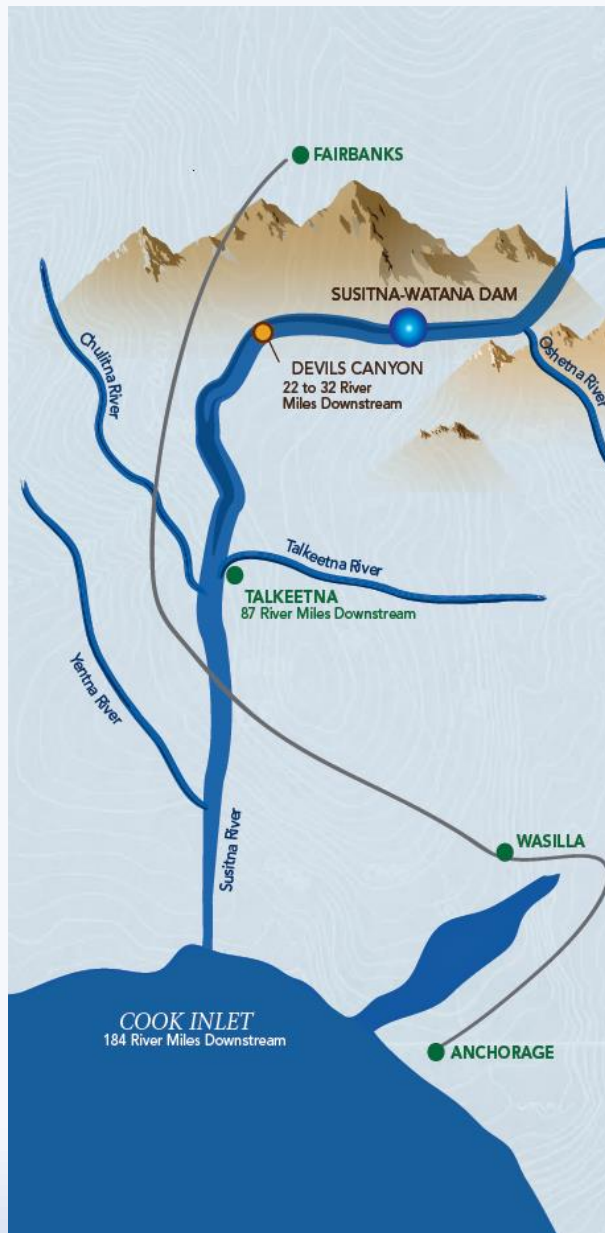


# Initial Study Report Meeting

## *Study 12.5 Recreation Resources Study*

*March 30, 2016*

Prepared by URS and  
McDowell Group



# Study 12.5 Status

## ISR Documents (ISR Part D Overview):

- Initial Study Report: Parts A, B, and C (June 3, 2014)
- 2014 Study Implementation Report (SIR) (November 4, 2015)

## Status:

- Assessed/presented information from existing plans (Complete)
- Identified and classified trails, routes, 17(b) easements, and RS2477 trails within Recreation Use Study Area (Complete)
- Identified and described special resource use areas. (NRRS is ongoing)
- Reviewed secondary data sources; analyzed ADF&G wildlife harvest reports and sport fishing survey data (2004-12) (Complete)
- Mapped public recreation facilities, incorporate into carrying capacity assessment (Ongoing)
- Collected visitor, telephone, and mailing survey data (Complete)
- Analyzed recreational use survey data and modeled demand (Complete)

## *Study 12.5 Objectives*

- Identify and document recreation resources and facilities that support commercial and non-commercial recreation in the Project area
- Identify the types and levels of current recreational uses and future reasonably foreseeable future uses based on surveys and interviews, consultation with licensing participants, regional and statewide plans, and other data
- Evaluate the potential impacts of Project construction and operation on recreation resources, needs, and uses in the Project area
- Develop data to inform AEA's future development of a Recreation Management Plan for the Project

## *Study 12.5 Components*

- A review of existing management plans relevant to recreation resources
- Inventory of trails and rights of way
- Mapping of trails with a project nexus at a 1:24,000 scale
- Description of recreation use areas using a National Resource Recreation Setting (NRRS) analysis
- Inventory of facilities and dispersed recreation sites, which will be incorporated into a carrying capacity assessment
- Collection of recreation user data through secondary review, executive interviews, and intercept, on-line, mail and telephone survey research to assess demand for consumptive and non-consumptive recreation uses

## Study 12.5 Variances

- Added the Denali East Option road and transmission corridor to the study area. Includes an expansion of the Recreation Effects Analysis Area by including a five mile buffer on proposed Denali East Option and on new trails identified 2013 found to have a nexus to the Project.
- State-issued registration (Tier I) and Tier II subsistence permits have been included in the analysis of hunting and trapping effort (RSP Section 12.5.4)
- Adjustments were made to intercept survey and observational tally locations (RSP Section 12.5.4)
- Regional household mail survey was phased in two mailings instead of one (RSP Section 12.5.4)

# *Study 12.5 Summary of Results*

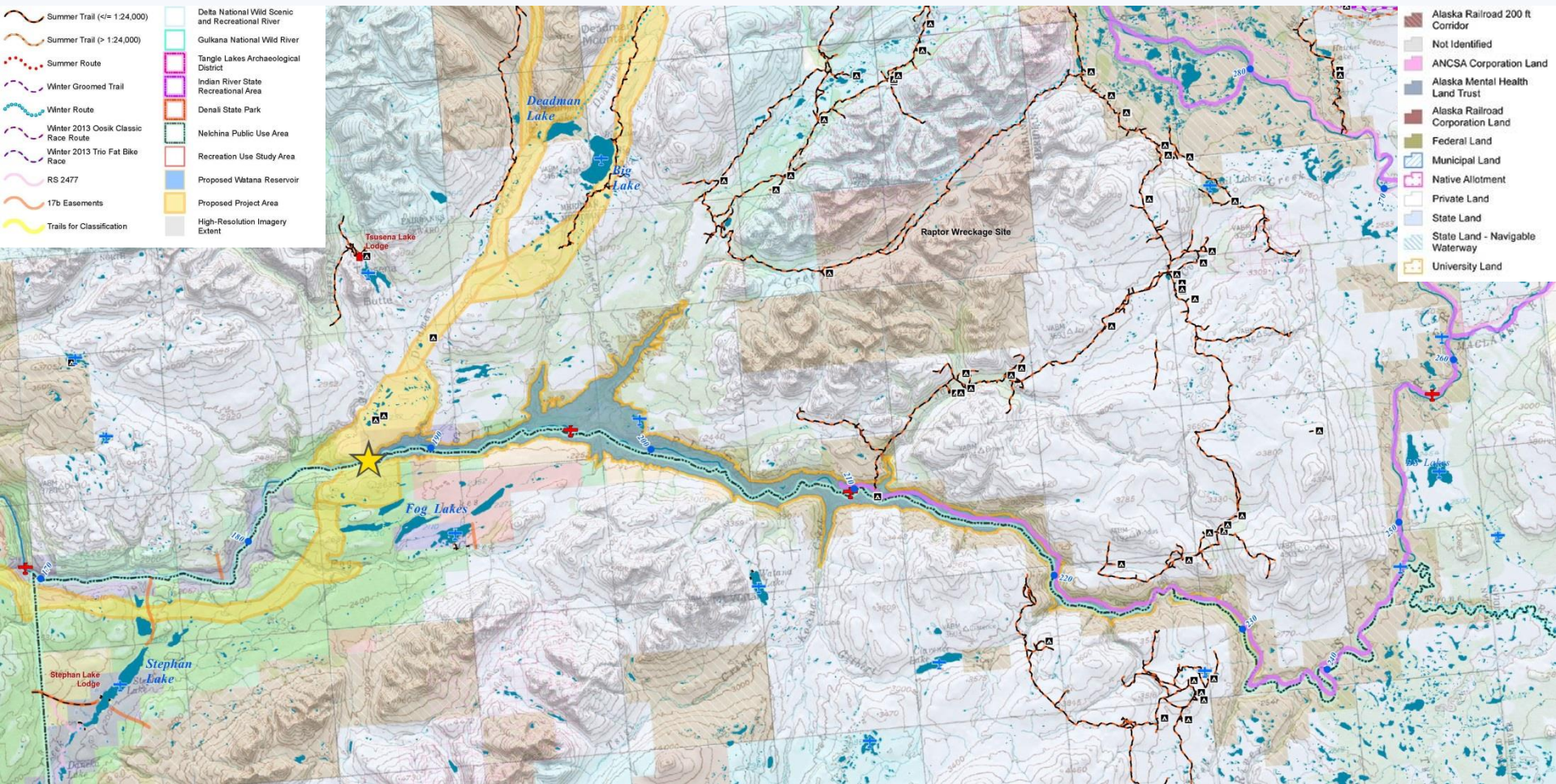
## **Regional Recreation Analysis**

- Assessed and presented recreation related information from plans outlined in Study Plan as well as other relevant plans identified in 2013 (Appendix A of ISR)

## **Trails**

- Trail resources identified in Section 12.5.2 of the ISR, as well as trail resources from the Denali East Option road and transmission corridor
- Trails were mapped at scale >1:24,000
- Winter and summer trail classification for trails with a nexus to the Project

# Study 12.5 Summary of Results - Trails Mapping



# *Study 12.5 Summary of Results*

## **Recreation Use Areas**

- Identified and described special resource use designations

## **Recreation Supply, Demand, and Use**

- Reviewed secondary data sources (BLM, ADF&G, ADNR, AKRR)
- Analyzed ADF&G wildlife harvest reports (2004-13)
- Analyzed ADF&G sport fishing survey database (2004-13)

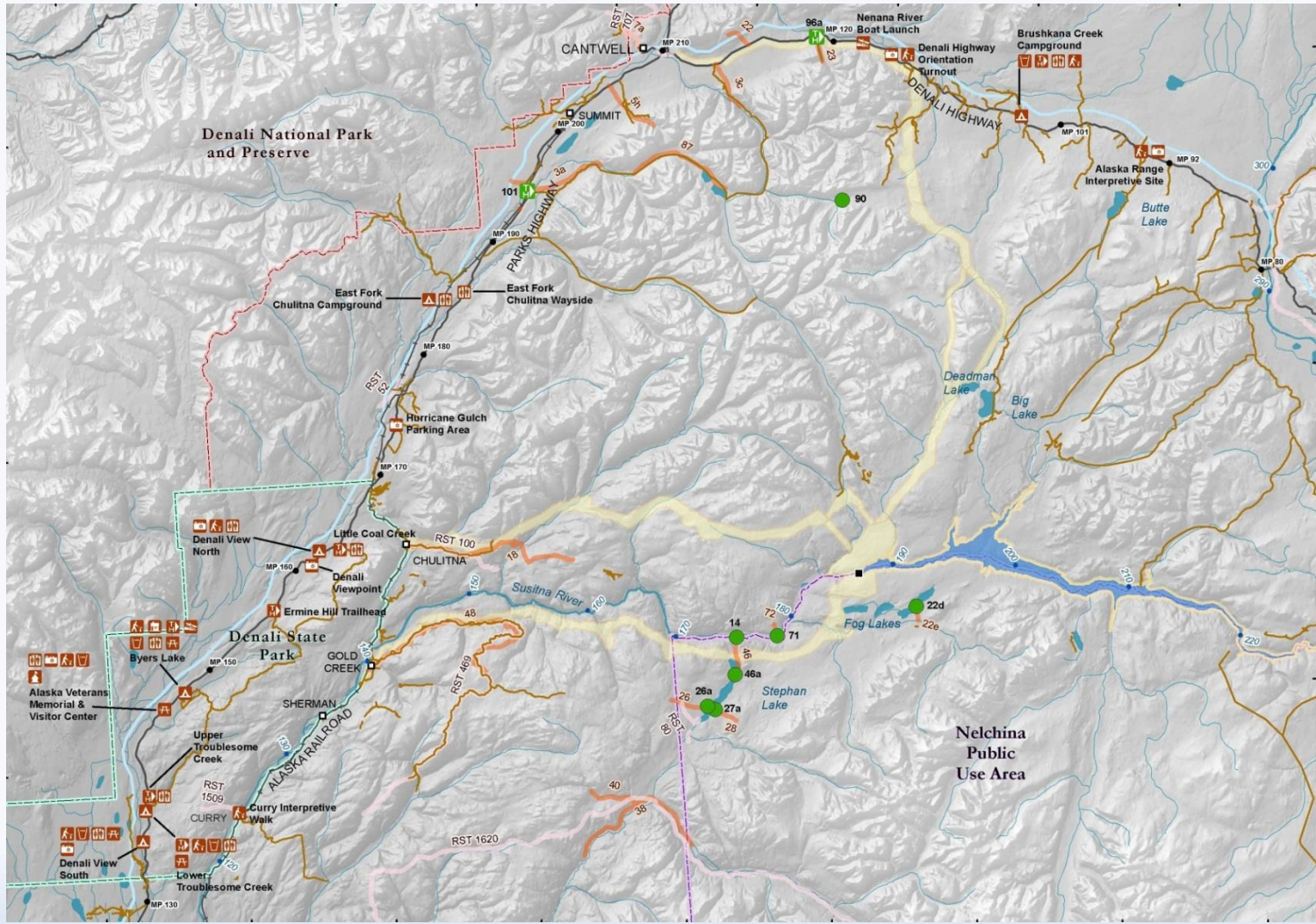


# *Study 12.5 Summary of Results*

## **Recreation Facilities**

- Mapped and inventoried developed public recreation facilities throughout Recreation Use Study Area
- Mapped and inventoried dispersed recreation use areas along Denali Highway
- Reviewed published information and agency consultation
- Field assessment: signage, fees, condition, and capacity

# Study 12.5 Summary of Results - Recreation Facilities – W. Denali Hwy



**ALASKA ENERGY AUTHORITY**

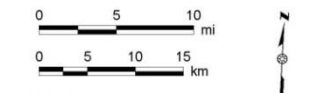
**Legend**

- Project River Miles
- Road Milepost
- Site Easement
- Trailhead Easement
- Boat Launch
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- Public Use Cabins
- Drinking Water
- Scenic Viewpoint
- Trailhead
- Restrooms
- Visitor Center
- Interpretive Displays
- Summer Trails
- RS 2477
- 17b Easements
- Proposed Watana Dam Site
- Proposed Watana Reservoir
- Proposed Project Area
- Denali State Park
- Denali National Park & Preserve
- Nelchina Public Use Area
- Tangle Lakes Archaeological District
- Delta National Wild Scenic and Recreational River
- Gulkana National Wild River
- Facilities Study Area

Disclaimer: Some map attributes may be located on private lands; this study report is not intended to suggest that the recreating public is authorized to access these lands for recreation purposes.

**West Denali Highway**

**Overview Map**



Data Sources: See Map References  
 Projection: Alaska Albers NAD 1983  
 Date Created: 12/17/2013  
 Map Author: URS Alaska, Courtney Smith  
 File: Facilities\_ISR.mxd

# Study 12.5 Summary of Results

## Existing Survey Data Collection

- SCORP, BLM Visitor Surveys, Benefits-Based Management Study (Denali Highway), Alaska Resident Statistics Program (ARSP), Alaska Visitor Statistics Program VI

## New Survey Research

- Incidental Observational Survey
- Recreational User Intercept Survey
  - Fielding – March 2013-March 2014
  - 1,118 completed surveys (including 1,012 in-person and 106 online completions)

# Study 12.5 Summary of Results

## New Survey Research (cont'd)

- Regional Household Recreation Mail Survey (2 phases)
  - 1,704 completed surveys (June 2013 mailing)
  - 2,278 completed surveys (October 2013 mailing)
  - 3,982 total surveys completed (27.4% response)
  - 3,555 total weighted sample
- Nonresponse Bias Telephone Survey (2 fieldings after each mail survey phase, 818 completed surveys)

# *Study 12.5 Summary of Results Since ISR*

## **Survey Analysis and Results**

- Recreational User Intercept Survey
- Regional Household Recreation Mail Survey
- Nonresponse Bias Telephone Survey
- Recreation Intercept Observation Tally
  - (283 tally sites; 2,943 tallies conducted)

# *Study 12.5 Summary of Results Since ISR*

## **Recreation Demand Assessment**

- Alaska Resident Recreation Demand Projections  
(10-year increments — 2014-2064)
- Non-Alaska Resident Recreation Demand Projections  
(10-year increments — 2014-2064)
- Total Users and User-Days

## Study 12.5 Summary of Results Since ISR

### Total Annual Study Area Users, All Alaska Residents and Non-Alaska Residents Combined, Mid-, Low-, and High Point Estimates

Note. Number of users rounded to the nearest hundred.

Region of Residence	Total Annual Users in the Study Area, Mid-Point Estimate	Total Annual Users in the Study Area, Low-Point Estimate	Total Annual Users in the Study Area, High-Point Estimate
Regional Alaska Residents	120,100	116,500	123,700
Other Alaska Residents	9,800	9,500	10,100
Non-Alaska Residents	260,000	234,000	286,000
Total	389,900	360,000	419,800

## Study 12.5 Summary of Results Since ISR

### Total Annual Unduplicated User-days (Whole or Part), All Alaska Residents and Non-Alaska Residents Combined, Mid-, Low-, and High-Point Estimates

Note. Number of user-days rounded to the nearest hundred.

Region of Residence	Total Annual User-Days in the Study Area, Mid-Point Estimate	Total Annual User-Days in the Study Area, Low-Point Estimate	Total Annual User-Days in the Study Area, High-Point Estimate
Regional Alaska Residents	1,721,400	1,596,600	1,846,100
Other Alaska Residents	68,800	63,500	74,400
Non-Alaska Residents	1,016,700	864,200	1,169,200
Total	2,806,900	2,524,300	3,089,700
Percent Nonresident	36%	34%	38%



## Study 12.5 Summary of Results Since ISR

**Alaska Regional Residents and Non-Alaska Residents, Projected Number of Users and Unduplicated User-Days in the Study Area and Overall 50-Year Growth Rate, Ten Year Increments 2014-2064**

	2014	2024	2034	2044	2054	2064	Total 50-Year % Growth
Alaska Regional Resident Users	120,100	134,300	147,000	162,200	179,300	195,900	63%
Non-Alaska Resident Users	260,000	281,100	300,300	316,000	330,700	348,300	34%
Total Users	380,100	415,400	447,300	478,200	510,000	544,200	43%
Alaska Regional Resident User-Days	1,721,300	1,985,700	2,240,300	2,547,000	2,916,700	3,288,500	91%
Non-Alaska Resident User-Days	1,016,700	1,099,400	1,174,100	1,235,800	1,293,100	1,362,100	34%
Total User-Days	2,738,000	3,085,100	3,414,400	3,782,800	4,209,800	4,650,600	70%

# Study 12.5 Summary of Results Since ISR

## Recreational Activity Profiles

- Consumptive Activities
  - hunting/trapping
  - sportfishing
- Non-Consumptive Uses
  - motorized boating
  - remote camping
  - roadside camping
  - hiking/backpacking
  - Snowmachining
  - Nordic skiing
  - flightseeing
  - wildlife viewing (inc. bird watching)
  - riding the Railroad
  - riding ATVs
  - Bicycling
  - dogsledding (inc. skijoring)

## *Study 12.5 Summary of Results Since ISR*

### **Each Recreational Activity Profile (Usually) Includes:**

- Total Estimated Participation
- Volume of Recreation Activity (Resident/Non-Alaska Resident)
- Location of Primary Activity
- Travel More than One-Half Mile from Trailhead or Main Road
- Mode of Travel
- Type of Trail Used
- Use of Guides
- Overnights and Lodging in Study Area
- Frequency of Hunting Trips to Study Area
- Other Activities on Most Recent Trip
- Party and Group Size and Characteristics
- Perceived Infrastructure Needs
- Perceptions of Detracted Experience
- Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

# Decision Points from Study Plan

## Extension of Study Area to Lower Susitna River

- Study 12.5 coordinated with Instream Flow Study (Study 8.5), Ice Processes in the Susitna River Study (Study 7.6), Geomorphology Study (Study 6.5), River Recreation and Flow Study (Study 12.7), and Aesthetics Study (Study 12.6).
- Executive interviews with user groups and informal consultations have indicated low levels of flow dependent recreation use between the Parks Highway Bridge (PRM 88.9) and Susitna Landing. Summer users and operators cited the lack of access, safety considerations, cost, and availability of fish and game resources as reasons for low levels of flow-based recreation.
- Log books provided by Susitna Landing managers indicate that winter recreation users (primarily snowmachiners) were crossing the Susitna River to travel to lands west of the river. Winter trails that cross the Lower Susitna River include: Rabideaux Trail (MP 89), Trapper Lake Trail (MP 82.5), Deshka-Su Trail (MP 82.5)
- Assessment of changes to flow and ice dependent river recreation are discussed in Study 12.7.

## *AEA's Proposed Modifications to Study 12.5*

*(ISR Part D, Section 7)*

The modifications described in ISR Part D, Section 7.1 were implemented as variances.

As detailed in the Summary Implementation Report, AEA plans no additional modifications of the methods for this study.

## *Steps to Complete Study 12.5*

*(ISR Part D, Section 8)*

Recreation Use Areas: As specified in Section 12.5.4 of the RSP, the NRRS/ROS framework will be used to describe recreation opportunity areas.

Recreation Facilities and Carrying Capacity: As specified in Section 12.5.4 of the RSP, AEA will continue to develop an inventory of developed and dispersed recreation sites, and estimate carrying capacity of the inventoried sites.

## *Licensing Participants Proposed Modifications to Study 12.5?*

- Agencies
- CIRWG members and Ahtna
- Public