



**SPECIAL AREA PERMIT FH-15-IV-GP10-SA**

**ISSUED:** April 1, 2015  
**EXPIRES:** March 31, 2016

General Public:

***Re: Susitna Flats State Game Refuge - Off-Road Vehicle Use and Aircraft Landings***

In response to public need for access to the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge (SFSGR), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Habitat has determined that both the public interest and the proper protection of fish and wildlife and their habitat would be served through the issuance of a general permit. This general permit, issued pursuant to 5 AAC 95, authorizes certain types of off-road motorized vehicle use and the landing of aircraft within the SFSGR.

The SFSGR was established in 1976 pursuant to AS 16.20.036 to protect:

1. Fish and wildlife habitat and populations, particularly waterfowl nesting, feeding, and migration areas; moose calving areas; spring and fall bear feeding areas; salmon spawning and rearing habitats; and
2. Public uses of fish and wildlife and their habitat, particularly waterfowl, moose, and bear hunting; viewing; photography; and general recreation in a high quality environment.

State statutes and the SFSGR Management Plan authorize multiple land use activities on the refuge if the activity provides proper protection of fish and game. The operation of off-road vehicles and aircraft is not expected to adversely impact important habitat values, fish and wildlife populations, or public recreation provided all activities are conducted in strict accordance with the conditions and stipulations contained herein.

**OFF-ROAD VEHICLES**

**Less than 1,000 Lbs GVW**

The off-road use of any wheeled, tracked, or other ground effect motorized vehicle **less than one thousand pounds (1,000 lbs)** gross vehicle weight (inclusive of operator and gear) is authorized from **November 9 through March 31** in the following areas provided the following conditions exist:

- On all refuge lands, provided there is at least a **twelve inch (12") snow cover and sufficient ground frost** to prevent the penetration of or disturbance to the soil surface or plant roots.

- On the Enstar Gas Pipeline right-of-way and marked trails to Figure Eight Lake and Flat Horn Lake (see attached map) provided there is sufficient **ground frost** to prevent the penetration of or disturbance to the soil surface or plant roots.

### **Less than 10,000 Lbs GVW**

The off-road use of any wheeled, tracked, or other ground effect motorized vehicle **less than ten thousand pounds (10,000 lbs)** gross vehicle weight (inclusive of operator and gear) is authorized from **November 9 through March 31** in the following area provided the following conditions exist:

- On the Enstar Gas Pipeline right-of-way, and on the frozen surface and floodplain of the Susitna River to access Flat Horn Lake and Alexander Creek north of where the Enstar Gas Pipeline crosses the Susitna River (see attached map), provided there is sufficient **ground frost** to prevent the penetration of or disturbance to the soil surface or plant roots.

Ground-effect vehicle operation other than specifically described herein requires an individual Special Area Permit from the Division of Habitat.

### **Aircraft Landings**

The landing of fixed-wing aircraft is authorized year-round within the SFSGR **except within the High Density Spring Waterfowl Staging Area** (see attached map) which is closed to aircraft landings from **April 1 through May 15** to avoid disturbance of waterfowl populations during spring staging (5 AAC 95.515(3)). The landing of rotary aircraft within the SFSGR requires an individual Special Area Permit from the Division of Habitat.

Pursuant to 5 AAC 95, the operation of vehicles and aircraft within the SFSGR as described above is authorized provided all activities are performed in strict accordance with the stipulations below:

1. The operation of vehicles within open waters on the SFSGR is prohibited. In addition, ice cover on wetlands and other water bodies must be of sufficient strength to support the laden weight of the off-road vehicle.
2. Harassment of wildlife is prohibited.
3. Vehicles or equipment shall not be left unattended within the SFSGR. The use of vehicles and aircraft within the refuge shall not restrict or interfere with public access to or across state land, or to fish and wildlife resources.
4. No material of any kind, including waste products, debris, supplies, or equipment shall be stored or disposed of within the SFSGR.
5. No vehicles leaking fuels, oils, hydraulic or cooling fluids shall be operated within the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge.

The vehicle/aircraft owner and operator, or the legal guardian of minor dependents (permittee's), are responsible for the actions of contractors, agents, or other persons who participate in the approved activity. For any activity that significantly deviates from the approved activity, the permittee shall notify the Division of Habitat at the above letterhead address and obtain written approval in the form of an individual Special Area Permit before beginning the activity. Any action taken by the permittee or an agent of the permittee that increases the overall scope of the permitted activity or that negates, alters, or minimizes the intent or effectiveness of any stipulation contained in this permit will be deemed a significant deviation from the approved plan. The final determination as to the significance of any deviation and the need for a permit amendment is the responsibility of the Division of Habitat.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Division of Habitat be consulted immediately when a deviation from the approved plan is being considered.

This letter constitutes a General Permit issued under the authority of 5 AAC 95. Please be advised that this approval does not relieve the permittee of the responsibility for securing all other applicable state, federal, or local permits.

The permittee shall mitigate any adverse effect upon fish or wildlife, their habitat, or any restriction or interference with public use, which the commissioner determines may be expected to result from, or which actually results from, the permittee's activity, or which was a direct result of the permittee's failure to: 1) comply with a permit condition or a provision of 5 AAC 95; or 2) correct a condition or change a method foreseeably detrimental to fish and wildlife, or their habitat.

The recipient of this permit (the permittee) shall indemnify, save harmless, and defend the Division of Habitat, its agents, and its employees from any and all claims, actions, or liabilities for injuries or damages sustained by any person or property arising directly or indirectly from permitted activities or the permittee's performance under this permit amendment. However, this provision has no effect if, and only if, the sole proximate cause of the injury is the Division of Habitat's negligence.

An interested person may initiate an appeal of a decision made under this chapter in accordance with the provisions of AS 44.62.330 - 44.62.630 by requesting a hearing under AS 44.62.370.

Sincerely,  
Sam Cotten, Commissioner

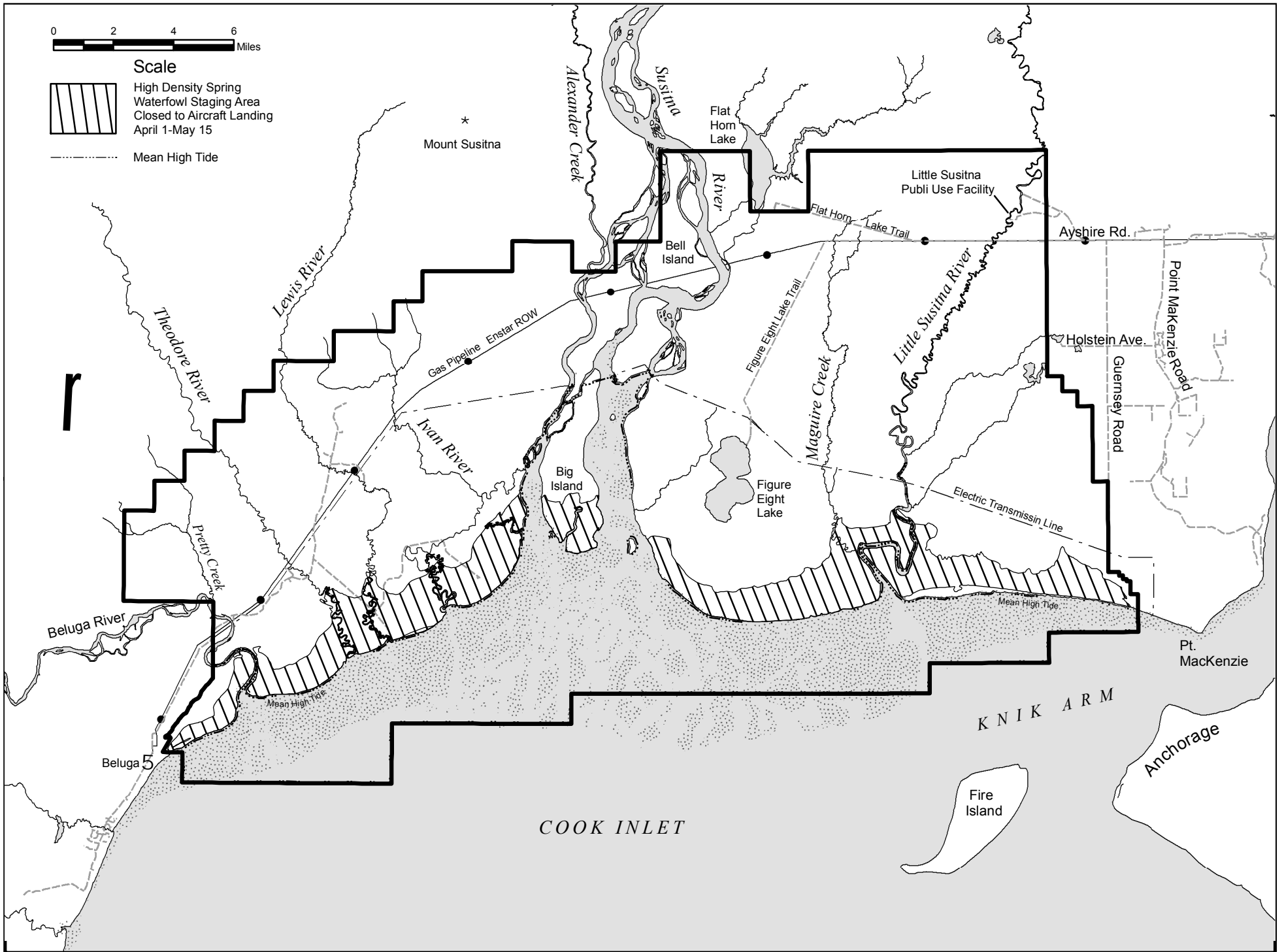


By: Michael L. Bethe, Habitat Biologist  
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Attachment: Susitna Flats State Game Refuge Map

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|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| cc: C. Cox, DMLW | J. Meehan, WC   | A. Oels, WC        | A. Ott, Habitat  |
| S. Ivey, SF      | E. Weiss, WC    | M. Fink, SF        | W. Biessel, DPOR |
| T. Rinaldi, WC   | D. Massie, AWT  | T. Massie, Habitat | B. Johnson, AWT  |
| D. Hill, WC      | C. Larsen, DMLW | T. Taranto, MSB    |                  |



**Scale**

- High Density Spring Waterfowl Staging Area Closed to Aircraft Landing April 1-May 15
- Mean High Tide

Susitna Flats State Game Refuge