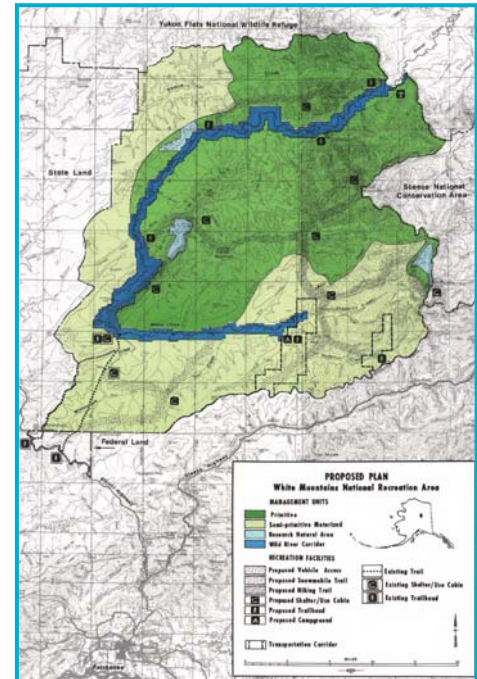


## White Mountains National Recreation Area

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan contains the only National Recreation Area in the State of Alaska. The White Mountains are a year-round, recreation destination for both motorized and non-motorized users, such as skiers, dog teams, fishermen, hikers, and campers. Many visitors come here to float the Beaver Creek National Wild and Scenic River the longest road-to-road float trip in the US at 400 miles and tributary to the mighty Yukon River. The White Mountains area has been recognized for its natural beauty and scientific significance for nearly 30 years. Despite high recreation values and frequent use, the BLM is evaluating making a large portion of these lands available for mineral development and reviewing road construction proposals through the primitive recreation area and the Beaver Creek corridor to provide development access to controversial oil and gas development proposals in the adjacent Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

### The Bureau of Land Management Must Provide Consistent and Compatible Management.



The White Mountains and Beaver Creek were designated by U.S. Congress to protect the scientific, scenic, historical and ecological values of the area. The White Mountains is in Fairbanks' back yard and is a place we value and enjoy for its range of recreation opportunities and landscapes.

The White Mountains contains three Research Natural Areas:

- Limestone Jags: (5,170 acres) Designated for unique karst (limestone) features such as: caves, underground streams, natural bridges or arches, and emergent cold springs which are rare at such high latitudes.
- Serpentine Slide: (4,274 acres) Designated for the periodically active earth flow of serpentine sediments. It is one of the largest slides in Alaska and remains an unusual feature for Interior Alaska.
- Mount Prindle: (5,960 acres – 3,147 acres within White Mountains) Designated for uncommon bird and vegetation populations; it also provides important habitat for Alaska's caribou and Dall sheep.

### Recreation or Roads and Mining?

Under the new BLM plan, the White Mountains area faces increasing threats from potential road development and increased impacts from Off Highway Vehicles (OHV). However, with this new management plan there is significant opportunity to make the much needed improvements and put an end to road development discussions. Some concerns and recommendations:

- Mineral withdrawals should remain in place within the boundaries of the entire White Mountains National Recreation Area to honor the designation adopted under the Alaska National Interest

Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). Recreation is the primary use; public enjoyment and the health of the area would be greatly reduced if development were allowed in the White Mountains.

- Road construction and oil and gas development are not compatible with the designation and management priorities for the White Mountains or the Beaver Creek. These areas have been designated for non-motorized, primitive recreation for over 20 years and protected for more than 30. It is unacceptable to reverse the hard work and time that went into conserving these places for short term, damaging development activities.



View of White Mountains from Beaver Creek –  
Photo taken by Kaarle Straily

- The boundaries of primitive and semi-primitive recreation designations should remain as is. The BLM is considering decreasing the primitive recreation areas to allow for increased mineral development and transportation corridors in a larger semi-primitive area.
- The spine of the White Mountains, an area of 180,000 acres that includes the Limestone Jags, was nominated for inclusion in the National Natural Landmarks Program. This area should be reevaluated for potential inclusion during the planning process.
- Unmonitored OHV use has resulted in great degradation to the White Mountains semi-primitive areas. This reduces the quality of enjoyment, degrades the natural environment, and reduces opportunities for sustainable activities. Better education, enforcement and monitoring are necessary for responsible OHV uses.
- Water quality on Beaver Creek has been greatly disturbed by past placer mining operations. The result has led to high levels of turbidity up to 50 miles downstream which chokes stream beds and reduces critical fish habitat. The BLM has an obligation to ensure the wild natural systems and health of the river is maintained.
- Beaver Creek has a small salmon stock that is sensitive to over harvest and environmental factors. Further studies are required to determine the extent of human impacts on salmon populations. Beaver Creek is a strategic location to study the Yukon River salmon stocks – smaller populations are windows to the larger runs and can help determine management objectives.

**The League anticipates a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be released in spring 2011. For more information, please contact *Darcie Warden 907.459.5539***

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