

STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

MAT-SU AREA

FIVE-YEAR SCHEDULE OF TIMBER SALES

CY 2024-2028



DNR Division of Forestry & Fire Protection

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Purpose of the Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales

The Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales (FYSTS), published every two years, identifies areas where the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOF) is planning timber sales. The Five-Year Schedule is meant to inform the public, timber industry, local governments, and other agencies of potential State timber sales, and solicit their input to help us better plan our sale program. The Five-Year Schedule is a scoping document, not a decision document, and is therefore not appealable under AS 38.05.035.

This Five-Year Schedule meets the statutory requirements of AS 38.05.113 and acts as a basis for allocating departmental resources in considering, designing and conducting timber sales. Volume and harvest information is based on the calendar year. This document does not include harvests proposed by the University of Alaska or the Alaska Mental Health Land Trust.

This Five-Year Schedule provides information to the public concerning development and use of State Forest resources in the Mat-Su Area (MSA) for the period of January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2028. The DOF bases the Five-Year Schedule on State Land that is classified for timber harvest and is identified in area management plans. Area management plans are long range planning documents prepared by DNR to determine the use of State land in regional areas, such as *Southeast Susitna Area Plan* and *Susitna Matanuska Area Plan*. The areas targeted for timber harvest and development are based on the management intent of the Area Plans and are quantified in this Five-Year Schedule based on aerial photo inventory. This data is augmented by limited ground reconnaissance and historical knowledge accumulated by personnel working in the area.

All State timber sales must comply with the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act, published in Alaska Statutes (AS) 41.17.010-950, also in Alaska Administrative Code (AAC), Title 11 Natural Resources, 95.185-255), and cited in the Alaska Land Act, including its procedures and regulations, reference Alaska Statutes § 38.05.005 (2023). Additionally, all State timber sales must adhere to area-wide and site-specific land management policies for each management unit of DNR area plans.

After adopting the Five-Year Schedule, the DOF conducts more detailed fieldwork, to assess and design proposed sales. Before a commercial timber sale of ten acres or larger is offered, the DOF will prepare a Best Interest Finding (BIF) for agency and public review and comment. Based on the comments received, the DOF will issue a Final Best Interest Finding to determine whether the timber sale is in the State's best interest or not. The Final BIF is appealable under AS 38.05.035.

Prior to harvest, a Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) will be developed, describing site-specific information for each sale including: the location, access, estimated timber volume, harvest methods, the reforestation plan, and citing other potential uses of the sale area. Other State agencies and the public have the opportunity to review and comment on each FLUP. Significant concerns or mitigation needs that arise during the review period are addressed by the DOF before the sale proceeds. The final BIF, not the FYSTS, is the document that decides whether the Division will offer a timber sale or not. The FLUP follows, as the State's specific logging plan for that sale. If a sale was offered, but not purchased, or if a sale was purchased but not harvested, wholly or in part, the remaining timber may be sold without reappearing in a FYSTS or in a BIF, or if conditions warrant, a new FLUP may be issued.

Public and Agency Review

The Draft Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales was distributed for concurrent public and agency review from August 21, 2024, to September 20, 2024. The Schedule was sent to several state agencies, collaborating entities and known interest groups for review. Additionally, it was posted on the State of

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection thanks all reviewers and commenters for their time and information given during this public process. Comments received, and DOF's responses are included below.

Organization	Author	Location
Alaska Department of Natural Resources - Resource Assessment and Development Section	Kevin Husa	Anchorage, AK
Alaska DOT&PF	Kristina Huling	Anchorage, AK
Susitna River Coalition	Melis Coady	Talkeetna, AK
Talkeetna resident	Becky Long	Talkeetna, AK

Commenter	Comment	Response
	Purpose/Land Base/ Management Intent	
Husa	<p>All of the timber sales are within the follow units of SMAP and SSAP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petersville Harvest Block 2024-2027 located in S026N007W27, 28, 33, S025N007W03, 04, unit P-13 of SMAP and designated as forestry (F) which converts to the classification of Forestry Land. o Unit Management Intent: Manage unit for its forest values. Unit is affected by the Susitna Forestry Guidelines or its successor; all timber sales must meet the requirements of 11 AAC 95. Forest land use plans must, in addition to these requirements, adhere to the requirements of the Forestry section in Chapter 2 (Areawide Land Management Policies). Because of the presence of important habitat and species scattered throughout portions of this unit, it is also to be managed for the maintenance of wildlife species, fisheries, and habitats consistent with Management Guideline B in the Fish and Wildlife Habitat section in Chapter 2 and other management guidelines in this section associated with waterfowl concentrations and moose wintering areas. Consult with ADF&G on sensitive habitats and wildlife locations prior to or concurrent with FLUP preparation. Protect anadromous streams and wetlands. Forestry riparian standards apply (AS 41.17.115 and AS 41.17.118) for riparian areas adjacent to anadromous and high value resident fish 	<p>DOF will conform to 11 AAC 95, Susitna Matanuska Area Plan and Southeast Susitna Area Plan. ADF&G were included in this review and will be consulted for their fish, wildlife, and habitat expertise as DOF develops Best Interest Findings (BIF) and Forest Land Use Plans (FLUP) for the proposed units.</p> <p>Routes, trails and easements, as well as remote cabins in the vicinity will be further researched and identified and will be addressed in BIF and FLUP documents. DOF will consult with appropriate agencies to gather appropriate information.</p> <p>Riparian, scenic, trail and road buffers will be discussed in the BIF/FLUP documents for timber sale units.</p> <p>DOF will consult with sister agencies, including DMLW, ADF&G, to gather and incorporate guidance and recommendations for sensitive habitats in and near the proposed sales.</p>

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>streams. Consult with ADF&G to determine the location of high value resident fish streams. A riparian buffer of 300' from OHW is to be maintained on the Kahiltna River and Peters Creek. Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes. During FLUP preparation, identify these routes and provide suitable protection or mitigation. Coordinate with the SCRO/DMLW, and with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough on trail identification and routing. Effects of timber harvests on areas with remote cabins will be considered and mitigated. Additional land disposals are not appropriate within this unit. Retain land in state ownership. Portions of the unit may be appropriate for inclusion in a state forest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabideux Creek Harvest Block 2028 located in S024N005W08, 09, unit P-15 of SMAP designated as Habitat (Ha), Water Resources (Wr), which converts to the co-classification of Wildlife Habitat Land and Water Resources Land o Unit Management Intent: Manage to protect habitat and hydrologic functions. Retain in state ownership. A 150-foot scenic buffer each side of the right-of-way for the Parks Highway is to be maintained in natural vegetation, although trailhead enhancements may be appropriate. Protect trails and easements. Resources and Uses Description states: This unit consists of four parcels in the southeast corner of the Petersville Region. They are mostly level terrain with extensive wetlands with islands of mixed spruce-hardwood forest scattered within. Rockys Lakes and other smaller lakes are scattered throughout this unit. Within the largest parcel past land sales have resulted in a few private lots and a timber sale was conducted here in the 1980s. • Oilwell Road Harvest Block 2027-2028 located in S023N008W25, 36, unit U-04 of SMAP designated Forestry (F), which converts to the classification of Forestry Land. o Unit Management Intent: Manage unit for its forest values. Unit is affected by the Susitna Forestry Guidelines or its successor; all timber sales must meet the requirements of 11 AAC 95. Forest land use plans must, in addition to these requirements, adhere to the requirements of the Forestry section in Chapter 2 Areawide Land Management Policies. Because of the presence of important habitat and species scattered throughout portions of this unit, it is also to be managed for the maintenance of wildlife species, fisheries, and habitats consistent with Management Guideline B in the Fish and Wildlife Habitat section in Chapter 2 and other management guidelines in this section associated with waterfowl concentrations and moose 	<p>All sales will be designed to conform to Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) to protect fish habitat and water quality.</p> <p>Recreation, current and historical trails, and other multiple use activities will be addressed in BIF/FLUP documents and accommodated during harvest planning, layout and operations. DOF will engage with sister agencies for information and guidance as necessary.</p>

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>wintering areas. Consult with ADF&G on sensitive habitats and wildlife locations prior to or concurrent with FLUP preparation. A riparian buffer of 300' from OHW is to be maintained on the Yentna and Kahiltna rivers. A riparian buffer of 300' from OHW is to be maintained on the Susitna River. Protect anadromous streams and wetlands. Forestry riparian standards apply (AS 41.17.115 and AS 41.17.118) for riparian areas adjacent to anadromous and high value resident fish streams. Consult with ADF&G to determine the location of high value resident fish streams. Protect trails, easements and RS 2477 routes, which include the INHTS and Iditarod Race Trail. During FLUP preparation, identify these routes and provide suitable protection or mitigation. Coordinate with the SCRO/DMLW, and with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough on trail identification and routing. Effects of timber harvests on areas with remote cabins will be considered and mitigated. Additional land disposals are not appropriate within this unit. Retain land in state ownership. Portions of the unit may be appropriate for inclusion in a state forest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willer Kash Harvest Block 2025-2027 located in S021N003W33, 34, S020N003W04, 05, 09, unit U-01 of SSAP designated Forestry (F), which converts to the classification of Forestry Land. o Unit Management Intent: Manage unit consistent with requirements of Forestry section of Chapter 2 and with applicable Susitna Forestry Guidelines and Forest Practices Act requirements. Protect anadromous streams and moose winter concentration and rutting areas. Maintain the Central Mail Trail, Mail Trail Connector, and Willow Mountain Trail corridors. Other recreational areas and corridors may exist within this unit and a review to determine if other such uses exist should occur prior to or concurrent with Forest Land Use Plan preparation. DOF is to consult with DMLW prior to initiating any timber harvests in parcels adjacent to management units that are intended for another use. DOF needs also to coordinate with ADF&G on FRPA and FLUP requirements, especially adjacent to Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area. • Houston-Zero Lake Harvest Block 2024-2027 located in S019N003W33, 34, S018N003W01, 02, 11, unit U-01 of SSAP designated Forestry (F), classified Forestry Land, and S018N003W03, 04, unit H-06 of SSAP designated Forestry (F) which converts to the classification of Forestry Land. o Unit Management Intent (Unit U-01: Manage unit consistent with requirements of Forestry section of Chapter 2 and with applicable Susitna Forestry Guidelines and 	

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>Forest Practices Act requirements. Protect anadromous streams and moose winter concentration and rutting areas. Maintain the Central Mail Trail, Mail Trail Connector, and Willow Mountain Trail corridors. Other recreational areas and corridors may exist within this unit and a review to determine if other such uses exist should occur prior to or concurrent with Forest Land Use Plan preparation. DOF is to consult with DMLW prior to initiating any timber harvests in parcels adjacent to management units that are intended for another use. DOF needs also to coordinate with ADF&G on FRPA and FLUP requirements, especially adjacent to Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area. o Unit Management Intent (Unit H-06): Unit is to be managed for its timber values. Local and regional trails are to be maintained.</p> <p>• Sunset Harvest Block 2024-2026 located in S018N003W01, S018N002W06, 07, unit U-01 of SSAP designated Forestry (F), classified Forestry Land, and S018N002W08, 19, 16, unit P-02 of SSAP designated Forestry (F) which converts to the classification Forestry Land. o Unit Management Intent (U-01): Manage unit consistent with requirements of Forestry section of Chapter 2 and with applicable Susitna Forestry Guidelines and Forest Practices Act requirements. Protect anadromous streams and moose winter concentration and rutting areas. Maintain the Central Mail Trail, Mail Trail Connector, and Willow Mountain Trail corridors. Other recreational areas and corridors may exist within this unit and a review to determine if other such uses exist should occur prior to or concurrent with Forest Land Use Plan preparation. DOF is to consult with DMLW prior to initiating any timber harvests in parcels adjacent to management units that are intended for another use. DOF needs also to coordinate with ADF&G on FRPA and FLUP requirements, especially adjacent to Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area.</p> <p>o Unit Management Intent (P-02): Manage parcel consistent with Susitna Forest Guidelines and Forest Resources Practices Act. Provide mitigation measures to mitigate significant impacts on moose wintering concentration areas. Recreation use of this parcel is to be considered in a FLUP prepared by DOF. Significant trails are to be protected and recreational activity is to be accommodated in timber harvest design.</p> <p>• Matanuska Valley Moose Range Harvest Block 2025-2028 located in S018N001E01, and S018N002E06, unit L-05 of SMAP designated Coal</p>	

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	<p>(Co) and Habitat (Ha), which converts to the co-classification of Coal Land and Wildlife Habitat Land.</p> <p>o Unit Management Intent: This unit encompasses the Matanuska Valley Moose Range, an LDA. See the section, <i>Legislatively Designated Areas</i> (AS 16.20.340) for detail on the management of this area. “The purpose of AS 16.20.340 — 16.20.360 is to establish the area described in AS 16.20.360 as the Matanuska Valley Moose Range. The primary purposes of the Matanuska Valley Moose Range are to maintain, improve, and enhance moose populations and habitat and other wildlife resources of the area, and to perpetuate public multiple use of the area, including fishing, grazing, forest management, hunting, trapping, mineral and coal entry and development, and other forms of public use of public land not incompatible with the purpose stated in this section”.</p> <p>• Fish Creek Harvest Block 2025-2028. Harvest sites within S017N005W18, 19, 30, and S017N006W13, 19, and 30 are in Unit 4 of the 2012 Fish Creek Management Plan (SC-08-001A01) plan amendment to 2008 SSAP and designated as General Use (Gu) and Forestry (F) which converts to the co-classification of Resource Management Land and Forest Land. S017N005W20 is with Unit 3 and is designated as Habitat (Ha) and Water Resources (Wr) which converts to the classification of Wildlife Habitat Land and Water Resource Land.</p> <p>o Management Intent Unit 3: The primary management intent for these wetland areas is to retain these lands in public ownership to preserve their functions for fish and wildlife habitat, to protect water quality and allow for recreational use, primarily winter activities. Activities within this unit must occur in a manner consistent with the protection of these values. Providing for recreational use of these parcels primarily focuses on maintaining winter trail links to and across this unit. In the future, if and when the surrounding areas are developed, recreation uses in these units can be expanded to include other forms of passive recreation use (e.g., wildlife viewing, walking trails) as well as limited, supporting recreation facilities. Public access will be maintained to and within the Iditarod Historic Trail corridor and the Iron Dog Trail. Work is needed to reserve other important regional trails, e.g. the Crooked Lake trail.</p> <p>o Management Intent Unit 4: Land within the Upper Fish Creek Unit is designated resource management. While the soils have potential for agriculture or settlement, the unit cannot be developed until the area has permanent road access. Permanent access must await a road that first crosses the Little Susitna River, and then makes significant additional stream and wetland</p>	

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	<p>crossings to reach this area. Permanent access is expected to be at least a decade away and probably significantly longer. By the time access is developed, the demand for timber, agriculture, or residential settlement land may change significantly from today's assessment. For that reason, the plan delays the decision about whether to sell these areas, and if sold, for what purposes – residential settlement, agriculture, or a combination. In the interim, the timber in this unit will be included in the State timber base. In this way, the future potential of the area for potential agriculture or settlement will be protected, but interim timber development will provide jobs and timber products and may help develop forestry roads that may bring access to the area and facilitate eventual permanent access. Therefore, to the extent practical, forestry roads will be located in a manner that may enhance the eventual agricultural or residential settlement value of the areas. This plan intends that at least 35 percent of the productive forest lands in this unit will be permanently retained for long-term forestry. The plan delays the decision about whether to sell remaining acreage in this unit, and, if sold, for what purposes - residential settlement, agriculture, or a combination; or whether to retain this remaining acreage in the unit in public ownership for uses such as forestry.</p> <p>Recommendation: RADS has no objections provided the management intent and guidelines for each unit are followed. Thank you for the opportunity to review.</p>	
Huling	<p>The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Central Region has reviewed the following Timber Sales Schedule and have the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024-2028 MSS FYSTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DOT&PF Right of Way, Property Management would like to contribute information and usage request processes to coordinate access and use of DOT&PF Right of Way and land interests. <p>All properties accessing DOT&PF roads must apply to Right of Way for a driveway permit and/or approach road review, subject to provisions listed in 17 AAC 10.020. Any previously issued access permits become invalid once the property undergoes a platting action or change in use and must be reissued.</p> <p>We recommend the petitioner verify all section line easements and DOT&PF road rights-of-</p>	DOF will review the status of ROW's, permits and easements while developing the BIF/FLUP for timber sales, and coordinate with sister agencies as needed.

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>way adjacent to their property. For assistance, the petitioner may contact the Engineering group within the Right of Way section in DOT&PF at (907) 269-0700. The petitioner is liable to remove any improvements within the easements and rights-of-way that impede the operation and maintenance of those facilities even if they are not shown on the plat, so it is in the petitioner's best interest to identify the exact locations and widths of any such easements or rights-of-way before they improve the property.</p> <p>If any section line easements or road rights-of-way exist within the bounds of their plat, we recommend the petitioner dedicate them. If there is an existing right-of-way or easement, the petitioner is unable to develop that portion of the property yet continues to pay property taxes on it; dedicating will remove that cost to the petitioner.</p>	
Coady	<p>On behalf of the Susitna River Coalition (SRC), representing over 14,000 local individuals, groups, and businesses, we are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed timber sales within the Fish Creek Timber Block as outlined in the Alaska Division of Forestry's Five-Year Schedule for 2024–2028.</p> <p>The SRC is deeply concerned about the significant environmental, economic, and infrastructural impacts these planned timber sales will impose on the region. The Fish Creek Timber Block comprises 37% of the proposed timber sales, yet its development is far more than a simple timber extraction effort. The necessity of building a bridge to cross the Little Susitna River, as well as the extensive road construction, raises serious questions about the true nature of this proposal. This alignment of the timber sales with road projects undermines the credibility of the Division of Forestry's stated goals for sustainable timber</p>	<p>DOF proposes to access the Fish Creek units via a winter access road DOF created in 2014. This route begins at the termination of West Susitna Parkway. DOF's route is different than the DOT proposed route, however part of DOT's <i>alternative route</i> aligns with the DOF's winter access route for approximately 2 miles before diverting south approximately 0.5 miles west of Little Su, where it becomes DOT's proposed route. The proposed timber sale units in this FYSTS are on the east side of the Fish Creek Block, approximately 2.7 miles north of DOT's proposed route, with the closest proposed unit being greater than 7 miles from "Susitna Landing"</p> <p>Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act and Regulations provide protections for fish habitat and water quality. All sales will be designed to conform to Forest Resources and Practices Act.</p>

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>management. Rather than focusing on timber production that supports local small sawmills or provides firewood for residents, these sales seem to prioritize infrastructure development that would open the region to further industrial projects, potentially including mining or large-scale development.</p> <p>From an economic standpoint, the financial return from timber sales in Alaska has historically been modest, often yielding less than \$10,000 per 40-acre sale. In the Fish Creek Timber Block, the construction of a bridge and road system—especially for the 2028 allotments—appears to serve dual purposes. We believe that these infrastructure developments are less about facilitating timber sales and more about subsidizing the initial stages of the controversial West Susitna Access Road. This road project has faced significant opposition due to concerns about environmental damage, disruption to local communities, and unclear economic benefits.</p> <p>The Fish Creek Timber Block sale area falls within a region with high environmental and recreational value that is vital to the local economy. Timber extraction and the associated construction threaten habitats, wildlife, and waterways, including salmon streams that sustain local subsistence fishing. Additionally, the alignment of new access roads with historical rights of way, previously cleared for timber sales, raises concerns that the Division of Forestry is prioritizing long-term road infrastructure for future development over sustainable forest management.</p> <p>We recognize that fire suppression might be cited as a justification for these timber sales. While reducing fuel loads in</p>	<p>DOF manages its state timber resources on a sustained yield principle. In the Mat-Su, the annual allowable cut is 1,400 acres per year. Each year of the FYSTS proposes a harvest schedule that is below that threshold.</p> <p>A site-specific silviculture prescription and reforestation plan will be included in the FLUP for each sale.</p>

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>certain areas can be a legitimate fire mitigation strategy, the scale of the Fish Creek Timber Block project—particularly with the construction of extensive new infrastructure such as roads and a bridge—far exceeds what is necessary for fire management. Moreover, the construction of new roads and increased human activity in the area could actually heighten the risk of wildfires, as more access often leads to increased recreational use and potential ignition sources. Thus, the fire suppression argument does not align with the expansive infrastructure proposals tied to these timber sales.</p> <p>Given the minimal financial return from timber sales, the substantial costs of building new infrastructure, and the project’s clear alignment with the controversial West Susitna Access Road, the proposed timber sales in the Fish Creek Timber Block do not appear to be in the best interest of the state or local communities. This project seems more like a backdoor attempt to advance road construction rather than a legitimate timber sale designed to support local industry. The Alaska Division of Forestry should reconsider these sales, prioritize sustainable forest management, and focus on projects that provide real economic and environmental benefits to Alaskans.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.</p>	
Long	<p><u>Public Comment on the Alaska Division of Forestry (DOF) 2024-2028 Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales for the Coastal Region’s Mat-Su Area (FYSTS)</u></p> <p>9/19/24</p> <p>The Public Process</p>	<p>The FYSTS is a scoping document, not a decision document, providing the general direction DOF intends to invest energy into over the next five years and to solicit input from the public and cooperating agencies.</p> <p>Alaska Mental Health Trust and UAA manage their timber separately from DOF.</p>

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>The FYSTS is a scoping document which is part of a state Best Interest Finding (BIF) process. But this scoping document seems to lead to a BIF process not for the whole Schedule. But it is for a BIF finding for individual sales only. The public finds it hard to monitor each individual sale process. Is there a public document that you will come out with that summarizes the scoping comments? Other state divisions in ADNR do that. That would seem to be a good idea. The scoping process sets the stage for a decision document. If a summary exists, please send to me.</p> <p>The FYSTS is the big picture document for the Mat Su state forestry designated/ forest land classified lands. But it does not include harvests proposed by the University of Alaska or the Alaska Mental Health Land Trust. We actually do need to know this to see an ecosystem/watershed wide picture.</p> <p>Page 5 of the FYSTS states: "DOF is beginning the process of developing a forest management plan for the forest classified lands in the Susitna Valley, with the goal of updating the guidelines with a plan that is based on current industry needs, market conditions and the latest science." For the near term, this schedule meets the Susitna Forest Guidelines (SFG)</p> <p>The Schedule's timber blocks are in phase 1 of the SFG. What are the DOF plans for phase 2 state forestry lands. These are the more remote lands that do not have road access. This is looking at the big picture as to the management of the Susitna Valley forests.</p> <p>Please keep me informed on the update of the SFG. The 1991 SFG resulted from the huge public outcry that occurred when DOF presented an aggressive logging plan for much of the state land in the Susitna Valley. The multi-year SFG process was created with multiple stakeholder meetings of agencies, businesses and NGOs. I participated in that process. It is a good planning document.</p> <p>Scoping Issue-Are any of the timber blocks' lands a potential for the Department of Natural Resources Program for the Carbon Sequestration credit program under AS 38.95.499 and 11 AAC</p>	<p>DOF will provide opportunity for public and agency involvement and input as the Susitna Forest Management Plan is developed. Susitna Forestry guidelines will be followed until a successor management plan is adopted.</p> <p>Forest land in the Mat-Su is being considered for carbon credit opportunities.</p> <p>Operators will utilize and market timber products based on wood condition and market demand.</p> <p>Beetle killed spruce are losing merchantability. This is a chance to capture the economic value while the opportunity exists.</p> <p>Fish Creek Management Plan is still in effect for State Land, totaling approximately 14,859 acres.</p> <p>The Little Su crossing method and means will be evaluated further and discussed in the BIF/FLUP documents for sales in this area.</p> <p>ADF&G will be consulted for wildlife habitat guidance.</p> <p>DOF will provide opportunity for public/agency input and comments during the review of BIF's/FLUP's.</p> <p>The proposed sales in the Fish Creek unit are covered in phase 1 of SFG. The four proposed sales in the Oil Well Road unit are in phase 2 of SFG. At this time, DOF does not additional plans for timber sales in phase 2 of SFG until access is established.</p>

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>78. This was legislatively approved. The state has identified the Mat-Su as one of three Carbon Offset Credit Portfolio Project Area. A 2022 ADNR study concluded that a Mat Su project of carbon offsets could earn net revenues of \$24.9 million over ten years and \$105.795 million over 40 years. A feasibility study is going forward now to be done by December 2024. You need to look at that study for the lands that will be considered. A good idea would be to put your timber sale decisions on hold.</p> <p>Is DOF offering these state lands based on DOF analysis of the timber market? Please explain the current timber market.</p> <p>Based on DOF experience with timber companies, I would like to know exactly how the thousands of acres of spruce bark beetle killed trees that are still standing will be dealt with by the loggers. I am a person who, with a partner, has harvested many, many fallen beetle kill trees on the stump and blowdowns. Some parts of the trunk may be good for firewood and lumber, but rarely if ever now the whole tree. This wood is getting old now. Almost 10 years old. Is it even good for wood chips or biomass? In the 1990s beetle killed spruce on the Kenai Peninsula, that wood eventually could not be used for chips due to moisture content. I believe that is the reason, perhaps an oversimplification.</p> <p>Fish Creek Harvest Block</p> <p>I oppose moving forward with all the Fish Creek Sales and the related infrastructure due to its negative impacts to the current uses of the area, the long-term socio-economic impacts, and environmental degradation.</p> <p>Are these sales part of the 19,942 acres of state land that made up the 43,300 acreages of the Fish Creek Management Plan? This was a joint Mat Su Borough (MSB) and State Plan. I participated in that process. The MSB repealed their part of the plan in October 2019 when it passed the MSB Natural Resource Management Unit Plan (NRMU). The borough Fish Creek Natural Resource Management Unit was one of 22 resource units in NRMU. I am assuming the state part of the original plan went defunct. Was the state part of the plan repealed?</p>	

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>The MSB and state administrations have been wanting to open-up the Fish Creek watershed since 1984. The August 1984 MSB/state plan was for agriculture, fish and wildlife, watershed, recreation and perhaps some incidental logging. Now both administrations want to open-up Fish Creek for timber and agricultural harvests, tourist recreation and subdivisions. It would be helpful if in your scoping you explained this background.</p> <p>Timber harvest and recreation are being touted as the reason behind the proposed ADOT West Susitna Road that would continue from the West Susitna Parkway. The DOF timber sales builds the momentum for this road. There is a direct connection between the West Su access proposal with ancillary roads and the five- year timber schedule for Fish Creek. And there is a definite connection to the longer AIDEA mining road being proposed to go to Whiskey Bravo airstrip.</p> <p>The Little Susitna River forms a substantial barrier for any overland access from the road system. Page 7 of the schedule says a bridge will need to be installed to cross the Little Susitna River approximately 1.8 miles west of the termination of West Susitna Parkway. Is this the same location for the ADOT STIP Road Project 34461 called Child Stage 1? The 34661 STIP amendment spends \$4million in 2024, \$4.1 million in 2025, \$100,000 in 2026 and \$50.010 million in 2027? Is this enough to get both the Little Su and Fish Creek bridges built with road improvements?</p> <p>The Fish Creek Sales are to start in 2025 with 420.2 acres. Will a bridge be up by then? If not, will there be a try for a temporary bridge and seasonal roads? It is questionable that the budget for this bridge will pencil out.</p> <p>This block of timber sales will be using the West Susitna Parkway for access. It will probably have to be improved. Do the residents of that area want that? The Big Lake Community Council has a lot of road, bike and foot path issues in their community. Traffic flow on Big Lake elementary</p>	

Commenter	Comment	Response
	school has no proper turn lanes, is not safe, and a mess to drive through at certain times. This is a scoping issue consideration.	
	Timber Harvest Methodology	
Long	<p>The February 2010 Susitna Matanuska Area Plan defines Forestry as “Land that is or has been forested and is suited for long-term forest management because of its physical, climatic, and vegetative conditions” It is the plan designation of Forestry or the land classification of Forest Land. (page A-3)</p> <p>Forest Management does not necessarily always need to mean commercial logging. We need to look beyond that concept of resource extraction to other uses that mean forest or forest management.</p> <p>Our Susitna forests are renewable resources of the public land that provide Ecosystem Services of our “Natural Capital” of forests and rivers. We need to use the precautionary principle in forest management. Natural capital assets have thresholds which are biophysical resilience. But if the stock of the asset is depleted below sustainability, then degradation occurs. Let us prevent that. The backbone of our southcentral economy is based on tourism, hunting, fishing, and recreation. For that to continue, we need healthy fish and wildlife populations and habitats, unpolluted waters and scenic vistas. Restoration is very long and difficult when it comes to ecosystems.</p> <p>Forest management must consider the value of an intact forest and natural undeveloped public lands in this time of climate change. Shifting weather patterns impact fish, wildlife, plant ranges and habitat. Intact natural lands that are NOT fragmented by roads, human development and infrastructure is more resilient to climactic changes. Natural forests and lands that are diverse complex systems form their own sheltering and buffering microclimates. This slows the rate of change and allow resident species time to adapt to climate changes. Resilient ecosystems can change and allow</p>	DOF manages forests resources for multiple uses and on a sustained yield principle. In the Mat-Su, the annual allowable cut is 1,400 acres per year, each year of the proposed FYSTS is well below that threshold. Previous FYSTS had similar proposed offerings in the Fish Creek Unit.

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>resident species the time to adapt to climate changes. Resilient ecosystems can regenerate better after disturbances, and resist and recover from pests, diseases, temperature changes and water availability.</p> <p>The MSB is growing rapidly. In response, the public does recognize the need for undeveloped and roadless forest lands for the purposes of open space, fish and wildlife habitat, watershed and wetland protection and residential quality of life. In the face of growth and the accompanying development and natural resource extraction proposals, this must be considered.</p> <p>The DOF needs to rethink the Fish Creek Harvest Block Plan.</p>	
	Water Quality/ Fisheries	
Long	<p>Lay Out of the Fish Creek Harvest Block Areas: There must be good on the ground reconnaissance for the boundaries near the Fish Creek. This needs to be done to discern the changes in the waterway from the current maps used. Six timber blocks are parallel to Fish Creek for a total of 2 to 3 miles on either side.</p> <p>In the east block boundary, FY 2026 the block of 244.9 acres and the block of 326.8 acres in FY 2027 run parallel and adjacent to Fish Creek. This is a total of 326.8 acres for a total of about 2 miles on the west side of Fish Creek. On east side of Fish Creek, 2028 are 3 blocks of 526 acres that are parallel and adjacent to the creek for about 3 miles. This closeness to the waterway concerns me regarding long term and cumulative impacts. Follow the SFG closely. Wetlands need to be protected because they form the headwaters into the area streams. As of now, the public recreational use is winter use. But with roads to access the timber blocks, ATV access will be created no matter how hard an agency tries to stop it. Access will be done by the public potentially year-round.</p> <p>Does DOF have any data for the Fish Creek waterway in terms of being affected by a changing climate? Scientific data has shown the</p>	<p>FRPA addresses waterbody/wetland setbacks and protections for water quality and fish habitat. Additionally, ADF&G will be consulted for their expertise and recommendations regarding habitat.</p> <p>The proposed harvest units in the FYSTS were generated based on available GIS data, including wetlands information. Field reconnaissance and layout will further refine appropriate setback and riparian zones, following FRPA.</p>

Commenter	Comment	Response
	<p>waters of the Deshka River are warming at a rate that is detrimental to fish habitat and survival. What is happening with Fish Creek? DOF should be responsible to find this out because of mitigation for your Schedule impacts. Cold water refugia for water habitat is important for species survival. Is there information or data on that for Fish Creek?</p> <p>According to page 92 of the MSB NRMU in the East-West Subunit of Fish Creek NRM Unit, most of the wetlands are included in the Su-Knik Wetland Mitigation Bank. These wetlands provide important hydrologic functions especially fish habitat. Are any lands in the Schedule in the wetland mitigation bank system or adjacent to them?</p>	
	Wildlife	
Long	Scoping Issue- Moose population: What are the potential effects on moose populations? Does the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have recommended management strategies for mitigation? Moose populations in Game Management Units 16A and 16 B have been depressed in recent years. These subunits have been the focus of Intensive Management (IM).	ADF&G will be consulted for wildlife habitat guidance.
	Cultural Resources	
	No comments for Cultural Resources.	
	General	
	No general comments.	

Management Intent of the DOF Timber Sale Program

The goals of the timber sale program are to make timber available for existing timber harvesting and processing businesses, and to create the kind of forest biodiversity that will provide additional future jobs and income while maintaining compatibility with other designated land uses. Harvesting is designed to promote forest health and diversity and to meet forest management goals that provide additional benefits, including diverse forest habitats and long-term supplies of many forest products. DOF develops FYSTS biennially and may write them annually if market and stand conditions warrant a change in management. Timber sales are offered in a range of volumes and contract periods to accommodate the demands of the forest industry, the public, and forest management goals. Sale offerings will be subject to access conditions, markets, the limits of the annual allowable cut, public comment, and DOF staffing and funding to design and administer timber sales.

The DOF will coordinate timber sales with timber sale offerings of other landowners when it will be in both the landowner's and State's best interest. Opportunities for cooperative timber sales will be identified, in part, through public and agency review of the FYSTS.

Mat-Su Area

The Mat-Su Area covers most of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Municipality of Anchorage and is bounded by Girdwood and Turnagain Arm on the south, the Alaska Range on the west, Denali National Park on the north, and the Talkeetna Mountains on the east, depicted in Appendix I.

Timber sales included in this Schedule are within 8 Timber Blocks (Harvest Zones). Refer to Appendix II for a Map of Mat-Su Region Harvest Blocks.

- | |
|--------------------------------|
| 1 PETERSVILLE |
| 2 OILWELL |
| 3 FISH CREEK (EAST & CENTRAL) |
| 4 WILLER-KASH |
| 5 RABIDEUX CREEK |
| 6 HOUSTON-ZERO LAKE |
| 7 SUNSET |
| 8 MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE |

Annual Allowable Cut (AAC)

The Division of Forestry is mandated to manage its timber harvest on a sustained yield basis. ‘Sustained Yield’ means the “achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of an annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the State land consistent with multiple use” (AS 38.04.910). ‘Sustained Yield’ is also mandated in the Constitution of the State of Alaska, Article 8, Section 4. To fulfill this mandate, the DOF uses annual allowable cut (AAC) calculations, which is the average amount of timber that may be cut from a forest to maintain a balance between net growth and harvest, while meeting the management intent for the land. AAC estimates the maximum amount of timber that can be harvested each year while maintaining sustainability of the timber. The DOF utilizes the AAC to develop the amount of timber proposed for sale in the FYSTS. For a variety of planning and logistical reasons, the DOF will typically designate a variety of proposed timber sale configurations; some amounting to more than the AAC for a given year. However, the acres cut will remain inside the AAC when averaged on a decadal basis (or the five-year basis as required by SFG). To this end, the DOF may write a FYSTS more often to accommodate changes in forest management timing and keep the public informed of its actions.

The annual allowable cut for the Mat-Su Area was established by the *Susitna Forestry Guidelines (SFG)*. The SFG further divides the Mat-Su Area into three phases: Phase I east of the Susitna River, Phase II west of the Susitna River, and Phase III west of the Kahiltna River. Each Phase has its own AAC calculation with all proposed activities during this schedule’s period directed towards Phase I. For this schedule, average cubic feet per acre was applied to existing data to arrive at an estimated AAC. The AAC will be updated as soon as new data is received.

Annual Allowable Cut

<u>Phase</u>	<u>Allowable Cut</u>
Phase I	1,400 acres/year

Estimated Proposed Area to be Sold Each Calendar year (2024-2028)

2024:	684	Acres
2025:	1,285	Acres
2026:	1,198	Acres
2027:	938	Acres
2028:	836	Acres
<i>Estimated Total:</i>	4,941	Acres

Timber Harvest Methodology

The Mat-Su Area will use harvest methods to encourage and enhance the establishment of seedlings produced by seeds from residual trees and the surrounding forest. Due to the extensive mortality of spruce caused by the recent spruce beetle outbreak, most of the silvicultural treatments will include removing dead trees and leaving live spruce less than a defined DBH. Live pole, sapling, and seedling-sized white spruce will be protected, to the fullest extent possible, to provide a stand of uneven age structure for the next rotation. Usually, natural regeneration provides adequate spruce reforestation. Methodologies will strive to protect next generation spruce seed sources. In most birch and aspen stands, the seed tree harvest silvicultural method will be employed. Natural seed regeneration and stump sprouting will provide regeneration in hardwood stands. Harvest areas using the seed tree methods will be mechanically scarified to create soil conditions conducive to the establishment of natural seedlings. In areas of high spruce stem counts, selective cutting of spruce may occur.

Transportation

Multiple use values will be considered when roads are located, designed, and developed, and will reflect the management intent and primary uses for the planning area. Proposed access routes and types of access for the first years of this schedule are shown on the attached maps. As management objectives are met for an area, roads may be put to bed, and access to the road will be restricted to off-highway vehicle traffic to reduce maintenance costs and minimize degradation of the road and surrounding area. Best Interest Findings for individual sales will fully discuss access types, locations, and management objectives based upon information gathered in the field.

State Land Use Plans

The strategic plan for the Mat-Su Area is to provide wood fiber for the local forest products industry in a manner that is compatible with the sustained yield of the renewable timber resource. The intent of the timber sale program is to support the local small independent sawmills, provide commercial and personal use firewood sales, and potentially supply wood fiber for a biofuels or wood chip market. A biofuel or wood chip market would enable the DOF to manage the many older, declining stands in the Mat-Su Valley, regenerate younger forests and improve forest health. All harvesting for this FYSTS is planned for Phase I (Eastside) Susitna Forest Guidelines (SFG). DOF is beginning the process of developing a forest management plan for the forest classified lands in the Susitna Valley, with the goal of updating the guidelines with a plan that is based on current industry needs, market conditions and the latest science. This FYSTS contains harvest units that meet SFG in the near term, and harvest units in later years that reflect an anticipated change in forest management guidelines.

The schedule also reflects the Division of Forestry's objective to offer timber sales to meet market demand, salvage dead timber, and reduce the wildfire hazard by harvesting spruce beetle killed trees. Sales are broken up into numerous units. Small to medium-size sales will be offered to meet current demand for sawlogs, house logs and fuel wood. Sales within the wildland-urban interface will be designed to reduce the risk of wildfire to the communities.

For maps and more information on the effects of the Spruce Beetle, visit the Division of Forestry's website: <http://forestry.alaska.gov/insects/surveys> for a current copy of the Alaska Forest Insect and Disease Survey.

The area plans may be found on the web at:
<http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/planning/areaplans/>.

The management plans and the *Susitna Forestry Guidelines* are on the web at:
<http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/planning/mgtplans/>.

Timber Sales by Year: Mat-Su Area

** Refer to Appendix III for a Map of each Harvest Block.

YEAR /TOTAL	TIMBER BLOCK (Harvest Zone)	AREA (Acres, estimated)
2024	PETERSVILLE	145.5
Estimated Total: 684.4 Acres	OILWELL	0
	FISH CREEK (EAST & CENTRAL)	0
	WILLER-KASH	0
	RABIDEUX CREEK	0
	HOUSTON-ZERO LAKE	350.2
	SUNSET	188.7
	MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE	0
2025	PETERSVILLE	169.3
Estimated Total: 1285.1 Acres	OILWELL	0
	FISH CREEK (EAST & CENTRAL)	420.2
	WILLER-KASH	166.1
	RABIDEUX CREEK	0
	HOUSTON-ZERO LAKE	306.9
	SUNSET	196.6
	MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE	26
2026	PETERSVILLE	111.6
Estimated Total: 1198.3 Acres	OILWELL	0
	FISH CREEK (EAST & CENTRAL)	536.9
	WILLER-KASH	159.9
	RABIDEUX CREEK	0
	HOUSTON-ZERO LAKE	182
	SUNSET	187.7
	MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE	20.2
2027	PETERSVILLE	131.7
Estimated Total: 937.5 Acres	OILWELL	130.3
	FISH CREEK (EAST & CENTRAL)	326.8
	WILLER-KASH	60.4
	RABIDEUX CREEK	0
	HOUSTON-ZERO LAKE	233.5
	SUNSET	0
	MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE	54.8
2028	PETERSVILLE	0
Estimated Total: 835.8 Acres	OILWELL	149.9
	FISH CREEK (EAST & CENTRAL)	526
	WILLER-KASH	0
	RABIDEUX CREEK	119.5
	HOUSTON-ZERO LAKE	0
	SUNSET	0
	MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE	40.4

Timber Sale Descriptions

Following are descriptions of potential timber sales, organized by tentatively planned year and location. Please note that while timber sales slated for 2024 and 2025 are discussed in this Five-Year Schedule narrative, maps depict all preliminarily planned timber sales from 2024 through 2028. If a sale listed in this Schedule is offered, but not purchased, and has reappeared in two consecutive FYSTS or in another FLUP with BIF, the sale may be re-offered.

2024 Timber Sales

Petersville Timber Block

This timber block is located ten miles west of the community of Trapper Creek, Alaska, south of Petersville Road. Six units, totaling 145.5 acres ranging in size from 4.2 to 45 acres, are planned for this area in 2024 and are located south of Petersville Road. These units may be sold as individual sales or grouped together and sold as larger sales. An old winter logging road on the south side of the Petersville Road will need to be reconditioned for approximately 1 mile and utilized for initial access into the northern units.

Houston/Sunset Timber Block

Seven harvest units are planned for sale, which are located at the base of the Talkeetna Mountains north of the Little Susitna River and will be accessed using either the East Fork of Zero Lake Road from the west, or from Sunset/Nightfall Road from the east. The units total 538.9 acres and will be designed to conform to the Susitna Forestry Guidelines as well as natural features such as rolling topography, timber type, and wetlands. These units may be sold as individual sales or grouped together and sold as larger sales.

2025 Timber Sales

Petersville Timber Block

This timber block, containing four units, is located ten miles west of the community of Trapper Creek, Alaska, and south of Petersville Road. These units range in size from 35 to 49 acres and total 169.3 acres. These units may be sold as individual sales or grouped together and sold as larger sales. An old winter logging road, reconditioned as part of the 2015 timber sale program, and an additional 0.5 miles of new winter road construction, will be needed for access.

Houston/Sunset Timber Block

Seven harvest units are planned for sale in 2025. These units are located at the base of the Talkeetna Mountains north of the Little Susitna River and will be accessed using either the east fork of Zero Lake Road from the west, or from Sunset/Nightfall Road from the east. The units total 503.5 acres and will be designed to conform to the Susitna Forestry Guidelines as well as natural features such as rolling topography, timber type, and wetlands. These units may be sold as individual sales or grouped together and sold as larger sales.

Willar-Kash Timber Block

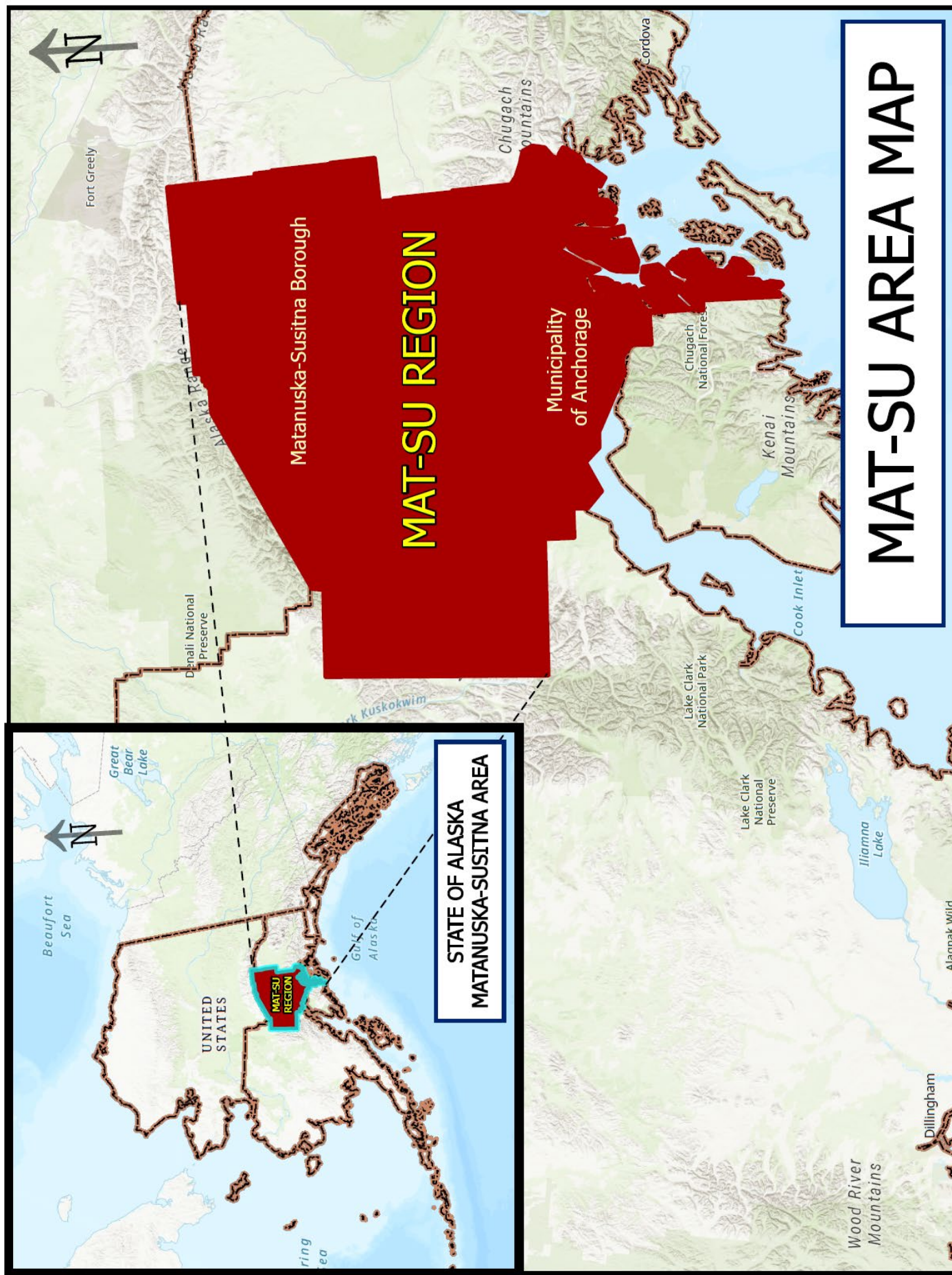
This timber block is located approximately seven miles east of the community of Willow at the foot of Willow Mountain and north of Willow Creek. 166.1 acres are projected for harvest in 4 units ranging in size from 32 to 49 acres. These units may be grouped together or sold separately.

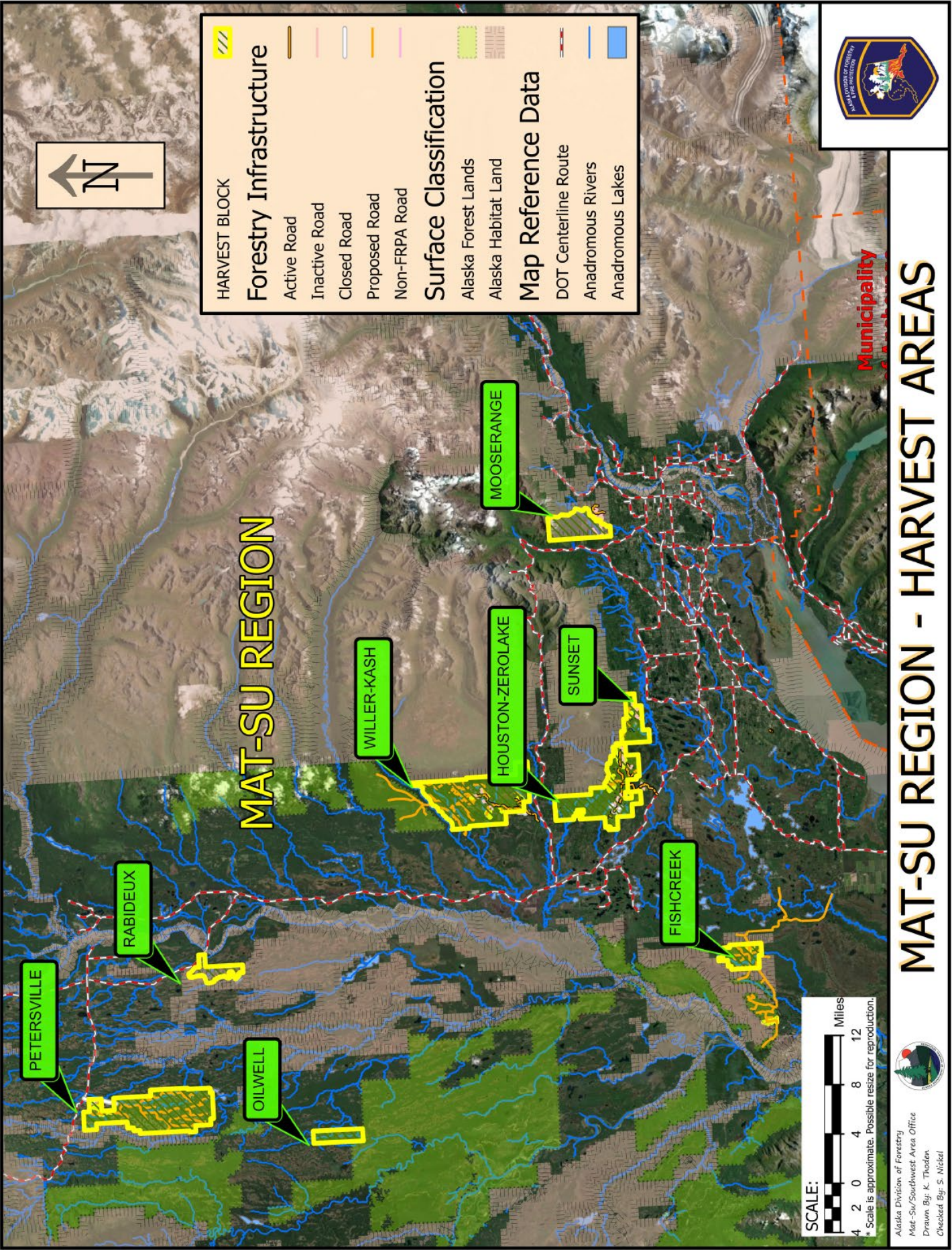
Matanuska Valley Moose Range

This timber block is located six miles northwest of Palmer, with access from Boyd Road. A single unit of 26 acres is planned for 2025. An old forestry road is the proposed primary access into the unit with approximately 1/10th of a mile to be improved. This sale will be designed in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to ensure that wildlife habitat needs are incorporated in the harvest prescription.

Fish Creek Timber Block

Located approximately 13 miles west of the community of Big Lake, this timber block is accessed via a winter road off the end of West Susitna Parkway. The road was cleared in 2014 and some regrowth should be anticipated within the alignment. A bridge will need to be installed to cross the Little Susitna River approximately 1.8 miles west of the termination of West Susitna Parkway. The cleared winter road continues toward the units, terminating on the east side of the sale area. Off the end of this road, a new primary road approximately 0.1 miles in length, needs to be constructed to access the first unit. Additional roads will need to be constructed to continue access into the sale area. Four units are planned, ranging in size from 40 to 141 acres, and combined are a total of 420.2 acres. These units may be sold as individual sales or grouped together and sold as larger sales.

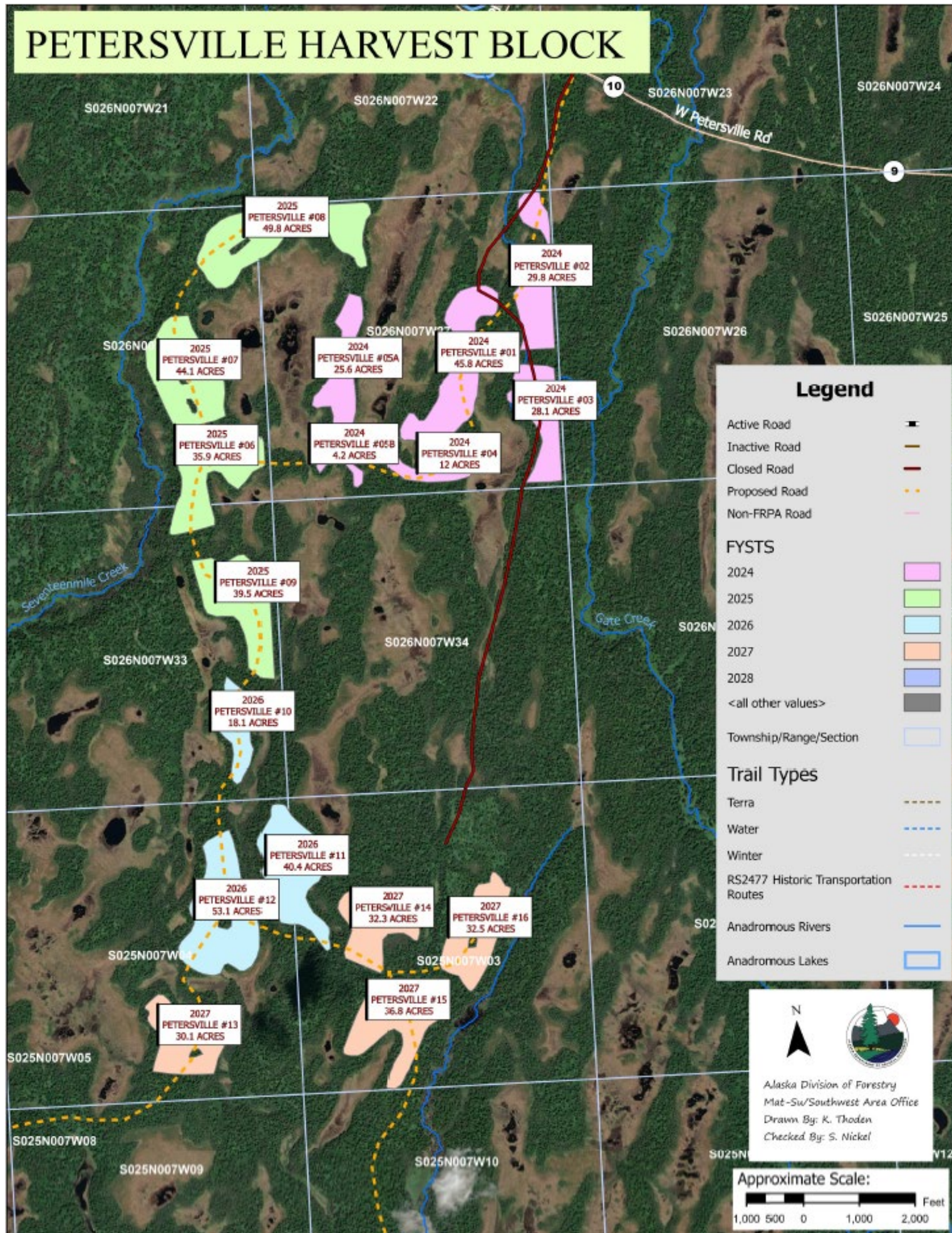




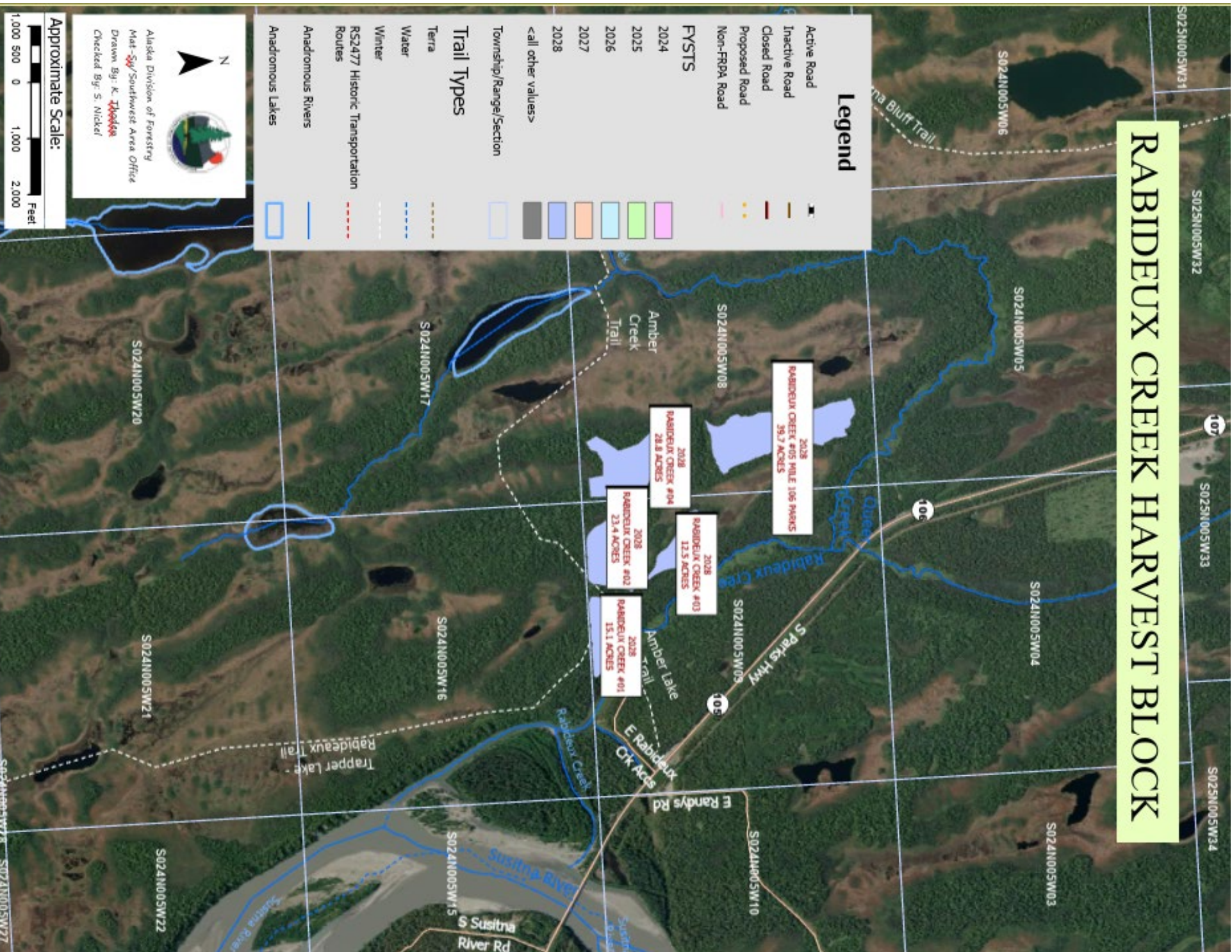
***** Appendix III: Harvest Block Maps (Plan Views)**

Timber Block	Page
PETERSVILLE	27
RABIDEUX CREEK	28
OILWELL	29
WILLER-KASH	30
HOUSTON-ZERO LAKE	31
SUNSET	32
MATANUSKA VALLEY MOOSE RANGE	33
FISH CREEK	34

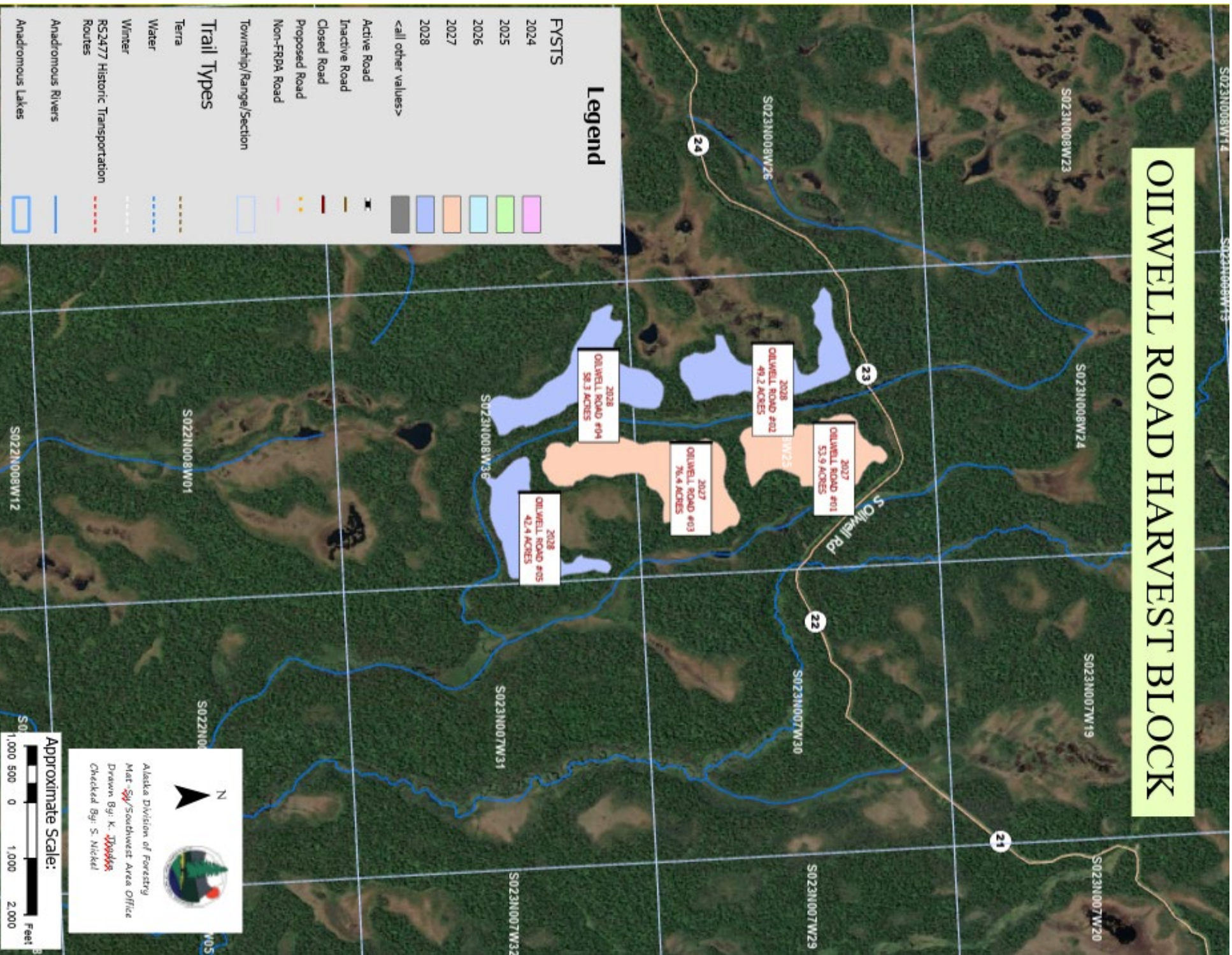
PETERSVILLE HARVEST BLOCK

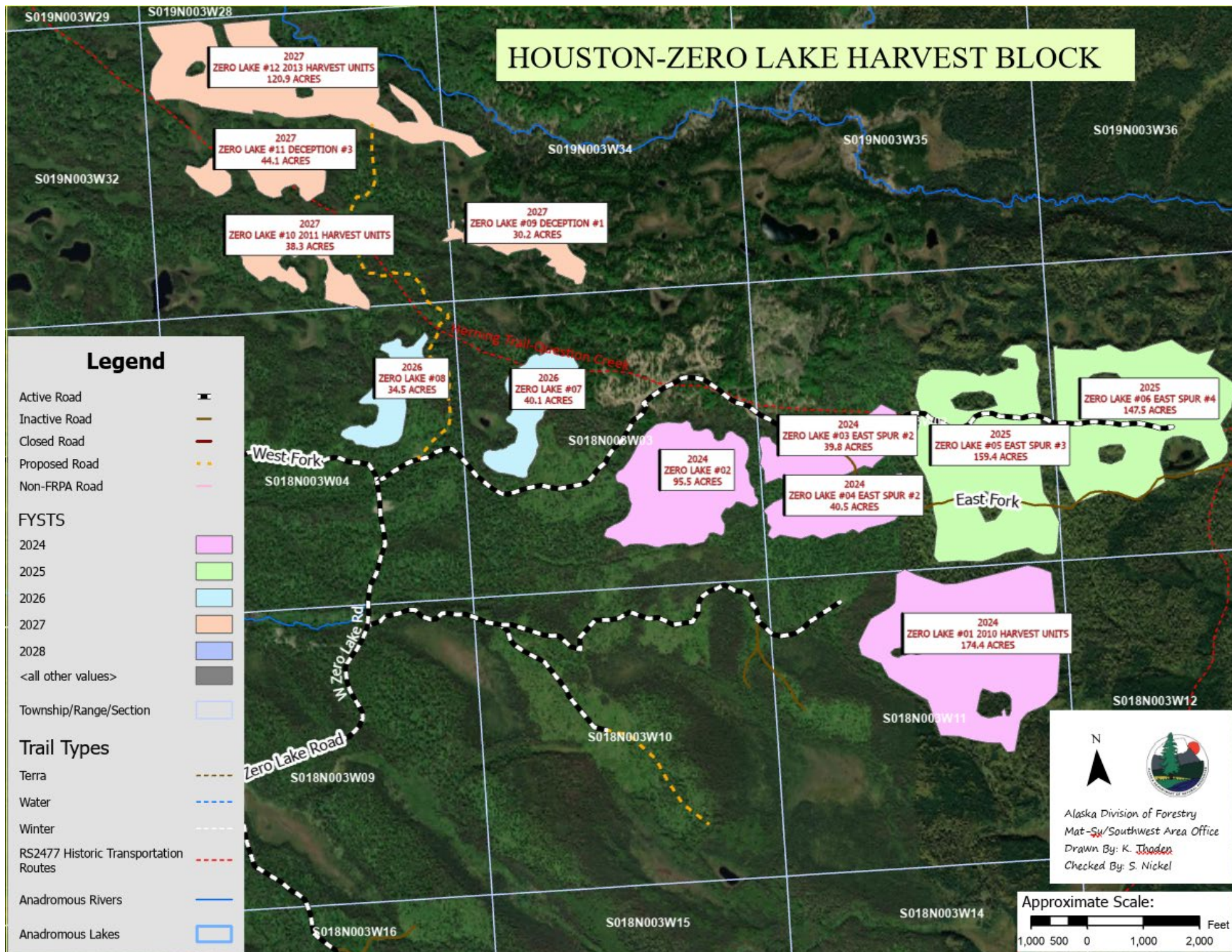


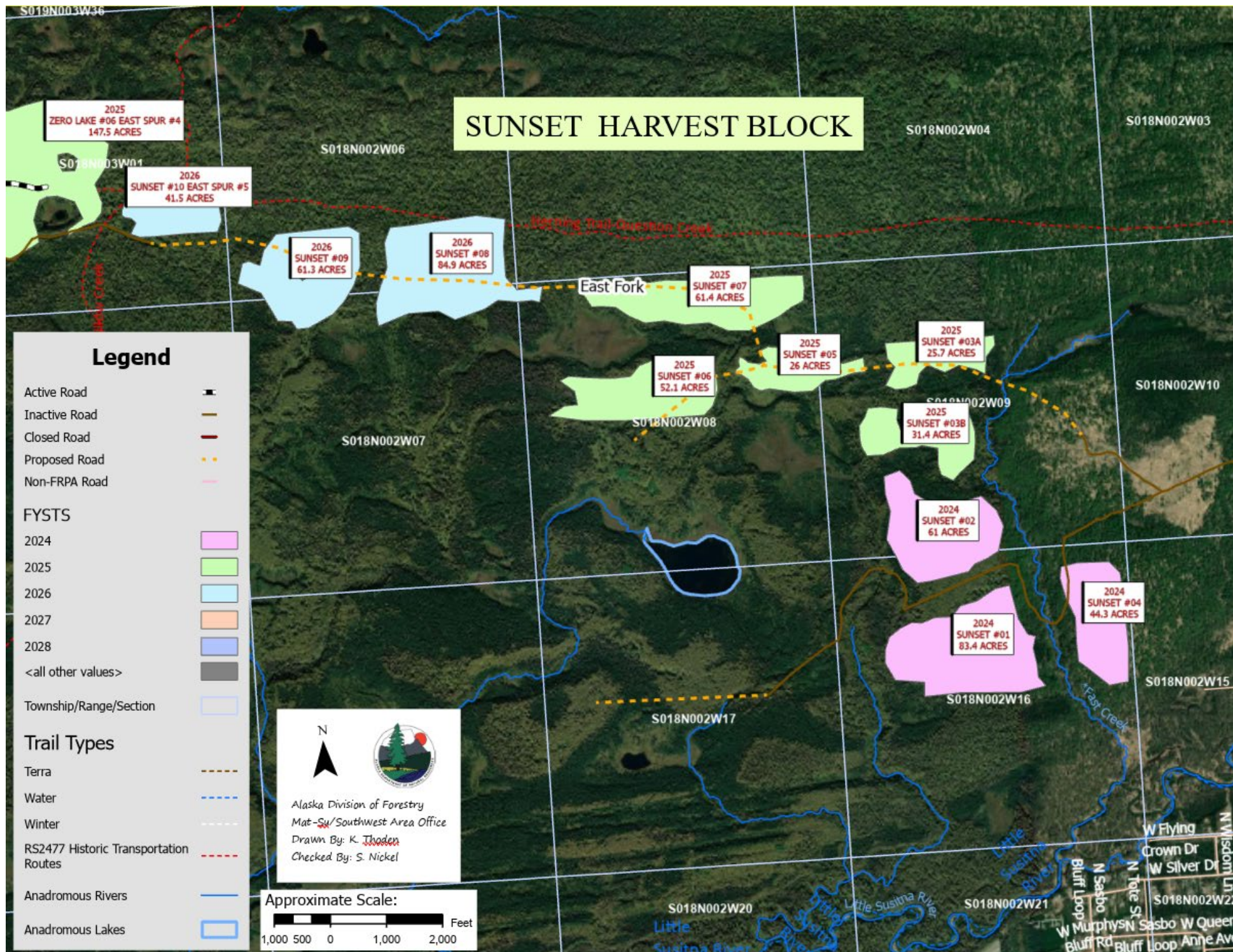
RABIDEUX CREEK HARVEST BLOCK

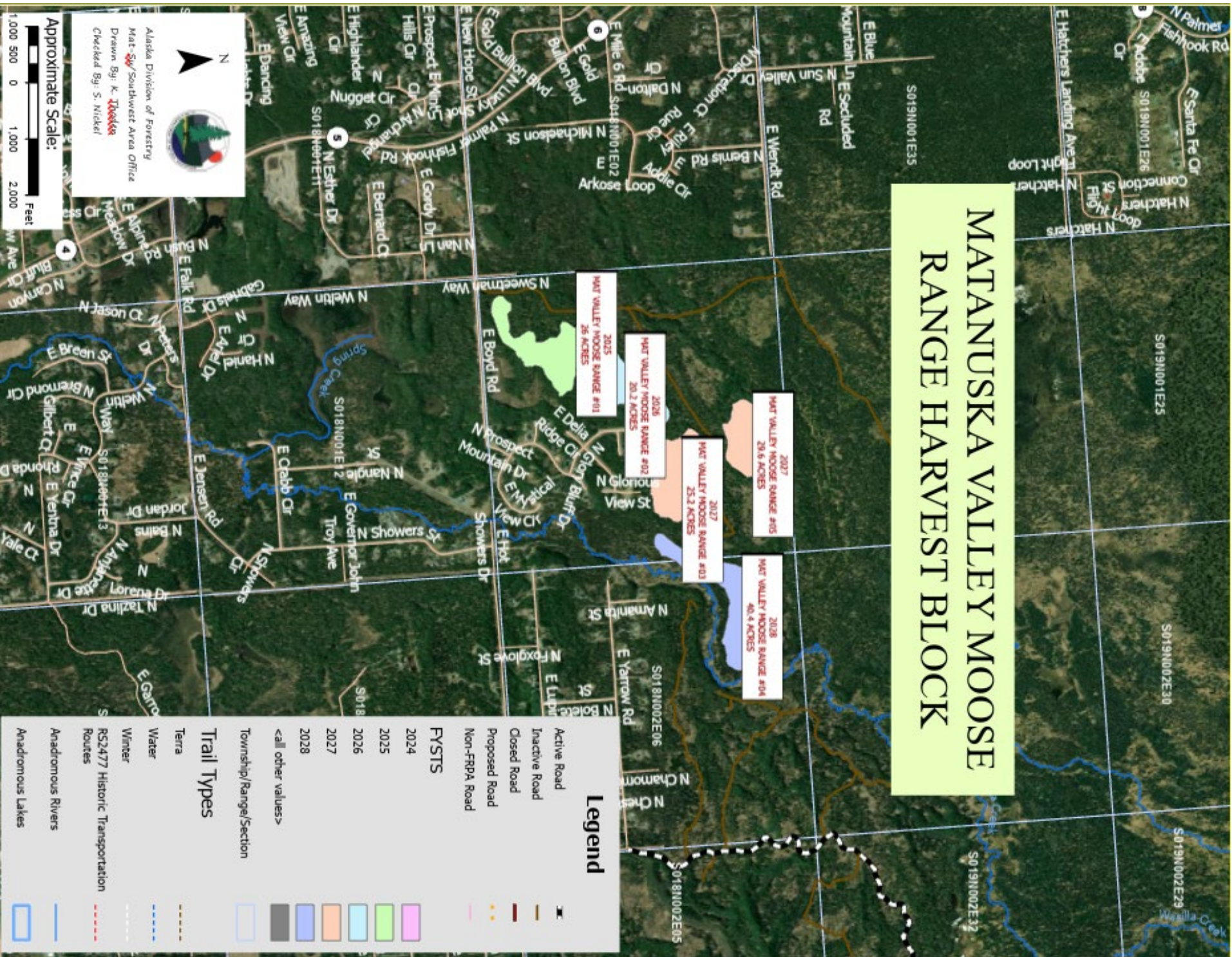


OILWELL ROAD HARVEST BLOCK











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