

Chapter 1

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction and Background

Summary of Purpose of the Plan

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...”

The plan determines management intent, land use designations, and management guidelines that apply to all state lands in the planning area.

Description of the Planning Area

The Eastern Tanana Area Plan (ETAP) directs how the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will manage general state uplands and shorelands within the planning boundary. The following table summarizes the acreage to which the plan will apply:

Table 1-1: Generalized Acreage and Ownership

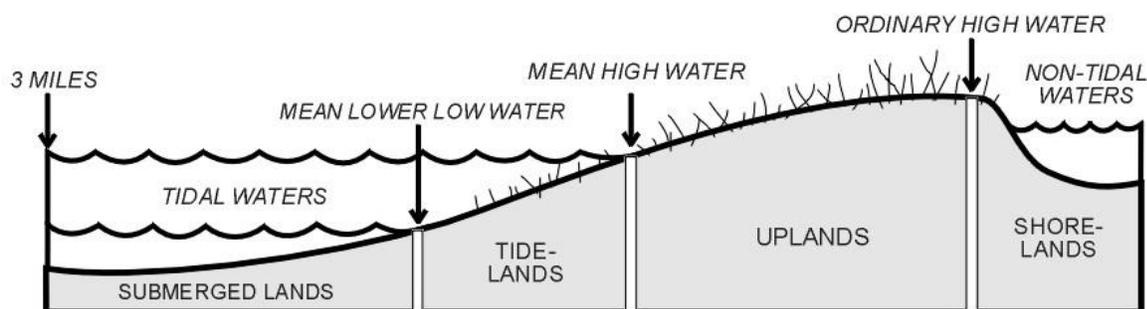
Area	Acres
State-owned uplands	8,143,559
State-owned shorelands	125,586
Military Reservation lands	930,614
Total State-owned Acreage	8,269,145

NOTE: There are five Legislatively Designated Areas (LDA) within the planning area which encompass approximately 1,695,550 acres. The ETAP establishes land use designations for all of these areas, but management intent is found in the statutes, regulations and management plans applicable to each LDA. Refer to the LDA region description at the end of this chapter, and defined in the Glossary, for more details.

Uplands and Shorelands as Described in This Plan

Figure 1-1 depicts those areas typically owned by the state and affected by area plans. In the case of this area plan, because the planning area does not include tidelands or submerged lands, only that portion of the figure that depicts uplands and shorelands apply. Shorelands include the lands below ordinary high water in non-tidal areas. Uplands include all other land above ordinary high water in non-tidal areas. These definitions are also found in the Glossary.

Figure 1-1: Submerged Lands, Tidelands, Uplands, and Shorelands as Described in This Plan



Update of the Original Tanana Basin Area Plan

The Tanana Basin Area Plan (TBAP) established policy for the management of over 12 million acres of state land and water generally within the greater Tanana River Basin. It was prepared in the early 1980s and was adopted in 1985. A portion of the 1985 TBAP was updated and adopted in September 1991.

The information and policies contained in the 1985 TBAP informed Department staff and was used as the basis for this plan revision although many changes have been made in order to deal with changes in land ownership, changed patterns of development, and more recent resource information. These changes allow the Department to fulfill the mission and statutory requirements of the agency; are responsive to the needs of the agency and the public; reflect current information and understanding of natural and cultural resources; and, revise state management intent and policies to reflect changes in land ownership and use.

A significant change undertaken through this revision process was to divide the TBAP planning area into two separate area plans – the Eastern Tanana Area Plan (ETAP) and Yukon Tanana Area Plan (YTAP). The boundary between the two plans was generally derived from the western boundary of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the south bank of the Tanana River, and the eastern boundary of the Denali Borough. The ETAP planning area contains approximately 8.3 million acres of state land and water. The boundaries of the

planning area is more or less unchanged from the regions contained in the eastern portion of the 1985 TBAP, with the exception of the removal of approximately 247,000 acres of land in the area of Tangle Lakes. This area was removed from the current plan boundary because it is managed by the Southcentral Region Office (based in Anchorage) and the area is functionally similar to other state lands in the area of the Denali Highway. Because of this, management direction for the area of state land around Tangle Lakes will be determined when the plan for the area of state lands around the Denali Highway is developed.

Since the original 1985 TBAP, much has changed in the portion of the Eastern Tanana Basin that is included in this plan. Much of the populated area along the Alaska, Richardson, Parks, and Glenn highways has continued to become more developed. Most of this growth and development has occurred in the community of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough in general. Growth and development has also occurred in other communities adjacent to the major highways but less than that experienced in the Fairbanks area. A variety of economic and demographic trends has accelerated growth and probably will continue in the areas most readily accessible from the developed roads or major regional trails. Another major change has been the marked decline in the inventory of state land, which has been particularly noticeable in the areas along and adjoining the highways. In the early 1980s the state was the principal land owner in these areas. Since that time, the amount of state land has steadily decreased with state land being conveyed to the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the University of Alaska, and to private parties through state land and agricultural land sales and settlements. This has resulted in a decreased and dispersed state land base in areas near the highways, although extensive state holdings remain in the more remote and inaccessible parts of the planning area. Additionally, the 1985 area plan has been found difficult to use for decision making in DNR since its land ownership patterns and land classification designations do not reflect the current patterns of state ownership or, often, land classifications. For these reasons, revision of the 1985 plan was appropriate and was undertaken beginning in 2009. Area plans are intended to be updated on a 15 to 20 year schedule.

The Land Classification Order (LCO No. NC-10-004) that accompanies this revision revises and supersedes all previous land classifications. Mineral Order 1145 (MO 1145) and Leasehold Location Order 39 (LLO 39) also accompany this revision. LLO 39 only affects new areas of state lands not already identified by an existing LLO or Mineral Order prohibiting the location or leasing of the mineral estate. Valid mineral orders and leasehold location orders remain in effect and are not modified by this revision.

Planning Area

The planning boundary of the ETAP (Map 1-1, pg 1-5) includes all state-owned and state-selected uplands and shorelands within the area (Map 3-1, pg 3-3). This extensive area consists of mixed topography ranging from glacier capped peaks of the Alaska Range in the south, to rolling mountainous terrains in the north and central portions, to the expansive wetlands and lowland forests near the Canadian border. The vast boreal forest covers much

of the planning area north of the Alaska Range with dominant species consisting of paper birch, quaking aspen, and white and black spruce. The Tanana River and its major tributaries – the Chatanika, Chena, Salcha, Goodpaster, Johnson, Robertson, and Tok rivers – bisect three of the four regions traversing over 350 miles within the planning boundary.

Population centers within the planning area tend to be located in close proximity to the Parks, Glenn, Richardson, and Alaska highways. The principle community within the planning area is the City of Fairbanks and its associated metropolitan area. Other communities within the planning area include Traditional Native villages such as the Native villages of Dot Lake, Tanacross, and Tetlin as well as more recently established communities such as Ester, North Pole, Delta Junction, and Tok. The majority of people within the planning boundary reside within the Fairbanks North Star Borough (103,343 people estimated in 2012) while significantly fewer live in communities outside of the borough (7,218 people estimated in 2012).

Three federal land management agencies administer six Conservation System Units (CSUs) within or immediately adjacent to the ETAP boundary. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages the Delta Wild and Scenic River, the Steese National Conservation Area, and the White Mountains National Recreational Area; the National Park Service (NPS) manages the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve; and, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) manages the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge. Additionally, there are a number of military installations within the planning area, including Fort Wainwright, Fort Greely, and Eielson Air Force Base. Military lands and airspace within the ETAP planning area are essential to the missions of a large number of military units; moreover these installations are important to the overall economy of the state and represent a significant economic base for the area within which they are situated.

Within the planning area large areas of uplands are also owned by Alaska Native corporations. Most of these lands have been conveyed to regional and local Alaska Native corporations by operation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). ANCSA provided for the conveyance of land to one of 12 Alaska Native Regional Corporations and certain other local Alaska Native corporations. The largest contiguous block of Native-owned land is located in the area of Tetlin Lake. Other large tracts of Native-owned land are generally located in the upper Tanana Valley east of Delta Junction and west of the Glenn Highway.

In addition to the large areas of Federal and Native lands, approximately 1.7 million acres of land and waters have been identified as Special Purpose Sites by the Legislature. These LDAs include the Chena River Recreation Area, Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Goldstream Public Use Area, Tanana Valley State Forest, and the Delta Junction Bison Range Area. These areas of land and water are managed consistent with more specific direction contained in planning documents prepared for each unit. In some cases, the lands and waters are managed jointly by DNR and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G).

Map 1-1: Planning Area

Overall Plan Summary

This document is a revision to the 1985 TBAP that was updated in 1991. The plan establishes a balanced combination of land available for both public and private purposes through the identification of primary uses of state lands and waters, and provides management intent that the Department will follow in the management of the land and resources. Principles of multiple use and sustained yield will continue to be observed on all public domain lands. The plan also identifies areas that can be sold for private and agricultural use and areas that should be retained in state ownership. It does not direct land uses for private, borough, or federal land; nor does it provide detailed management direction for LDAs such as refuges, state forests, or parks. While DNR is the primary or co-manager of most of these LDA's, these special purpose sites are managed consistent with more detailed management plans for each area. Because more than one use is allowed on most state lands, the plan establishes guidelines that allow various uses to occur without serious conflicts.

How the Plan is Organized

The plan has four chapters:

Chapter 1 includes a summary of the purpose of the plan, description of the planning area, how and why the plan was developed, what the plan does and does not cover, and a summary of plan actions.

Chapter 2 provides the areawide land management policies and includes goals and management guidelines for the major resources affected by the plan. Guidelines are specific directives that will be applied to land and water management decisions as resource use and development occurs.

Chapter 3 includes an explanation of plan designations, general management intent for state land, descriptions of the four planning regions, and a detailed listing of management units. It also provides a summary of management constraints and considerations based on existing plans, legislative designations and other management constraints that significantly affect resource management and a description of navigability as it relates to state waters within the planning region.

The bulk of this Chapter, however, consists of the Resource Allocation Table (RAT). State land in the planning area is divided into spatial areas called 'units'. These are either uplands or shorelands and may consist both of small areas of state land, like a lot or tract within a state subdivision, as well as very large areas that have common location, access, use, or resource characteristics. There are a total of 290 units including five LDAs (Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Goldstream Public Use Area, Chena River State Recreation Area, Delta Junction Bison Range Area, and the Tanana Valley State Forest) and five shoreland units on major waterbodies in the region (Tanana, Delta, Robertson, Nabesna, and

Chisana rivers). For each unit the RAT identifies the recommended land use designation, background information on resources and uses, and management intent. Units in the RAT correspond to the management units identified on the plan maps.

Chapter 4 discusses specific actions necessary to implement the plan. These include a description of how land use designations convert into classifications, a description of survivor designations and classifications, and a land classification order. Procedures for changing the plan are also discussed.

Appendices include a glossary, land classification order, mineral order (closing), leasehold location order, and list of reservations of water.

Why This Plan Was Developed

The planning area is rich in natural resources, contains a mix of developed and undeveloped land, and there are competing demands for the use of state land. There are many different ideas about how these resources should be used or protected. Although some proposed uses might be in conflict with each other, many different uses can occur throughout the planning area while protecting vital resources, providing the uses are properly managed.

This plan establishes the land use designations for state land and describes their intended uses. The plan directs which state lands will be retained by the state and which should be sold to private citizens, used for public recreation, or used for other purposes. It also identifies general management guidelines for major resources and land uses within the planning area as well as guidelines for the development and use of resources for specific parcels.

With an area plan, state permits and permit review processes become more efficient for the government and the public. The area plan guides DNR decisions for leases, sales, and permits that authorize use of state lands. Preparation of land use plans for state general domain lands is required under Title 38 of Alaska Statutes¹. DNR's actions will be based on the area plan.

The Mandate

The state is responsible for the management of those lands it owns and the DNR is the agency responsible for managing these lands. There are about 8.3 million acres of state-owned uplands within the planning boundary including over 125,000 acres of shorelands associated with the Tanana, Big Delta, Robertson, Nabesna, and Chisana rivers. Of the uplands, nearly 1.7 million acres (21%) are associated with LDAs. The remainder of the

¹ State special purpose sites, like state game refuges, state parks, or state forests, often are required to prepare management plans, but do so under other authorities.

planning area - over 6 million acres - is general domain land managed under AS 38.04 and 38.05. This plan focuses on the management of the general domain state land, although plan designations (and land classifications) are provided for four of the five LDAs within this plan boundary.

Alaska Statute (AS 38.04.065) requires the Commissioner of DNR to “adopt, maintain, and when appropriate, revise regional land use plans that provide for the use and management of state-owned land.” To ensure that these lands are properly managed, DNR has developed this plan for all state lands, both uplands and shorelands in the planning area.

The planning process provides a means of openly reviewing resource information and public concerns before making long-term decisions about public land management. The planning process resolves conflicting ideas on land use and informs the public about what choices were made and why. Decisions are made on a comprehensive basis, rather than case-by-case, providing consistency and consideration of the wide diversity of resources and uses within the planning area. This process provides for more efficient use and protection of the area’s resources.

What the Plan Will Do

The ETAP will form the basis for the management of land and water that is state owned or selected by the state. When adopted, ETAP is the basis for DNR decision making for state land and resources. The plan will help ensure that state resource management takes into account the sustained yield of renewable resources, that development is balanced with environmental concerns, and that public access to state land is provided. The plan encourages cooperation with other landowners to better address conflicts caused by checkerboard land ownership patterns. Finally, the plan documents the state’s intent for land management so that both public and private interests know how the state intends to manage lands over the period the plan is in effect.

What the Plan Won’t Do

While the plan provides an overall basis for state decision making, it is important to recognize that there are limits on its authority and constraints on what it can and cannot apply to. The following are some important aspects of land management that are not addressed in this plan and are beyond the authority to the area plan to regulate:

Non-DNR Lands. This plan does not apply to lands that are: federal, municipal, private, University of Alaska, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, or Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

Fish and Wildlife. Management, maintenance, and protection of fish and wildlife resources are the responsibility of the Department of Fish and Game. Allocation of fish and game stocks and regulation of harvest methods, means, and timing are the responsibility of the State Boards of Game and Fisheries.

Generally Allowed Uses (GAU). The area plan does not regulate activities that do not require a written authorization on state land, such as hiking, camping, boating, hunting, and fishing. GAU are identified in 11 AAC 96.020 and the conditions for GAU are provided in 11 AAC 96.025.

Legislatively Designated Areas. The plan does not apply to state parks, refuges, public use areas, and other areas that are legislatively designated with the exception of providing designations (and subsequent plan classifications after adoption of the plan) for LDAs that are not totally reserved from the public domain.²

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

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

How This Plan is Used

This plan is intended to manage state lands and resources within the planning area, and is the expression of how DNR will pursue this management. Much of the use of this plan is by the DNR Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW). Adjudicators are to use this plan when reviewing and making decisions on authorizations for use of state land, including permits, leases, sales, conveyances, and rights-of-way. The DNR Division of Forestry (DOF) and Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) also use this plan in the administration of their programs and activities.

Public Participation in Planning Process

The Eastern Tanana Area Plan is the product of a five year planning process conducted by the DNR DMLW; other divisions within DNR; state and federal agencies (primarily ADF&G); local governments (primarily Fairbanks North Star Borough); interest groups, and the public. A first round of public meetings occurred in the spring of 2009 and focused on a description of the planning process and planning area, and on issue identification and scoping. A second round of public meetings were held in the fall of 2014. These meetings

² See “Land Use Designation” in the glossary for a further description of authorities.

focused on the Public Review Draft with information provided on proposed plan designations and management intent (for specific management units) and on plan implementation. The results of these discussions and the subsequent review of public comments submitted on the Public Review Draft formed the basis for revisions to the draft plan, which were included in an issue response summary, and incorporated into the final plan document.

Process of Plan Preparation

The following process was used to develop this area plan:

- identify issues in the planning area;
- map and analyze resources and uses;
- conduct public meetings to identify land use issues;
- prepare the Public Review Draft (PRD) based in part on comments previously received from the public and from agencies;
- public review of the PRD;
- review all public and agency comments and prepare an Issue Response Summary (IRS) that addresses issues raised in comments;
- based upon the results and recommendations of the IRS, the Commissioner signs and adopts it as DNR's management intent for state lands in the planning area.

Who Developed the Plan?

The DNR planning staff directs the planning process; including data collection, drafting the area plan, preparing response to public and agency comments, and final plan preparation. A number of local, state, and federal agencies reviewed the preliminary draft of the PRD and provided land use and resource recommendations that are often valuable in refining initial plan recommendations. Following the review of public comments on the PRD and subsequent IRS, the Commissioner of the DNR formally adopted the Eastern Tanana Area Plan.

Uses and Resources Within the Planning Area

Uses of State Land. The plan outlines management objectives for state land. This includes describing what resources and valid existing uses should be protected, and what uses are most suitable for development or protection on state land during the planning horizon.

State-selected Land and Land Beneath Waters Susceptible to Navigation. Some lands have been selected but not yet been conveyed to the state. Submerged lands beneath waters that are navigable or susceptible to navigation for title purposes, are state owned. In both cases, the plan determines how to manage these lands if they are state-owned.

Land Sales. The state has offered land for sale to Alaskan citizens. The planning process reviewed the state land holdings to determine which undeveloped lands are suitable for settlement uses or agricultural land disposal. This plan recommends the retention of the settlement designation of many existing settlement areas in addition to new settlement areas.

Municipal Land Conveyance. When this plan was revised, only the Fairbanks North Star Borough had received a municipal entitlement, and this had been conveyed or authorized for conveyance to the borough by DNR. At this time (2014), no other municipal entities are designated to receive state land under the municipal entitlement act. Should this occur, however, they will be entitled to ten percent of the vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved (VUU) state land within the boundary of the new borough/city. This plan influences entitlements of future new municipal entities by determining which state lands will be classified VUU and which lands will be retained in state ownership. It also provides the basis for the land classifications that determine if land is conveyable under the Municipal Act. Until a final decision approving conveyance of land to a municipal entity has been approved, state lands remain under state ownership and this area plan provides the basis for their management.

Roads, Trails, and Access. The plan considers access across state lands, including existing and proposed roads, trails, easements, and rights-of-way.

Mining, Coal Leasing, and Oil and Gas Development. The plan reviews the mineral, coal, and oil and gas potential within the planning area and describes the statutory authorities that affect mining, coal development, and oil and gas extraction. This revision maintains all current mineral closures but does not recommend any further closures to mineral entry – with a single exception that provides for the protection of a utility corridor near Delta Junction. The more critical areas have been adequately covered by mineral closures that pre-date this plan. A Leasehold Location Order is recommended, however. It will affect all land identified for land disposals and designated Settlement areas that are not currently closed to mineral entry within the area of the land disposal. Coal and oil and gas development can occur throughout the planning area; however, development in the LDA's is subject to the management plans specific for those areas.

Forest Resources. Extensive forest resources exist within the planning area. These are scattered throughout the eastern, central, and western portions of the planning area, and total over 1.96 million acres, including areas of the Tanana Valley State Forest. The plan identifies these areas and specifies the areas considered appropriate for inclusion in the sustained yield calculations that are made by the Division of Forestry. Those areas with

forest resource values that are designated Forestry are to be the basis for those calculations and may be considered appropriate for inclusion in a state forest, should the legislature consider the expansion of the Tanana Valley State Forest within the planning area.

Recreation. Recreation is a popular use of state land. The plan proposes designations to manage lands for recreation in several locations where recreational use is extensive. Many areas designated Resource Management, Minerals, Habitat, or Water Resources are also widely used for recreation.³ Where appropriate, these uses are recognized in the management intent statement for a unit where recreation is particularly significant and widespread or where it is important to recognize this use. Those areas with a significant recreation use or potential use are designated Public Recreation-Dispersed.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat. The plan documents important fish and wildlife habitat areas and provides management intent and guidelines for these resources and uses. Areas with particularly significant habitat, wildlife, or fisheries values are designated Habitat or co-designated with Habitat if there is another significant use or value.

Water Resources. DNR is responsible for allocating water resources on all lands within the State of Alaska. The plan designates areas to be managed for their water resource values and describes management guidelines for instream flow reservations. Areas with water resource values are primarily associated with the maintenance of wetlands, which are extensively distributed throughout the planning area.

Planning Period

This plan reflects land management decisions and allocations based on the best available information on the demand for use of state land and resources projected over the next 20 years. It is also based on a specific set of social, environmental, economic, and technological assumptions. The plan guides state land use and resource decisions for the next 20 years or until the plan is revised.

³ All general state land is managed consistent with Generally Allowed Uses of State Land and Conditions for Generally Allowed Uses of State Lands (11 AAC 96.020 and 11 AAC 96.025). Generally Allowed Uses recognize a variety of recreational uses that occur on state land within this plan.

Summary of Plan Actions

Management Intent

The planning area consists of four regions that contain both uplands and lowlands as well as a single region that encompasses five LDAs. The four regions are composed of state-owned and state-selected lands that are contiguous to each other and have similar characteristics.

The plan presents management intent that explains the department's overall resource management objectives for each region and unit, and provides resource and use information for land managers. This information is presented in Chapter 3.

Land Use Designations

Each unit identifies one or more designations⁴ representing the uses and resources for which the area will be managed. Plan designations are identified and described in Chapter 3 along with Resource Allocation Tables that contains the designations specific to individual units.

Management Guidelines

According to the Alaska Constitution, state lands are to be managed for multiple uses. When potentially conflicting uses are designated in a parcel, the plan provides guidelines to allow various uses to occur without unacceptable consequences. Management guidelines for specific management units are given in Chapter 3. Guidelines that apply to the entire planning area are identified in Chapter 2.

Classifications

This plan identifies classifications for all state lands which are derived from the designations in this plan. All state lands in the planning area are classified consistent with the land use designations in this plan. The Land Classification Order (LCO) adopted with this plan is included as Appendix B. It actually enacts and imposes the classifications that are identified as designations in the area plan. Table 4-2 in Chapter 4 shows how designations convert to classifications

⁴ See "Land Use Designation" in the glossary for more detailed information.

Summary of Plan Implementation and Modification

The plan is implemented through administrative actions such as leases, permits, land conveyances, and classification orders. The plan serves as the final finding for land classifications. 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 periodically to monitor progress in implementing the plan and to identify problems that may require amendment or modification.

Specific modifications may be made when conditions warrant them, although a request for these changes must follow certain procedures (11 AAC 55.240). The plan may be amended after approval by the Commissioner of DNR following public review and consultation with the appropriate agencies. Special exceptions and minor changes must follow certain procedures. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed description of procedures for plan modifications, amendments, special exceptions, and minor changes.