

STATE OF ALASKA

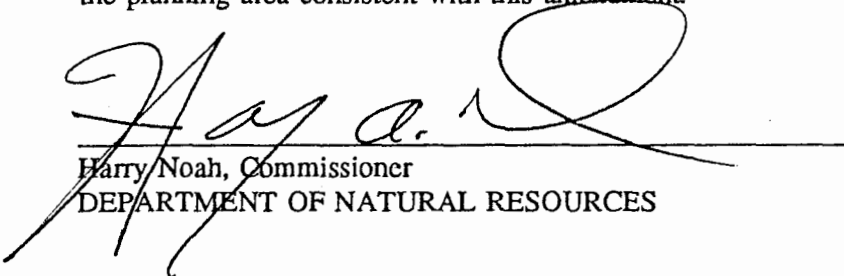
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF LAND

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

LAND & RESOURCES SECTION
3601 C STREET
P.O. BOX 107005
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510-7005
PHONE: (907) 762-2425

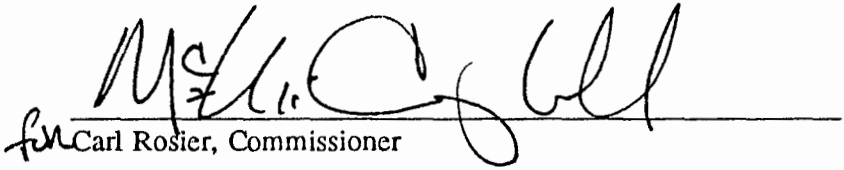
The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources finds that the following amendment to the Susitna Area Plan meets the requirements of AS 38.04.065 and 11 AAC 55.010-.030 for land use plans and hereby adopts the amendment. The Department of Natural Resources will manage state lands within the planning area consistent with this amendment.



Harry Noah, Commissioner
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

11/1/93
Date

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game reviewed this amendment to the Susitna Area Plan. We appreciate the opportunity to represent fish and wildlife habitat, harvest, and public use values during the development of the amendment. The Department of Fish and Game will use the amendment as guidance when implementing its authorities and when reviewing and commenting on proposed uses of state lands in the planning area.


for Carl Rosier, Commissioner

12/6/93
Date

"Subunits 11b and 11c (Gunsight Mtn. and Ahtna block) are proposed for designation by the legislature or the governor as a state recreation area. This proposed special designation is intended to provide special and lasting protection for this area's unique public recreational value. This proposal has a lower priority than other areas in the study area proposed for legislative or administrative designation because of the general lack of land use conflicts in the area and also due to uncertainties regarding land ownership subunit 11c has been selected by both the state and Ahtna, The Copper River Area Native Corporation. Final determination of land ownership is unlikely for at least several years.

A large area of land within subunit 11b currently is leased for grazing. This lease was issued by the BLM prior to the state receiving title to the land and is partly within the area the plan proposes to close to grazing due to potential conflicts between livestock, Dall sheep, mountain goat and caribou. Decisions on the eventual renewal of the leases should be made in a manner consistent with the grazing policies in the Agriculture section of Chapter 2 of this plan (agriculture section) and with the land use designations in this chapter.

Forestry is a secondary use in subunit 11b. Timber may be harvested for personal use. Commercial timber harvesting to salvage dead timber is also an allowed use. Forest management activities will be designed to recognize and protect primary uses and be consistent with the guideline for Timber Harvests and Visual Quality for this unit (see p. 368).

SAP p. 367, Land Use Designation Summary Chart

Subunit	Land Ownership	Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
11b Gunsight[TE] Mountain	State	Public Recreation Wildlife Habitat	Forestry [PERSONAL USE]

PLAN AMENDMENT

Additions to the original Susitna Area Plan text are underlined; deletions are [BRACKETED AND CAPITALIZED].

Susitna Area Plan, p. 362, ¶ 4

"Land in subunits 10a and 10b (the Monument and Lake creeks settlement areas and adjacent retention land) is lightly used for hunting and other types of recreation. Several trails lead through this area into sheep and goat hunting areas located up drainages of the adjacent Chugach Range. The state land within subunit 10b will be retained in public ownership to provide personal use timber and public recreation. As more land is sold and developed along the highway, recreation activities in this subunit, particularly winter recreation, are likely to grow in popularity. Settlement will be allowed in subunit 10a in the vicinity of Lake Creek and along the Matanuska River near Monument Creek. These sites were chosen to minimize impacts of settlement on public uses and visual quality. Land should be offered either as large subdivision parcels (10-20 acres) or under the homestead program. More and higher density settlement would be allowed in this subunit if doing so would help improve public access into the recreation area at the mouth of the Matanuska Glacier. Forestry is a secondary use in subunits 10a and 10b. Timber may be harvested for personal use. Commercial timber harvesting to salvage dead timber is also an allowed use. Forest management activities will be designed to recognize and protect primary uses.

SAP p. 363, Land Use Designation Summary chart

Subunit	Land Ownership	Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
10a Monument Creek, Lake Creek	State	Settlement	Public Rec. Wildlife Hab. Forestry [(PERSONAL USE)]
10b Gravel Creek, Glacier Creek	State/ Borough	Public Recreation Wildlife Habitat	Forestry

Reasons for amendment and determination of public interest

Spruce bark beetles have infested lands in these Susitna Area Plan subunits 10a and 10b. The Division of Forestry has proposed a commercial timber sale in this area to salvage the dead timber. The Susitna Area Plan currently specifies that forestry in these subunits is for personal use. However, personal use harvest can't effectively salvage the beetle-killed timber because it is too costly to provide and maintain access for personal use, and because the area is far from most demand for personal use. Harvesting will be done in the winter, with access from a winter road to the Matanuska River, and ice or snow bridges across the river. The proposed amendment allows commercial harvesting in this area to allow salvage of timber resources.

This amendment is in the best public interest because it will provide an efficient and effective means to salvage dead timber on state lands. With commercial harvests, the operator can be required to remove damaged trees, clean up slash to prevent spread of insects and disease, and perform site preparation to encourage regeneration. Revenue from a commercial sale can offset access costs. Commercial sales can be monitored more efficiently than personal use sales with multiple harvesters. The amendment does not change the long-term management intent to offer land for sale in subunit 10a, nor the intent to manage subunits 10b and 11b primarily for Public Recreation and Wildlife Habitat. Any harvest must meet the requirements of the Forest Resources and Practices Act, including preparation of a Forest Land Use Plan under AS 38.05.112 prior to a timber sale.

The amendment originally proposed and reviewed by the public also allowed for commercial timber harvest to prevent or control outbreaks of insects and disease and reduce wildfire hazards. Following public and agency comment, the amendment was narrowed to allow only commercial salvage. The Department of Fish and Game believes fire may be beneficial to habitat in this area. Some public comments also challenged the ability to prevent or control insect and disease outbreaks with harvesting. Current proposals from the DNR Division of Forestry are for salvage only, and would be consistent with the revised amendment. A more detailed response to public comments is attached.