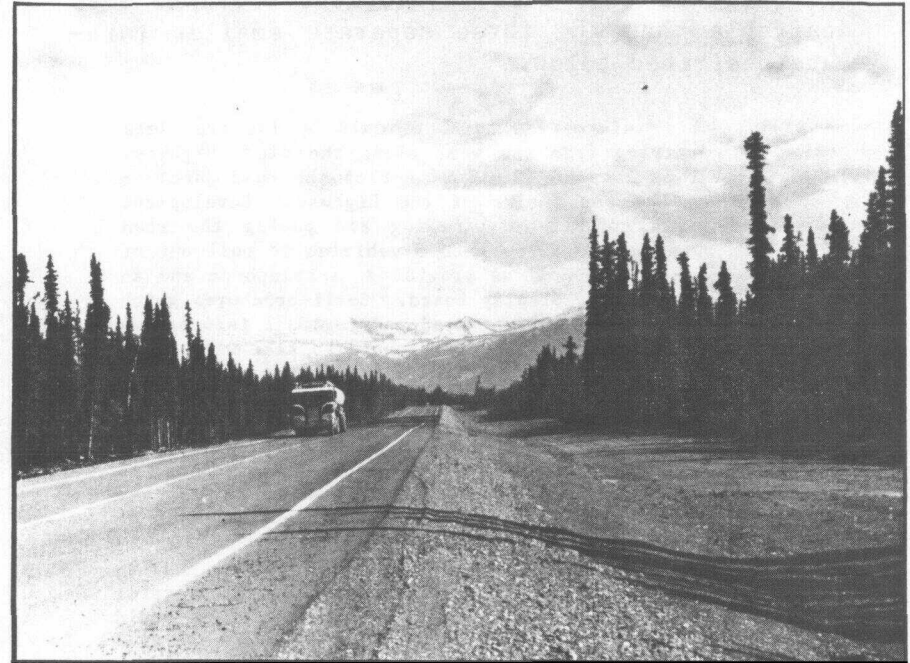


Copper Center Area

General Description

Management Unit 19 begins 2.3 miles south of the south Richardson and Glenn Highway junction and extends for 19 miles to a point 1/2 mile north of Willow Lake. (Six miles of the Richardson Highway passing through Copper Center were omitted from the study. This portion of the highway is planned for realignment to bypass the Copper Center commercial and residential area.) Throughout most of this unit, the highway closely parallels the Copper River. It also crosses the Tazlina and Klutina Rivers.

The land use intensity is relatively low outside the Copper Center area. However, a few industrial sites have created significant negative impacts on the visual landscape quality.

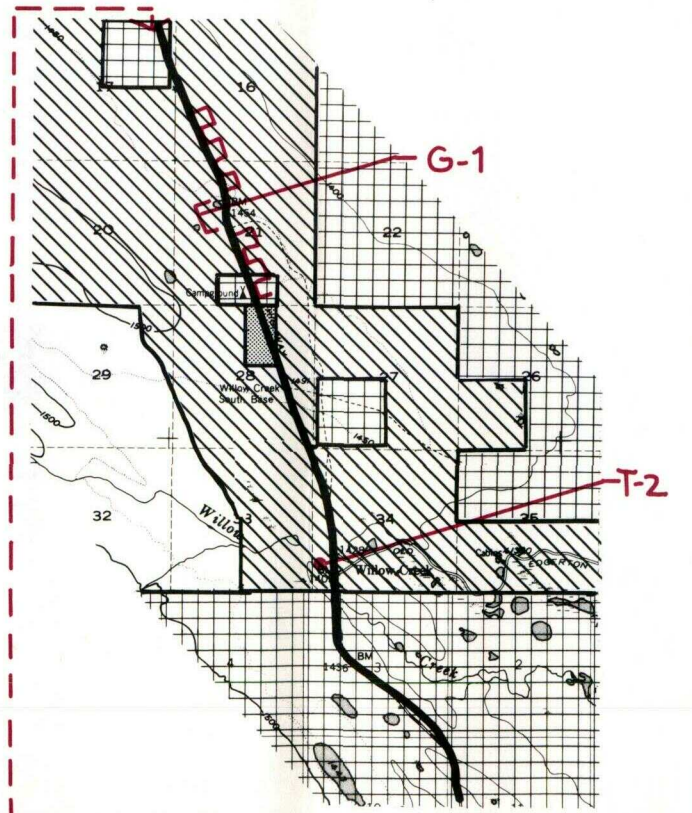
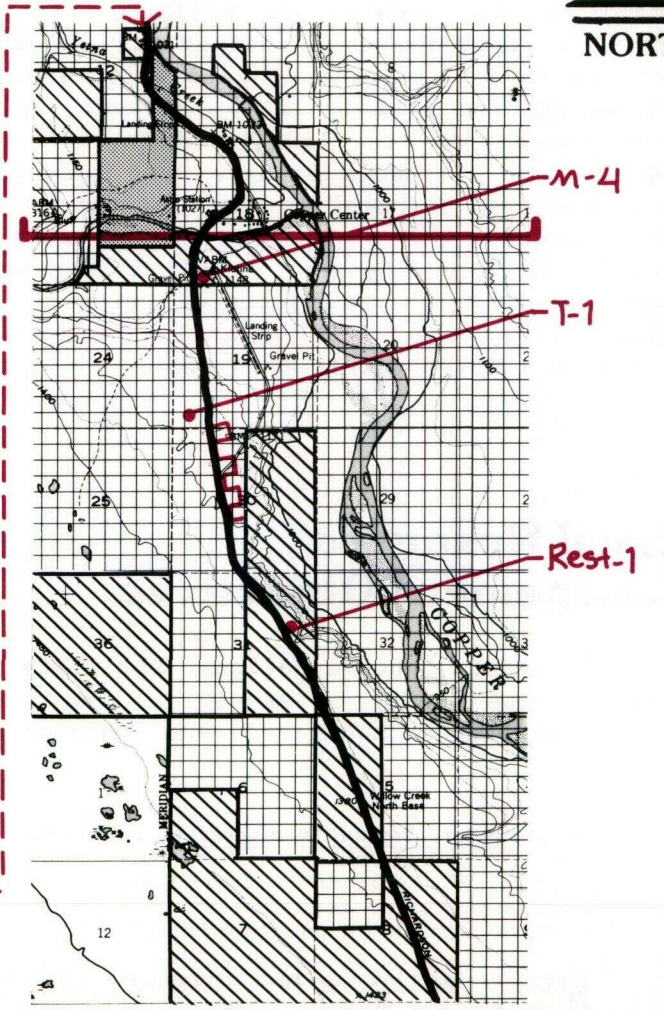
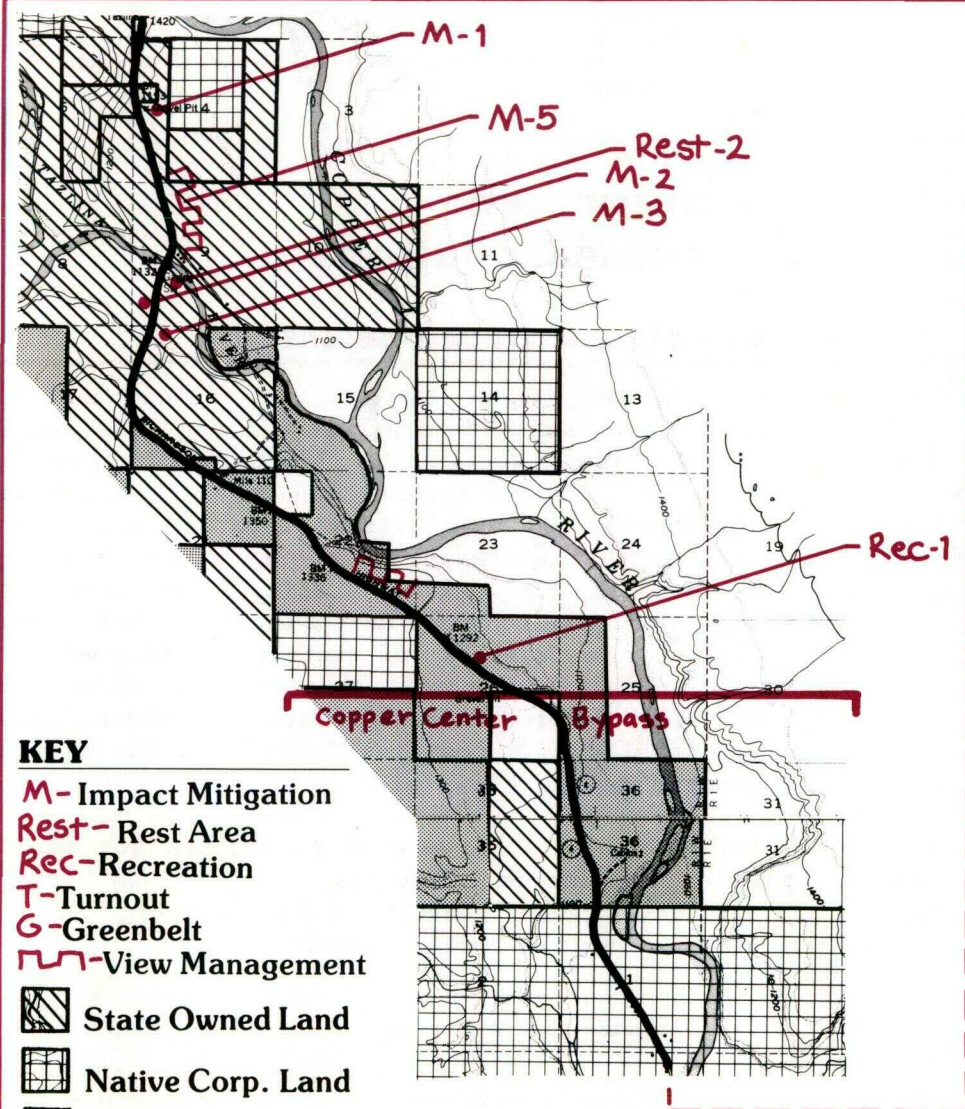
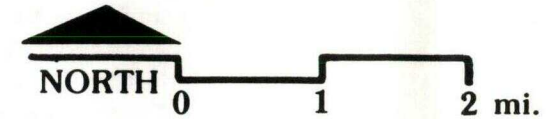


To the south, the Chugach Mountains are often framed by the nearer vegetation and gently sloping terrain.

Most of the highway in this unit traverses a fairly enclosed corridor of spruce-hardwood forests. At irregular intervals, however, this enclosure is broken by highly distinctive views. To the east, there are expansive vistas across the Copper River Valley to the distinctive peaks of the Wrangell Mountains. To the south, the Chugach Mountains are often framed by the nearer vegetation and gently sloping hills. And to the north, the traveler can at times see as far as the Lake Louise plateau.

19 Copper Center Area

Assessment Units R46 – R57



KEY

- M** - Impact Mitigation
- Rest** - Rest Area
- Rec** - Recreation
- T** - Turnout
- G** - Greenbelt
- View Management** (indicated by a red line with a wavy pattern)
- State Owned Land
- Native Corp. Land
- Federal Land
- Private Land

Land Ownership & Management Responsibility

Overall, the pattern of land ownership within this unit is complex, since it is divided into many small tracts. Those lands immediately adjacent to the highway are predominantly under Native, other private or University ownership. There are several parcels of land which are under state management at this time. However, all but two of these, near the Tazlina River, are either existing land disposals or have been surveyed in preparation for disposal in the near future. The DOTPF manages a 300 foot right-of-way except for within the Copper Center area and adjacent to private lands which were patented prior to 1952. Additionally, the DOTPF Tazlina Maintenance Station is located within this unit.

Visual Resource Management Objectives

The management recommendations for this unit relate to the themes of sensitive land use and development, impact mitigation and enhancement.

Sensitive Land Use and Development: To encourage sensitive land use and development which uses the character of the landscape to minimize negative visual impacts and instead create visually distinctive additions to the views from road.

Impact Mitigation: To take appropriate actions to mitigate the negative impact of existing land uses and developments on scenic resource values.

Enhancement: To respond to opportunities to enhance the experience, understanding and appreciation of this landscape's distinctive natural and man-made features, particularly those with historic significance.

Management Recommendations

Land Use & Development

Outside the Copper Center area development is fairly sparse and scattered along the road; consequently, where the highway corridor is enclosed in dense forest, sensitive land use and development could add visual interest and diversity to the landscape. Properly sited clearings could open distinctive scenic views from the highway. Within this unit, there is the potential for a variety of future developments - residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial and timber production. Each of these could potentially have positive impacts on the driving experience.

Following are some general guidelines for sensitive land use and development within this area. All development should avoid locating in the areas of highest scenic quality.

Residential Development

- Maintain a setback of at least 25 feet beyond the highway right-of-way for all permanent structures.
- Remove no more than 25% of the natural vegetation between structures and the roadside.
- Retain deciduous trees to provide filtered views.

-
- Incorporate colors and materials which complement or blend in with the natural landscape.

Commercial Development

- Maintain a setback of 25 feet beyond the highway right-of-way.
- Utilize the right-of-way vegetation to provide screening for parking areas.
- Retain deciduous trees to provide filtered, but adequate, visibility.
- Maintain some distance between commercial establishments to avoid strip-like development of the roadside.
- Utilize materials and designs for structures that conform to the cultural character of the region while maintaining a level of diversity (e.g. the Grizzly Bear Pizza establishment is a good example of this concept).

Agricultural Development and Timber Production

- Selectively remove spruce trees between the development and the highway and retain deciduous trees to provide filtered views, especially of agricultural fields.
- Where possible, locate clearings on the east side of the highway where they can provide expansive views across the Copper River Lowlands to the Wrangells.
- Retain masses of natural vegetation between smaller clearings to provide diversity rather than making one large scale open clearing.

Industrial Development

- Locate all clearings for material extraction beyond the recommended greenbelt and utilize vegetation and landform to screen activities.
- Avoid visible development near rivers and creeks.

Greenbelts (G)

Due to the densely forested landcover adjacent to the road, the generally level to gently rolling topography and the wide (300 foot) right-of-way, a relatively narrow greenbelt management strip (25 feet) would be adequate throughout most of this unit. However, a wider greenbelt width (100 feet) is necessary at the major river crossings (Klutina and Tazlina Rivers) and around an open view to a small lake (see G-1 on map).

Private landowners are encouraged to voluntarily adopt the following guidelines for greenbelt management on their land. Native corporations and the University are urged to formally adopt these guidelines as part of their management practices to set an example to other landowners.

- No permanent structures should be located within the greenbelt.
- Retain at least 75% of the natural vegetation except where there are opportunities for opening distinctive views.
- Utilize greenbelt vegetation to screen parking areas and other unattractive land uses.

Right-of-Way Management

Due to the complex pattern of small tracts of predominantly privately owned lands throughout this highway corridor, the management of the right-of-way lands will play a fundamental role in maintaining consistency in scenic resource management. To reinforce the greenbelt concept, the maximum amount of natural vegetation should be retained within the right-of-way, while at the same time responding to traffic safety needs

and the opportunities for enhancing views.

Throughout this unit, except where managed for viewing opportunities, a minimum of 50 feet of natural vegetation should be retained as a buffer between the highway and adjacent lands.

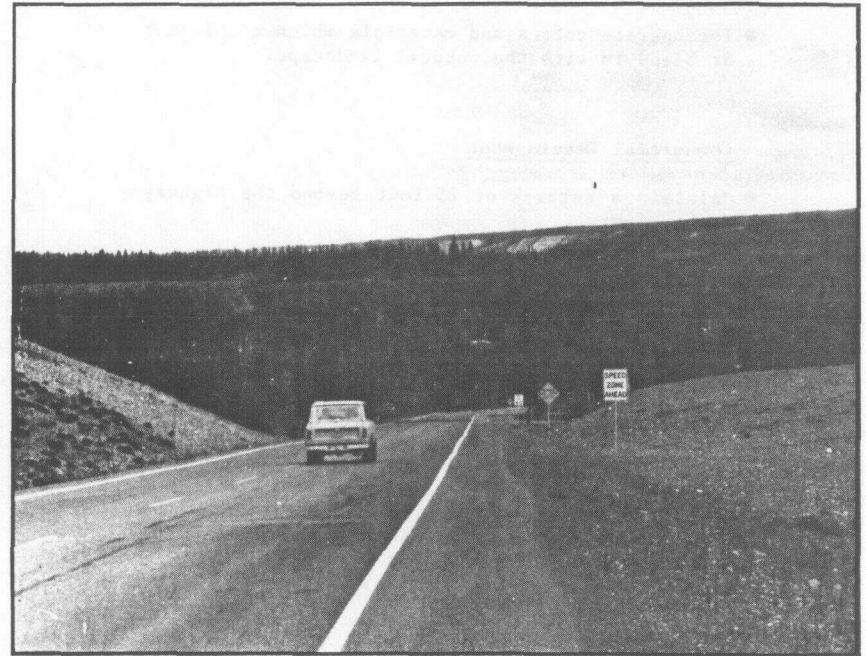
There are currently two major sources of negative impacts on the driving experience within this management unit - the many unvegetated road cuts and the visual accentuation of the road's linear character as a result of uniform, wide clearings (35 feet beyond the road edge) on either side of the road.

Road cut impacts can be reduced by the following considerations:

- Regrade to shallower slopes, in keeping with the surrounding natural landscape.
- Seed areas with nitrogen-fixing, soil-building plants (vetch, clover, lupine, alder) to initiate natural revegetation.
- Refrain from further clearing or thinning and allow natural succession to take over.

Some appropriate techniques for reducing the linear feeling of the road as a result of wide uniform clearings include the following:

- Plant or allow intrusion of scattered trees and masses of trees within the cleared strip.
- Allow low brush to remain in clearings.
- Where brush is not yet established, seed with flowering plants (vetch, lupine) to add visual diversity and interest.
- Vary the width of clearings in response to site specific needs, such as visibility on the inside of curves, known moose movement corridors and winter shade patterns on the road surface.



The visual impact of roadcuts could be reduced by seeding with nitrogen-fixing, flowering plants, such as clover, vetch, or lupine.

Copper Center Bypass

The design for the Copper Center Bypass should include plans for small information turnouts noting the historic points of interest in Copper Center. It is recommended that a turnout be located at the north end of the bypass on the west side of the road for southbound travelers. Another turnout should be located at the south end of the bypass on the east side of the road for northbound travelers. The opportunity for establishing a site with day use recreation facilities near the Klutina River should be explored.

Rest Area / Interpretive Sites (Rest)

Two potential rest area sites have been identified in this unit, one of which would provide good opportunities for landscape interpretation.

Rest-1 Old Highway Alignment: The top priority site for rest area development appears to have been developed as a rest area and subsequently vacated. It is located on a paved loop turnout created by a vacated alignment and provides outstanding views across the Copper River to the Wrangell Mountains. It is completely screened from the highway by dense vegetation. This would be an excellent interpretive site for the Copper River Lowlands landscape. Redevelopment, requiring minimal investment, would include the following:

- Selectively thin vegetation on the east side of the rest area to open views to the Wrangells and the Copper River.
- Provide picnic tables, toilets and trash receptacles on the west side of the rest area where vegetation can be used for screening and creating private picnic sites.
- Construct a walking trail to the Copper River - which would be an approximate 1/2 mile hike for the most direct route.
- Selectively thin the vegetation on the west side at the north and south ends of the site to open views of the entrance. This will alert the traveler to it's location.
- Provide an interpretive information display with information regarding the Copper River Lowlands landscape as well as the history of the Copper Center settlement.
- Provide information signs on the highway located approximately 1/2 mile on either side of the entrance to inform travelers of the rest area location.

Rest-2 Existing Rest Area - Tazlina River: This existing paved rest area offers accommodations for picnicking and access to the Tazlina River. The site is adequately screened from the road and is sensitively developed, but has limited opportunities for views of the surrounding landscape. Some improvement of viewing opportunities could be accomplished with selective vegetation thinning. This site should be maintained as a day use facility, but landscape interpretation of the Copper River Lowlands character type should be provided at Rest-1.

Turnouts (T)

Two turnouts are noted in this unit.

T-1 Existing Turnout. This short gravel loop turnout on the west side of the highway has virtually no amenities and serves as an emergency pullout or short term turnout only. There are no existing or potential scenic views from this point. It is recommended that this turnout be retained for traveler use, but that additional right-of-way vegetation be encouraged between it and the highway to reduce its visual impact as a clearing.

T-2 Existing Paved Turnout - Willow Creek: It is also recommended that this turnout be retained. It provides parking and access for fishing at Willow Creek. There are nice views to the south of the Chugach Mountains from here.

Power & Communication Lines

Powerlines parallel the highway within the right-of-way for most of the length of this management unit. Their visual impact varies with their location and the right-of-way vegetation management. Negative visual impacts can be reduced if the following management practices are employed:

- A wide strip of vegetation between the powerlines and the highway provides an excellent screen - often eliminating all visual impact.
- The placement of the lines close enough to a backdrop of tall trees where the lines and poles are generally lower than the tree tops, reduces the impact by eliminating the lines from the close horizon.
- A combination of these two approaches - where scattered tall vegetation is allowed to grow within the right-of-way management strip, partially screening the lines and poles - is the most effective management tool.

View Management

View management, by selectively thinning and clearing roadside vegetation, is a particularly useful tool for visual resource management within this corridor. The field study identified several opportunities where this tool could be applied to enhance existing, but brief filtered views to the Wrangell Mountains across the Copper River Lowlands. Selective removal of spruce trees would increase the duration of the views and provide an attractive foreground frame.

Impact Mitigation (M)

Material sites and clearings apparently associated with the highway and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline are the major visual problems in this unit. The following sites have been identified for specific impact mitigation actions:

- M-1 Material Site. This very extensive gravel extraction area is located within one of the most panoramic scenic vistas along this stretch of the

highway. In addition to the large scar created by the gravel extraction, there is a large unattractive warehouse located on the west side of the site. Reducing the visual impacts here is especially difficult due to the elevated road alignments. However, the impact could be somewhat reduced by the following measures:

- Establish additional vegetation on the north side of the road entrance to reduce visibility from the north.
- Construct a berm or fence with tall vegetation within the right-of-way adjacent to the site, especially in front of the warehouse structure, to reduce visibility from the west.
- As material resources are depleted or no longer needed in portions of the site, begin active reclamation through regrading and revegetation to reduce the size of the clearing.

M-2 Highway Maintenance Storage Yard. The size of this clearing on the west side of the highway is out of scale and character with the surrounding dense forests, and there are no views from the site. Constructing a combination fence and tall vegetation screen within or at the edge of the right-of-way alongside the clearing would help reduce the impact. This would be an excellent opportunity for DOTPF to set an example to other landowners of visually sensitive roadside management.

M-3 Department of Natural Resources clearing. The exposed soil in a clearing situated on a steep hill below the DNR building creates a strong color contrast to the natural surrounding landscape. This is particularly noticeable from the south. It is recommended that this site be actively revegetated to reduce its impact. This is another opportunity to display public agency efforts to manage visual resources on roadside land.

M-4 Materials Site. This site includes a large depression created by material extraction. The negative visual impact could be significantly reduced by adopting the following measures.

- Construct a substantial berm within the right-of-way lands adjacent to the site and plant it with tall vegetation.

- Regrade the east side of the site to allow revegetation to occur.

M-5 Commercial Garage Structure. The garage site has a cluttered and congested appearance. The property owner should be contacted to discuss ways to reduce the visual problems by site organization and screening while providing for adequate business visibility.

Recreation Site

There are limited recreation opportunities on the central Richardson Highway within this management unit. One site, however, could serve as a campground.

REC-1 Potential Overflow Camping Facility. Although there may be ownership conflicts, this former material site could be developed as a small overflow camping area. There are no existing camping facilities between the Edgerton Road cutoff and Glennallen. This site also has outstanding views across the Copper River to the Wrangell Mountains. The modifications that would need to be made in order to develop this site include the following.

- Restrict the access to the site from the highway to one narrower entrance.
- Construct a vegetated berm approximately 50-75 feet east of the road edge to screen direct views from the highway to the site. This would create a split in the entry road which will guide entering vehicles to one side and exiting vehicles to the other side.
- Regrade the site and establish masses of vegetation to break up the expansiveness of the site and provide some privacy for campers.
- Construct a short trail to the top of the north ridge (on-site) to provide accessibility for tent camping in the small aspen grove above.
- Construct a short trail to the top of the small ridge on the east side for a scenic viewpoint and picnicking area.



Additional vegetation planted in the right of way would reduce the visual impact of DOTPF's maintenance storage yard.

- Provide an interpretive information display on the surrounding natural landscape.
- If not developed for recreational use, this site should be screened from view from the highway.