

MANAGEMENT UNIT 6: ALEXANDER CREEK

MANAGEMENT INTENT

Management Unit 6 covers the Alexander Creek drainage and runs east to the Yentna River. Most of the area is wetland or lowland forest, but Trail Ridge is a prominent feature of the unit. Several large lakes fall within this area, including Alexander, Sucker, Rabbit and Trail Lakes. Alexander Creek is one of the most important waterways in the entire study area for riparian habitat and salmon spawning. It is also a very popular destination for fishing and float trips. Many of the smaller creeks also support anadromous fish populations (Lower Sucker, Wolverine, Clear, Texas, Anderson and Bear Creeks) and provide winter range for moose (Deep, Fox, Rabbit, Kutna, Lower Sucker, Clear, Texas and Bear Creeks). The Iditarod Trail crosses through the center of the management unit. Lands around Sucker Lake and near the Yentna-Susitna confluence also have some potential for settlement and small to medium scale agriculture. The southern part of the region has moderate potential for coal development.

Because of the extensive wetlands and public recreation and habitat values, most of the unit will remain publicly owned, but provision will be made for additional land disposals in portions of the management unit. All public lands in this unit are available for oil and gas leasing. Management Unit 6 will remain open to mineral location and available for coal leasing except for the existing and proposed disposal areas (subunits 6c and 6f), and the Alexander Creek corridor which is proposed for legislative designation as a state recreation river (subunit 6d), and land along Lower Sucker Creek (closed to location only, available for leasing).

Although presently remote from year-round roads, the southern portion of the unit is accessible by winter roads that cross the Susitna River on an ice bridge. DOT/PF has identified a potential road corridor to Rainy Pass that would provide access to lands on the southwest edge of the management unit. Construction is unlikely for many years, however, and the low level of resource development that is likely in the near future (approximately 5 years) will not require additional access.

There are six subunits in the management unit: the large wetlands in Kutna Flats (6a); resource management lands around Trail Lake, Deep Creek and Clear Creek and borough land bank lands west of Susitna Station and around Sucker Lake (6b); state owned areas proposed for settlement in the Sucker Lake area (6c); Alexander Creek corridor (6d); Trail Ridge and

Anderson Creek (6e); and past remote parcel offerings and existing subdivisions (6f). See the maps at the end of this section for the boundaries of these areas, and the accompanying chart for a summary of land uses for each subunit.

Subunit 6a: The large wetland areas in the Kutna Flats will be retained in public ownership for wildlife habitat and water resource protection and public use.

Subunit 6b: These lands have values for habitat, public recreation and forestry, and moderate values for coal development. They are potentially valuable areas for settlement and small to medium scale agriculture. The potential for future development is high, but since provision of access is unlikely in the next few years, state lands in this subunit are designated resource management-high value, and borough lands are included in the borough land bank. All these values will be considered when the subunit is reevaluated to determine its best use for the long term.

Subunit 6c: Settlement is the primary designation on state-owned lands around Rabbit Lake and Toms Creek.

Subunit 6d: Alexander Creek corridor and Alexander Lake will be retained in public ownership and managed for fish and wildlife habitat, public recreation and watershed protection. Because of its extremely high habitat and recreation values, this unit is recommended for legislative designation as a state recreation river. It is rated by the Department of Fish and Game as the third most important river in the Susitna Area for habitat and public use, and is one of five rivers in the study area proposed for designation as a state recreation river in the Southcentral Recreation Action Plan prepared by ADNR and ADF&G. Public cabins should be built in subunit 6d to support recreational use of Alexander Creek. Forestry is a secondary use in this subunit. Timber harvesting will be allowed when consistent with the habitat and recreation objectives for the subunit.

Subunit 6e consists of state lands along Trail Ridge. These lands have very high habitat value (especially as moose winter range) and potential for commercial forestry. They have been proposed for legislative designation to provide for long-term timber and habitat management, and to provide public recreation opportunities adjacent to the Yentna and Susitna River corridors.

LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

SUBREGION Susitna Lowlands

MANAGEMENT UNIT 6 – Alexander Creek

SUBUNIT	LAND OWNERSHIP (GENERALIZED)	LAND USE DESIGNATIONS				PROHIBITED SURFACE USE(S)*	COMMENTS
		SURFACE		SUBSURFACE			
		PRIMARY USE(S)	SECONDARY USE(S)	LOCATABLE MINERALS	LEASEABLE MINERALS		
6a Kutna Flats	State	Water Resources Wildlife Habitat	Forestry Public Rec. Remote Cabins	Open	Available for leasing	Grazing Land Disposals	—
6b Trail L./ Anderson Creek	State/ Borough	Resource Management (high)/Borough Land Bank Values: Agriculture, Forestry, Settlement, Wildlife Habitat		Open except along Lower Sucker Creek (see mgmt. guidelines	Available for leasing	Grazing Land Disposals	—
6c Rabbit Lake/ Toms Creek	State	Settlement	Forestry (personal use) Public Rec. Wildlife Hab.	Closed prior to disposal	Not available for coal leasing or prospecting	Remote Cabins Trapper Cabins	Estimated net disposal area = 240 acres
6d Alexander Cr.	State	Public Recreation Water Resources Wildlife Habitat	Forestry	Closed	Not available for coal leasing or prospecting	Grazing Trapper Cabins Land Disposals	Recommended for legislative designation

*Other uses such as material sales, land leases, remote cabin permits, etc., that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed. Such uses will be allowed if consistent with the management intent statement and management guidelines of this unit, and with the relevant management guidelines in chapter 2

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		SURFACE		SUBSURFACE			
		PRIMARY USE(S)	SECONDARY USE(S)	LOCATABLE MINERALS	LEASEABLE MINERALS		
6e Trail Ridge	State	Forestry Public Recreation Wildlife Habitat	—	Open	Available for leasing	Grazing	Recommended for legislative designation
6f Kutna Creek, Otter Lakes, & Trail Ridge Disposals	State/ Private	Settlement (past subdivisions & remote parcel offering)	Forestry (personal use) Public Rec. Wildlife Hab.	Closed	Not available for coal leasing or prospecting	Grazing Remote Cabins Trapper Cabins	Approximately 160 unsold surveyed lots remain available over-the-counter

*Other uses such as material sales, land leases, remote cabin permits, etc., that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed. Such uses will be allowed if consistent with the management intent statement and management guidelines of this unit, and with the relevant management guidelines in chapter 2.

Subunit 6f: Settlement is the primary designation along the Yentna River in the past Kutna remote parcel disposal area, and in the existing Kutna, Otter Lake and Trail Ridge subdivisions. Unsold surveyed lots in the subdivisions will remain available over-the-counter. Numerous parcels have been staked in the Kutna remote area in the past. There are no immediate plans for additional sales in the past Kutna remote parcel area, but this area may be reconsidered for additional offerings in the future.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The complete set of areawide management guidelines is presented in Chapter 2 of this plan. All of the guidelines potentially apply to uses within this management unit; however, those that are most likely to be applicable are indicated with asterisks in the list below.

- Agriculture
- *Fish & Wildlife Habitat
- *Forestry
- *Recreation
- *Settlement
- Subsurface
- *Transportation
- Instream Flow
- *Lakeshore Management
- Public Access
- *Remote Cabin Permits
- *Stream Corridors
- *Trail Management
- *Wetlands Management
- Resource Management

Management guidelines that apply to this management unit only are presented below by subunit.

Subunit 6d (Alexander Creek)

Commercial development

Commercial development to support recreational activities is a permitted use in the Alexander Creek subunit.

Management Planning and Remote Cabins

A management plan should be prepared for subunit 6d in conjunction with management planning for the portion of Alexander Creek corridor in the Mt. Susitna subregion. The management plan should develop guidelines to prevent snowmachine disturbance of moose populations that winter along Alexander Creek. The management plan will determine whether remote cabins will be a permitted use in this subunit. Remote cabin permits will not be offered until and unless areas

open to remote cabins are designated by a management plan.

Mining

Public lands within 200' of Lower Sucker Creek will be closed to mineral location. The closure is intended to protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat in one of the most important tributaries to Alexander Creek.

Oil and Gas

Oil and gas exploration and development activities will be sited and/or timed to mitigate impacts on the fish and wildlife habitat and public use values of the Alexander Creek corridor. Specific mitigation measures necessary to protect the values for which the river corridor was established will be developed as part of the lease sale process. Mitigation measures will be developed on a case by case basis considering timing, topography, vegetation and other factors affecting the impact of oil and gas exploration and development activities on fish and wildlife, habitat and public use values.

Interagency Consultation

Since protection of habitat and recreation values is of such importance in this unit and the area is being recommended for legislative designation, special consideration should be given to consulting with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Department of Fish and Game when reviewing permit or lease applications in this unit.

Transportation

Road crossings of Alexander Creek should be minimized. Road crossings must be designed in consultation with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Department of Fish and Game.

Subunits 6b, 6c, and 6f (Sucker Lake-Trail Lake, Rabbit Lake, and Past Disposal)

Stream Corridors

The management intent for land adjacent to the streams referenced below is to permit uses such as fishing, camping and other active uses, and to protect water quality and riparian habitat. Consequently, this land should be retained in public ownership. Corridor widths will be set on a case-by-case basis using policies in Chapter 2. The standard minimum buffer width (200' on each side of the river) should be used on Deep, Clear, Toms, Anderson, Kutna and Snag Creeks, and unnamed creeks that appear on the USGS 1:63,360 scale topographic maps. The corridor on

lower Sucker Creek should be $\frac{1}{4}$ mile wide on each side to protect the opportunities for "wilderness camping" and hunting on one of the most important tributaries to Alexander Creek.

Subunit 6e (Trail Ridge)

Management Plans and Remote Cabins

It is recommended that a management plan be prepared for units 6e, 13d and 13e. The management plan will determine, among other things, whether or not remote cabins will be permitted in these subunits. Remote cabin permits will not be offered until and unless areas open to remote cabins are designated by a management plan.