Unit 3f - Mendenhall Lake

Background

This unit includes the state uplands along Montana Creek and McGinnis Creeks and the shorelands under the Mendenhall River and Mendenhall Lake.

Montana Creek. The lands along Montana Creek were selected from the USFS by the state for community recreation values (NFCG 107). Montana and McGinnis creeks (Subunit 3f25) are currently used for sport fishing. The Montana Creek trail that accesses Spaulding Meadows receives hiking use in the summer and snowmachining and skiing use in the winter. Montana Creek contains important black and brown bear spring habitat. Uplands along Montana Creek and McGinnis Creek have high mineral potential. There are federal mining claims located in the upper Montana Creek drainage. This area contains mineral locations and placer gold has been mined in the area in the past. The area has seen recent exploration activities. CBJ is managing the lower part of the Montana Creek drainage primarily as a recreation area. The CBJ Comprehensive Plan designated Montana Creek and McGinnis Creek as a Watershed Protection Area. As the population in the Mendenhall Valley expands, the creeks may be utilized as a water source. Montana Creek below McGinnis Creek is being considered by ADFG for fisheries habitat enhancement because of impacts from land use activities.

Mendenhall River and Mendenhall Lake. Mendenhall Glacier is the most popular tourist destination in Juneau. The nearby USFS Visitor Center provides interpretive facilities. There are usually numerous icebergs calved from the glacier floating in the lake, and it is frequently photographed. There are extensive hiking trails along both the west and east shores. There is a campground, managed by the USFS, on the southwest shore of the lake. Commercial float companies launch boats from Mendenhall Lake and run trips down the Mendenhall River. In the winter, local residents use the lake for cross-country skiing, snow machining, ice skating, and sledding. The lake and river are proposed by ADFG for a fisheries habitat and improvement project. The USFS has designated Mendenhall Lake as a Special Interest Area. The USFS management intent is to provide for the protection and interpretation of unique features such as this lake with its recreational, scenic, geological, and historic features.

The Mendenhall River is navigable by motor boats up to the Brotherhood Bridge and is frequently used by both commercial and recreational boats. Dredging just north of the Juneau International Airport runway has opened up a slough with sufficient water depths at all tides to accommodate small boats. Commercial float trip operations use the river. Some private recreational boats are moored in the river along residential areas and access Fritz Cove when tides are appropriate. The shifting course, swift current, and silt make harbor development difficult, and to date no public or private developments for small boats have been proposed.

The middle reaches of the Mendenhall River have been impacted by bank revetment and gravel extraction. CBJ has applied for a right-of-way for an 18-inch buried waterline adjacent to the Brotherhood Bridge (ADL 103943). CBJ has also applied for a right-of-way for a 36-inch storm drain from Melvin Park to replace the existing drainpipe. DOTPF is considering replacement of the Brotherhood Bridge that crosses the Mendenhall River.

Management Intent

Montana Creek. Montana and McGinnis creeks will be managed for their high recreation, habitat, and harvest values.

State lands in this unit are open to new mineral location unless specifically closed by a mineral closing order. Land along Montana Creek and below Mendenhall Lake will be closed to new mineral locations (see *Mineral Closure* guidelines below).

Mendenhall River and Mendenhall Lake. The shorelands will be managed primarily for their high recreation, habitat, and harvest values while providing opportunities for public improvements for utilities and roads that must cross the Mendenhall River. Commercial recreation leasing is allowed under .073 on state shorelands on the Mendenhall Lake and River in Subunit 3f40.

Management Guidelines

Land Management Consolidation. Montana Creek was originally nominated for state selection because of its high recreation values. CBJ originally intended to select these lands, but was unable to because of over-selections. These lands continue to have high recreation values. They also have the potential to provide a future water-supply for the Mendenhall Valley. CBJ is already managing the lands on lower Montana Creek for recreation. To ensure future efficient management of these lands, DNR should enter into a cooperative agreement to transfer management of these lands to the CBJ. See also the section on *Land Management Consolidation Proposals* in Chapter 4.

Protect Riparian Areas. DNR should work with DOTPF to ensure that rocks or other structures are placed along the Montana Creek Road to ensure that vehicles do not drive off the road into the riparian zone as they have in the past.

Erosion Control Structures. Much of the uplands along the Mendenhall River are in private ownership. There has been extensive erosion control work along the river banks in the past. When erosion control projects are proposed, navigation, recreation, fisheries, and river hydrology will be taken into consideration. Fill will not be authorized in the river in order to create additional private uplands.

Mineral Closure. The bed (below ordinary high water) of Montana Creek will be closed to new mineral location from the north boundary of state land on Montana Creek to the confluence of Montana Creek with the Mendenhall River. Montana Creek will be closed to protect the spawning, incubation, and rearing areas for significant populations of anadromous fish that live in this clear-water system. Upper Montana Creek (within state lands) is heavily used for sport fishing, hiking, and hunting. Lower Montana Creek (within the CBJ lands) has been identified by the CBJ as a greenbelt.

State-owned uplands in Subunit 3f25 above the ordinary high water mark extending landward fifty (50) feet on either side of Montana Creek will be closed to new mineral location to protect the intensive recreation uses and the fisheries values.

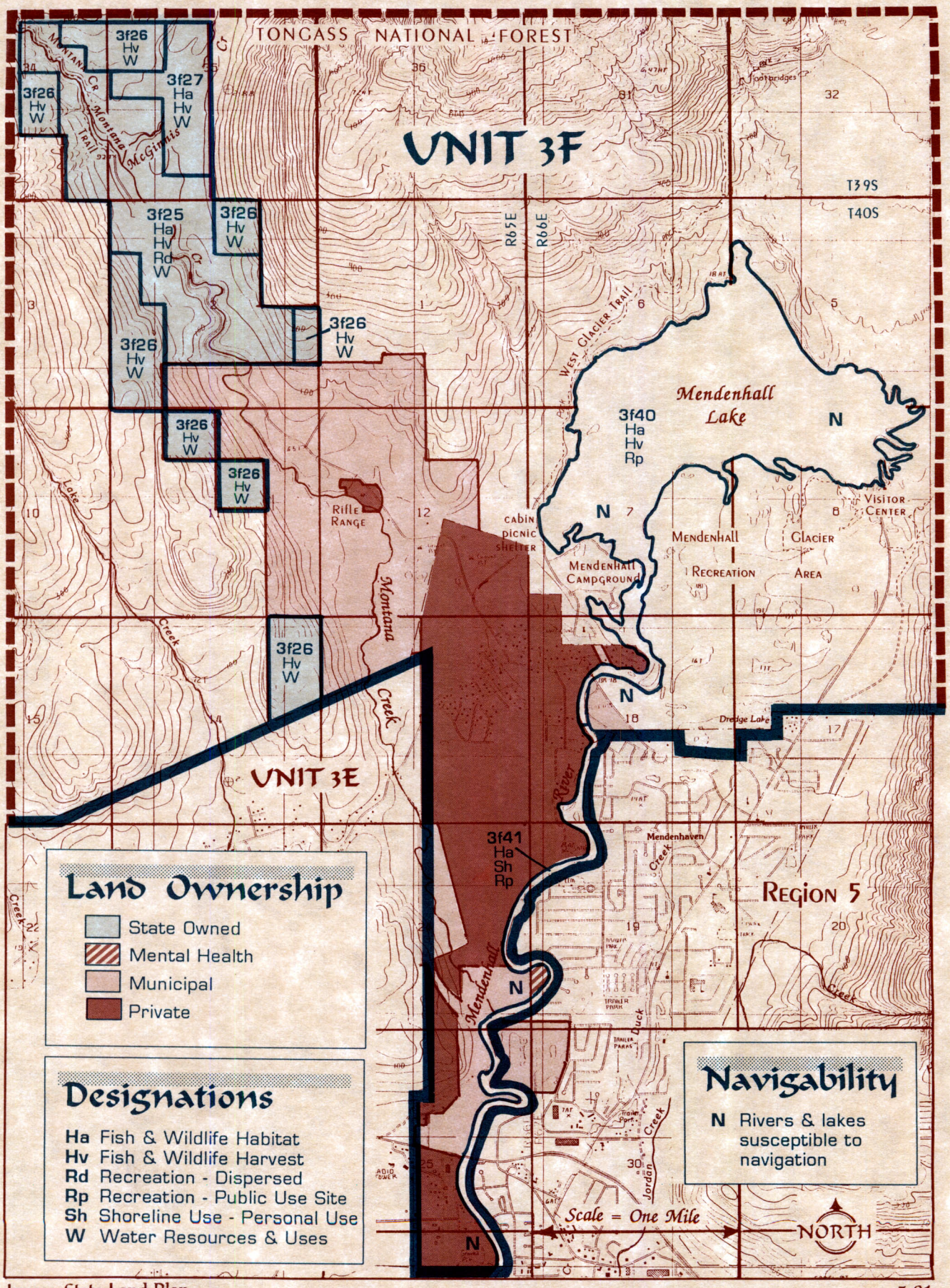
Lands below ordinary high water in Mendenhall Lake (Subunit 3f40) will be closed to new mineral entry to protect high recreation values.

Commercial Recreation Leasing. Authorizations for commercial recreation leasing may be considered for the uplands and shorelands in this unit. DNR will determine the appropriate commercial recreation leasing process on a case-by-case basis.[8] However, commercial recreation leasing on state shorelands on Mendenhall Lake and River should be under the .073 process. Activities may include boating, or wildlife and scenic observation or eduction. No permanent developed facilities for commercial recreation will be allowed.

8 For additional information about commercial recreation leasing, see Chapter 2, Recreation, Tourism, and Scenic Resources section.

Land-Use Designation Summary

For keys to the one-letter and two-letter abbreviations used in this table, see the beginning of this chapter

UNIT 3F: MENDENHALL LAKE						
Area no. & name	**DNR designation**	**CBJ zoning district**	**Land type**	**Adjacent ownership**	**Resource or use**	**Other comments**
3f25 Montana Creek	Ha Hv Rd W	C-watershed protection area	UP	State/ USFS	Black and brown bear spring, summer, and fall habitat; sportfishing; Montana Creek trail and road; anadromous stream; black bear hunting	
3f26 Montana Creek Uplands	Hv W	C-watershed protection area	UP	State/ USFS	Black bear hunting	
3f27 McGinnis Creek	Ha Hv W	C-watershed protection area	UP	State/ USFS	Black and brown bear spring and summer/fall habitat; black bear hunting; anadromous stream	
3f40 Menden-hall Lake & upper river	Ha Hv Rp	RR C-OS	SL	USFS	Cutthroat trout, char, salmon, and rainbow trout overwintering area; cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden sportfishing; USFS trails, visitor center, campground, and recreation around lake perimeter; brown and black bear summer and fall habitat; fish rearing area	Proposed by ADFG as a habitat improvement and rehabilitation area
3f41 Menden-hall River	Ha Sh Rp	I/D-5/ LC/ D-1/ D-15	SL	Private/ CBJ	Public and commercial boating; raptor viewing along river; anadromous stream; trails along shoreline on CBJ and privately owned uplands	Proposed by ADFG as a habitat improvement and rehabilitation area; shoreland adjacent to Mental Health Trust lands currently classified utility (SE- -010)

UNIT 3F Mendenhall Lake