Central Richardson Highway

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General Description

The central Richardson Highway, between the junctions with the Denali and Edgerton highways is a portion of Alaska's first highway, connecting Fairbanks and Valdez. Like many of Alaska's highways, the Richardson now follows what used to be a trail and sled road during the gold rush days. Captain W. R. Abercrombie of the U.S. Army explored the first route, followed by construction of a telegraph line around 1900. Soon afterwards, Major Wilds P. Richardson, for whom the highway is now named, established a sled road linking Valdez, an ice-free port, to Fairbanks, then a major gold rush settlement.

About 55 years later, the Richardson was completed as a paved highway. It is an important commercial and industrial link as well as a homesite and and recreational access road. The Richardson Highway was one of the major road corridors used during the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline which now parallels it.

Issues & Concerns

- **Paxson Lake:** Paxson Lake is a highly scenic and attractive recreation area which receives a substantial amount of use for fishing, boating and camping. It is a major put-in site for Gulkana River float trips. The existing facilities are limited and are oftentimes over used. Some have unsafe entrances off the highway. In addition, day use areas and scenic viewpoints with safe access are extremely limited. (See Management Unit 11).

- **Sourdough Creek :** Sourdough Creek is a heavily used area for grayling fishing and is also the take-out point for the Gulkana River float trip from Paxson Lake. The state campground located at Sourdough Creek contains only 15 campsites and is often used beyond its capacity. (See Management Units 14 and 15.)

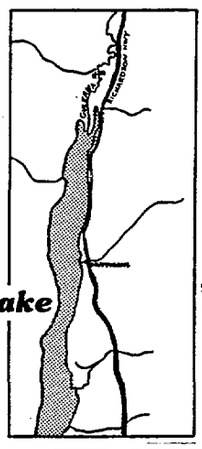
- **Sourdough Creek Land Sale:** A proposed state land sale is located on the east side of the central Richardson Highway near the Sourdough creek crossing. The impacts on views from the road that would result from this development need to be assessed. (See Management Unit 14.)

- **Gulkana River Crossing:** Recreational and industrial uses have impacted the river banks at the Gulkana River crossing. Recreational use at this location is high, but recreational facilities are limited to the small Gulkana village campground site. Scenic viewpoints and day use facilities are also inadequate. The exising campground is visible from the highway and exposed to the noise and other impacts of traffic. (See Management Unit 16.)

- **Hogan Hill :** Hogan Hill is well-known for its expansive views across the Gulkana Basin to the Talkeetna Mountains, the Chugach Mountains and the Alaska Range. Safe opportunites for stopping to enjoy the view, have a picnic or take a photograph are presently nonexistent. (See Mangement Unit 13.)

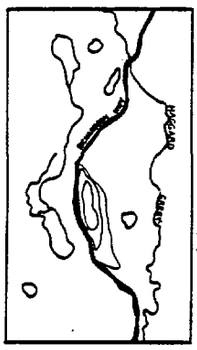
- **Proposed Highway Realignments:** DOTPF has developed preliminary plans for realigning and upgrading portions of the Richardson Highway between Gakona Junction and Paxson to straighten curves and reduce grades. (See Management Units

10 Paxson Junction

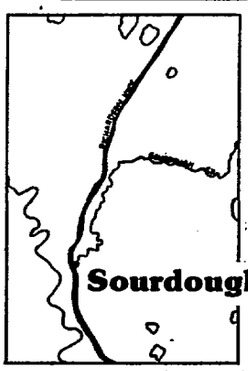


11 Paxson Lake

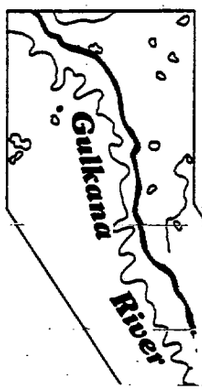
12 Meiers Lake



13 Hogan Hill



14 Sourdough



15 North Junction

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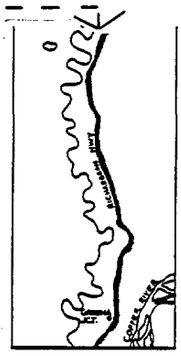
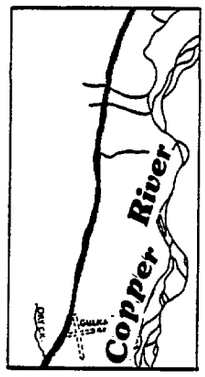
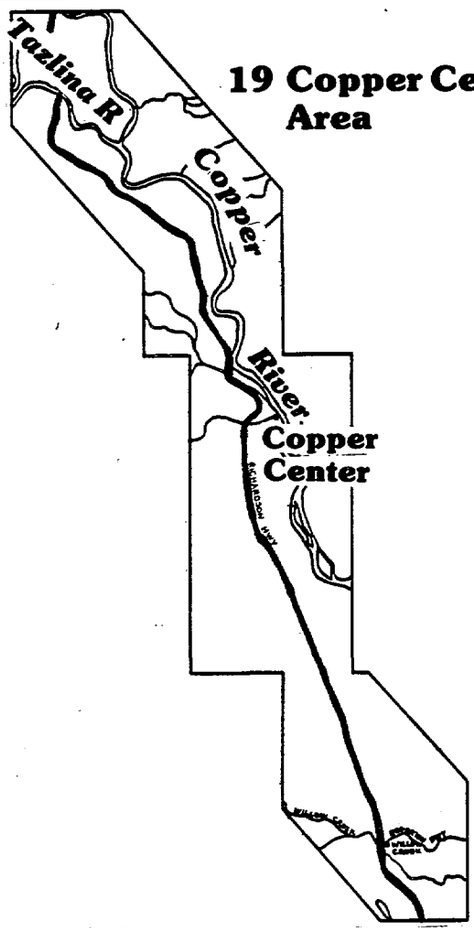


16 Gulkana River Bear Creek



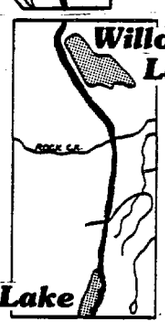
17 Bear Creek to Dry Creek

18 South Glenn-Richardson Jct.



19 Copper Center Area

20 Willow Lake



11 through 15 and the general discussion on road realignments.)

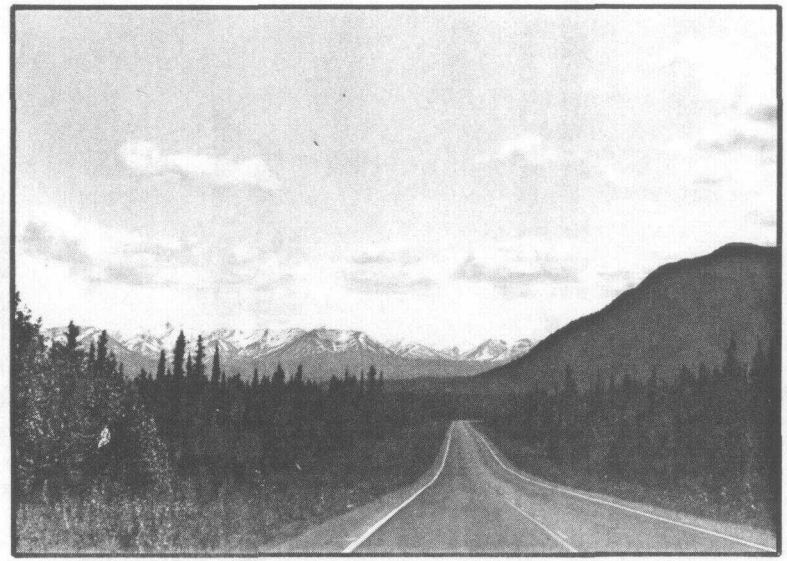
- **Copper Center By-pass:** The historic Native settlement of Copper Center will be by-passed by a rerouting of the Richardson Highway to the west of the existing alignment. Travelers will no longer have the opportunity to directly experience the historic points of interest within Copper Center. (See Management Unit 19.)

- **Roadway Information:** Travelers need access to an information system that covers road conditions, availability of commercial, recreational and emergency services and an orientation to the landscape. (See Management Units 10, 15, 18 and 21.)

Findings & Recommendations

Summary of Scenic Resource Values

Along the central Richardson Highway, between Paxson and the Edgerton Road cutoff, scenic resource values are extremely variable. The highest quality, most memorable views are concentrated around the northern and southern portions of the highway. At the north end, Paxson Lake, Meier's Lake and Hogan Hill provide the traveler with dramatic views of both the immediate and distant landscape. Toward the southern end of this route, expansive views across the Copper River basin and Willow Lake to the Wrangell Mountains provide memorable visual experiences.



A wide, high-speed thoroughfare takes the motorist through an area characterized by distant views of the Wrangell Mountains across the forested Copper River Valley at the southern end of the central Richardson Highway.

The remainder of the central Richardson Highway follows the broad valleys of the Copper and Gulkana rivers through a densely forested corridor offering only occasional distant views to the Wrangell and Chugach Mountains and Alaska Range. Although the highway is relatively close to the Copper and Gulkana rivers, views of the rivers are infrequent.

Throughout the central Richardson Highway, there are varying degrees of visual interest and experiential diversity provided by a combination of factors. First, there is the way the road

moves through the landscape. Its winding nature through the lowlands and along the edges of steep terraces is reflective of the sinuous nature of the Copper and Gulkana rivers. Moreover, the changing patterns of open bogs, semi-open stands of black spruce, pure and mixed stands of birch, spruce, poplar and aspen give variety and interest to the vegetaion visible from the road.

Second, are the more dramatic but less frequent views of distinctive landscape features and panoramic vistas. The river crossings at the Tazlina, Klutina, and Gulkana rivers are important visual and recreational nodes. Additionally, the periodic expansive views of the more distant mountains--particularly the Wrangells to the east and the Alaska Range to the north--are memorable when visible.

Third, is the visual interest created by the variety of land uses and development scattered throughout the corridor. Both historic and present day land development, from roadhouses and cabins to the Trans Alaska Pipeline, are often memorable features of the central Richardson Highway.

Scenic resource values are dependent on the presence and interaction of each of these three factors and management actions must respond to them appropriately, preserving those characteristics and experiences which are desirable and exploring ways to enhance these experiences for the benefit of visitors and residents alike.

Management Theme

No single theme is adequate to describe the central Richardson Highway. It is both scenic and in a sense wild. It is historic and at the same item modern. It functions as a local access road as well as a highway linking this area to other parts of Alaska and beyond. No single use predominates and the land uses reflect a diversity of natural and cultural resources. Consequently, the management of scenic resources along this highway corridor should consider two general themes: multiple resources and multiple uses.

In addition to scenic resources, there exist numerous other natural and cultural resources along the central Richardson Highway corridor. These include timber, productive soils, fish and wildlife, sand and gravel, fresh water, minerals, and fuels as well as local human populations and transportation and communication infrastructures. Like scenic resources these vary in quality and distribution over the landscape. There are places where they may be concentrated and places where they may be absent. Some areas are characterized by a multiplicity of resources and in others a single one tends to predominate. Scenic resource management actions can generally respond to these situations in one of two ways, prioritization or coordination.

Prioritization: In some cases people will value a particular resource in an area more than others. Use of this resource may take priority over use and development of other resources. Along the central Richardson, priority should be given to scenic resources in two areas: Paxson Lake to Hogan Hill (Management Units 11-13) and the area around Willow Lake (Management Unit 20).

Land uses and developments should take special care to retain or enhance the identified high scenic resource values in these areas.

Coordination: Alternatively, numerous resources may exist and all may be valued and used in various ways. In these areas, management actions should attempt to coordinate the various uses so all user needs are met without depleting or degrading the resource base. Most of the Richardson Highway has both scenic and other equally important resource values. Therefore, development on roadside lands for residential or commercial uses should incorporate appropriate measures to avoid degrading the visual quality of the surrounding landscape. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline is an example where resource uses have been generally well coordinated. Sand and gravel was extracted in numerous sites for pipeline construction. However, most of the sites were located so they were not highly visible. Additionally measures were taken to reclaim some of them. Along the central Richardson Highway the goal should be to integrate a concern for protecting scenic resource values into decisions related to use and development of the other resources along the corridor.

The existence of multiple of resources leads to a multiple use demands. The central Richardson Highway is used as a haul road for transferring freight from entry points to distribution centers. It is used as a service road for the Trans Alaska Pipeline. It is an access road for numerous residences and small businesses located adjacent to it. It is a recreation corridor with numerous recreational attractions along and accessible from it. It is a scenic drive for people driving for pleasure and desiring to see this part of Alaska.

For each use, different roadway characteristics are required. As a haul road particular emphasis is placed upon long straight alignments and easy grades to allow fast, efficient travel. As a scenic drive curving alignments which provide a continually changing view and moderate grades which climb to viewpoints would be considered preferable. Clearly along a multiple use road some compromise and accommodation of these differing needs and values needs to occur. It is possible to design roads and manage roadway corridors so safe, efficient and relatively direct travel is possible while at the same time taking advantage of viewing opportunities and creating an interesting driving experience. The multiple use theme of the central Richardson Highway suggests that this integration of scenic resource values with other development and use considerations is appropriate.

Scenic Resource Management Goals

The following goals relate to the multiple resources and multiple use themes of the central Richardson Highway and are recommended to guide scenic resource management plans, policies and actions.

- To integrate appropriate scenic resource considerations into land use and development actions throughout the highway corridor so existing scenic values are retained or enhanced.

- To make scenic resource management a priority consideration within those areas with particularly high scenic resource values and take appropriate action with respect to road design, right-of-way management, and development of roadside lands to be sensitive to these special resource values.

- To take action to mitigate the impacts of previous developments and management activities within the highway corridor which significantly detract from the scenic resource potential of the area.

Implementation: Land Ownership & Management Responsibilities

Scenic resource management along the central Richardson Highway involves five major actors: the State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF), State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), AHTNA Regional Corporation and various village corporations, the University of Alaska, and Alyeska Pipeline Company: The greatest responsibility and opportunity for potential impact on scenic resource values rests the DOTPF which manages the road and its 300 foot right-of-way corridor (except for private lands patented prior to 1952 where the right-of-way is narrower). With respect to land adjacent to this right-of-way, DNR will be the primary land manager north of the Sourdough area once selected lands are conveyed. South of here to the Gulkana River crossing, Native corporations are the primary landowners. Beyond this point the ownership pattern becomes complex with State, University, and Native lands and numerous small private landholdings.

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF)

The DOTPF can respond to its role as the primary actor with respect to effective scenic resource management along the central Richardson Highway through the following actions:

- Playing the lead role in the development and implementation of plans and guidelines for scenic resource management throughout the highway corridor.

- Adopting right-of-way management practices which are particularly sensitive to scenic resource concerns.

- Integrating considerations related to visual and experiential interest into criteria used for determining road upgrading and realignment - particularly in those areas with higher scenic resource values (Paxson to Sourdough, Willow Lake to the Edgerton junction).

- Giving adequate consideration to the siting, management and reclamation of road construction and maintenance sites as well as material sites in order to minimize adverse visual impacts.

The recommendations outlined in this report should be the basis of DOTPF scenic resource management policies, plans and actions for this corridor and should be extended to the remaining portions of the Richardson Highway.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Presently, DNR manages numerous relatively small parcels scattered along the road corridor south of Sourdough with large amounts of roadside lands selected north of this area. The DNR can play an effective role in scenic resource management through the following recommended actions:

- Implementing greenbelt management recommendations on its lands throughout the highway corridor.
- Including greenbelts as scenic easements on its roadside lands subject to land disposals and leases and outlining guidelines and performance standards for the use of these greenbelt areas.
- Encouraging land uses on state lands which are compatible with overall scenic resource management goals and objectives as well as with management actions proposed by DOTPF for the right-of-way.
- Retaining state lands adjacent to the road in areas of predominately private ownership (Sourdough south to Willow Lake) to help control roadside strip development and retaining some lands in a natural state as potential open space and buffers around developments.

University Lands

University of Alaska trust lands are scattered throughout the central Richardson Highway corridor. These are generally large blocks of land readily accessible from the road and well-suited for use and development. University lands managers can respond to scenic resource management considerations through the following actions:

- Adopting greenbelt recommendations as outlined in this report and require that land uses on these roadside lands conform to the guidelines and performance standards associated with these greenbelts.
- Setting an example for adjacent private landowners through sensitive land development and management.

Alyeska Pipeline Company

As seen from the central Richardson Highway, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline has a minimal negative visual impact and in many cases, is a distinctive landscape feature. This is a result of sensitive pipeline right-of-way management and because it is generally located away from the road. Alyeska has expended considerable time and money to minimize the impacts of this development. What they have learned - particularly with respect to revegetation techniques specific to Alaskan conditions - should be used by others. Such information would be especially useful for DOTPF in material site reclamation and revegetation of cut and fill banks.

There still are a number of sites visible from the highway where pipeline related use has resulted in significant negative visual impacts. These are pointed out and discussed in the management units where they occur. It is recommended that Alyeska continue to set a good example of development that is sensitive to scenic resource values and take necessary action to reduce these impacts.

Native Corporations

AHTNA Regional Corporation and the various village corporations can play instrumental roles in scenic resource management along the central Richardson Highway, primarily because they own

large blocks of developable land adjacent to the road from Sourdough south. These corporations are in a position to adopt policies for their land which respect scenic resource values. Specifically it is recommended that:

- Greenbelt recommendations as outlined here be adopted for Native corporation lands adjacent to the road and these be included in future sales or leases of the lands.
- Native corporations strive to set examples and standards of visually sensitive development - particularly for adjacent landowners.

Other Private Landowners

While at first glance, small individual property owners along the highway would seem to have little impact on scenic resources, in actuality, their impact can be significant. A single commercial development, if set in front of a panoramic view of the Wrangell Mountains, could change the appeal of the view if it is out of scale and presents a foreground dominated by extensive gravel areas, parked cars and blinking neon signs. Similarly, an attractive homestead or small roadside business could be a strong positive visual feature - particularly when carefully sited and where the landscape itself has minimal visual diversity. Private landowners can play a significant role in the following ways:

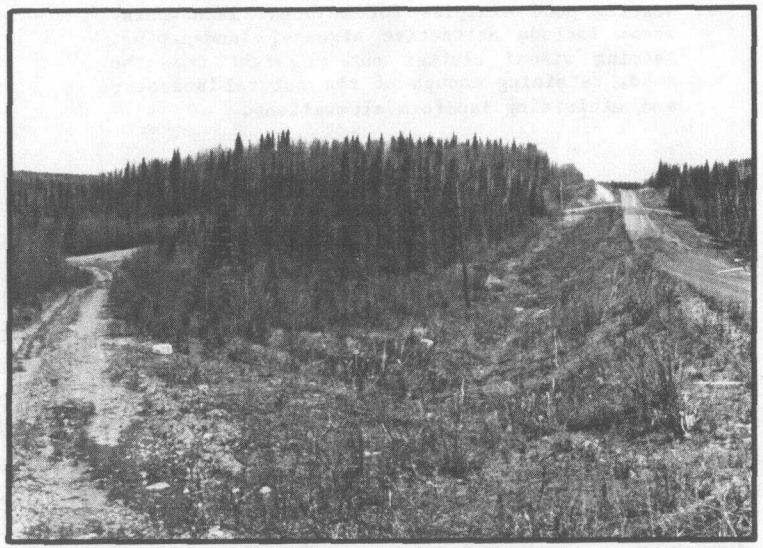
- Supporting visually sensitive right-of-way management along their property frontage and demanding that appropriate management and maintenance actions be undertaken along the entire highway.
- Adopting visually sensitive land use and developmnt practices for their property and setting good examples for adjacent landowners. These include attractive signage, landscaping, keeping visual clutter out of sight from the road, retaining enough of the natural landcover and minimizing landform alterations.

The State of Alaska, DNR, DOTPF and other public agencies can help private landowners in two important ways. First the State could establish funding for design assistance available to commercial and other developments adjacent to highways, particularly those with valuable scenic resource values. Such assistance could be used for site planning and landscaping as well as building and commercial sign design. Second, design guidelines and examples of visually sensitive roadside development practices should be prepared and communicated to local landowners. (See Edgerton Road discussion.)

The following Findings and Recommendations are a summary of the general management actions in keeping with the theme and goals for scenic resouce management for the central Richardson Highway. Because this study focused on only the central portion of this road corridor and scenic resource values as well as roadside recreational use are as important both to the north and south, it is recommended that action be taken to extend this type of study to the remainder of the Richardson Highway in order to complete the management plan for the entire road.

Proposed Realignments

Road alignment and design must take into consideratin the various requirements and needs associated with different users. A straight



Opportunities exist along the Richardson to reclaim portions of the old highway alignment as well as to minimize the new road's linearity and raw character through sensitive vegetation management.

alignment with gentle grades designed for industrial and commercial use often does not provide the variety or interest desired by recreational travelers. In this context, recent DOTPF realignment proposals for the area from Gulkana River to Paxson (May, 1982) have been evaluated in the field for their possible impacts on the scenic and recreational driving experience. Factors considered include the following:

1. Potential visual impacts of both the proposed realignment and the vacated alignment.

2. Potential opportunities for enhancing the visual and recreational driving experience by opening interesting views from the new alignment or by creating a needed scenic turnout, rest area or recreational access point in the vacated alignment.

3. Opportunities for mitigating the visual impact of the new or vacated alignment.

4. Potential for the proposed realignment to reduce the visibliity of other activities which currently have a negative visual impact.

5. The change in the quality of the viewing and driving experience as a result of the new alignment.

The results of the field study suggest that many of the proposed realignments present opportunities to enhance the scenic driving experience while others would either have a significant negative visual impact or result in little discernable change. Where the present alignment offers a richer driving experience or where the realignment would have a significant negative visual impact, recommendations are made to upgrade the existing alignment rather than to proceed with the proposed realignment. Where realignments would present opportunities to enhance the scenic driving experience or where they would result in no significant negative visual impact, it is recommended that the plans for realignment proceed, taking into consideration the specific recommendations as presented for each management unit. (See Management Units 11 through 15.)

Right-of-Way-Management

Due to the variable — predominantly private — ownership and management responsibilities of the lands adjacent to the highway, the best opportunity for providing continuity in scenic resource management throughout the central

Richardson Highway corridor is through appropriate and sensitive right-of-way management. Since the 300 foot right-of-way maintained by DOTPF is a highly visible part of virtually all views while traveling the road, it can be a strong influence on the quality of this experience.

Along a modern, multipurpose, high speed highway such as the Richardson, right-of-way management needs to respond to a number of considerations. Clearly the primary one is that of safety. In response to this, right-of-ways are systematically cleared of all tree and shrub vegetation to allow for adequate visibility of signs, potential hazards on the road such as wildlife and stalled vehicles, and adequate visibility around corners. Additionally, roadside management activities focus on clearing for snow removal, to reduce surface icing, maintain drainage, and to prevent the deterioration of the road surface as a result of invading plants. Road shoulders are maintained for emergency stopping. At times, some right-of-way clearing is done to open up or maintain distant views. Other typical right-of-way management activities relate to highway signage, maintenance of turnouts, rest areas and litter collection sites as well as storage of sand and gravel.

Along the central Richardson Highway, right-of-way management activities which have the greatest affect on scenic and recreational resource values relate to the following three categories:

1. Routine R.O.W. vegetation management
2. Turnouts and other road related facilities beyond traffic lanes
3. Material sites and road construction and maintenance activities. Turnouts and material sites are discussed under separate sections which follow.

Roadside vegetation management along the central Richardson Highway commonly consists of clearing all brush and tree vegetation back an even distance from both sides of the road. Such practices are undesirable from a scenic resource management perspective for the following reasons:

1. Even shrub and tree clearing accentuates both the linearity and width of the road on the landscape.
2. This type of clearing creates a uniform edge and a less diverse experience, both spatially and visually.
3. It can accentuate the visibility of roadside land uses, particularly material sites and commercial developments.
4. It is not sensitive to site specific opportunities and constraints which could suggest variations in the common management response that might reduce adverse visual impacts and or enhance the driving experience.

Instead, right-of-way vegetation management actions should be more site specific and responsive to scenic resource management considerations. It is recommended that DOTPF adopt new policies and operating procedures such as the following:

- Adopt the policy and practice of varying roadside management actions to respond to site specific situations and conditions rather than using the same techniques over large areas.
- Utilize a landscape architect working in the field with the maintenance station supervisor or

foreman to develop a plan of action for each year's field maintenance activities.

- Give first priority for right-of-way management actions sensitive to scenic resource considerations given to those portions of the central Richardson which have particularly high scenic and recreational resource values.
- Use the right-of-way vegetation to screen or soften the visual impacts of adjacent landscape alterations - particularly material sites, maintenance stations and material and equipment storage areas.
- Reseed bare road cuts and fills to encourage the reestablishment of vegetation.
- Take advantage of clearings beyond the right-of-way to open up desirable distant views.
- Avoid clearing and management activities all the way back to the right-of-way edge.

Specific right-of-way management recommendations may be found for each management unit. In addition, there are numerous ways to use roadside vegetation clearing as a tool to introduce visual and spatial diversity. These are outlined under the right-of-way management section for the McCarthy Wild and Historic Road.

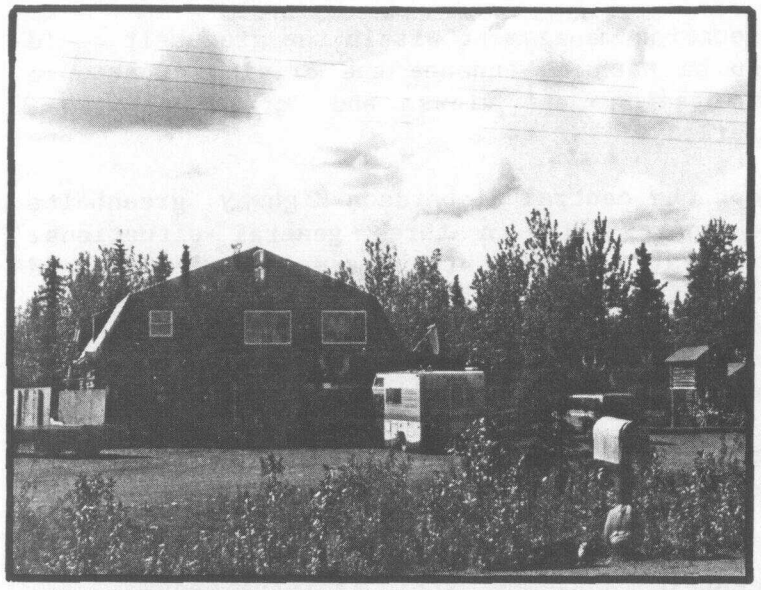
Land Use & Development

The central Richardson Highway corridor will undoubtedly continue to be a focus for roadside land use and development in this part of southcentral Alaska. As already pointed out, a primary goal for scenic resource management is to encourage land developments and uses in a fashion which are sensitive to scenic resource values - either to mitigate past actions, retain existing conditions or enhance view opportunities and experiences. Land use and development recommendations are organized around the following three areas; 1) Paxson to Sourdough, 2) Sourdough south to Willow Lake, 3) Willow Lake south to the Edgerton Road junction.

Paxson to Sourdough

This portion of the central Richardson Highway is characterized by high scenic resource values, minimal roadside development and predominately public (State selected) ownership. Within this area the following recommendations with respect to visually sensitive roadside land use and development are made:

- Encourage future development - particularly commercial activities, services, and light industry - to locate near Paxson. Some recreational and residential uses can be sited there and also around Sourdough. Development along the highway between areas should be primarily recreation related and adequately set back or screened from the road to retain the undeveloped, natural appearance of the area.
- Establish greenbelts on public lands as recommended in this report.
- Except near Paxson and Sourdough, avoid land disposals other than for dispersed recreational homesites and cabins. Take special care to ensure that any disposals adjacent to the road include greenbelt management strips and appropriate guidelines to minimize potential visual impacts.
- Encourage land developments beyond the greenbelt management strip to take advantage of areas with high visual absorption capability in order to retain the generally undeveloped character of this area.



If well sited off the road with some screening and attention to design, roadside commercial development can enhance the driving experience by adding interesting man-made features to the landscape.

Sourdough South to Willow Lake

This area is characterized by moderate scenic resource values with considerably more roadside development than areas to either the north or south. Land ownership is a complex array of small private parcels, extensive Native corporation lands and scattered parcels of state and University lands. This is where continued roadside development seems most likely to occur and where it could either be a means of enhancing scenic resource values through opening up more distant views and introducing interesting buildings and man-made features. Alternatively it could result in significant negative impacts through the introduction of extended linear commercial development with its associated large clearings for vehicle parking and flashing neon signs. The following recommendations relate to visually sensitive developments within this area:

- Encourage roadside commercial development around existing nodes (Glennallen Junction, Copper Center, Gulkana Village).
- Encourage private landowners to adopt greenbelt management recommendations and associated used guidelines.
- Encourage public landowners (state and University) to adopt greenbelt recommendations that will serve as an example for visually sensitive development adjacent to the road. State lands adjacent to the road should be retained in public ownership. In the future, this land may help meet other public needs or can serve as a block of undeveloped land to help soften the visual impacts of intensive development on surrounding private lands.
- In general, locate larger developments and resource uses requiring land clearing (airstrips, agriculture, timber harvesting) on the east side of the road because the best mountain views are in this direction. Care must be taken to ensure that the land clearing impact is not severe, particularly in areas closet to the road.
- Demonstrate ways that visual impacts of land use and development can be minimized by taking advantage of the generally high visual absorption capability found in this area.

Willow Lake South to the Edgerton Road Junction

This area is characterized by fairly high scenic resource values and a small amount of roadside

development, mostly scattered residences and some pipeline and highway related uses. Land ownership is predominately private. Future development will likely consist of additional scattered residences and recreational homesites on existing private lands with some possible roadside commercial development. The following general land use and development recommendations are made for this area:

- Give preference to scattered residential and recreational homesites and agriculture uses in this area.
- Concentrate road-related commercial activity around the junction of the Richardson Highway and Edgerton Road, preferably on the east side of the Richardson Highway.
- Encourage both public agencies and private landowners to adopt the greenbelt recommendations and use the area's generally high visual absorption capability to minimize the impact of new land uses and development.
- Consult each management unit for additional discussions of land use and development recommendations.

Greenbelts

In keeping with the overall visual resource management goals for the central Richardson Highway, the greenbelt concept could be an appropriate management tool for both sensitive land use and development and enhancing the visual driving experience. A greenbelt management strip could help to ensure that roadside developments and land uses are adequately set back and screened to buffer roadside development from highway impacts while at the same time reduce visibility of developments from the highway.

Vegetation management within the greenbelt could also be used to enhance the driving experience by opening up views and creating visual diversity.

Along the central Richardson Highway, greenbelts are appropriate in three general situations. First, in selected highly scenic locations and near distinctive landscape elements such as lakes and rivers. Here greenbelts of sufficient width to maintain the natural character are recommended. Second, in areas of dense vegetation, a relatively narrow, 25 foot greenbelt management strip is commonly recommended beyond the right-of-way. Finally, in those areas where vegetation is not as dense or topography more exposed, a 100 foot wide greenbelt management strip is recommended.

The primary limitation facing the use of greenbelts along the central Richardson Highway is that there is no mechanism to apply them to private lands outside of organized boroughs and local governments. With the significant amount of private lands adjacent to the road it means that comformance to greenbelt guidelines for these lands would be voluntary. The following recommendations relate to the implementation of greenbelts for this highway:

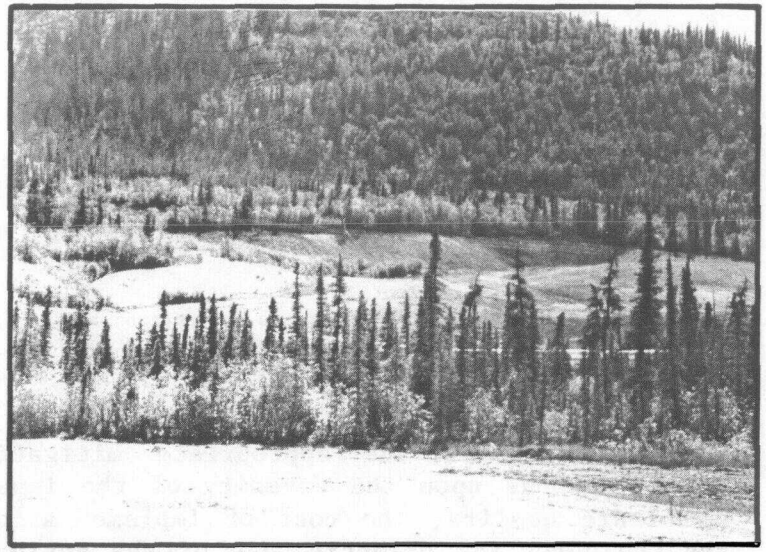
- Implement greenbelt recommendations on public lands - including University lands, and use these as examples for private lands.
- Cooridnate the DOTPF right-of-way management practices with greenbelt management practices so these two roadside management strips are used most effectively.
- Develop public information programming which gives private landowners along the road a better understanding of the greenbelt concept and how

it works as a flexible management tool. Emphasize the benefits to landowners adjacent to the road as well as the fact that within greenbelt management strips, some types of land use and alteration may be permitted or even encouraged when based upon specific goals and objectives.

Greenbelt recommendations have two parts: the width of the management strip already discussed above, and the types of actions permitted or encouraged within this area to accomplish specific goals or objectives. Along the central Richardson Highway the following are typical management guidelines suggested for greenbelts:

- Use greenbelts as a setback for permanent structures.
- Encourage retention of deciduous trees and selective clearing to provide filtered views within greenblets.
- Remove no more than 25% of the vegetation within the greenbelt management strip and avoid soil and landform disturbance.
- Encourage clearings in greenbelts where, through coordinated right-or-way and greenbelt management, distant views could be opened, particularly to the Wrangell Mountains.
- Align access roads through greenbelts following the topography or curving rather than perpendicular to the highway. Retain vegetation along road edges to minimize visual impacts.
- Use sensitively designed and located signs for commercial structures with greenbelt frontage.
- Encourage the retention of adequate existing vegetation within the greenbelt to screen large parking areas associated with roadside commercial development.

Refer to the specific greenbelt recommendations outlined within each management unit.



While glimpses of the pipeline snaking across the landscape generally add interest to the drive, old material sites can be distracting land scars and should be graded and planted so they blend in better with their surroundings.

Impact Mitigation

While the central Richardson Highway is an appropriate development corridor, some land uses have disproportionately large visual impacts. Of particular concern along the central Richardson are material sites and highway and pipeline associated clearings. The negative visual impacts of these activities can be mitigated with appropriate screening or reclamation practices and the sensitive location of any new sites.

Three types of responses are possible to deal with the impact of these activities:

1. Reclamation/Restoration
   Regrade and replant the disturbed area so it blends in with the surrounding landscape.

2. Reuse
   Identify an appropriate or desirable use for the site and take any necessary reclamation action to best meet the requirements of this use. Along the central Richardson typical reuse possibilities include turnouts, rest areas, and campgrounds.

3. Screening
   Through the use of landforms, vegetation and/or structures such as fences and walls, screen the disturbed area from the road.

The selection of the appropriate mitigation action depends upon the severity of the impact on scenic quality, the cost of implementation, and the potential effectiveness of the actions. Specific recommendations for individual sites which have significant negative impact or potential for reuse as roadside recreational facilities are outlined in the management unit discussions. Those areas of highest scenic quality should be given priority for impact mitigation actions.

New material sites required for road construction and maintenance should be located and managed according to the following guidelines:

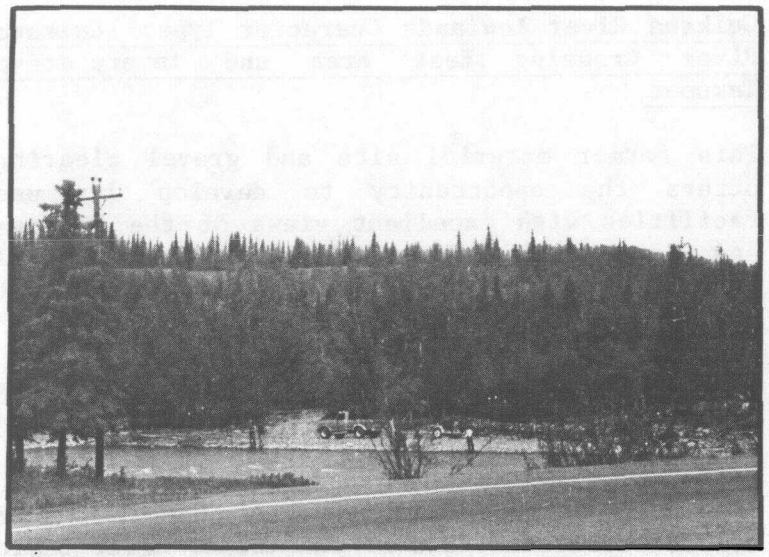
- No extraction sites should be visible from within the right-of-way or greenbelt areas.
- All sites should be screened from view from the highway.
- Utilize both vegetation and landform characteristics of adjacent land to aid in screening and minimizing visual impact.
- Prior to developing new material sites, a reclamation or reuse strategy should be adopted so appropriate actions are taken during the extraction process.

View Management

View management for scenic resources responds to two important objectives - enhancement - opening up or creating new views - and retention - maintaining good views or experiences. Of particular importance on the central Richardson Highway is the enhancement of views through selective vegetation thinning of clearing.

Presently, there are rather long stretches of the highway through which the traveler is teased with filtered glimpses of distant scenic landscape featuring such as the Wrangell Mountains or the Gulkana or Copper Rivers. Along the highway corridor, but especially between Sourdough and Willow Lake, opportunities have been identified for utilizing selective thinning and strategic clearing of primarily right-of-way vegetation to open views. For example, north of Glennallen, clearing for roadside drainage has partially opened brief lateral views to the Wrangell Mountains. This study identifies some sites for reclamation, including additional selective clearing and thinning to improve the viewing opportunities.

Specific view management recommendations can be found within the individual management units.



The central Richardson Highway is also a recreation access corridor. Information turnouts should alert travelers to the variety of amenities and opportunities along its length.

Highway Related Facilities: Turnouts, Rest Areas, & Information Turnouts

Along the central Richardson Highway, which serves both faster moving commercial and commuter traffic and slower moving recreational traffic, a variety of appropriately spaced and sited turnouts are essential to the safety and enjoyment of all travelers. This study has identified three types of highway related facilities:

- **Turnouts:** For brief stops to enjoy a view, take a photo, change drivers, etc.
- **Information Turnouts:** To respond to the traveler's need for information regarding road conditions, services, recreation opportunities, and points of interest.
- **Rest Areas - Interpretive Sites:** Day use facilities for longer stops as well as places where travelers have the opportunity to better understand the landscape through which they are traveling.

Existing and potential sites for these highway related recreational facilities were evaluated based upon a number of factors including safe entry and exit, opportunities for scenic views and other site amenities, ease of development, etc. In addition, appropriate locations for roadway information turnouts were evealuated at each highway junction (Denali, North Glenn, South Glenn and Edgerton). The location of rest area sites considered opportunities for interpretive information related to the surrounding landscape.

Roadway information turnouts recommended at highway junctions are described in Management Units 10, 15, 18 and 21. Two smaller information turnouts are also recommended at each end of the proposed Copper Center bypass to provide travelers with information related to the historic points of interest in Copper Center (see Management Unit 19).

Information related to the numerous small turnouts recommended for use as scenic viewpoints, trailheads and other recreational access and emergency stopping may be found within each management unit. The following discussion summarizes the rest area system proposed for the central Richardson Highway. One primary site is propsed for development

within each of the three landscape character types (Gulkana Uplands, Gulkana River Lowlands, Copper River Lowlands) through which the road passes. (Landscape character types are those large areas which have similar visual expressions of landform, landcover, water features, etc.)

Gulkana Uplands Character Type: Hogan Hill Rest Area and Interpretive Turnout

The proposed highway realignment on the west slope offers the opportunity to develop a rest area with outstanding panoramic views across the Gulkana River basin to the Chugach and Talkeetna Mountains as well as to the Alaska Range (see Management Unit 13).

Alternative Sites:

1. Paxson Lake: Existing wayside, with the opportunity for a roadside turnout created by the proposed highway realignment (see Management Unit 11).

2. Meiers Lake: Level area at lakeside (see Management Unit 12).

3. Hogan Hill: Alyeska Pipeline Company former material site (see Management Unit 13).

Gulkana River Lowlands Character Type: Gulkana River Crossing Rest Area and Interpretive Turnout

This former material site and gravel clearing offers the opportunity to develop day use facilities with excellent views of the Gulkana and Copper River valleys as well as recreational access to the Gulkana River (see Management Unit 16).

Copper River Lowlands Character Type: Copper River - Wrangell Mountains Viewpoint Rest Area and Interpretive Turnout

This vacated rest area south of Copper Center offers excellent views of the Copper River basin and the Wrangell Mountains and could easily be developed as a turnout (see Management Unit 19).

Alternative Sites

1. Existing rest area at the Tazlina River Crossing (see Management Unit 19).

Other Roadside Recreational Facilities

During the field work for this study, material sites were evaluated with respect to their potential for reclamation and development as campgrounds. While this was not part of a systematic recreational needs assessment of overnight facilities in the area, the following two sites appear to have potential for campground development.

1. Between Sourdough Creek and the Gulkana River crossing (see Management Unit 15).

2. Between the Glennallen Junction and Copper Center (see Management Unit 19).

Both require the reclamation of former materials sites and would be appropriate overflow camping areas with only limited facilites provided.