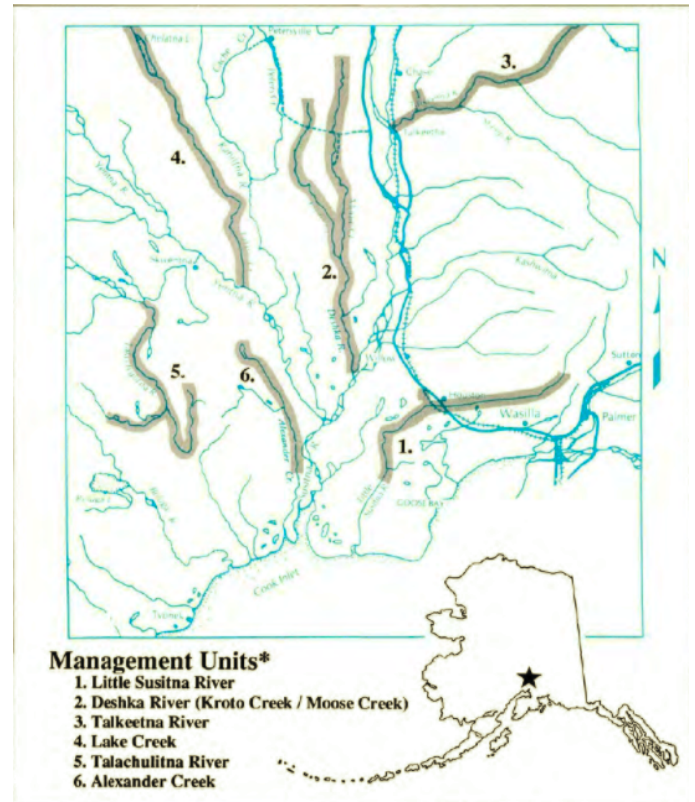


## Recreation River Management Plan: History, Importance, and Future

In 1988, the Alaska State Legislature passed the Recreation Rivers Act and designated six rivers in the Susitna River Basin as Recreation Rivers including the Little Susitna, Deshka, Talkeetna River, Lake Creek, Talachulitna, and Alexander Creek. The Recreation Rivers designation provides important protections and management directives to maintain the quality and Recreation values of these high-use waterways. To ensure the continued stewardship of the Recreation Rivers, the Act established a Recreation Rivers Advisory Board and directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to work with the board, interested stakeholders and the public to create a management plan. The first plan was developed in 1991 and has not been revised. Recently, DNR appointed a new Advisory Board in anticipation of revising the management plan. The revision of the Recreation Rivers Management Plan will dictate the fate of these incredible rivers and shape the future of the greater Susitna Watershed.



### *What does the 1991 Recreation Rivers designation and Management Plan do?*

The Recreation Rivers designation allows for better stewardship of riparian areas, including maximizing the amount of natural shoreline vegetation, preserving habitat, minimizing the degradation of upland habitat adjacent to rivers and lakes, and preserving water quality and quantity. These measures are all vital to preserving healthy habitats for salmon and other fish and wildlife. In addition, the plan manages public access, Recreation and commercial use, and works to minimize conflicts between user groups. Each designated river has a mile-wide publicly-owned river corridor managed by the state as directed by the management plan.

## *Timeline*

Year	Action	Management Implications
1988	Rec. Rivers Act	Established mile wide river corridors along the six rivers. Keeps the rivers in public ownership and establishes an advisory board. Required DNR to make a management plan. Requires the public to be involved in plan development and plan amendment.
1991	Susitna Basin Rec Rivers Mngm't Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish guidelines and restrictions;</li><li>• Protect, maintain, or enhance the fish and wildlife habitat and the free-flowing nature of the river;</li><li>• Identify special Recreation values and manage the level of intensity and types of Recreation uses;</li><li>• Designate management guidelines for development activities as well as designate commercial Recreation activities or development, including Recreation services;</li><li>• Provide for necessary public services, such as transportation and utility corridors, crossing or fording corridors, public safety, and law enforcement; allow reasonable access to public land and private inholdings, including municipal land that is offered for sale or lease, and to land beyond or adjacent to the Recreation river and the Recreation river corridor;</li><li>• Establish criteria and timelines to review future proposed use.</li></ul>
2021	Senate Bill 97	Introduced by Governor Dunleavy to repeal the Recreation Rivers Act and remove protections for the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers (still pending)
2021	Rec Rivers Advisory Board reassembled	In anticipation of a Recreation Rivers Management Plan revision, DNR named 13 members of the public and state agencies to the new board.

### *What is the role of the Recreation River Advisory Board?*

In November 2021 the Governor appointed 13 members representing commercial fishing; sport fishing; sport hunting; conservation; subsistence; forest products; mining; powerboat users; Recreation-oriented commercial users; other Recreation users; private property owners within the Recreation river corridor; the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission from the membership of the planning commission; and the mayor of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough or the designee of the mayor. The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources consults with the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board in preparing, adopting, and revising the Recreation river management plan and regulations affecting use and management of the Recreation rivers. While no revision to the management plan has been publicly announced as of November 2021, it is anticipated this will occur very soon. **The Advisory Board will have the power to make recommendations and therefore are in a powerful position to shape the future of the six rivers.**

### *The West Susitna Access Road and threat to the Recreation Rivers.*

The proposed West Susitna Industrial Access Road will bisect the heart of the Susitna watershed and cut through the Recreation Rivers route to the Yentna mining district in the Alaska Range. The road will provide access to mining claims staked by Canadian and Australian junior mining companies. The road poses an existential threat to fish and wildlife populations, fishing and hunting opportunities, and the Recreation values that the Recreation Rivers were designated to protect. The access road, promoted by the Alaska Industrial Development Export Authority (AIDEA), received \$8.5 million of appropriated funds from the State Legislature last year to advance pre-development work on the West Susitna Access Road in preparation to file for federal permits.

### *What is next for the Recreation Rivers Management Plan revision process?*

The function of the Recreation Rivers Advisory Board is to prepare, adopt, and revise the Recreation Rivers Management Plan. While no revision to the management plan has been publicly announced as of December 2021, it is anticipated it will occur very soon. When the official process begins the Advisory Board will play an important role in charting the future for the Recreation Rivers and the broader Susitna River Watershed.

### *For more information:*

- ❖ [November 2021 Recreation Rivers Advisory Board](https://gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions/roster/?board=123&fbclid=IwAR1zT0qXkhdQTf1xafsgtpg9XydwCksW9_rmYUvp9qdfjeHbL5Qa1quZwJ8)

[https://gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions/roster/?board=123&fbclid=IwAR1zT0qXkhdQTf1xafsgtpg9XydwCksW9\\_rmYUvp9qdfjeHbL5Qa1quZwJ8](https://gov.alaska.gov/services/boards-and-commissions/roster/?board=123&fbclid=IwAR1zT0qXkhdQTf1xafsgtpg9XydwCksW9_rmYUvp9qdfjeHbL5Qa1quZwJ8)

- ❖ [1999 Recreation Rivers Management Plan](http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/mgtplans/susitna/pdf/Susitna_Basin_Recreation_Rivers_Management_Plan.pdf)

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/mgtplans/susitna/pdf/Susitna\\_Basin\\_Recreation\\_Rivers\\_Management\\_Plan.pdf](http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/mgtplans/susitna/pdf/Susitna_Basin_Recreation_Rivers_Management_Plan.pdf)