

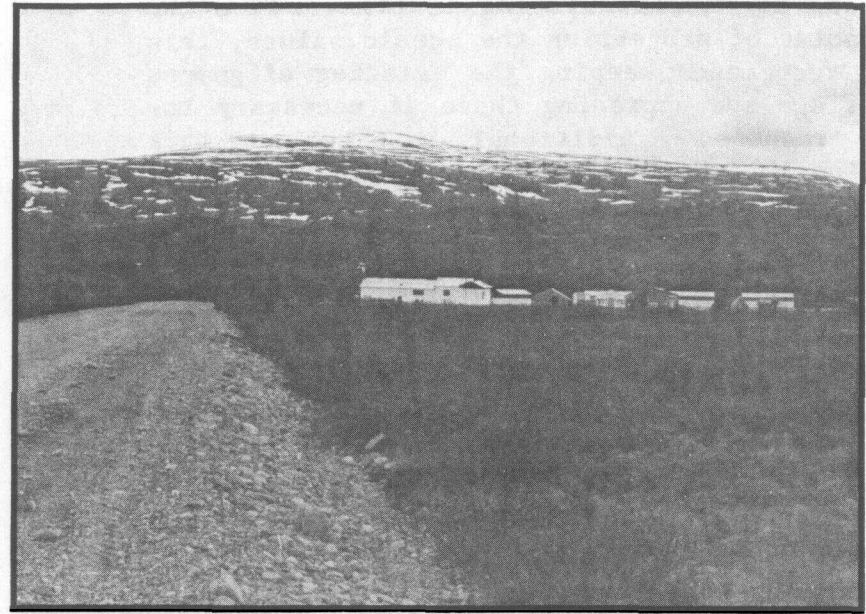
# Management Unit 8

## Tangle Lakes

### General Description

Management Unit 8 includes lands on either side of the Tangle Lakes area located twenty miles west of Paxson. This 19.7 mile long unit is characterized by open views, low brush vegetation, and interesting glacial topography. Natural features which accentuate the visual experience include the Amphitheater Mountains, Tangle Lakes, Landmark Gap, Flattop Mountain, numerous small lakes, and glacially created landforms. Some of the more outstanding views from the road encompass the Alaska Range, the Wrangell Mountains, the Gulkana and Gakona glaciers, the Clearwater Mountains, the Tangle River, and Octopus Lake.

Scenic values along this portion of the Denali wild and Scenic Road are high but not exceptional when compared to other portions of the road. The open character of the landscape and low vegeta-



*Existing recreation service development is nestled among the glacial landforms surrounding Tangle Lakes which screen the uses from distant views. This is an appropriate area for additional development as a recreation use node.*

tive cover make this a very sensitive scenic area with a low visual absorption. East of the Tangle River road the surface is paved. The paved road winds through undulating topography which enhances the driving experience because of the frequent changes in point-of-view. Along this section of the road numerous developed turnouts offer excellent viewing opportunities for the traveler's enjoyment.

The western unpaved portion of this unit has a straighter road alignment, lacking the visual highlights created by curves, hills, or a

**KEY**

R- Reclamation

T- Turnout

Rec- Recreation

25' Greenbelt

State Owned Land

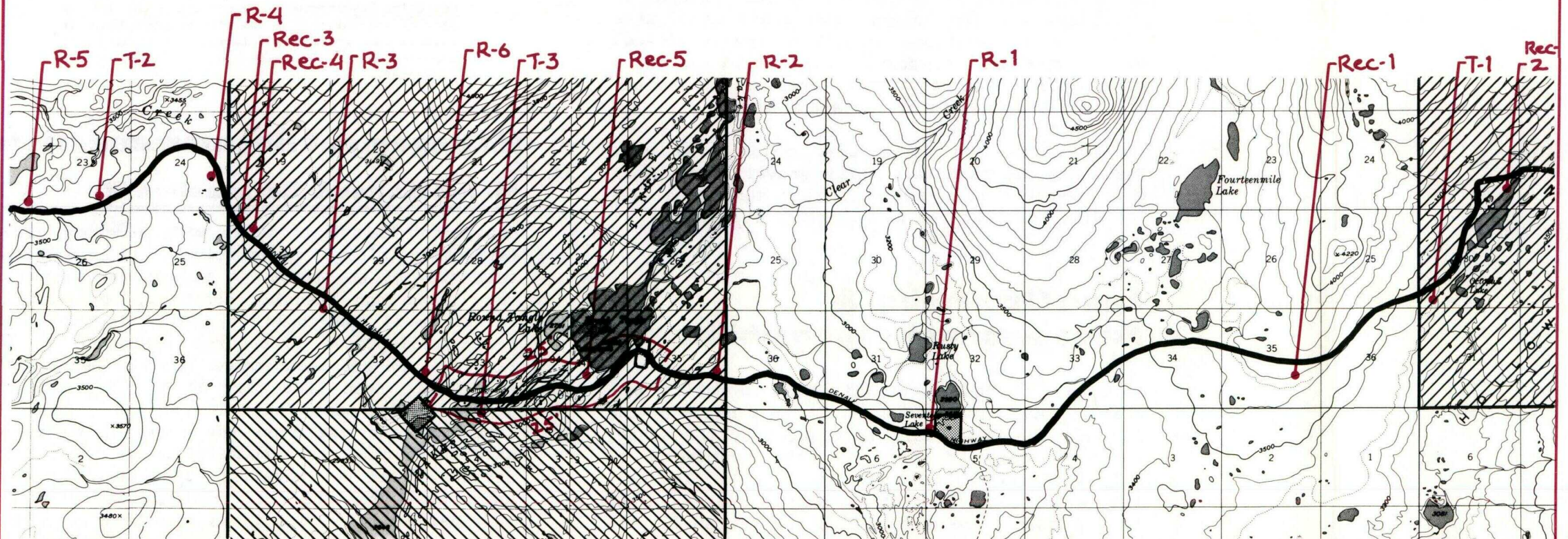
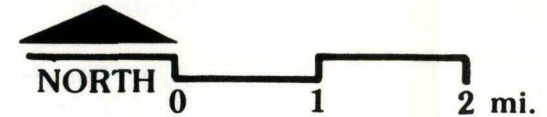
State Selected Land

Federal Land

Private Land

# 8 Tangle Lakes

Assessment Units D51-D61



changing point of view. In addition, the poor road maintenance on this road section forces drivers to focus their attention on maneuvering around potholes, not on scenery. Turnouts are required so travelers can appreciate the view; yet the number of turnouts are inadequate to meet present needs.

The Tangle Lakes area is a popular recreation destination, drawing people from all over the state for fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and camping. While most of the unit is in its wild and natural state, there are a number of establishments that cater to recreation needs. Focused on the lakes are two lodges with their associated cafes and gas stations (one is currently closed) and a large BLM campground. Nestled in the rolling glacial topography, these uses are only visible from the immediately adjacent area.

Gravel extraction is another major land use. There are approximately forty gravel sites along this nineteen mile segment, concentrated around Ten Mile Lake and the Landmark Gap Trailhead.

## **Land Ownership & Management Responsibility**

Most land in Management Unit 8 is in public ownership. Approximately one-half is managed by the BLM and the other half is managed by the state, but the pattern of state and federal land ownership is fairly mixed. The State DOTPF also manages a 300 foot right-of-way immediately adjacent to the road. The unit includes a few small privately owned parcels located in the vicinity of Tangle Lakes.

## **Visual Resource Management Objectives**

Management goals for scenic resources in Unit 8 are related to three general themes: retention, impact mitigation, and sensitive development.

**Retention:** To retain the natural features and scenic resources which enhance the recreation and driving experience within this unit.

**Impact Mitigation:** To reduce negative visual impacts associated with haphazard gravel extraction adjacent to the road.

**Sensitive Development:** To encourage the development of recreational facilities in appropriate locations to provide additional opportunities to experience and appreciate the landscape and area resources.

## **Management Recommendations**

### **Material Sites & Reclamation (R)**

Management Unit 8 is laden with numerous gravel extraction sites, insensitively located within full view of the road. A few of the sites are very large and visually dominant, but most are rather small and could be easily improved with basic reclamation procedures discussed in the Findings and Recommendations for the Denali Wild and Scenic Road (See page D9 ). For existing sites, management actions should focus on screening the use from the road, using berms, site contouring, or a combination of these three actions. All new material sites should be situated away from the road and outside the green-belt using natural landforms to screen extraction activities from view. Several existing sites require special management attention.



*Frequent roadside gravel extraction is a major distraction from spectacular views. This site, which was also identified by BLM, can be recontoured as a turnout with a good view of Landmark Gap.*

**R-1** Two large and visually dominant material sites are located on either side of the road. The site on the south side is highly visible and disruptive and should be given priority for reclamation activity. If this site is still in use, the remaining portion of the bisected moraine should be removed. When extraction activities are complete, the site should be closed to vehicular access to encourage revegetation.

**R-2** This small, inactive materials site has a nearly level, driveable surface and wonderful views of peaks in the Alaska Range as well as the dramatic east face of the Amphitheater Mountains. An inexpensive turnout could be created here requiring only a small amount of grading to make it more accessible to vehicular use.

**R-3** Located in an area where additional turnouts are needed, this site has a nearly level gravel surface which could be developed as a turnout. The entrance and exit would be visible from both directions for safe access. The location offers nice views of Landmark Gap, Rock Creek, and distant Tangle Lakes. Conversion of this site into a scenic turnout would require little expense since a small amount of grading is the only improvement necessary.

**R-4** This medium-sized materials site currently provides the only off-road parking in the vicinity. Although views from this site are limited, it should be retained as an opportunity for travelers to pull off the road. The surface is driveable in its present condition. Space should be retained for several vehicles and the remainder of the site should be graded to more natural contours, blocked to vehicular access, and encouraged to revegetate.

**R-5** This small materials site is located entirely below the level of the road and could be completely hidden from view by placing a five foot berm or by planting tall native brush immediately adjacent to the road. An old camper shell cluttering the inside of the depression should be removed.

**R-6** To the west of Tangle Lakes where the landscape opens to highly photogenic views of Landmark Gap is another old gravel pit. Since the site does not appear to be active, it is a priority candidate for reclamation as a scenic turnout. The plan also recommended this site as a viewpoint and interpretative stop. McGinnis Peak and Mt. Moffit are visible through the mountain cut which has served as a caribou migration route and a favorite Indian hunting area.

## **Recreation Development (Rec)**

Since Management Unit 8 is popular for camping, boating, hiking, picnicing, fishing and ORV use, existing facilities reach capacity at peak use times during the year. Because of the variety of recreation use opportunities, accessibility, the

pattern of existing development, and the ability of the landscape to absorb additional use, this unit is recommended as a recreational use node. Some expansion of commercial or related services can be accommodated in the general area between the Tangle Lakes Lodge and about 1/2 mile beyond the Tangle River Inn, while a limited amount of additional trails and other recreational facilities could be provided in the surrounding area. Some scattered recreation cabins would also be compatible with the character of the area if they were limited in number and carefully sited away from the road. Although this unit is recommended for development, all land uses should be located and constructed in a manner that maintains the area's scenic and recreation values.

The following facilities are recommended for construction or improvement:

Rec-1 Intepretive Overlook . This large paved pull-out is located at milepost 13.3 at an elevation of 3,750 feet and offers a surprise view of Mt. Sanford and Mt. Drum in the Wrangell Mountains. The site is high on a hill overlooking a broad, lake-dotted valley covered in alpine tundra. The BLM Denali Highway Information Plan recommended this site as an outstanding interpretive viewpoint for the volcanically formed Wrangell Mountains. Their plan included the addition of interpretive signs, a short trail, an entrance sign on the road, and two premonitory signs. These additions would be appropriate to enhance travelers' use of this exceptional viewpoint.

Rec-2 Ten Mile Lake Day Use Recreation . Set midway between Paxson and the Tangle Lakes, Ten Mile Lake offers a variety of recreational opportunities, such as fishing, picnicing, boating, and hiking. There are several large gravel areas next to the road above the lake which could be inexpensively graded to provide parking. Because it is located in a broad valley any development

at the lake would be highly visible from the road. However, some off-road development could take place at an old Fish and Game cabin site which is in a screened location at the north end of the lake. Recommended facilities to be added at this site include picnic tables, a foot trail around the lake, and a non-motorized boat launch near the cabin. Due to the open terrain and low-lying alpine tundra, this is recommended as a day-use area only.

Rec-3 Rock Creek Crossing. This area is presently used for fishing, camping, and parking for Landmark Gap Trail access, but no formal facilities have been provided to accommodate this use. Consequently, the creek banks are eroded and the site appears unattractive. A graded parking area large enough to accommodate five to seven vehicles should be developed off the road, leaving adequate screening. In order to minimize visibility from the road and provide a sense of privacy to those using the area, only one access road should be provided. Litter barrels should be placed in unobtrusive locations. Due to its proximity to the Landmark Gap Trailhead, this site can also serve as the designated trailhead parking area.

Rec-4 Landmark Gap Trailhead. This site was identified prior to the field inventory as a popular area for off-road vehicle use. Field investigation noted that while off-road vehicle use has damaged the trail surface, the tracks are not very visible from the Denali Road. The staging area is located in a materials site, which is scarred with ORV tracks and campfire remains. The site should be graded and additional screening provided near the road to help ensure that continued use does not adversely impact the view from the road. A more appropriate site for trailhead parking is the Rock Creek crossing discussed in Rec-3.

Rec-5 Tangle Lakes Boat Launch . The BLM launch and parking area on the north side of the road is very visible and should be screened with high brush vegetation near the roadside out-house and below the driveway.

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## **Turnouts (T)**

Additional turnouts are necessary along the western portion of Management Unit 8 as scenic pull-outs and rest stops. Specific sites, most of which are located in the western part of the unit, are recommended here. Several others are covered in the discussion on Material Sites and Reclamation, including R-2, R-3, R-4 and R-6.

- T-1 Octopus Lake Overlook. Octopus Lake is a unique water feature which attracts attention and leads travelers to stop for a view at an unsafe location in the road. A small gravel widening for one or two cars should be constructed to make a safe viewing pullout. Also, the addition of a small "Octopus Lake" sign would help visitors appreciate this novelty.
- T-2 Valley Panorama Overlook. This site offers very nice views, including a panorama of a broad lake-filled valley, the Amphitheater Mountains, and the foothills of the Taiketna Mountains. It has a sufficient amount of developable, nearly level land, but it is presently undeveloped. Turnout construction here would require grading and surfacing.
- T-3 Existing Turnout. Vehicular access to a small gravel turnout overlooking the Tangle Lakes on the south side of the road is presently blocked by large stones left behind by careless grading practices. A minimal amount of grading would open this turnout to provide needed roadside parking for two cars.

## **Greenbelts (G)**

In Management Unit 8 where the terrain is open and visual absorption capability is low, greenbelts can be an effective land management tool for minimizing visual disruption of foreground lands and locating developments and landscape modifications a specified distance from the viewer. A 1,000 foot greenbelt is recommended for state and federal land along both sides of the road beyond the right-of-way, with the excep-

tion of the Tangle Lakes area.

Within this greenbelt, land use and development other than for recreation should be discouraged. Recreational uses can be sited within the greenbelt; however, they should be sensitive to the area's high scenic values and limit visible disturbance of vegetation and landforms. The alignment of access roads through the greenbelt should follow landform contours as much as possible. It is recommended that visual impact studies be prepared for land developments outside of the green-belt area and within the viewshed.

In the Tangle Lakes area, extending from 1/4 mile west of Tangle Lakes Lodge to 1/4 mile east of Tangle River Inn, a 25 foot "sensitive development strip" is recommended. This portion of the unit has been identified as a recreation use node, and future recreational developments are encouraged to locate within this area. Due to the enclosed nature of the topography, a narrow setback is sufficient to soften visual impacts and provide a buffer from road noise and dust.

The design and siting of any land use within view of the road should still be sensitive to the area's delicate scenic resource values and follow appropriate management guidelines. Because topography dictates that development must be located close to the road, care should be taken to retain as much natural land cover as possible. Developments should have no more than one access road, and there should be a separation between the road edge and adjacent land uses. Natural vegetation should be retained within the right-of-way except for minimal access clearing. Development and structures constructed in this area should utilize materials and designs which are compatible with surrounding land cover and landforms.