



Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area

Introduction

On March 30, 2009, President Obama signed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (S. 22/H.R. 146). This legislation included among its 160 constituent bills S.3045, which designates Alaska's first National Heritage Area, known as the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area (KMTANHA). The majority of lands designated are national forest lands within the Chugach National Forest. The theme of this NHA is the history of transportation on the eastern Kenai Peninsula, from Alaska Native trails, to mining and settlement, to modern highway and rail transportation.

Background

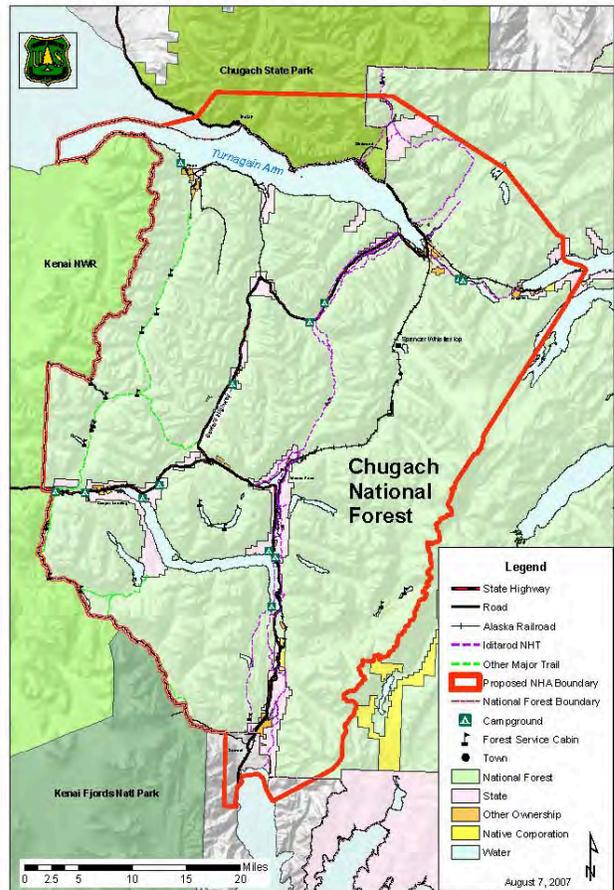
Traditionally, an NHA designation provides a mechanism for communities and citizens to:

- Preserve and protect the cultural and natural heritage of an area.,
- Promote the area for economic development, and
- Secure federal assistance funds through the Department of the Interior.

In contrast to most NHAs, the KMTANHA is primarily comprised of federal lands. It includes the entire Seward Ranger District and part of the Glacier Ranger District, with 89 percent of NHA within the Chugach National Forest.

Although the Interior Department is the designated federal manager for this heritage area, the Forest Service will be an active partner in working with the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm Heritage Corridor Communities Association (KTCA) and the National Park Service to implement this legislation and ensure good integration with existing Forest Plan direction for national forest lands.

USDA Chugach National Forest
Proposed Kenai Mountains - Turnagain Arm NHA



Current Situation

The KMTANHA is focused on the theme of transportation for mining and settlement, including Native use, gold rushes and contemporary placer mining, trail and wagon road development, the Iditarod Trail, railroad and highway development.

The Forest Service has several projects underway that dovetail very closely with the goals of this transportation-focused heritage area. We are restoring a 180-mile recreation route on the Iditarod National Historic Trail between Seward and Girdwood. The original Iditarod Trail between Seward and Nome played a key role as a route used by early miners and for mail delivery from the coast into the Interior of Alaska. The Seward “All American Scenic” Highway crosses directly through the Seward Ranger District and hosts access to many of the areas’ developed recreation sites and trailheads.



Our partnership with the Alaska Railroad to develop whistle stops along the back-country segment of the railroad, also one of the historic routes of the Iditarod system, is well underway.

More Information

Chugach Forest Supervisor, (907) 743-9525, or Ruth Monahan, Regional Director of Recreation, Lands and Minerals, (907) 586-8877.