STEESE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
RMP
RECORD OF DECISION
1986

Goals and Objectives
Overview

The purpose of the Steese National conservation 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 conservation area. The actions recommended in this plan are a result of policy considerations, detailed technical work, an analysis of both completed 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 use. This plan is designed to be a dynamic tool for resolving critical issues and problems.

The Steese National Conservation Area (SNCA) as established by Congress through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (P .L. 96-487 ANIIJCA). The Act provides for a program of multiple use and sustained yield and for the maintenance of environmental quality. Special values to be considered in planning and management of the area are Birch Creek and caribou range.

The plan is designed, to protect the wild and scenic qualities of Birch Creek National Wild River and to improve its water quality over the next several years. Such improvement, however, will be somewhat dependent on activities on Birch Creek and its tributaries outside the SNCA on both State and federal mining claims.

Within the framework of this plan, crucial caribou calving grounds and Dall sheep habitat would remain closed to mineral entry in order to protect their natural and undisturbed qualities. Other important wildlife habitats would also be given protection through management actions within the semi-primitive management units.

Where consistent with the protection of Birch Creek and of caribou range, opportunities for the multiple use of natural resources would be provided. Two of the primary uses of the SNCA are recreation and mineral development. Diverse recreational opportunities would be available, ranging from backcountry non-motorized uses within the primitive areas to off-road vehicle uses within the semi-primitive areas. The several productive placer mines within the SNCA evince the highly mineralized character of the Area. Considerable interest has been generated by the known occurrence of unknown quantities of tungsten, a strategic mineral.

The overall management strategy of the SNCA under this plan is intended to complement the management of the White Mountains National Recreation Area to the west as well as that of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge to the north, of the Yukon/Charley Rivers National Preserve to the east, and of adjacent State lands.

Goals and Objectives

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

GOAL 1: Improve the water quality of Birch Creek NWR.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop guidelines for mitigation of water. quality degradation.

- Maintain State water quality standards for the currently clear-flowing tributaries, such as, Harrington Fork, Clums Fork, Sheep Creek, South Fork Birch Creek.

GOAL 2: Manage present and historical caribou habitat as a primary land use.

OBJECTIVE:

- Manage historical caribou range to meet; Alaska Department of Fish and Game goals and objectives.

GOAL 3: Manage lands consistent with multiple use principles and maintenance, of environmental quality.

OBJECTIVES:

- Manage Birch Creek and associated values in a manner consistent with the Birch Creek NWR Plan.
- Protect existing viewsheds along Birch Creek NWR.
- Improve access to recreational opportunities.
- Maintain or improve habitat to support viable self-sustaining populations of fish and wildlife.
- Provide for quality hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife viewing.
- Protect primitive recreation values in 1) the Mount Prindle/Lime Peak area, and 2) along the Pinnell Mountain Trail.
- Provide Research Natural Areas dedicated to scientific study of selected typical and/or unusual natural phenomena identified as type needs in the Ecological Reserve System.
- Provide opportunities for ORV use where compatible with fish, wildlife, and recreation objectives.
- Facilitate environmentally sound mineral development in a multiple use context.

MULTIPLE USE MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

Introduction

This section describes the management decisions with their related terms and conditions which define the combination of allowable resource uses and levels of production or protection, the program constraints and the general management practices to be followed in managing the various public land resources within the Steese National Conservation Area. Based on management prescriptions, the SNCA has been divided into six management units: primitive, Semi-Primitive Motorized Restricted; Semi-Primitive Motorized Special, Semi-Primitive Motorized, Research Natural Areas, and the Birch Creek National Wild River Corridor. These management units are delineated on the "Proposed Plan" map in the map pocket. Each of these management units has a multiple use management prescription which is appropriate to the resource capabilities and management intent for that unit.

Within the Primitive Management Unit, the intent is to maintain existing primitive values. The major resource use will be non-motorized recreation except for snowmobile use in the winter.

In the Semi-Primitive Motorized Restricted Management Unit, a somewhat wider range of uses, including the use of off-road vehicles, will be allowed. However, in order to ensure protection of crucial caribou and Dall sheep habitat, mineral development will not be allowed.

Mineral development will be allowed in the Semi-Primitive Motorized Special Management unit but only with special stipulations specifically designed to protect wildlife and recreational values.

The Semi-Primitive Motorized Unit will allow for the greatest range of resource uses, including mineral development with standard BLM stipulations for environmental protection.

Research Natural Areas make up a management unit devoted to scientific research. Except for hiking no other uses will be allowed.

The Birch Creek NWR Corridor is managed under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542) to protect and enhance scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, and similar values. An approved River Management Plan covers this management unit. Throughout this plan the phrase, "Birch Creek NWR Corridor," is used to indicate the lands within the NWR boundaries as defined in the Birch Creek NWR Plan.

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. The assignment of protection

levels is based on criteria, such as natural barriers to fire spread, which may not be useful in defining boundaries for other management practices. However, 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 SNCA into six management units, several management prescriptions will be put into practice throughout the Area. These common prescriptions are described below.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL VALUES. Important recreational resource values that make the SNCA unique will be protected. These values include outstanding scenic vistas of high mountain terrain, primitive areas with virtually no evidence of manmade improvements, wildlife viewing opportunities, high ridge hiking opportunities along unmarked trails, unique landforms and geologic features, hunting opportunities, and outstanding opportunities for winter use of remote backcountry through a system of primitive cabins.

RECREATION FACILITIES. The need for new recreational sites, such as campgrounds, trailheads, parking, float-trip staging areas, .etc., within the SNCA will be assessed. Areas of expansion and development of summer and winter trail opportunities will be identified. These will include short trail hiking opportunities from Birch Creek. associated with river floating trips in the following drainages: South Fork of Birch Creek, Big, Windy Creek, and Sheep Creek. Additional trails may later be identified for development.

A remote cabin program will be established and. a system of cabins will be constructed which will accommodate recreational uses such as float boating, dog mushing, backcountry hiking, and winter uses, etc. A winter trails system associated with the proposed cabin program will be identified for the North Steese Area.

Trails and recreational development will be located to avoid conflicts with crucial wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas. Trail development will include: (I) developed trailheads with signs, maps, mileage, and other user information; (2) use of, wood posts or rock cairns to identify trail routes; (3) boardwalks as necessary if wet areas cannot be avoided; (4) a system of public use shelter cabins at appropriate locations, and (5) informational maps, brochures, and similar items desirable for public use.

HUMAN RECREATIONAL USE OF FISH AND WILDLIFE. Opportunities for fishing, wildlife viewing, hunting, and trapping will be provided by improving access and management while recognizing the environmental protection.

VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION. Public information and interpretation will be provided through development of signs, brochures, and maps. These will include: (1) visitor information signs at trailheads; (2) maps, brochures, and interpretive information for public hand-out; and (3) signs and brochures on bear safety.

Special Recreation Use Permits are required for commercial uses such as commercial outfitting and guiding and commercial river trips, etc.

Visitor use will be monitored to evaluate use patterns, needs, and impacts. This will be accomplished through the use of aerial reconnaissance in primitive areas, traffic counters in developed vehicle access areas, and visitor registers on trails.

Rationale

The SNCA is bisected by the Steese Highway. This accessibility means that the present and anticipated future growth in the Fairbanks area will result in increasing demands on the SNCA, particularly for recreational purposes. Expansion of opportunities associated with Birch Creek, the major recreation attractor, will be most beneficial to the public.

Fish and wildlife values are also important recreational attractors, and proper management of these values will contribute greatly to public enjoyment.

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 the peregrine falcon (an endangered species). The wildlife habitat management program will be implemented in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and 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 will be used to assess the effects of various land use activities, to determine habitat condition and trends, and to formulate measures to mitigate possible adverse effects on wildlife from land uses such as mining, roads, and trails.

HABITAT PROTECTION. Habitat protection in the SNCA 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 caribou and Dall sheep, as

well as for other wildlife species within the SNCA, are listed in Table 9-1. Crucial habitats will be protected through the avoidance or mitigation of possible adverse effects of land use activities and by closing specific areas to mineral development. Areas which will be closed to mineral entry include crucial caribou calving areas in the South Steese and crucial Dall sheep habitat. The Birch Creek NWR encompasses the presently known nesting habitat for the peregrine falcon, and this area is also closed to mineral entry.

When specific land use actions are proposed in the Semi-Primitive Units, mitigating 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 locatable minerals, by the Surface Management Regulations (43 CFR 3809). As a result of this process, restriction or alteration of timing, location, and extent of a proposed land use activity may be required to avoid or minimize adverse effects. Table 9-2 shows crucial habitats and timeframes that aerial and surface use restrictions may be required in the crucial use, areas. For example, restrictions may include 1,500-foot minimum altitude for aircraft and one mile horizontal surface distance from crucial habitat. Rehabilitation of disturbed areas will be required to facilitate stabilization and recovery of vegetation.

Caribou range was identified by Congress as a special consideration in the SNCA. Emphasis will be placed on managing the area to maintain the opportunity for the Fortymile caribou herd to utilize both present and historical use areas. In addition to previously mentioned habitat protection measures, future access routes, when feasible, will be consolidated with existing roads and trails within transportation corridors. These corridors will be intensively managed to minimize any potential "barrier effect" on caribou movements. Transportation corridors may also be subject to surface use restrictions to avoid conflicts with caribou movements at crucial times.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT. Habitat improvement for moose and other species is provided for on a long-term basis through management of wildfire as prescribed in 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, Preacher Creek, the North Fork of Preacher Creek, and Rock Creek. Over the next ten years, a minimum of four prescribed burns will be conducted within the SNCA, each improving at least 7,500 acres of habitat for moose and other species.

Rationale

The SNCA contains a wide variety of wildlife species, including one federally listed endangered species (peregrine falcon). Protection of Endangered Species is required by the Endangered Species Act, and ANILCA requires that caribou range be given special consideration in this plan. Dall sheep are given special consideration because of their priority as a game and viewing species and because of their sensitivity to disturbance. Other species will receive protective consideration through surface use and occupancy restrictions.

These species and many others found within the SNC are an important resource value and a major recreation attractor.

CRUCIAL USE AREAS FOR VARIOUS SPECIES AND SPECIES GROUPS

Table 9-1

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

POSSIBILE SURFACE USE AND OCCUPANCY RESTRICTIONS IN CRUCIAL HABITATS

Species	Crucial Use Area	Dates
Caribou	Calving/movement routes	May 1 – June 15 Aug 15-Sept 30
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 the present quality of fish habitat in those tributary streams of Birch Creek that are largely undisturbed at present. These streams include the South Fork of Birch Creek and its tributaries, Clums Fork, Sheep Creek, and Harrington Fork. Primary emphasis will be placed on arctic grayling. The primary management tool used to mitigate the impact of development on the fishery resource is the enforcement of stipulations which are attached to authorizing documents on a case by case basis.

In cases where upland gravel sources are not available or where their use would cause greater environmental damage than the use of riparian sources, riparian sources can be used. The gravel will 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. In some cases it may be necessary to select an alternate site.

All, surface-disturbing activities will be required to meet water quality requirements.

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

Rationale

Sport fishing is a recreational use of the SNCA. Most sport fishing takes place on Birch Creek NWR and its tributaries. The Birch Creek fishery has been also identified as a subsistence resource for the Village of Birch Creek. It is therefore appropriate to concentrate management efforts on Birch Creek and its tributaries.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

Mineral development, consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan, will be allowed to proceed in an environmentally sound manner.

LOCATABLE MINERALS. The following requirements will apply to valid existing claims as well as to any new mining claims which might be located in areas opened to entry:

Each operator in the SNCA will be required to file a plan of operation or notice depending on location and acreage disturbed. An operator who disturbs more than five acres per year or who is operating in an area closed to further mineral location is required to file a plan of operation. The plan, or notice shall 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 claim(s) to be mined, proposed operation and dates of activity, type and degree of the operation, measures to prevent undue and unnecessary degradation, and a plan to reclaim disturbed lands. A reclamation plan must be included as a part of the plan of operation or Notice of Intent.

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

Close coordination with adjacent land owners or managers will be made where the potential exists to affect the lands under their control.

All operators producing water-borne effluent must obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and meet the requirements of that permit. In cooperation with ADEC and EPA, water quality will be monitored along streams to ensure compliance.

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

BLM will develop a program of erosion abatement and satisfactory reclamation on disturbed ground in the headwaters of Birch Creek. This program will involve federal claims outside of the SNCA in order to help improve the water quality of the Birch Creek NWR.

COAL. Since there is no known potential or demand for coal in the area, no lands will be opened to coal leasing.

SALEABLE MINERALS. Disposal of sand, gravel, rock, and other saleable minerals will be based on need and on conformance with the RMP.

Rationale

The Area contains mineral resources that are presently of economic value to the Fairbanks community. The mineral potential within the SNCA could provide a base for future economic development. Regulations are necessary to ensure that development occurs in an environmentally sound manner. Caribou habitat and the Birch Creek NWR must be protected. ANILCA and Bureau policy address multiple use and allow for development where compatible with other land uses.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES, HORSES AND AIRCRAFT

Management Direction

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES. The use of vehicles of greater than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way will be allowed by authorization only. Such authorization will be given only when necessary to provide access to inholdings or for other purposes, based on analysis of the need and compatibility with the RMP. Approval would be given subject to conditions designed to minimize the impact to the environment or to other land uses. Crossing the wild river corridor would be allowed only if there were no economically feasible and prudent alternatives. Vehicle use could be authorized under a mining plan of operation (43 CFR 3809), with a right-of-way, permit (43 CFR 2800 or 43 CFR 2920), or by other appropriate means.

For the most part, use of vehicles of greater than 1500 pounds GVW off a valid existing right-of-way will be limited to winter months with adequate snow cover and will be limited to existing trails where practical. Under certain circumstances the Authorized Officer may authorize summer moves. These circumstances include, but may not be limited to, the following when: (1) a winter move would be impractical; (2) a summer move would not result in undue or unnecessary impacts to other resources as defined in 43 CFR 3809; (3) an existing trail would be used, and the proposed use would not damage the trail to the extent that it becomes unusable by recreational ORVs; (4) specialized equipment such as low ground pressure vehicles would be used which would minimize impacts to within acceptable limits; or (5) a specified limited number of trips over a trail would result in impacts within acceptable limits.

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

1. A watershed will 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 small 3-wheeler or other similar ORVs.
2. A watershed will be closed to ORV use when water pollution from ORV trails or disturbances become noticeable in Birch 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 ORVs, 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 will 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 will be restricted or prohibited if it becomes necessary to do so in order to protect wildlife or watershed values.

Permanent use restrictions on ORVs require an order signed by the Authorized Officer and published in the Federal Register. Signs will be posted at access points to inform the public of use restrictions. ORV management for the SNCA is shown on Table 9-3. 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 CPR 8341.2).

ORV MANAGEMENT
STEESE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
Table 9-3

	SUMMER	WINTER
Primitive	Permit Required for any ORV use off a valid right-of-way	No permit required for snowmachines of less than 1,500 pounds GVW Permit required for all other ORV use
Wild River Corridor	Permit Required for any ORV use off a valid right-of-way	No permit required for snowmachines of less than 1,500 pounds GVW Permit required for all other ORV use
Research Natural Areas	CLOSED TO ALL ORV USE	
Semi-primitive motorized restricted management	No permit required for vehicles of less than 1,500 pounds GVW Permit required for use of ORVs of greater than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way	
Semi-primitive motorized special management	No permit required for vehicles of less than 1,500 pounds GVW Permit required for use of ORVs of greater than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way	
Semi-primitive motorized	No permit required for vehicles of less than 1,500 pounds GVW Permit required for use of ORVs of greater than 1,500 pounds GVW off a valid right-of-way	

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

AIRCRAFT. Aircraft use will generally be unrestricted, except in areas of crucial wildlife habitat.

Rationale

Because the SNCA has few roads, the use of large ORVs is often necessary to gain access to mining claims or for other legitimate purposes. Light ORVs are often used for hunting or other recreational activities. Environmental damage and conflicts between ORV users and other users will be minimized by this policy.

RIGHTS-OF-WAY AND OTHER REALTY ACTIONS

Management Direction

Four transportation corridors will be established under the authority of, Section 503 of the Federal Land Policy and Management, Act, P .L. 94-579 (FLPMA).

In the North Steese, one corridor will follow the existing Montana Creek trail to Preacher Creek; the other will extend from the end of the Porcupine Creek Road to Loper Creek.

In the South Steese, two corridors will be established to provide access to the south side of Birch creek, one at Great Unknown Creek and one at Portage Creek/Buckley Bar. Both of these corridors follow existing trails into the Birch Creek NWR corridor, and both will cross the Wild River. In accordance with Section 1107 of ANILCA, any authorized transportation system within the NWR corridor must be compatible with wild river values and shall be constructed in a manner that does not interfere with or impede stream flow or transportation on the river. Location and construction techniques shall be selected to minimize adverse effects on scenic, recreational, fish, and wildlife and other values of the river area.

In order to prevent proliferation of rights-of-way, all future rights-of-way will, as far as possible, be located in one of these four corridors. If it were to become necessary for a right-of-way to extend beyond a corridor, existing trails would 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 will be required to allow public access for recreation .unless there is a compelling reason to deny such access.

Engineering studies for route selections within the transportation corridors will be conducted in order to identify road and trail locations, river crossings, geologic hazards and other important resource values prior to any construction

LAND EXCHANGES. Land exchanges will be -proposed in order to acquire the approximately 14, 000 acres of State lands within the boundaries of the SNCA.

Other realty actions would 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

Roads and trails are needed to improve access for recreation and make the area available to more users. They will also provide access to existing and future mining claims. The designation of transportation corridors will help to maintain environmental quality by consolidating major access routes. The two corridors in the North Steese would provide access to the Preacher Creek drainage. The corridors in the South Steese would provide access to the south side of Birch Creek.

The proposed land exchange would give the federal government additional management opportunities within the SNCA and ensure that the values for which the SNCA was created could be protected. It would also allow the State of Alaska to acquire federal lands in areas where it would have more flexibility for management.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

Scenic quality will 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, recreational facilities, etc.

Rationale

Visual resources contribute to public enjoyment of the area. Assessment of surface disturbances is necessary to determine whether or not VRM objectives are being met and to determine where site-specific mitigation measures will be necessary.

CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Management Direction

Class III site-specific inventories will be conducted prior to any development action in order to identify, protect, or mitigate potentially adverse impacts to significant cultural and paleontological resources.

Rationale

The Class I literature search, the Class II field inventory on Birch Creek, isolated finds in the SNCA, and the Pleistocene fossil material found in adjacent mining operations provide an indication of the potential for cultural and paleontological resources within the SNCA.

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

Water quality will be improved in Birch Creek NWR. This will be accomplished by: (1) reducing the amount of sediment released into Birch Creek and its tributaries by placer mines, including those outside of the SNCA boundaries and (2) requiring reclamation of ground disturbed by mining to prevent stream sedimentation caused by erosion.

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 Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and State Water Quality Standards.

Regulation of mining to reduce sedimentation is discussed in detail in the Minerals section of the EIS. Water quality will be measured periodically during the summer in order to ensure that State water quality standards are being met. The information gained will be used to determine whether or not stipulations attached to mining plans of operation are adequate to protect, water, quality and whether or not the operator is complying with those stipulations.

A sufficient in-stream flow will be maintained in Birch Creek to meet the purposes for which the NWR was established. An in-stream flow study, already identified in the Birch Creek NWR Plan, will be conducted to determine how much in-stream flow is needed for the NWR. The federally reserved water right for the NWR needs to be quantified.

Rationale

Water quality in Birch Creek has been seriously degraded both within the SNCA and outside its boundaries. To achieve the purposes for which the National Wild River was designated, it is desirable to strive to improve the water quality of Birch Creek. However, improvement cannot be achieved, by managing the water resources only within the Area. Some of the Birch Creek tributaries, which support excellent fisheries, will contribute to that improvement by protection through proper management.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

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

Rationale

There is little timber of commercial value within the SNCA and little demand for commercial sales in the area. Commercial harvest in remote areas could lead to soil erosion or other environmental problems and is not unlikely to prove economical. The limited local demand for firewood or other forest products for personal use can be met without, significant risk to resource values.

SUBSISTENCE

Management Direction

Compliance with Section 810 of ANILCA and the BLM subsistence procedures outlined 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. The action can be initiated by BLM or by some other agent, as long as BLM has discretion to substantially affect the result. Subsistence values in the SNCA include the Birch Creek fishery and the Fortymile caribou herd. These values are further described in Chapter II of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Rationale

Section 810 of ANILCA requires compliance with directed procedures of this Act. In order to ensure compliance on ELM lands, further instructions have been promulgated and issued under the Bureau's IM AK-B4-339. 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 of 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 and will be managed so 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 Primitive Management Unit consists of the high country adjacent to the White Mountains National Recreation Area and the Pinnell Mountain Trail Corridor. These areas will be managed to protect quality wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

The Primitive Management Unit will be managed to protect primitive values along the Pinnell Mountain Trail and in the Mount Prindle/Lime Peak area. These values include outstanding scenic vistas of high mountain terrain, primitive areas with virtually no evidence of manmade improvements, wildlife viewing opportunities, and outstanding opportunities for winter use of remote backcountry through a system of primitive cabins. Much of the Pinnell Mountain Trail crosses what is now State land. Although the ELM has acquired a 100-foot-wide right-of-way for the trail, a cooperative agreement should be made with the State for management of these lands consistent with the values associated with the trail.

A primitive Recreation opportunity Spectrum classification will be maintained.

A minimum of six miles of new trails are proposed within this unit.

Rationale

The Pinnell Mountain Trail is a National Recreation Trail. Its primitive setting should be maintained for the enjoyment of the public.

The Mount Prindle/Lime Peak area lies on the boundary between the SNCA and the White Mountains National Recreation Area. This area has outstanding scenic, wildlife and other values contributing to public enjoyment. The portion of the area which lies within the WMNRA is designated for primitive recreation in the Plan for the WMNRA, and it is appropriate to make the same designation within the SNCA.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

The Primitive Management Unit will remain closed to mineral entry under the 1872 Mining Law and to the leasing of oil and gas, non-energy minerals and geothermal resources.

EXPLORATION. Anyone proposing to explore for minerals within the SNCA 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.

Rational

The roads, equipment, and structures associated with mineral development are not compatible with primitive recreation and the primitive values present in this unit. 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 also assist the Bureau in meeting this legal requirement. Such information, in combination with information 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

Management Direction

The Primitive Management unit is closed to ORVs. Authorization will be required for the use of any motorized vehicle other than a snowmachine off a valid right-of-way. The use of snowmachines will be allowed without authorization. (See ORV Management Table, 9-3).

Rationale

Use of ORVs is generally not compatible with management for primitive recreation use. Hikers and backpackers find the noise and visual intrusion of ORVs objectionable, particularly during the summer and fall months when recreational use is highest.

However, winter use of the area is extremely low because winter access is difficult. The use of snowmachines will allow some winter recreational, use without creating serious conflicts. If conflicts arise between snowmachine users and cross-country skiers, some winter trails may be closed to motorized use.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

The Primitive Management Unit 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.

Rationale

This management unit contains some of the highest scenic quality to be found in the SNCA. Aesthetic values are an important part of recreation, which will be one of the primary uses of this unit. A high level of protection for existing scenic quality is appropriate.

Prescription for the Birch Creek National Wild River Corridor

This management unit is distinguished from all others in the SNCA by the fact that it is covered by an approved River Management Plan, which became effective May I, 1984. The River Management Plan for Birch Creek NWR provides a detailed description of the boundaries of the corridor, major issues and concerns for management of the corridor, and management actions. Part III of the River Management Plan, entitled The Management Program, is 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 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. 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 Birch Creek River Management Plan as it relates to ORV use within the river corridor. Except as listed below, ORV use is prohibited within the Birch 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 permit (43 CFR 2800 or 43 CFR 2920), or by other appropriate means.

Prescription for Semi-Primitive Motorized Restricted Management Unit

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

This management unit will be managed to maintain a semi-primitive motorized ROS classification. Use of light (under 1,500 pounds GVW) off-road vehicles will be allowed without authorization.

A minimum of 12 miles of trail are proposed within this unit.

Rationale

Multiple use opportunities for hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities exist in this management unit.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

The Semi-Primitive Motorized Restricted Management Unit will remain closed to mineral entry under the 1872. Mining Law and to leasing of oil and gas, non-energy minerals, and geothermal resources.

EXPLORATION. Anyone proposing to explore for minerals within the SNCA must contact the Authorized Officer. Activities which conform to the management prescriptions for this unit and which will not impair the unit's values will be allowable. Permits will generally not be required for helicopter landings.

Rationale

This management unit contains caribou calving grounds, an area of crucial importance to that species. Congress has directed that caribou range be a special consideration in this plan. Also, this management unit contains important habitat for a small population of Dall sheep in the Big Windy Creek/ Puzzle Gulch area. In view of the possible detrimental effects of mineral development; on these two species, the area should retain closed.

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 also assist the Bureau in meeting this legal requirement. Such information, in combination with information 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.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

The Semi-Primitive Motorized Restricted 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.

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 approval of this plan.

Rationale

Resource uses which might require some changes to the landscape will be allowed in this unit. A Class III designation would permit some changes while still retaining most of the existing scenic quality.

Prescriptions for Semi-Primitive Motorized Special Unit

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

This management unit will be managed to maintain a semi-primitive motorized ROS classification. Use of light (under 1,500 pounds GVW) off-road vehicles will be allowed without authorization.

Areas adjacent to the Birch Creek NWR corridor will be managed to provide recreational opportunities which could be combined with a float trip, such as hiking trails leading from the river to interior areas. The best of such opportunities lie within the drainage of the South Fork of Birch Creek.

A minimum of 68 miles of trail and five cabins are proposed.

Rationale

The recreational experience of floating Birch Creek could be enhanced by providing additional opportunities for recreation. The South Fork area has high scenic quality and excellent opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

The Semi-Primitive Motorized Special Management unit in the SNCA encompasses portions of present and historical use areas of the Fortymile caribou herd and of Dall sheep. These use areas include caribou calving areas and principal movement routes and Dall sheep lambing areas, mineral licks, movement routes, winter ranges, and escape cover.

Emphasis will be placed on managing the area to maintain the opportunity for caribou and Dall sheep to utilize present and historical use areas. As a result, proposals for land use within this area will be required to include a mitigation plan that describes discrete phases and actions for the proposed activity. Possible mitigating measures would include restriction or alteration of the timing, location, and extent of the proposed land use activity.

Rationale

This management unit contains important caribou range, which was identified by Congress as a special consideration for this plan. It is therefore appropriate that this management unit should be a priority area for habitat management, and habitat protection should be a major factor in determining which other resource uses can be allowed and under what conditions.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

The Semi-Primitive Motorized Special Management unit will be opened under the 1872 Mining Law to mineral entry (43 CFR 3800). It will also be open to oil and gas leasing (43 CFR 3100), geothermal leasing (43 CFR 3200) and to leasing of non-energy minerals (43 CFR 3500). All operations on leases and mining claims are subject to the following special stipulations.

1. Prior to commencing operations, the operator shall demonstrate that his operation will have no long-term, significant, adverse, effects on caribou habitat or caribou populations.

2. Seasonal restrictions will be imposed between May 1 and June 15, or between August 15 and September 30, if the operation will interfere with caribou calving or caribou migration.

Rationale

This management unit contains areas of high mineral potential. It also contains important caribou range, which is required by ANILCA to be a special consideration in this plan. Mineral development can be allowed to occur in this management unit only if such development has no long-term impacts on caribou.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

This 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.

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 approval of this plan.

Rationale

Resource uses which might require some changes to the landscape will be allowed in this unit. A Class III designation will permit some changes while still retaining most of the existing scenic quality.

Prescription for Semi-Primitive Motorized Management Unit

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Management Direction

This management unit will be managed to maintain a semi-primitive motorized ROS classification. Use of off-road vehicles under 1,500 pounds GVW will be allowed.

A minimum of 12 miles of trail and one cabin are proposed.

Rationale

Opportunities for hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities exist in this management unit. A Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS classification will allow

motorized access for these activities, making them available to a wide range of users. No significant resource impacts or user conflicts are expected to result from these activities.

MINERALS MANAGEMENT
Management Direction

This management unit will be opened to entry under the 1872 Mining Law. It will also be opened to oil and gas leasing (43 CFR. 3100), geothermal leasing (43 CFR 3200), and the leasing of non-energy minerals (43 CFR 3500). All leasing will be under standard stipulations.

Rationale

This area contains existing placer gold mines and shows potential for other types of mineral development. Mineral development is compatible with other resource uses proposed for this area, and standard stipulations will be adequate to protect known resource values

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Management Direction

This 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.

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 approval of this plan.

Rationale

Resource uses which might require some changes to the landscape would be allowed in this unit. A Class III designation will permit some changes, while still retaining most of the existing scenic quality.

Prescription for Research Natural Areas

Management Direction

Two Research Natural Areas (RNAs) will be designated. One RNA, on Mount Prindle, includes 2,800 acres in the SNCA, and the other encompasses the 160-acre Big Windy Hot Springs withdrawal. Locations and boundaries are shown on the "Proposed Plan" map. With the exception of hiking trails, no surface disturbing activities will be allowed, except permitted research projects. These 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. Access into the RNA can then be gained through developed trails and helispots, which will be improved. Hiking, hunting, and nature appreciation will be allowed.

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

An establishment report, which describes the values within an RNA and details use restrictions, will be written for each RNA. This work is already underway.

Rationale

The establishment of Research Natural Areas is part of the Ecological Reserve System, an interagency program for establishing areas which are useful for scientific research. These areas were selected because they contain typical representations of ecosystems or unusual natural features.

Description of Fire Management (maybe superceded by the Statewide Fire Amendment completed in 2005)

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 recreation values by maintaining vegetative and visual diversity and increasing wildlife habitat quality. The areas in which particular options will 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 fire 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 SNCA 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. Prior to any prescribed burn, the area will be thoroughly investigated to identify any inhabited or historical cabins, other structures, or other critical protection sites, and appropriate measures would be taken to protect them from fire.

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

The purpose of this section is to deal with Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and coal leasing, two planning elements which are given special prominence in Bureau planning policy and regulations.

ACEC DESIGNATIONS: ACEC designations are used to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historical , cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural hazards. No such designations are deemed necessary in the SNCA. 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 BLM procedures. The additional layer of regulation provided by designation of an ACEC is not necessary to prevent irreparable damage to these resources.

COAL LEASING. Coal leasing is not proposed in this plan and therefore is not addressed here.

SUPPORT

Support activities are actions necessary to aid in implementation of the plan or to 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 to a number of other activities.

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

The Bureau will have to process applications for rights-of-way for roads, trails, or pipelines which may be developed for access to mineral claims or leases, access for public recreation, or 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 work cooperatively with the State of Alaska to identify all right-of-way claims made pursuant to Revised Statute 2477 within the SNCA 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 as follows:

Agency	**Focus of Cooperation**
Alaska Department of Fish and Game U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Endangered Species Office	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
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation	Monitoring water quality; enforcement of water quality standards
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 SNCA 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 North Steese 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 in this plan. The comments and

the way in which they have been addressed can be found in Chapter V of the Environmental Impact statement, Response to Public Comment.

The South Steese is bordered on the east by the Yukon-Charley Rivers National preserve, which is administered by the National Park Service. A draft general management plan has been prepared for the Preserve possible inconsistencies between the draft general management plan and. the Draft map for SNCA were identified in a letter from NPS. Changes have been made in this plan to resolve significant conflicts. This matter is addressed in detail in the response to the NPS letter in Chapter V of the EIS.

Much of the SNCA is surrounded by lands belonging to the State of Alaska. Some of these lands are covered by the Tanana Basin Area Plan. There are no apparent conflicts between the State's plan and the approved plan for the SNCA.

Consistency with State programs and. policies has been addressed by responding to the comments submitted by the State of Alaska on the Draft PMP/EIS. These comments and how they were addressed are printed in Chapter V of the EIS. Also, in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.3-2(e), a copy of this proposed plan has been 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 North Steese is bordered on the west by the White Mountains National Recreation Area which is also under BLM administration. Land use planning for the SNCA and the WMNRA 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 these objectives. Implementation is not a single, discrete action. It is an ongoing process which will continue until this plan is replaced by a new, 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 planning requirements have been identified as additional planning needs.

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.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING NEEDS

Program	**Planning Needs & Objectives**	**Completion Time**	
		Time	**Cost**
Recreation	Consistent with the recreation management objectives established throughout this plan, develop a Recreation Activity Management plan to provide specific, detailed locations, timing, methods, and rationale for: a) public information and interpretation, b) remote public use cabin program, c) campgrounds, trai1heads, boat launches, or other facilities, and d) summer and-winter trails, especially hiking trails associated with Birch Creek.	1 year	$45,000
Recreation	Develop project plans for layout and design of all recreation facilities (priorities for these planning needs are discussed later in this section under construction and maintenance priorities).	3 years	$45,000
	TOTAL PROJECT REQUIREMENTS	4 years	$90,000
Visual Resource Management	Viewshed analysis of Birch Creek to define the critical watershed	1 year	$12,000
Fish and Wildlife	Prepare Habitat Management Plan document to specify cooperative inventory, monitoring, protection and improvement projects and maintenance programs described in management prescriptions	1 year	$9,000
Fish and Wildlife	Yearly implementation of Ongoing Habitat Management Plan for the life of the plan.	Ongoing	105,400/year for life of plan
Fire	Project plans to describe exact procedures for prescribed burns.	2 years	$45,000
Water Resources	Prepare a plan for conducting in-stream flow studies on Birch creek to quantify the federal reserved water right.	3 years	$55,000
Water Quality Monitoring	Monitor water quality on mainstream of Birch Creek and on tributary streams to ensure that the goals and objectives of the RMP are met.	Ongoing	$8,000

Construction and Maintenance

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

Recreation Facilities	**Construction**	**Maintenance**
85 miles of trails	$255,000	$10,000/year
3 cabins	$60,000	$5,000/year
5 trailheads	$150,000	$3,000/year
River access – Jump-Off Creek	$100,000	$3,000/year

FIRST PRIORITIES

Jump-off Creek: River access, small campsite
Trail development: Sheep Creek/South Fork - 28 miles of trail
Trail development: Mount Prindle/Twelve-mile - 18 miles of trail

SECOND PRIORITIES

Shelters at Sheep Creek/South Fork

Trail development: North Steese snowmachine trail -40 miles of trail.

THIRD PRIORITIES

Trail development: South Steese snowmachine trail -12 miles of trail
Shelter: North Steese snowmachine trail

Manpower (Resource Protection and Visitor Services)

Many plan decisions can be implemented with existing staff as part of on-going resource management programs in the Yukon Resource Area. Actions which will require a significant increase in staff are described below:

RECREATION

Additional manpower will be needed to (1) prepare necessary activity and project plans and (2) provide maintenance and visitor services such as public information, monitoring ORV use, etc. This will require the services of a landscape architect (temporary position), a recreation specialist (seasonal), and two recreation technicians (seasonal), at an approximate annual cost of $54,000.

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.

MINERALS

To ensure compliance with approved 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 $7,500 per year for aircraft use.

WILDLIFE

Additional manpower will be necessary to implement fish and wildlife project work. One seasonal wildlife biologist and one seasonal fisheries biologist will be required for five months each for approximately $35,000.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the RMP

Monitoring and evaluation provide information about progress toward the goals and objectives established in the plan. They are 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 once 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 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 and/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 will 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 is 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

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 of plan approval and will continue for the life of the plan. Such information is essential to maintaining a recreation management program which is responsive to public demand.

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 of plan approval.

MINERALS

Mineral assessment of all federal lands within the SNCA 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 in Section 1010 of ANILCA. All proposals for this assessment, whether conducted by public or private groups, would be accomplished in an environmentally sound manner that would prevent any lasting impacts which would appreciably alter the natural character of the SNCA or the biological or ecological systems found in it. 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 that 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 us~ 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 and additional inventories and monitoring will be conducted, 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 will be used.

FISHERIES
Fisheries inventories will be undertaken on Clums Fork,' Harrington Fork, Sheep Creek, South Fork of Birch Creek, Preacher Creek, and the North Fork of Preacher Creek. This information will be used to evaluate the impacts of development of existing mining claims on those creeks and to formulate appropriate mitigative measures. Inventories will take three years and cost approximately $50,000

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 ADF&G/Division of Subsistence and by other organizations and individuals. This information will further aid in developing mitigative measures for future site-specific land use proposals made to BLM

CORRECTIONS TO FEIS FOR THE STEESE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

FEIS CORRECTIONS

Page 102, paragraph 6, line 6, add: (Menzie, et al, Open-file Report No. 83~170B).

Page 115, paragraph 4, line 1: Surface water quality in the area is generally good, except for the…

Page 126, paragraph 6, line 3: ...recommended for study by the National Park Service for nomination to the National....

Page 142, paragraph 2, line 6: ...requirements. There are presently 14 operations in various stages of development. Access includes over 20 ...

EXPANDED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Page 251, line 24, insert:
Menzie, W.O.; Foster, H.L.; Tripp, R.B.; and Yeend, W.E. 1983. Mineral resource assessment of the Circle quadrangle, Alaska: U. S. Geological Survey Open-file Report No. 83-170B, 55 pp.

Page 252, line 9: After the section entitled “REFERENCES CITED” add, in a section entitled, “WORKS CONSULTED”:

Barker, J.C. 1978. Mineral deposits of the Tanana-Yukon uplands -a summary report, U.S. Bureau of Mines Open-file Report 88-98.

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Bergerud, A.T.; Jakimchuk, R.D., and Carruthers, D.R. 1984. The Buffalo of the North: Caribou (Rangifer tarandus) and Human Developments. Arctic 37(1): 7-22.

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