

# NUSHAGAK & MULCHATNA RIVERS

## Recreation Management Plan



August 1990

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

BRISTOL BAY COASTAL RESOURCE SERVICE AREA

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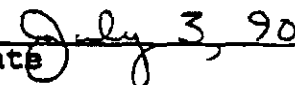
# NUSHAGAK & MULCHATNA RIVERS

## Recreation Management Plan

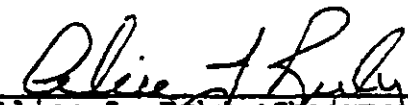



The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources finds that the Nushagak and Mulchatna Rivers Recreation Management Plan meets the requirements of AS 38.04.065 and 11 AAC 55.010-.030 for land use plans and does hereby adopt it as an amendment to the Bristol Bay Area Plan. The Department of Natural Resources will manage state lands within the planning area consistent with this plan.

  
Lennie Gorsuch, Commissioner  
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

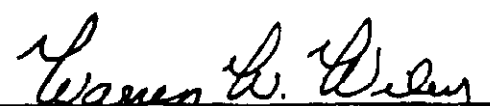
  
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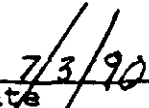
The Bristol Bay Coastal Resource Service Area Board finds that the Nushagak and Mulchatna Rivers Recreation Management Plan meets the requirements of AS 46.40.030, AS 46.40.180, 6 AAC 80.160, and 6 AAC 85.010-.150 and does hereby adopt it as an Area which Merits Special Attention plan for the Bristol Bay Coastal Resource Service Area.

  
Alice L. Ruby, Chairperson  
BRISTOL BAY COASTAL RESOURCE SERVICE AREA

  
Date

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game assisted the Department of Natural Resources and the Bristol Bay Coastal Resource Service Area Board in preparing the Nushagak and Mulchatna Rivers Recreation Management Plan. We appreciate the opportunity to represent fish and wildlife habitat and harvest values during the development of the plan. The Department of Fish and Game will use this plan as guidance when implementing its authorities and when reviewing and commenting on proposed uses of state lands in the planning area.

  
Don W. Collinsworth, Commissioner  
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

  
Date

## **Unit 1. Lower Nushagak River, Keefer Cutoff to Wood River**

### **Background**

**Land Status.** Most of this unit is owned by Choggiung Ltd. or is federal land selected by the state, Choggiung Ltd., or Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC). The state and BBNC have both selected the mouth of the Iowithla River. It is likely BBNC will receive the selection. The Nushagak River is navigable; the state owns tidelands, submerged lands, and shorelands in the unit. Twenty Native allotments are located in the unit.

**Miles of River.** The main channel of the Nushagak River extends for 56 miles.

**Access.** The unit is easily accessible by motorboat, float plane, and snowmobile and is relatively close to major airports and sport fishing lodges. Portage Creek has a developed public airstrip. The nearest communities are Dillingham and Ekwok. The river is important for use as a corridor for boat travel between Dillingham and upriver villages.

**Existing Development.** The unit includes the village of Portage Creek, many subsistence fish camps near Lewis Point, and 11 cabins which are used seasonally. Twelve temporary camps for commercial sport fishing were authorized by Choggiung between Black Point and Portage Creek in 1988. Ten of the camps supported fly-in day use; two served as bases of operation. The ADF&G operates a field camp near Portage Creek.

**Fisheries.** The river serves as a corridor for migration of all species of juvenile and adult salmon, which are generally abundant in the summer.

Subsistence and sport fishing uses are among the highest in the planning area. Most of the subsistence fishing use takes place downstream of Black Point. Most of the sport use is commercial, targets king salmon, and takes place from mid-June to mid-July between Portage Creek and Black Point. Commercial use is based out of lodges and nearby communities and out of camps in the unit. Motorboats are stored in the unit to support fly-in day use. The king salmon sport fishery is of increasing importance as a recreational opportunity for residents of Dillingham.

**Wildlife.** Moose density is moderate; caribou density is low.

Subsistence hunting for moose is high and caribou hunting use is moderate because of relatively easy accessibility. Sport hunting use is low because of private land ownership, competition with local hunters, and relatively low density of game.

**Trails and Easements.** The winter trail from Dillingham to Naknek is a possible RS-2477 right-of-way. Portions of the trail are on 17(b) easements. The following 17(b) easements are located in this unit: EIN 2, 2a, 2-1, 6, 8a, 8b, 20, 20b, 34, and 36. (Refer to the maps in the envelope in the back of this document for descriptions of these easements.)

**Other Values.** Scenic values are relatively low because of constricted views and low landscape diversity. Floating use is low. Four cultural sites are documented in the unit.

### Management Intent

Semi-developed use experience.

### Management Guidelines

#### **Long-term Use (longer than 14 consecutive days at one site):**

Permanent facilities	Prohibited.*
Temporary facilities	Prohibited.*
Trapping cabins	Prohibited.*
Boat storage	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Airstrip development	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Docks: permanent	May be allowed (case-by-case).
temporary	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Other uses	May be allowed (case-by-case).

\* The state owns only shorelands in this unit. Permanent facilities and temporary facilities (except for floating facilities) and trapping cabins are prohibited on shorelands.

#### **Short-term Use (14 consecutive days or less at one site):**

See Short-term Uses (generally allowed uses) in Chapter 2.

### Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit

- U1.1 Short-term Uses at the Mouth of the Iowithla River (Public Use Site 6). Because of high public use, this public use site is designated as a "special use area" under 11 AAC 96.010. In public use sites, short-term uses can take place for 14 consecutive days or less without a permit. In this special use area, allowed short-term uses can take place for 7 consecutive days or less without a permit. Allowed uses that take place for longer than 7 consecutive days are considered long-term uses and require a permit or lease. All other public use site guidelines apply to this special use area (see Chapter 2, Public Use Sites).
- U1.2 Relocation of Public Use Site 4. Choggiung Ltd. is considering relocating its designated upland public camping site to a site closer to the Portage Creek landing strip. DNR should work with Choggiung to identify this site. If Choggiung relocates the camping site, Public Use Site 4 will be relocated to shoreland adjacent to the new upland camping site.

### **Public Use Sites**

See Public Use Sites in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations of sites are shown on maps in Appendix C.

- Site 1 Shoreland site on lower Nushagak River known as Blood Beach, 7 miles west of Portage Creek, primarily used for angling. The state owns only the shorelands in this public use site. Uplands are owned by Choggiung Ltd.
- Site 2 Shoreland site on lower Nushagak river at the southern mouth of Keefer Cutoff, primarily used for angling. The state owns only the shorelands in this public use site. Uplands are owned by Choggiung Ltd.
- Site 3 Shoreland site on Keefer Cutoff, 1 1/2 miles north of Portage Creek. The state owns only the shorelands in this public use site. Uplands are owned by Choggiung Ltd.
- Site 4 Shoreland site adjacent to upland site designated by Choggiung Ltd. as a public camping site, 1 1/2 miles north of Portage Creek. The state owns only the shorelands in this public use site. Uplands are owned by Choggiung Ltd.
- Site 5 Shoreland site on Keefer Cutoff, 3 miles north of Portage Creek, used for camping and angling. The state owns only the shorelands in this public use site. Uplands are owned by Choggiung Ltd.
- Site 6 This site is a special use area. See "Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit." Campsite and floatplane landing area on shorelands at the mouth of the Iowithla River. The state owns only the shorelands in this public use site. Uplands are selected by Bristol Bay Native Corporation.

### **Recommendations for this Unit**

Land Selection: Township 12 South Range 50 West (the mouth of the Iowithla River) is currently selected by both the state and the Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC). If BBNC receives title to this selection, a 17(b) easement should include Public Use Site #6 (campsite and floatplane landing area on shorelands at the mouth of the Iowithla River).

## **Unit 3. Lower Nushagak River Corridor, Ekwok Vicinity**

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### **Background**

**Land Status.** Most of the land is owned or selected by Ekwok Ltd. No uplands are owned by the state in the unit. The Nushagak River is navigable; the state owns the tidelands and shorelands in this unit. Eleven Native allotments are located in the unit. No mining claims are located in the unit.

**Miles of River.** The main channel of the Nushagak River extends for 30 miles.

**Access.** The corridor is easily accessible by motorboat, float plane, and snowmobile. The unit is located near a major airport in Dillingham and a developed public airstrip exists in Ekwok. The river is important for use as a corridor for boat travel between Dillingham and upriver villages.

**Existing Development.** The unit contains the village of Ekwok, five cabins used seasonally, and the Ekwok Lodge, a sport fishing lodge.

**Fisheries.** The lower Nushagak River is a major salmon migration route, as well as an important king and chum salmon spawning habitat.

Subsistence fishing use is high, particularly near Ekwok. Sport fishing use is moderate in the downstream portion of this unit and low in the upstream portion. Most of the sport fishing use is guided and targets king and silver salmon. Most commercial use originates from the Ekwok Lodge or fly-in users.

**Wildlife.** Moose density is moderate; caribou density is low.

Subsistence hunting for moose is high; the unit is an important hunting area for local residents. Subsistence hunting for caribou is low. Little sport hunting use takes place in the unit because of private land ownership.

**Trails and Easements.** The following 17(b) easements are located in this unit: EIN 9, 9a, 10, 10a, 11, 11a, 37, and 37a. (Refer to the maps in the envelope in the back of this document for descriptions of these easements.)

**Other Values.** Scenic values are low because of constricted views and low landscape diversity. Floating use is low. The corridor is important for local trapping and wood-cutting uses. Seven cultural sites are documented in the unit.

## Management Intent

Semi-developed use experience.

## Management Guidelines

### **Long-term Use (longer than 14 consecutive days at one site)**

Permanent facilities	Prohibited.*
Temporary facilities	Prohibited.*
Trapping cabins	Prohibited.*
Boat storage	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Airstrip development	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Docks: permanent	May be allowed (case-by-case).
temporary	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Other uses	May be allowed (case-by-case).

\* The state owns only shorelands in this unit. Permanent facilities and temporary facilities (except for floating facilities) and trapping cabins are prohibited on shorelands.

### **Short-term Use (14 consecutive days or less at one site)**

See Short-term Uses (generally allowed uses) in Chapter 2.

## Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit

U3.1 Short-term Uses at the Mouth of the Kokwok River (Public Use Site 9). Because of high public use, this public use site is designated as a "special use area" under 11 AAC 96.010. In public use sites, short-term uses can take place for 14 consecutive days or less without a permit. In this special use area, allowed short-term uses can take place for 7 consecutive days or less without a permit. Allowed uses that take place for longer than 7 consecutive days are considered long-term uses and require a permit or lease. All other public use site guidelines apply to this special use area (see Chapter 2, Public Use Sites).

## Public Use Sites

See Public Use Sites in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations of sites are shown on maps in Appendix C.

Site 9 This site is a special use area. See "Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit." Campsite and floatplane landing area on shorelands on the Nushagak River

at the mouth of the Kokwok River. The state owns only the shorelands in this public use site. Uplands are owned by Ekwok Natives Ltd.

**Recommendations for this Unit**

None.



## **Unit 15. Lower Mulchatna River Corridor**

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### **Background**

**Land Status.** Most of the lower portion of the unit is owned or selected by Koliganek Natives Ltd. Most of the rest of the unit is owned by the state. The Mulchatna River is navigable; the state owns the shorelands. Eight Native allotments are located in the unit.

**Miles of River.** The main channel of the Mulchatna River extends for 41 miles.

**Access.** The unit is easily accessible by motorboat, float and wheeled airplanes, and snowmobile. The unit is about a one-hour flight from Iliamna and Dillingham.

**Existing Development.** Seven cabins are located in this unit. Three sites have been used for commercial camps.

**Fisheries.** The Mulchatna River serves as a major salmon migration corridor and provides important spawning and rearing habitat for king, chum, and coho salmon.

Subsistence fishing use is moderate for freshwater species and spawning salmon. Sport fishing use is moderate and generally associated with floating activity. There is locally high sport fishing effort at the mouths of the Stuyahok and Koktuli rivers because they provide good fishing and access, and excellent camping and staging opportunities. Anglers target primarily salmon. Commercial recreational use is high and is associated with guided floating, commercial camps in the unit, and fly-in day use. Day use may rely on motorboats stored in the unit.

**Wildlife.** The unit provides essential winter range for moose and densities are seasonally high. Caribou migrate through the unit and densities are moderate to high. The unit is a waterfowl staging area during spring and fall migrations.

The unit is primarily a travel corridor for all user groups. Subsistence hunting for caribou and moose is high during the fall and winter. Sport hunting use is low but has increased as float trips down the Mulchatna, Stuyahok, and Koktuli rivers to pickup points in this unit have become more popular.

**Trails and Easements.** The following 17(b) easements are located in this unit: EIN 25 and 25a. (Refer to the maps in the envelope in the back of this document for descriptions of these easements.)

**Other Values.** Scenic values in the unit are low because of constricted views and low landscape diversity. Floating use is high and originates from drop-offs on the Stuyahok, Koktuli, and upper Mulchatna rivers. Floating use is chiefly unguided and is increasing. The unit is used for trapping by local residents. Four cultural sites are located in the unit, including Stuyahok, the site of the old village located at the mouth of the Stuyahok River, which is especially significant to local residents.

## Management Intent

Semi-primitive use experience.

## Management Guidelines

### **Long-term Use (longer than 14 consecutive days at one site)**

Permanent facilities	Prohibited.
Temporary facilities	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Trapping cabins	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Boat storage	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Airstrip development	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Docks: permanent	Prohibited.
temporary	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Other uses	May be allowed (case-by-case).

### **Short-term Use (14 consecutive days or less at one site)**

See Short-term Uses (generally allowed uses) in Chapter 2.

## Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit

- U15.1 Short-term Uses at the Mouth of the Stuyahok River (Public Use Site 21). Because of high public use, this public use site is designated as a "special use area" under 11 AAC 96.010. In public use sites, short-term uses can take place for 14 consecutive days or less without a permit. In this special use area, allowed short-term uses can take place for 7 consecutive days or less without a permit. Allowed uses that take place for longer than 7 consecutive days are considered long-term uses and require a permit or lease. All other public use site guidelines apply to this special use area (see Chapter 2, Public Use Sites).
- U15.2 Long-term Uses Associated with Mineral/Oil and Gas Activity. For long-term uses associated with mineral and oil and gas exploration and development, see Chapter 2 guideline.
- U15.3 Siting Criteria. Long-term uses will be sited to minimize evidence of human use.

## Public Use Sites

See Public Use Sites in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations of sites are shown on maps in Appendix C.

- Site 21 This site is a special use area. See "Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit." Campsite and floatplane landing area on the Mulchatna River at the mouth of the Stuyahok River. There is a pending Native allotment in this site.

Site 22 Campsite and floatplane landing area on the Mulchatna River, 1.5 miles downstream from the mouth of the Koktuli River.

Site 23 Campsite and floatplane landing area on the Mulchatna River at the mouth of the Koktuli River.

### **Recommendations for this Unit**

Management of Public Use Sites at the Stuyahok and Koktuli Rivers: Use of the sandbars at the mouths of the Stuyahok River and Koktuli River (public use sites # 21 and # 23) for camping, fishing, and waiting for floatplane pickups is steadily increasing. Problems with overcrowding, garbage, and waste are beginning to develop at the mouth of the Stuyahok River. In implementing the recommendations for a monitoring program for the planning area (see Monitoring, Chapter 4), these sites should be assigned a particularly high priority. Possible management actions that should be considered are 1) developing public information materials suggesting alternative sites and recommending measures for keeping the sites clean, 2) developing privies at the sites, and 3) changing the number of days that short-term (generally allowed) uses can occur.