

Chapter 1: Introduction, Background, and Purpose

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Background, and Purpose

Summary of Purpose

The Hatcher Pass Management Plan (2010 Management Plan) is the land use plan for public lands in the Hatcher Pass management plan area. As such, it provides the basis for the management of state and borough lands and affects all authorizations issued by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Matanuska Susitna Borough (borough). It designates the uses that are to occur on public lands¹ and establishes a general direction for public lands management within the planning area. Because of its size, the planning area is separated into ten discrete management units that occupy areas with generally similar characteristics and management direction. For these units, management intent, management guidelines, and management recommendations are also identified.

Planning Area

The area encompassed by the management plan, termed the ‘planning area’, includes the foothills and mountains of the Talkeetna Mountains (Maps 1-1 through 1-3). This large area, consisting of 301,301 acres, extends from the Kashwitna River drainage in the north to the foothills of privately owned land in the south, and from the boundary with the Southeast Susitna Area Plan to the west then east to the boundary of the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. It consists of mostly mountainous topography, much of it covered by glaciers, separated by several large river valleys.

This area is depicted in a series of maps:

- Map 1-1: Land Status
- Map 1-2: Land Status, Topography and Management Boundaries
- Map 1-3: Topographical View of Plan Area
- Map 1-4: Satellite View of Plan Area

Consult these maps to get a better understanding of land status, topography, plan and management unit boundaries, and the distribution of river drainages and cultural features.

¹ ‘Public Lands’ refers to the lands owned or managed by the State of Alaska and Matanuska Susitna Borough. When the term ‘state land’ is used it refers to only state land, and when the term ‘Borough Land’ is used, this refers to only that land owned or managed by the Matanuska Susitna Borough.

Description of Planning Area (General)

The planning area is situated in the southwestern corner of the Talkeetna Mountains. Except for river bottoms of the larger streams and some of the foothill areas in the western part of the planning area, topography is characteristically mountainous with numerous glaciers, cirques, and lakes. The area is avalanche prone². Vegetative patterns reflect the climatic influences and topography. Evergreen-deciduous forests, consisting mostly of spruce and poplars, occupy the relatively few areas of level terrain in the western and southern parts of the planning area and extend up the larger river valleys. Most of the management area is found at or above timberline and consists primarily of alder and willow brushfields, meadows consisting primarily of bluejoint plant communities, and, at higher elevations in the alpine zone, low-growing woody plants and alpine tundra. The Little Susitna, Willow, Sheep, and Montana Creeks and the Kashwitna and Talkeetna Rivers all flow through the planning area. All are considered navigable under state navigability criteria and all are anadromous.

The principal natural resources within the planning area are associated with the fish and wildlife populations and mineral resources. There is a significant concentration of moose in the western most part of the planning area, near the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area and extending south into the Bald Mountain / Hillside unit. Other wildlife includes caribou, sheep, black and brown bears, wolf, wolverine, coyote, beaver, fox, martin, mink, and weasel. Resident ptarmigan, spruce grouse, and nesting tundra birds also occur within the area as well as raptors, song birds, and bird species associated with wetlands.

There are many anadromous streams in the planning area in which high value resident fish species are also present. Placer and hard rock mining has occurred in this area since the early 1900s and is within the Willow Creek Mining District. There are over 500 mining claims, both federal and state, primarily within the Independence and Craigie Creek management units, as well as but extending southward into the Bald Mountain / Hillside unit along Grubstake Gulch and Homestake Creek.

Other than mining, the Hatcher Pass area is primarily used for public recreation, which has increased significantly over the last 25 years since the initial plan was prepared. The open, rolling terrain, steep-walled valleys and jagged peaks provide a variety of recreational opportunities. Popular summer uses include sight-seeing, photography, hiking, river kayaking, mountaineering, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, hang-gliding, rock collection, off-road vehicle use in designated locations, and berry picking. Winter use includes various types of cross-country skiing, telemarking, boarding, sledding, and down-hill skiing, dog mushing, and snow-machining. Both summer and winter use has increased dramatically, but especially winter recreation. This is at least partly because of the area's deep powder snow, which comes early in the fall and remains late into spring, which makes for diverse skiing, boarding, and snow-machining opportunities and for an extended winter use period.

² An Avalanche Study was conducted during the 1986 Management Plan Process. A map of the original planning area that depicts the results from that study is included as Appendix E of this plan.

A more detailed description of the area’s uses and natural resources is contained in Chapters 2 and 3; consult those chapters for detail.

Land Ownership and Land Status

The Hatcher Pass management area³ consists of a mixed ownership pattern of private, borough, and state land, although the state is the principal land owner. There are 301,301 acres within this area. Map 1-2 provides an indication of both the amount of the various types of land ownership as well as its distribution. Private ownership generally coincides with current or patented federal mining claims in the Independence, Craigie Creek and Archangel units and constitutes only 1% of the total planning area. The Mat-Su Borough land ownership totals 3,369 acres, most of which (3,272 acres) is situated within the Government Peak unit. The remainder of the management area consists of state land, or 294,652 acres.

Table 1-1: Land Ownership Summary

<u>Land Owner</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
State:	294,652
Mat-Su Borough:	3,369
Private:	2,965
Federal Mining Claim:	315
Planning Area Total:	301,301

**Note: Plan recommendations do not apply to private land or federal mining claims.*

General Domain Land. Most of the state land consists of ‘general domain’ land, which is governed by AS 38 statutory requirements and by associated Administrative Code (11 AAC 96). This land is to be managed for multiple use and sustained yield of the area’s renewable resources, although state land use plans can direct this management toward particular uses.

Special Purpose Land. ‘Special purpose’ land differs from general domain land in that the legislature can, under statute and the state constitution, designate certain areas as a special purpose site, withdrawing the land from the general domain. Examples include state park, state game refuges, critical habitat areas, recreation areas, and public use areas. Termed Legislatively Designated Areas (LDAs), two occur within the management area. These include the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area (CHA) in the western part of the planning area, and the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area (PUA) generally situated along the Little Susitna river drainage. These areas are to be managed according to the statutory requirements of the pertinent LDA. The remainder of the planning area is affected by AS 38.04 and 38.05 planning and use requirements.

³ The term ‘management area’ as used in this plan refers to the area encompassed by the plan boundary.

Legislatively Designated Areas. Management requirements pertaining to the two LDAs:

- The Hatcher Pass PUA is managed under AS 41.23.130. This section of statute requires that the state owned land within the PUA be managed to be consistent with “their primary function as public use land.” DNR interprets this broadly in the sense a variety of uses may be allowed within the Hatcher Pass PUA if they do not interfere with public recreation. A Public Use Area is also subject to the requirements of AS 38.04 and AS 38.05.
- The Willow Mountain CHA is controlled by AS 16.20.500-530, which is the general authority for Critical Habitat Areas, and more specifically by 5 AAC 95.420, which lists the activities that require a permit. The latter precludes certain activities from occurring within a CHA unless a special permit is issued by ADF&G Division of Habitat which affirms that the use is compatible with statutory intent. Among the uses that are prohibited (except by permit) are construction or the continuing use of structures, destruction of vegetation, off-road use of wheeled or tracked equipment, and grazing and general husbandry. ADF&G has routinely issued special area permits to the general public, which authorizes certain types of off road use in the CHA. ADF&G should be contacted for current information regarding routes and off road vehicle uses.

The CHAs are to be managed under a management plan prepared by ADF&G as required by AS 16.20.620(b). Until such a plan is prepared, ADF&G decisions are to be consistent with the management intent for the Willow Mountain unit in the 1986 HPMP. ADF&G intends to develop a management plan for the CHA in the near future. Once that plan is prepared, it will control activities within the CHA that are of the type listed in 5 AAC 95.420. The HPMP will only have limited applicability once the CHA management plan is approved.

Land Administered Under ILMAs. There are two other areas that, while not LDAs, are managed for specific purposes that are defined in an Interagency Land Management Agreement (ILMAs). ILMAs are issued by the Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW) to another state agency (like Alaska Department of Fish & Game) or to another division within DNR for the purpose of transferring management authority for the administration of state land and waters from DMLW to another entity for specific site and areas. In the case of Hatcher Pass, there are two such ILMAs, both of which are issued to the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR): one for the Summit Lake State Recreation Site and another, for the Independence Mine. These areas are to be managed consistent with the requirements of the ILMA and with the requirements that the DPOR may impose under their general park authorities in Administrative Code (11 AAC 12). While these specific areas are not withdrawn from state general domain land, they are administered under the more restrictive DPOR authorities of 11 AAC 12.

Map 1-1: Land Status

Map 1-2: Land Status, Topography and Management Boundaries

Map 1-3: Topographical View of Plan Area

Map 1-4: Satellite View of Plan Area

Planning History

There has been the recognition for some time that, because of the amount and diversity of use within the Hatcher Pass area, active management and planning is necessary.

The first management plan was prepared in the early 1980s and adopted in October, 1986⁴. The reasons given for the initial plan development are similar to those that are driving this revision, but are also somewhat different. The initial planning effort was undertaken in response to the increasing, year-round recreational use in the Hatcher Pass area, the conflict between uses in the narrow road corridor, the need for improved access and parking facilities and interest in developing a major ski resort on state land in the Government Peak unit. Except for the parts of the plan affected by a 1989 Plan Amendment, the 1986 Management Plan remains the basis for the current management of the Hatcher Pass area until the 2010 Management Plan is adopted formally.

There was a significant amendment of a portion of the 1986 Management Plan in 1989.⁵ This amendment focused on revision of the Government Peak unit and revised the 1986 Management Plan to provide detailed management guidelines and requirements for the development of a downhill (Alpine) ski area and four-season resort. Other than the extensive revision of this and adjacent units to accommodate the proposed ski development, little else in the plan was changed through the 1989 Amendment, with certain exceptions. The Reed Lakes subunit was modified to create a non-motorized special use area, and the Little Susitna subunit was changed to extend this non-motorized area to the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area.

A revision of the Government Peak subunit was also attempted in 2008, but did not proceed to adoption. The borough developed a draft Special Land Use District (SPUD) for the area of the Government Peak subunit, which would have the effect of placing specific land use controls on any development that would occur on borough owned land for the ski resort and on state owned land that contained the proposed ski runs. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had developed a plan amendment that would have implemented the proposed SPUD on state land, the effect of which, if adopted, would have rescinded the 1989 Plan Amendment. The Borough Assembly did not take action on the proposed SPUD and, instead, directed the borough administration to develop a Development Suitability Analysis and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prior to action being taken on the SPUD. DNR postponed any action on Hatcher Pass until the borough had developed a position on development within the Government Peak subunit. The borough completed the EIS on May 5, 2010.

⁴ The original plan is termed the '1986 Management Plan' in this document.

⁵ Termed the '1989 Plan Amendment' in this document.

Reasons for Plan Revision

Many of the reasons for the preparation of the initial plan in the early 1980s remain valid or have increased in urgency. There has been increasing use of the Hatcher Pass area for both winter and summer recreation activities, and conflicts between uses, primarily during the winter, have intensified in areas near the road in the East Side⁶ of the planning area. However, there are somewhat different reasons for the 2010 revision of the management plan. These include but are not limited to:

- Changes in land ownership. The Borough owned large portions (3,000 acres) of the Government Peak Management Unit. This land was obtained by the borough as a conveyance of state land as part of their municipal entitlement. An additional 272 acres were conveyed to the borough through a land exchange in March 2012. (See ADL 231234 and LCO SC-09-003AO1 for more information on this land exchange).
- Transfer of interest in and management responsibility for the development of a ski area/resort in the Government Peak unit. In addition to the conveyance of state land in this area to the borough, DMLW established a Development Lease⁷ that affects over 11,000 acres of land, which transfers the authority for the development of public ski facilities in that area to the Borough.
- Enactment of LDAs and ILMAs. These did not exist in the original plan, are now enacted, and impose different management requirements for state land and waters than in general domain land (which they previously were a part of).
- Changes in the technology of snow machines which are more powerful and can traverse slopes greatly in excess of the types of machines in use in the 1970s and 1980s. This has provided access to areas previously not accessible to snowmachines.
- Difficulties in plan interpretation and use by DMLW and DPOR. Both divisions have responsibility for the management of state land in Hatcher Pass, including the issuance of authorizations. Because the plan is outdated, it is not immediately evident what the management recommendations and requirements are for specific areas. This has resulted in confusion and a misunderstanding of what the plan requires.
- Mapping inconsistency between DPOR maps for snowmachine use, maps within the 1986 Management Plan, and maps associated with regulations promulgated under 11 AAC 96. In some cases regulations close an area to motorized use that, as a

⁶ *East Side*: the area that is situated generally east of the road summit at Bullion Mountain near Summit Lake. It encompasses the following units: High Glacier Peaks, Reed Lakes / Little Susitna, Independence, and Government Peak. The *West Side* is to the west of that location and includes the following units: Cragie Creek, Bald Mountain / Hillside, Willow Mountain, and the Kashwitna River Drainage (since the bulk of the latter area is situated west of Bullion Mountain. See the Adopted Plan Map (Map 2-5) for detail.

⁷ The Development Lease is explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

matter of practice, has been open to that use for many years and, conversely, areas designated in DPOR maps for motorized use are actually closed to this use. This needs to be fixed so that it is clear what areas are open or not open to motorized use.

- Expansion of the area used for winter recreation and increasing back-country use.
- Increase in population growth and recreation demands during both the summer and winter.

Management Restrictions and Authorities Related to Statute and Administrative Code

This management plan applies to state general domain land, the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area (a legislatively designated area), and borough land. It does not apply to private land and normally does not apply to state land conveyed to municipalities. However, the borough has agreed, in settlement litigation, to conform to the requirements of the management plan as it pertains to borough land.

Most of the land within the Hatcher Pass management area is state land designated as general domain land. Such areas are controlled under AS 38 (General Land Management) and are subject to those standards and the associated requirements of Administrative Code in 11 AAC 96. Certain components of statute and administrative code are particularly relevant to the management of general domain land and to decisions on certain types of land use activities within the Hatcher Pass management area.

Traditional Means of Access (AS 38.04.200). This section of statute places restrictions on the authority of DNR to manage state land and water so that “a traditional means of access for traditional outdoor activities is restricted for the purpose of protecting aesthetic values.” AS 38.04.200(a). Traditional means of access means those types of transportation on, to, or in state land for “which a popular pattern of use has developed.” Traditional outdoor activities means those types of activities that people may use for sport, subsistence, or personal enjoyment and that have been historically conducted as part of individual, family, or community life pattern on state land. Aesthetic values means those values that are an expression of the social or cultural viewpoint held by a portion of the population. Based on this statute, an area(s) cannot be closed to motorized use when a popular pattern of use has been established if the intent is related to ‘aesthetic’ reasons, which are defined in statute as “those values that exist as an expression of the social or cultural viewpoint held by a portion of the population.”

Under certain conditions an area can be closed to motorized use: if the area is less than 640 contiguous acres in size, if the closure is temporary in nature and if it is effective for less than a period of eight months in a three-year period, for the protection of public safety and public or private property, or is necessary for the development of natural resources and a reasonable alternative is available and approved by the Commissioner. AS 38.04.200(a)(1). DNR interprets and applies this restriction as it is stated. That is, there must be issues of

public safety, protection of private or public property (which can include habitat degradation), or conflict with actual or potential natural resources for DNR to close an area to motorized use when such use has been established as a popular pattern of recreational use.

Special Use Land (11 AAC 96.014). This section of regulation permits DNR to impose special requirements or additional protections on state land when DNR determines that an area possesses special scenic, recreational, or resource values that warrant this additional protection. In 1987, DNR created a Special Use Land area (ADL 223585) in portions of the Hatcher Pass management area⁸ in order to protect certain natural features and manage certain forms of motorized use. 11 AAC 96.014(b)(3). These areas are shown in Map 1-5, which depicts two areas of closure: one seasonal (summer) and one year-round. The affected areas include the following units: Independence, Reed Lake / Little Susitna, and Government Peak. These are subject to a year-round closure to motorized use. A small portion of the Bald Mountain / Hillside unit has a summer closure.

Changes to the non-motorized areas depicted on Map 1-5 are subject to the requirements of AS 38.04.200 and revisions to this map can only occur when the requirements of this portion of statute are satisfied.

General Park Provisions (11 AAC 12). This section of administrative regulation permits DPOR to impose its General Provision regulations on state general domain land when there is a management agreement between DMLW and DPOR that transfers management authority for the control of certain uses (in this case, for recreation). A management agreement exists and includes management units⁹ that experience heavy recreation use, allowing DPOR to exercise its authorities on state general domain land. This practice occurs throughout the state when the types of uses and activities on state land can best be managed by DPOR. Usually, small areas are involved. These authorities do not affect land owned by the borough.

This revision affects all general domain land within the management area and is intended to supersede the 11 AAC 12 authorities now used to close areas to motorized uses. Other aspects of the 11 AAC 12 authorities are intended to continue.

Relationship of Management Plan to Area Plans, Land Use Regulations, and Hatcher Pass PUA Management Plan

Area Plan (AS 38.04.065(a)). DNR is required to develop a ‘land use plan’ for the management of state lands and waters on general domain land, and authorizations that DNR issues shall be based on such plans. DNR has two general types of land use plans: area plans

⁸ The Government Peak unit is not actually closed by this regulation since the Special Use Area Map that was adopted with the regulation did not depict this area as being affected. Rather, this area, while closed to motorized use, is closed under 11 AAC 12.

⁹ Includes all or portions of the Government Peak, Independence, Archangel, Reed Lakes / Little Susitna management units.

and management plans. Area plans typically cover a very large geographic area and establish plan designations, management intent, and management guidelines. Management plans are often developed for smaller geographic areas, are usually focused on the management of a land use or resource at a detailed level, and may or may not also perform the functions of an area plan. The Hatcher Pass Management Plan is a type of management plan, but it has been developed to also provide the functions of an area plan. It classifies state land within the management area and exercises other authorities related to AS 38.04.065(a). It is stand-alone management plan that functions as both a management plan and an area plan.

Other Area Plans and Management Plans. Adjoining area plans include the Southeast Susitna Area Plan and the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan¹⁰. Neither of these area plans pertain to or contain requirements affecting the Hatcher Pass management area. Adjoining management plans include the Moose Range Management Plan, the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan, and Knik River Public Use Area Management Plan. The HPMP is to function as the basis for decision-making within the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area until a management plan is developed by ADF&G.

Hatcher Pass Public Use Area Management Plan. The statute that created the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area (AS 41.23.100) requires the Commissioner of DNR to adopt (and revise) a management plan for the Hatcher Pass PUA (AS 41.23.110(c)). This plan is to be consistent with the purposes of the PUA (AS 41.23.100) and, under AS 41.23.130, the Commissioner may prohibited or restrict incompatible uses. It is also intended that the plan designate routes for motorized and non-motorized access within the Hatcher Pass PUA. If uses are designated as incompatible, the plan must indicate the determination of incompatibility, the area where and when the specific restriction is to apply, and the reasons for the incompatibility.

It is intended that the 2010 Management Plan function to fulfill the requirements of the management plan indicated in AS 41.23.110(c).

Special Use Land Regulations (11 AAC 96.01). This plan is to form the basis for the regulations enacted under 11 AAC 96.014. The current regulations are based on the 1986 Management Plan and have been partially modified by the recommended changes in non-motorized use areas contained in Chapter 2 (section on Recreation) and Chapter 3 (management units). See Appendix D to review the regulations that are proposed to be revised.

¹⁰ The Susitna-Matanuska Area Plan has been developed and is in final form, but is awaiting Commissioner approval. It will replace the 1986 Susitna Area Plan when adopted, but at this time (2011) the 1986 Susitna Area Plan functions as the area plan.

What the Management Plan Will and Will Not Do

Although the management plan is intended to be the basis for the management of state and borough land within the management area, it is also constrained in its application.

What the Plan Will Do:

- Provide for the planning and management of state and borough land.
- Supersede all management direction and requirements from the 1986 Management Plan and the 1989 Plan Amendment.
- Reclassify all state and borough lands within the planning area.
- Provide the basis for the designation of motorized and non-motorized areas, both seasonal and year-round.
- Provide the basis for the revision of the current regulations affecting motorized uses (11 AAC 96.014(b)(3)).
- Provide the basis for the management of recreational uses, both winter and summer.
- Restrict development within the management area to those uses provided by law (mining) and identified in this management plan.

What the Plan Will Not Do:

- Affect Native Corporation or private land, including native allotments.
- Close large, additional areas to mineral entry under AS 38.05.185 and .300¹¹.
- Affect existing surface leases.
- Amend the regulations that affect motorized uses.¹²
- Provide the basis for the management of the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area.
- Affect the authorities of ADF&G to manage fish and game or ADF&G harvest regulations.

¹¹ Two small areas of state land are, however, recommended to be closed in the Independence and Archangel management units.

¹² Although the plan is intended to provide the basis for the regulation of these uses within the management area, it cannot do so directly. A separate process, which is to occur subsequent to the adoption of this plan, must be followed to enact regulations or changes to regulations.

Map 1-5: Land Status, Topography and 1986 Recreational Motorized Closures

How the Management Plan Will be Used

The plan has several major functions. It will:

- Provide an overall management strategy for the management area as well as specific management strategy for individual management units.
- Provide the basis for DNR and borough management of its lands during the planning period, which is 20 years or until revised.
- Function as the Hatcher Pass Management Plan as mandated under AS 41.23.110(c).
- Provide the basis for the management of recreation uses, both summer and winter.
- Provide the basis for the revision of regulations under 11 AAC 96.014 that manage certain types of motorized uses within the management area. Said differently, it will provide the basis for the designation of non-motorized areas (seasonal and year-round) within the planning area.
- Identify allowed, conditionally allowed, and prohibited uses on an areawide basis and for individual management units.
- Identify recommendations to implement the plan and to keep it current.

Organization and Scope of Plan

The Hatcher Pass Management Plan is divided into four chapters containing the following topics:

Chapter 1. Introduction, Background, and Purpose

This chapter provides a description of the planning area, the type and distribution of land ownership and land status, an analysis of applicable statutes and regulations that affect planning within the management area, descriptions of planning history and the reasons for plan revision, an indication of what the plan is intended to accomplish and those actions that it cannot implement, the relationship of this plan to area plans and to other management plans, and a summary of major issues encountered during the plan preparation process.

Chapter 2. Areawide Goals, Policies, and Recommendations

This chapter describes the goals, management guidelines, and management recommendations for each of the major resources with the management area (Subsurface Resources, Water Reservation, Material Sites, Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Recreation, Cultural Resources, and Public Access and Transportation). These goals, guidelines, and recommendations affect each of the 10 management units within the planning area. It also identifies those uses that are allowed, prohibited, or conditionally allowed on an areawide and individual management unit basis.

Chapter 3. General Management Strategy and Management Units

This chapter describes the overall management approach for the management area recommended in this plan as well as specific management strategies for individual management units, consisting of:

- General Management Intent: provides an overview of general management intent, especially related to public recreation activities.
- Management Strategy for Individual Management Units: provides a detailed description of the resources, general management intent, management guidelines for uses and structures, and management recommendations. Also provides a listing of allowed, conditionally allowed, and prohibited uses within each management unit.
- A summary of allowed, conditionally allowed, and prohibited uses for the management area.

Chapter 4. Implementation

This chapter describes those actions necessary to implement the recommendations of this plan, including, most importantly, the basis for the issuance of DNR and borough authorizations, a land classification order that classifies the state land within the management area, a mineral closing order within the Independence and Archangel management units, and recommended additions to the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. Also included are a listing of facility recommendations and a listing of agency responsibilities for plan implementation.

Summary of Issues

A wide variety of issues were addressed during the plan revision process:

- The overriding issue throughout the planning area was the determination of non-motorized areas for winter recreation use. By far the majority of public comments and discussion focused on this issue. Recreationists who use non-motorized forms of transportation favored all of the East Side becoming non-motorized while those favoring motorized transportation wanted to expand access to more remote areas through the use of corridors within or adjacent to current non-motorized areas.
- The need to revise regulations related to non-motorized uses was very much related to the issues of winter non-motorized/motorized uses, and focused on the revision of those regulations intended to implement the plan recommendations.
- The development of motorized forms of transportation within both the West Side and East Side during the summer emerged as important issues, although not as significant as winter recreation issues. In the East Side, this focused on the identification of

- routes, some of which could be joint winter-summer routes, while others would be used during the summer only. On the West Side, the degradation of areas affected by ATVs, need for facilities, and identification of routes emerged as primary issues.
- The development of motorized use corridors, particularly within the Government Peak management unit, was very contentious. An even split emerged amongst the public during scoping and focus group meetings over whether motorized routes within the East Side of the planning area were appropriate. Supporters of these facilities felt that it would be appropriate to develop such corridors in order to provide access routes to the more remote areas for winter recreation use faster. They felt that the routes would decrease conflict in the popular areas. Those opposed to motorized corridors felt that additional access routes through traditionally non-motorized areas would increase recreational user conflict.
 - The need to develop facilities to support increasing levels of recreational use; this focused on the need to develop use corridors, parking facilities, highway pull-outs, scenic pull-outs, and sanitation facilities. There was general agreement about the need to develop such facilities.
 - Expansion of the planning boundary to correspond to actual use areas was also significant, and resulted in the inclusion of the Kashwitna River Drainage and High Glacier Peaks management units.
 - Underlying all of these issues, however, was clarification of the uses that the Hatcher Pass management area was to be managed for. Most individuals felt that this area had progressed over time to a principal recreational area for the Valley and Anchorage, and that the type of uses allowed within this area should be compatible with this changed orientation. They felt that the management plan should be developed to fulfill a primary recreation orientation.

Relationship of 2010 Management Plan to 1986 Management Plan and 1989 Plan Amendment.

The 2010 Plan supersedes and replaces the 1986 Plan and 1989 Plan Amendment. The provisions of the 1986 Plan and the 1989 Plan Amendment no longer apply.

Special Use Designation (ADL 223585) and 11 AAC 96 Regulations

The Special Use Designation (ADL 223585), derived from the 1986 Plan, remains valid and continues to apply. This special use designation (SUD) formed the basis for the development of regulations (2002) under 11 AAC 96.014 that closed certain areas to motorized uses. In terms of application, the SUD applies to the Independence, Archangel, Reed Lakes / Little Susitna River, Mile 16, High Glacier Peaks, and Government Peak management units. Generally, this is the same area of application as originally identified, although the specific

areas of application changes under the provisions of the 2010 Plan. Since somewhat different management units are used in the 2010 Plan, the references to management units also need to be changed to correspond to the nomenclature used in the 2010 Plan. The 2010 Plan recommends changes to the regulations under 11 AAC 96.014, and a separate regulation revision and adoption process is to occur in 2011-2012.

Planning Period

The 2010 Management Plan guides state and borough land use and resource decisions for the next 20 years (from the date of adoption¹³) or until the plan is revised.

Public Participation Process

An extensive Public Participation Process was conducted over a two year period in order to identify issues important to the public and to obtain their comments and recommendations. Over 20 meetings were held for the public and over 2,000 comments were received during the planning process. The involvement of the public helped shape the recommendations made in this plan. Their attendance at meetings, written comments, recommendations, and public statements were an integral part of this plan revision. Nearly all of the comments were related to recreational use and, specifically, to issues associated with motorized and non-motorized recreation.

Below is a general description of the Planning Process that DMLW follows during plan development and revisions, which was adhered to through the Hatcher Pass Management Plan Revision.

Planning Process Overview

There are certain distinct steps that are followed in the development of state area or management plans, and the 2010 Management Plan adhered (generally) to the same processes as used for other DNR plans. All of the steps that are described have been completed.¹⁴

Review Existing Plan.

Review the existing management plan to determine what needed to be revised and what aspects were still working and could be retained. The review of the HPMP indicated that the 1986 plan needed to be revised.

¹³ November 17, 2010.

¹⁴ For more detail about the Hatcher Pass Management Plan Revision process, comments and meetings, see Appendix E.

Gather Information about the Planning Area

Contact affected state agencies to inform them that the planning process has begun and request their participation in the process. Review land ownership records and available resource data to determine current use patterns, such as mining, habitat, forestry and recreation. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough was also involved in this plan revision.

Identify Issues

Notify the public that a plan revision process has begun according to the requirements in Alaska Statute AS 38.05.945. Hold public meetings and encourage public comments in order to determine what issues are important to the public and need to be addressed in the plan.

Preparation of an Agency Review Draft (ARD)

Develop a draft of the plan for review by the effected state and borough agencies based on data received from those agencies, land research, and public input and request their comments and recommendations. Revise where appropriate.

Public Review Draft and Comment Period

The revised ARD becomes the Public Review Draft (PRD). The PRD is released for public review and comments. Additional meetings are held with the public to provide substantial opportunities for public input and education about the information in the revised plan. A public comment period is typically 45 – 60 days.

The Issue Response Summary and Final Plan

An Issue Response Summary is developed to address the public comments and recommendations received regarding the PRD. Changes that will be made to the final plan are detailed in the Issue Response Summary and extracted into a “List of Approved Revisions”.

Adoption by DNR Commissioner

The PRD and Issue Response Summary constitute the final plan. These documents are sent to the commissioner for adoption and once adopted, serve as the management plan until the plan is finalized. The Hatcher Pass Management Plan was adopted by the DNR Commissioner on November 17, 2010.

Request for Reconsideration

A 30 day review period is provided for the public to submit requests for reconsideration of the plan adoption. If no requests are received, the plan is formerly adopted. If requests are received, the Program Support Unit develops the “Commissioner’s Decision” to respond to each issue raised and provide and revisions to the plan, if found appropriate.

Final Plan

Once the commissioner has adopted the plan and any appeals for reconsideration have been resolved, the plan is final and goes into effect. At this point it becomes the basis for DNR decision-making within the plan boundary.