

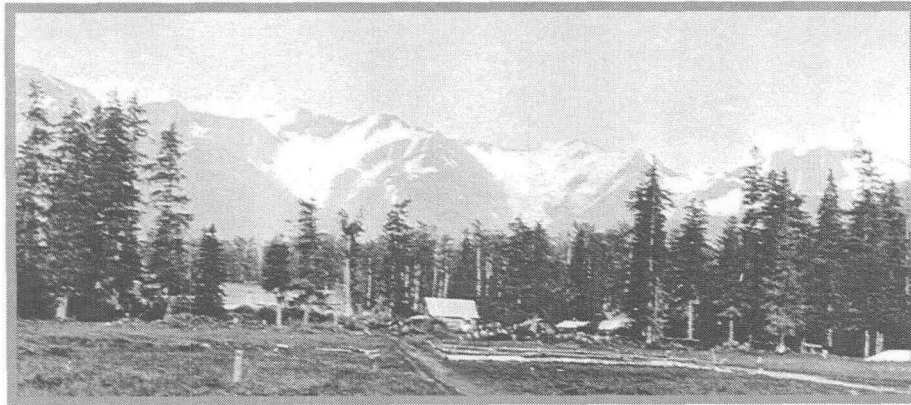
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION



Courtesy Anchorage Museum of History & Art

The Glacier Creek valley and the community of Girdwood in 1906

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The State of Alaska owns, or will soon own, important land in the Turnagain Arm area, including uplands near Girdwood and Crow Pass, small parcels near the Seward Highway, and tidelands in the arm itself. The purpose of this plan is to determine how this land should be managed.

This land is very important to the residents of the State of Alaska and the state's visitor industry. Turnagain Arm's spectacular scenery, easy access, and close proximity to Alaska's major population center make it one of the most visited places in the state. Proper management of this state land is essential if Turnagain Arm is to continue to provide benefits to both residents and visitors.

State lands within the planning area are to be managed for multiple use. However, given the Turnagain Arm area's importance for recreation, wildlife, and the visitor industry, the primary uses for most state lands within the planning area are for recreation, tourism, and wildlife habitat. Although this does not mean that other uses cannot occur on these lands, other uses must be managed in a way that does not significantly detract from the primary uses.

The role of state land use plans was established by state statute (AS 38.04.005). It is the policy of the State of Alaska "...to establish a balanced combination of land available for both public and private purposes. The choice of land best suited for public and private use shall be determined through the inventory, planning, and classification processes..."

This plan determines management intent, land-use designations, and management guidelines that apply to all state lands, excluding Chugach State Park, in the Turnagain Arm planning area.



Forest along Glacier Creek

**Coordination
with the
Municipality
of Anchorage**

As part of their municipal land entitlement, the Municipality of Anchorage will be receiving ownership of some state lands in the planning area. To ensure that both the state and the Municipality of Anchorage have compatible land management goals for these lands, the development of this plan was coordinated with the development of the Municipality's plan for their lands (the Girdwood Area Plan). Also, development on these state and municipal lands could impact the growth and development throughout Girdwood. As a result, both the Turnagain Arm Management Plan and the Girdwood Area Plan are compatible with each other, and should be viewed as companion documents. For example, while the Turnagain Arm Management Plan sets out management policies that address impacts from potential resort development on state lands and resources, the Girdwood Area Plan addresses the impacts of resort development on the community.

HOW THIS DOCUMENT IS ORGANIZED

- Chapter 1** Chapter 1 includes a brief description of the planning area, the reasons why a plan is necessary for the Turnagain Arm area, the types of decisions made by the plan, an introduction to the planning process and the agencies involved in developing the plan, and a brief description of plan implementation and modification.
- Chapter 2** Chapter 2 includes an overview of the goals and management guidelines that affect each major resource or type of land use throughout the planning area.
- Chapter 3** Chapter 3 includes management policies for the plan's five management units. The management units are geographic subdivisions of the planning area, and are further subdivided into subunits. For each management unit, there is a statement of management intent, management guidelines, a chart listing primary land uses and prohibited land uses, and a map.
- Chapter 4** Chapter 4 discusses specific actions necessary to implement the plan, including recommendations for additions to Chugach State Park, recommendations for state land selections, land use classifications, and mineral orders.
- Appendices** The Appendices offer a variety of support materials for the plan, including a glossary and an index.



Courtesy Anchorage Museum of History & Art

Trail and grade line visible along Turnagain Arm prior to railroad construction, early 1900's

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Turnagain Arm planning area includes approximately 23,000 acres of state owned and state selected lands, and approximately 25,000 acres of state owned tidelands in the Turnagain Arm Area (see Figure 1-1 and Map 1-1). The southern boundary of the planning area coincides with the boundary of the Municipality of Anchorage, which runs down the middle of Turnagain Arm, and includes Portage Lake. The planning area abuts the Prince William Sound Area Plan to the East, and Chugach State Park to the North.

The planning area includes the communities of Rainbow, Indian, Bird, Girdwood, and Portage. Girdwood is the largest of these communities with a population of approximately 1,350. These communities are linked by the Seward Highway, which bisects the planning area and is one of the most traveled and scenic roads in the state.

Most of the state lands in the planning area are in one block just north of Girdwood. This block includes the Glacier, Winner, and Crow creek drainages, the Crow Pass area, and Mount Alyeska. These lands were selected from Chugach National Forest lands as part of the state's National Forest Community Grant land entitlement. The land in the Crow Creek and Crow Pass area, and in the upper Winner and Glacier creek drainages has been selected by the state but has not been conveyed yet. The remaining land in this block has been conveyed to the state.

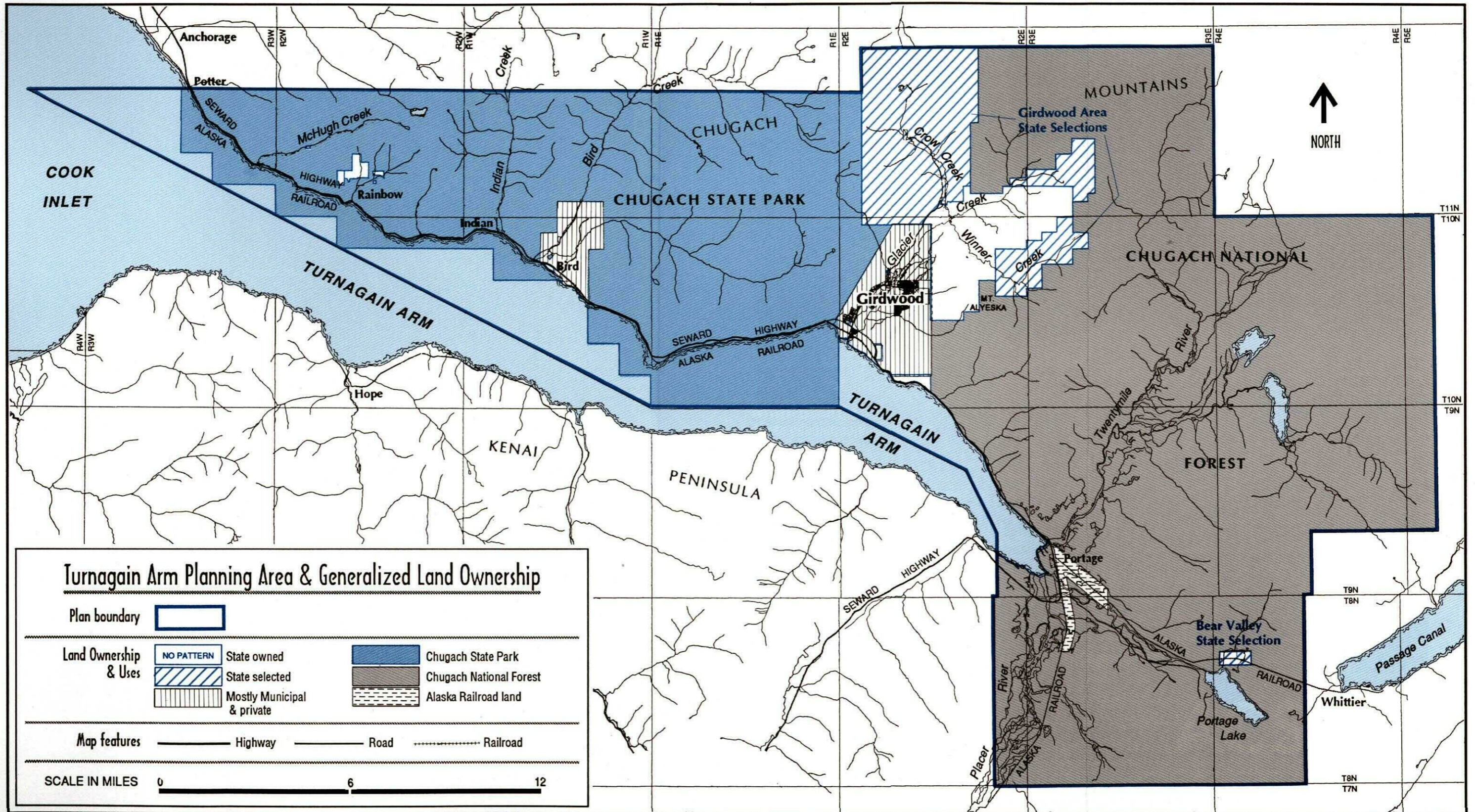
The planning area includes 320 acres of state selected land in Bear Valley, near Portage. The planning area also includes some isolated parcels of state land near McHugh Creek, Rainbow, Bird, and Girdwood.



Figure 1-1. Location of planning area

Map 1-1. Planning Area

& Generalized Land Ownership



WHY THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The planning area is rich in natural resources. There are many different ideas about how these resources should be used or protected. Although some proposed uses may be in conflict with each other, many different uses can occur throughout the planning area while protecting vital resources, providing uses are responsibly managed.

Public land managers make decisions about land use, such as whether to allow commercial recreation development to occur, or whether to issue permits for roads or sand and gravel extraction. Managers need clear, consistent guidelines for their decisions. Land use plans establish long-range commitments for the use of public land and provide clear policies for public land management.

Land use plans can be valuable for private landowners. If the state is publicly committed to land use patterns and policies, private investors can make decisions about their own land. For example, if someone is contemplating developing a subdivision next to state land, it is important to know if the public land is likely to become a gravel pit or a recreation area.

WHAT DECISIONS ARE MADE BY THE PLAN

The Turnagain Arm Management Plan determines major land uses on state lands within the planning area. These uses are described in a management intent statement for each subunit of the plan. The plan also sets management guidelines and land use designations for each subunit.

The plan also identifies prohibited uses within each management unit. These are uses that will not be allowed in the management unit without amending the plan in an open public process.

Management Intent

The plan presents management intent that explains the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) overall resource management objectives for the management units and provides background information for land managers.

Management Guidelines

Most public lands are intended to be managed for multiple use. The plan establishes management guidelines that allow various uses to occur without serious conflicts. Management guidelines can direct the timing, amount, or specific location of different activities, making the allowed uses compatible.

Land Use Designations The plan designates surface and subsurface uses for each management unit. Surface uses are designated primary if they are major surface uses; the unit will be managed to encourage its use, conservation or development.

Classifications All state lands in the planning area will be classified consistent with the land use designations in this plan. Land use designations made by the plan are thereby officially established in state land status records. A table that shows how designations convert to classifications is located in Chapter 4.

WHAT THE PLAN WON'T DO

There are some important issues that are not addressed in this plan:

Non-DNR Land This plan does not apply to municipal, private, university, federal, Mental Health Trust, or Department of Transportation & Public Facilities land. However, the plan does apply to the state-retained mineral estate, such as beneath land granted from the state to the municipality.

Fish and Wildlife Allocation of fish and game stocks and regulating methods and means of harvest are the responsibility of the state boards of Fisheries and Game.

Short-Term Uses This plan does not regulate activities that do not require a written authorization on state land, such as hiking, short-term camping, boating, hunting, and fishing.

Legislatively Designated Areas This plan does not apply to Chugach State Park or the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.

Decisions on Specific Applications While this plan provides general management intent for state land, the plan does not make decisions about specific land-use authorizations. These decisions are made through the permit review process. Land-use authorizations must, however, be consistent with the plan, and existing laws and regulations.

Actions by Agencies Other than DNR This plan does not provide management intent for prescribing actions and policies for agencies and governments other than DNR.

Oil and Gas Guidelines DNR's statewide policies for oil and gas are found in the Five-Year Oil and Gas Leasing program. Specific stipulations for oil and gas exploration, development, and production activities will be developed and applied on a case-by-case basis for each oil and gas lease sale using the lease sale process.

HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

Because of the need to establish compatible management policies between the State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage, the development of the Turnagain Arm Management Plan has been done as part of a coordinated planning effort between the two governments. Both planning processes have shared data collection responsibilities, public meetings, and a joint Community Advisory Board. As a result, the Municipality's Girdwood Area Plan is compatible with the state's plan, and should be viewed as a companion document.

The development of both the state and municipal plans is summarized in Figure 1-2. The first step was to collect data, including economic and demographic data on the community, community desires and aspirations, and data on the natural environment and ski area feasibility. Using this data, six land use alternatives were developed. These alternatives combined different levels of resort development with different community land use patterns. The alternatives were evaluated for their impacts to the environment and the community of Girdwood, and were then given public review. The draft plans were then developed, and given extensive public review before their adoption.

The Turnagain Arm Management Plan is the product of over two years of work by the Planning Team, Community Advisory Board, interest groups, and the general public. The Planning Team includes eleven representatives from state agencies, the Municipality of Anchorage, and the U.S. Forest Service (see page iii). The Community Advisory Board includes ten representatives from Girdwood and various municipal agencies and commissions (see page iv).

Public participation Public participation was an essential part of the planning process. During this planning process, twelve public meetings and workshops were held in Girdwood and Anchorage. In addition, over 200 people attended a seminar on resort development in Girdwood in October of 1992. This public involvement is summarized in separate documents available from DNR.

Throughout the planning process, members of the planning team and DNR staff met with representatives from communities in the planning area, and interest groups, to inform them of the plan's progress and provide them the opportunity to review resource data and plan proposals.

Information gathered at these meetings and the written comments were instrumental in identifying important issues, gathering data on local resource values, developing and evaluating land use alternatives, and shaping the draft plan.

SUMMARY OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MODIFICATION

The plan is implemented through administrative actions such as leases, permits, land conveyances, classification orders, and mineral orders. The plan serves as the final finding for land classifications and mineral orders. Chapter 4 presents the details of plan implementation recommendations and procedures.

Economic and social conditions in Alaska and the planning area are sure to change and the plan must be flexible enough to change with them. The plan will be reviewed regularly to monitor progress in implementing the plan and to identify problems that may require amendment or modification.

Specific modifications may be made whenever conditions warrant them, though a request for these changes must follow certain procedures. The plan may be amended after approval by the Commissioner of DNR following public review and consultation with appropriate agencies. Special exceptions and minor changes must follow certain procedures. See ***Procedures for Plan Review and Changes*** in Chapter 4 for a more detailed description of plan modifications, amendments, special exceptions, and minor changes.

Figure 1-2:
Plan Development Process

