

# Analysis of the Management Situation

## Recommendations

Completion of conservation assessments is recommended for the top four species recognized as having viability or distribution concerns (i.e., Montague Island hoary marmot, Dusky Canada goose, Kenai Peninsula wolverine, and brown bear) (Fig. IV-16). Initial emphasis is recommended to be placed on Dusky Canada goose and brown bear on the Kenai Peninsula to respond to immediate management issues that require attention in revision of the Chugach National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (e.g., see Suring et al. *In press* and Pacific Flyway Council 1997). Recovery of threatened Steller sea lion populations is being managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service; additional efforts by the Chugach National Forest for assessment and conservation planning are not required. The remaining four species on the list may have viability or distribution concerns and should be monitored closely to evaluate their populations' status. This information will help to determine if additional efforts are needed to maintain their viability on the Chugach National Forest.

### *Wildlife Habitat Management*

A demand analysis for wildlife resources, conducted within the context of Forest Plan Revision, will provide a clear picture of the public's expectations of the Forest. Such an analysis will also provide the basis for a review of how well the current wildlife program on the Forest is addressing those expectations and how Revision may be used to implement any changes needed in the program.

The Forest Plan standards and guidelines is an appropriate place to establish the habitat management objectives called for in the NFMA regulations. The current Forest Plan only contains specific objectives for moose habitat improvement on the Kenai Peninsula. Additional objectives are needed which reflect a more comprehensive wildlife habitat management program on the Chugach National Forest to be in compliance with the NFMA regulations. This will be accomplished through the Revision process.

### *Conclusions*

The issues identified associated with management of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species are easily resolvable during revision of the Chugach Land management Plan by developing processes to list and delist sensitive species and by providing management direction for the conservation and recovery of identified species.

Maintenance of viable, well-distributed populations of wildlife on the Chugach National Forest will be an issue during the revision process. The Forest Service can demonstrate that viability will be maintained with adequate analysis and documentation.

A comprehensive wildlife habitat management program will need to be developed during the revision process that is responsive to the public's desires and has measurable objectives.

## ***C. Use and Occupancy of the Forest***

### **1. Wild and Scenic Rivers**

#### *Current Management Situation*

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act establishes that it is national policy to "preserve... selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes." The Act also states that these rivers "shall be preserved in a free flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations".

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In 1972 the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation established a task force to evaluate free flowing rivers in Alaska which might qualify for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Their state-wide preliminary screening of all rivers identified 69 rivers for consideration. Of these 69 rivers, portions of the Copper, Kenai and Russian flow through the Chugach National Forest. Today, 26 Alaskan rivers are included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system. None of the 26 rivers flow through the Chugach National Forest.

All named rivers and glaciers (760+) and many unnamed rivers on the Chugach National Forest were examined and evaluated to identify “outstandingly remarkable” river related features which would make them “eligible” for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Table IV-17 is a summary of the rivers, the Outstandingly remarkable values and tentative classification, they are also shown on **Map 6 - Potential Wild & Scenic Rivers**.

### *Need to Establish or Change Management Direction*

As per the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Congress directs the Secretary of Agriculture to study whether additional rivers should be added to the national system, (16 U.S.C. § 1276(d) (1982).

As of April 30, 1997, some 154 river segments comprising 10,815 miles have been designated in the National System. These nationally recognized rivers comprise some of the nation’s greatest diversity of recreational, natural and cultural resources, offering great scientific study value and scenic beauty.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System ranks among the major efforts of the federal government to protect natural areas, along with national parks, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and forests. In contrast to those, the rivers program offers greater flexibility; it recognizes the coexistence of many uses on both public and private land.

Rivers were not evaluated in the current Forest Plan. Revision needs to evaluate all rivers for possible inclusion in the National System.

### *Revision Decision Space*

As a result of public scoping, some rivers may be found to not contain outstandingly remarkable values. Additional rivers may be identified with outstandingly remarkable values and added to the list of eligible rivers. The final step in the river assessment process is the determination of suitability. The suitability phase of the study evaluates whether designation as a national wild and scenic river would be the best way to manage eligible rivers. This step provides the basis for the decision to recommend designation or nondesignation of the river. If a river is found to be eligible, its suitability is considered in the analysis of alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement accompanying the draft forest plan. It is likely that some rivers will be suitable in one alternative and not suitable in another in accordance with the pertinent issues, conditions, and needs as expressed in each alternative. Factors that may be considered in determining the rivers’ suitability include:

- The characteristics which make the river a worthy addition to the national system; i.e., the outstandingly remarkable values, including scenic, recreational, geological, fish and wildlife, cultural, historic, botanical, and wilderness values.
- The amount of private land along the river and the present uses of that land.
- All present and possible future uses of the river and its corridor, and how these uses would be affected. These uses include municipal water sources, timber, minerals, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- Public, state, and local interest in designation of the river.

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Figure IV-17: River Segment Miles

River Name	Outstandingly Remarkable Value(s)	Wild	Scenic	Recreation
Bear Creek	Geologic feature	0	0	3.4
Sixmile Creek	Recreational whitewater boating, scenery and visual features	0	5.7	0
E. Fork Sixmile Creek	Recreational whitewater boating, scenery and visual features	0	5.6	0
Canyon Creek	Geologic feature	0	6.8	0
Snow River	Scenery & visual features	24	0	0
Twenty mile river (complex)	Synergistic effects of combined special resource values	22.2	0	0
Palmer Creek	Scenery & visual features	0	10.9	0
Portage Lake & Glacier	Scenery & visual features, and recreational values	0	7	0
Portage Creek	Scenery & visual features	0	0	9.2
Kenai River	Fisheries value	0	0	5.5
Russian River	Fisheries & prehistoric values	10	2.2	0
Columbia Glacier	Geologic feature	19	0	0
Coghill River	Fisheries, recreation, scenery and visual features	6.9	0	0
Cascade Creek	Visual feature (waterfall)	2	0	0
Nellie Juan River	Recreational whitewater boating, scenery and visual features	20	0	0
Martin Glacier	Geologic feature	18	0	0
Martin River & Lake	Scenery, visual features, geologic feature, fisheries, recreation values	20.8	3.4	0
Alaganik Slough & unnamed tributary	Historic/Cultural values	0	13	0
Copper River - lower (delta complex)	Scenery, visual features, historic, cultural values, fisheries, wildlife values and geologic feature	24.3	1	0
Copper River - upper	Scenery, visual features, recreation, and fisheries values	51.3	0	0
Bering River & Lake	Scenery, visual features, recreation, and fisheries values	6.6	25.2	0
Katalla River	Fisheries value	4.8	7.1	0
Nellie Martin River	Fisheries value	0.4	1.6	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>230.3</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>18.1</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>337.9 miles</b>		



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- The estimated cost of acquiring necessary lands and interests in land and of administering the area if it is added to the System.
- Any other issues and concerns identified by the public. These include concerns about user conflicts, fears of condemnation of or restrictions on private land, opportunities forgone, etc.

Alternatives may be developed that range from all nineteen river systems and three glaciers being found suitable, plus additional rivers nominated by the public, to an alternative with few or no rivers found to be suitable.

The final suitability determination is then documented in the Record of Decision for the FEIS accompanying the Revised Forest Plan. The rationale for the suitability determination will be documented in the study report.

## 2. Recreation and Tourism

### *Introduction*

Recreation as a resource has grown significantly since the 1984 Forest Plan was completed. Tourism, as a part of recreation, has seen the greatest increase. Additionally, backcountry or dispersed use has increased, especially in Prince William Sound and the eastern Copper River Delta.

Demand for recreation opportunities on the Chugach are now greater than ever. Increased tourism, an increased state population, and the proximity to Anchorage have combined to make the Chugach the place where many people seek recreation opportunities from road accessible to wild and remote experiences. Improved access to the Forest, particularly the new road to Whittier, is expected to further accelerate recreation uses and tourism on the Forest.

### *Current Management Situation*

The Chugach provides a variety of recreation opportunities for local and regional residents of Alaska as well as national and international travelers. The “mystique” of Alaska for those coming here is well represented by the Chugach: wild and natural appearing landscapes, historical and cultural features, glaciers, and fish and wildlife.

#### Tourism

Tourism refers to a commercial industry serving visitors coming from outside the state (or region), whereas recreation refers to local residents pursuing activities for their own enjoyment. Tourism provides specific, directed, or often-controlled patterns of use while recreational users are relatively free to do and go whenever and wherever they wish.

Tourism is the third largest industry in Alaska and related expenditures generally have benefited local Alaska communities by strengthening their economies. Over the past ten years, the number of tourists coming to Alaska has grown about five percent annually and now numbers more than one million each year. Market studies conducted by the State suggest this trend will continue into the foreseeable future.

A recreational user study (CUSTOMER Survey, 1995) suggests that out-of-state tourists generally participate in the same activities in the same proportions as Alaskan recreational users, with the top attractions being viewing scenery (approximately 95 percent), watching fish and wildlife (approximately 90 percent), and motorized travel (approximately 80 percent). However, tourists more often choose these activities as their primary reason for visiting the Forest than do Alaskans. Conversely, Alaskans engage in non-motorized travel (approximately 20 percent) and overnight camping (approximately 15 percent) as primary reasons to visit the Forest more often than tourists. Curiously, tourists are slightly