

## 46. LAND AND WATER USE

### 46.1 Introduction

The land use baseline study describes the existing ownership, use, and management of land and surface waters in the Cook Inlet drainages study area (except for subsistence uses, which are addressed in Chapter 51).

The regional study area for the land use study in the Cook Inlet drainages encompasses an extensive region on the western Cook Inlet coast and nearby offshore islands and coastal waters. It includes the coastal strip of uplands and tidelands between Lake Clark National Park and Katmai National Park. Within the regional study area, a smaller study area, termed the central study area, was subject to a more detailed examination of the uplands, tidelands, nearby offshore islands, and nearshore waters surrounding Iliamna and Iniskin Bays (the central study area coincides with the Cook Inlet drainages study area depicted on Figure 1-4 in Chapter 1).

The method of study was to review and analyze relevant existing land use studies, plans, management documents, and land records developed by state, federal, and local governments. These sources were supplemented through interviews of people with relevant information about land use in the study area.

### 46.2 Results and Discussion

The regional study area encompasses approximately 577,280 acres of uplands and approximately 704,000 acres of tidelands and submerged lands within the three-mile offshore limit. The State of Alaska is the largest landowner in the study area, with approximately 344,704 acres of uplands. Most state uplands, approximately 248,320 acres, are managed as the McNeil River State Game Refuge and Sanctuary.

Regional and village Native corporations established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act are the next largest landowners, with patent or interim conveyance to approximately 166,213 acres. Native corporations, in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, have selected an additional 63,744 acres, the final ownership of which remains to be resolved.

Cook Inlet Region, Inc., Seldovia Native Association, and Tyonek Native Corporation are the primary landowners in the central study area. Lesser private landowners include Alaska Native allotment owners or applicants and other private landowners; these account for approximately 2,444 acres.

Except for McNeil River State Game Refuge and Sanctuary and the Kamishak Special Use Area, the state uplands, tidelands, and submerged lands in the regional study area are managed according to the planning designations and management policies of the Kenai Area

Plan. Most state uplands (approximately 90 percent) are designated as wildlife habitat, with the balance designated for general use, heritage, and forestry. About two-thirds of the state tidelands and submerged lands are designated for Public Recreation and Tourism — Dispersed Use, with most of the balance being designated as habitat.

The Kenai Area Plan planning area is divided into twelve regions, and each region is further divided into management units. Management units within the study area include the following:

- Tidelands and submerged lands near the mouth of Iniskin Bay.
- Tidelands in Iliamna Bay near Williamsport.
- Tidelands and submerged lands near Seal Spit on the north coast of the Iniskin Peninsula.
- Tidelands and submerged lands off the south coast of the Iniskin Peninsula.

These management units are designated, respectively, for habitat, waterfront development, habitat or high-value resource management, and habitat.

The management intent of McNeil River State Game Refuge and Sanctuary (Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1) is to provide permanent protection for brown bear and other wildlife and fish populations and their habitats. Human activities are to be managed in a manner compatible with that purpose. The prime activity in the sanctuary and refuge is wildlife viewing, mainly brown bear viewing.

According to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, the Kamishak Special Use Area is managed primarily for wildlife habitat and harvest, with public recreation as a secondary value that will be allowed only if compatible with wildlife management objectives.

The state owns all tidelands and a 100-foot-wide right-of-way along the existing Williamsport to Pile Bay Road. The State of Alaska's preferred possible route for an improved road west from Williamsport partly follows this existing alignment and partly crosses into Native corporation lands to avoid a steep avalanche-prone section of the existing road.

There are several sites suitable for a possible port in the vicinity of Iniskin and Iliamna bays. Cook Inlet Regional, Inc. (CIRI) currently holds title to the surface and subsurface estate of much of the uplands in this area, but the surface estate is open to selection by CIRI's village corporations.

The prevalent existing land and water uses in the regional study area are wilderness and natural habitats that support a variety of low-intensity recreational activities such as hunting, sportfishing, wildlife viewing, and flight-seeing. Access for recreation is by small plane or boat. There are no improved boat harbors, port facilities, public airports, or public transportation improvements, except the Williamsport barge landing and the Williamsport to Pile Bay Road.

There are no permanent year-round settlements in the central study area, although there are two clusters of Native allotments and homesteads or homesites: one at Seal Spit on the

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northern coast of the Iniskin Peninsula and another on the coast south of Williamsport near and around Cottonwood Bay.