Forestry

Resource Description

There are approximately 15,900 acres of spruce, birch, and cottonwood stands in the Fish Creek Unit. The average acre contains approximately 400 trees ranging in size from 10 inches d.b.h. (diameter at breast height) up to 24 inches d.b.h., with some black cottonwood trees reaching 27 inches d.b.h. The stands are typical of the Susitna River Valley.

Volumes. In some areas, trees over five inches d.b.h. reach the 1,000 cubic feet per acre level. For trees smaller than five inches d.b.h. there are no reliable estimates of the volume and/or weight of their biomass. In general, stand volumes in the unit are better than many in the overall region but are not as a rule among the highest in volume.

Commercial timber. White spruce and paper birch, with some cottonwood, comprise the potential timber harvest. Based on trees five inches d.b.h. and larger, the area contains about 20,000,000 cubic feet of birch or approximately 220,000 cords of firewood. Based on trees 8" and larger, the area contains 467,000 cubic feet or 1868 mbf of white spruce.

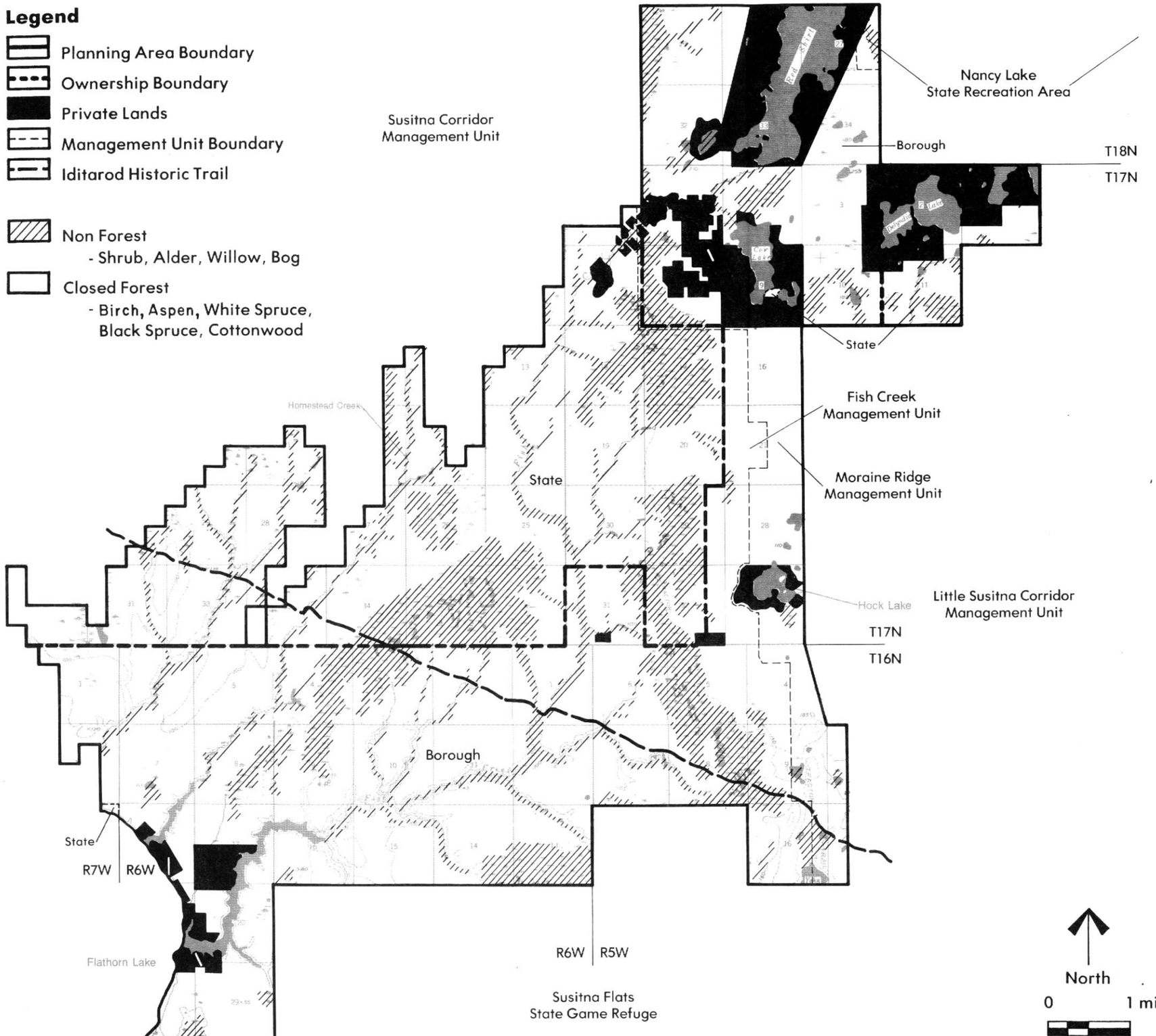
Non-commercial forest. Black spruce covers approximately 4,900 acres and would yield 72,000 cubic feet of wood. In addition, there are 700 acres of riparian willow/alder for which volumes have not been estimated.

Resource Evaluation

Quality and quantity of timber. The majority of the timber is mature or over-mature birch and aspens with some spruce. The volumes appear to be lower than those of Point MacKenzie, and in the older stands there is a high incidence of disease which further reduces the commercial volumes.

Access. Current base rates for the value of standing timber to the owner are established on a premise of reasonable cost of access. At present no all-season access to the area exists, and the Fish Creek Unit's location makes the prospect of constructing logging roads economically unattractive, since the potential harvest would not sufficiently compensate the logger for the costs involved. If roads already existed the value of the standing timber would be significantly higher; or were there a strong market for the wood the cost of access would become correspondingly less prohibitive. At present, however, there is not a demonstrably strong market and the area's loggers do not presently have the production capabilities to move large enough quantities of wood fast enough to utilize the area's timber in less than ten years following road construction.

The lack of road access makes a state or borough timber sale in the Fish Creek area impractical at present. The limited demand and production capabilities makes a sale impractical after road construction and before



FISH CREEK
Management Plan
General Land Cover

sale of the agricultural tracts. If agricultural development is significantly delayed and the demand and production capabilities increase, the feasibility of a state and/or borough timber sale could change.

In any event, the unit's timber resource will be of considerable value to residents and farmers in the form of houselogs, fuelwood, and rough cut (unplaned) lumber. If the new owner wishes to farm his land he could cut the timber and use it in these ways, or he could burn it or sell it on the stump.

Relationship to other values. Forests of the unit provide important habitat for valuable fish and wildlife resources, including game and non-game species. Harvest of timber resources and/or non-harvest manipulation of forest vegetation will result in an increase in the acreage of more productive habitat conditions for moose and in the generally recognized, productive conditions (edge effect) associated with edges of adjoining stands. Either operation can be conducted so as to result in habitat enhancement without unacceptable impacts on other environmental conditions.

Forests of the unit contribute to the appeal of the area for various dispersed recreation uses.