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	2,261 acres
Private & Other	316 acres
Total	7,829 acres

13
14 **Wildlife**

15
16 Lower Alexander Creek has some of the highest winter and spring densities of moose in the
17 planning area. Active bald eagle nests and trumpeter swans have not been sighted in recent
18 surveys of this subunit.

19
20 **Development**

21
22 The subunit includes many private recreational cabins with several year-round residents. One
23 of these cabins is used commercially as a fishing lodge. Private landowners just west of the
24 subunit use a trail and dock at RM 4.6 to access the creek. There are also numerous cabins
25 outside the subunit around Otter and Weenie lakes.

26
27 **Access**

28
29 A prominent summer trail near RM 12 parallels Trail Creek for at least one mile. A section
30 line on the east side of the subunit and parallel to the river is accessible in the summer and
31 connects a block of private land at RM 5 with an airstrip. Another airstrip lies west of
32 RM 18. There is a dock and major trail at RM 4.6 on the west side of the river that is used by
33 private landowners west of the subunit.

34
35 There is extensive winter travel along Alexander Creek below Sucker Creek. Snowmachine
36 use is by both recreational users and private property owners. The Beluga gas line from the
37 Knik Road is used as a trail to access Alexander Creek in winter. Snowmachines also travel
38 to lower Alexander Creek from the Iditarod race trail and from Deshka Landing. The Iditarod
39 National Historic Trail runs through this subunit on a trail paralleling the river just west of
40 Otter Lake.

1 **Heritage Resources**

2

3 There are several areas of known heritage sites in this subunit, and the potential for discovery
4 of more is high due to historic subsistence use, and the proximity to the village of Alexander
5 near the mouth.

6

7

8 **Management Intent**

9

10 **Class II.** Most recreation use in this subunit occurs during the coho salmon run. The once
11 popular Chinook salmon fishery has been closed since 2008 due to impacts from northern
12 pike predation. Also, throughout the summer and particularly in the late summer, people
13 fishing for Arctic grayling and rainbow trout is common. Because of strong salmon runs and
14 other sport fishing opportunities, relatively inexpensive air access from the railbelt, and the
15 placid nature of the river, the subunit receives heavy use by both powerboaters and floaters.
16 The subunit provides opportunities for boaters in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting.
17 The subunit also contains salmon spawning and winter moose habitat. The subunit will be
18 managed to provide and enhance recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat while
19 accommodating uses associated with private lands. Some temporary camps will be allowed.
20 Because of high public use, amount of private land, and the absence of state uplands,
21 temporary camps will not be allowed below RM 4 if the mouth is added to the Recreation
22 Rivers. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The subunit will be managed to
23 provide opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. There
24 are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

25

26

27 **Management Guidelines**

28

29 **No-wake Area.** See management guidelines for the Alexander Creek Management Unit
30 described earlier in this section.

31

32 **Temporary Camps.** Up to three temporary camps may be permitted in this subunit. They
33 will not be authorized in public use sites nor below RM 4 if the river mouth is added to the
34 Recreation Rivers.

35

36 **Public Information.** A sign should be placed at the south boundary of the Alexander Creek
37 corridor identifying it as a Recreation River.

38

39

40

1 **Public Use Sites**

2
3 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
4 on maps at the end of this unit.
5

6 **PU 6a.1 Pierce Creek** (RM 7.4). This site is used for fishing and camping.

7 **PU 6a.2 Trail Creek** (RM 12.2). This site is used for fishing and camping. ADF&G
8 has a seasonal weir camp at this location.

9
10 **6b. Upper Alexander Creek Subunit**

11 **Background**

12 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 20.1 to RM 38.3

13
14 The subunit begins above the mouth of Sucker Creek and extends to the south end of a trail
15 downstream from Alexander Lake. The creek is 3 to 4 feet deep, and 20 to 50 feet wide. The
16 water is generally clear above RM 25 but becomes silty below this point. The terrain is
17 gently rolling. Contiguous wetlands cover about half of the area.

18
19 **Land Ownership**

20
21 There are 8,680 acres of state land in this subunit.

22
23 **Wildlife**

24
25 Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit. Trumpeter
26 swans and their young have been observed.

27
28 **Camping**

29
30 There are numerous secondary and marginal campsites along the entire length of the subunit.

31
32 **Development**

33
34 There is a parcel under state lease at RM 33 on Rose Lake which contains cabins and docks
35 used for a commercial guiding business.

36
37 **Access**

38
39 There is a short trail between Rose Lake and Alexander Creek. The lake is also used by
40 floatplanes, often to drop off floaters. The Iditarod National Historic Trail crosses Alexander
41 Creek near RM 21.5. Seismic lines along the river are also used for winter access. There are

1 extensive open bogs adjacent to the river that are used for snowmachining. Airboats are
2 sometimes taken up the creek.

4 **Heritage Resources**

6 There are a few known heritage sites in this subunit and the potential for more is high.

9 **Management Intent**

11 **Class I.** Most recreation use in this subunit occurs during the coho salmon run. The once
12 popular Chinook salmon fishery has been closed since 2008 due to impacts from northern
13 pike predation. Because of fishing opportunities, relatively inexpensive air transportation
14 from the railbelt, and the placid nature of the river, this subunit receives moderate use by
15 floaters. Suitability for powerboat use is marginal because of low water volumes. The subunit
16 provides float boat opportunities in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. The area
17 contains important winter moose habitat and supports salmon spawning. The subunit will be
18 managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and
19 wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus
20 of management. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. With the exception of
21 the Rose Lake special management area, the subunit will be managed to provide a non-
22 motorized experience during the fishing season.

25 **Management Guidelines**

27 **Boating Restrictions.** See management guidelines for the Alexander Creek Management
28 Unit described earlier in this section.

30 **Iditarod National Historic Trail.** The trail system parallels the river in this subunit between
31 Otter Lake and Alexander Lake. See guidelines in Chapter 2, *Upland Access, Trails, Iditarod*
32 *National Historic Trail* and *Iditarod Race Trail*.

35 **Special Management Area**

37 See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations
38 of sites are shown on the map at the end of this unit.

39 **SMA 6b.1 Rose Lake (RM 33).** There is a parcel under state lease on the lake which
contains cabins and docks used for a commercial guiding business.
Floatplanes use the lake. The Special Management Area (SMA) will be
managed as a Class II area. Class II area management intent and guidelines
will apply. This area will be managed to accommodate uses associated with

existing state leases in the SMA while providing and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat.

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6c. Alexander Lake Subunit

Background

Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 38.3 to RM 44.0

Alexander Lake is about 2.5 miles long and 0.5 miles wide. The terrain around the lake is flat. Contiguous wetlands make up at least 90 percent of the area within the subunit. Well-drained sites are mostly in private ownership.

Land Ownership

State	5,007 acres
Private & Other	95 acres
Total	5,102 acres

Wildlife

In recent surveys, trumpeter swans have been observed along Alexander Creek and adjacent lakes/ponds. Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit.

Invasive Species Concerns

The Division of Agriculture has been working to eradicate the invasive aquatic plant, *Elodea* from Alexander Lake since 2018. Full eradication in Alexander Lake is challenging due to the many inflows into the lake that make maintaining a specific concentration of herbicide difficult. Reintroduction is also a challenge from the inflows but also from anthropogenic sources such as boats, floatplanes and gear. The Division of Agriculture anticipates full eradication in the next few years.

ADF&G began a northern pike suppression program in 2011. Crews have been gillnetting side sloughs in the spring, targeting, and removing northern pike. To date, ADF&G has removed over 30,000 northern pike from Alexander Creek. Unfortunately, Alexander Creek provides ideal habitat for pike, and Alexander Lake/Sucker Lake at the headwaters are completely dominated by northern pike. ADF&G plans to continue implementation of aggressive pike removal in the watershed.

Development

The former Alexander Lake Lodge is located on the south end of the lake. There are a number of improvements associated with the lodge including equipment storage and boat

1 storage areas adjacent to the river. No longer operating as a commercial lodge, the structures
2 are still used for private purposes. Several private cabins are scattered around the lake,
3 mostly on the south end.

4
5 **Access**

6
7 There is a major off-road vehicle trail from the former lodge along the east shore of the lake.
8 Most of this trail is in wetlands. Another trail is located in the woods on the north side of the
9 creek. Seismic lines in this subunit do not appear to be heavily used in summer. Floaters are
10 usually dropped off by floatplanes at one of three primitive campsites around the lake. The
11 most commonly used landing area is near the lake exit. The other floatplane drop-off area is
12 on the northwest side of the lake. This second site is more commonly used in late summer
13 when the lake becomes clogged with vegetation.

14
15 The Iditarod National Historic Trail parallels this subunit to the west of Alexander Lake.
16 Private property owners around the lake use snowmachines on the lake and on the river.

17
18 **Heritage Resources**

19
20 The heritage site potential is high.

21
22
23 **Management Intent**

24
25 **Class II.** This subunit is used primarily as a put-in point for float trips down Alexander
26 Creek and other recreational activities at the lake. This subunit provides fishing and hunting
27 opportunities. The subunit contains winter moose and salmon spawning habitat. Camping
28 opportunities are limited because well-drained sites around the lake are in private ownership.
29 Private lands are located on the south half of the lake and along the creek. Winter use of the
30 subunit is primarily by snowmachines, skiers, and dog mushers following the Iditarod
31 National Historic Trail. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation
32 opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private
33 lands. Developing a suitable dry access point for the public is a high priority. Wetlands
34 compose over 90 percent of the public lands in this subunit. Development of, or activities on,
35 wetlands that would result in significant damage should be avoided or minimized.
36 Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide
37 opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized access. There are no non-motorized
38 areas in this subunit.

39
40
41 **Management Guidelines**

42
43 **Boating Restrictions.** None.

1 **Iditarod National Historic Trail.** The trail system parallels this subunit to the west of
2 Alexander Lake. See guidelines in Chapter 2, *National Historic Trail and Trails, Iditarod*
3 *Race Trail*.

4
5 **Public Information.** A kiosk should be established to provide information on the river at the
6 most commonly used public air-taxi drop-off point on Alexander Lake. A sign should be
7 established at the outlet of the lake identifying it as a Recreation River.
8

9 10 **Public Use Site**

11
12 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
13 on maps at the end of this unit.
14

PU 6c.1 Unnamed Put-in Site (RM 41.2). Most of the well-drained upland sites
around the lake are in private ownership.

15 16 17 **6d. Sucker Creek Subunit**

18 19 **Background**

20
21 Miles of River/River Characteristics, Sucker Creek, RM 0.0 to RM 5.5

22
23 Sucker Creek is a clear-running tributary about 20 feet wide near the mouth. The subunit
24 contains a few contiguous wetlands, less than 20 percent of the area.
25

26 **Land Status**

27
28 There are 1,327 acres of state land.
29

30 **Wildlife**

31
32 Active bald eagle and trumpeter swan nests have not been sighted in recent surveys of this
33 subunit.
34

35 **Fisheries**

36
37 The mouth of Sucker Creek (just outside the subunit) is used as a fishing and camping area
38 for boaters on Alexander Creek. The creek is also fished by floaters originating on Trail or
39 Sucker lakes.
40
41

Invasive Species Concerns

The Division of Agriculture has been working to eradicate the invasive aquatic plant, *Elodea* from Sucker Lake since 2018. Full eradication in Sucker Lake is challenging due to the inflow and possible reintroduction from Alexander Creek. Reintroduction is also a challenge due to anthropogenic sources such as boats, floatplanes and gear. The Division of Agriculture anticipates full eradication in the next few years.

ADF&G began a northern pike suppression program in 2011. Crews have been gillnetting side sloughs in the spring, targeting, and removing northern pike. To date, ADF&G has removed over 30,000 northern pike from the Alexander Creek drainage. Unfortunately, Alexander Creek provides ideal habitat for pike, and Alexander Lake/Sucker Lake at the headwaters are completely dominated by northern pike. ADF&G plans to continue implementation of aggressive pike removal in the watershed.

Camping

Three marginal campsites exist near the mouth of Sucker Creek (in adjacent subunits).

Access

There is a foot trail from Trail Lake to Sucker Creek. This trail is used by floaters who carry their gear from the floatplane drop-off on Trail Lake to Sucker Creek. The trail is through wetlands, making it difficult to carry heavy gear including rafts. There is only limited winter use of this subunit. Small wheel planes land on a gravel bar at RM 20.6 although use has declined, and fishermen walk down to the mouth.

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit is used primarily by powerboaters coming upriver, floaters descending Alexander and Sucker creeks and users who access the area by wheelplane. The subunit provides fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities. In winter the subunit receives some snowmachine use. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. Maintaining the public use site at the mouth of Sucker Creek will be a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide both motorized and non-motorized opportunities. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

1 **Management Guidelines**

2

3 **Boating Restrictions.** None.

4

5

6 **Public Use Site**

7

8 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
9 on maps at the end of this unit.

10

PU 6d.1 Sucker Creek Junction (RM 2.0). The area along both Alexander and
Sucker creeks within one-quarter mile of the confluence is used for fishing
and camping.

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Location Map: Alexander Creek Management Unit

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Map 1: Alexander Creek

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Map 2: Alexander Creek

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Map 3: Alexander Creek

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