

3.25 Short-Term Uses versus Long-Term Productivity

This section discusses, in general terms, the relationship of local, short-term uses of land and resources, and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity for the local area (FHWA 1987). Transportation improvements in Alaska are generally based on State and local comprehensive planning, which considers the need for present and future traffic requirements within the context of present and future land uses. In context with this project, the impacts associated with transportation improvements are considered relative to the present and future uses and subsequent long-term productivity of the land as a natural and recreational resource.

3.25.1 Environmental Consequences

3.25.1.1 No Build Alternative

Direct and Indirect Impacts

Under the No Build Alternative, a minor amount of new right-of-way would likely be required for the planned reconstruction of the Cooper Landing, Cooper Creek, and Schooner Bend bridges and the programmed curve realignment near MP 45. This use of land for the transportation improvement is negligible in comparison to the productive land within the project area. These anticipated improvements are discussed further under Cumulative Impacts (Section 3.27). The No Build Alternative is consistent with the various land use plans developed for the project area (see Section 3.2, Land Use Plans and Policies). The No Build Alternative would have no adverse effect on the long-term productivity of the renewable resources in the area.

3.25.1.2 Issues Applicable to the Build Alternatives

Direct and Indirect Impacts

Each of the build alternatives would involve varying degrees of the short-term uses of resources through the conversion of natural areas to roadway right-of-way, but would not be appreciably different from each other. Long-term productivity of the land as a natural and recreational resource would be lost in the constructed roadway footprint and right-of-way of the proposed build alternatives as part of a transportation facility for the life of the proposed project and for the foreseeable future beyond 2043. However, forestry and agricultural production are not occurring on these lands; therefore, long-term production for this type of land use is minimal or nonexistent. Further, the short-term use of the land as a recreation resource is minor in comparison to the land available for this use.

The wetland and vegetation resources used would not recover in the short-term. However, the project area contains substantial amounts of wetland and vegetative resources, and the short-term uses would have minimal effects on long-term productivity of these resources. There would be some short-term reduction in property tax revenues as a result of right-of-way acquisitions of private property.

Short-term uses of the environment by implementation of the proposed project alternatives would be consistent with local land use plans. The long-term benefits of the improvements are recognized in State and local comprehensive planning for the region. Improving surface transportation in the region is consistent with these plans. The project would result in a more

efficient and safer transportation network and would enhance the area's long-term economic productivity.

Considering the overall abundance of naturally productive land in the project area and the project's consistency with local land use plans, the project build alternatives would be consistent with maintaining and enhancing the long-term productivity of the area.