



Denali National Park & Preserve

Superintendent
Denali National Park and Preserve
P.O. Box 9
Denali, AK, 99755

Cantwell Subsistence ORV Management Preliminary Alternatives Newsletter

Message from the Superintendent

March 2006

Dear Planning Participant,

As many of you know, National Park Service staff have been working to develop alternatives for managing subsistence ORV use in the Cantwell traditional ORV use area in the park (see Figure 1). In December 2005, we mailed out a scoping letter and met with some of you at public meetings in Cantwell and Anchorage to ask for your ideas.

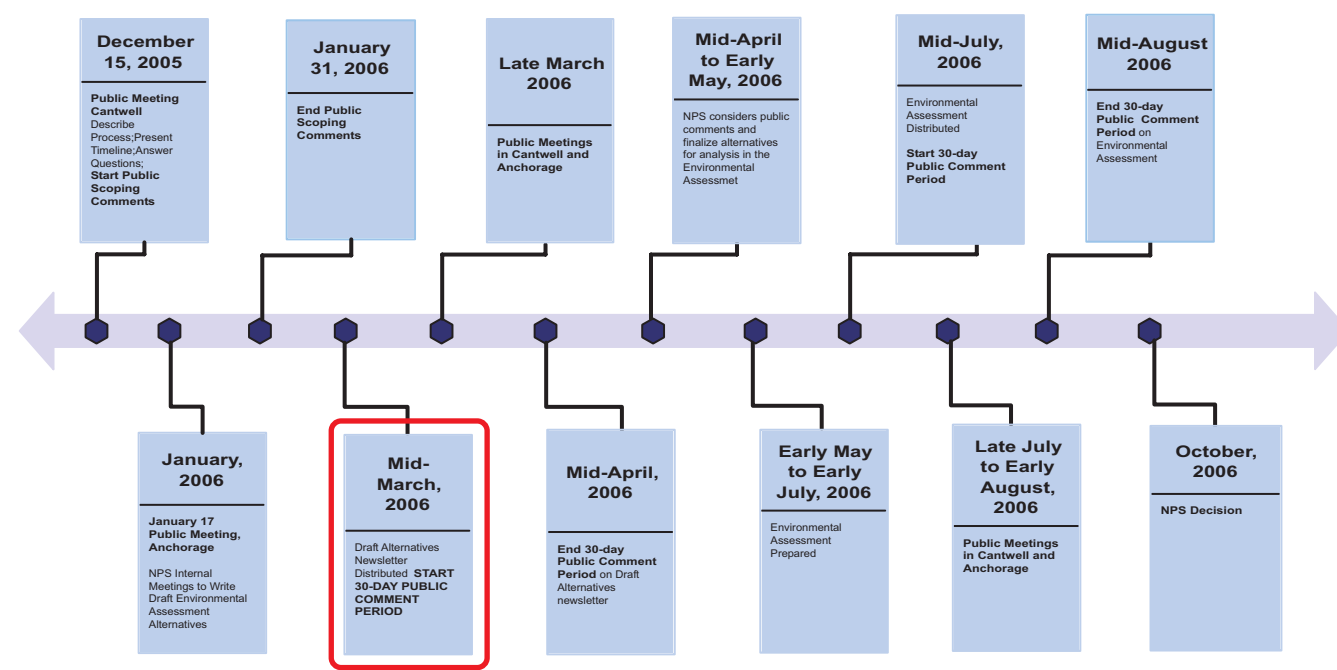
We have received several comments and have used them to create a range of preliminary alternatives. We describe these alternatives in this newsletter and explain the details supporting each.

We will be holding public meetings in order to discuss these alternatives in person with you. The meeting schedule and locations are:

April 4 – Cantwell
Cantwell Community Hall
Open House from 7:00pm to 9:00pm

April 5 – Anchorage
Egan Center, Lower Level, Space 5
555 W. 5th Avenue
Open House from 6:00pm to 8:00pm

Cantwell Subsistence ORV Use Environmental Assessment Process Milestones



We Are Here

This schedule outlines approximately when each step will take place. Dates are subject to change. This document serves as a guideline to the public process. Public meetings will be announced in advance. *Revised March 2, 2006.* Change reflects extended public comment period.

We appreciate any time you can spend reading the preliminary alternatives, thinking about them, and sharing your thoughts with us. If you like one alternative better than the others, please tell us why. If you don't like any of the alternatives, feel free to combine or modify an alternative, or create an entirely new alternative, to reflect your own vision. Based on your ideas, we'll refine the alternatives and present them for public comment in an environmental assessment this summer.

Thank you for your help! We look forward to hearing from you.

Paul R. Anderson
Superintendent

Inside this Newsletter

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Why We're Taking This Action (Purpose)

In July 2005, we published the final “Cantwell Subsistence Traditionally Employed ORV Determination” which opened the entire Cantwell traditional ORV use area to the use of ORVs for subsistence purposes. The reason we are taking this current action is to make certain we manage subsistence ORV use in this area in a way that will minimize adverse impacts to park resource values while also providing reasonable access for subsistence purposes.

The reason we are taking this action is to make certain that we manage subsistence ORV use in the Cantwell traditional ORV use area in a way that will minimize adverse impacts to park resource values while also providing reasonable access for subsistence purposes.

It is important that we manage this use in a way that is thoughtful, logical, and rooted in the purposes for which Denali National Park and Preserve was created. These purposes are found in the language of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA, Pub. L. 96- 487), that enlarged and renamed the park Denali National Park and Preserve. Section 202 (3) (a) of ANILCA stated that the Denali National Park and Preserve additions are to be managed for the following specific purposes:

- To protect and interpret the entire mountain massif and the additional scenic mountain peaks and formations.
- To protect habitat for, and populations of fish and wildlife, including, but not limited to, brown/grizzly bears, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, swans, and other waterfowl.
- To provide continued opportunities, including reasonable access, for mountain climbing, mountaineering, and other wilderness recreational activities.



The Next Steps

After the public review of these preliminary alternatives, we will make modifications and then prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will describe and analyze the alternatives. In the EA, we will identify a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative may be very similar to one of the preliminary alternatives, may incorporate elements from more than one preliminary alternative, or could be an entirely new alternative.

How to Comment

We would like to hear your thoughts about these preliminary alternatives. Please provide as much detail in your comments as possible. If you would like us to consider something new or a variation of what has been presented, please give us the specifics about what you want us to consider and explain why you think it would benefit subsistence users, park visitors, or park resources.

You are welcome to submit your comments at any time during the planning process, but comments will be most helpful if we receive them by April 14, 2006. You can comment on these alternatives in several ways:

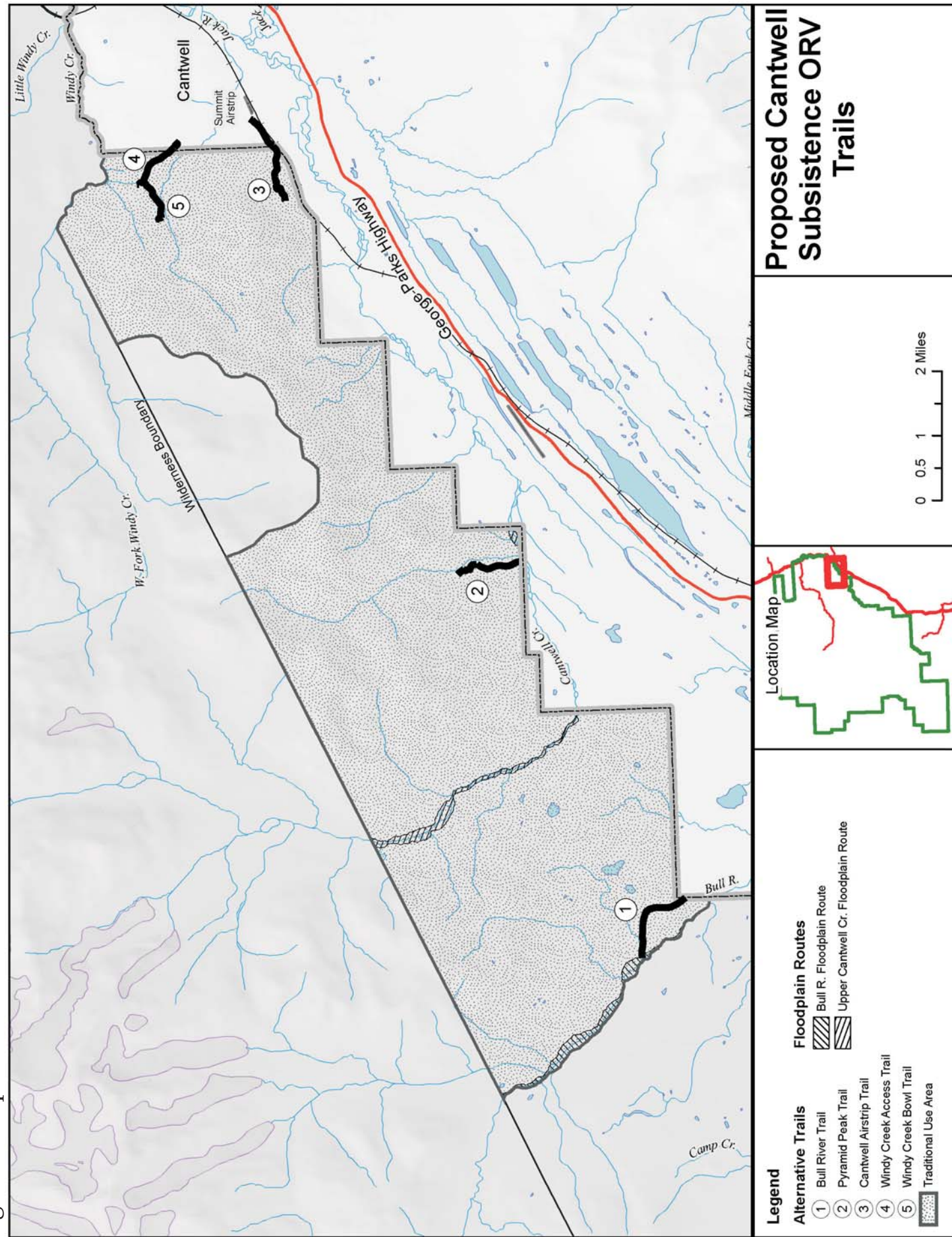
* Mail comments to:
Superintendent
Denali National Park and Preserve
P.O. Box 9
Denali, AK, 99755

* Fax comments to (907) 683- 9612

* Comments also may be sent electronically through the National Park Service's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) program located on the new NPS public comment website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Once at this site, select “Denali NP&P” from the list of parks. On the Denali page, select “Cantwell ORV Environmental Assessment” from the list of projects. The newsletter will be found under “Documents and Links.” Instructions for commenting also will be found there.

Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individuals may request that we withhold their home address from the administrative record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the administrative record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Figure 1. Proposed Cantwell Subsistence ORV Trails



What Led to This Action (Need)

In addition to describing the specific purposes for which Denali National Park and Preserve is to be managed, Section 202(3)(a) of ANILCA provided that “subsistence uses by local residents shall be permitted in the additions to the park where such uses are traditional in accordance with the provisions in title VIII.” Under Title VIII of ANILCA, section 811(a) states that “rural residents engaged in subsistence uses shall have reasonable access to subsistence resources on public lands.” Subsistence access is further addressed in section 811(b) where it states that “the Secretary [of Interior] shall permit on the public lands appropriate use for subsistence purposes of snowmobiles, motorboats and other means of surface transportation traditionally employed for such purposes by local residents, subject to reasonable regulation.”

On July 22, 2005, we published a final “Cantwell Subsistence Traditionally Employed ORV Determination” in which we determined that the community of Cantwell had used ORVs for successive generations for subsistence purposes in portions of the Denali Park additions before the establishment of the Denali National Monument in 1978 (see Figure 1). Such use is subject to the provisions of 36 CFR 13.46, and other applicable laws and regulations.

On August 1, 2005, we implemented a temporary 120- day closure to protect park resources in the area where Cantwell residents traditionally employed ORVs for subsistence purposes that was identified in the Determination. Three existing trails were exempted from this closure.

The closure allowed reasonable access to subsistence resources for the residents of Cantwell while protecting park resources and also giving us time to complete the necessary field work and environmental documentation evaluating ORV effects on park resources and values. This is the work we are now doing and which is reflected by the alternatives in this newsletter.

The Preliminary Alternatives

The following table presents the range of preliminary alternatives at this point. Alternative 1 (No Action), represents the status quo, and is used as a baseline against which to compare the changes and impacts of the other alternatives. In addition to this “no action” alternative, there are four action alternatives.

Under all alternatives, the NPS would continue to adhere to existing law and regulation, in particular ANILCA Section 811(b) and its implementing regulations in 36 CFR 13.46.) Also, closures proposed under any of the alternatives would require public involvement and would be implemented through measures such as signs and maps, and would be published in the Superintendent’s Compendium.

Under the action alternatives, the NPS would apply the concept of adaptive management. For example, if unacceptable damage is resulting from ORV use, the following actions may be taken: sustainable trail construction; limits on ORV user numbers; partial or complete closures of areas damaged by ORV use. Monitoring strategies would be developed to determine whether ORV use is adversely affecting park resources values. (These strategies have not been completed, but will be included in the forthcoming EA.)

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION)	ALTERNATIVE 2	ALTERNATIVE 3	ALTERNATIVE 4	ALTERNATIVE 5
Alternative Summary				
<p>The Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would remain open to use of ORVs by federally qualified subsistence users for <u>no</u> restrictions or closures other than the existing 36 CFR 13.46(d) restrictions.</p>	<p>Within the Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area, off-trail use of ORVs would continue to be permitted by federally qualified subsistence users only for extraction of harvested moose and caribou. This use would be managed via permit system which would specify best practices and best available technology. Vehicle type would be restricted to best available technology (BAT), including low psi tracked vehicles, or four-wheelers with additional restrictions (e.g., sensitive habitat "closures" below for more detail). The use of ORVs by federally qualified subsistence users for all subsistence purposes would continue to be allowed on designated existing trails and routes.</p>	<p>The Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would remain open to use of ORVs by federally qualified subsistence users for all designated existing trails and routes described in Alt 2. The remainder of the Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would be closed by regulation to ORV use. This regulatory closure would be balanced by new ORV trail construction and a second specific ORV route designation to provide reasonable and sustainable access.</p>	<p>The Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would remain open to use of ORVs by federally qualified subsistence users for all designated existing trails described in Alt 2. No new ORV trails would be constructed and no routes would be designated for ORV use. The remainder of the Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would be closed by regulation to ORV use. This regulatory closure would be balanced by the following additional actions: implementing an extended winter hunting season, initiating a contract between the NPS and a horse-packing outfit to extract harvested moose and caribou; and identifying a viable bypass route for ORV use along Cantwell Creek that is entirely outside the park boundary.</p>	<p>The entire Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would be closed by regulation to ORV use. This regulatory closure would be balanced by an extended winter hunting season to provide reasonable and sustainable access.</p>
Off-Trail ORV Use for Subsistence				
<p>Allowed for all subsistence purposes by federally qualified subsistence users throughout the Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area.</p>	<p>Allowed only by permit for extraction of harvested moose or caribou for subsistence purposes by federally qualified subsistence users during the fall hunting season.</p>	<p>Not allowed.</p>	<p>Not allowed. Instead: (1) a winter hunt would be implemented, primarily in the area southwest of Cantwell Creek and into the Bull River area; (2) the NPS would explore alternative methods to retrieve large game from the determination area; and (3) the NPS would identify a viable bypass route for ORV use that is entirely outside the park boundary along lower Cantwell Creek.</p>	<p>Not allowed. Instead, a winter hunt would be implemented, primarily in the area southwest of Cantwell Creek and into the Bull River area.</p>
<p>None.</p>	<p>Two types of ORVs may be used for extraction of harvested moose or caribou: (1) ORVs designed with best available technology, including low ground pressure (low psi) (e.g., tracked ARGOs or Snow Cats); or (2) Four-wheeled ORVs with a maximum curb weight of 750 lbs, a maximum engine size of 500 cc, and factory tires (no aggressive lugged/paddle tires). Trailers must meet the same standards as the vehicle they're attached to.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Permits</p>	<p>Subsistence users must obtain a permit from the NPS to use a vehicle for extraction. Permits would be issued by the NPS when the hunting permit is issued. Travel guidelines established by the NPS or other best practices (e.g., Tread Lightly) must be followed. To better monitor impacts, the ORV user must provide the NPS with a map or a GPS-tracking log (or similar record) identifying the travel route used for extraction.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Closures</p>	<p>No ORVs may be used: (1) across open water; (2) over areas with greater than 25% slopes; or (3) across areas with existing unacceptable damage that have been designated for recovery. In addition, four-wheeled ORVs may not be used across sensitive habitats such as open wetlands.¹</p>	<p>Except for designated trails and routes (see below), the Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would be closed by regulation to ORV use.</p>	<p>Except for designated trails and routes (see below), the Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would be closed by regulation to ORV use.</p>	<p>The Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would be closed by regulation to ORV use.</p>
On-Trail Use of ORVs for Subsistence				
<p>Allowed for all subsistence purposes by federally qualified subsistence users on <u>all</u> existing trails and routes.</p>	<p>Allowed for all subsistence purposes by federally qualified subsistence users <u>only</u> on the following trails or routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Windy Creek Access Trail; Windy Creek Bowl Trail; Cantwell Airstrip Trail; Pyramid Peak Trail; and Upper Cantwell Creek Floodplain Route (as necessary, the NPS would delineate specific route(s) to protect resources on the Cantwell Creek floodplain). </p>	<p>The same as Alternative 2, plus additional trails/routes for all subsistence purposes by federally qualified subsistence users: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bull River Trail (new construction); and Bull River Floodplain Route (as necessary, the NPS would delineate specific route(s) to protect resources on the Bull River floodplain). </p>	<p>The same as Alternative 2, but the NPS would close the Upper Cantwell Creek Floodplain Route</p>	<p>The Cantwell Traditional ORV Use Area would be closed by regulation to ORV use.</p>
<p>None.</p>	<p>Only ORVs with a maximum curb vehicle weight limit of 1,500 pounds and a maximum width of 5.5 feet would be allowed.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

¹To view maps of the closed areas under Alternative 2, go to the National Park Service's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) program located at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Once at this site, select "Denali NP&P" from the list of parks. On the Denali page, select "Cantwell ORV Environmental Assessment" from the list of projects. The maps will be found under "Documents and Links." (Note: Only open water, areas with slopes greater than 25%, and open wetlands are shown on the map. Recovery areas have not been identified and, therefore, aren't shown at this time.)