

KNIK RIVER PUBLIC USE AREA

Knik River Public Use Area Planning
Department of Natural Resource
550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Planning Team,

Please consider the following comments on the Knik River Public Use Area management plan as my preferred alternatives.

Sincerely,

Name _____

email: _____

Address _____

Phone: _____

City State Zip

Butte Area Residents Civic Organization (BARCO)

**KNIK RIVER PUBLIC USE MANAGEMENT PLAN
BARCO Substitutes for DNR Management Actions**

1) DEVELOP MANAGEMENT PLAN WITH PRIME CONSIDERATION HOW ANY PROPOSED ACTION WOULD NEGATIVELY IMPACT RESIDENTS regarding traffic, noise, dust, air quality and personal safety and how to mitigate such impact.

2) DEVELOP A TIME-SHARE SCHEDULE FOR MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION. Existing commercial airboat tour operators and aircraft should be exempted from the limitation. Existing ATV guided tours may be exempted on a permit basis. During the trapping and hunting seasons, legally licensed hunters and trappers shall be allowed motorized access. This will benefit different users to recreate without conflict, give respite to wildlife, and give residents and quiet users equal time to enjoy their homes and yards without nuisance noise from power boats, personal watercraft and ORVs and high-use traffic in their neighborhoods.

3) SEPARATE MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED ACCESS POINTS:

Centralize Motorized Access:

a) from RS 2477 (Knik Glacier Trail/Jim Creek Tral) trail head and parking lot on State of Alaska Land.

b) Public Access to Upper Knik River from South Knik River to be determined;
Private Access for residents only onto motorized trails if their private property adjoins KRPUA is allowed.

Multi-Use Access:

From Pavilion Parking Lot for access to Jim Creek Fishing on Sexton Trail.

Motorized access to terminate in existing DNR parking lot uphill from Jim Creek Fishing area.

Non-motorized access for campers, hikers, horses, bikers etc to Jim Creek Fishing and beyond.

Non-motorized Access:

a) from Knik River/Bodenburg Creek Access to protect fish and waterfowl habitat at Bodenburg Creek; to protect adjoining private lands from ongoing trespass, and to allow residents and visitors the enjoyment of quiet recreational endeavors near our homes.

b) from Jim Lake Parking Lot to Rippy Trail and Wetlands

c) Allow access for motorized handicapped persons and non-handicapped companion in non-motorized areas by permit.

4) CRITICAL HABITAT AREAS SHOULD BE CREATED to include lakes, wetlands, alpine transition zones and sand dunes, to prevent further destruction.

Restoration/revegetation plans should be established and implemented for these areas. The Jim – Swan wetlands area and adjacent Rippy Trail should be made a non-motorized area, with a possible relaxation of restrictions during hunting /trapping seasons if daily enforcement is in place. During these times, motorized use should be limited to designated trails and access points. This area has been specifically recommended for special protection by numerous groups, agencies and studies at least since the 1981 USF&W Knik Arm Wetlands Study.

5) ANY LAND ACQUISITION FOR INCLUSION TO THE KNIK RIVER PUBLIC USE

AREA will require a public process regarding cost for management, facilities and law enforcement and available funding. Any land acquisition from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough will require a full public process regarding preferences of local residents for that parcel and proposed management actions to ensure a variety of recreational activities for the benefit of residents, and particularly the Youth of the Community of Butte; and the cost of such a land transaction to the State of Alaska and the income to be derived by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough from the sale of these lands. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough shall not “give away” borough-owned assets until the Community of Butte can be assured that they be managed for the benefit of the community .

6) Establish fines for bailable offenses including the intentional or unintentional contamination of land and waters by lead, automotive fluids and other hazardous materials; cutting life trees; rutting and destroying vegetation; contributing to the erosion of river, lake and stream banks; disturbing or harassing wildlife including waterfowl.

BARCO ALTERNATIVES TO DNR ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL UNITS

Limit off-road vehicles to established and hardened trails. Prohibit snow-machine “water skippers” from operating in Knik River or any of its tributaries. Establish bailable offense for this activity for disturbing the peace of residents at any hour.

Oppose rescinding any existing rules or other regulatory action in the entire KRPUA which protect streams, fish and wildlife habitat, etc., or are designed to prevent rutting of trails and disturbing vegetation. Do not allow existing destructive uses to continue or expand.

Restrict curb weight to 1,000 lb for highway and off-road vehicles until such time as damaged trails are restored and a permanent, hardened road surface with appropriate bridging in all units is developed in order to prevent rutting, disturbance of vegetation and stream banks and the pollution of the waters of Knik River and its tributaries from automotive fluids. Allow large-vehicle access to miners, inholders and handicapped by permit.

BARCO ALTERNATIVES BY MANAGEMENT UNIT

UNIT A. Lower Knik Flats

INTENT: Change language to read:

“The intent is to encourage a wide variety of recreational uses including nonmotorized and motorized uses as described in HB307. DNR recognizes the high value of this area for quality multiple use recreation. DNR shall not manage any unit as a motor park, moto-cross or mudbog venue but provide a high quality experience for responsible ORV travelers and sightseers. The management goal includes to separate nonmotorized from motorized uses by creating specially hardened trails for motorized and equine users to lessen impact on the environment and to create safe conditions for all uses. To further this goal, multiple access points will be created which separate motorized and nonmotorized users and which provide safety and quiet for adjacent property owners.

DNR shall mitigate high-use multiple use recreation for the benefit of residents and responsible motorized and quiet users. Mitigation measures to include speed limits, speed bumps, controlled access and a highly visible law enforcement presence.

Indestructible sanitation facilities and camping area style trash containers shall be placed as soon as possible to protect the health of the public.

BARCO ALTERNATIVE 4 regarding Discharge of Firearms: “Recreational discharge of firearms will be prohibited in this entire unit to protect human safety and to prevent pollution of lead from skeet targets and ammunition into the waters of Knik River Valley.

BARCO ALTERNATIVE 4 regarding Rescinding of Regulations including Remedies for well documented current Damage in this unit:

1) No existing regulations will be rescinded. All regulations will be developed in compliance with existing laws and regulations, including but not restricted to 11AAC 96.020 (a)(1)(D)(E), 11 AAC 96.025 (1)(2)(3)(A-C) as well as any and all Alaska Statutes which protect fish, game and waterfowl and its habitat.

2) Repair rutted trails and vegetation in forests, wetlands and lowlands. Harden where appropriate. Repair stream banks.

3) Revegetate Dunes. Dunes protect Butte and Palmer from Knik River changing course.

4) Allow unrestricted vehicle curb weight only for travel on Sexton Trail from Pavilion Parking Lot to DNR Parking Lot on the uplands prior to Jim Creek Flats and on Jim Creek Trail to existing DNR parking lot, or parking lot to be established on uplands in forest prior to approaching the Flats. Both Jim Creek Trail (aka RS2477, Knik Glacier Trail) and Sexton Trail should be hardened with speed bumps added for the safety of the public.

5) Restrict curb weight of highway and off-road vehicles to 1,000 lb curb weight until such time as damaged trails are restored and a permanent, hardened road surface with appropriate bridging from UNIT A to KNIK GLACIER is developed in order to prevent rutting, disturbance of vegetation and stream banks and the pollution of the waters of Knik River and its tributaries from automotive fluids. Allow large vehicle access to miners, inholders and handicapped by permit.

6) Prohibit the use of trees for extricating “winching” vehicles out of mud or water.

7) Recommend and agree with DNR Alternative 2 and 3 regarding 100’ stream buffer protection on all water ways.

NEW Alternative 4 regarding utilization of Mat-Su Borough Pavilion Parcel. In addition to equalize the number of motorized and non-motorized trails on this parcel, Mat-Su Borough shall utilize a large portion this parcel for community recreational purposes, including a community park, BMX park, multi-age playground, soccer fields, volleyball and tennis venues to give young adults and families, “something to do.”

A public campground should be established there as well. The Pavilion Parking Area was built by the Equestrian Association and the Mat-Su Borough. The picnic pavilion at the site was subsequently destroyed by motorized users. The Pavilion Parking Area should be designated access for non-motorized users. Two non-motorized trails should be designated to accommodate different users, such as for hikers, bikers and horses. A separated parking lot on the west side of the “Pavilion” should allow cars to travel the Sexton Trail to Jim Creek. In addition, An ATV trail should be developed and designated to allow ATV access from the “Pavilion” parking lot to Jim Creek.

Residents should be allowed planning participation on this Mat-Su Borough parcel.

All motorized access to the entire area should be from the trail head for the RS2477 Knik Glacier Trail (aka Jim Creek Trail) on State of Alaska Land to minimize adverse impact to residents from high traffic, noise, dust and air pollution. Sanitary facilities will be developed and may be shared by users of both the Pavilion and RS2477 parking areas. Separate sanitary facilities may be developed for a public camp ground on the Pavilion parcel.

NEW Alternative 4 regarding Manmade Lake: “No Motorized use” at Manmade Lake except for parking access for picnics, swimming and other non-motorized activities. The bottom of Manmade Lake should be dredged and cleaned from an accumulation of glass, metal and lead and restored to its original purpose as a community “swimming hole.”

**UNIT B. Lakes –
Unit B should be renamed to read “Lakes and Wetlands.”**

INTENT language should be changed to read: Provide for moderate density quiet use and limited motorized use for all seasons for the protection of water fowl in the summer and moose and sheep in the winter. The area in this unit was recommended as Critical Habitat in previous studies. Designate and manage this area as Critical Habitat. Motor size for boats in this unit and Jim Creek shall be restricted to 3 HP to protect nesting and rearing waterfowl including trumpeter swans in all lakes of the unit. No motorized recreational vehicle use in lakes and wetlands area during the summer. No power boats, including airboats, in lakes and wetlands. Establish snowmachine corridor in the winter.

NEW BARCO Alternative 5 regarding Rippy Trail; . Rippy Trail to remain designated non-motorized in its entirety. No Loop Trail.

Rippy Trail was established by and for non-motorized use by the Equestrian Association and the Mat-Su Borough in the 1980s. Motorized users have destroyed one salmon stream and several springs feeding the wetlands and lakes and, because of their large numbers, have created sanitary issues. A “Loop Trail” would cut into an established wild life corridor which extends from the Alpine environment west to the Knik River-Matanuska River Delta and connects with the Palmer Hay Flats

NEW Alternative 5 for the entire unit: Use of any waterbody with a motorized watercraft is prohibited between April 1 and September 30. Approaching within 1500 feet of an active Trumpeter Swan nest on land or water is prohibited between April 1 and September 30. Legal hunting is allowed; however, swans gathering on the lakes in preparation of their fall migration may not be approached within 500 feet either on land or on the waters they are gathering in.

Agree with DNR Alternative 4 regarding Mud Lake. In addition, construction of a boat launch/ramp at Mud Lake is recommended for access to the lake system. Motors not to exceed 3 HP.

Agree with DNR Alternative 4 regarding Jim Lake. In addition, construction of a canoe launch at Jim Lake is recommended for access to the lake system. Motors not to exceed 3 HP.

NEW Alternative 5 to prohibit recreational shooting at Jim Lake in order to protect public safety and preventing disturbance of nesting/rearing waterfowl. Legal hunting is allowed after Swan fall migration.

UNIT C - Upper Knik Flats

NEW Alternative 3: No vehicles more than 1000 lbs curb weight until an improved road for access is developed to prevent rutting, disturbance of vegetation and stream banks and the pollution of the waters of Knik River and its tributaries from automotive fluids.

UNIT D - Upper Jim Alpine

Agree with DNR Alternatives 2 regarding trails development.

UNIT E - Upper Friday Alpine

Agree with DNR Alternatives 2 regarding trails development.

UNIT F - Grasshopper Valley

Agree with DNR Alternatives 2, with the exception that no additional trails be developed.

UNIT G – Glacier

Agree with DNR Alternatives 2 regarding trails development. In Addition:

NEW ALTERNATIVE 3 regarding future development: Recommend that the area past the Knik Glacier Lake if that is within the PUA be made a non-motorized area, except for aircraft. At this time no other motorized vehicles can generally access it (except if transported by helicopter or other air transportation). However, as the glacier recedes, motorized access may be possible, with deleterious effects to the wildlife and environment. At present this area is almost pristine, with some aircraft landing sites and virtually no other tracks, litter etc. Taking a non-motorized (except for aircraft) stance at this time, while having no effect on present usage, would protect the area against possible future abuses. As has been seen throughout the accessible PUA, any place an ORV can get, someone will take one, and many will not be cognizant of possible environmental damage.

UNIT H - Metal Creek

Agree with DNR Alternatives 2 regarding trails development.

NEW Alternative 3: Prohibit vehicles to travel through Metal Creek in order to prevent pollution of the waters of Metal Creek and Knik River from automotive fluids while traveling through the water and to prevent abandonment of vehicles in the waterways of the Knik River.

FEES

Agree with DNR Alternative 2 and 3, Point 1 regarding the collection of fees. In addition, amount of fees charged should be based on cost of management, law enforcement and facilities to be determined as the management plan is developed..