

## MANAGEMENT UNIT 3: SKWENTNA RIVER

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### MANAGEMENT INTENT

This unit includes the floodplains of the Skwentna and Hayes Rivers and the uplands between the two rivers. Major features include Red Salmon Lake and Porcupine Butte. The river corridors are important habitat and recreation areas and the Skwentna is a major transportation route. The rivers and adjacent riparian lands support several species of salmon, provide important moose winter range and have important swan nesting areas. The river corridors support forests that can supply timber for personal use. The Iditarod Trail follows the Skwentna River through this unit. Mobil Oil Company has a coal lease that extends south to the Skwentna River near its confluence with the Hayes River. Some of the adjacent lands have high to moderate potential for coal development as well. Most of the management unit will remain in public ownership to protect habitat and public recreation values. One area of land between the Hayes and Skwentna Rivers will be available for remote settlement. Management Unit 3 will remain open to mineral location and available for coal leasing with the exception of the proposed disposal area (subunit 3b), which will be closed prior to sale. All public lands in this unit are available for oil and gas leasing.

The three subunits in Management Unit 3 are the Skwentna River and Spring Creek corridors (3a), lands identified for settlement west of Porcupine Butte (3b), and important swan habitat along the Hayes River (3c). See the maps at the end of this section for boundaries of these areas, and the accompanying chart for a summary of land uses for each subunit.

**Subunit 3a** (Skwentna Valley-Spring Creek) will be retained in public ownership in the long term. The management intent for these state-owned and state-selected lands is to protect water resources and the public values noted above.

**Subunit 3b** (Porcupine Butte West) will be designated for settlement. This state land is accessible from the Skwentna River and offers opportunities for remote settlement, particularly recreation and seasonal use.

**Subunit 3c** contains state-owned and state-selected lands with critical trumpeter swan nesting habitat along the Hayes River. It will be retained in public ownership and proposed for legislative or administrative designation to protect the swans and their nesting habitat, water resources, and other riparian habitat values.

### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The complete set of areawide management guidelines is presented in Chapter 2 of this plan. All of the guidelines potentially apply to uses within this management unit; however, those that are most likely to be applicable are indicated with asterisks in the list below.

- Agriculture
- \*Fish & Wildlife Habitat
- \*Forestry
- \*Recreation
- Settlement
- Subsurface
- Transportation
- Instream Flow
- Lakeshore Management
- Public Access
- \*Remote Cabin Permits
- \*Stream Corridors
- \*Trail Management
- Wetlands Management
- \*Resource Management

Management guidelines that apply to this management unit only are presented below by subunit.

#### **Subunit 3b (Porcupine Butte West)**

##### **Stream Corridors**

The management intent for land adjacent to the streams referenced below is to permit uses such as fishing, camping and other active uses and to protect water quality and riparian habitat. Consequently, this land should be retained in public ownership. Corridor widths will be set on a case-by-case basis using policies in Chapter 2. The standard minimum buffer width (200' on each side of the river) should be used on the unnamed streams that appear on the 1:63,360 scale USGS topographic maps.

#### **Subunit 3c (Swan Habitat)**

##### **Critical Swan Habitat**

This subunit is recommended for legislative or administrative designation to protect swans. Until designation takes place, the following guidelines are intended to provide sufficient protection and will be applied by the Department.

# LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

SUBREGION Susitna LowlandsMANAGEMENT UNIT 3 – Skwentna River

SUBUNIT	LAND OWNERSHIP (GENERALIZED)	LAND USE DESIGNATIONS				PROHIBITED SURFACE USE(S)*	COMMENTS
		SURFACE		SUBSURFACE			
		PRIMARY USE(S)	SECONDARY USE(S)	LOCATABLE MINERALS	LEASEABLE MINERALS		
3a Skwentna Valley/ Spring Creek	State/ State selected	Forestry Public Recreation Water Resources Wildlife Habitat	Remote Cabins	Open	Available for leasing	Grazing Land Disposals	—
3b Porcupine Butte West	State/ State selected	Settlement	Forestry Public Rec. Wildlife Hab.	Closed prior to disposal	Not available for leasing	Grazing Land Disposals	Estimated net disposal area = 1600 acres
3c Swan Habitat	State/ State selected	Water Resources Wildlife Habitat	Forestry Public Rec.	Open	Available for leasing	Grazing Land Disposals	Proposed for legislative or administrative designation

\*Other uses such as material sales, land leases, remote cabin permits, etc., that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed. Such uses will be allowed if consistent with the management intent statement and management guidelines of this unit, and with the relevant management guidelines in chapter 2

1. Restricted Activities. Activities that potentially will damage swan nesting habitat or cause visual or noise disturbance should be prohibited from April 1 through August 31 within at least one-quarter mile of current or potential swan nesting or staging ponds, marshes or lakes. Particular activities may be restricted in a wider area if their potential level of damage or disturbance warrants doing so. Activities that may be restricted include, but are not limited to, use of off-road vehicles, airplanes and motorboats. However, some traditional access routes and sites will be designated that will remain open to motorized access. [Note: This guideline will result in the restriction of the activities described above on most ponds, marshes and lakes other than those that have been identified as traditional access points.]
2. At a minimum, permits should not be issued for those types of off-road vehicle use requiring permits in the areas and during the period described in 1. above.
3. Aircraft. At a minimum, landing of aircraft should be prohibited in the areas and during the period described in 1. above unless at designated access sites.

#### **Management Planning and Remote Cabins**

A management plan should be prepared for subunit 3c. The management plan will determine, among other things, whether remote cabins will be a permitted use in this subunit. Remote cabin permits will not be offered until and unless areas open to remote cabins are designated by a management plan.