

Expanded Bullets on area plan public processes related to the new Susitna State Forest [1/30/12]

- 1985 Susitna Area Plan identified Forestry designated lands for consideration as legislatively designated areas (LDAs).
- State lands under consideration for a Susitna State Forest are addressed by two area plans: the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan (2011), and the Southeast Susitna Area Plan (2008). These two plans supersede the 1985 Susitna Area Plan.
- The Commissioner of DNR adopted the Southeast Susitna Area Plan (SSAP) on April 28, 2008, following a year-long planning process that included two rounds of public meetings. This plan applies to about 255,000 acres of state land formerly managed by the 1982 Willow Sub-Basin Area Plan and the original 1985 Susitna Area Plan. The SSAP designates 74,855 acres of state land for Forestry. The Division of Forestry actively manages these lands in the Houston and Kashwitna areas for timber production.

A recurring theme during the following processes was the idea of a Susitna State Forest.

- In 2009, DOF engaged in a revision process for the 1991 Susitna Forestry Guidelines (SFG). A citizens' advisory committee and an inter-agency planning team were established and several meetings held. In addition, the SFG process held joint public scoping meetings with the DMLW-led SMAP planning process.
- In 2009, DOF's planner mentioned the Susitna State Forest during his presentation to the Mat-Su Salmon Science and Conservation Symposium in Wasilla.
- During annual (2008-2011) Winter Trails User's meetings between timber operators and Willow area dog mushers, the concept of a state forest in the Susitna was discussed, with broad support for the idea expressed by those attending. Dog mushers enjoy the use of state lands and the associated improved access from logging activities.
- Following a two year planning process, the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) adopted the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan (SMAP) on August 11, 2011, with a date of issuance of August 17th. The SMAP applies to nine million acres of state land formerly managed under the Susitna Area Plan. About 700,000 acres of these state lands are classified Forestry. This area plan recommends establishment of a legislatively designated State Forest for those lands designated or co-designated Forestry in the SMAP and the 2008 Southeast Susitna Area Plan. Public input received at a series of community meetings held throughout the planning area and during a three and a half month public review (February – May 2011) of the draft SMAP supported the concept of a Susitna State Forest.
- DOF coordinated the public scoping efforts for the SFG with DMLW's area plan scoping and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's land use planning. During April of 2009, six joint open houses were held in communities in the Mat-Su area, and one in Anchorage. An

open house planned for Skwentna in late March was cancelled due to an ash fall in the area from the volcanic eruption of Mt. Redoubt. Approximately 80 people attended the public meetings, and DOF received 22 written scoping comments through the end of July. Many of the written comments supported maintaining or strengthening the Susitna Forestry Guidelines as they are presently written, and keeping its original purpose statement intact. The public comments were generally supportive of forestry. The issues most frequently mentioned were regeneration, timber road access after harvesting, harvest design, riparian standards, and herbicides. Other public outreach efforts that occurred during this period included briefings with the Alaska Outdoor Council, Friends of the Mat-Su, and WACO Trail's Committee.

- The Mat-Su Area Forester reported on the interest in the Susitna State Forest to the Board of Forestry during their August 30-31, 2011 meeting.

*Provided by Division of Forestry.