

Willow Region

The Willow Region is in the northern half of the planning area and encompasses the majority of the Willow Creek and Deception Creek drainages. The Parks Highway and Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road are the major arterial roads for the region, and the built up core of the community of Willow lies to the south and west of their intersection. There is a complex of lakes west of the Parks Highway and north of the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area (SRA) that is a developing residential area and the state has a few scattered parcels here. Most land within this region is owned by non-state entities, including the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the private sector, and much of the state land that remains is associated with the Legislatively Designated Areas, Nancy Lake and Willow Creek SRAs. See Map 3.

Distribution and Characteristics

State uplands, totaling approximately 6,000 acres, are scattered throughout the region with more than half lying in one large block north of the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road and Willow Creek and west of the Shirley Towne Bridge. Private land occupies the riparian area and state lands generally begin one half mile north of Willow Creek. A large block of borough land lies to the north. This state land is generally level or gently rolling and contains a mix of forested uplands and scrub or forested palustrine wetlands. There are some agricultural soils present.

There is a one square mile section of state land that lies one mile east of the Parks Highway across from Nancy Lake. Three lakes are present on this mostly forested land that also contains some palustrine wetlands. Large blocks of borough land are immediately north and south of this parcel.

A 494 acre piece of state land encompasses the Willow Airport and associated lands along the Parks Highway corridor. While most of this parcel is affected by the footprint of the airport there are some bordering lands that are forested and as yet undeveloped.

A few state parcels occupy forested riparian lands adjacent to Willow Creek State Recreation Area. The remainder of state lands are scattered parcels, 10-60 acres in size, exhibiting a mix of forest and wetlands. Most are found in proximity to the numerous lakes in the western half of this region and are on the edge of private residential development. Road access and some utilities are present or are within one mile of each parcel.

Access, Resources, and Uses of State Land

The majority of the parcels of state land have road access. The remainder have trail access and/or are within one mile of a road. Some of the small state land parcels adjoining lakes are likely to be the only remaining public access points for these lakes and gain increasing importance as residential development occurs on non-state land.

Some of the larger pieces of state land, especially those along the north side of Willow Creek, provide movement corridors for moose and bear from the Talkeetna Foothills to the Susitna River corridor. The few scattered lakes in the eastern half of this region provide habitat for waterfowl including swans. 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 and Deception creeks are regionally significant anadromous fish streams that pass through the center of the region.

Private and commercial recreation are important activities in this region. Fishing is the major summer recreation with human use dispersed on the state land within this region. The nearest concentrated use is in the adjacent Willow Creek State Recreation Area (SRA). In the winter, recreation turns to snow-machining, dog mushing, skiing and snowshoeing. There are extensive winter trail systems including the Emil Stancec Trails north of Willow Creek, the Haessler-Norris Trails between Deception Creek and the Parks Highway, and the West Gateway Trails criss-crossing the lands between the Parks Highway and the Susitna River. These trails mainly follow the waterways and wetland complexes and are so extensive as to touch almost all of the state land parcels in this region.

Management Constraints

Several state and local management plans affect the planning area and were consulted in the development of recommendations for the Willow Region. Only two state resource plans affected this region, the 1982 Willow Sub-Basin Area Plan and the 1989 Deception Creek Land Use Plan, which are now superseded with this update. Local plans include the Willow Area Trails Plan, Matanuska-Susitna 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 useful. The Willow Community Council began their comprehensive plan process in 2007 with results unavailable for this Southeast Susitna Area Plan.

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. The majority of state land (2,080 acres) is designated Settlement and is recommended for land disposal during the planning period. These areas adjoin current or projected residential areas and are relatively close to access and necessary infrastructure. It is not intended that all of this land be disposed of immediately. Before the development of some of this state land becomes practicable, adjacent private and borough lands must be developed first, thereby providing access and infrastructure to state lands. The remainder of state land is designated Water Resources (2,400 acres), Forestry (610 acres), Public Facilities (494 acres), Public Recreation (411 acres)⁶ or Materials (30 acres). The area designated for Habitat is a wetland area adjacent to the Willow Creek corridor. The Forestry area is a section of land in the southeast corner of this region that is adjacent to a much larger block of state land designated for forestry. Areas designated Public Recreation are parcels providing access to waterbodies that receive local recreational use. The Public Facilities designation applies to the area of the Willow Airport. Consult the Resource Allocation Table and maps for specific recommendations.

Two LDAs are geographically near or generally within this region: the Willow Creek SRA and Nancy Lake SRA, consisting of 3,594 and 22,476 acres, respectively.

⁶ In addition, two LDAs, which together total 26,070 acres, are in or near this region and are managed for public recreation purposes.

Resource Allocation Table for Upland Units – Willow Region

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
W-01	F 610	Map 3 S019N004W: 36	Manage unit consistent with requirements of Forestry section of Chapter 2 and with applicable Susitna Forestry Guidelines. Maintain public use easement on Windy Lake Loop. Protect habitat and recreation values on lakes, trails, and anadromous stream. Maintain 100' protection area (no cut) on lakes and a 50' protection area (no cut) on both sides of the Haessler-Norris Trails.	Unit is generally flat, consisting of both vegetated uplands and wetland areas. Upland areas are a spruce-hardwood mix. Three lakes are located within parcel, the largest being Windy Lake, AWC# 247-41-10100-2231-3050-4011-0010. The Haessler-Norris Winter Trail System, Windy Lake Loop Trail bisects parcel. There is no immediate road access to parcel, but it lies within 1.1 miles of Parks Hwy and 0.6 miles of minor road. Anadromous stream 247-41-10100-2231-3050-4011 crosses parcel. This parcel is closed to mineral entry (Mineral Closing Order 250).
W-02	Rd 45	Map 3 S019N004W: 34	Manage parcel for its recreational values. Retain in state ownership.	Unit is generally flat, consisting of both vegetated uplands and wetland areas and contains a heavily used winter recreational trail network. Frying Pan Lake is 0.1 miles to north and there is one small lake within parcel. Frying Pan Lake Trails (part of the Haessler-Norris Winter Trail System) run through eastern part of this parcel. This parcel is closed to mineral entry (Mineral Closing Order 250).
W-03	Rp 2	Map 3 S019N004W: 34	Unit is to be managed for public recreation. Retain in state ownership.	Unit is a forested point of land on Frying Pan Lake. This lake is used as part of the Haessler-Norris Winter Trail System. There is no immediate road access but parcel is within 0.4 miles of Parks Hwy and 0.4 miles of a minor road. Land surrounding lake is in Matanuska-Susitna Borough, University and other private ownership. This is the only remaining state land on this lake, which is used for public recreation purposes.
W-04	Rp 36	Map 3 S019N004W: 28	Manage unit consistent with the ILMA. Protect anadromous lake and stream. Retain public access.	Unit is adjacent to Nancy Lake and bisected by the Parks Highway and Old Parks Highway. Nancy Lake, AWC# 247-41-10100-2231-0010, provides habitat for coho and sockeye salmon, burbot, Dolly Varden, rainbow trout and whitefish. Northern Pike are also present. Anadromous stream Lilly Creek 247-41-10100-2231-3080 is on parcel. Unit is affected by an ILMA (ADL 37437) to Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation for the Nancy Lake Wayside. The parcel is part of the borough's Nancy Lake Northeast Shore Recreation Land Use District (RLUD).
W-05	Se 30	Map 3 S019N004W: 33	Unit may be suitable for settlement if access develops through adjacent private lands. Subdivision design should protect wetlands that connect to Nancy Lake SRA immediately to west and maintain its function as recreational open space for local residents.	Unit is half lake/wetland and half forested uplands. The only current access is by private road. Small lake used for recreational open space by immediate neighborhood residents.

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
W-06	Rp 6	Map 3 S019N004W: 29	Unit shall remain in public ownership and be maintained as a recreation corridor that functions to connect the two lakes. Public access to and along both lakes is to be maintained.	Small forested parcel connects Honeybee Lake and Lynne Lake and is bisected by road, providing public access to lakes. Both lakes are stocked by ADF&G.
W-07	Unit deleted; not state land.			
W-08	Se 80	Map 3 S019N004W: 20	Unit is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Subdivision design should protect wetland values and provide a public use site on and access to and along Jack Lake. If anadromous fish habitat is identified by ADF&G, it should be protected. Portion east of railroad will need access development.	Unit is mostly wetlands with intermittent strips of vegetation. It encompasses most of eastern shore of Jack Lake. While Jack Lake is not listed in the Anadromous Waters Catalog, it is hydrologically connected to Gene Lake, AWC# 247-41-10200-2120-3018-0010. The Alaska Railroad crosses through the northeast corner of the parcel. The Kelly Lake Loop Trail (part of the Haessler-Norris Winter Trail System) runs through southeastern portion of this parcel.
W-09	Rp 7	Map 3 S019N004W: 16	Unit is to be managed for public recreation. Retain in state ownership.	Unit occupies a forested peninsula on Stevens Lake, a popular recreation lake. This is the only remaining state land on this lake. It is School Trust land (SCH 45).
W-10	Wr 1,600	Map 3 S020N004W	Manage unit to protect and maintain its hydrologic values. Protect anadromous waters and trails.	This largely flat and consists of a mixture of vegetated uplands and wetlands. An extensive wetlands complex exists in portions of this parcel.
W-11	Pr 494	Map 3 S019N004W: 5-8, 17	Manage unit consistent with the Management Right and ILMAs to ADOT/PF. Wetland area west of Gene Lake and small parcels east of Willow Lake are to be managed for public recreational access. Protect anadromous waters and maintain trails. Maintain a screening strip of native vegetation along road.	Unit comprises area along Parks Highway corridor between Willow Lake and Gene Lake. It contains Willow Airport and portions of Parks Highway and the Alaska Railroad. Talkeetna Trail runs through a portion of this unit. Most acreage is affected by ADOT/PF Mgt. Rt. ADL 227587 and ILMA ADLs 22488 & 40293. Remaining area is the wetland area west of Gene Lake, AWC# 247-41-10200-2120-3018-0010, and small parcels east of Willow Lake. There is also a small strip of land (ROW) along the section line at southern border of municipal entitlement (ADL 216873, now patented to MSB) that was not included in that ADL. Willow Lake, adjacent to this unit, is managed for floatplane access by ADOT/PF pursuant to an Interagency Land Management Transfer (ILMT) ADL 18500 issued to ADOT/PF in 1964.
W-12	Rd 50	Map 3 S019N004W: 5	Manage unit to be consistent with the recreation uses and values of the adjacent State Recreation Area. Retain in state ownership. Protect anadromous stream.	Unit occupies a forested area along an anadromous stream (247-41-10200-2120-3017), a tributary of Willow Creek. It adjoins Willow Creek State Recreation Area and lies one mile east of Parks Hwy. Access to this parcel requires the crossing of the Alaska Railroad right-of-way or Willow Creek.

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
W-13	Rp 10	Map 3 S019N004W: 5	Manage unit to be consistent with the recreation uses and values of the adjacent State Recreation Area. Retain in state ownership. Protect anadromous stream.	Unit occupies a generally level, forested area near the mouth of Deception Creek, AWC# 247-41-10200-2120-3020. It adjoins Willow Creek State Recreation Area and the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road.
W-14	Ma 30	Map 3 S019N004W: 3	Manage material site consistent with Free Use Permit to ADOT/PF. Protect anadromous stream. Maintain a screening strip of native vegetation along road.	Unit occupies forested area adjacent to Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road and functions as a material site under permit to ADOT/PF (ADL 25125, issued in 1965 for an indefinite term). Portions of unit are within floodplain of Willow Creek, AWC# 247-41-10200-2120. Leasehold Location Order 11 applies to area.
W-15	Se 1,650	Map 3 S020N004W: 33-36	<p>Portions of this unit are appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Development of this large area should only occur after the development of a framework plan that identifies potential subdivision areas, areas that require protection, and a generalized development phasing plan. Development should be sequential, beginning at the southeastern part of the unit that accesses the Willow-Fishhook (Hatcher Pass) Road. An open space system that is intended to be protected in subsequent subdivision development is to be provided in the framework plan. Consideration should be given to large lot design in a portion of the unit to allow for the harboring of animals. Subsequent subdivision development, in its general characteristics, is to conform to the framework plan. The public should be given an opportunity to comment on a draft plan.</p> <p>The framework plan and any subsequent subdivision designs should either avoid wetlands (or retain their functions), maintain trails (or realign them), and provide space for the recreational uses that occupy areas as opposed to specific trail locations.</p>	This unit comprises portions of several sections and is generally flat, consisting of both vegetated uplands and wetland areas. Portions of this parcel are susceptible to residential development. The intertie (ADL 213063) and RST 1691 (Herning Trail) run through unit. Portions of the Emil Stancec Winter Trail System occupy this unit. Leasehold Location Order 8 and Mineral Closing Order 343 affect portions of this unit. Section 36 is School Trust land (SCH-46).
W-16	Wr 800	Map 3 S020N004W: 28,33	Protect the water resource values of this wetland. Maintain trails. Protect anadromous waters.	Unit occupies area of wetlands along Rogers Creek, AWC# 247-41-10200-2130-3020, and an unnamed tributary to Willow Creek, AWC# 247-41-10200-2120-3017. Intertie ADL 213063 bisects unit. Portions of the Emil Stancec Winter Trail System occupy this unit.

Unit #	Designation(s) / Acres	Map(s) / MTRS	Management Intent	Resources and Uses
W-17	Se 320	Map 3 S020N005W: 36	<p>The northern portion of unit, that part above the bluff, is appropriate for land disposal during the planning period, except as noted below. Protect the viewshed from the adjacent SRA by using building setbacks and partially vegetated buffers, or similar techniques designed to protect the viewshed.”</p> <p>This portion of the unit will not be considered for land sales for three years following plan adoption to allow for the consideration of this site’s potential for a facility supporting the Iditarod Race. A best interest determination must find that it is in the best interest of the state to proceed with a land disposal for this purpose.</p> <p>The area south of the bluff is to be retained as open space and managed to be consistent with the recreational uses and values of the adjacent Willow Creek SRA. The southern area is to be retained as state land. Protect anadromous waters.</p>	<p>The unit occupies forested, level ground in the northern part above the bluff line. Its southern portion adjoins the Willow Creek State Recreation Area. Mineral Closing Order 539 affects this unit. Secondary roads come to northern edge of property. Portions of the Emil Stancec Winter Trail System are in this unit. Unit occupies section 36, School trust land (SCH-47).</p>
W-18	Rd 180	Map 3 S020N005W: 24	<p>Manage unit consistent with Management Right ADL 225812. Maintain the public use easement. Protect anadromous stream.</p>	<p>Most of parcel occupies a level, forested area along Little Willow Creek, AWC# 247-41-10200-2130. This property (OSL 1070) is currently managed according to a Management Right (ADL 225812) to ADF&G. A public right-of-way (ADL 225875) occupies part of the unit.</p>
W-19	Rd 75	Map 3 S020N004W: 36	<p>Manage unit for its recreational value. Preserve public access and protect the anadromous stream. Retain in state ownership.</p>	<p>This parcel occupies a mostly level, forested area along Willow Creek, AWC# 247-41-10200-2120, a major anadromous stream in the region. There is an instream flow reservation on Willow Creek (LAS 11562). A bridge situated within the geographic area of the parcel provides access to the remainder of the large unit to the north (W-15). Unit occupies section 36, School Trust land (SCH-46).</p>

Total state land within region (18 units) – 6,025 acres