

STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF MINING, LAND AND WATER

PRELIMINARY DECISION

ADL 231168 AK Mountain & Wilderness Huts Association

Manitoba Cabin

Application for Lease
AS 38.05.810(b)-(d)
Public & Charitable Use

This Preliminary Decision is the initial determination on a proposed disposal of interest in State land and is subject to comments received during the Public Notice period. The public is invited to comment on this Preliminary Decision. The deadline for commenting is **5:00 PM on January 6, 2015**. Please see the Comments Section on page 5 of this decision for details on how and where to send comments for consideration. Only the applicant and those who comment have the right to appeal the Final Finding and Decision.

Proposed Action:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW), Southcentral Region Office (SCRO) has received a request from AK Mountain & Wilderness Huts Association (Alaska Huts) to lease 1.6 acres of land for 55 years near Manitoba Mountain on the Kenai Peninsula. The location of the project area is further described as being within the SW4 of Section 21, T. 7 N., R. 1 W., Seward Meridian. Alaska Huts is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which is proposing to use this site as an existing publicly available recreation cabin and yurt site.

SCRO is considering the issuance of a 10-year public and charitable use lease to Alaska Huts for the construction, use, operation, and maintenance of a public use site. The cabin and yurts are used by recreationists throughout the year.

Scope of Review:

The scope of this decision is to determine if it is in the State's best interest to issue a land lease on State uplands.

Authority:

This lease application is being adjudicated pursuant to AS 38.05.035(b)(1) Delegation of the Powers and Duties of the Director; AS 38.05.035(e) Written Findings; AS 38.05.810(b-d) Public and Charitable Use; and AS 38.05.945 Public Notice.

The authority to execute the Final Finding and Decision and the lease has been delegated to the Regional Managers of DMLW.

Administrative Record:

Case file ADL 231168 constitutes the administrative record for the Alaska Huts lease application.

Legal Description, Location, and Geographical Features:

The State land where this proposed lease site is located is described as follows:

- **Legal description:** Within the SW4 Section 21, T. 7 N., R. 1 W., Seward Meridian

- **Geographical location:** East of Seward Highway and Canyon Creek, near Manitoba Mountain, Kenai Peninsula
- **Approximate Lat/Long:** 60° 40.5' N, 149° 28.4' W
- **Area geographical features:** Manitoba Mountain, Lower Summit Lake
- **Existing surveys:** Mineral Survey No. 2189
- **Municipality/Borough:** Kenai Peninsula Borough
- **Native Corporations/Federally Recognized Tribes:** Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI)
- **Size:** 1.6 acres

Title:

The State of Alaska holds fee title to the subject land under Tentative Approvals dated 7/31/1996 and 1/7/2011. A DNR Title Report (RPT-6122) issued on 10/10/2014 from DNR's Realty Services Section advised that aside from the usual reservations for ditches, canals, railroads, telegraph and telephone lines, and water rights, there are two other reservations near the proposed lease site:

- Fresno Creek Road (FS #928), located within Secs. 21, 28, and 29, T. 7 N., R. 1 W., S.M.;
- Mills Creek Road (FS #923), located within Secs. 21 and 28, T. 7 N., R. 1 W., S.M.

Third Party Interests:

The project area is located on an active mining claim (ADL 665012), which covers the project area. There are no other known third party interests.

Classification and Planning:

The project area is subject to the Kenai Area Plan (KAP), Region 2, Seward Highway from the Hope Y to the South End of Kenai Lake, Unit 410E Manitoba Mountain (map number 2A). The classification for this site is Public Recreation Land. The KAP recognizes the significant tourism and recreation values of the area, and specifically makes mention of the various outdoor activities popular throughout the region, including "sightseeing...photography...backcountry skiing, hiking, mountain biking, snowmachining, hunting, fishing [and] camping", which are all consistent with the intent of Alaska Huts' proposal. Additionally, both the Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) Comprehensive Management Plan and the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area Management Plan identify the Manitoba Cabin's renovation and use as consistent with the overall recreational activities of the region.

Access:

The site is accessible by a shared-use network of trails and dirt roads on State and U.S. Forest Service land. Specifically, the Forest Service land is comprised of Fresno Creek Road and Mills Creek Road, with State land surrounding. The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) maintains a paved parking lot on the east side of milepost 48 of the Seward Highway, where the main trailhead begins. The Manitoba Cabin site is nearly one mile to the northeast. DOTPF cautions users of the parking lot that vehicles which interfere with seasonal snow removal may be towed per 13 AAC 02.345. A single-file trail, which was cut by Alaska Huts per 11 AAC 96.020, connects the lot to the broader dirt road network. See attached maps for more information.

Agency Notice:

An Interagency Review was conducted on 5/27/2014. The deadline for agency comments was 6/13/2014.

The following agencies were included in the review:

- DNR DMLW - Mining
- DNR DMLW - Water
- DNR Office of History and Archaeology/SHPO
- DNR Contract Administration
- DNR Division of Oil and Gas
- DNR Natural Resource Conservation and Development Board
- Department of Fish and Game - Sport Fishing
- Department of Fish and Game - Habitat
- Department of Environmental Conservation

- Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Department
- Kenai Soil and Water Conservation District

DMLW Mining Section responded that "any lease that is issued for the surface use of this land must include a provision maintaining the mineral rights as stated in AS 38.05.125 and AS 38.05.135." Accordingly, if the proposed surface lease is issued, a special stipulation will be included that outlines the mineral rights and active mining claim.

DMLW Land Sales responded that they had no concerns regarding the proposed lease.

No other agency comments were received.

Lease Discussion:

Alaska Huts is an Anchorage-based volunteer organization committed to supporting "places in which hikers and skiers can travel hut-to-hut." The Manitoba Cabin, built in the 1930s and managed by several owners and caretakers over the years, was deemed unsafe for habitation by the U.S. Forest Service in 2001. As part of their mission to provide "settings that foster camaraderie and promote wilderness education and stewardship", Alaska Huts secured funding for the complete renovation of the cabin, and under a DNR Land Use Permit (LAS 28042), also constructed two yurts and a new double-occupancy outhouse on the site.

The 1.6-acre location now hosts the Manitoba Cabin, two eight-person yurts, a fire pit area, a firewood shed, and two outhouses. Paths connect all the structures, and meet up with the main nearby trail system, which includes portions of the INHT. A "small solar-charged electrical lighting system" is planned, as well as possibly a sauna, should the lease be granted.

Given Alaska Huts' mission to provide for public wilderness lodging, and their commitment to educating the public about proper stewardship of natural resources, they represent lease candidates focused on active stewardship for the Manitoba Cabin site. The organization's proposal is consistent with the area's rich history of outdoor recreation, due in large part to its proximity to Anchorage and the nearby Seward Highway.

Though Alaska Huts has requested a 55-year lease in their application, the site's small size and location off the road system qualify it for a briefer lease period. A shorter lease term would not require a survey, yet would still serve Alaska Huts' needs. Furthermore, the mining activity in the immediate area has priority over surface interests, and could complicate a longer term lease. A lease term of 10 years would serve the best interests of the State, as this project will continue the development of the State's natural resources and provide a public benefit without significantly impacting the local area.

The proposed lease will be subject to the terms of DMLW's standard lease document (available for review upon request), any developed Special Stipulations, and the following considerations.

This lease does not constitute a lessee preference right to purchase under AS 38.05.102.

Development Plan:

The Development Plan (DP) attached to this decision (Attachment A) and dated September 2014 is hereby accepted by SCRO through the issuance of this decision. Should the proposed lease be granted, it is anticipated that the DP will need to be updated throughout the life of the lease as activities and/or infrastructure are added or subtracted. All updates must be accepted, in writing, by SCRO before any construction, deconstruction, replacement of infrastructure, or change in activity will be permitted. SCRO reserves the right to require additional agency review and/or public notice for changes that are deemed by SCRO to be beyond the scope of this decision.

Hazardous Materials and Potential Contaminants:

Hut users are encouraged to pack out their own trash. Any remaining garbage will be hauled out periodically by authorized caretakers. Combustibles such as paper, cardboard, and wood are burned in the cabin's woodstove.

Hazardous materials on-site include propane and "minor household maintenance and cleaning supplies." Propane is transported to and from the site in 100-pound tanks. There are six propane burners and an oven in the cabin, as well as two propane lights. Gasoline, occasionally used for chainsaws, a portable generator, and "other small equipment", is stored in a 5-gallon container inside a shed. Occasionally, a 55-gallon drum of gasoline will be stored on-site during construction and maintenance projects, and will be placed on top of a rubber containment tray to prevent spillage.

The double-capacity outhouse constructed in 2014 will handle human waste needs. It is situated well away from the bluff overlooking Canyon Creek, which abuts the parcel. Gray water from the cabin's kitchen and handwashing sinks are strained and disposed of in a French drain.

The use and storage of all hazardous substances must be done in accordance with existing Federal, State, and local laws. Debris (such as soil) contaminated with used motor oil, solvents, or other chemicals may be classified as a hazardous substance and must be removed from the site and managed or disposed of in accordance with State and Federal law.

Lease Performance Guaranty (bonding):

In accordance with AS 38.05.035(a)(4), Alaska Huts will be required to submit a performance guaranty for the lease site.

- **\$2,000.00 Performance Bond:** This bond will remain in place for the life of the proposed lease. The bond amount is based upon the level of development, amounts of hazardous material/substances on-site, and the perceived liability to the State. This bond will be used to insure the applicant's compliance with the terms and conditions of the lease issued for their project. This bond amount will be subject to periodic adjustments and may be adjusted upon approval of any amendments, assignments, reappraisals, changes in the DP, changes in the activities conducted, or changes in the performance of operations conducted on the authorized premises, and as a result of any violations to one or more of the authorizations associated with this project.
- **Reclamation Bond:** SCRO is reserving the right to require a reclamation bond due to noncompliance issues during the term of the lease or near the end of the life of the project.

Insurance:

In accordance with AS 38.05.035(a)(4), Alaska Huts will be required to submit proof of liability insurance to SCRO, with the State of Alaska listed as a "NAMED" insured party. Alaska Huts will be responsible for maintaining such insurance throughout the term of the lease.

Survey:

In accordance with AS 38.04.045, this short term land lease does not require a survey. However, the State of Alaska reserves the right to require one in the future, should the need arise due to changes in statutes or increased use of the area. The applicant will be required to submit GPS coordinate points for the leased area.

Compensation/Appraisal:

DMLW has determined that due to Alaska Huts' structure as a nonprofit group focused on providing outdoor public recreational opportunities, they are eligible for a reduced lease fee. As this application is for a short-term lease for a 1.6-acre public use cabin site that is located off the road system and has no public utilities, the fee for the lease will be \$107.00 per year. This represents ten percent of DMLW Appraisal Report No. 2325-15, which is effective through March 14, 2016. Furthermore, in accordance with AS 38.05.105, the proposed lease will be subject to reappraisal at five-year intervals after the issuance of the proposed authorization.

Subleasing:

Subleasing is permissible through AS 38.05.095, though no commercial use of the leasehold is allowed under AS 38.05.810(b-d). Any potential nonprofit subleases must be approved in writing by SCRO before any agreement is entered into. Depending on the activity, SCRO is reserving the right to reevaluate the need for further agency review and/or public notice before making a determination on the appropriateness of the proposed sublease. Furthermore, SCRO is reserving the right to charge a sublease annual fee, though this fee is often waived for nonprofit activities.

Assignment of Lease:

The proposed lease, if issued, may be transferred or assigned to another individual or corporation only with written approval from SCRO. A lease will not be assigned to an entity if that entity does not meet the statutory requirements of the lease.

Reclamation:

In accordance with AS 38.05.090(b), all lessees must restore their lease sites to a "good and marketable condition" within a minimum of 120 days after the termination of their lease. What level of reclamation constitutes as being "good and marketable" is at the discretion of SCRO.

Public Notice of the Preliminary Decision:

Pursuant to AS 38.05.945, this Preliminary Decision will be advertised for a 30-day public comment period, starting on **December 5, 2014**. Courtesy notices will be mailed or emailed to neighboring property owners, permit/lease holders, Cook Inlet Region Inc., the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and other interested parties.

In addition, the post offices located in Cooper Landing, Hope, Moose Pass, and Seward will be requested to post the notice per AS 38.05.945(b)(3)(B). The notice will also be posted on the State Public Notice website located at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/pic/pubnotfrm.htm>.

Comment(s):

This decision is subject to both public and agency comments and all comments received by the comment deadline will be addressed in the Final Finding and Decision. Only those who comment and the applicant have the right to appeal this decision.

Written comments about this project must be received in this office no later than 5:00 PM on January 6, 2015 to be considered.

To submit comments, please choose one of the following methods:

Postal: Department of Natural Resources
Southcentral Region Office
ATTN: Brandon Tucker
550 West 7th Avenue Suite 900C
Anchorage, AK 99501-3577
E-mail: brandon.tucker@alaska.gov
Fax: (907) 269-8913

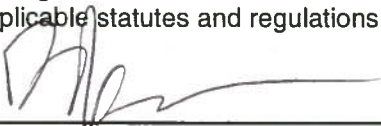
Questions about this project can be directed to Brandon Tucker at (907) 269-8549 or brandon.tucker@alaska.gov.

If public comments result in significant changes to the Preliminary Decision, additional public notice will be given. To be eligible to appeal the Final Finding and Decision, a person must provide written comments during the Preliminary Decision comment period per AS 38.05.035(i)-(m).

Signature page follows:

Recommendation:

DMLW has completed a review of the information provided by the applicant, examined the relevant land management documents, and reached a preliminary conclusion that this project is consistent with all applicable statutes and regulations. It is recommended this project proceed to public notice.



Brandon Tucker, Natural Resource Specialist II

11/26/14

Date

Preliminary Decision:

It is the determination of the Division of Mining, Land and Water that it may be in the State's best interest to issue a Public and Charitable Lease per AS 38.05.810(b-d) for 10 years to Alaska Huts, as described above. This application shall now proceed to public notice.



Clark Cox, Regional Manager
Southcentral Region Land Office, Division of Mining, Land and Water

12/1/14

Date

Attachment

Attachment A – Development Plan



Attachment A Development Plan



Alaska Mountain & Wilderness Huts Association



September 2014

Submitted to:

Alaska Department of Natural Resources,
Division of Mining Land & Water,
Southcentral Region Office

In support of:

An application for a
Negotiated Lease for Public and Charitable Organizations

Applicant

Alaska Huts
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www.alaskahuts.org

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Alaska Mountain and Wilderness Huts Association

Manitoba Cabin Development Plan September 2014

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Manitoba Cabin Development Plan September 2014

1. Introduction and Overview of Hut Proposal

The Alaska Mountain and Wilderness Huts Association (Alaska Huts) has established the Manitoba Cabin site as its first multi-party hut site. Alaska Huts is a non-profit corporation based in Alaska, with 501(c)(3) status, and proposes a long-term lease to operate this site for public use, education, and enjoyment. The Manitoba site lies between Anchorage and Seward in the Kenai Mountains. (See **Figure 1**, below. For detail, see **Appendix 1**). This hut and future proposed huts are meant to provide a new form of access to wild public lands and to promote appreciation and stewardship of public lands. A multi-party hut means hut users reserve bunk space and share kitchen, dining, and living spaces with others. Alaska Huts seeks to provide shelter in the tradition of mountain huts for foot travelers and skiers. Alaska Huts promotes opportunities for outdoor recreation on local trails and within surrounding alpine valleys and ridgelines.

Alaska Huts renovated and opened Manitoba Cabin under terms of a permit from the State of Alaska—LAS 28042—to preserve the cabin quickly before it was further damaged. Alaska Huts applied for the permit and a long-term lease at the same time, and this document updates the lease application in minor ways. Alaska Huts seeks a long-term negotiated public and charitable lease of state land (AS 38.05.810).

The improvements completed and proposed and the operation of the Manitoba hut site are intended to create recreational appeal and modest economic development for Southcentral Alaska. Alaska Huts provides shelter and a venue for visitors to experience the outdoors firsthand and to learn about the natural and human history of the area. The site is available to groups with an education function, providing a unique learning environment not available elsewhere.

Manitoba was the choice as the first hut for a number of reasons.

- The site provides a good blend of easy access and backcountry setting and amenities. The site is centrally located for people from Seward, Anchorage, Cooper Landing, Hope, Girdwood, and Soldotna/Kenai. Out-of-state and international access is from Anchorage.
- The location was already widely known for winter skiing on Manitoba Mountain and is well suited to a wide range of year-round recreational activities including hiking and mountain biking. The site has a history as a ski cabin (see Figures 2 and 3), so use is more assured than an unknown site might be.
- The site is set in an historic landscape within the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area. A portion of the Iditarod National Historic Trail system provides access to the cabin. Along with the state's nearby Lauritsen Cabin (on the National Register of historic Places, dating from the Cook Inlet gold rush) and the mining origins of the Manitoba Cabin itself, these historic elements suggest access to a wealth of history

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about Southcentral Alaska. See Figures 2 and 3 below.

- The Kenai Area Plan for State Lands [3] classifies the land for “public recreation and tourism-dispersed use” and specifically allows for hut-to-hut use in this area.

Figure 1. Kenai Peninsula and Manitoba cabin location



The hut concept is based on successful hut systems in North America and Europe. All of these systems seek to enable enjoyment of, and safe access to, the backcountry. The pre-eminent model for a hut-to-hut system is in the European Alps. The Manitoba site currently is envisioned as a stand-alone facility.

Manitoba Cabin is located in the richest area of the Cook Inlet Gold Rush. It has also been known as the McHenry Cabin. This area has essentially been continuously mined since the 1890s, making it one of Alaska's most historic mining locales. The Manitoba Cabin itself dates from the 1930s and has been used for private housing, mining support, and as a cross-country skiing lodge over the years. The cabin had been unused for a decade or more when Alaska Huts renovated and reopened the cabin in 2102. The land and the cabins transferred from the federal government to the State of Alaska in January 2011.

The Manitoba Cabin urgently needed to be renovated, as it had not been properly maintained for many years. Most of the renovation work is now done. The following proposal describes how Alaska Huts would operate the site and make modifications over the life of the lease. The following sections follow the topics outline for a lease application.

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Figure 2. Manitoba (left) and Lauritsen Cabins (photos courtesy of J.Wolfe, C.Barnwell).



Figure 3. Manitoba Mountain in the 1940s (rope tow in background). Photo courtesy of Alaska Lost Ski Areas Project.



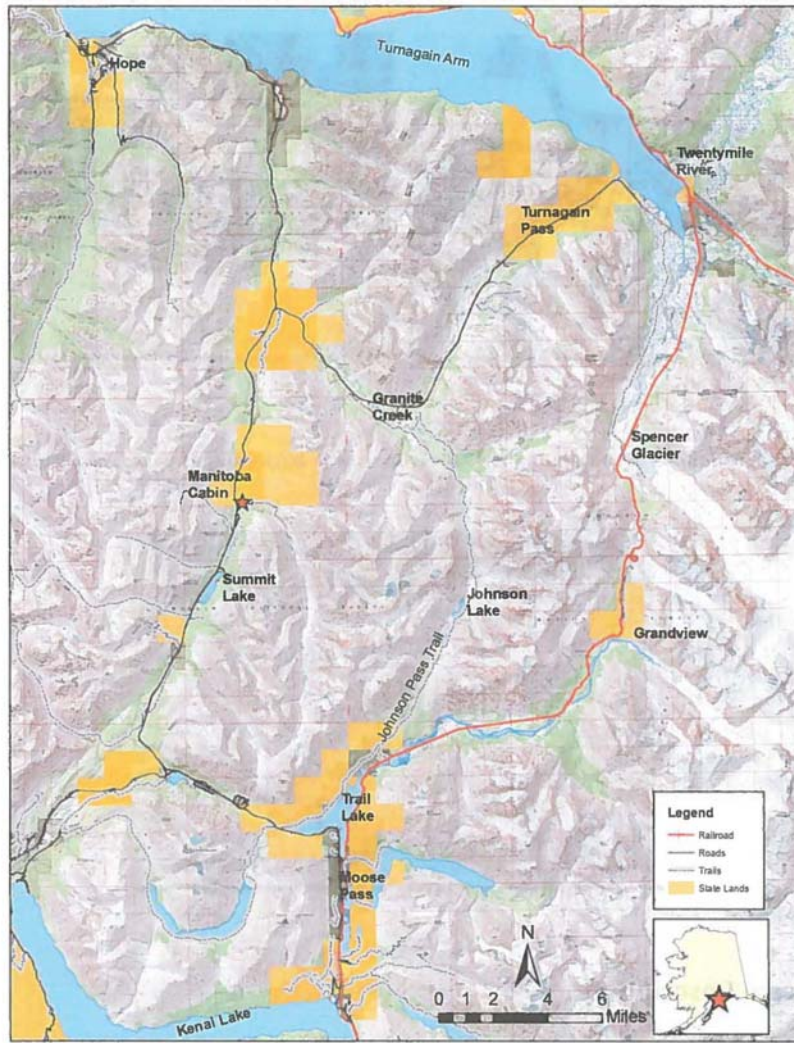
2. Legal Description

Manitoba Cabin is located as follows: SW ¼ SW ¼ Section 21, Township 7N, Range 1W, Seward Meridian, Alaska. Approximate coordinates: 60°40.5'N Latitude, -149°28.4'W Longitude. Description of the proposed lease area appears below. The immediate area around the Manitoba cabin site is State Land, with National Forest lands beyond (see **Figures 4 and 5** below). See also the site survey done by CRW Engineering, Inc. for Alaska Huts in **Appendix 2**.

The *Kenai Area Plan for State Lands* [3] classifies the land “public recreation and tourism-dispersed use” and indicates the area is well-suited for hut-to-hut uses.

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Figure 4. Kenai Peninsula area showing Manitoba Cabin location and State lands.

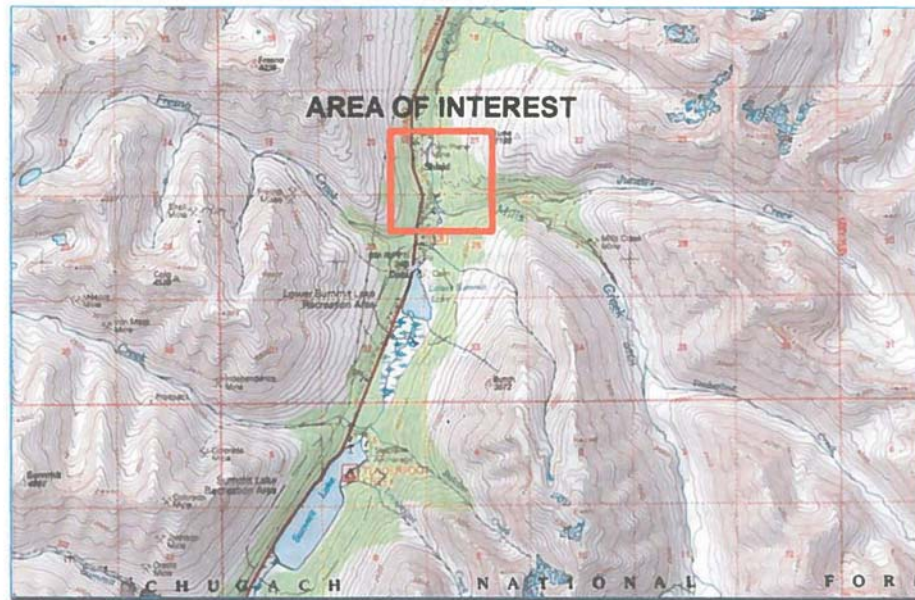


Initial Land Use Permit: The specific site currently in use under a land use permit is bounded on the south by the section line between Sections 21 and 28, is bounded on the west by Canyon Creek and on the east by Fresno Creek Trail, a USDA Forest Service public easement. The site encompasses approximately 1 acre.

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Long-Term Public and Charitable Lease: The specific site sought under a long-term lease of state land would be somewhat larger, running farther north. The site would be bounded on the south by the section line between sections 21 and 28. The northern boundary would be an east-west line located approximately 470 feet north of the section line. The site would be bounded on the west by the Canyon Creek bluff. The site would be bounded on the east by a meandering line, described as follows. From the section line, the eastern boundary would run north-northeast following the centerline of Fresno Creek Road to the top of a grade. At the top of the grade, the second line on the left is an intersection of a 4-wheeler track and Fresno Creek Road; at the northern edge of this intersection, the site boundary line would proceed north-northwest to intersect the outside of a prominent bend in the 4-wheeler track and then would follow that track, continuing to the north-northwest (from Mills Creek Road, this north-northwest trending line would be about 340 feet). The site would encompass approximately 1.6 acres. See **Appendix 3**.

Figure 5. Application area of interest



3. Terrain/Ground Cover and Existing Site Condition

The site is located on a well-drained relatively flat bench above Canyon Creek and immediately downstream of the confluence of Mills Creek and Canyon Creek. See **Figure 5** above. The cabin site lies at approximately 1,100 feet elevation. Vegetation in the area is mixed boreal spruce-birch forest with small meadows of tall grass. Hemlock also grows nearby. Canyon Creek is a steep-gradient, fast-moving stream. Adjacent to the cabin site, the creek is located within a rock canyon without substantial riparian habitat. No substantial change to vegetation is proposed.

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Initial Land Use Permit: The 1-acre site for the initial land use permit is occupied by the existing renovated Manitoba Cabin, two 16-foot diameter yurts on elevated platforms; each with a deck; a woodshed/covered bear-proof food container; an historic meathouse/old outhouse; and a new outhouse (see **Appendix 3** for site plan). No trash, garbage, debris or sign of possible site contamination is evident. The Bureau of Land Management prepared a site report in preparation for transferring the land to the State of Alaska and found no reason to suspect contamination.

Long-Term Public and Charitable Lease: The site for the long-term lease (**Appendix 3**) contains most of the 1-acre land use permit area plus undeveloped land off the northwest corner of the current permit area. The additional area contains no evidence of past mining or reason to suspect contamination. The Bureau of Land Management prepared a site report in preparation for transferring the land to the State of Alaska and found no reason to suspect contamination of the land.

4. Access

A small network of old roads provides general public access in this area. **Appendix 1** provides a detailed map of the area. The old Seward Highway roughly parallels the existing Seward Highway between Lower Summit Lake (MP 47.5) and a State of Alaska gravel pit (Milepost 49). The old Seward Highway is the likely route of the original Canyon Creek Trail / Moose Pass Military Road that connected Moose Pass to Sunrise and Hope and is today recognized as part of the Iditarod National Historic Trail. It once connected the Canyon Creek mining areas, including the Manitoba and Lauritsen cabins and areas downstream as far as the historic Sunrise townsite, to the main Iditarod Trail route through the pass at Grandview farther east. Figure 6 shows a typical road/trail in the area.

Figure 6. One of the old roads near Manitoba Cabin (photo courtesy of Mikal Hendee).



The USDA Forest Service manages public access easements that provide access to Chugach National Forest lands to the east. See **Appendix 1** and Figure 7 below for a map showing some of these access easements. A portion of the old Seward Highway is within a public access easement held by the Forest Service; the Forest Service calls it the Fresno Creek Road. The Fresno Creek

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Road connects the MP 49 gravel pit to a pedestrian bridge over Canyon Creek. The bridge is also suitable for small ATVs (allowed for upstream miners with a federal permit). North of the creek, the Fresno Creek Road runs immediately to the east of Manitoba Cabin. The Mills Creek Road is another Forest Service public access easement. It provides access across upper Canyon Creek/Fresno Creek (a ford) and across Mills Creek (an old ford, rarely used). North of Mills Creek, it connects with the terminus of the Fresno Creek Road and continues about 3 miles uphill on the side of Manitoba Mountain, fords upper Juneau Creek, and enters upper Mills Creek valley.

Since about 1983 the typical access to Manitoba Cabin by skiers has been from a State-maintained pullout parking area on the Seward Highway at Milepost 48, about ¾ mile to the south of Manitoba Cabin. The original Seward Highway and approximate route of the Iditarod Connecting Trail, along with a portion of the Fresno Creek Road, serves as the access for Manitoba Cabin. The connection between the old road and the MP 48 pullout is an informal route on state land through the woods.

Figure 7. Access in the Manitoba Cabin area (map source: USFS, 2002).



Initial Land Use Permit: As part of initial land use permit, the route between the MP 48 pullout and the old Seward Highway/Iditarod Connecting Trail was minimally cleared of vegetation in the vicinity of Fresno Creek per Generally Allowed Uses on State Land (11 AAC 96.020). The Iditarod Connecting Trail has been minimally maintained similarly to keep brush from encroaching.

Public user access to the cabin site typically is via the MP 48 pullout and trail, Iditarod Connecting Trail, and Fresno Creek Road. The cabin is accessed on foot or on skis. The Fresno Creek Road from the MP 49 gravel pit is treated as a service road in summer and is used for service access by street vehicles and ATVs (for maintenance and resupply of the hut), for the disabled, and for bicycles. Except for the disabled and bicyclists using the hut site, Alaska Huts generally discourages use of this access by cabin users. However, it is a public access route and is

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not gated, and people sometimes drive in during summer to unload gear closer to the cabin. Alaska Huts has a permit for the Forest Service for use of the road, including the bridge and the short grade up to the hut site, for resupply and maintenance. Beyond the cabin site, Alaska Huts has a permit to use the Mills Creek Road for winter trail grooming and for firewood collection, and has a permit from the State Division of Forestry for firewood collection. To date, firewood collection has not occurred.

Long-Term Public and Charitable Lease: Under terms of the lease, public user access to the hut site would be identical to that described above under the initial land use permit, via the MP 48 pullout and trail, Iditarod Connecting Trail, and Fresno Creek Road. The hut site would be accessed on foot or on skis. The Fresno Creek Road from the MP 49 gravel pit would be treated as a service road in summer and would be used for service access by street vehicles or ATV (for maintenance and resupply of the hut), for the disabled, and for bicycles. Except for the disabled and bicyclists using the hut site, Alaska Huts generally would discourage use of this access by hut users.

5. Buildings and Other Structures

Existing Structures

On the site existing facilities include Manitoba Cabin, now renovated, and a separate original outhouse (reportedly a meat house in the distant past). Both of these are State-owned structures that pre-dated the current permit. In 2009, the Huts Association commissioned a survey of the site done by CRW Engineers depicting the cabin and facilities relative to survey monuments and the section line in the area. This survey document is attached in **Appendix 2**. The cabin measures approximately 18' x 24' and has an attached hut keeper's quarters, for a finished area of approximately 550 square feet of heated floor space. The building is permanent and is reported to have been on site since approximately 1936. The building appeared to have been built directly on naturally occurring cobbles or on a foundation of river rock placed on the site; the building was raised and placed on an all-weather wood foundation. The outhouse is a wood-framed structure approximately 5' x 5' located north of the cabin. It also appears to have been built directly on the ground or on cobbles.

The structures transferred with the land from the federal government to the State of Alaska and, at the request of Alaska Huts, were not removed before the transfer. The Forest Service had previously slated the building for demolition; its commercial value at that time was therefore negligible. However, Alaska Huts found it sufficiently valuable, because of its historic associations, to renovate it.

Manitoba Cabin was in urgent need of repairs. Improvements needed to be made immediately to prevent a portion of the roof from collapsing. In past years the building served as a popular cabin for use by Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage members (in the 1980s-1990s), and offered shelter including basic heating, bunks, and cooking. Various parts of the cabin needed to be stabilized (foundation and bottom sill) and upgraded. A sauna existed near the cabin during the 1980s but reportedly was removed by the Forest Service.

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Existing Structures and their Uses

Initial Land Use Permit: The Manitoba Cabin is used today as the primary hut, a gathering place for cooking and eating, education programs, and socializing. This is similar to how it was used for about 18 years by the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage. The Alaska Huts Association owns two winterized yurts that have been located to the immediate north and northwest of the building for primary sleeping space. The building and yurts are in use year round. **Appendix 3** illustrates the locations for the yurts in relation to the cabin.

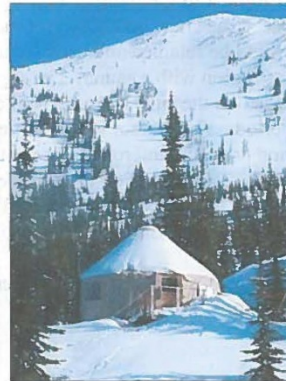
The yurts are long-term temporary insulated fabric shelters each 16 feet in diameter (see **Figures 8 and 9 below** for examples). They were erected on wooden platform decks. A new outhouse hole was dug, and a replacement outhouse meeting ADA standards was erected (still being finished in 2014). A wildlife resistant food storage area (food cache) outside the cabin has been installed for public and administrative use. This consists of steel container located beneath a roof on poles covering an area of about 12'x12', as shown in **Appendix 3**. It also serves as the woodshed. A new sauna approximately 8' x 8' is currently under construction on the site in 2014. Final completion of the structure may occur in 2015. The location of the sauna will be as indicated in **Appendix 3**, a shift from the area originally indicated in the permit application because that location was determined to be within the Fresno Creek Road easement.

Planned Structures and their Uses

Long-Term Public and Charitable Lease: Under the long-term lease, the site would continue to be used with the facilities described immediately above. It is possible that within the term of the lease the yurts would be replaced by a permanent bunkhouse structure that would work in concert with the Manitoba Cabin as an operating hut site. The additional building is anticipated to be approximately 20x32 or the equivalent area of footprint (640 square feet, based on interior living space and two-story construction). Sleeping capacity of the site could be expanded to 18-24 using the existing Manitoba Cabin and the new building. A composting toilet system with heated tank to ensure optimum composting temperature could be located in the new building and would supplement or entirely replace the existing outhouse.

Figure 9. Yurt in Winter

Figure 8. Yurt on platform in summer



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6. Power Source

Construction and maintenance tasks make use of standard portable generators that run on gasoline or propane. No standard wired electrical power connection will be required. Solar electric panels mounted to buildings will be used to charge a solar-electric system for interior lights and communications and possibly for a bear-protection fence. Interior heating of all heated structures would be as it is today by wood or propane. The provisions apply both under the initial land use permit and under the long-term public and charitable lease.

7. Waste Types, Waste Sources, and Disposal Methods

Solid Waste

The following solid waste provisions apply under both the initial land use permit and the long-term public and charitable lease. Garbage, trash, and recyclables are expected primarily from food packaging. Hut users are directed to “pack it in, pack it out” and dispose of items properly back home. When a volunteer hut keeper is present and during volunteer work weekends, garbage, trash, and recyclables are sometimes hauled out for disposal in licensed municipal landfills and for recycling. Burnable trash (non-recyclable paper, cardboard, and wood) may be burned in the cabin’s heating stove.

Human Waste

Initial Land Use Permit: Under terms of the existing Land Use Permit, the existing standard pit toilet outhouse has been used to dispose of human waste, and a new outhouse hole has been dug and a new outhouse constructed. The transition from the old outhouse to the new outhouse is still underway in 2014. The old outhouse hole will be buried and closed out per terms of the permit, and the new outhouse is expected to operate for many years. See **Appendix 3** for location of the outhouses.

Long-Term Public and Charitable Lease: For the long-term lease, human waste disposal would continue at the “new outhouse” for many years. The old outhouse (aka the historic meathouse) would be retained and used for interpretive purposes and for function (e.g. as a tool shed, or in association with a sauna). During the life of the long-term lease, a composting toilet could be installed on the site. The tank would be heated to ensure good composting activity during cool periods. The system would be designed so that the heat could be turned up for a specified period to ensure microbes were not an issue before emptying the compost. Finished compost would be disposed of on the surface by shovel and wheelbarrow at the northern edge of the site in a clearly marked and cordoned off area. The system design would be coordinated with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation at the time of construction.

Gray water disposal is covered below under Section 9, Water Supply.

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8. Hazardous Substances

The following provisions apply under both the initial land use permit and the long-term public and charitable lease.

Hazardous substances used and stored on site include gasoline, propane, and minor household maintenance and cleaning supplies. Propane is used for partial heating of facilities, for cooking, for some lighting, and could be used in the future for a small generator. Propane is transported to and from the site in 100-pound tanks. Gasoline is used for incidental maintenance and operations, including chainsaws (typically for firewood), portable generator, and other small equipment. Storage is anticipated in containers of 5-gallon capacity or less in a woodshed/outbuilding. During construction projects or for possible future winter trail grooming by snowmachine, larger amounts of gasoline may be stored on site in a 55-gallon drum with lockable hand pump. A rubber containment tray would be established under the drum, and absorbent material would be on hand in case of spills. A solar electric system using a small bank of batteries may be installed on site. Minor amounts of paint, solvent, cleaning products, chainsaw bar oil, and similar maintenance supplies are likely to be on site at any given time and would be stored away from access by the general public.

The Bureau of Land Management prepared a site report in preparation for transferring the land to the State of Alaska and found no reason to suspect contamination of the existing site.

9. Water Supply

Water supply

Initial Land Use Permit: Water supply for the cabin has traditionally been from Canyon Creek, dipped and hauled by hand, and this method is in use today and is expected to continue. Hut users would be informed that, during most of the year, they would be responsible for their own water treatment using backpacking filters. During popular periods, when a hut keeper was on site, the hut keeper may treat water using chlorine and would store water in small tanks at the cabin. In winter, snowmelt would likely provide some water, but the creek typically remains open year round. A spring is available at and north of the section line that forms the southern edge of the site, and water may be drawn from the spring on occasion.

Long-Term Public and Charitable Lease: During the term of the Public and Charitable Lease, the same methods would continue to be used. If deemed necessary, a drilled well may be installed within the life of the lease.

Gray Water

The following gray water provisions apply to both the initial land use permit and the long-term public and charitable lease. Gray water from a small drain sink currently is strained and disposed of via drain into a perforated drum located below the ground surface in well-drained rock and gravel. Because there is no running water to the hut, volumes of gray water are small and primarily related to dish washing—approximately 10 gallons per day as a typical maximum today, and up to 30 gallons per day in the future. Any water used in the sauna would drain directly to the site's permeable soils through a floor designed to drain.

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10. Parking Areas, Storage Areas, and Mechanized Equipment

Initial Land Use Permit:

On-Site Storage: It is possible that a snowmachine or 4-wheeler would be stored on site, along with a tow-behind groomer for winter trail grooming. No other vehicles or large items that are difficult to transport are stored on site. Storage typically includes limited quantities of food, gasoline and propane, basic hand tools and household cleaning/maintenance supplies, and firewood.

Parking: Parking for cabin access is at the MP 48 pullout on the Seward Highway. See Section 4 above entitled Access, and **Appendix 1**. Based on the working capacity of the hut, no more than 6-9 vehicles are associated with the hut at full capacity, and full capacity does not occur routinely. The pullout has adequate capacity. Service vehicles and vehicles for disabled hut users may park temporarily at the existing turnaround on Fresno Creek Road adjacent to the bridge over Canyon Creek (intended for loading and unloading only). The primary method for addressing leaks and drips from vehicles is preventive maintenance on vehicles and equipment operated by Alaska Huts. Most vehicles are operated by private parties coming to use the cabin and are parked on the existing State highway system pullout.

Motorized Equipment: No long-term storage of mechanized construction equipment or standard street vehicles is expected on the site. The primary method for addressing leaks and drips from any vehicles owned or operated by Alaska Huts would be preventive maintenance.

Long-Term Public and Charitable Lease:

All provisions described above for on-site storage, parking, and motorized equipment would apply also under the long-term public and charitable lease. In addition, during future construction under the long-term public and charitable lease, mini-motorized equipment such as a single small excavator, likely not more than 10,000 lbs, or Cat D-3 dozer, likely not more than 15,000 lbs., may be necessary for a short time for site preparation/foundation work.

11. Number of People Using the Site

Land Use Permit: The site currently has a total capacity of 16 bunks, with an additional two bunks allocated for hut keepers (volunteer and paid staff) and sometimes made available to the public when hut keepers are not present. The site is open for public use year round. The cabin became popular when operated by the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage in the 1980s-1990s under permit by the Forest Service. Occupancy during 2013, the first full year of operation, was about 800 user nights. Alaska Huts anticipates similar use levels, with slow growth. Volunteer hut keepers are on site frequently, with special focus on busy weekends. As use increases, volunteer or paid staff (1-2 people) are likely to be on site more frequently.

Long Term Public and Charitable Lease: During the period of the long-term lease, it is possible that capacity of the site would be expanded to between 20 and 24 bunks, as described above in the section entitled Buildings and other Structures. It would otherwise operate the same.

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12. Operations and Maintenance

Operations. The following operations provisions apply equally to the initial land use permit (existing operations) and the long-term public and charitable lease. The hut site operates partly similar to a State of Alaska public use cabin and partly similar to a non-profit camp or commercial lodge. It operates year round providing hiking, skiing, biking, and other recreational opportunities. Over much of the year, independent users function on their own at the site. During these times, volunteer or paid staff may check on the hut at any time and on scheduled day or overnight visits. During the more popular winter break, spring skiing, and summer periods, and on other weekends of the year, depending on usage levels, a volunteer or paid hut keeper is on site to interact with hut users and ensure the hut is clean and operating efficiently. One or two hut keepers typically is on site during these times.

The hut site is meant mainly to provide a facility for the public to access the backcountry and public lands, and for education groups to use the hut and surrounding natural environment for their education programs. The hut site is meant to provide shelter, warmth, and space for people to sleep, cook and eat, socialize, and conduct any education program or retreat function. As such, typical operations include provisions for water, cooking, and heat. Bunks are provided for sleeping, and it is anticipated mattresses will be added. When a paid hut keeper is present, food may be available for purchase on site (this has not occurred to date but could occur in the future). Most meal preparation is by hut users themselves. The hut keeper may coordinate cooperative food preparation and participate with hut guests in cooperatively preparing a meal but is not expected to prepare and serve food in the traditional sense. On some occasions, Alaska Huts may provide fully prepared meals as a service for hut users. Hut keepers' primary operating duties are to ensure the site is clean and operating efficiently, and that hut users know how to use hut systems. Alaska Huts paid and volunteer staff resupplies firewood, heating and cooking fuels, cleaning supplies, laundry items, and any food, as necessary, with larger springtime and autumn efforts becoming a tradition. These operations are expected to continue under a long-term lease.

Maintenance. The following maintenance provisions apply equally to the initial land use permit and the long-term public and charitable lease. Maintenance primarily involves keeping the site's structures and systems safely operating in good condition. Most maintenance is routine small jobs—general cleaning, fixing a loose hinge or stuck drawer, painting—and these are handled by association staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers also resupply fuels and firewood. Larger efforts such as roof or window replacement are anticipated to be rare and may require hiring professionals.

13. Closure/Reclamation Plan

Use of the site is intended to be long term, effectively permanent, beginning under the Land Use Permit and extending under a long-term Public and Charitable Lease. The hut site operates year round. As such, closure is not expected seasonally or after any set number of years.

Because the Manitoba Cabin already existed as an unheated shell, Alaska Huts posted a bond-equivalent certificate of deposit (CD) for removal of the heat source and moveable items installed in the main cabin, complete removal of the yurts and platforms, and complete removal of any sauna and food cache constructed. Yurts, sauna, and food cache each can be dismantled and removed from the site rapidly if necessary. The cabin and outhouse would remain State of Alaska

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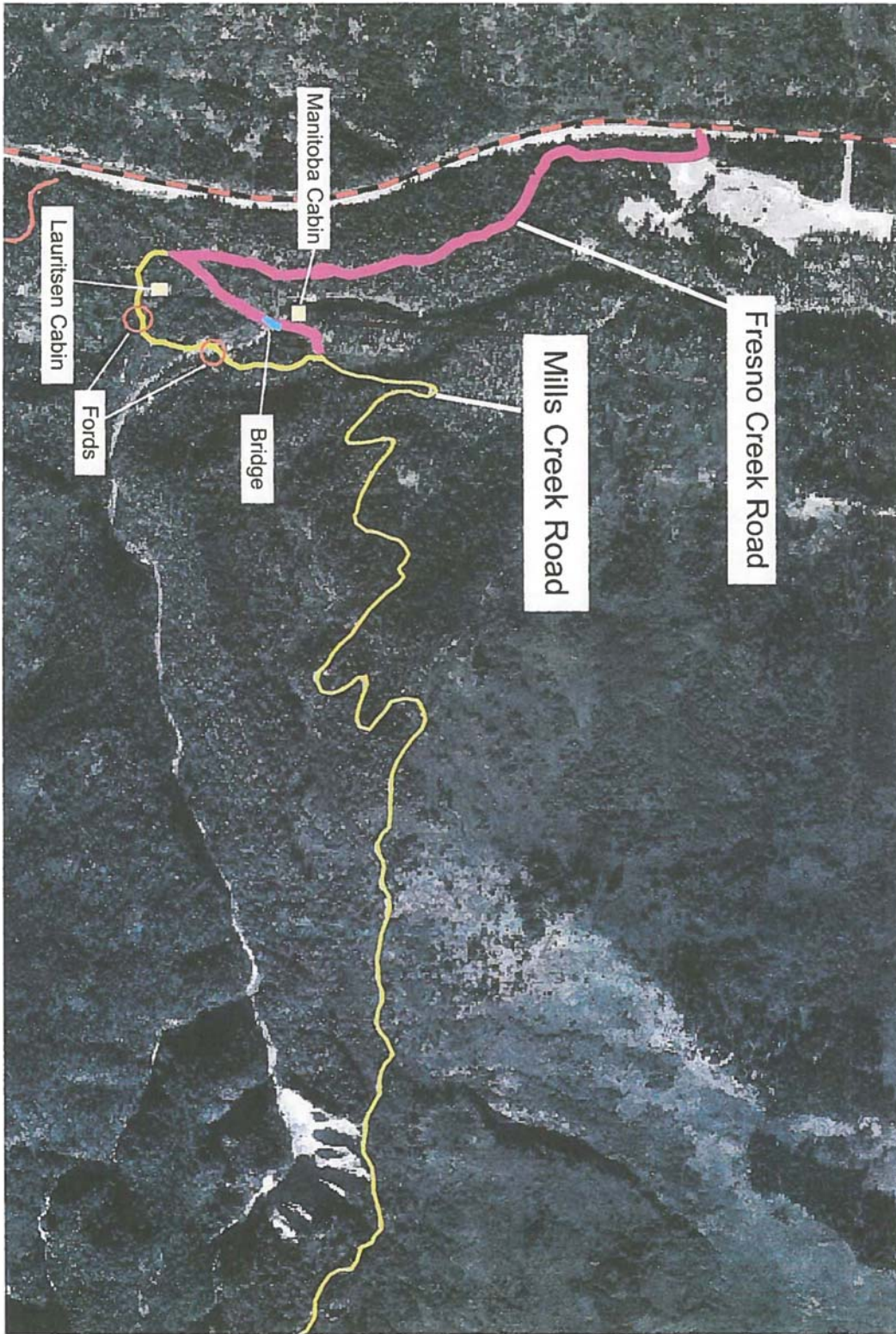
property. The CD is intended to leave the site much as it was pre-permit, in case of unforeseen circumstances.

Under the long term public and charitable lease, it is anticipated that the CD may be continued and extended (or a new one implemented with extended terms). If necessary at the time of new construction under a long-term public and charitable lease, Alaska Huts could post a new bond (or equivalent) for removal of improvements on the site. The new bond would reflect the change of structures on the site (i.e. when a new hut is built, the yurts are anticipated to be removed). Again, the bond-equivalent would be intended to leave the site much as it is today in case of unforeseen circumstances. Manitoba Cabin is expected to remain State of Alaska property.

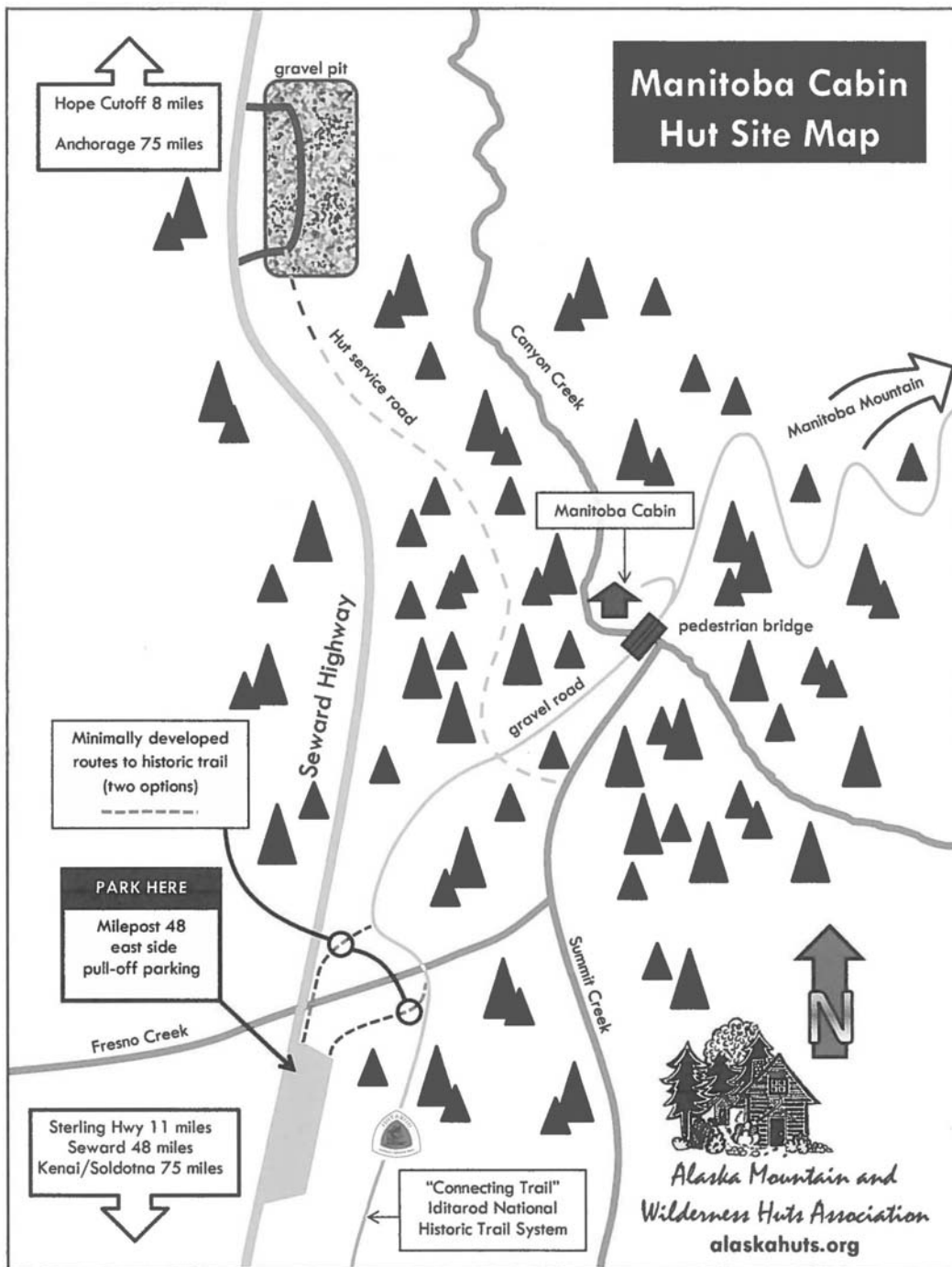
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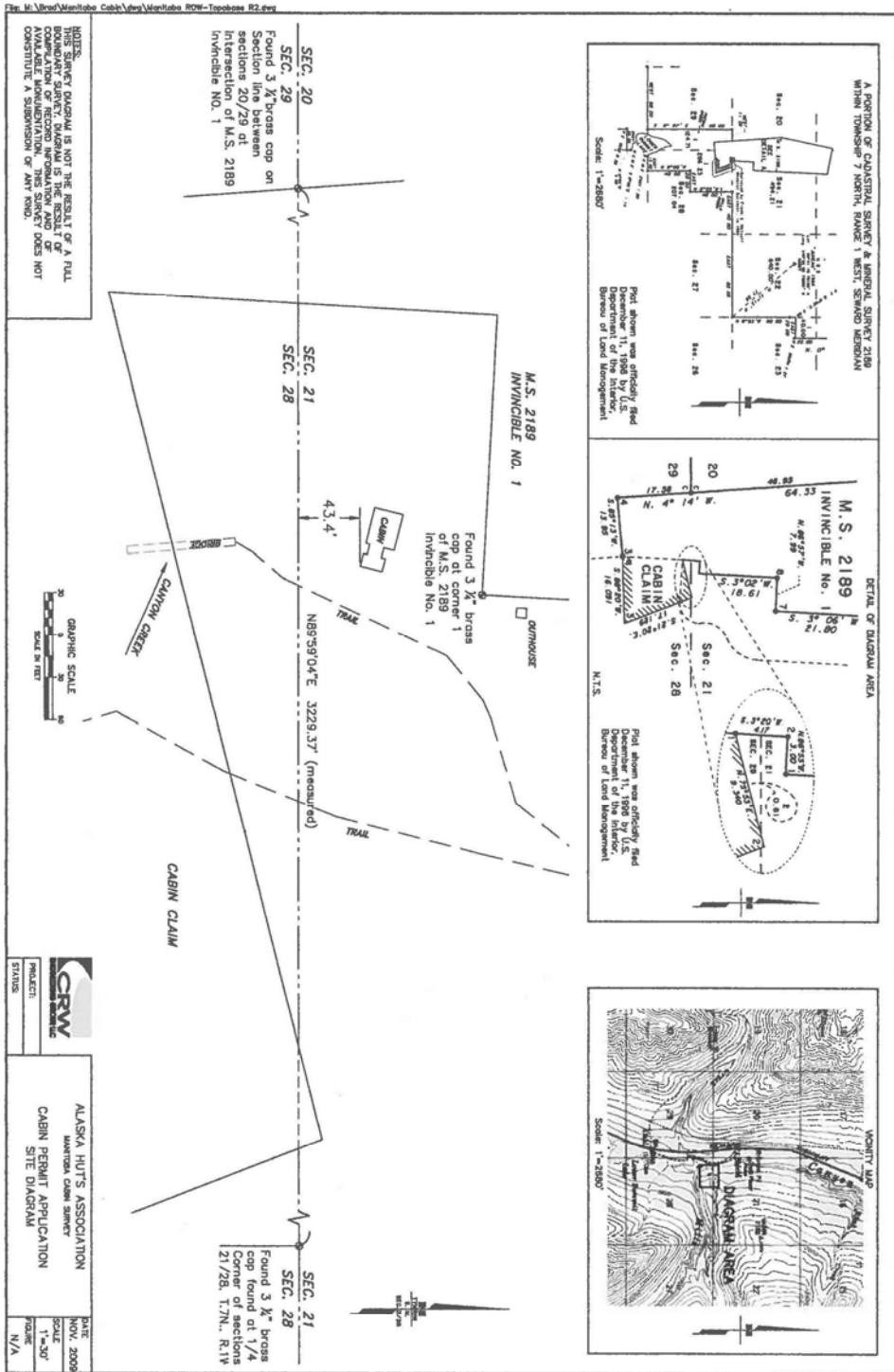
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