

**Rationale for Changes to Zoning**  
**Kluane National Park and Reserve Draft Management Plan (2022)**  
March 28/ February 03, 2022

The purpose of this document is to provide the rationale for the zoning changes presented in the Kluane National Park and Reserve Draft Management Plan (2021). National park management plans must be reviewed every 10 years, with opportunities for Indigenous and public consultation. The Kluane National Park and Reserve (NPR) draft plan identifies several changes to zoning, following review of the 2010 management plan. The draft management plan was prepared by a working group comprised of members of the Kluane National Park Management Board, Kluane First Nation (KFN), Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN) and Parks Canada.

In June, 2019 public consultations were held in the park region to provide opportunities for area residents and organizations to express their views about park management. Public open house meetings were held in Whitehorse, Haines Junction and Burwash Landing. A meeting with Elders was held in Haines Junction, and meetings with tourism and environmental organizations were held in Whitehorse. The topic of the proposed eco-tourism facilities was presented during these consultations. Support was received for the proposals.

All national park management plans are assessed through a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to understand the potential for impacts and cumulative effects. The SEA for the Kluane National Park and Reserve Draft Management Plan found that the zoning changes and corresponding potential activities are consistent with the park's ability to uphold ecosystem protection requirements.

## 1. Summary of Changes in the Draft Management Plan

The draft management plan reflects changes made to zoning to: 1) incorporate new information about ecosystem protection requirements, and the ecosystems' capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences, 2) confirm and identify visitor experiences that are consistent with these ecosystem protection requirements, and 3) accommodate proposals for First Nations owned and operated eco-tourism lodges. Changes are identified in Map Two and include:

- I. Conversion of six Zone I areas to Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) to reflect the level of ecosystem protection requirements while providing flexibility to allow for visitor experiences.
- II. Based on new ecological inventory information: creation of a new Zone I and a new ESA, expansion of three previous Zone I areas that are now ESAs, and conversion of a Zone I to a Zone II.
- III. Minor boundary adjustments of two Zone I areas to reflect better resolution of mapping of ecological features from when these areas were initially designated and mapped in the 1980s.
- IV. Creation of three small Zone IV areas to accommodate a proposed eco-lodge owned and operated by KFN and two proposed mountain camps owned and operated by CAFN.
- V. Quantitative changes are presented in the table below. Zone II remains at approximately 85% of the park. Zone I has decreased by 14%, but that change is offset by transferring the changed areas to ESAs. Zone III has decreased by 11% as a result of upgrading a segment of the

Dezadeash River to Zone II as described below. Zone IV has increased by 45 ha to align zoning with the proposed First Nations- owned and operated tourism facilities.

Zone	Area in 2010 (km <sup>2</sup> )	Area in 2020 (km <sup>2</sup> )	Change from 2010 (km <sup>2</sup> )	Percent change %	% of Park Area 2010	% of Park Area 2020
Zone I	3,272	187	-3,085	-13.98	14.83	0.85
ESA	0	3,173	3,173	14.38	0.00	14.38
Zone II	18,711	18,647	-64	-0.29	84.81	84.52
Zone III	44	20	-24	-0.11	0.20	0.09
Zone IV	34	35	0	0.002	0.15	0.16
TOTAL	22,062	22,062				

## 2. Proposed First Nations Owned and Operated Tourism Lodges

### **Kluane First Nation Proposed Eco-tourism Lodge**

KFN is moving forward with a proposal to develop an eco-tourism lodge in the park, in the Donjek Valley. The proposal is rooted in their Final Agreement, which identifies providing economic opportunities for the First Nation in the operation and management of the park.

The lodge would support a multi-night visitor experience in KFN's Traditional Territory, near Bighorn Lake. The proposal is for a small-scale operation consisting of a main lodge and visitor and staff cabins, which requires the creation of a small Zone IV area. The infrastructure and servicing requirements (including motorised access) require a Zone IV classification. Other cabins may also be established in other locations in the valley. They are rudimentary in nature and therefore consistent with Zone II. Activities may include experiencing Southern Tutchone culture, aircraft-assisted wildlife viewing and hiking, flight-seeing, and horseback riding. The airstrip which services the lodge is on an airstrip within 1 km of the site, in an existing Zone II area. In Parks Canada policy, aircraft access in Zone II is allowable in remote northern parks with Field Unit Superintendent permission.

Parks Canada and Kluane Community Development Limited Partnership (formerly known as Kluane Community Development Corporation) signed a memorandum of understanding to advance the establishment of the facility (2016). Several assessments of the proposal have been undertaken, including:

- Archaeological impact assessment
- Geotechnical assessment
- Assessment completed for the above archaeological and geotechnical work under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA)*
- Inventory for species at risk and other sensitive species
- Initial assessment of wildlife use of area
- Human-wildlife interaction risk assessment
- Market and feasibility study

This proposal will require an assessment under YESAA when it advances. The YESAA process includes public review.

### **Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Proposed Eco-tourism Lodge**

CAFN is moving toward developing an eco-tourism lodge on their settlement land outside the park beside Mät'atäna Män/Kathleen Lake, with many of the proposed activities to occur in the park. The proposal is rooted in their Final Agreement, which identifies providing economic opportunities for the First Nations in the operation and management of the park. Supporting infrastructure in the park would be developed and may include two mountain camps located on high points, one between Mush and Bates lakes and one between Sockeye and Johobo lakes. The infrastructure and servicing requirements for these mountain camps (including motorised access) require a Zone IV classification in two small areas. Other cabins may also be established in other locations in the valley. They are rudimentary in nature and therefore consistent with Zone II. Activities may include experiencing Southern Tutchone culture, aircraft-assisted wildlife viewing and hiking, flight-seeing, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and dog sledding.

This proposal will require an assessment under YESAA when it advances. The YESAA process includes public review.

## **3. Zoning – Background**

The national park zoning system is a management tool in which land and water areas are classified according to ecosystem and cultural resource protection requirements, and the capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences. It is part of an array of management strategies used to ensure park resources are protected for future generations. As such, zoning provides direction for the activities of park managers and park visitors alike. Zoning is not regulatory and does not affect land claim rights, such as subsistence harvesting.

The national park zoning framework has several categories, five of which are used in Kluane NPR.

### **Zone I - Special Preservation** (seven areas; 0.85% of Kluane NPR)

Zone I lands and waters deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. Motorized access is not permitted. In Kluane NPR, in all Zone I areas, public access is prohibited and motorized access is permitted only for park management purposes.

### **Environmentally Sensitive Areas** (seven areas; 14.38% of Kluane NPR)

In some cases, areas may warrant special protection and management but do not fit the zoning designations. Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) allow for protection of the full range of valued resources and complement the zoning system. Management plans can include the guidelines necessary for the protection and use of such areas, offering an additional level of protection over the requirements for Zone II areas. In Kluane NPR, motorized access is not allowed in ESAs except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access.

### **Zone II - Wilderness** (84.83% of Kluane NPR)

Zone II lands contain extensive areas that are good representations of the natural region and are conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. Zone II areas offer opportunities for visitors to experience firsthand the park's ecosystems and require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities. In much of Zone II, visitors have

the opportunity to experience remoteness and solitude. Motorized access is not allowed except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access.

**Zone III - Natural Environment** (eight areas; 0.09% of Kluane NPR)

Zone III areas are managed as natural environments, and provide opportunities for visitors to experience a park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities requiring minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. Strictly controlled motorized access is allowed.

**Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation** (six areas; 0.16% of Kluane NPR)

Zone IV areas are capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park's heritage values and related essential services and facilities, in ways that impact the ecological integrity of the park to the smallest extent possible, and whose defining feature is direct access by motorized vehicles.

Activity	Zone I	ESA	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV
First Nation subsistence harvesting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Research, monitoring	C	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-motorized recreational travel	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Camping	x	C	✓	✓	✓
Recreational angling	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recreational motor boating	x	x	x	✓	✓
Recreational snowmobiling	x	x	x	C	C
Public aircraft access	x	C	C	C	C
Rudimentary cabins	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-rudimentary eco-lodges/camps with motorized access	x	x	x	x	C

C = Conditionally allowed if activity aligns with site-specific objectives or occurs in designated areas.

#### 4. Zoning Changes in the Kluane NPR Draft Management Plan (2022)

According to the Parks Canada zoning framework, public access is prohibited or strictly controlled in Zone I (Special Preservation) areas. Of the 13 Zone I areas in the 2010 plan, this plan converts six Zone I areas to ESAs, protecting key ecological features and recognizing the ecosystems' capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences. Based on new ecological information, one Zone I has been converted to Zone II. The remaining six areas retain their Zone I designations and public access is prohibited.

Shär Ndü Chù/Duke River Headwaters

Draft change: This area was designated Zone I in past management plans to protect the purple braya plant (*Braya glabella* ssp. *purpurascens*). Based on new information, this area is now designated as Zone II. Inventory work in 2019 did not find purple braya in this area, but instead found *Braya glabella* spp. *glabella*, which is found across Canada (Naturreserve Conservation Status is secure globally (T5)). Since the original zoning, purple braya has been collected from Mt. Hoge and Sheep-Bullion areas. Since both of these areas are in ESAs, there is adequate protection for purple braya.

### Lower Alsek River ESA

Key ecological features: This area has a productive, coastally-influenced environment not found elsewhere in the park and one that is uncommon in Yukon. The Alsek River is a Canadian Heritage River.

Draft change: Convert this Zone I to an ESA to protect key features, recognize protection requirements and the area's capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences. The ESA's northern boundary has been expanded by approximately 10 sq. km to include rare plants and a barn swallow roost (afforded special protection under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA)) found during inventory work in 2017. Motorized access is not allowed except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access.

### Sockeye Lake and River Zone I

Key ecological features: This area provides critical spawning grounds for Canada's most northern population of wild kokanee salmon, the freshwater form of sockeye salmon.

Draft change: Reconfigured boundaries to recognize ecosystem protection requirements and the area's capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences (e.g. hiking on the Cottonwood Trail). No net loss in size of Zone I. Prior to this plan, travelling to and camping at Sockeye Lake was permitted from October 31 to July 14. Now, there is no access to Sockeye Lake, or the rest of this Zone I area, except for park management purposes.

### Goatherd Mountain ESA

Key ecological features: This area is the best representation of the coastal alpine ecosystem in the park. It also provides significant habitat for approximately 100 mountain goats, or 12% of the entire Yukon population.

Draft change: Convert this Zone I to an ESA and triple it in size to protect key mountain goat habitat north of Goatherd Mountain, and to recognize the area's capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences (e.g. day hiking by rafters, backpacking of the Goatherd overland route, and pack-rafters hiking to Bates Lake from the Alsek River). Camping is limited to two nights. All activity is prohibited on the face of Goatherd Mountain, other than hiking on the established access route. Motorized access is not allowed except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access.

### Alsek, Dusty, Disappointment and Kaskawulsh ESA

Key ecological features: This area harbours the densest grizzly bear population in the park and possibly in Canada. Grizzly bears need large areas free of human and aircraft disturbance. This area contains a high density of grizzly bear dens and valuable spring habitat for family groups. This area also includes the Alsek Upper Dunes, critical habitat for the largest population in Canada of baikal sedge, listed as "Special Concern" under SARA.

Draft change: Convert this Zone I to an ESA to protect key features and to recognize the area's capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences. Based on new information, the boundaries were redrawn to follow watershed boundaries and now include the entire Kaskawulsh Valley. The changes maintain protection of the Alsek River as a travel corridor for grizzly bears, but

exclude the far eastern side of the Alsek Valley as lower quality habitat. Camping is restricted to designated sites in the ESA, and day and overnight rafting parties must register. Motorized access is not allowed except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access. The existing Lowell Lake Designated Landing site sits just outside of the ESA, in Zone II.

#### Lower Alsek Dunes Zone I

Key ecological features: This area protects baikal sedge, listed as “Special Concern” under SARA, and the dune tachinid fly, also listed as “Special Concern”.

Draft change: In 2010, this area was part of the Alsek/Kaskawulsh Grizzly Bear Zone I. Now that the Alsek/Kaskawulsh Grizzly Bear Zone is being proposed as an ESA, this area has been retained as Zone I for special protection of the dunes. As in the 2010 plan, there is no access except for park management purposes.

#### Dän Zhùr/Donjek – Mt. Hoge ESA

Key ecological features: This area protects over 1,000 Dall’s sheep. Hoge and Atlas alpine passes are particularly important in the summer, containing up to 40% of the subpopulation. The alpine also protects some of the most northern mountain goats in Canada and collared pika, a species afforded protection under SARA. The valley ponds provide breeding habitat for several SARA-protected birds, such as horned grebes and red-necked phalaropes, and the grasslands contain a sage endemic to Yukon.

Draft changes: Convert this Zone I to an ESA to protect key features and to recognize the area’s capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences. Expand the original area by 100 sq. km to include Mt. Hoge up to the park’s boundary. Actions will be taken to minimize disturbance from hiking and aircraft to the known wolf den in the area. Motorized access is not allowed except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access. The following new protections apply:

- Camping in Hoge Pass is prohibited.
- Parks Canada will work with aircraft operators and local pilots to minimize impacts associated with flights through Hoge and Atlas passes.
- Restrictions may be established to minimize disturbance from hiking and aircraft to the wolf den in the area.

#### Thechàl Dhâl’ Zone I and Thechàl Dhâl’ ESA

Key ecological features: Thechàl Dhâl’ ESA, along with ‘A’ây Chù’ ESA, represents a unique array of plants from Beringia, the Great Plains and coastal ecosystems. Combined with the area outside of the park around Silver Creek, this is a hotspot of biodiversity, hosting over 891 species that includes a quarter of the vascular plants known to occur in Yukon. The wind-swept mountain creates the best year-round habitat for Dall’s sheep in the park and supports 300 to 400 sheep. The south face of Thechàl Dhâl’ is critical lambing habitat. Sheep Bullion Plateau provides significant habitat for family groups of grizzly bears.

Draft Changes: The south face of Thechàl Dhâl’ remains a Zone I, while the remainder is converted to an ESA to protect key features and to recognize the area’s capability and suitability to provide

opportunities for visitor experiences. Expand the new ESA to fully include Sheep Bullion Plateau, which is sensitive bear habitat. No motorized access is allowed, except for park management purposes (Zone I and ESA) and strictly controlled public aircraft access (ESA only). Camping continues to be prohibited in the southern portion of the ESA and restricted to one night in the northern portion of Sheep Bullion Plateau. New protections include:

- Hiking Thechàl Dhâl' Ridge Route is prohibited during lambing season (May 1 to June 16).
- While hiking is allowed on the route to Shepherd's Knoll and Soldier's Summit, access is not permitted to the south-facing slopes above, which are Zone I.

#### 'A'äy Chù' Delta ESA

Key ecological features: 'A'äy Chù' ESA, along with Thechàl Dhâl' ESA, represents a unique array of plants from Beringia, the Great Plains and coastal ecosystems. Combined with the area outside of the park around Silver Creek, this is a hotspot of biodiversity, hosting over 891 species that includes a quarter of the vascular plants known to occur in Yukon.

Draft Changes: Convert 'A'äy Chù' Delta Zone I to an ESA to protect key features and to recognize the area's capability and suitability to provide opportunities for visitor experiences. Motorized access is not allowed except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access. The following new protection applies:

- Access is only allowed from the existing 'A'äy Chù' (Slim's River) West and East trailheads. Access from the highway is not allowed.

#### Shar Tägà'/Grizzly Creek ESA

This is a new ESA to protect a sensitive ecosystem that has recently been identified as possible habitat for undocumented plant species unique to the area. Motorized access is not allowed except for park management purposes and strictly controlled public aircraft access.

#### Zone III changes

There are no new Zone III areas.

The management approach in past management plans has been to use Superintendent's Orders to allow recreational snowmobiling in the park in certain Zone III and IV areas. Snowmobiling will continue on the Mät'ätäna Män/Kathleen Lake Access Road, the Mät'ätäna Män/Kathleen Lake Day Use Area parking lot, the surface of Mät'ätäna Män/Kathleen Lake, along the pipeline right-of way between Dakwäkäda/Haines Junction and Titl'at Män/Dezadeash Lake, and the Dezadeash River from the park boundary to Serpentine Creek. To minimize vulnerability of moose to wolf predation resulting from snowmobile-compacted travel routes, public snowmobile use will not be permitted on the Mush Lake Road. Under special permits and formal agreements, snowmobiles may be used to track set cross-country ski trails on the Mush Lake Road, but only as far as Alder Creek. Any new proposed snowmobile access points along Zone III roads will be carefully considered and would only be enabled if strict ecological protection and visitor experience objectives can be met and maintained.

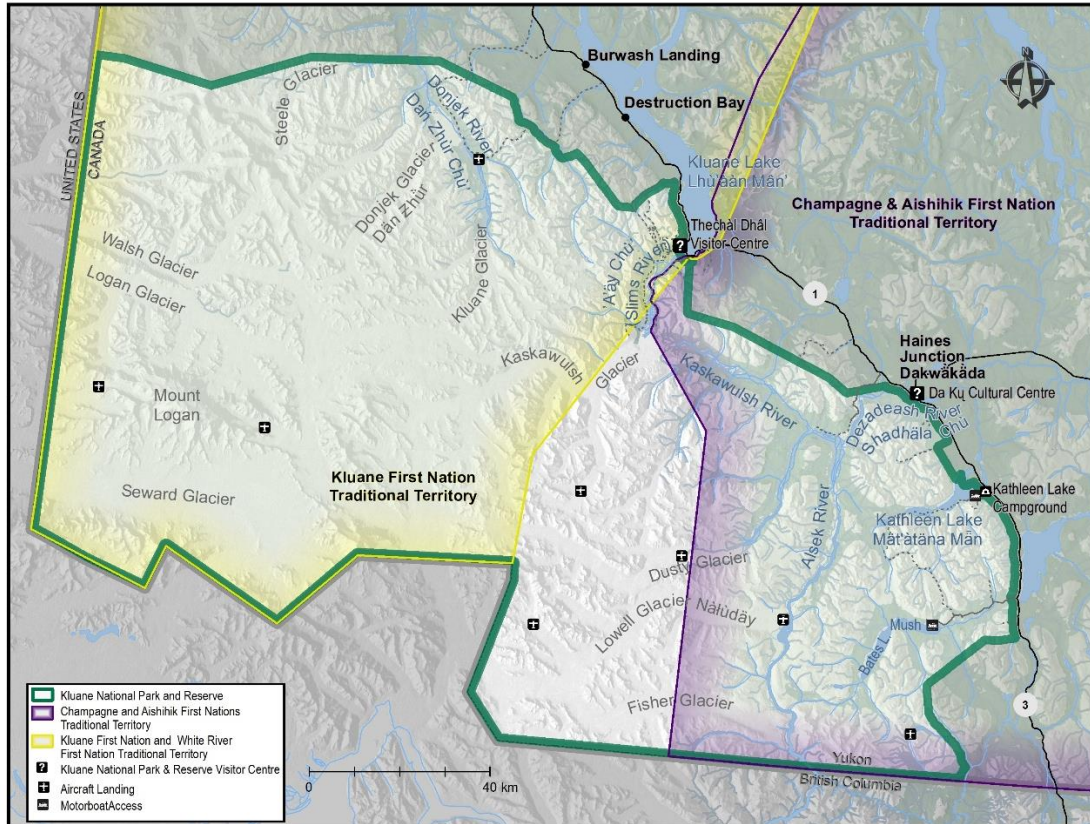
## Zone IV Zoning Changes

Three small areas have changed from Zone II to Zone IV to accommodate proposed First Nation eco-tourism lodges. These zoning changes are described in detail in Section 2: Proposed First Nation-Owned and Operated Tourism Facilities.

For a complete description of Parks Canada zoning, please see:

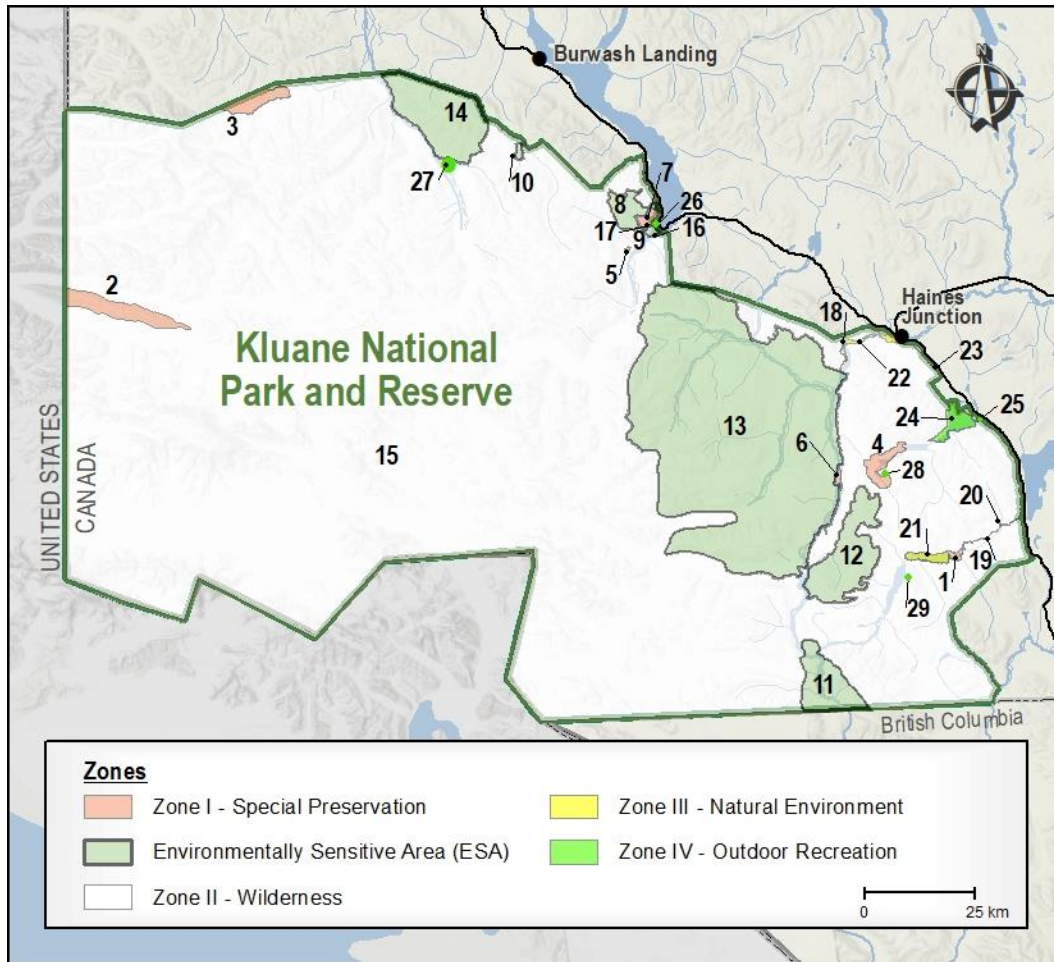
English: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/docs/pc/poli/princip>

French: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/fr/docs/pc/poli/princip>



Map One – Kluane National Park and Reserve





Map Two – Zoning in Kluane National Park and Reserve

Zoning Map References		
ID	Zone Type	Zone Name
1	I	Fraser Creek Fen
2	I	Logan Nunatak
3	I	Gyu' Aan Nji/Steele Creek Alpine
4	I	Sockeye Lake and River
5	I	Tthe Dats'aala Chù'/Bullion Creek Dunes
6	I	Lower Alsek Dunes
7	I	Thechàl Dhâl' Zone I
8	ESA	Thechàl Dhâl' ESA
9	ESA	'A'ąy Chù' Delta
10	ESA	Shar Tägà'/Grizzly Creek
11	ESA	Lower Alsek River
12	ESA	Goatherd Mountain

13	ESA	Alsek, Dusty, Disappointment and Kaskawulsh
14	ESA	Dän Zhùr/Donjek – Mt. Hoge
15	II	Zone II
16	III	'A'äy Chù' (Slim's River) East Road
17	III	'A'äy Chù' (Slim's River) West Road
18	III	Alsek Road
19	III	Mush Lake Road
20	III	Shorty Creek Road
21	III	Mush Lake
22	III	Abandoned pipeline right-of-way
	III	Dezadeash River from boundary to Serpentine Creek
23	IV	Mät'ätäna Män/Kathleen Lake
24	IV	Kathleen Lake Day Use Area and Campground
25	IV	Thechàl Dhâl' Visitor Centre
26	IV	Proposed KFN eco-tourism lodge
27	IV	Proposed CAFN mountain camp
28	IV	Proposed CAFN mountain camp