

Region 3 : South Fork

Regional Summary

Background

Region 3 is the largest of the four regions. It comprises most of the south half of the planning area, and is situated south and west of Chicken. The portion of the Taylor Highway between Tetlin Junction and Chicken runs through the center of the region. Mount Fairplay is the most noted feature in this region, because of its proximity to the highway. There are no permanent residents in the region.

State Lands

This region includes the largest contiguous block of state-owned and state-selected land in the planning area. There are approximately 1,587,623 acres in state ownership, and approximately 598,605 acres that are selected. Land in Region 3 was selected for its mineral potential and its habitat and recreational values. Most of the state-owned land is in the eastern portion of the region, with a large block of contiguous acreage on the east side of the Taylor Highway, and state-selected land lies mostly in the upper Mosquito Fork drainage.

Physical Features

Region 3 consists of low mountains and rolling terrain that are characteristic of the Yukon-Tanana Upland physiographic province. It encompasses most of the upper Mosquito Fork, the upper West Fork, the Dennison Fork, and the Ladue River drainages. In addition, the headwaters of the Sixtymile River extend into this region from Canada. Prominent peaks are Mount Veta, at 5,825 feet, and Mount Fairplay, at 5,120 feet. Vegetation consists mostly of mixed and pure stands of white spruce and black spruce, with balsam poplar, birch, and aspen occurring mostly in river valleys and on alluvial flats.

Access

The Taylor Highway bisects this region, and there are several trails and streams that provide access to its remote areas.

RS 2477 Trails:

Kechumstuk-Chicken Trail. Historic trail which served as an access route to the Fortymile area. The northern spur of the trail encompasses part of the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) line, where it passes from Kechumstuk Station, and crosses

the divide to Hutchinson Creek.

Kechumstuk Winter Trail. Originally, this trail was part of the trail along the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS). It was used as an access and supply route for Kechumstuk and Chicken and for mining activities in the region.

Dennison Fork Trail. One of the earliest access and freighting routes for the Fortymile Mining District.

Ladue River Trail. This trail was used for mining access and as a transportation route through the area.

Airstrips:

There are several primitive landing areas on gravel bars and alpine areas. Most of these landing sites were established for mining exploration and operations.

Resources and Uses

Fish and Wildlife, Habitat, and Harvest. Residents of the planning area and from the neighboring communities use much of the South Fork Region for subsistence purposes. Hunting for moose, caribou, bear, and small game, trapping of furbearers, and berry picking are fairly predominant uses of this region. The Ladue River and the East, West, and the Mosquito Forks of the Fortymile River are important wintering range for the Fortymile and Nelchina caribou herds. The quality of range is excellent relative to other caribou ranges in Alaska. The spruce forests in much of this area are at optimum age to support rich mats of lichen and wide spread modification should be avoided. Once these spruce stands are over 150 years old or have been heavily grazed by caribou, prescribed burns or managed logging would enhance the area for wildlife habitat.

Mosquito Flats, which centers on the confluence of Mosquito Fork and Wolf Creek, has been noted as an area that has a concentration of harvest activity. Although most of this harvest area is on federal land, some of it is adjacent to or overlaps onto state land. Another area important for harvest is along the ridge that separates the Fortymile and Ladue River drainages, beginning near Tetlin Junction and extending northeast. The Atwater Creek and Liberty Creek areas have been noted as important for harvest activity. Harvest activity by local and non-local residents is concentrated in the areas accessible from the Taylor Highway, mostly within five miles of the road.

There are no streams in this region that are listed in the Department of Fish and Game's Anadromous Waters Catalog and Atlas at this time. Resident fish species include Arctic grayling, sheefish, and whitefish. The Ladue River has been identified as being productive for whitefish and grayling.

Several raptor and trumpeter swan nesting sites have been identified in the region.

Forestry. Vegetation in this region is largely comprised of alpine tundra with a variety of forest types depending on localized factors such as slope, aspect, soils, and fire patterns. These forest communities are characteristic of interior Alaska spruce-hardwood forests, containing white and black spruce, balsam poplar, birch, and aspen in various combinations. Generally, forests of white spruce, paper birch, and aspen cover most lower slopes. Black spruce forest vegetation grows at higher elevations, on all north-facing slopes and lower south-facing slopes with impeded soil drainage throughout the area. Above the black spruce forest, the vegetation is alpine meadow characterized by sedges on poorly drained sites and by low-growing shrubs on drier sites. Harvest of timber in this region is limited to personal use, for house logs and firewood. Conditions related to market proximity and stand characteristics make commercial timber harvest unlikely.

Heritage Resources. Few heritage sites have been reported by the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey for this region. However, this does not necessarily mean that few exist. The Survey is continually being updated as more areas are studied. Since RS 2477 trails are historic trails, they are also considered heritage resources. Refer to the RS 2477 trails listed in this region.

Materials. There are many sites along the Taylor Highway and the Top of the World Highway that DOT/PF uses for materials. Most of these are within the highway right of way, but there are some sites outside the right of way that DOT/PF has under contract with DNR. There are four of these sites that are under contract in this region. Usually, material sites are located fairly close to the road and are spaced as frequently as practical to minimize haul distances for materials. Since they are cleared and level, they are often used for other purposes, both authorized and unauthorized. These characteristics also make the sites desirable for other uses after DOT/PF no longer needs them for materials.

Mineral Resources. The geology of this region is similar to the rest of the planning area, consisting primarily of felsic and mafic intrusive and metamorphic rock including schist and gneiss. It is within the Tintina Gold Belt and has been actively mined since the late 1800's. Mining has mostly focused on placer deposits of gold-bearing gravel and colluvium. In this region, mineral exploration has mostly occurred in the northwestern portion, and also within the Ladue River drainage to the south. So far, the overall level of mining activity in this region is low compared to the other regions, particularly Region 4.

Recreation. The majority of recreation in Region 3 is associated with harvest, which is dispersed throughout most of the region (see *Fish and Wildlife, Habitat, and Harvest*). A more concentrated form of recreation occurs at the West Fork bridge on the Taylor Highway, which is one of the put-ins for boating in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (for further information regarding the Wild and Scenic Rivers, see the discussion in the *Navigable Rivers* section of this chapter). The region is also used for hiking, skiing, camping, snowmachining, and dog mushing by both residents and visitors.

Settlement. There are remnants of settlement activity in the past, most notably Kechumstuk, but there are currently no permanent residents in this region.

Management Constraints and Considerations

This region is less fragmented by National Wild and Scenic River corridors than the other regions. Although Wild and Scenic corridors occur along portions of the Mosquito Fork, Dennison Fork, and Logging Cabin Creek, they do not extend very far into the region. The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for management of these lands, which is guided by the *River Management Plan for the Fortymile River Component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System* (1983). There are conflicts between management of the federally owned uplands and the mining activity permitted on the adjacent state-owned shorelands (for further information on this issue, see the discussion in the *Navigable Rivers* section of this chapter). Resolution of this issue is outside the scope of this area plan, and the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Natural Resources are working to develop appropriate solutions.

The Mount Fairplay area is valued for harvest, mineral values, scenic values, recreation opportunities, and berry picking. It also has a location that is highly favorable for communications facilities. The area around the Mount Fairplay survey bench mark was classified Reserved Use Land under Classification Order NC-92-004, and there are currently three leases for communications facilities that have been issued.

The Ladue River drainage has been under consideration as a segment of a potential route for a railroad line to Canada. A route was identified, and a 300 foot wide strip of land along the Ladue River was classified Reserved Use Land (NC-81-001). Although the application for the right of way was closed (ADL 402805), the classification still exists.

Management Intent for Region 3

Management intent in this section applies to state-owned and state-selected land. Also refer to Chapter 2, *Areawide Land Management Policies*.

Management unit R-03 consists of all lands in Region 3 that are not within the smaller management units near Mount Fairplay. Refer to the management units listed in the Resource Allocation table and delineated on the maps at the end of this section.

All lands within unit R-03 are designated General Use (Gu). This is to maintain flexibility in management, since these lands consist of large amounts of acreage, current levels of demand for their use is relatively low, and a variety of uses can be accommodated with appropriate siting and design considerations.

Region 3 is to be managed for multiple uses, primarily harvest, recreation, and mining. Activities in this region should avoid or minimize conflicts with habitat and harvest.

To maintain habitat and recreation values, and to minimize conflicts between uses, no settlement areas are designated for Region 3. It is not anticipated that the need for private ownership of land will occur in this region for the duration of the plan.

The management intent for Region 3 is to preserve scenic values along the Taylor Highway, minimize the number of access points onto the Taylor Highway, and reduce impacts to wildlife and other natural resources.

Commercial and residential development should be kept to a minimum in Region 3. Such development should be directed to management units near communities in Regions 2 and 4 that have appropriate land use designations and management intent. Resource development activities, most of which are likely to be related to mining, are appropriate if the impacts from these uses can be addressed. If construction of a road is necessary for any DNR authorization, it should use an existing RS 2477 route whenever feasible and prudent.

Management Intent for Mineral Licks in Region 3

The mineral lick within the area identified for Logging Cabin Creek is important to moose (see *Mineral Leasehold Location Order 28*, Appendix B). Mining activity must avoid direct impacts to the mineral licks and the routes that animals use to access them, or mitigate adverse impacts to these resources. If a game trail or mineral lick is affected, mitigation alternatives may include a variety of measures to address lick accessibility. In addition to protection of the routes themselves, activities that may divert animals from the routes or otherwise affect usage patterns shall be avoided or mitigated.

Resource Allocation Summary for Region 3 : South Fork

Unit Number	Unit Name or Location	Designation	Acres	Management Intent	Resources / Uses / Additional Information
R 03	Predominant state land base in the South Fork Region	Gu	2,172,962	See <i>Management Intent for Region 3</i> in this chapter.	See <i>Regional Summary</i> for Region 3. This unit consists of all state-owned and state-selected lands in Region 3 that are not within specific management units listed below.
F 01	Mount Fairplay	Gu	13,266	Manage for harvest, mineral values, recreation (particularly dispersed recreation, which is primarily hiking and foraging), and scenic values. The development of additional material extraction sites is unlikely, but may occur subject to the requirements of Chapter 2. Management unit to be retained in state ownership. Development, should it occur, is to be sited and developed in a way that minimizes effects upon scenic values and the traditional uses characteristic of this area/management unit. Note: The scenic values that require maintenance (or minimal impact upon) are those viewed from the Taylor Highway. The habitat values within this management unit are not considered to be high, but consultation with ADF&G on wildlife and habitat impacts is recommended. The potential impacts of development upon the resource values described above are to be taken into consideration during the review of the land use permit issued by the Division of Mining, Land, and Water.	This unit excludes the area previously classified Reserved Use Land in Section 24, T22N, R16E. A number of used extraction sites occur adjacent to the Taylor Highway.

Courtesy noticing of certain DNR authorizations may be required for this management unit. The Department should provide courtesy notice for authorizations within this management unit that have a long-term effect on the uses of this area, create significant visual effect from the road for most of the summer season, or create significant environmental impact. Examples of actions that may create this effect include new permanent access or a temporary change that creates a noticeable season-wide change visible from the Taylor Highway, or uses that are likely to displace people from frequently used or traditional hiking, berry picking or similar use areas. Examples of actions that generally do not create these effects include soil sampling, drilling that is temporary and does not leave a significant, permanent new work area, or temporary overland access. In distributing the notice, the department will use practical methods designed to reach the affected public within the planning area. These may include direct mailings to interest groups, communities, or agencies; posting at post offices; newspaper notices; or similar practical means. Failure to give notice under this management intent does not constitute a legal basis for invalidation or delay of the action.

F 02	Mount Fairplay	Gu	5	<p>To be managed for communications facilities. The visual impacts of new installations or changes to current installations, as viewed from the Taylor Highway, are to be taken into consideration in authorizations granted by the Department. The impacts to scenic values are to be kept to a practical minimum.</p> <p>Courtesy noticing of certain DNR authorizations may be required for this management unit. The Department should provide courtesy notice for authorizations within this management unit that have a long-</p>	<p>This management unit is located at the Mount Fairplay survey monument. There are currently three leases for communications facilities that have been issued. It was previously classified Reserve Use Land under Classification Order NC-92-004. This Plan reclassifies this unit to General Use, with a management intent that specifically authorizes the development and use of communication facilities.</p>
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term effect on the uses of this area, create significant visual effect from the road for most of the summer season, or create significant environmental impact. Examples of actions that may create this effect include new permanent access or a temporary change that creates a noticeable season-wide change visible from the Taylor Highway, or uses that are likely to displace people from frequently used or traditional hiking, berry picking or similar use areas. Examples of actions that generally do not create these effects include soil sampling, drilling that is temporary and does not leave a significant, permanent new work area, or temporary overland access. In distributing the notice, the department will use practical methods designed to reach the affected public within the planning area. These may include direct mailings to interest groups, communities, or agencies; posting at post offices; newspaper notices; or similar practical means. Failure to give notice under this management intent does not constitute a legal basis for invalidation or delay of the action.

Map - Region 3 : South Fork

Map - Mount Fairplay Inset