

wilderness suitability review

INTRODUCTION

Section 1317(a) of ANILCA directs that a review be made of the suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness of all lands within unit boundaries not so designated by the act. Section 1317(b) specifies that "the Secretary shall conduct his review, and the President shall advise the United States Senate and House of Representatives of his recommendations, in accordance with the provisions of sections 3(c) and (d) of the Wilderness Act." The review is to be completed by December 2, 1985. This suitability review meets the requirements of ANILCA.

Recommendations on whether to designate suitable areas as wilderness will be made following completion of the general management plan. An EIS will be prepared as part of the wilderness recommendation process. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on these recommendations, and public hearings will be held. Upon completion of the EIS and secretarial review, the president will make his recommendations to Congress.

All lands determined suitable for wilderness designation will be managed under the terms of ANILCA to maintain the wilderness character and values of the lands until designation recommendations have been proposed and Congress has acted on these proposals.

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY CRITERIA

Wilderness suitability criteria were developed to reflect the definition of wilderness contained in the Wilderness Act and the provisions of ANILCA specific to wilderness areas in Alaska. These criteria were applied to all nonwilderness lands in the park and preserve to determine their suitability for designation (table 5). These criteria relate to the physical character of the land and current land status. Factors such as appropriateness for management as wilderness and state and local concerns with wilderness management will be considered when recommendations are prepared after the general management plan has been approved. All future wilderness recommendations will recognize valid existing rights including rights-of-way under RS 2477.

Table 5: Wilderness Suitability Criteria

<u>Description of Land or Activity</u>		<u>Suitable for Wilderness</u>	<u>Not Suitable for Wilderness</u>	<u>Suitability Pending</u>
Land Status	Federal	x		
	Federal land under application or selection			x
	State and private land patented or tentatively approved		x	
	Private ownership of subsurface estate		x	
Mining	Areas with minor ground disturbances from past mining activities	x		
	Areas with major ground disturbances from past mining activities		x	
	Areas with current mining activities and ground disturbances		x	
Roads and ORV trails	Unimproved roads or ORV trails that are unused or little used by motor vehicles	x		
	Improved roads and ORV trails regularly used by motor vehicles		x	
Airstrips	Unimproved or minimally improved and maintained airstrips	x		
	Improved and maintained airstrips		x	
Cabins	Uninhabited structures; hunter, hiker, and patrol cabins	x		
	Cabins inhabited as a primary place of residence		x	
Size of Unit	Greater than 5,000 acres adjacent to existing wilderness, or of a manageable size	x		
	Less than 5,000 acres or of unmanageable size		x	

LANDS SUBJECT TO REVIEW

ANILCA, section 701, formally designated approximately 1,900,000 acres of Denali as wilderness. The area covered by this congressional designation comprises most of what was Mount McKinley National Park, with the exception of a buffer zone of 300 feet (90 meters) surrounding each development, a corridor extending 150 feet (45 meters) from either side of the centerline of the park road, existing borrow sources and waysides, and lands east of the railroad right-of-way. The designated wilderness area will be managed in accordance with the provisions of the Wilderness Act except for the extraordinary uses allowed by ANILCA because of the unique conditions in Alaska. For example, section 1110 of ANILCA allows the use of snowmachines, motorboats, and airplanes for traditional activities on lands and waters designated as wilderness. Specific closures to this type of use have been proposed for the road corridor and Wonder Lake. Section 1315 permits the continuation of existing public use cabins and the construction of a limited number of new public use cabins or shelters. Section 1316 allows the continued taking of wildlife where such use existed prior to ANILCA. However, since all hunting was already prohibited in the old Mount McKinley National Park, it will continue to be prohibited in the designated wilderness.

SUITABILITY DETERMINATION

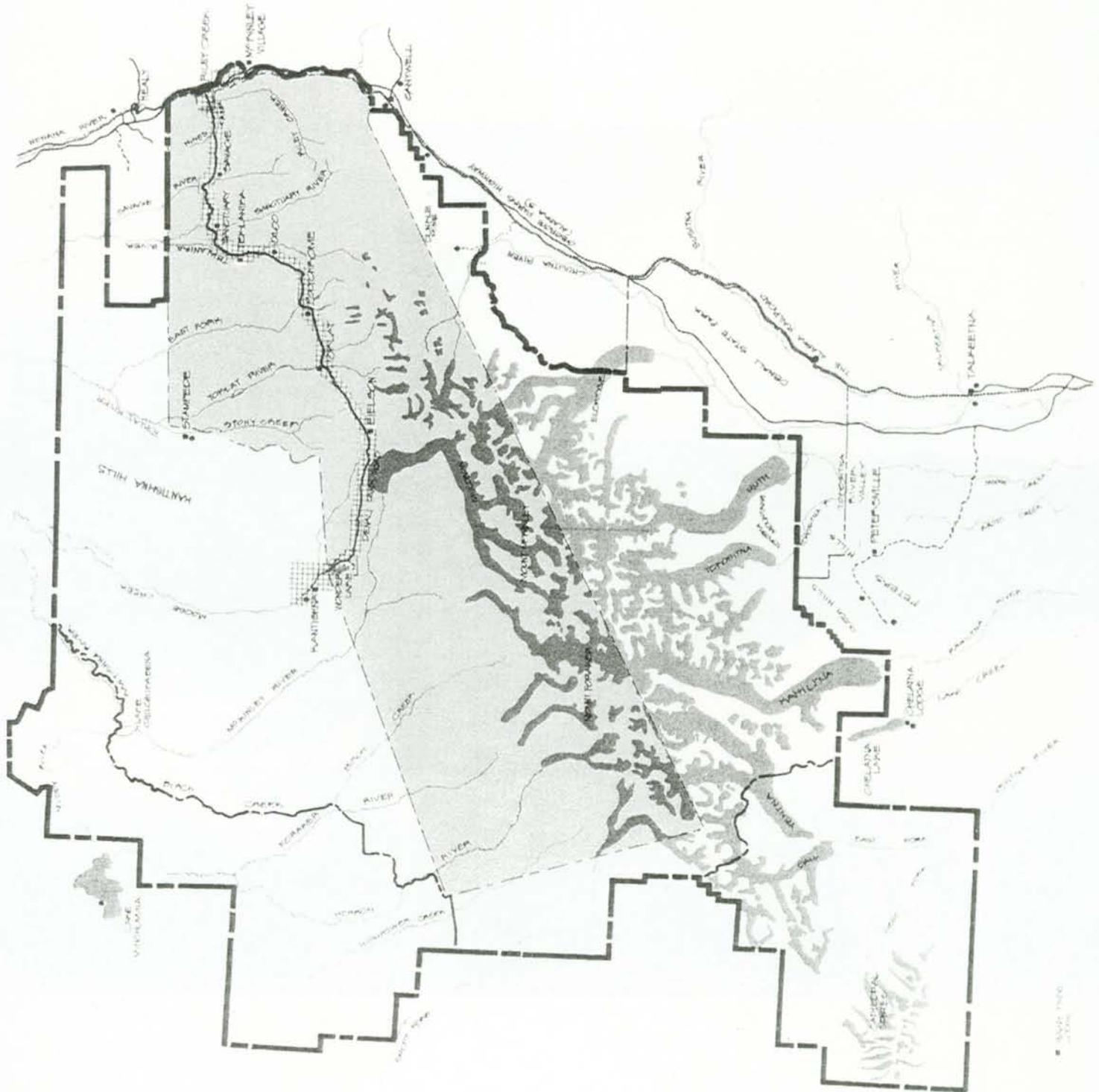
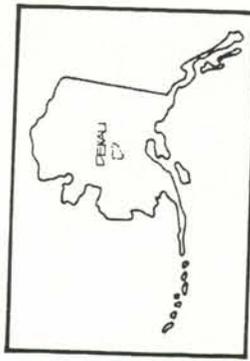
The areas determined to qualify for wilderness designation are shown on the Wilderness Suitability map. This map represents only a preliminary analysis, and a final recommendation could change certain boundaries.

The analysis accounted for such factors as lands needed to serve visitors now and in the future, the land status of those areas added by ANILCA, existing and potential mineral activities, lands needed for operation of the park and preserve, and the locations of improved and regularly used roads. Lands in other than full federal ownership are ineligible for wilderness designation. The park road corridor is ineligible because of the nature of the visitor use proposed for these areas. The Kantishna mining district is ineligible for wilderness designation because of the disturbance to the landscape by mining and the road system.

If additional lands are acquired by the federal government, as discussed in the "Land Protection Plan," they will be studied for wilderness suitability. Conversely, any lands deleted from federal ownership will no longer be eligible for wilderness designation.

The approximately 3.9 million acres determined suitable for wilderness designation combined with the areas already designated amount to approximately 95 percent of the park complex. Managing these lands according to the criteria of the Wilderness Act and ANILCA will provide additional protection to the Denali environment by precluding large-scale development and the attendant disturbance of wildlife and other resources. At the same time, formal designation of preserve lands will not prohibit or otherwise restrict sport hunting, fishing, trapping, or traditional subsistence activities. Nor will wilderness designation of the park additions affect traditional subsistence use in these areas.

Regardless of this suitability review or any subsequent National Park Service proposal, wilderness can be designated only by Congress, and any subsequent change in the status and management of designated areas can also be accomplished only by Congress. In the interim those lands considered suitable for designation as wilderness will be managed in accordance with the provisions of the Wilderness Act and the special provisions for Alaska conveyed by ANILCA.



-  SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION
-  UNSUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS DESIGNATION
-  DESIGNATED WILDERNESS
-  DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE BOUNDARY
-  AIRSTRIP
-  GLACIER



WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

Denali National Park and Preserve
 United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

Map No. 1000
 Oct 1986