

Kashwitna-Willow Uplands Region

The Kashwitna-Willow Uplands Region occupies the undulating to hilly terrain situated east of the developed areas along the Parks Highway and the community of Willow. It also extends eastward to the Hatcher Pass Management Area along the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road, encompassing the areas immediately north and south of that road. The eastern boundary of this region coincides with the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area and the plan boundary of the Hatcher Pass Management Plan. This area is generally undeveloped, is heavily forested, and a portion of the unit is an important part of the Department's forest inventory base for South-central Alaska. Although most of the area is heavily vegetated with upland vegetation characteristic of a sub-arctic boreal forest, wetlands are interspersed throughout this region. These typically occupy the lowlands and are characterized by generally flat terrain. Maps 1 and 2 depict this region.

Distribution and Characteristics

This is the largest of the regions having holdings of state land not situated within LDAs. Totalling nearly 108,000 acres, state land is generally contiguous within this region except for scattered private and Borough land east of Willow and along portions of the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road. Most land is generally level to gently rolling in the western part east of the Parks Highway and in the southern part south of the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road, and contains a mix of vegetated uplands and scrub or forest type palustrine wetlands. That portion of the region along the eastern and northern parts of the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road is, however, fairly mountainous and, depending on location, characterized by either forested and shrub vegetation or by alpine vegetation. Limited residential development occurs within this state land, with almost all of this occurring along the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road, although limited residential settlement adjoins it in the Kashwitna and Willow regions. State land is adjoined primarily by Matanuska-Susitna Borough land or private land. With few exceptions, this non-state land is either vacant or contains limited residential uses. Where residential development occurs, access (roads and trails) and limited infrastructure (electrical, telephone) may sometimes be available.

Access, Resources, and Uses of State Land

Except for areas along the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road, access to the lands within the region is either non-existent or limited. Limited access is provided through a series of local and regional trails.

Moose are generally present throughout the region and there are a number of winter concentration, rutting, and calving areas. Waterfowl are generally distributed throughout the region and swan nesting sites are present in a number of lakes. Lacking suitable habitat, Dall sheep and caribou are not present within the region. Anadromous streams cross a few of the units within the region and, depending on location, contain king, silver, pink, or chum migration, rearing, or spawning areas. Willow Creek, Montana Creek, and the Little Susitna River are regionally significant anadromous fish streams that cross through the region.

State land receives moderate to limited recreation use, with the type of use reflecting the local patterns of recreation activity. Given the dispersed character of state land, its main use is for winter recreation (dog mushing, cross country skiing), although limited summer trail and ATV use occurs, particularly during the fall hunting season. The primary streams (Montana, Willow, and Little Susitna) all receive intensive summer fishing use. Such use is necessarily dispersed and limited in amount, with most occurring outside of the region generally west of the Parks Highway. There is very limited agricultural use, but timber harvest is an important use on portions of state land in areas east of Houston. The forested areas within the region are important components of the Department's sustained yield inventory in South-central Alaska.

Management Constraints

Several state and local management plans affect the planning area and were consulted in the development of recommendations for the Palmer-Wasilla Region. Only two state resource plans affected this region, the 1982 Willow Sub-Basin Area Plan and the 1991 Kashwitna Management Plan, which are now superseded with this update. Local plans include the local land use plans of community councils within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Borough Comprehensive Plan, and the Borough Coastal Management Plan. These plans provide management guidance of a general nature and helped in the formulation of recommendations. The Enforceable Policies of the Coastal Management Plan were particularly pertinent.

Management Summary

State land is to be managed consistent with the plan designations and management recommendations contained in the Resource Allocation Table. State land will be managed in a manner similar to that inferred from its designation. One third of the state land in this region (38,516 acres) is designated Habitat (Ha) or Water Resources (Wr), both of which are protective designations. Areas designated Water Resources are associated with strips of land, sometimes as much as 0.5 miles in width, on each side of the principal anadromous streams of Willow and Montana Creeks, and the Little Susitna River. These areas are also co-designated Public Recreation-Dispersed (Rd), reflecting their recreational use. The vast bulk of the Habitat areas (24,600 acres) are situated on the large contiguous tracts of state land south of the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road and encompass significant areas important for moose winter concentrations and calving. Areas along the Willow-Fishhook

(Hatcher Pass) Road (2,300 acres) are designated Public Recreation-Dispersed, reflecting the importance of this area as an entranceway to the Hatcher Pass Management Area. Most of the remaining parts of the region are either designated Forestry (F) or Settlement (Se). Areas designated Forestry (56,447 acres) include the forested uplands in the central and easterly parts of the region. Settlement areas (9,713 acres) are situated south of the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road or are scattered throughout the more accessible, better situated and drained level areas throughout the region north and south of this road. Consult the Resource Allocation Table and maps for specific recommendations.

The SSAP supersedes both the Deception Creek Land Use Plan and the Kashwitna Management Plan. The former functioned as a management plan for the Deception Creek area east of Willow and south of the Hatcher Pass Road. It was adopted in 1989 as a component of the Willow Sub-Basin Area Plan. The latter primarily affected the Kashwitna-Willow Uplands Region, although portions extended into the eastern parts of the Kashwitna Region, most of which are now owned by the borough. The Kashwitna Management Plan amended the Willow Sub-Basin Area Plan (1982) and superceded that plan within the Kashwitna management unit. Since the Deception Creek or Kashwitna management plans have been replaced by the SSAP, only the area plan should be consulted for guidance in decision making.

Resource Allocation Table for Upland Units – Kashwitna-Willow Uplands Region

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-01	F 56,447	Map 1 S018N002W; S018N003W; S019N003W; S020N003W; S021N003W; S022N003W; S023N003W	<p>Manage unit consistent with requirements of Forestry section of Chapter 2 and with applicable Susitna Forestry Guidelines and Forest Practices Act requirements. Protect anadromous streams and moose winter concentration and rutting areas. Maintain the Central Mail Trail, Mail Trail Connector, and Willow Mountain Trail corridors. Other recreational areas and corridors may exist within this unit and a review to determine if other such uses exist should occur prior to or concurrent with Forest Land Use Plan preparation.</p> <p>DOF is to consult with DMLW prior to initiating any timber harvests in parcels adjacent to management units that are intended for another use. DOF needs also to coordinate with ADF&G on FRPA and FLUP requirements, especially adjacent to Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area.</p>	<p>This extensive unit, occupying nearly the entirety of the Kashwitna-Willow Uplands Region, consists of vegetated uplands containing extensive forest resources. Most of this area is occupied by upland spruce hardwood forest except along the drainages of Montana and Kashwitna Creeks, where a bottomland spruce-poplar forest predominates. The bottomland spruce-poplar forest contains white spruce, locally mixed with cottonwood and balsam poplar. Paper birch and quaking aspen also occupy areas within this forest type. The upland spruce-hardwood forest is a fairly dense, mixed forest composed of white spruce, Alaska paper birch, quaking aspen, black cottonwood, and balsam poplar. Numerous significant anadromous streams cross this unit in an east-west direction; they are not part of this unit and are included in a separate management unit, U-03. See U-03 for the management intent and guidelines for these anadromous streams, which include Montana, Kashwitna, and Willow Creeks. Portions of the unit contain both moose winter concentration and rutting areas.</p> <p>Portions of this unit, principally in townships S021N003W and S020N003W, contain multiple use trail system, some of which are managed by the Borough. These systems include the Central Mail Trail, Mail Trail Connector, and Willow Mountain Trail. These trails are depicted either on DNR status plats or in the Borough ‘Trail Guide’ map.</p> <p>This large area has been classified Forestry for over 25 years and constitutes, together with unit S-03 in the Susitna Corridor Region, a significant portion of the Division of Forestry’s sustained yield inventory in the Susitna Valley.</p> <p>Unit abuts Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area and also contains numerous anadromous fish streams in the Willow Creek, Deception Creek, Little Willow Creek, Kashwitna River, Sheep Creek, Goose Creek, Montana Creek and Little Susitna River drainages.</p>
U-02	Se 2,846	Map 1 S023N003W: 29-33	<p>Unit may be appropriate for land disposal during the planning period, depending on the availability of road access.</p> <p>Avoid or protect streams and adjacent wetlands in subdivision design.</p>	<p>Parcel occupies gently rolling terrain and is mostly vegetated with a mix of shrubs and trees. Several small streams cross the parcel and palustrine wetlands adjoin these streams. Borough land adjoins the parcel to the south. Road access is available within 0.5 miles.</p>

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-03	Wr, Rd 11,855	Map 1 Various	Manage this unit to protect and maintain the anadromous streams within this unit and their adjacent uplands. Except for required roads and utilities, safety, and recreational facilities, other forms of uses or structures, including timber harvest, are prohibited.	The major streams draining the Kashwitna-Willow Uplands Region are included within this unit. These streams include the following: Sheep, Kashwitna, Montana, Little Willow and Willow Creeks. In addition to the streams, adjacent uplands, often as much as 0.5 miles of either side of stream, are included within the unit. Each of these streams has an important run of salmon, and both Willow and Montana Creeks support important South-central sport fisheries.
U-04	Se 2,868	Map 1 S022N003W: 5, 7, 8, 17-20	Unit may be appropriate for a residential land disposal during the planning period. Road access to the residential subdivision to the west will be required, and this may affect the timing of development. Protect small streams and adjacent wetlands in subdivision design.	Parcel occupies gently rolling terrain and consists of vegetated uplands interspersed by isolated palustrine wetlands. A small stream occupies the central part of the parcel; there are several small lakes. Borough land adjoins this parcel to the west and south, portions of which have been developed as a residential subdivision with road access. The North Fork of Kashwitna Creek, a portion of which is included in unit U-03, adjoins this parcel to the east. This area is to remain undeveloped. Residential land uses exist immediately to the west of the unit in the Borough subdivision.
U-05	Wr, Rd 574	Map 2 S021N003W: 2	Manage this unit to maintain the protection of Little Willow Creek that begins in unit U-03.	Unit adjoins Little Willow Creek and is generally flat and heavily vegetated. No immediate access to parcel, and should be difficult to develop in the near term. The Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area adjoins this parcel to the east.
U-06	Ag, Se 790	Map 3 S020N003W: 19, 30	Unit is appropriate either for an agricultural/settlement disposal or residential disposal during the planning period. Protect central area of wetlands and the Roger Creek river system. Maintain the Talkeetna Mail – Central Trail Loop.	Parcel is generally flat and consists of a mix of vegetated uplands and shrub/forest palustrine wetlands, with the majority of the central area of the site occupied by wetlands. Agricultural uses occur immediately to the west of the parcel. Parcel is considered to have soils suitable for agriculture. Road access is available for southwest. The Talkeetna Mail – Central Trail Loop (ADL 228207), a public use easement, traverses the unit in a north-south orientation. The trail system is managed under a cooperative resource management agreement with the Borough (ADL 228819). The upper end of the Rogers Creek system occurs in this unit.
U-07	Rd 360	Map 3 S020N003W: 29, 30	Manage unit to protect habitat and recreation values. Maintain public use easement associated with Central Mail Trail. Except for required roads and utilities, safety, and recreational facilities, other forms of uses or structures, including timber harvest, are prohibited. Parcel is to be retained in state ownership.	Parcel is generally flat and heavily vegetated. Little Willow Creek and the ‘Central Mail Trail’, a major multiple use trail managed by the Borough, cross major portions of the parcel. Borough land adjoins the parcel immediately to south. See also unit U-06.

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-08	Se 940	Map 4 S019N003W: 4, 5	<p>Unit is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Protect anadromous stream (100' protection area) and wetlands in subdivision design.</p> <p>Consideration is to be given in subdivision design to the orientation of residential units to views (primarily to south) and to the maintenance of any recreation uses, although none are discernible currently (2008).</p> <p>DMLW is to consult with DOF prior to the initiation of any land disposals in this unit and within U-08. Timber harvest within the areas of settlement may be appropriate but must be compatible with the overall residential development plan and with development phasing.</p>	<p>This large parcel is situated immediately south of Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road, which is bordered by residential uses. Topography is generally level in the western part, coinciding in part with wetland areas, to moderately sloping in the eastern part. Upland areas are heavily vegetated. Two small drainages, one of which is anadromous stream 247-41-10200-2120-3020-4021 provides habitat for coho salmon, cross the parcel.</p>
U-09	Se 100	Map 4 S019N003W: 3	<p>Unit is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. The trail is to be maintained. Rerouting of the ADF&G trail may be necessary in subdivision design.</p>	<p>Unit is moderately sloping and heavily vegetated, although there are a few palustrine wetlands. A 50' trail under ILMA to ADF&G affects the central part of the parcel, and is oriented in a north-south direction (ADL 46664). Residential uses and Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road are situated nearby (0.25 miles north).</p>
U-10	Se 261	Map 4 S019N003W: 1, 2	<p>Unit is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Avoid or protect wetlands in subdivision design. Maintain a 50' protection area adjacent to lakes.</p>	<p>Parcel is irregularly configured, with Borough land surrounding it on all sides. It consists of gently rolling topography with vegetated uplands interspersed throughout by palustrine wetlands. Residential uses are nearby and parcel has road access. Contains several lakes.</p>
U-11	Se 5	Map 4 S019N003W: 1	<p>Unit is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Maintain a 50' protection area adjacent to the lake.</p>	<p>Unit adjoins lake and is surrounded by Borough land. It is vegetated and has topography that is level to slightly sloped. Residential uses are situated nearby along road, about 0.5 miles distant. Some of the site contains palustrine wetlands.</p>
U-12	Se 1,889	Map 4 S019N003W: 10-12	<p>Unit is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Maintain trail access; reroute if necessary. Development should be concentrated in upland areas; wetlands should be avoided or protected in subdivision design. Maintain a 50' protection area adjacent to lakes.</p>	<p>This large parcel consists of a mix of vegetated uplands, lakes, and wetlands, the latter predominating in its eastern part. Upland areas are heavily vegetated consisting of paper birch, black spruce, and occasional white spruce and cottonwoods. Parcel has been pre-identified by DNR for settlement/disposal (ADL 229577, Teakwood Lake Subdivision). A 50' primitive trail (ADL 46664) affects portions of the parcel.</p>

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-13	Ha 9,373	Map 4 S019N003W: 14-15, 22-24, 25-28, 34-36	Manage unit to protect moose winter concentration area, anadromous stream, and wetlands. Protect recreation and trail access.	This extensive parcel, except for a generally flat area in its northeastern part, is moderately to heavily sloped. It consists of both vegetated uplands and palustrine wetlands, with the latter predominating, particularly in the more level areas. It contains an extensive moose winter concentration area and is crossed by an anadromous stream. A 50' primitive trail (ADL 46664) affects portions of the parcel. Bullion Mountain Scenic Area is within this unit.
U-14	Se 15	Map 4 S019N002W: 6	Unit is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. A 50' non-disturbance area affects the uplands adjacent to the lake.	Unit adjoins lake and Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road is nearby. Residential uses are nearby.
U-15	Ma 25	Map 4 S019N002W: 6	Manage unit consistent with the requirements of the ILMA. Maintain a screening strip of native vegetation along road.	Parcel is affected by a Public Use Permit (ADL 202813) for the extraction of gravel. Issued to ADOT/PF for the purpose of providing suitable gravel for local state road projects. Indefinite amount specified in FUP.
U-16	Rd 2,271	Map 4 S019N002W: 2-6	Manage unit for its public recreation values and retain in state ownership. Roads and utility lines are considered appropriate uses within the unit. Maintain the easements associated with the Willow Sled Trail and the transmission facility. Retain in state ownership.	This extensive parcel adjoins Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road in an east-west direction and functions as an entranceway into the Hatcher Pass area. It is heavily vegetated and is slightly to moderately sloped, depending on location. An electrical transmission line easement (ADL 44316) affects the area of the parcel south of the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road. Portions of the Willow Sled Trail (ADL 46665), a multi-use trail, crosses in a north-south orientation through section 5. Willow Creek AWC #247-41-10200-2120 bisects unit. Specific stream protection guidelines are required under existing plans.
U-17	Ma 108	Map 4 S019N002W: 2	Manage unit consistent with the requirements of the ILMA. Maintain a screening strip of native vegetation along road.	Parcel is affected by a Material Sale (ADL 223680) to ADOT/PF for the extraction of gravel for local road projects. <i>Note: Material Sale expired 7/01/90.</i> Willow Creek AWC #247-41-10200-2120 bisects unit. Specific stream protection guidelines are required under existing plans.
U-18	Ma 20	Map 4 S020N003W: 34	Manage unit consistent with the requirements of the Free Use Permit. Parcel is appropriate for alternative use(s) when gravel extraction ceases. Reclassification will be required in order to accommodate an alternative use.	Parcel is affected by a Free Use Permit to ADOT/PF (ADL 32188) for the purpose of excavating material for the construction of roads. Unit adjoins Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road. Specific stream protection guidelines are required under ILMA.

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
U-19	Rp 52	Map 4 S020N003W: 36; S020N002W: 31	Manage unit consistent with the requirements of the P&C Lease.	Parcel is affected by a Public and Charitable (P&C) Lease to a non-profit entity (ADL 59832).
U-20	Gu 9	Map 4 S019N003W: 2	Manage unit consistent with requirements of ILMA. Upon termination of ILMA, consider alternative uses of parcel. Reclassification may be required in order to accommodate an alternative use.	Unit is affected by an ILMA for a communications site (ADL 227147).
U-21	Ma 46	Map 4 S019N002W: 5	Manage unit consistent with the requirements of the Free Use Permit.	Parcel is affected by a Free Use Permit (ADL 73305) to ADOT/PF for the purpose of extracting gravel for bridge reconstruction and the maintenance of Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road. Indefinite term. Specific stream protection guidelines are required under ILMA
U-22	Ha, Wr 16,715	Map 4 S019N002W; S018N002W: 6, 7	Manage unit to protect its habitat and water resource values. Maintain trail access.	This very large parcel consists of a mixture of very mountainous terrain characterized by alpine vegetation in its eastern part and by moderately sloping, heavily vegetated uplands in the western part. It adjoins the Hatcher Pass Management Plan (area) to the north and an area designated Public Recreation to the north. Moose winter concentration, rutting, and calving areas are distributed throughout much of this unit, particularly in its eastern part. An anadromous tributary of Deception Creek traverses portions of the unit as do portions of the Willow Sled trail, a multi-use trail.

Total state land within region (22 units) – 107,568 acres