

One Route of the Historic Iditarod Trail Runs Through NLSRA.

CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

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HISTORY

Inhabitants of the Cook Inlet area are believed to have arrived approximately 8,000 years ago. It is believed that the Tanaina Indian groups entered the Cook Inlet subregion from the west and moved southwestwardly to village locations on or near the salmon producing streams of Cook Inlet. Adapting to their new coastal homelands, the Tanaina Indians became the only Athapaskan-speaking peoples of Alaska who hunted sea mammals. Settlements of Athapaskan Indian origin have been documented in the NLSRA. Several Tanaina Indian settlements and activities occurred within and around the boundaries of NLSRA as recently as 75 years ago.

The first Caucasian contact in the area occurred in the 1790s. The Russian American Company and the Russians explored the Cook Inlet country with one trip up the Susitna River. The mid-century produced an expansion of trading settlements near the mouth of the Knik River, and by the mid-1800s the numbers of white settlers were increasing due to the gold prospecting expansions.

Implications

Presently, not enough is known about the historic sites within NLSRA. A more exhaustive historical survey with recommendations for restoration and interpretation of the cultural heritage of NLSRA should be accomplished.

Prior to the construction of new facilities, the site should be surveyed by the Department of Geological and Geophysical Surveys.

POPULATION

The population most influenced by, and having the greatest influence on NLSRA, includes residents of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough with a population of 17,766 (1980 census) and the Municipality of Anchorage with a population of 173,017 (1980 census). The median age of Anchorage residents is young - 25 - compared to the national median age of 30 (1980 U.S. Census). Communities within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough nearest NLSRA for which census figures are published are Palmer (36 miles to the east) with 2,141, Wasilla (25 miles to the east) with 1,559, and Houston (8 miles to the east) with 370. The Institute of Social and Economic Research projects population growth to continue at a more steady rate, as shown in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5: POPULATION PROJECTION for ANCHORAGE
and the MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH**

	1980 (census)	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Anchorage	179,118	202,708	237,418	245,945	263,903	285,821
Mat-Su Borough	17,766	29,000	46,000	72,000	102,000*	No Pro- jection
*1995 projection						
Sources:						
Anchorage projections by the <u>Institute of Social and Economic Research</u> , December 1981. Matanuska-Susitna Borough projections by CH2M-Hill for the <u>Overall Economic Development Program, Inc., Report, Volume II</u> , for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, July 1980.						

Implications

Many factors could dramatically influence the population of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in an upward direction. Examples are:

- oil and gas discovery and development;
- coal and associated port development;
- agricultural development;
- recreational development;
- industrial development following hydroelectric development;
- construction of a bridge across Knik Arm; and
- petrochemical development.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

The Parks Highway is the primary route of access to NLSRA. The amount of average daily traffic near the entrance to NLSRA from 1970 through 1980 correlates with the monthly use patterns of the recreation area.

The Alaska Railroad currently operates two trains a week between Anchorage and Fairbanks during the winter and offers daily passenger service during the summer. The train passes by the entrance to NLSRA and is a potential access mode to the recreation area. Presently, people may use the train via whistle stop procedures to access NLSRA. There is an annual ridership of approximately 70,000 passengers on this route.

Float plane access into NLSRA presently occurs on Nancy, Lynx, Red Shirt and Butterfly lakes. No additional float plane access is planned for the area. Access to NLSRA is also provided by the Little Susitna River, at MP 57 of the Parks Highway. Boaters may enter the recreation area from a portage trail on the river 12 miles from the highway put-in.

Implications

Improved rail access, and upgraded highway conditions could increase the numbers of visitors using NLSRA.

Should float plane access endanger the safety of visitors, or the public demand should request lake access closures, the Director of the Division of Parks has the capability of closing the lakes to float plane access.

LAND OWNERSHIP

There are 29 separate parcels containing 304.63 acres of private land within the boundaries of the recreation area. Figure 6 shows the public and private land within and adjacent to NLSRA. Private land within NLSRA is not open to the public. All the waters and all the public land have been patented to the state. The state retains the subsurface estate beneath all land and water.

Implications

Private lands within NLSRA need to be clearly identified to the public to help eliminate trespass situations.

Private lands within NLSRA should be purchased on a willing seller basis.

LOCAL, REGIONAL ECONOMY

The economy of the area surrounding NLSRA is diverse. Employment tends to be related to services, government and retail sales businesses. Tourism is a supporting economic base of the area, with recreationalists contributing to local businesses, through the purchase of groceries, gasoline, and camping supplies; chartering guide services; and utilizing lodging or camping opportunities and prepared meals. In 1980, the State's Division of Tourism estimates that the 566,100 tourists visiting Alaska spent \$260 million.

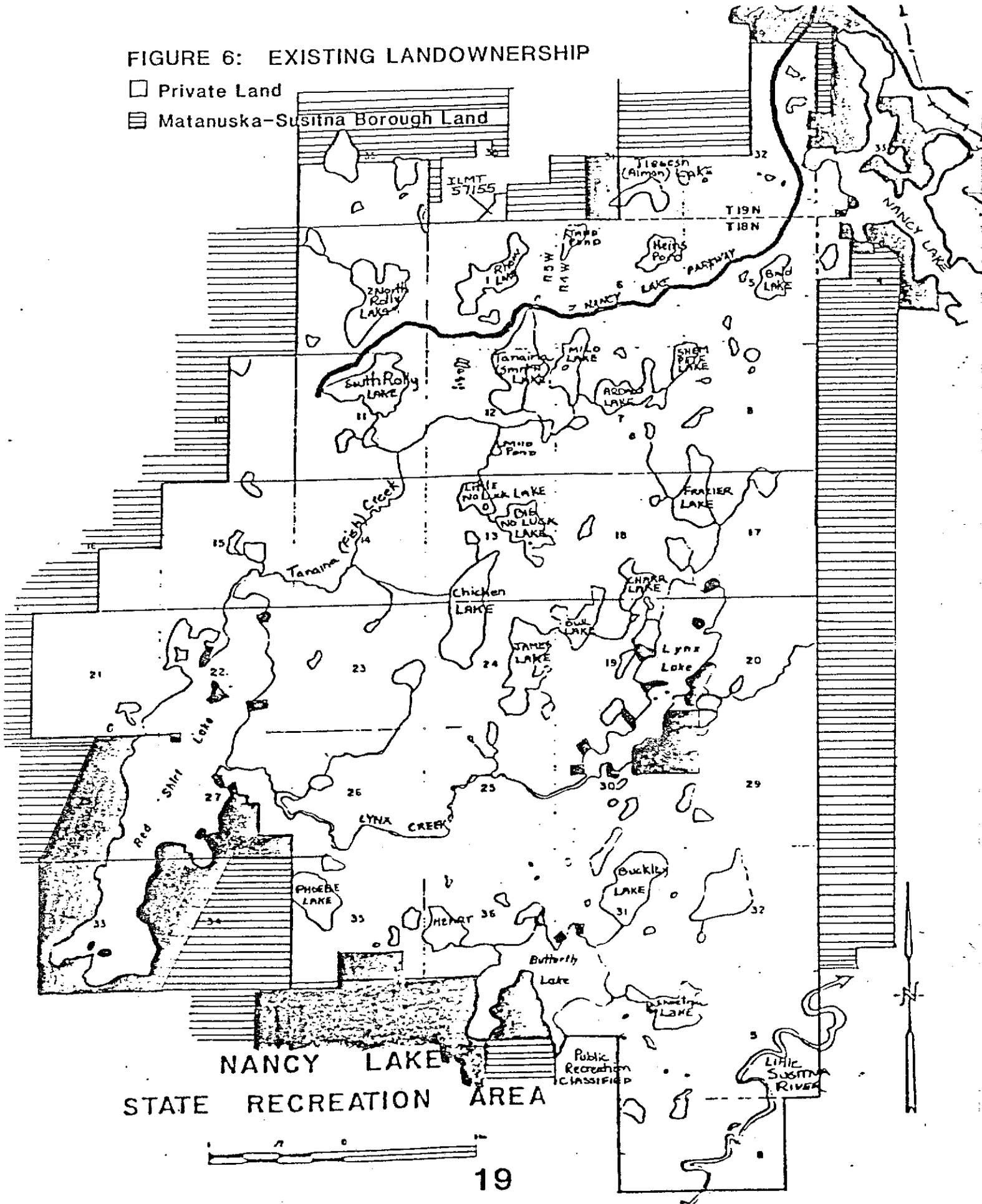
Implications

Recreational activities and tourism are expected to grow in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough area and continue to provide an economic base for the area surrounding NLSRA.

FIGURE 6: EXISTING LANDOWNERSHIP

□ Private Land

▨ Matanuska-Susitna Borough Land



NANCY LAKE
STATE RECREATION AREA