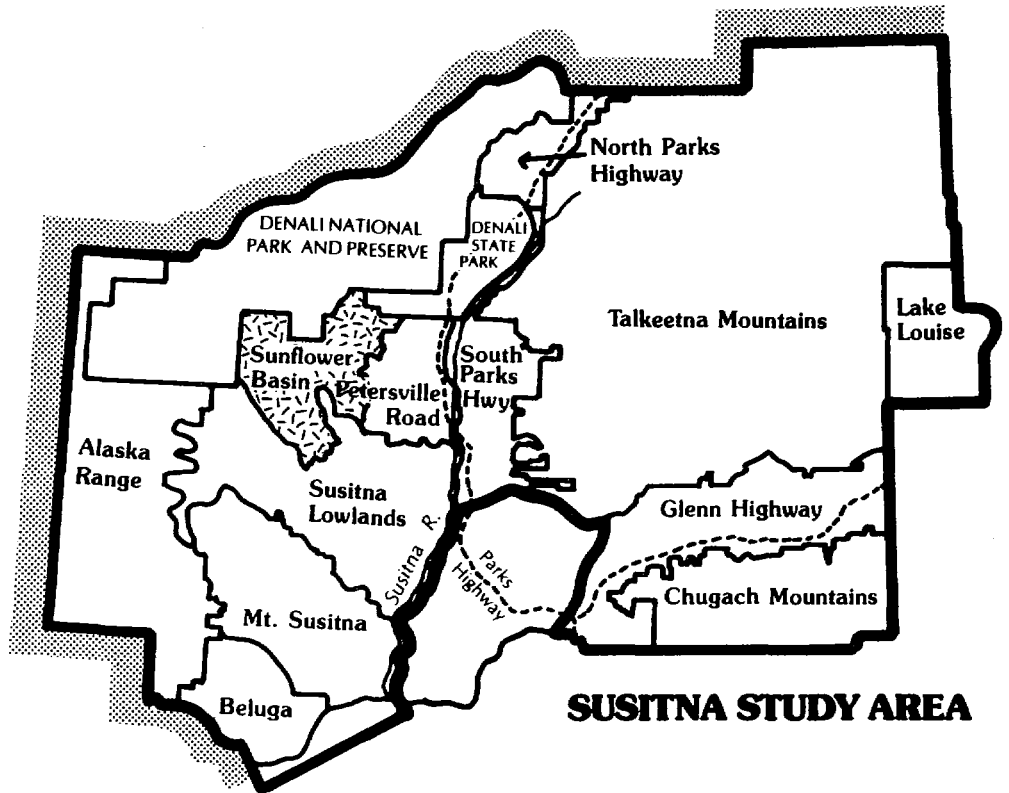


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# SUNFLOWER BASIN SUBREGION



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The following section describes land use policy within the Sunflower Basin Subregion. It is divided into two parts. The first is an overview of resources and their management for the subregion as a whole. The second presents specific statements of management intent, land use designations, prohibited uses, and management guidelines for each of the subregion's seven management units. A map showing land ownership in the subregion and boundaries of management units and subunits is presented at the end of the second part.

## 1. SUBREGION OVERVIEW

### Background

The Sunflower Basin Subregion lies in the northwest part of the study area and includes Chelatna Lake and the majority of the Dutch Hills — Peters Hills area. Its north and west boundaries are formed by Denali National Park and Preserve and Denali State Park. The southwest boundary follows the Yentna River and Donkey Creek Slough. The eastern border lies between Peters Creek and the Peters Hills and Little Peters Hills. The southern part of the subregion includes Mt. Yenlo.

The area encompasses approximately 482,000 acres. The state owns or has selected all the land within this subregion with the exception of some small private parcels in the past Yenlo Hills remote parcel offering and a series of federal mining claims along Petersville Road and Cache Creek which are in the process of being patented to private individuals.

The most prevalent uses in this subregion are placer mining, hunting, fishing and other recreational uses. Mining activity is concentrated in the Peters Hills and Fairview Mountains, but claims are scattered throughout the subregion. The Yentna Mining District overlaps this entire area. Mineral potential is high, and approximately 35,000 acres of high and 140,000 acres of moderate coal potential also are found here. In addition, this subregion and the adjoining Petersville Road Subregion form one of the most heavily hunted areas in the Susitna Basin. Moose, black and brown bear are the most popular big game species. Through habitat enhancement techniques, moose production and associated public use could be increased greatly. Favorite hunting areas overlap the mining areas due in large part to the ready access (airstrips and roads) mining has provided. Commercial trapping also occurs in this area. Major anadromous streams such as Lake Creek, Peters Creek, the Yentna and Kahiltna rivers have headwaters in the Sunflower Basin Subregion.

Lake Creek and Peters Creek are heavily used fishing streams. The Department of Fish and Game has rated these creeks among the top ten streams in the entire study area for riparian habitat and public use. In addition, Lake Creek is one of five streams in the study area proposed for state recreation river status in the Southcentral Recreation Action Plan prepared by ADNR and ADF&G. Recreation activities are focused on Lake Creek, a popular rafting stream, and the Peters Hills and Fairview Mountains which provide hiking, berry-picking, skiing and snowmobiling areas.

Access into the Sunflower Basin Subregion is by road, trail and air. Petersville Road, a four wheel drive road open primarily in the summer, extends into the north-east corner past Petersville ending at Cache Creek. An extensive trail and airstrip system takes over where the road system leaves off to provide access to the remainder of the subregion. Two major trail systems, one originating about five miles north of Petersville, the other originating at the junction of Petersville Road and Peters Creek, branch off to provide access to placer mines and hunting and recreational areas. These trails receive extensive all-terrain vehicle use for hunting on the east side of the Kahiltna River. At least fifteen landing strips are located along the trail system: four are publicly owned, and eleven are privately owned. Access west of the Kahiltna River is predominantly by air.

### Management Summary

The overall purpose of resource management in this subregion is to retain the large majority of the area in public ownership, emphasizing management of the values most important in the area now — minerals, wildlife habitat, and recreation. The Lake Creek corridor and some very important habitat lands east and south of the Peters Hills are recommended for legislative designation, primarily to protect habitat and provide opportunities for public recreation. Three areas have been identified where land will be offered for sale for settlement and private recreation in remote areas. Details of the management intent by resource are presented below.

### Settlement

Settlement in this subregion has been and will continue to be limited. Much of the area is remote, and the existing resource uses — mining, habitat, and public recreation — conflict with land sales. Settlement is designated the primary use on four sites with a net area of approximately 12,210 acres available for sale (see Table 1). The gross acreage totals 88,430. One of the

four sites has been offered previously as the Yenlo Hills Remote Parcel sale. The remaining lands — a gross area of 62,300 acres and net area of 6,620 acres -- are newly designated disposal areas. The first location proposed for new settlement is northwest of the Yenlo Hills remote parcel land offering. This area parallels the Yentna River but lies further north. This portion of the study area is likely to remain without road access and undeveloped for many years given its geographic isolation. As a result, this sale is intended to provide land for long term, remote, self-sufficient lifestyles. This is the only area in the Susitna Basin specifically proposed for this type of use. The remaining two areas are located on either side of Lake Creek. These sales would provide primarily recreational properties. Fly-in access is available at both locations.

**TABLE I**

**Acres Identified for Settlement**

	Gross Area (Acres)	Net Area (Acres)
New Offerings	62,300	6,620
Reofferings Within Past Disposal Areas	26,130	5,590
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88,430</b>	<b>12,210</b>

Other disposals in this subregion will be limited to lands necessary to support resource development (primarily placer mining and coal). Land will not be sold for these purposes until such development occurs.

In addition to land disposals, a large area west of Lake Creek will be open to remote cabin permits (approximately 40,000 acres). Construction of public use cabins is recommended in the Lake Creek corridor.

**Agriculture**

Agricultural potential is limited to grazing in the vicinity of the Fairview Mountains. Because this area is remote from road access or farm headquarter sites, grazing is not a designated use at this time. Applications for grazing permits or leases will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as provided for by the areawide grazing policies in Chapter 2.

**Forestry**

Timber values are limited in this subregion. Forest lands generally will be managed to provide personal use fuelwood and houselogs for the area's few seasonal and year-round residents, but there is also long term potential for a small amount of commercial production from forest lands near the major rivers. Forestry is designated a primary use on the 61,800 acres proposed for legislative designation as a multiple use area, although commercial potential is generally

low in this area. Forestry is a secondary use on an additional 85,400 acres of land to be retained in public ownership, including the Lake Creek corridor.

**Recreation and Fish & Wildlife**

Recreation and habitat are some of the most valuable resources in the Sunflower Basin Subregion. The subregion will be managed to protect existing opportunities for hunting, fishing, and other types of recreation. Special emphasis should be placed on maintaining the quality of big game and salmon habitat. Improved public access and habitat enhancement should be encouraged.

A large wetland area adjacent to the Kahiltna River will be proposed for legislative or administrative designation to protect trumpeter swan nesting sites. In addition, the Lake Creek corridor, a very popular fishing and boating stream, is proposed for legislative designation as a state recreational river. A large area east and south of the Peters Hills is proposed for legislative or administrative designation as a multiple use area. Fish and wildlife habitat and public recreation are two of the primary uses on this area. It is a particularly valuable area for moose hunting.

**Subsurface**

Mining and mineral exploration are, and will continue to be, very important activities in this subregion. The great majority of the subregion will remain open to locatable mineral entry. The only exceptions are in settlement areas and corridors along Lake Creek and selected tributaries, and land adjacent to Chelatna Lake. The corridors will be closed to mineral entry in recognition of their important recreation and habitat values. For the most part, these closures are in areas of low mineral potential. Near trumpeter swan nesting sites, stipulations attached to miscellaneous land use permits for mining will be designed to prevent disturbance to swans and their habitat.

Coal leasing and prospecting are allowed throughout most of this subregion. However, the Lake Creek corridor (including lands adjacent to Chelatna Lake) and selected tributaries to Lake Creek will be unavailable for coal leasing and prospecting. Existing and proposed settlement areas also are unavailable for coal leasing or prospecting. Portions of the high and moderate coal potential areas located southwest of Chelatna Lake and in the Peters Hills-Cache Creek area may be offered for lease under the competitive coal lease program. All public land in this subregion is open to exploration and development of oil and gas. In the Lake Creek corridor, however, exploration and development activities are subject to special restrictions designed to protect public recreation and habitat values.

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**Transportation**

Numerous trails cross this subregion. These need to be identified and protected to maintain existing public access across mining claims and in proposed land sale areas. Improved public access is recommended for this subregion. This may include upgrading the existing trail from Peters Creek to Collinsville.