

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE TANANA VALLEY STATE FOREST

Although there have been significant changes in the use of the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF) and the surrounding economic and physical environments, the purpose of the State Forest has not changed.

The TVSF was established under AS 41.17.400 on July 1, 1983. The legislature described the purpose of state forests as:

"The primary purpose in the establishment of state forests is "multiple use management that provides for the production, utilization, and replenishment of timber resources while perpetuating personal, commercial, and other beneficial uses of resources." (AS 41.17.200)

And clarifies that state forest land *"shall be retained in state ownership."* (AS 41.17.210(b))

Because AS 41.17 specifies that the Tanana Valley State Forest shall be retained in state ownership, the TVSF Management Plan does not identify lands for disposal. However, if legislation specifically authorizes the University of Alaska to select land within the State Forest, it will supersede AS 41.17. The law also addresses the composition of State Forests: *"The governor may propose to the legislature the establishment of state forests consisting primarily of commercially valuable forest land determined by the governor to be necessary for retention in state ownership for management under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield" (AS 41.17.210(a)).* In compliance with this section, the TVSF boundaries were designed to encompass mostly forestland with potential for commercial value. Lands along the major clear water rivers were generally excluded from the State Forest, even though some very productive forestland is found along the clearwater rivers.

The wildlife management objective of the TVSF is *"the production of wildlife for a high level of sustained yield for human use through habitat improvement techniques to the extent consistent with the primary purpose of a state forest" (AS 41.17.400(e)).*

AS 41.17.200-.400 provides additional direction on management of the state forest. The law directs the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prepare a management plan for the state forest that *"must consider and permit the uses described in AS 38.05.112(c)."* These uses are:

- commercial timber harvesting, including related activities
- harvesting of forest products for personal use
- fish and wildlife habitat, including:
 - identification and protection of important wildlife habitat
 - retention of riparian, wetland, and ocean-shoreline vegetation critical for fish and wildlife habitat
 - classification of water bodies according to physical characteristics
- silvicultural practices, commercial timber harvest, and related activities that maintain and enhance the quality of fish and game habitat
- uses of forest land for non-timber purposes, including:
 - recreation, tourism, and related activities
 - mining, mining claims, mineral leaseholds, and material extraction
 - uses of fish and wildlife

- 1 ○ agriculture, including grazing,
- 2 ○ other resources and uses appropriate to the area, including compatible traditional uses
- 3 • soil characteristics and productivity
- 4 • water quality
- 5 • watershed management

6 Under AS 41.17.200, DNR may "restrict the public use of the land and its resources, including timber, fish and
7 wildlife, and minerals, only when necessary to carry out the purposes of [the Forest Resources and Practices Act]."
8 Further, "if the commissioner finds that a permitted use is incompatible with one or more other uses in a portion
9 of a state forest, the commissioner shall affirmatively state in the management plan that finding of incompatibility
10 for the specific area where the incompatibility is anticipated to exist and the time period when the incompatibility
11 is anticipated to exist together with the reasons and benefits for each finding."

12 In addition, AS 38.04.200 states that DNR "*may not manage state land, water, or land and water so that a*
13 *traditional means of access for traditional outdoor activities is restricted for the purpose of protecting aesthetic*
14 *values [...] unless the restriction or prohibition is:*

- 15 • for an area of land, water, or land and water that encompasses 640 contiguous acres or less
- 16 • temporary in nature and effective cumulatively less than eight months in a three-year period
- 17 • for the protection of public safety and public or private property
- 18 • for the development of natural resources and a reasonable alternative for the traditional means of access
19 across the land, water, or land and water for traditional outdoor activities on other land, water, or land
20 and water is available and approved by the commissioner
- 21 • authorized by an act of the legislature

22 PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

23 The Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act directs the Department of Natural Resources to prepare a forest
24 management plan for each state forest (AS 41.17.230). This plan will guide long-term, active management of the
25 forested lands within the TVSF and identifies the policies that will be followed. It establishes the process that the
26 Department of Natural Resources will use to review and address proposed uses of State Forest land by the public,
27 industries, and other government agencies. This forest management plan addresses uses of forest land from a
28 multiple use perspective and includes timber production as well as nontimber purposes including recreation,
29 tourism, mining, mineral exploration and leasing, uses of fish and wildlife, and other uses. Because of this broad
30 scope this plan also establishes rules or guidelines aimed at allowing various uses to occur with minimal conflict.
31 Finally, the plan is designed to provide management flexibility as conditions change and additional resource data
32 becomes available.

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35 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER MANAGEMENT PLANS

36 Several other land use plans will affect or be affected by the TVSF Management Plan:

1 **DMLW Area Plans** The TVSF falls across two DNR area plans, the Yukon-Tanana Area Plan (YTAP) and the Eastern
2 Tanana Area Plan (ETAP), split off from the Tanana Basin Area Plan in a 2016 revision. These two area plans
3 establish land management direction for much of the state land adjacent to the State Forest. The State Forest
4 plan was developed to be consistent with DMLW area plan policies.

5 **Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan.** The Fairbanks North Star Borough
6 Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan inventories trails of regional and statewide significance in the Borough.
7 The plan presents detailed policies and specific recommendations for trail management within and outside of the
8 State Forest. The trail plan does not supersede the TVSF Management Plan.

9 **Five-Year Schedules of Timber Sales.** The DOF annually prepares a Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales for each
10 area office -- Fairbanks, Delta, and Tok -- under AS 38.05.113. These schedules "*provide a timeline that identifies*
11 *timber sales, their amounts, and their locations.*" The Schedules also list planned transportation routes to access
12 proposed timber sales and reforestation projects for each area. The Schedules are intended to "*provide the public*
13 *and the forest products industry with a basis to comment on future sale offerings.*" They also provide an
14 opportunity to coordinate forest management activities among different landowners. Draft Schedules are
15 published for public, industry, and agency review and are reviewed with the TVSF Citizens' Advisory Committee
16 prior to adoption.

17 **Forest Land Use Plans (FLUPs).** The DOF must prepare a FLUP for each timber sale greater than 10 acres, except
18 for salvage harvests on land that is cleared for non-forest use (AS 38.05.112). A FLUP describes the harvest
19 methods, access, reforestation plan, and multiple use provisions for the proposed sale. Each FLUP must consider
20 the same list of uses required for the TVSF Management Plan (AS 38.05.112(c)); see "*Establishment and Purpose*
21 *of the Tanana Valley State Forest,*" above). Draft FLUPs are published for public, industry, and agency review prior
22 to adoption.

23 **Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).** Several communities that are adjacent to or surrounded by the
24 TVSF have CWPPs that are active or in the process of being renewed including: Delta Junction, Dry Creek, Tok and
25 the Fairbanks North Star Borough. CWPPs are created collaboratively with all the parties responsible for fire
26 protection in the vicinity of each community. These plans do not supersede the TVSF Management Plan.

27 **Interagency Fire Management Plan.** Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan. DNR, along with other
28 state and federal agencies and Native corporations, has developed an interagency fire management plan for
29 Alaska. This plan identifies the appropriate level of wildland fire suppression for all lands in Alaska. In some areas,
30 wildland fires are actively suppressed to protect life, property, or valuable resources. In other areas, wildland fires
31 are allowed to burn to improve wildlife habitat, decrease long-term risks of severe wildland fires, and reduce the
32 costs of fire suppression. In the Tanana Valley State Forest, Critical Protection areas have been identified where
33 immediate and aggressive fire suppression efforts are taken to protect life and property. Critical protection areas
34 are typically close to residential areas and cover about 1% of the State Forest. Full Protection areas also receive
35 immediate suppression efforts to protect high value resources where fire may adversely impact resource
36 management objectives. Full protection areas follow the major highways in the Tanana Basin, and where there
37 are valuable resources close to access. About 79% of the State Forest is in full protection. Modified Action areas
38 are those with high value resources where land managers may consider trade-offs of acres burned versus
39 suppression costs. Fires are attacked immediately, but land managers guide the suppression effort. Modified
40 protection areas cover 15% of the State Forest. Limited Action areas are those where fire is beneficial or benign,

1 or firefighting costs are greater than fire damage. In these areas, fires are monitored, but no suppression action is
2 taken except to prevent fires from burning onto higher value land. About 5% of the State Forest is in limited
3 protection areas. Fire suppression levels are reviewed annually among the agencies and major landowners. For
4 additional information on fire management topics in this plan, see the Fire Management parts in the Scientific
5 Resources and Timber Management sections of Chapter 2, and the Fire Disturbance section of Chapter.

6 Activities or uses not directly addressed by the TVSF Management Plan or the above related plans should be
7 considered subject to the same provisions for General Land Use Activity as described in Section 11 AAC 96.020 –
8 Generally Allowed Uses.

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PROCESS USED TO DEVELOP THE PLAN

The planning process is designed to ensure participation by the public and government agencies, to provide opportunities for review and amendment of the plan. An outline of the planning process is provided below.

- 1. Identify Issues:** In some cases, an amendment occurs in response to an administrative directive, either from the Governor or the DNR Commissioner. Other times, DOF draws on the experience of State Forest resource foresters, local expertise, and public insight to identify ways that a current plan is not able to effectively guide management decision-making for a State Forest.
- 2. Determine necessary level of revision:** Based on the proposed changes to the plan document, DOF decides whether an amendment, minor change, or special exception is the best process for capturing those changes. An amendment is an edit that “permanently changes the forest management plan by adding to or modifying the basic management intent for one or more of the units or subunits, by changing allowed or prohibited uses, guidelines, or policies”
- 3. Announce amendment intentions** with the public.
- 4. Prepare draft plan:** Create a draft plan that reflects resource values, as well as public and DOF goals. DOF and other agencies review the first draft and settle any land use conflicts that remain or propose the best alternatives for public review.
- 5. Agency review of draft plan:** DOF collaborates with other agencies including Department of Natural resources (DNR) Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation; DNR Division of Mining, Land and Water; and Alaska Department of Fish and Game Habitat and Restoration Division in the amendment process. A draft of the management plan is shared with these agencies for review before it is made available to the public.
- 6. Adjust plan content** based on agency comments.
- 7. Public review of draft plan:** The draft plan is released for public review. Public meetings are held to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the draft plan and to identify parts that need to be changed. Public review drafts are open for comment for at least 30 days.
- 8. Prepare issue response summary:** Agency and public comments are reviewed, and the draft plan is revised as necessary. The final plan and Issue Response Summary are prepared for public review.
- 9. Prepare the plan for publication:** Review agency and public comments and revise the plan.
- 10. Approve plan:** The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources approves and signs the plan.
- 11. Implement plan:** The plan guides management decisions for lands within Tanana Valley State Forest.

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