



RECORD OF DECISION  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

for the

WHITE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
FAIRBANKS DISTRICT OFFICE  
FEBRUARY 6, 1986

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

PUBLIC LANDS: USA (USE, SHARE, APPRECIATE)

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the balanced management of the PUBLIC LANDS and their various resource values so that they are considered in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people. Our management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield; this is a combination of uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. These resources include recreation, range timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness and natural, scenic, scientific and cultural values.

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RECORD OF DECISION

White Mountains National Recreation Area  
Resource Management Plan  
Yukon Resource Area  
Fairbanks, Alaska

This document identifies the decisions reached by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for managing the 1.0 million acres of public land within the White Mountains National Recreation Area. The decisions are presented in the enclosed Resource Management Plan.

Alternatives Considered and Analyzed

Six land use alternatives were considered and analyzed in the final environmental impact statement. The six alternatives analyzed are:  
The Proposed Plan - a balance of management opportunities;  
Alternative A - continuation of present management;  
Alternative B - increase of the present level of resource protection;  
Alternative C - a wider range of use opportunities than at present;  
Alternative D - the widest range of human use of the area; and  
Alternative E - a modification of alternative D with special emphasis on resource protection.

In response to the Governor's review, the Proposed Plan has been modified to ensure consistency with the plans, policies, and programs of the State of Alaska. The portions of the plan that have been modified are identified by asterisk in the Revised Resource Management Plan. The Proposed Plan has been determined to be the environmentally preferable alternative.

This alternative was developed and selected to emphasize protection of primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunities with protection of the wild and scenic qualities of Beaver Creek National Wild River as a high priority. Other activities are permitted where compatible with recreation management objectives. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been incorporated into the resource management plan.

The implementation plan and the monitoring and evaluation standards and intervals are found on the last seven pages of the RMP. Minor changes to the EIS and its bibliography are also attached.

Decision

The enclosed Resource Management Plan, as revised herein, for the White Mountains National Recreation Area is approved. This document meets the requirement for a Record of Decision as provided in 40 CFR 1505.2.

Michael Penfold  
State Director

FEB 2 1986

Date

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White Mountains National Recreation Area

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN



White Mountains National Recreation Area

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## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Overview

The purpose of the White Mountains National Recreation Area Land Use Plan is to provide the Bureau of Land Management and the public with guidelines for protecting the quality and managing the use of the White Mountains. The actions identified in this plan are a result of policy considerations, detailed technical work, an analysis of previous and ongoing studies and reports, and an evaluation of public comments.

This land use plan helps to place resource opportunities, needs, and problems into proper perspective and to provide a basis for the orderly development and implementation of resource conservation, preservation, management, and uses. This plan is designed to be a dynamic tool for resolving critical issues and problems.

Specific authorization for the White Mountain Plan comes from the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (P.L. 96-487, ANILCA). The specific language of this Act directs that the Area shall be administered to provide for public outdoor recreational use and for the conservation of scenic, historic, cultural and wildlife values; and for other uses if they are compatible or do not significantly impair the previously mentioned values. This plan was developed using the BLM planning system as outlined in Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-579, FLPMA).

The White Mountains National Recreation Area is located approximately 60 miles northwest of Fairbanks. It is bounded on the east by the Steese National Conservation Area and on the north by the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. Millions of acres of State lands lie to the south and west of the WMNRA.

Current recreational opportunities in interior Alaska are available in highly developed and intensively used areas accessible by road from Fairbanks as well as remote and seldom-visited areas accessible only by air. The overall management strategy for the WMNRA is to provide for a variety of public outdoor recreation opportunities emphasizing existing primitive and semi-primitive values, to protect and/or improve the water quality of Beaver Creek National Wild River and its tributaries, and to provide for multiple use of other resource values which are compatible with the recreation goals. Some areas within the WMNRA will be reserved for primitive, non-motorized types of recreation. However, these areas will not be as difficult and expensive to reach as the large wilderness areas which can be found in the National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska and will, therefore, be available to a somewhat larger user group. Other areas will be managed for a semi-primitive type of recreation with some motorized vehicle use permitted. However, these areas will not be as accessible or as developed as the State and borough

recreation areas which exist within the Fairbanks road network and will not be as heavily used. Thus, the WMNRA will provide a necessary intergrade between the existing very accessible and very remote areas of recreational opportunities.

The primary recreation attractor in the WMNRA is Beaver Creek National Wild River. Preservation of the wild and scenic qualities of Beaver Creek and its associated arctic grayling fisheries, as well as the high country along the White Mountains backbone, are major considerations of this plan.

Activities other than recreation would be appropriate when consistent with recreation management objectives as outlined below. In areas designated for primitive-type recreation, only those activities which would not adversely affect the primitive characteristics of the area would be allowed. In semi-primitive areas, where increased access is desirable and some changes in the natural setting are permissible, a wider range of resource uses could take place.

### Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives for this plan reflect the requirements of ANILCA, the act which established the WMNRA. Resource potentials have been examined from both a regional and national perspective.

GOAL 1: Provide for a variety of public outdoor recreational opportunities which emphasize the existing natural primitive and semi-primitive values appropriate to the WMNRA designation.

OBJECTIVES: Improve access for recreational use of Beaver Creek within the confines and stated purpose of the Wild and Scenic River Act and the approved river management plan.

Improve recreational access to the interior highlands emphasizing primitive and semi-primitive experiences.

Establish hiking opportunities related to river floating use.

Establish backcountry hiking/horseback riding opportunities along the high ridge complex linking Cache Mountain, Lime Peak and Mount Prindle.

Maintain natural ecosystems in order to enhance primitive and semi-primitive recreational experiences.

Provide for semi-primitive motorized recreation on the lands along the southern and western boundaries of the WMNRA.

Provide opportunities for off-road vehicle use where compatible with recreation objectives.

Protect existing scenic values within the viewshed along the Beaver Creek NWR and along the ridge complex in the White Mountains.

Maintain the spine of the White Mountains in its natural state to protect its high scenic values.

Provide opportunities for hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

**GOAL 2:** Protect and maintain the water quality of Beaver Creek NWR.

**OBJECTIVES:** Meet existing State water quality standard. \*

Promote a quality fishing experience in Beaver Creek NWR.

**GOAL 3:** Provide for multiple use where compatible with primitive or semi-primitive recreation.

**OBJECTIVES:** Maintain lands classified as primitive in a natural state.

Where compatible with recreation goals, permit multiple use of resources on land classified as semi-primitive.

Preserve unusual natural phenomena, which have been identified as type needs in the Ecological Reserve System, for further scientific study by designating the surrounding area as a Research Natural Area.

Maintain or improve habitat to support viable self-sustaining populations of fish and wildlife.

## MULTIPLE USE MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

### Introduction

This section describes the management decisions which prescribe the combination of resource uses and levels of production or protection, program constraints and general management practices to be followed in managing the various public land resources within the White Mountains National Recreation Area. Based on management prescriptions, the WMNRA has been divided into four management units: Primitive, Semi-Primitive Motorized, Research Natural Areas, and the Beaver Creek National Wild River Corridor. These management units are delineated on the "Proposed Plan" map located in the map pocket. Each of these management units has a management prescription which is appropriate to the resource capabilities and management objectives for that unit.

Within the Primitive Management Unit, the intent is to provide for recreational use within a natural and undisturbed setting. Existing primitive values will be maintained and the area is closed to ORV use, with the exception of snowmachines.

Within the Semi-Primitive Motorized Management Unit, a somewhat wider range of uses, including some use of off-road vehicles, will be allowed. Access will be developed as appropriate to support prescribed uses. Recreational use will be more diversified and somewhat higher due to easier access. Other resource uses will be allowed, including mineral development, when beneficial to or compatible with outdoor recreation.

The areas of limited acreage are designated Research Natural Areas. These areas are reserved for scientific research and only primitive-type uses will be permitted within them.

The Beaver Creek National Wild River Corridor is managed under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542) and the approved river management plan (effective May 1, 1984) to protect and enhance scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, and similar values. The approximate one-mile wide, 127-mile long corridor traverses the WMNRA. Throughout this plan the phrase, "Beaver Creek NWR Corridor," is used to indicate the lands within the NWR boundaries as defined in the Beaver Creek NWR Plan. With adoption of this Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, the Beaver Creek NWR Plan and the WMNRA Plan will be compatible.

The only practice which is not defined in terms of the management units is fire management. Fire management options are drawn from the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan: Upper Yukon-Tanana Planning Area. There are no conflicts between the multiple use management prescriptions in this plan and the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan.

## Prescriptions Common to All Management Units

Although this plan divides the WMNRA into four management units, some management prescriptions will be the same throughout the Area. These general management practices are described below.

### RECREATION MANAGEMENT

#### Management Direction

PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT RESOURCE VALUES. Important recreational resource values that make the WMNRA unique will be enhanced and protected. These values include the outstanding scenic quality of the viewshed, the natural state of the river corridor, the water quality of the river system, the fishing and hunting opportunities, wildlife viewing, short hiking opportunities from the river, and unique landforms/geologic formations, such as, the White Mountains, Windy Gap Arch, Serpentine Slide, and Victoria Mountain.

Preservation of the Beaver Creek NWR Corridor and adjacent viewshed is essential to meeting recreational goals and objectives for the plan. Beaver Creek has national significance as a recreational resource and is one of the main attractions of the WMNRA. River floaters enjoy the solitude and magnificent scenery while fishing for arctic grayling, hiking in the White Mountains, viewing wildlife, and enjoying primitive camping experiences. Maintaining the values of the river system and corridor are essential to recreational use of the WMNRA.

The highlands, consisting of the high-ridge complex from Cache Mountain to Lime Peak and Mount Prindle plus the White Mountains backbone and Victoria Mountain, will be managed to protect remote primitive values. These values include outstanding scenic vistas of high mountain terrain, pristine areas with virtually no evidence of manmade improvements, wildlife viewing opportunities, high ridge hiking opportunities along unimproved trails, unique landforms and geologic features, hunting and fishing opportunities, and outstanding opportunities for winter use of remote backcountry.

Within the Semi-Primitive Motorized Management Unit, values which should be protected include ORV hunting opportunities, scenic qualities, recreational access to primitive areas and river put-in, wildlife viewing, hiking opportunities in the vicinity of the White Mountains Trail and Mount Prindle and recreational mining on Nome Creek.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES. A remote cabin program will be developed and a system of cabins will be established to accommodate recreational uses, such as, float boating, dog mushing, backcountry hiking, winter uses, etc. Along with the existing Borealis cabin, cabins will be constructed in the vicinity of Wickersham Dome, Trail Creek, Fossil Creek, Windy Creek, upper Bear Creek, Lime Peak, Victoria Creek, Mount Prindle, Bear/Champion Creek, and other areas that might later be identified.

New recreational sites would be developed, such as, campgrounds, trailheads, parking, float-trip staging area, etc., within the context of primitive and semi-primitive recreation. These sites would include a primitive campground and staging area in the vicinity of lower Nome Creek, trailheads and related new trails as shown on the "Proposed Plan" map.

Trails and recreational development will be located to avoid conflicts with crucial wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas. Trail development would include: (1) a system of unimproved trails which would consist of limited vegetation clearing, necessary trail markers, and boardwalks to span unavoidable wet areas; (2) developed trailheads with parking, toilet facilities, signs, maps, mileage; and (3) a system of appropriately located public use shelter cabins.

The following recreation sites and recreation withdrawals outside the WMNRA along the Steese Highway and the Chatanika River will be retained under BLM management as support facilities:

1. The Cripple Creek campground and recreation withdrawal is a 21-unit campground located 60 miles northeast of Fairbanks. It will serve as a major staging area for people wishing to travel into the WMNRA.
2. The U.S. Creek recreation withdrawal north of the Steese Highway right-of-way at 56 Mile is a site that will be developed as necessary to serve as a staging area for the WMNRA.
3. The Perhaps Creek recreation withdrawal at 53 Mile Steese Highway will be retained for future development.

VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION. Public information and interpretation would be provided through development of signs, brochures, and maps. This material would be designed to facilitate greater public enjoyment and increase the public's understanding of recreational resources.

Special Recreation Use Permits would be required for commercial use, competitive events, and special uses involving over 50 participants.

Visitor use would be monitored to evaluate use patterns, needs, and impacts.

HUMAN USE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE. Opportunities for fishing, wildlife viewing, hunting, and trapping would be ensured. Fish and wildlife values are among the most significant recreation attractors to the WMNRA.

#### Rationale

In accordance with ANILCA, recreation is the primary use of the WMNRA, although other uses are allowable when compatible with recreation. Portions of the WMNRA of particular value to recreation are the Beaver Creek NWR Corridor and the White Mountains highlands. Preservation of

these two regions must be an important consideration in the management of the Area. Because of the proximity of the WMNRA to Fairbanks and the accessibility of the Area, several types of recreational use, ranging from primitive non-motorized to semi-primitive motorized, must be accommodated. Support recreational facilities along the Steese Highway are needed to facilitate use of access to the WMNRA.

## **WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

### **Management Direction**

The primary emphasis of the wildlife habitat management program will be habitat protection, maintenance, and improvement. The priority species will be caribou, Dall sheep, fish, and peregrine falcon (an endangered species). The wildlife habitat management program will be implemented in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Endangered Species Office.

Identification and monitoring of wildlife distribution, movements, and use areas will be done through the use of ground and aerial surveys. Information gained from monitoring will be used to assess the effects of land use activities, determine habitat condition and trends, and formulate measures to mitigate possible adverse effects on wildlife from development such as mining and the construction and use of roads.

**HABITAT PROTECTION.** Habitat protection in the WMNRA will emphasize protection of crucial habitats. Crucial habitats are wildlife use areas which are necessary for perpetuation of the species or population and which provide an essential element of the life cycle for that species or population. Crucial habitats for wildlife are listed in Table 9-1. Crucial habitats will be protected through the avoidance of possible adverse effects of land use activities, through mitigation, and by withdrawing specific areas from certain land use activities. Areas which are closed to mineral leasing include crucial caribou calving areas and Dall sheep habitat. The Beaver Creek NWR encompasses the presently known nesting habitat for peregrine falcon, and this area is also closed to mineral leasing.

When specific land use actions are proposed in the Semi-Primitive Motorized Unit, mitigative measures to avoid or minimize possible adverse effects will be developed through the environmental assessment process, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act and, in the case of lode leasing or valid existing rights, by the Surface Management Regulations (43 CFR 3809). As a result, it may be necessary to restrict or alter the timing, location, and extent of a proposed land use activity to avoid or minimize adverse effects. Table 9-2 lists crucial use areas and the times during which special restrictions may be required in these areas. These restrictions prohibit surface movement within one mile of the area or the use of aircraft under an altitude of 1,500 feet.

**HABITAT IMPROVEMENT.** Habitat improvement for moose and other species will result from the implementation of the Alaska Interagency Fire

Management Plan: Upper Yukon-Tanana Planning Unit. Additionally, prescribed burns may be used to reestablish or improve habitat for moose and other species. Areas to be considered for prescribed burns include, but are not limited to: Trail Creek, Ophir Creek, Champion Creek and Bear Creek. Over the next 10 years a minimum of four prescribed burns will be conducted within the WMNRA, each improving at least 7,500 acres of habitat.

### Rationale

Wildlife is a priority resource which is identified in ANILCA and which contributes to public enjoyment of the WMNRA. Hunting and/or wildlife viewing provide an important part of the recreational experience for nearly all users, including hikers, river floaters, and ORV users. Protection of crucial habitats or improvements of specific habitat is essential to maintaining this opportunity for the public. Dall sheep range between the WMNRA and the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The management plan for the WMNRA is consistent with the purposes of the refuge.

#### CRUCIAL USE AREAS FOR VARIOUS SPECIES AND SPECIES GROUPS

Table 9-1

<u>Species/Group</u>	<u>Crucial Use Area</u>
Caribou	Calving (present and historical), movement routes (present and historical)
Dall Sheep	Mineral licks, movement routes, lambing, associated escape terrain, winter range
Moose	Late winter range, mineral licks
Grizzly Bear/Black Bear	Denning (winter), seasonal high use/high prey density
Peregrine Falcon/Other Raptors	Nesting, prey gathering
Furbearers	Denning (reproduction), seasonal high use/high prey density
Waterfowl	Nesting, overwintering (potential)
Small Game	Winter concentrations
Land/Shore Birds and Small Mammals	Concentrations which are crucial for predator prey gathering
Fish	Spawning areas, overwintering areas



POSSIBLE SURFACE USE AND OCCUPANCY RESTRICTIONS  
IN CRUCIAL HABITATS

Table 9-2

<u>Species</u>	<u>Crucial Use Area</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Caribou	Calving/movement routes	May 1 - June 15
Dall Sheep	Lambing, movements Mineral licks Winter range	May 1 - 31 May 15 - July 15 Oct 1 - May 1
Grizzly Bear/Black Bear	Denning	Nov 1 - April 31
Peregrine Falcon/Other Raptors	Nesting, prey gathering	April 15 - Aug 31
Furbearers	Denning	May 1 - June 15
Fish	Spawning Overwintering	May 1 - Sept 1 Dec 1 - April 15

**FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

**Management Direction**

Fish habitat will be managed to maintain and/or enhance fish populations for the use and enjoyment of the recreational users of the WMNRA. Primary emphasis will be placed on habitat for arctic grayling. Management actions will include development projects to rehabilitate stream and riparian areas such as Nome Creek where past placer mining activity has altered the aquatic environment.

Measures to mitigate the impacts of development on the fishery resource are attached as stipulations to the authorizing documents on a case-by-case basis.

Riparian gravel sources will be used only where upland sources are not reasonably available and where any damaging impacts can be mitigated to the extent that the water quality and fisheries of the Beaver Creek system will not be significantly impaired. The gravel would be extracted in such a manner as to minimize the loss of fish and wildlife and their habitats.

Special stipulations will be placed on development activities in crucial habitat areas such as fish spawning and overwintering areas. Such

stipulations could require an alteration in the timing of activities so as to avoid disturbing or disrupting spawning activity as well as to avoid habitat alteration or loss in quality. In some cases, it may be necessary to select an alternate site.

Proponents of all surface-disturbing activities will be required to use the best available technology to reduce siltation and stream turbidity to an acceptable level for fish survival and reproduction.

All placer mines and other surface disturbances will be required to be rehabilitated in such a way as to minimize future erosion.

### **Rationale**

Sport fisheries contribute to public enjoyment of the WMNRA. Most sport fishing takes place on Beaver Creek while people are floating the NWR. However, fish habitats on tributaries contribute to fish populations in Beaver Creek and should also be protected. At present, the only practical way to maintain or improve fisheries habitat is to critically evaluate all projects that have the potential to degrade the fish resource.

### **MINERALS MANAGEMENT**

#### **Management Direction**

ANILCA provides special and specific direction on how to manage minerals. The mineral program is guided by the requirements found in Sections 402, 404, 1010 and 1312.

LOCATABLE MINERALS - VALID EXISTING CLAIMS. In accordance with 43 CFR 3809, all operators of valid existing claims within the WMNRA will be required to file a plan of operations or notice which will include the name and mailing address of the operator (and of the claimant if the two are not one and the same), a map showing existing or proposed access, the name and serial number of the claims to be mined, proposed operation and dates of activity, type and degree of operation, and measures to prevent undue and unnecessary degradation. A reclamation plan must be included as a part of the plan of operations or notice.

Within the WMNRA, wintertime cross-country moves are preferred for the transport of equipment onto claims. Any cross-country movement of equipment will have to be approved in advance by the Authorized Officer.

LOCATABLE MINERALS - NEW DISPOSALS. In accordance with ANILCA, new disposals of locatable minerals within the WMNRA can only be made through a leasing process. No lands within the WMNRA will be opened to the leasing of placer deposits. However, the leasing of lode deposits will be allowed.

COAL AND GEOTHERMAL. In accordance with 43 CFR 3201.1-6 and 43 CFR 3400.2, neither coal nor geothermal leasing is allowed within the National Recreation Area.

SALEABLE MINERALS. Disposal of sand, gravel, rock, and other saleable minerals under 43 CFR 3600 will be made if such disposals are compatible with the other provisions of this plan.

EXPLORATION. Because of the multiplicity of exploration methods which might be employed, anyone proposing to explore for minerals within the WMNRA must contact the Authorized Officer.

RECLAMATION. All operations in the WMNRA will be reclaimed to the satisfaction of the Authorized Officer.

#### **Rationale**

Under the provisions of ANILCA, holders of valid existing rights can develop their claims in accordance with the Surface Management Regulations which provide for the protection of the environment.

In certain areas outside the primitive unit, new mineral development can be permitted under the leasing provisions of ANILCA as long as it does not significantly impair recreational values or use. \*

Extensive placer mining on Beaver Creek or its principal tributaries would be in conflict with recreational purposes because of degradation to natural and primitive values of the Beaver Creek NWR corridor and damage to arctic grayling habitat.

Section 1010 of ANILCA directs the Secretary to "assess the oil, gas, and other mineral potential on all public lands in the State of Alaska in order to expand the data base with respect to the minerals potential of such lands." The Secretary is also directed to allow for access by air for such activities. The BLM is working with the State Division of Geological/Geophysical Survey, the Bureau of Mines, and the U.S. Geological Survey in an effort to further develop mineral assessments of these and other lands in Alaska. Any proposed study will also receive review and comment by the mineral industry, so the best utilization of government and private mineral assessment capabilities can be made. Information gathered through exploration by private companies will assist the Bureau in meeting this legal requirement. Such information, in combination with information which will be collected on wildlife and other resources, will be very useful in evaluating possible amendments to this plan. In accordance with Section 1010, all exploration will be carried out in an environmentally sound manner, with no appreciable alteration of the natural character or ecological systems of the Area. \*

## OFF-ROAD VEHICLES, HORSES AND AIRCRAFT

### Management Direction

The type and extent of ORV uses allowed under the plan depends on the designation of the unit in which the use occurs. The Primitive Unit is closed to all ORV use, with the exception of winter snowmachine use. The Semi-Primitive Motorized Unit is open to the use of off-road vehicles of less than 1,500 pounds GVW. Vehicles of greater than 1,500 pounds GVW could only be allowed through a specific request to the Authorized Officer. (See ORV Management Table 9-3.)

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES. The use of vehicles greater than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way would be permitted by specific authorization. Such authorization would be given when necessary to provide access to inholdings and for other purposes acceptable under the terms and conditions of this plan. Authorization would be given subject to conditions designed to minimize impact to the environment or to other land uses. Authorization for vehicle use could be granted under a mining plan of operations (43 CFR 3809), through a temporary use permit (43 CFR 2800 or 43 CFR 2920), or by other appropriate means. Crossing the wild river corridor would be permitted only if there were no economically feasible and prudent alternative.

Except as indicated below, use of vehicles greater than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way would be limited to winter months with adequate snow cover and would be limited to existing trails where practical.

Within the WMNRA, the need to protect recreational values will, in most cases, preclude summertime movement of heavy equipment. However, under certain circumstances, a summer move may be permitted. These circumstances include, but would not be limited to: (1) a one-time-only move which would be impossible in the winter, and (2) a move which would not interfere with crucial wildlife habitat.

An ORV monitoring program would be developed and implemented. This program will document existing trails and their conditions, document newly disturbed areas of cross-country use, and provide a basis for determining rehabilitation needs, monitoring recovery, and establishing a threshold as to when impacts are becoming excessive. On an interim basis, a semi-primitive area open to ORV use would be closed or restricted under any of the following four conditions:

1. A watershed would be closed to ORV use when, due to erosion and sedimentation or poor trail conditions, more than five percent of the miles of trail become difficult to negotiate with a small three-wheeler or other like-sized ORV.
2. A watershed would be closed to ORV use when water pollution from ORV trails or disturbances become noticeable in Beaver Creek or its major tributaries.

3. If there is extensive cross-country damage or rutting on trails as a result of the use of light off-road vehicles, the area will be closed to ORV use from the beginning of breakup to the time when willows and dwarf birch are in full leaf. This would allow the excess moisture from snowmelt to dissipate and the fluffing of the soil caused by winter frost action to settle, thereby reducing the tendency to form ruts from vehicle passage.
4. ORV use would be restricted or prohibited as necessary to protect recreation, wildlife, watershed and/or scenic values.

Permanent use restrictions on off-road vehicles would require an order, signed by the Authorized Officer and published in the Federal Register. Signs would be posted at access points to inform the public of use restrictions. However, where the Authorized Officer determines that ORVs are causing or will cause considerable adverse effects on resource values or other authorized uses, he/she shall immediately close the area or trail affected to the type of vehicle causing the adverse effect until that effect is eliminated and measures have been implemented to prevent a recurrence (43 CFR 8341.2).

ORV MANAGEMENT  
WHITE MOUNTAINS RECREATIONAL AREA  
Table 9-3

	SUMMER	WINTER
Primitive	<u>Permit Required</u> for any ORV use off a valid right-of-way	<u>No Permit Required</u> for snowmachines of less than 1,500 pounds GVW <u>Permit Required</u> for all other ORV use
Wild River Corridor	<u>Permit Required</u> for any ORV use off a valid right-of-way	<u>No Permit Required</u> for snowmachines of less than 1,500 pounds GVW <u>Permit Required</u> for all other ORV use
Semi-Primitive Motorized	<u>No Permit Required</u> for vehicles of less than 1,500 pounds GVW <u>Permit Required</u> for use of ORVs of greater than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way	
Research Natural Areas	CLOSED TO ALL ORV USE	

HORSES. The use of horses will be generally unrestricted throughout the WMNRA.

AIRCRAFT. Aircraft use will be generally unrestricted except in certain wildlife crucial habitats.

#### **Rationale**

Many members of the public feel that off-road vehicles detract from their enjoyment of the area. To others, the use of light-weight ORVs is an important recreational activity. Large off-road vehicles (those over 1,500 pounds GVW) are a particular problem since they may cause environmental damage which persists long after the passage of the vehicle. However, in an area with almost no roads, ORVs are often the only practical method of reaching inholdings or accomplishing other legitimate tasks. This policy would allow the use of large ORVs when necessary and of small ORVs in specified areas, but would restrict such use to minimize environmental damage. The monitoring program will assist BLM in making future decisions affecting ORVs.

Use of horses and aircraft in the area has not created any problems and is not expected to do so in the future. Aircraft provide a means of reaching remote areas to engage in primitive recreational activities.

#### **RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND OTHER REALTY ACTIONS**

##### **Management Direction**

Under the authority of Section 503 of P.L. 94-579 (FLPMA) and Title XI of P.L. 96-487 (ANILCA), two transportation corridors will be established. One would cross upper Nome Creek from the U.S. Creek Road and extend to the vicinity of Champion Creek. The other will begin at the WMNRA boundary near the Steese Highway, extend to lower Nome Creek and provide access to a put-in point on Nome Creek which will access floatable water on the Beaver Creek NWR. Development within this second corridor will require a right-of-way from the State of Alaska since the first five miles would be located on State lands. Both corridors will generally follow existing roads or trails. The upper Nome Creek corridor will provide recreational access to the ridge complex leading to the Mount Prindle area and the highland country. Both corridors could also be used to provide access to existing and possible future mineral development.

To prevent a proliferation of rights-of-way, all future rights-of-way will, as far as possible, be located within one of these two corridors. If it becomes necessary for a right-of-way to extend beyond a corridor, existing trails will be followed whenever possible. Several users might be required to use the same right-of-way and to jointly maintain it. Holders of rights-of-way for roads or trails would be required to allow public access for recreation unless there is a compelling reason to deny such access.

Before any construction takes place, engineering studies for route selections within the transportation corridors will be conducted to identify pipeline, road and trail locations, river crossings, and geologic hazards.

EXCHANGES. No lands within the WMNRA will be exchanged or otherwise disposed of. Lands outside the WMNRA in the Wickersham Dome area will be retained in federal ownership for recreational purposes.

OTHER REALTY ACTIONS. Other realty actions could be permitted if compatible with the land uses designated in this plan. The BLM is in the process of formulating a trapping cabin policy.

#### **Rationale**

Rights-of-way may be needed to provide access for recreation, for mining claims, or for other purposes. This plan would provide for necessary access in accordance with the provisions of Title XI of ANILCA.

Retention of federal lands outside the WMNRA in the Wickersham Dome Area will provide road frontage on the Elliott Highway. In addition, the trailheads for the White Mountains summer and winter trails are also located on these lands.

#### **VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

##### **Management Direction**

Scenic quality would be maintained by adhering to Visual Resource Management objectives while implementing a program of visual assessment of all surface-disturbing activities, such as, new access trails, mining activities, ORV use, support structures and developments, and recreational facilities. Specific areas with outstanding scenic qualities of special concern are the high ridge complex within the Primitive Management Unit and the river viewshed.

##### **Rationale**

The scenic quality of the existing landscape is an important part of the recreational experience in the WMNRA. Maintaining the viewshed along the Beaver Creek corridor and the background view of the White Mountains spine in their natural states is essential to complying with the wild river designation and the intent of Congress in designating the White Mountains as a National Recreation Area.

#### **CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

##### **Management Direction**

Class III site-specific inventories will be conducted prior to any surface-disturbing activity to identify, evaluate, and mitigate any adverse impacts to resources which may be eligible for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic structures will be evaluated for recreational use.

## Rationale

Class I literature search, Class II inventory of Beaver Creek and Pleistocene faunal material indicate that potentially significant cultural and paleontological resources may exist within the WMNRA.

## WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### Management Direction

The Bureau will cooperate closely with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the purpose of establishing water quality standards and for preventing, eliminating or diminishing the pollution of State waters consistent with the Federal Clean Water Act; the purpose for which the wild and scenic rivers were established under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; and State water quality standards. \*

The Bureau will cooperate closely with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the enforcement of State and federal water pollution laws. All mining operations will be required to keep water-borne effluent within present ADEC and EPA limitations, and reclamation of disturbed ground will be required to prevent erosion resulting in stream sedimentation. These requirements would be enforced under the Surface Management Regulations (43 CFR 3809). \*

## Rationale

Protection of water quality, particularly in the Wild River, is necessary to provide a quality recreational experience. The cleanliness of the river bed and maintenance of a clear water fishery are critical to the recreational uses of WMNRA.

## FOREST MANAGEMENT

### Management Direction

Forest products would be reserved for local use only. No commercial timber harvest would be permitted.

Monitoring would be done to ensure that the authorized amount of forest products have been taken by the applicant from the location indicated in the permit and that permit stipulations have been followed. Permit stipulations could include winter cutting and movement, maintaining a set distance from waterways, and lopping and scattering slash.

## Rationale

There is no timber of commercial value within the WMNRA. The demand of local residents for firewood or other forest products for personal use is limited and can be met without significant risk to resource values.



## SUBSISTENCE

### Management Direction

Compliance with Section 810 of ANILCA and the BLM subsistence procedures as defined in Instruction Memorandum AK 84-339 is required for any action to withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the occupancy or disposition of public lands. This is true whether the action is initiated by BLM or by some other agent, as long as BLM has the discretion to substantially affect the result. Subsistence values in the WMNRA are discussed in Chapter II of the Final EIS.

### Rationale

Section 810 of ANILCA requires compliance with directed procedures of this Act. In order to ensure compliance on BLM lands, further instructions have been promulgated and issued under the Bureau's IM AK 84-339. The wildlife species mentioned are important to subsistence. Actions impacting these species must be analyzed under these procedures to determine the necessity of the actions and the adequacy of mitigative measures.

## SENSITIVE AND RARE PLANTS

### Management Direction

Inventories for sensitive and rare plants will be conducted as required for clearances for proposed surface-disturbing activities. Sites will be protected by modifying proposed actions which threaten sensitive or rare plant habitats or by denying those actions which cannot be modified. If actions cannot be modified or denied, plant material salvage will be attempted.

### Rationale

Sensitive or rare plant habitats will be protected from activities which might alter or destroy them. They will be managed in such a way that it will not become necessary to list the plants as threatened or endangered in accordance with the Endangered Species Act.

### Prescription for Primitive Management Unit

The following management prescriptions apply to the primitive areas identified on the "Proposed Plan" map in the map pocket. Primitive areas will be managed to protect the wild and natural character of the area.

## RECREATION MANAGEMENT

### Management Direction

Egress from Beaver Creek will be improved by establishing a site for a primitive airstrip as a take-out point in the vicinity of Victoria Creek.

Short hiking trail opportunities associated with river floating trips will be established in Fossil Creek, Windy Gap, Serpentine Slide, Big Bend, and in other areas which might later be identified in project planning. Winter trails within this management unit will also be established.

A minimum of 160 miles of trails and six cabins will be established within this unit. These areas are identified on the "Proposed Plan" map. \*

#### **Rationale**

A strong demand for primitive recreational opportunities was expressed in the public comments on the Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The proposed Primitive Management Unit is sufficiently large and remote to accommodate this demand.

Access to the Primitive Management Unit will be sufficient to allow primitive recreational use to increase somewhat over present levels, but will not promote or lead to overcrowding or user conflicts.

#### **FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

##### **Management Direction**

Beaver Creek fish habitat and riparian areas will be maintained to support viable self-sustaining populations of fish and to provide a quality fishing experience. This includes an evaluation of activities in the remainder of the WMNRA which may have negative effects on Beaver Creek.

#### **Rationale**

The key recreational use of WMNRA primitive areas consists of a combination of float boating, fishing, hiking, and primitive camping. The arctic grayling fishery contributes significantly to recreational enjoyment of the WMNRA and comprises one of the major natural resources of the Beaver Creek Corridor.

#### **MINERALS MANAGEMENT**

##### **Management Direction**

LEASING. The Primitive Management Unit will remain closed to all mineral leasing.

EXPLORATION. Anyone proposing to explore for minerals within the WMNRA must contact the Authorized Officer. Activities which conform to the management prescriptions for this unit and which will not impair the unit's primitive values will be allowed. Permits will generally not be required for helicopter landings. However, the use of off-road vehicles (except snowmachines) will not be permitted.

## Rationale

The primary objective in the Primitive Management Unit is to provide opportunities for primitive recreation. The roads, structures, and heavy equipment necessary for mineral development are not compatible with the primitive recreational experience.

Section 1010 of ANILCA directs the Secretary to "assess the oil, gas, and other mineral potential on all public lands in the State of Alaska in order to expand the data base with respect to the mineral potential of such lands." The Secretary is also directed to allow for access by air for such activities. The BLM is working with the State Division of Geological/Geophysical Survey, the Bureau of Mines, and the U.S. Geological Survey in an effort to further develop mineral assessments of these and other lands in Alaska. Any proposed study will also receive review and comment by the mineral industry, so the best utilization of government and private mineral assessment capabilities can be made. Information gathered through exploration by private companies would assist the Bureau in meeting this legal requirement. Such information, in combination with that which will be collected on wildlife and other resources, would be very useful in evaluating possible amendments to this plan. In accordance with Section 1010, all exploration will be carried out in an environmentally sound manner, with no appreciable alteration of the natural character or ecological systems of the Area.

## OFF-ROAD VEHICLES AND AIRCRAFT

### Management Direction

To prevent negative impacts to the primitive recreational experience, the Primitive Management Unit is closed to ORV use. The single exception to this closure is the seasonal opening of the unit to the use of snowmachines. Authorization will be required for the use of any motorized vehicle other than a snowmachine off a valid right-of-way. Aircraft use will generally be unrestricted except in certain crucial wildlife habitats.

A location for a primitive landing strip for light aircraft will be designated near the mouth of Victoria Creek primarily to serve as a take-out point for floaters of Beaver Creek.

Criteria for selecting a site for location of a primitive airstrip will include: (1) meeting the minimum needs (clearance, approach, take-off, departure) for small single-engine aircraft; (2) choosing a relatively flat area that would require only minimal leveling and clearing of brush; (3) minimizing visual intrusion; and (4) minimizing the potential for conflicts with local residents.

### Rationale

Winter use of the area is extremely low and winter access is difficult. Therefore, the use of snowmachines will allow some winter recreational use without causing significant user conflicts. With adequate snow cover, snowmachines cause little or no resource damage. The landing of

airplanes and helicopters facilitates primitive backcountry use. An improved landing strip near the mouth of Victoria Creek will provide safer and easier access from Beaver Creek.

Restriction of ORVs at other times of the year will minimize motorized intrusions into primitive areas during the summer and fall months when recreational use is highest.

#### **RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND OTHER REALTY ACTIONS**

##### **Management Direction**

Rights-of-way will be allowed within the Primitive Management Unit only if there is no economically feasible and prudent alternative.

##### **Rationale**

Construction of roads or trails is not compatible with primitive values but may sometimes be necessary to provide access to inholdings such as mining claims.

#### **VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

##### **Management Direction**

Scenic quality will be maintained by adhering to Visual Resource Management objectives as defined in the BLM Manual 8400 and as further described below.

The Beaver Creek NWR viewshed and the entire Primitive Management Unit would be managed as a VRM Class II area. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.

##### **Rationale**

The Primitive Management Unit contains the highest scenic quality of the WMNRA. A high level of protection is necessary to preserve the primitive recreational opportunities available in this unit.

The VRM Class II objectives are realistic under the limited degree of development allowed in the Primitive Management Unit.

#### **WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

##### **Management Direction**

Water quality in Beaver Creek NWR will be managed to preserve clear flowing and undisturbed stream and the associated floating and fishing experiences. Water resource management of the Beaver Creek system will be aimed at attaining the State's water quality standard for Beaver Creek.

A water quality monitoring program will be established by setting up sampling points along Beaver Creek and its tributaries and taking samples on a monthly basis during the summer. Sufficient instream flow will be maintained in Beaver Creek to meet the purposes for which the NWR was established. An instream flow study, already identified in the Beaver Creek NWR Plan, will be conducted to determine how much instream flow is needed for the NWR. Although there is a federally reserved water right for the NWR, it needs to be quantified.

### **Rationale**

Maintaining both a high water quality equal to State standards and sufficient instream flow are necessary to meet the objectives of the NWR management plan and to provide for the principle recreation uses of WMNRA, such as, float boating, fishing and camping. \*

### **Prescription for Beaver Creek National Wild River Corridor**

This management unit is distinguished from all others in that it is covered by an approved River Management Plan, which became effective May 1, 1984. The River Management Plan for Beaver Creek provides a detailed description of the boundaries of the river corridor, major issues and concerns for management of the corridor, and management actions. Part III of the River Management Plan, "The Management Program," is attached to this document as Appendix H and should be considered to be the multiple use management prescription for this management unit. The prescription is designed to preserve the river and its immediate environment in its natural, primitive condition, in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542).

The designated NWR corridor will be managed as a VRM Class I area. The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape so that it appears unaltered by man. The level of change to the landscape should be extremely low because only very limited management activities should occur. \*

The NWR viewshed will be managed as VRM Class II area. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. The method for determining this viewshed will involve analysis and on-the-ground refinement by a team of at least two people trained in visual assessment. The viewshed consists of areas identified as critical to scenic viewing opportunities associated with the wild river floating experience. Factors to be considered when determining critical viewshed include seen-area, viewing angle, viewing time, and topographic screening. \*

This plan amends the Beaver Creek River Management Plan, completed in December, 1983, relating to ORV use within the river corridor. Except as listed below, ORV use is prohibited within the Beaver Creek NWR Corridor.

During the winter months snowmachines of less than 1,500 pounds GVW are permitted. ORV use for access to inholdings can be authorized under a mining plan of operation (43 CFR 3809), with a right-of-way or permit (43 CFR 2800 or 43 CFR 2920), or by other appropriate means.

### Prescriptions for Semi-Primitive Management Unit

The overall management strategy for the Semi-Primitive Motorized Unit is to allow for a wider range of recreational opportunities in combination with other uses. Because this unit is closer to the Steese Highway, it is expected that it will receive greater visitor use than the Primitive Management Unit.

#### RECREATION MANAGEMENT

##### Management Direction

Recreation management in this area will focus on facility development and motorized vehicle access. This area will often serve as a "staging area" for primitive recreational experiences.

RECREATION FACILITIES. Recreation developments will include:

- (1) improvement of Lower Nome Creek Road as a put-in for Beaver Creek. (Development will also include a small campground, parking, and staging area.)
- (2) trailheads and parking areas for trails leading into primitive areas, and
- (3) development of snowmachine trails and public use cabins in the Wickersham Dome area.

RECREATION ACCESS. Existing access will be improved, and new winter trails will be established in Upper Victoria Creek/Colorado Creek, White Mountains Trail, Trail Creek/O'Brien Creek, Bear Creek/Quartz Creek, and in other areas which may later be identified pending further site evaluation.

Trailhead access for the interior highlands will be provided at lower Nome Creek and for the Mt. Prindle area at upper Nome Creek near the terminus of upper Nome Creek/U.S. Creek Road.

Access to Beaver Creek NWR will be improved by establishing a two-wheel drive road to a put-in point in the vicinity of lower Nome Creek Road or at a reasonable alternative location.

Areas for expansion of hiking and cross-country skiing opportunities in the Wickersham Dome Area will be evaluated and identified.

A minimum of 70 miles of trails and two cabins are proposed within this unit.

GOLD PANNING - NOME CREEK. A specific section of Nome Creek will be designated for gold panning. Markers delineating the extent of the panning area will be established on the ground. Parking areas will be

established on the tailings level as demand warrants. Approved tools will be limited to rocker boxes, gold pans, and portable sluice boxes (maximum 16" x 5'), and other hand-held tools such as shovels and picks.

Camping is limited to 10 days.

It may become necessary through a permit system to limit the number of users at a given time.

### **Rationale**

The Semi-Primitive Motorized Management Unit is the most easily accessible portion of the WMNRA and is an appropriate place to provide recreational opportunities for users who desire motorized access. Such use complements the primitive uses of WMNRA as well as the wilderness type uses in adjacent parks and refuges.

### **FISHERIES HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

#### **Management Direction**

Restoration of fish habitat and riparian areas along Nome Creek (with the exception of the area to be designated for gold panning) will be attempted. Mitigative measures will be formulated to cope with the impacts of the development of existing mining claims. A plan and methodology for the restoration and rehabilitation of the stream and associated riparian areas will be developed.

The scope and extent of restoration and rehabilitation along Nome Creek will depend on pre-project planning results. However, a restoration project could involve stream channel modification and alteration, bank stabilization, gabion and wing-dam placement, riparian area recontouring, soil spreading, and willow planting.

### **Rationale**

Nome Creek is a main headwater tributary to Beaver Creek and is accessible by road. Restoration of this fishery would provide high quality recreational opportunities to the day users from Fairbanks.

### **MINERALS MANAGEMENT**

#### **Management Direction**

LOCATABLE MINERALS - NEW DISPOSALS. In accordance with Section 1312 of ANILCA, new disposals of locatable minerals within the WMNRA may only be accomplished through a leasing program.

Lode deposit leasing will be permitted within the Semi-Primitive Motorized Management Unit. Placer mining, except for those claims with prior rights, will not be permitted. See Proposed Plan map in map pocket.

OIL AND GAS. The area open to the leasing of lode deposits in the Semi-Primitive Unit will also be opened to oil and gas leasing under 43 CFR 3100. See Proposed Plan map in map pocket.

NON-ENERGY MINERALS. Other commodities disposal under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 are considered on a case-by-case basis (43 CFR 3500).

HARDROCK LEASABLES. New regulations are presently being prepared for hardrock leasing. Draft regulations have been circulated which would require that a prospecting permit/lease system with mandatory bonding be instituted. Analysis of the proposed operation would include but would not be limited to water quality, wildlife habitat, visual resources, compatibility with recreation values, undue and unnecessary degradation, and compliance with the hardrock leasing regulations.

Under both 43 CFR 3809 and the draft hardrock leasing regulations, special attention is given to all existing and proposed operations within the WMNRA to ensure that the water quality of Beaver Creek is preserved in its present state. All operations must employ the latest technology to mitigate downstream effects. Terms of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits must be met or the operations will not be allowed to proceed. \*

There will be close coordination with adjacent land owners or managers, such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Alaska, where the potential exists to affect the lands under their control.

EXPLORATION. Because of the multiplicity of exploration methods which might be employed, anyone proposing to explore for minerals within the WMNRA should contact the Authorized Officer. In this unit, exploration activities which entail the use of mechanized equipment, explosives, etc., require an approved plan of operations or a prospecting permit prior to any activity.

#### **Rationale**

Lode mining or oil and gas development within the Semi-Primitive Motorized Management Unit is compatible with the recreational objectives for that unit and with the intent of ANILCA. Improved access associated with mineral development will benefit some recreational users. This area includes several geologic zones with mineral potential. The Surface Management Regulations (43 CFR 3809) and the proposed leasing regulations, coupled with the standards set by EPA, provide for sufficient controls on mining operations.



## **OFF-ROAD VEHICLES**

### **Management Direction**

The use of vehicles of less than 1,500 pounds GVW will be unrestricted in any season, except on designated hiking trails and cross-country ski trails, which would be closed to all vehicles. This policy will be reviewed after five years. The review will take into consideration the results of ORV monitoring. The use of vehicles of more than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way will require authorization.

### **Rationale**

With the current information on ORV impacts and the documented need for areas open for ORV use, it appears that this area is appropriate for the recreational use of light ORVs. It is relatively accessible from the Steese and Elliott highways and contains many existing ORV trails. ORV monitoring and use of emergency closures when necessary will provide sufficient protection for other values.

## **RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND OTHER REALTY ACTIONS**

### **Management Direction**

Under the authority of Section 503 of P.L. 94-579 (FLPMA), two transportation corridors will be established. Both will begin at the WMNRA boundary near the Steese Highway. One will cross upper Nome Creek and extend to Champion Creek. The other will extend to lower Nome Creek. Engineering studies for route selections within the transportation corridors will be conducted prior to any construction in order to identify potential road and trail locations, river crossings, and geologic hazards.

### **Rationale**

Both corridors follow existing roads or trails. The upper Nome Creek corridor will provide recreational access to the ridge complex leading to the Mount Prindle area. The lower Nome Creek corridor will provide access to a put-in point on Nome Creek, which could be used to reach Beaver Creek NWR. Both corridors could also be used to provide access to existing and possible future mineral development.

## **VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

### **Management Direction**

Scenic quality will be maintained by adhering to Visual Resource Management objectives as defined by BLM Manual 8400.

The White Mountain Trail will be managed as a VRM Class II area. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.

Areas of this unit that are determined to be within the critical viewshed for the NWR will be managed by VRM Class II objectives. These areas will be defined on 1:63,360 scale topographic maps within one year of completion of this plan.

The rest of the Semi-Primitive Management Unit will be managed as a VRM Class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the character of the landscape. The level of change should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer.

#### **Rationale**

Visual resources contribute to public enjoyment of the area and must be protected in a manner appropriate to recreational use. In this area, some changes to the landscape can be allowed to accommodate access, recreational facilities, or other developments.

#### **Prescriptions for Research Natural Areas**

##### **Management Direction**

Serpentine Slide (4,274 acres), Limestone Jags (5,170 acres), and Mount Prindle (3,147 acres in the WMNRA) will be designated as Research Natural Areas. No surface-disturbing activities will be allowed within the RNAs except permitted research projects. The areas will be closed to off-road vehicles and camping to avoid disturbing research projects. Natural processes, including wildfire, will be allowed to continue with as little interference as possible. Primitive campsites could be established outside the RNA boundaries and improved access in the form of trails could be developed. Hiking, hunting, and nature appreciation will be allowed.

All Research Natural Areas will remain closed to all types of mineral leasing.

An Establishment Report, which describes the values within an RNA and outlines visitor management controls, will be written for each RNA. This work is already under way.

##### **Rationale**

The designation of Research Natural Areas is part of the Ecological Reserve System program, an interagency effort to identify examples of certain types of ecosystems. These areas were chosen because they contain typical representatives of ecosystems or unusual natural features that are of scientific interest.

## Description of Fire Management

Fire will be managed according to the standards established in the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan: Upper Yukon - Tanana Planning Area. Fire management will enhance primitive and semi-primitive recreational values by maintaining vegetative and visual diversity and increasing wildlife habitat quality. The areas in which particular options would be applied are identified in the Fire Management Plan and any inhabited cabins will be designated as Critical Protection Sites and will receive first priority for fire suppression. Other cabins, structures, and historic cabins have been designated to receive protection.

Fuels management and other strategies will be used to reduce the wildfire hazard to structures which require protection.

The level of fire suppression will be that necessary to protect life, property, and historical cabins and to prevent escape of fire to areas requiring a higher level of fire suppression. There are no areas within the WMNRA where fire suppression is required to protect natural resource values. If increasing amounts of recreational or other uses mandate an increased level of fire protection, the level of suppression for any area can be changed. The Fire Management Plan is subject to annual review and modification.

Prescribed burning will be used to break up large areas of continuous fuels, improve wildlife habitat, and increase vegetative diversity. The drainages of Bear, Champion, Trail and Ophir creeks will be considered, as well as other areas which may be identified as more information becomes available.

Prior to any prescribed burn, the area will be thoroughly investigated to identify any inhabited or historic cabins, other structures, or critical protection sites, and appropriate measures will be taken to protect them from fire.

## AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

The purpose of this section of the plan is to address Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and/or coal leasing. These two planning elements are given special prominence in Bureau planning regulations and policy statements.

ACEC designations are designed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes; or to protect life and safety from natural hazards. No such designations are deemed necessary in the WMNRA at this time. No natural hazards, beyond the usual hazards associated with traveling in remote areas, were identified. Scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, and other important resource values were identified, but they can be adequately protected by the management prescriptions in this plan and by standard BIM procedures. The additional layer of regulations provided by designation of an ACEC is not necessary to prevent irreparable damage to these resources.

Coal leasing is not permitted within a National recreation area (43 CFR 3201.1-6) and therefore does not need to be addressed here.

## SUPPORT

Support activities are actions which make possible the implementation of the plan or which facilitate the type of resource management identified in the plan. Such actions may be entirely within the authority of BLM, or they may involve other agencies, groups, or state and local governments.

### Realty Actions

The BLM realty program will be needed to provide support for a number of other activities.

In order to open lands to mineral leasing, a Public Land Order will have to be written to revoke the existing withdrawals.

Lands in the Wickersham Dome area outside of the WMNRA boundaries which are necessary to ensure access to the WMNRA are presently withdrawn from State selection under PLO 5150, which establishes a corridor for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. Should PLO 5150 be revoked, another PLO will be necessary to ensure that the Wickersham Dome area will be retained in federal ownership and reserved for recreational purposes.

The Bureau will have to process applications for rights-of-way for pipelines, roads, or trails which may be proposed for access to mineral claims or leases, for public recreation, or for other purposes. In the case of applications from individuals, costs of processing may be recovered from the applicant. Applications from the State of Alaska for public roads would generally be processed at the expense of the federal government.

The Bureau will also have to file right-of-way applications for trails, cabins, or other facilities constructed at the expense of the Bureau. This is to ensure that BLM facilities will be protected from adverse land actions.

The BLM will work cooperatively with the State of Alaska to identify all right-of-way claims made pursuant to Revised Statute 2477 within the WMNRA boundaries for administrative purposes only. The validity of such claims can only be determined in a court of competent jurisdiction. \*

The BLM proposes to cooperate with the State of Alaska and with other federal agencies in the preparation of an analysis of transportation needs involving the respective State and federal transportation and land managing agencies. The analysis would address the existing and future access needs and propose how best these needs could be met. It would also identify where access routes presently exist and which ones, if any, are duplicative. \*

### Intergovernmental Cooperation

Sharing of information with other resource management agencies and cooperative efforts in inventory, monitoring, research, studies, and enforcement are essential to the successful implementation of this plan. Some of the principal agencies with which the Bureau cooperates are:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Focus of Cooperation</u>
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	Inventory, monitoring, study, and management of threatened or endangered and other species and their habitats; monitoring and evaluation of impacts of land uses on wildlife; and monitoring of human use of wildlife resources
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Endangered Species Office	
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation	Monitoring water quality, enforcement of water quality standards
Environmental Protection Agency	
Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, and Division of Geologic and Geophysical Surveys	Assessment of mineral potential
Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks	Coordination of management on adjacent lands.
U.S. Bureau of Mines	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
U.S. Geological Survey	

## CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

The WMNRA is not included in lands covered by an existing federal, State, or local land use plan. However, land use planning for adjacent lands is in progress, and an effort has been made to coordinate this plan with the plans of adjacent land managers.

The WMNRA is bordered on the north by the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A land use plan for the refuge is currently being developed. In the absence of a completed and approved plan, consistency with USFWS programs and policies has been addressed by responding to the comments submitted by USFWS on the Draft RMP/EIS. These comments and responses are printed in Chapter V of the Final Environmental Impact Statement "Response to Public Comment."

The WMNRA is bordered on the west and south by lands belonging to the State of Alaska. Most of these lands are included in the Tanana Basin Area Plan, which is currently in draft form. The management actions identified for the WMNRA are believed to be consistent with the proposals for managing State lands set forth in the Draft Tanana Basin Area Plan.

Consistency with State programs and policies has been addressed by responding to the comments submitted by the State of Alaska on the Draft RMP/EIS. These comments and responses are also printed in Chapter V of the FEIS. Additionally, in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.3-2(e), a copy of the Proposed Plan was submitted to the Governor of Alaska for a consistency review. As a result of that review, changes have been made to ensure that the plan is consistent with State plans, policies, and programs. \*

The WMNRA is bordered on the east by the northern portion of the Steese National Conservation Area which is also under BLM administration. Land use planning for the WMNRA and the SNCA has been conducted simultaneously by the same planning team to ensure maximum coordination between the two plans.

## IMPLEMENTATION

This section describes the actions which will be required to implement the management objectives described in this plan. This includes the development, operation and maintenance of new facilities; increased visitor services; monitoring and evaluation of use; and the increased manpower needs associated with the objectives. Implementation is not a single, discrete action. Rather, it is an ongoing process, which will continue until this plan is replaced by a new or revised plan.

### Activity Planning

The management objectives established by this plan represent broad scale land use decisions. In many instances, such as in the development of new facilities, more detailed, site-specific planning is required. This level of planning is necessary to determine exact locations of improvements, to explore alternative methods of design and construction, and to provide specific guidance for operations and maintenance, etc. For the purposes of this section, these additional planning requirements have been identified as additional planning needs. If further needs are identified later, additional project plans can be developed without amending this RMP, as long as the proposals of the plans are in conformance with the RMP.

Figures on costs are broken down by program. These costs reflect participation and expenditures by the BLM Alaska State Office, Fairbanks District Office and Yukon Resource Area.



PROJECT PLANNING NEEDS

<u>Program</u>	<u>Planning Needs &amp; Objectives:</u>	<u>Completion Time</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Recreation	1. Consistent with the recreation management objectives established through this plan, develop a Recreation Activity Management Plan (RAMP) to provide specific, detailed locations, timing, methods, and rationale for: a) public information and interpretation, b) remote public use cabin program, (c) campgrounds, trailheads, boat launches, or other facilities, and d) summer and winter trails, especially hiking trails associated with Beaver Creek.	1 year	\$ 30,000
	2. Project Plans for lay-out and design of all recreational facilities. (Priorities for these planning needs are discussed later in this section under construction and maintenance priorities.)	3 years	\$ 90,000
Total Project Requirement		4 years	\$120,000
Visual Resource Management	Viewshed analysis of Beaver Creek to refine the critical viewshed and to place allowable activities in perspective.	1 year	\$ 12,000
Wildlife	1. Habitat Management Plan to carry out cooperative monitoring, protection, and improvement projects and maintenance of habitat programs described in management prescriptions.	1 year	\$ 6,000
	2. Yearly implementation of Habitat Management Plan for the life of the plan.	Ongoing	\$105,400
Fisheries	Project plan for restoration and rehabilitation of fish habitat in Nome Creek.	1 year	\$ 10,000
Fire	Project plans to describe exact procedures for prescribed burns.	2 years	\$ 45,000

## Construction and Maintenance

The following construction work would be necessary to fully implement plan decisions:

### RECREATION

<u>Recreational facilities:</u>	<u>Construction:</u>	<u>Maintenance:</u>
15 miles of access road to lower Nome Creek or extension of U.S. Creek Road to Champion Creek to improve river access and provide necessary facilities	\$1.5 million	\$30,000/year
166 miles of Trails	\$525,000	\$10,000/year
9 Cabins	\$ 80,000	\$10,000/year
1 Campground	\$500,000	\$10,000/year
10 Trailheads	\$300,000	\$ 5,000/year
Airstrip - minor improvements	\$ 25,000	\$ 3,000/year

Recreation facilities will be constructed as funding permits. Priorities are as follows:

#### First Priorities

Lower Nome Creek - river access, small campground  
Cache Mountain/Mount Prindle Trail - 50 miles of trail  
Table Top Mountain Spur Trail - 21 miles of trail  
Airstrip near Victoria Creek

#### Second Priorities

Shelters along Cache Mountain/Mount Prindle Trail-(4)  
Trail development: Big Bend - 18 miles of trail  
Lime Peak Trail - 19 miles of trail

#### Third Priorities

Shelter at Big Bend Trail-(1)  
Shelter at Lime Peak Trail-(1)  
Trail development: Victoria Mountain Trail - 22 miles of trail  
Snowmachine Access Trail: Wickersham Dome - 32 miles of trail

#### Fourth Priorities

Shelter at Victoria Mountain Trail-(1)  
Shelter at Wickersham Dome snowmachine trail-(1)

#### RESTORATION OF FISH HABITAT IN NOME CREEK

The scope and extent of restoration and rehabilitation along Nome Creek will depend on pre-project planning results. However, a restoration project could involve stream channel modification and alteration, bank stabilization, gabion and wing-dam placement, riparian area recontouring, soil spreading, and willow planting. A stream reach of five to 10 miles could be involved. Total cost will depend on the scope of the project but could be as high as \$200,000 over a three-year project period.

##### Manpower (Resource Protection and Visitor Services)

Many plan decisions can be implemented with existing staff as part of ongoing resource management programs in the Yukon Resource Area. Actions which would require an increase in staff are described below:

#### RECREATION

Additional manpower will be needed to (1) prepare necessary project plans and (2) provide maintenance and visitor services (public information visitor safety, monitoring ORV use, etc.). This would require the services of a recreation specialist (seasonal), and two recreation technicians (seasonal), at an approximate annual cost of \$54,000. An additional \$10,000 for aircraft use would be required.

This manpower will provide for immediate needs. After construction of new facilities, additional manpower may be needed for maintenance and to handle increased visitor use. Specific additional needs will be identified during project planning.

#### MINERALS

To ensure compliance with existing and anticipated mining plans of operation or mineral lease requirements, at least three inspections per year should be made of all operations. This will require a full-time surface protection specialist at a cost of approximately \$40,000 per year, and approximately \$9,600 per year for aircraft use.

#### WILDLIFE

Additional manpower will be necessary to implement fish and wildlife project work. One seasonal wildlife biologist and two seasonal fishery biologists will be required for five months each for approximately \$52,500.

## Monitoring and Evaluation of the RMP

Monitoring and evaluation provide information about progress towards the goals and objectives established in the plan. Information gained is used to determine the effectiveness of plan decisions and related management prescriptions. Monitoring indicates when amendments or revisions may be necessary.

BLM planning procedures require monitoring and evaluation at least every five years. Because of the national interest in this plan, the high value of existing resources and the scarcity of information about some of those resources, this plan should be evaluated at least every three years or whenever a significant change in the management situation occurs.

Every three years, the Yukon Area Manager will be required to evaluate the plan on the basis of the best and most recent information available. He/she will:

1. Determine if a multiple use prescription is fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed or if there is a need for amendment or termination of the prescription.
2. Determine if predictions of effects and impacts from management actions were accurate as a basis for appropriate management action and as a basis for more accurate predictions in future planning.
3. Reveal unanticipated and/or unpredicted effects including off-site impacts.
4. Determine if mitigative measures are satisfactory and are as effective as predicted.
5. Determine if any established threshold levels have been met or exceeded.
6. Provide for continuing evaluation of consistency with plans or programs of the State of Alaska and adjacent land managers.
7. Provide for continuing comparison of plan benefits versus costs (social, economic, and environmental).
8. Determine if new data or information have affected the plan, its conclusions, or estimation of effects.
9. Determine the rate and degree to which the plan is being implemented in terms of both the decisions that can be implemented without activity planning and those that require activity planning.

The evaluation process will be coordinated with local, State, and other federal interests. The evaluation will become part of the RMP file and be available for public inspection. Any part of the plan can be amended, whenever a significant change in data or the management situation occurs (Planning Regulations 43 CFR 1610.5-5). Review and amendment procedures require full public involvement under the rules of the National Environmental Protection Act, and the best and most recent information will be used. \*

In order to effectively perform monitoring and evaluation, more resource data are needed in a number of areas. Resource inventories necessary for effective monitoring are described below. Other inventory needs may become apparent after implementation of the plan.

#### RECREATION

(1) A visitor-use survey will be undertaken to quantify number of users, types of use, impacts of use, user needs, and user conflicts. This program will be instituted within two years and will continue for the life of the plan. Such information is essential to maintaining a recreation management program that is responsive to public demand. (2) Existing ORV trails will be mapped and ORV use will be monitored. This information is needed to determine whether or not resource damage or user conflicts are occurring as a result of ORV use. The program should be instituted within one year.

#### MINERALS

Mineral assessment of all federal lands within the WMNRA is needed to expand the data base with respect to the mineral potential of the Area. The mineral assessment program may include, but would not be limited to, such techniques as side-looking radar imagery, airborne magnetometer surveys, and helicopter-borne core and test drilling. A mineral program consisting of gathering and analyzing rock and chip samples, stream sediment samples, and pan concentrates could be accomplished during a five-year period. The cost of such an effort would be approximately \$915,000 (\$183,000 per year).

The mineral resource assessment program discussed here is in keeping with the intent of Congress as identified by Section 1010 of ANILCA. All proposals for this assessment, whether conducted by public or private groups, would be accomplished in an environmentally sound manner, this would prevent any lasting impacts which would appreciably alter the biological or ecological systems of the WMNRA. Protective restrictions on access and operations during calving, spawning, migration, or other critical periods shall be imposed.

The BLM is working with the State Division of Geological/Geophysical Survey, the Bureau of Mines, and the U.S. Geological Survey in an effort to further develop mineral assessments of these and other lands in Alaska. Any proposed study will also receive review and comment by the mineral industry, so the best utilization of government and private mineral assessment capabilities can be made. \*

New data generated from the mineral inventory will be incorporated into the three-year evaluation/revision process; and if new land use decisions are needed, they will be proposed at that time. \*

The BLM will cooperate fully with the State in a joint commitment to improve placer mining methods and technologies which will seek ways to achieve water quality standards and retain an economically viable mineral industry. The BLM will accept the opportunity to participate in the State's ongoing placer mining studies and will evaluate and consider the results of such studies and utilize this data when formulating land management decisions. \*

#### **WILDLIFE**

Ongoing inventories will be continued, emphasizing identification of crucial use areas, assessment of habitat condition and trends, and assessment of effects of land use activities. Aerial surveys, ground surveys, and biotelemetry would be used.

#### **FISHERIES**

An inventory of the Nome Creek fishery will be conducted to assess the opportunities for habitat improvement and assist in project planning for the rehabilitation of Nome Creek. The approximate cost will be \$10,000. Inventories will be conducted on Bear Creek and Champion Creek to determine present habitat quality and fish use. This information will be used to evaluate impacts from development of existing mining claims on those creeks and to formulate appropriate mitigative measures. Approximate cost would be \$12,000.

#### **SUBSISTENCE**

BLM's data base on subsistence uses on and near federal lands will continue to increase as more studies of subsistence activities are completed for central Alaska by Alaska Department of Fish and Game/Division of Subsistence, and by other organizations and individuals. This information will further aid in developing mitigation for future site-specific land use proposals made to BLM.

CORRECTIONS TO FEIS FOR THE WHITE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Page 111, paragraph 3, line 8: ...and tuffs, some of which are fossiliferous. (Weber et al, Open-file Report, 483, 1971). Ultramafic rocks may be....

Page 126, paragraph 3, line 1: The spine of the White Mountains has been recommended for study by the National....

Page 135, paragraph 3, lines 12-13: ...decline. Beaver Creek is on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Anadromous Stream List. Chum and King salmon are present in....

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Page 244, line 6, insert:

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Page 244, line 9: After the section entitled "REFERENCES CITED" add, in a section entitled "WORKS CONSULTED":

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