

Analysis of the Management Situation

- 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

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Figure IV-18: Reported Recreation Use 1986-1997

Year	Estimated Developed Recreation Use (RVD's)	Reported Developed Recreation Use (RVD's)	% Projected Use Met Reported Use	Estimated Dispersed Recreation Use (RVD's)	Reported Dispersed Recreation Use (RVD's)	% Projected Use Met Reported Use	Total Reported Recreation Use (RVD's)
1986	420,000	328,800	78%	688,000	1,333,600	194%	1,662,400
1987	420,000	353,200	84%	688,000	1,616,900	235%	1,970,100
1988	420,000	373,800	89%	688,000	1,245,700	181%	1,619,500
1989	420,000	325,100	77%	688,000	1,232,700	179%	1,557,800
1990	420,000	309,000	74%	688,000	1,329,000	193%	1,638,000
1991	643,000	320,600	50%	922,000	1,516,400	164%	1,837,000
1992	643,000	314,300	49%	922,000	1,552,300	168%	1,866,600
1993	643,000	328,400	51%	922,000	1,607,100	174%	1,935,500
1994	643,000	276,400	43%	922,000	1,700,300	184%	1,976,700
1995	643,000	280,500	44%	922,000	1,724,100	187%	2,004,600
1996	643,000	272,600	42%	922,000	2,417,000	262%	2,689,600
1997	643,000	653,659	102%	922,000	2,341,050	254%	2,994,709

less interested in maintaining scenic quality than Alaskans. Not surprisingly, tourists are slightly more interested than Alaskans in expanding visitor services. In general, tourists are slightly more satisfied with their recreation experiences in the Forest than are Alaskans.

Commercial Recreation/Special Uses

Commercial recreation services (concessionaires, recreation residences, and outfitter/guides) continue to provide an important portion of the recreation use on the Forest. In 1984, there were approximately 40 - 60 recreation special use permits and presently there are 190 permits. Of these, several are major concessionaire operations, of which one is new and implemented under Forest Plan direction (Portage Glacier Cruises, 1989). As a result of State land conveyances, two major special uses operations are now on State lands (Summit Lake Lodge, Alyeska Ski Area). In addition to there being more permits, the activities or services are more varied than those of 1984. Requests for recreation special use permits are expected to continue to increase at approximately a 10% rate for the next several years before leveling off. An issue that has risen with this additional commercial use is an allocation between commercial users and the general public and overall capacity, especially in a few specific areas. Capacity analyses have been done for Sixmile Creek, the southern half of the Resurrection Pass Trail, and portions of the Cordova Ranger district for hunting.

Forest Capacity

The theoretic overall capacity of the Forest is 660,062 people at one time (PAOT's). Of this, 8,508 PAOT's or about 1% of the total capacity is in developed facilities (campgrounds, cabins, visitor centers) and the remainder is in dispersed recreation areas (607,272 PAOT's). The Forest provides 1,998,777 PAOT-Days at developed sites and facilities and 142,708,920 PAOT-Days in dispersed recreation opportunities throughout the Forest. In 1997, the forest generated 653,659 Recreation Visitor Days (RVD) at developed sites and facilities and 2,341,050 RVD's in dispersed recreation activities throughout the Forest.

Approximately 22% of the annual use occurs at developed sites and facilities. This use is occurring within less than 1% of the total forest capacity. Conversely, less than 1% of the available dispersed capacity is being utilized over the remainder of the Forest.



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Developed Recreation

Developed sites, particularly cabins and campgrounds, are near or over their capacity during the primary use season (June - mid-August).

Figure IV-19: Cabin Occupancy 1985-1997, Selected Cabins Only

Cabin (dates available)	Primary Use Season in Days	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Average
		9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	
		8	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	
		5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Glacier Ranger District															
Crow Pass (6/1-9/30)	120														
Nights Occupied		81	81	51	59	89	79	81	98	99	90	92	99	78	
% Occupancy		68%	68%	43%	49%	74%	66%	68%	82%	83%	75%	77%	83%	65%	69%
Harrison Lagoon (1/1-12/31)	150														
Nights Occupied		103	116	121	99	101	102	97	111	118	125	134	136	139	
% Occupancy		69%	77%	81%	66%	67%	68%	65%	74%	79%	83%	89%	91%	93%	77%
South Culross (1/1-12/31)	150														
Nights Occupied			117	124	106	82	102	119	127	137	111	138	124	125	
% Occupancy		0%	78%	83%	71%	55%	68%	79%	85%	91%	74%	92%	83%	83%	72%
Cordova Ranger District															
Martin Lake (1/1-12/31)	180														
Nights Occupied		108	103	88	96	75	100	94	87	86	113	119	115	134	
% Occupancy		60%	57%	49%	53%	42%	56%	52%	48%	48%	63%	66%	64%	74%	56%
Nellie Martin (1/1-12/3)	240														
Nights Occupied		165	165	150	91	95	125	108	86	105	103	68	97	78	
% Occupancy		69%	69%	63%	38%	40%	52%	45%	36%	44%	43%	28%	40%	33%	46%
McKinley Trail (1/1-12/31)	365														
Nights Occupied		59	62	39	79	75	87	88	123	131	128	126	113	117	
% Occupancy		16%	17%	11%	22%	21%	24%	24%	34%	36%	35%	35%	31%	32%	26%
Green Island (1/1-12-31)	180														
Nights Occupied		74	113	98	37	29	79	69	69	83	50	61	102	116	
% Occupancy		41%	63%	54%	21%	16%	44%	38%	38%	46%	28%	34%	57%	64%	42%
Seward Ranger District															
Juneau Lake (1/1-12/31)	365														
Nights Occupied		149	158	158	150	154	163	170	165	205	187	194	178	185	
% Occupancy		41%	43%	43%	41%	42%	45%	47%	45%	56%	51%	53%	49%	51%	47%
Paradise Lake (1/1-12/31)	180														
Nights Occupied		130	96	92	57	85	79	97	124	92	103	106	96	83	
% Occupancy		72%	53%	51%	32%	47%	44%	54%	69%	51%	57%	59%	53%	46%	53%
Barber (1/1-12/31)	365														
Nights Occupied		0	0	165	187	192	203	200	228	221	188	202	218	243	
% Occupancy		0%	0%	45%	51%	53%	56%	55%	62%	61%	52%	55%	60%	67%	56%
Crescent Lake (1/1-12/31)	365														
Nights Occupied		176	180	174	155	166	156	172	168	174	156	149	173	168	
% Occupancy		48%	49%	48%	42%	45%	43%	47%	46%	48%	43%	41%	47%	46%	46%
All Cabins	14,593	4090	4355	3970	3156	3415	3895	4260	4439	4668	4379	4336	4327	4392	
		28%	30%	27%	22%	23%	27%	29%	30%	32%	30%	30%	30%	30%	28%

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Cabins on the Kenai Peninsula and western Prince William Sound are fully reserved from mid-May through mid-September, with only a few random, single days available. Other cabins show specific times associated with fish runs or hunting seasons being completely booked. Cabin occupancy has been relatively flat the last several years indicating that use may be at or near capacity across all the cabins the Forest.

In campgrounds on the Kenai Peninsula, occupancy averages about 65% during the summer season. Several campgrounds are well over 80% occupancy. An occupancy rate of 60% is generally considered to be optimum for campgrounds. The Chugach is well over that at most campgrounds.

Interpretive Services

Interpretation of the Forest occurs primarily at two places: Begich Boggs Visitor Center (BBVC) and the Crooked Creek Information Site in Valdez. Additional interpretive programs are aboard the Alaska Marine Ferry, Childs Glacier, area schools and several campgrounds on the Kenai Peninsula.

The greatest number of contacts occurs at BBVC. Close to half a million contacts are made. A significant change is expected in the next few years with the construction of the road to Whittier. BBVC will no longer be the “end of the road”.

Since its opening in 1993, Crooked Creek Information Site has had over 100,000 visitors/year. Discussions are on going with the City of Valdez for combining several information centers into one.

Dispersed Recreation

While a large number of people use the developed recreation sites on the Forest, more time is spent participating in a variety of dispersed recreation activities in the backcountry of the Chugach. Over the last 10 years, people spent approximately 3 - 4 times more time participating in dispersed recreation activities than developed recreation activities. The largest of these is viewing scenery. While there are many acres for people to disperse, use is typically concentrated around developed nodes, such as cabins, along trails, and adjacent to saltwater shorelines. Existing access patterns tend to concentrate people. Dispersed campsites are also typically found in these same areas.

Customer Satisfaction

A visitor use study conducted in 1995 indicated that a vast majority of recreation users were satisfied with essential management actions and services. However, one area of dissatisfaction concerned the inaccessibility of developments to the physically impaired. This situation is slowly being corrected as facilities undergo major renovation. The same 1995 study showed that the highest priorities of users for improving the overall quality of recreation opportunities were more oriented towards maintaining the existing quality of the landscape, backcountry areas, and recreation facilities before constructing new facilities.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum was developed in the late 1970's to provide a framework in which recreation opportunities could be managed. The Chugach was inventoried in 1981. This ROS was adopted in the Forest Plan as a guideline for managing the recreation resource. Because there has been significant changes in the uses and user patterns, the Forest has been re-inventoried. Completed in February 1998, the new inventoried ROS classes will be used during alternative development and effects descriptions. The results of this inventory are shown in Figures IV-20 - 22 along with capacity which was based on ROS, and see **Map 8 - Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**.

The Forest is primarily a wild place by recreation standards. About 80 percent of the Forest acreage have an ROS (recreation opportunity spectrum) classification of “primitive” and another 14 percent is classified as “semi-primitive non-motorized.” Thus, backcountry opportunities are abundant, although there are few roads other than the Seward, Sterling, and Copper River Highways providing access

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ROS Class	Acres	PAOTs/ Acre	Capacity
Primitive	566,000	0.01	5,660
Primitive II	43,000	0.01	430
Semi-Primitive Non-motorized	462,000	0.03	13,860
Semi-Primitive Motorized	45,000	0.05	2,250
Roaded Natural	135,000	2.5	337,500
Roaded Modified	3,800	1	3,800
Rural	6,100	3	18,300
Urban	0	150	0
Total	1,260,900		381,800

Figure IV-20: Kenai Peninsula

ROS Class	Acres	PAOTs/ Acre	Capacity
Primitive	2,455,000	0.002	4,910
Primitive II	43,000	0.002	86
Semi-Primitive Non-motorized	402,000	0.01	40,200
Semi-Primitive Motorized	28,000	0.008	224
Roaded Natural	1,700	1.5	2,550
Roaded Modified	110,000	1	110,000
Rural	1,000	2	2,000
Urban	1,500	10	15,000
Total	3,042,200		174,970

Figure IV-21: Prince William Sound

ROS Class	Acres	PAOTs/ Acre	Capacity
Primitive	1,368,000	0.002	2,736
Primitive II	378,000	0.002	756
Semi-Primitive Non-motorized	180,000	0.1	18,000
Semi-Primitive Motorized	68,000	0.1	6,800
Roaded Natural	32,000	1.5	48,000
Roaded Modified	12,000	1	12,000
Rural	3,000	2	6,000
Urban	900	10	9,000
Total	2,041,900		103,292
Forest Total	6,345,000		660,062

Figure IV-22: Copper River Delta

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of the trail mileage is within the Kenai Peninsula. Less than 3 percent has some type of roaded classification (e.g., “urban,” “rural,” “roaded modified,” or “roaded natural”), with the bulk of that acreage in the Seward Ranger District associated with the Seward and Sterling Highways, see the following tables.

Benchmarks

Benchmarks identify minimum and maximum potential that could be derived from the Forest. For recreation, the benchmarks are identified in Recreation Visitor Days (RVD’s).

Minimum Benchmark

The minimum benchmark assumes that all developed facilities would be closed and maintenance of dispersed recreation facilities would cease. Some incidental use at developed sites would occur and dispersed use would be expected to continue, but likely decline as dispersed facilities, primarily trail structures, deteriorate and make access difficult. The minimum benchmark for Developed Recreation is 65,365 RVDs (10 percent of existing use). The minimum benchmark for Dispersed Recreation is 1,404,630 RVDs (60 percent of existing use).

Maximum Benchmark

The maximum benchmark assumes a maximum capacity of recreation visitors across the Forest while maintaining a range of recreation opportunities in primitive, semi-primitive, roaded, rural, and urban settings. Without an assumption of the quality of recreation opportunities, the maximum benchmark would only represent the number of people that could be physically crammed onto the Forest land base, shoulder-to-shoulder. For Developed Recreation, the maximum benchmark is 1,256,400 RVDs and for Dispersed Recreation, the maximum benchmark is 10,321,885 RVDs.

Need to Establish or Change Management Direction

There are several recreation uses or activities that are in conflict, new issues that were not addressed in the 1984 Plan, issues of allocation, or needing integration with management plans of other land owners and managers (Alaska State Parks, Native lands).

Motorized/Non-motorized Recreation

This is a recurring issue. Since 1984, off-road equipment has improved and the popularity of off-roading has increased. Improved equipment is allowing users greater ability to access country previously unavailable. This issue has two distinct and different seasons, winter and summer. Currently, during the summer months (no snow cover), the Forest is closed to all off-road vehicles except where specifically open. All trails are closed to motorized use. In winter, it is the opposite: the Forest is open for over-snow use, except where specifically closed. Most trails are open to over-snow motorized use except where specifically closed.

The issues related to this include: 1) physical conflicts (safety) between motorized and non-motorized users; 2) fundamental value differences between motorized and non-motorized users; 3) resource impacts; and 4) noise/quiet.

Revision of the Forest Plan needs to look at the current allocation and develop alternatives that provide for both motorized and non-motorized users. Areas of particular concern are the Resurrection Pass Trail, the Lost Lake area, Manitoba Mountain, Hinchinbrook and Hawkins Islands, and the Copper River Delta.

Helicopter Skiing

This is a new issue. Increases in winter tourism and the desire to provide increasingly unique Alaskan experiences in a crowded market have created new opportunities.

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Helicopter skiing is not particularly new, but it is relatively new to Southcentral Alaska as a regularly advertised service. The expansion of Alyeska and their desire to provide a range of opportunities to their customers has also contributed to this growth. There is currently one special use permit for helicopter skiing on the Glacier District. The Cordova District is analyzing a special use permit request for helicopter skiing between Cordova and Valdez. Other requests for special use permits are expected.

The issues related to this include: 1) conflicts with backcountry winter users; 2) noise/quiet; 3) capacities, both commercial and individual; and 4) wildlife impacts.

Helicopter Hiking

This is also a new issue. With ever increasing summer tourists, many with limited time, but seeking that uniquely Alaskan experience, this activity puts people in very remote settings, essentially wilderness in character, in minutes. There are no special use permits for this at this time. It is expected that requests for permits for this will occur.

The issues related to this include: 1) noise/quiet; 2) fundamental value differences between backcountry users and helicopter access; 3) resource impacts in delicate alpine settings; 4) archeological impacts; 5) wildlife impacts; and 6) displacement of existing users.

Revision of the Forest Plan needs to look at this issue and determine if there is the need to allocate or restrict helicopter access for winter skiing or summer hiking. Areas of particular concern are Turnagain Pass and areas surrounding communities.

Capacities

People seek recreation opportunities on the Forest based on an expected experience. For example, people going to the BBVC expect to have other people around, lots of vehicles, large and small groups, and lots of development. A place like BBVC has a high capacity for both individual users and commercial users. On the other hand, a small group of 4 people kayaking on Knight Island expect not to see

Figure IV-23: Developed Recreation

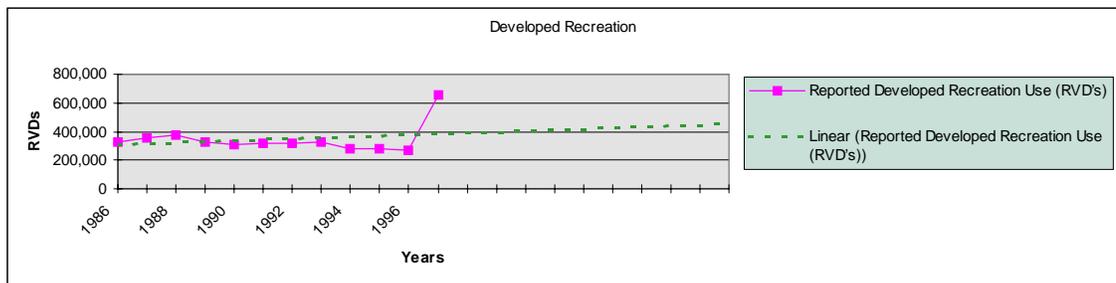
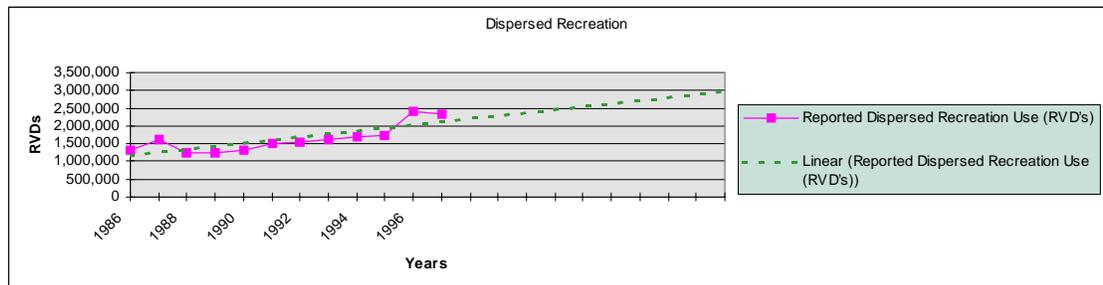


Figure IV-24: Dispersed Recreation



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many other people, large commercially guided groups, or lots of development. Each setting has a physical and social capacity, both individually and commercially. See Figures IV-20 - 22 for capacity based on ROS.

The capacity of developed facilities (cabins, campgrounds) is limited. Current demand indicates campgrounds are at or over current capacity and many cabins are near capacity. Demand for developed facilities is expected to increase.

The issues related to this include: 1) group size; 2) the recreation opportunity setting (ROS); 3) number of people at one time; 4) demand for facilities; and 5) allocation between commercial and noncommercial users.

The Revision needs to identify the role the Forest is to play in providing developed recreation facilities and dispersed recreation opportunities in Southcentral Alaska. Revision of the Forest Plan needs to look at this issue and develop alternatives that allocate different opportunities and corresponding capacities across the Forest. As a part of this allocation, a distribution between commercial and noncommercial users is needed.

New Access to Whittier

Construction of a new road to Whittier is expected to be completed in Spring of 2000. Projections are for well over a million additional people coming to Whittier and a large percent of those going into Prince William Sound. In addition, the City of Whittier is planning to double the size of the small boat harbor. Related to this is the planned availability of services and fuel at Chenega Bay and potentially at other places in the Sound. This will result in a significant change in users, user patterns and the number of people and boats in the Sound, particularly the western part.

The issues related to this include: 1) wilderness study area management; 2) recommended wilderness; 3) recreation opportunities (ROS); 4) noise; 5) crowding; 6) trails; 7) mooring buoys; 8) other facility needs; 9) displacement of existing users; and 10) impacts to upland resources (e.g. soils, water, wildlife).

This will be a significant change to a large portion of the Forest. The existing Plan does not speak to anything of this magnitude in the western Sound. Alternatives need to be developed exploring the range of management options available as a result of this change.

Wilderness Management

In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) created the 1.9 million acre Nellie Juan-College Fjord Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in western Prince William Sound. The Forest Plan direction for the WSA requires that it be managed "to maintain presently existing wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness preservation System" and "will follow the direction established in the Alaska Lands Act [ANILCA] for wilderness management in Alaska."

Issues related to this include: 1) cabins for public health and safety; 2) trails; 3) habitat improvement activities; 4) special use permits for recreation and non-recreation uses; and 5) traditional access.

The revision of the Forest Plan needs to consider additional standards and guidelines that will provide direction as to what level or type of activities or facilities are appropriate within the WSA and any additional recommended wilderness recommendations both inside and outside the study area.

New Recreation Opportunities

While one can not predict what the next recreation fad will be or what type of impact on resources or other users might occur, the last 10 years have brought an explosion in new recreation equipment,

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resulting in new demands. Some of the things that have changed or dramatically improved since the 1984 Plan was completed are: 1) mountain bikes; 2) improvements in back country equipment; 3) wind surfing; 4) jet skis; 5) snow boards; 6) improved ATV's and snowmobiles; 7) ultra-light aircraft; and 8) kayaking, to name a few.

Issues related to this include: 1) providing a range of recreation opportunities; 2) noise/quiet; 3) crowding; 4) fundamental differences in values; 5) allocation between commercial and noncommercial users; and 6) displacement of existing users or uses.

While we can not write standards or guidelines for activities that don't exist, the Revision needs to look at developing standards or guidelines that will help evaluate new recreation opportunities in the future as to their appropriateness within the Forest. Issues of motorized versus non-motorized, or noise, or wilderness, or value differences will always be present with any new activity. Management areas may be structured to allow for new or experimental recreation activities or some type of check list could be developed to analyze a new activity against existing uses for compatibility.

Revision Decision Space

Many of the recreation issues can not be resolved. The objective is to meet the needs of as many of the recreating public as possible. Differing values, conflicting or incompatible uses, and multiple parties, to name a few, can not be resolved. Alternatives need to be developed that provide a range of recreation opportunities for: 1) wilderness recommendations and management; 2) a range of recreation opportunities and settings (ROS); 3) areas available for motorized and non-motorized recreation (quiet); 4) commercial and noncommercial recreation activities; 5) options to provide increased developed recreation opportunities; and 6) alternatives that increase the utilization of the large unused dispersed recreation capacity. Along with the alternatives, Standards and Guidelines need to be developed for managing qualitative matters for the wilderness study area, management of non-wilderness areas, methods to analyze new recreation opportunities, allocating recreation special use permits, and development standards for developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. The revised plan needs to include specific monitoring requirements for recreation related activities using limits of acceptable change concepts or other appropriate methods for monitoring.

3. Roadless/Wilderness

Current Management Situation

Figure IV- 25 (following page) displays the different activities and uses that may be conducted within proposed or designated wilderness areas and wilderness study areas. Wilderness areas in Alaska are subject to the provisions of ANILCA and there is less restriction on the use of snowmobiles, motorboats and aircraft than wilderness areas only subject to the Wilderness Act.

Figure IV-26: Summary of Acreage Figures for Roadless Area

Inventory	Roadless Acres
1997 RARE II	3,849,020
1984 Forest Plan	5,434,000
1996 Inventory	5,376,400
Total Forest Acres (GIS)	5,493,380