

Welcome!



Sterling Highway

Open House and Public Hearing

**Sterling Highway Milepost 45-60
Draft Supplemental
Environmental Impact Statement &
Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation**



Meeting Purpose

The purpose of today's meeting and hearing is to share information and receive your input.

When providing input at the hearing or in writing, it is most helpful to focus comments on:

- A particular alternative, impact, or proposed mitigation.
- Concerns about an alternative and its effects on the environment.
- Any incomplete or inaccurate information.
- How the project or alternative would affect you.

Sign in Here for Public Testimony



Ground Rules for Public Testimony

We ask that you please:

- » Be respectful, courteous, and patient.
- » Remain quiet while others are giving testimony so the court reporter can hear; leave the room for side discussions.
- » Refrain from addressing the audience or asking for audience participation.
- » Help maintain an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable and welcome, regardless of his or her position on the project.
- » Don't interrupt anyone while he or she is speaking.
- » Turn off cell phones or set them to vibrate.



You must sign in personally to speak during the public hearing portion of the meeting. Testimony from individuals, including a representative from a commercial enterprise, will be limited to 3 minutes. Testimony by a group (an established non-profit club or association) or agency will be limited to 5 minutes.

All testimony will become part of the public record. No displays, signs, or banners should be posted in the building.

Purpose & Need

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to bring the highway up to current standards to efficiently and safely serve through-traffic, local community traffic, and traffic bound for recreation destinations in the area.

Need

- » Reduce Highway Congestion
- » Meet Current Highway Design Standards
- » Improve Highway Safety



49%



Sharp Curves



of the curves are too sharp

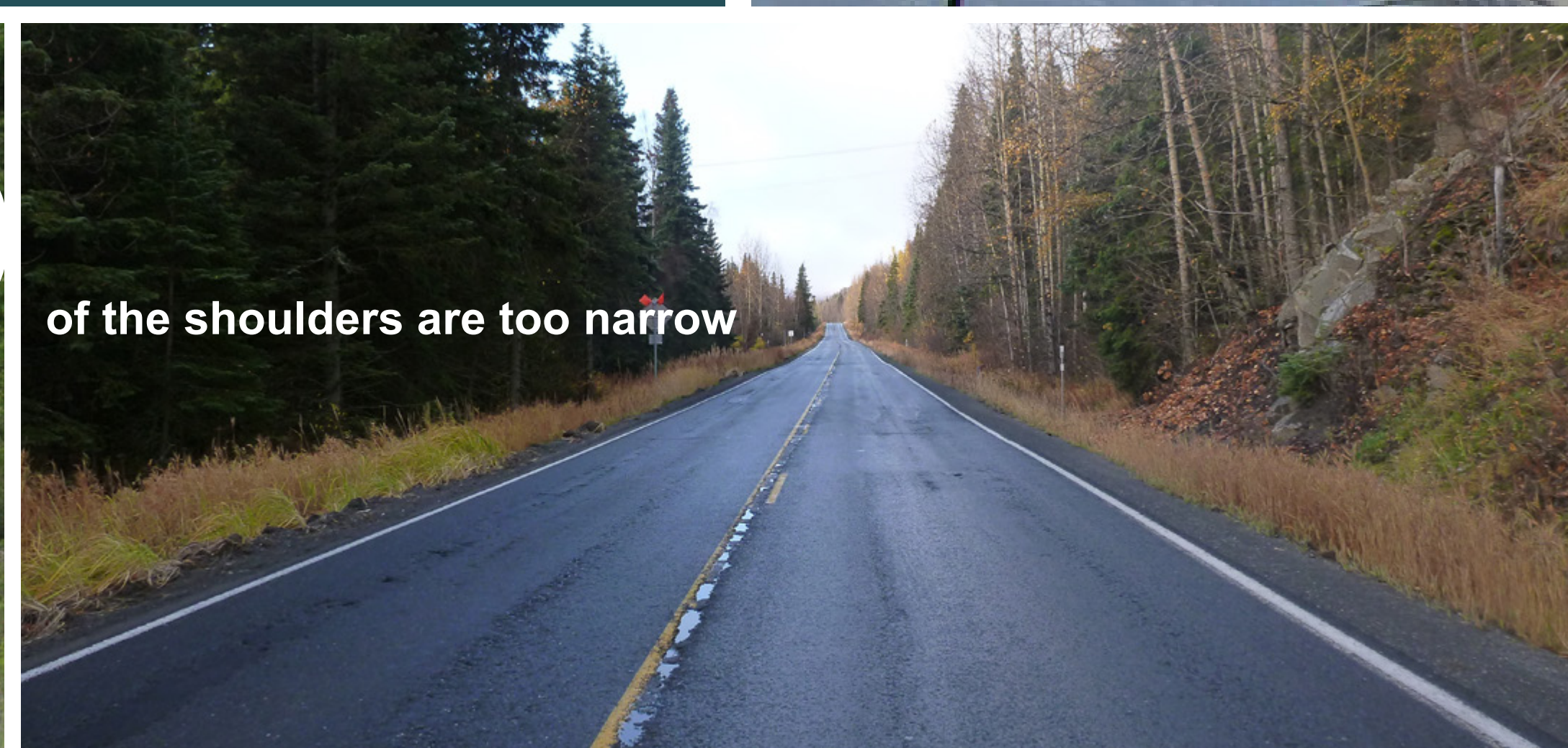
Narrow Lanes and Clear Zone



Narrow Shoulders



100%



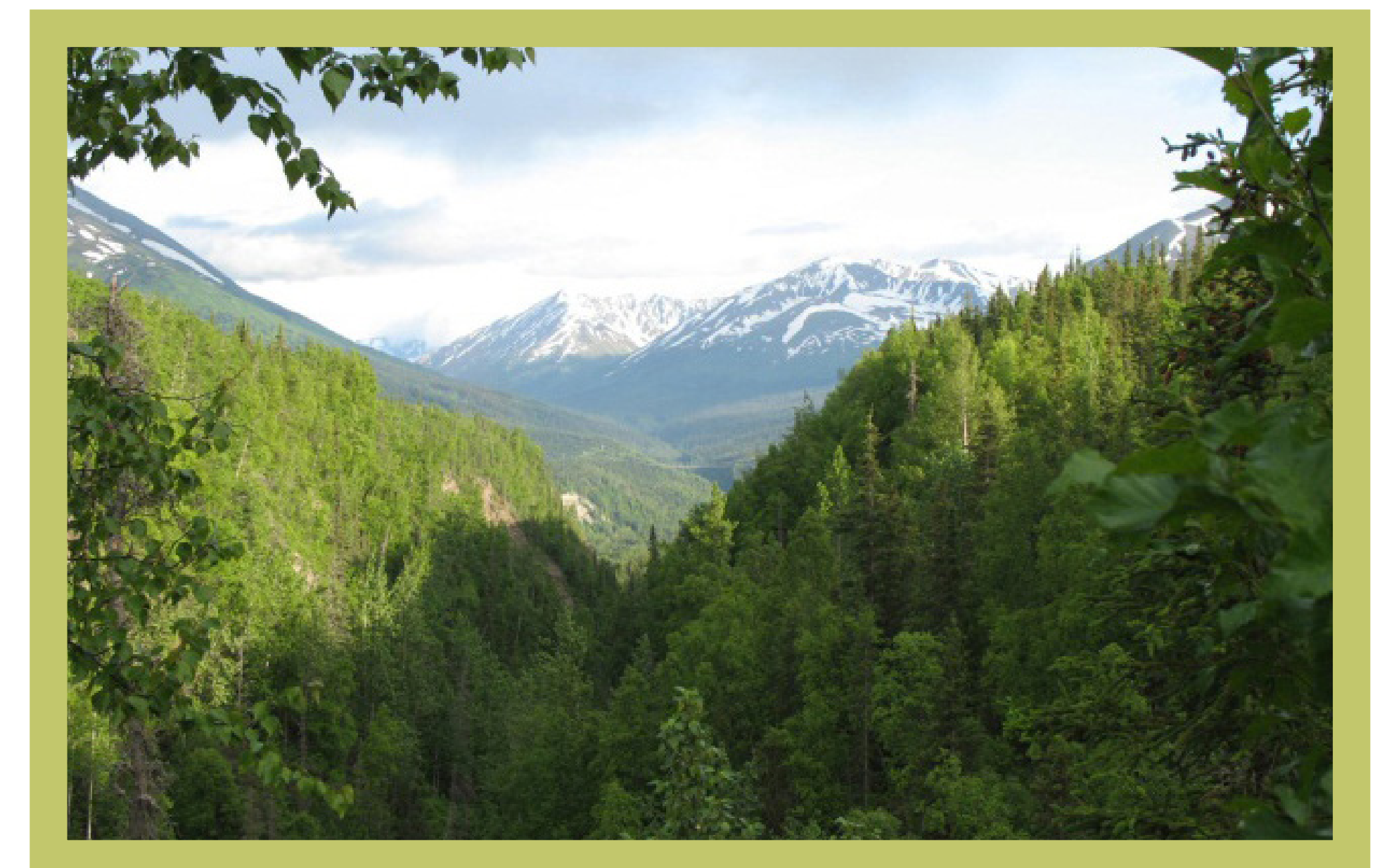
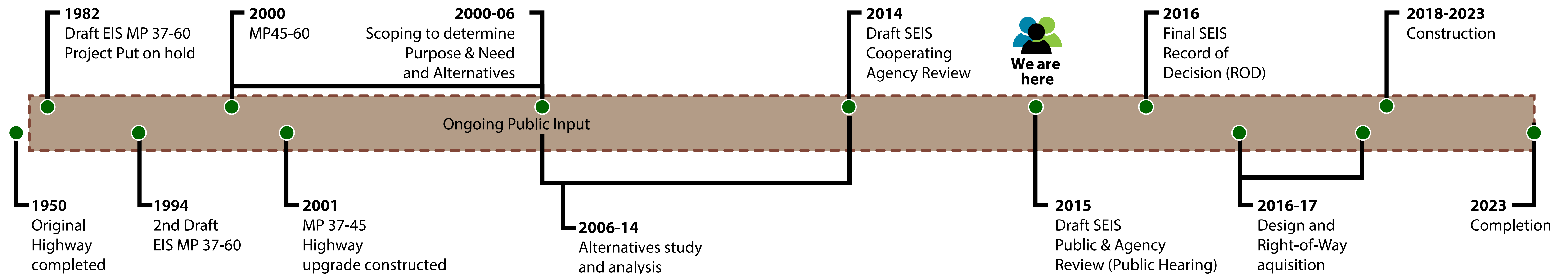
of the shoulders are too narrow



Timeline



Project Timeline and NEPA Steps



Cost of Alternatives

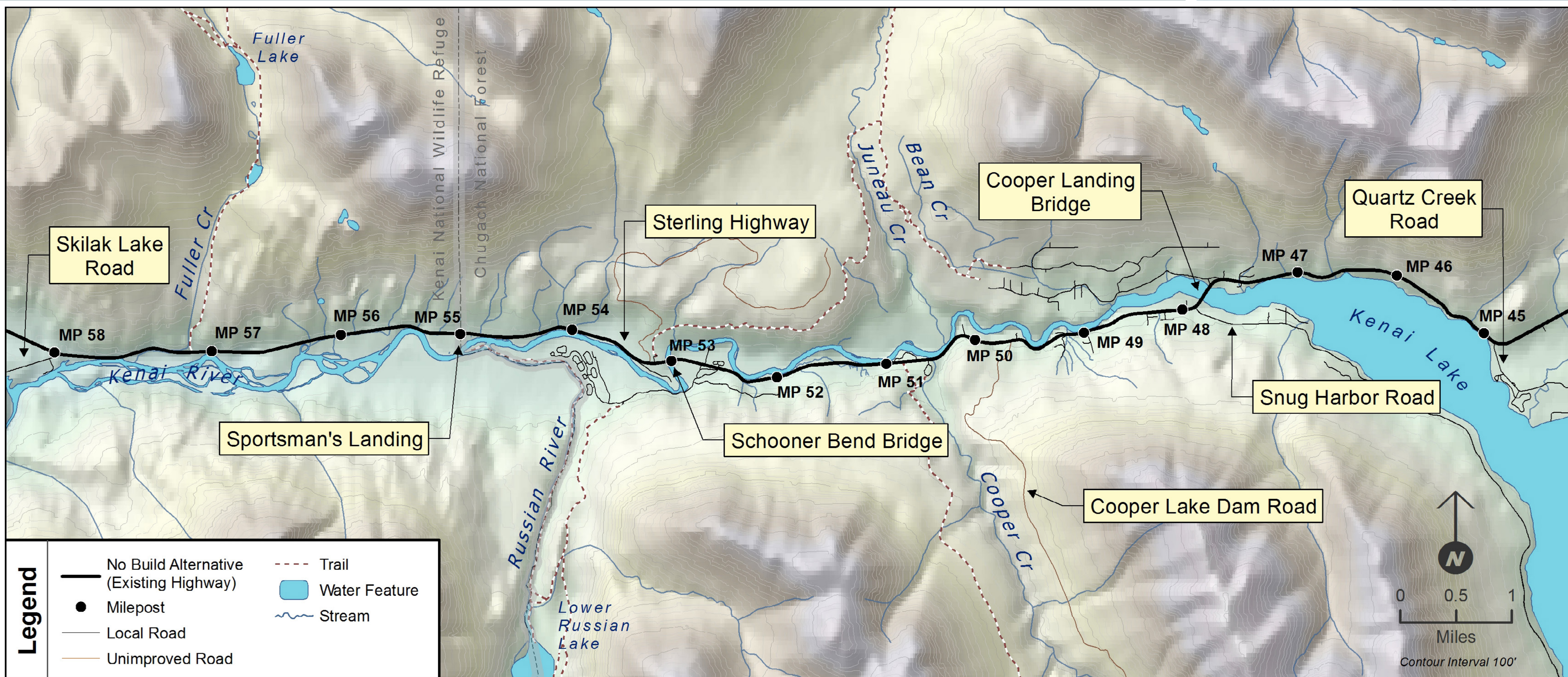


(Millions)				
	 Cooper Creek	G South	Juneau Creek	Juneau Creek Variant
Construction ^a	\$236	\$250	\$205	\$211
Other Costs ^b	\$54	\$53	\$44	\$45
Total	\$291	\$304	\$250	\$257

^aConstruction costs include the road itself and bridges/tunnels/retaining walls, plus 20% for contingencies, and 15% for construction administration.

^bOther costs include permitting, design, utility relocations, right-of-way acquisition, and Indirect Cost Allocation Plan (ICAP). Note that right-of-way costs estimate the land payment portion only. It does not address the other per parcel costs of land acquisition. These costs only reflect privately owned land impacted by the alternatives. Land owned by Federal, State, and Municipal agencies is assumed to be acquired via interagency land transfers.

No Build Alternative



- » National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that an EIS analyze the impacts of not building the project in order to compare the effects of the project alternatives.
- » Highway would remain much as it is today – only maintenance and pre-programmed work would occur.

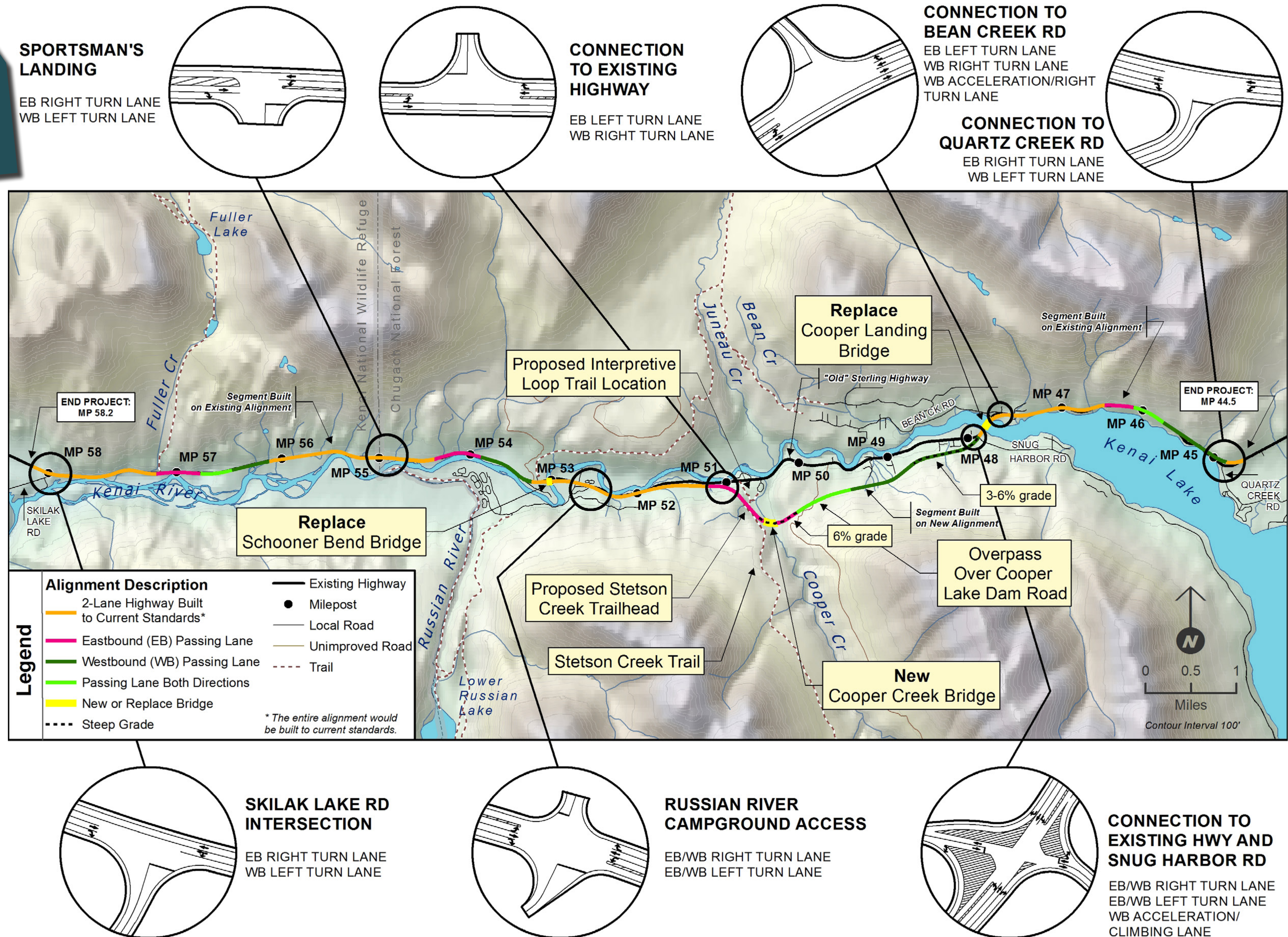
- » Does not resolve congestion problems.
- » Does not meet modern highway standards.
- » Does not improve National Highway functionality.

Cooper Creek Alternative



- » Follows the existing alignment for most of its length.
- » About 3.5 miles would be located on a new alignment, routed south of Cooper Landing.
- » Includes construction of three large bridges:
 - Two replacing existing Kenai River bridges
 - One new large bridge over Cooper Creek
- » Total Cost: \$291 million

**\$291
M**

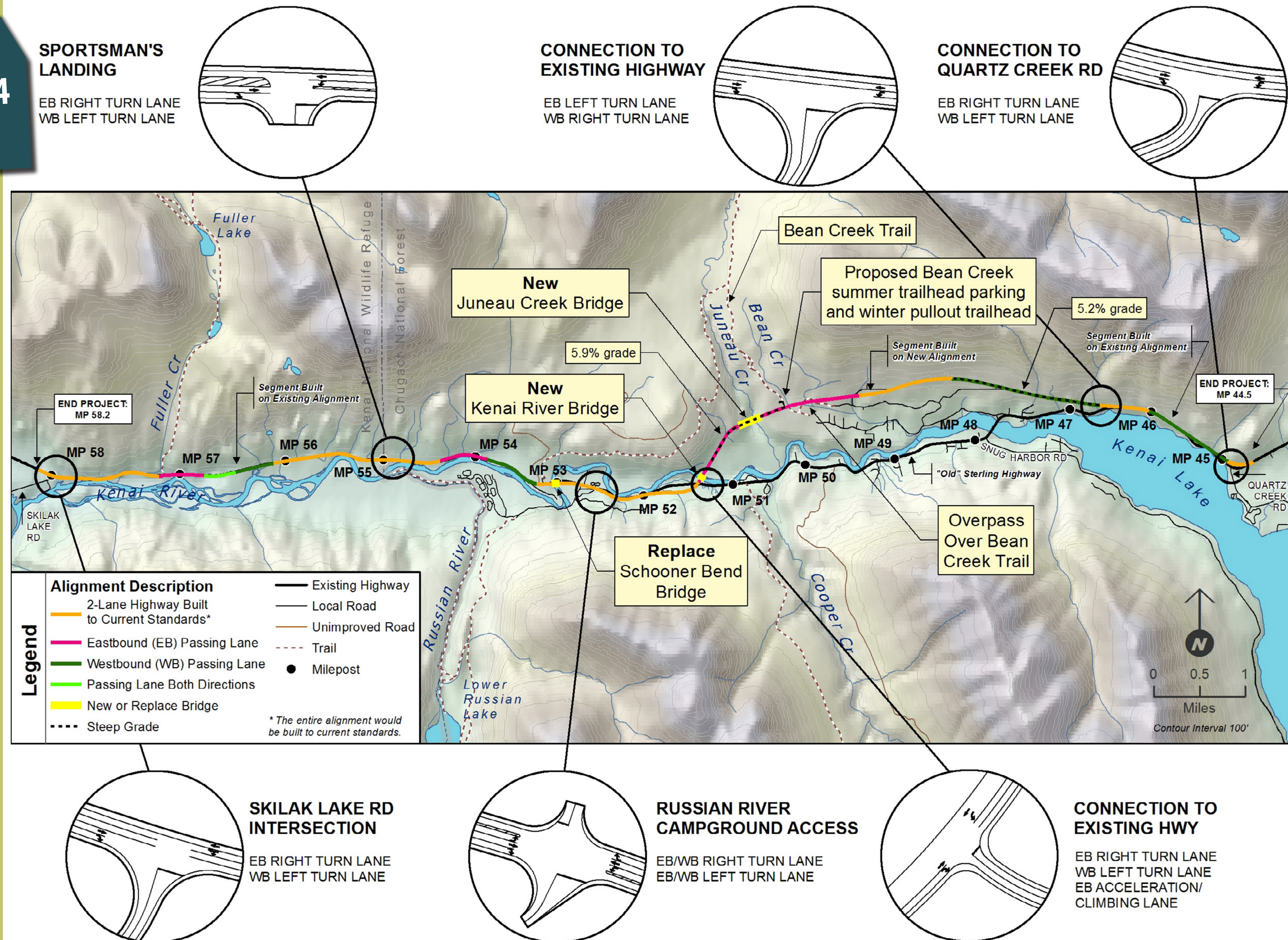


G South Alternative



- » Would construct 5.5 miles of new alignment skirting north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, reconnecting with the existing alignment near MP 52.
- » Designed to avoid impacts to the Resurrection Pass Trail and Juneau Creek Falls area.
- » Would include construction of three bridges:
 - One replacing an existing bridge over the Kenai River
 - Two new bridges, one over lower Juneau Creek, and one over the Kenai River
- » Total Cost: \$304 million

**\$304
M**

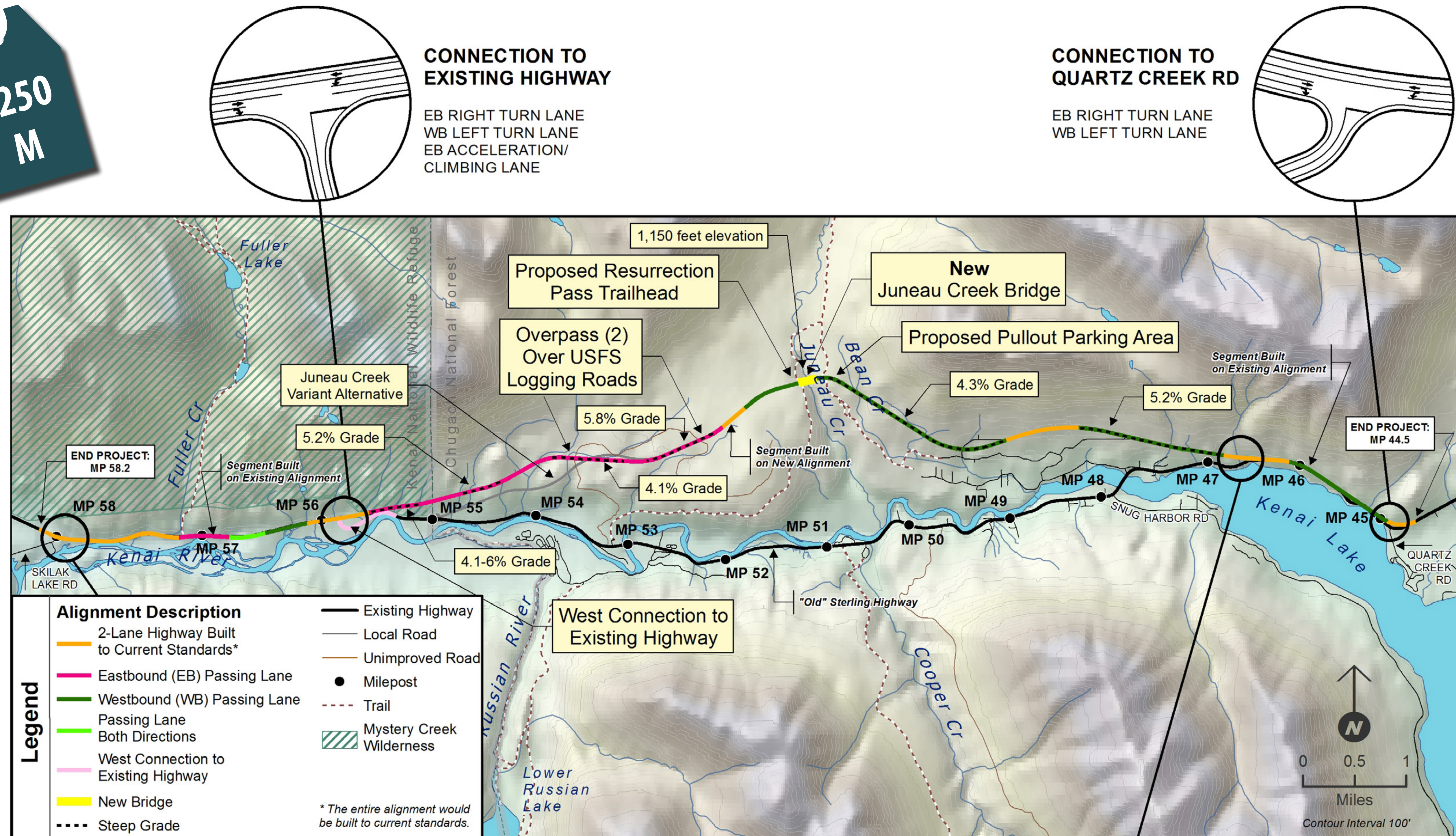


Juneau Creek Alternative



- » Deviates from the existing alignment more than the other alternatives—about 10 of 14 miles would be on a new alignment.
- » Would run north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, climbing the hillside and crossing Juneau Creek Canyon with a new bridge south of Juneau Creek Falls.
- » New segment would cross the Mystery Creek Wilderness area in the KNWR and would rejoin the existing highway at about MP 56.
- » Includes one large bridge spanning Juneau Creek Canyon – the longest single-span bridge in Alaska.
- » Total Cost: \$250 million

\$250
M



Juneau Creek Variant Alternative

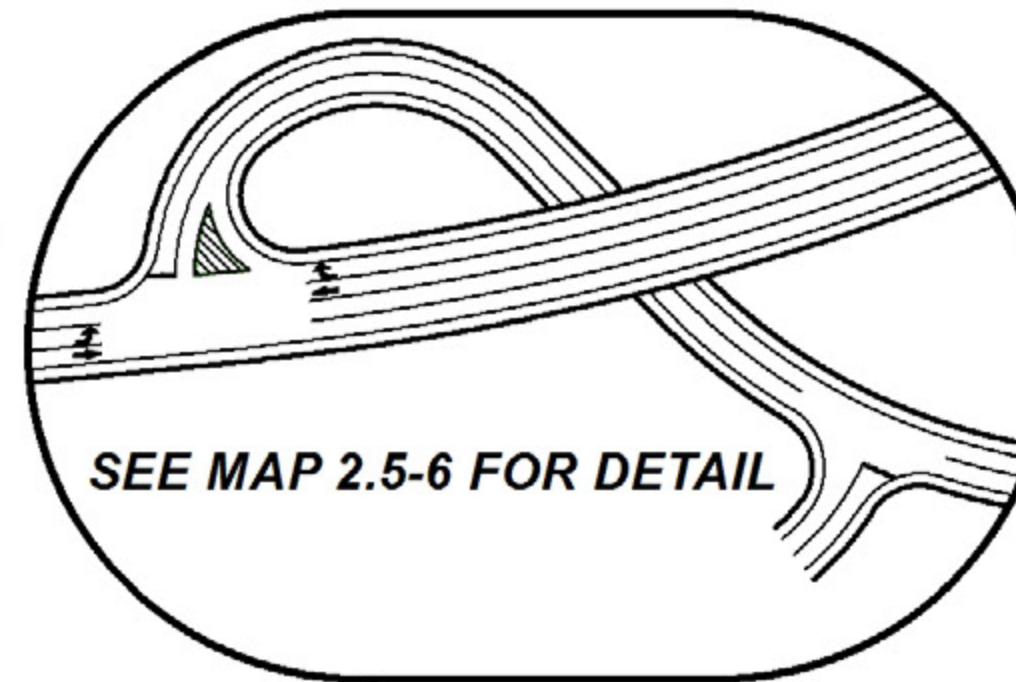


- » Almost the same as the Juneau Creek Alternative, but was specifically designed to avoid use of land from the KNWR and the Mystery Creek Wilderness.
- » Would rejoin the existing alignment at MP 55 of the existing highway near Sportsman's Landing.
- » Includes one large bridge crossing Juneau Creek Canyon – the longest single-span bridge in Alaska.
- » Total Cost: \$257 million

**\$257
M**

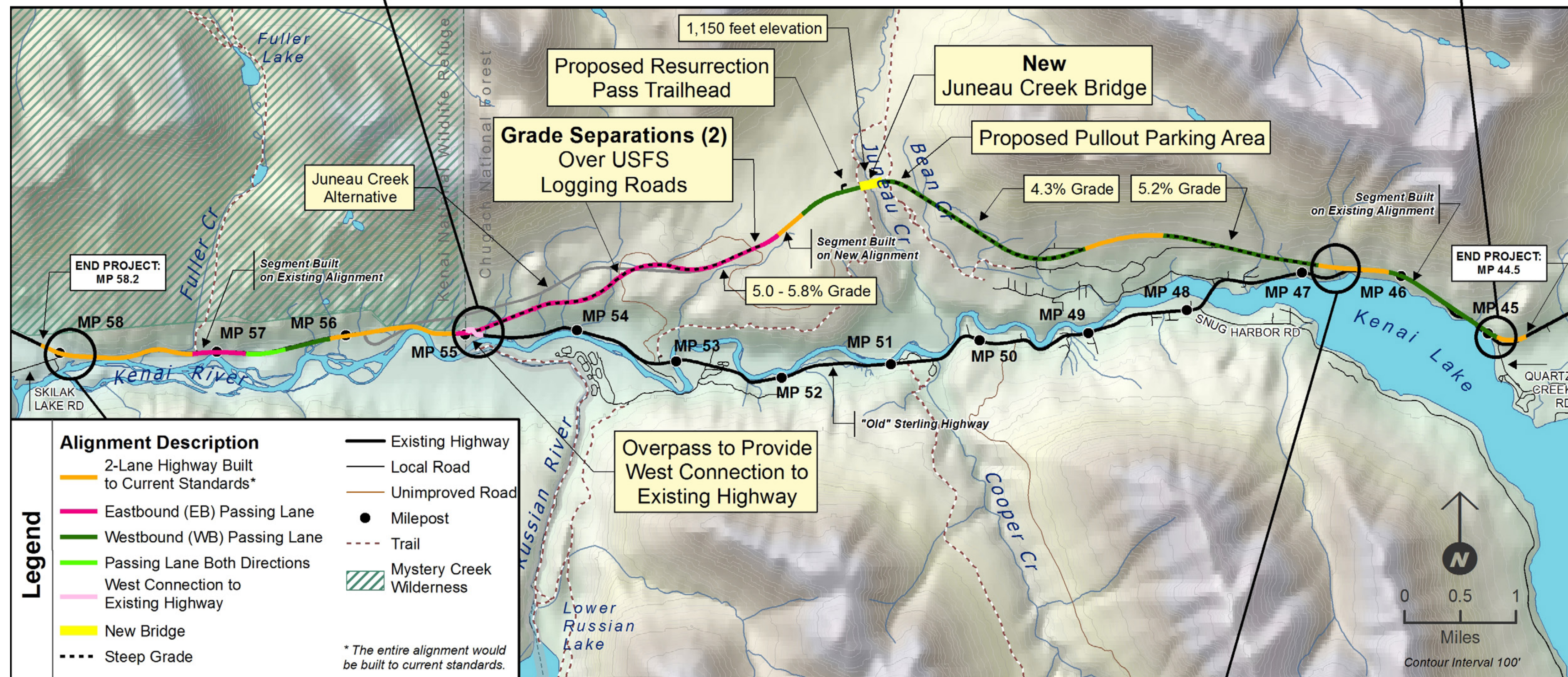
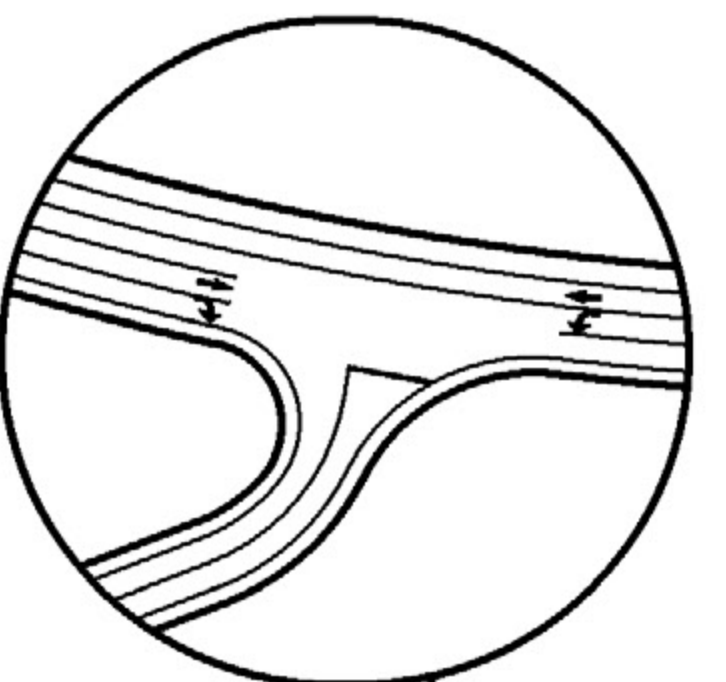
CONNECTION TO EXISTING HIGHWAY

EB RIGHT TURN LANE
WB LEFT TURN LANE
EB ACCELERATION/
CLIMBING LANE



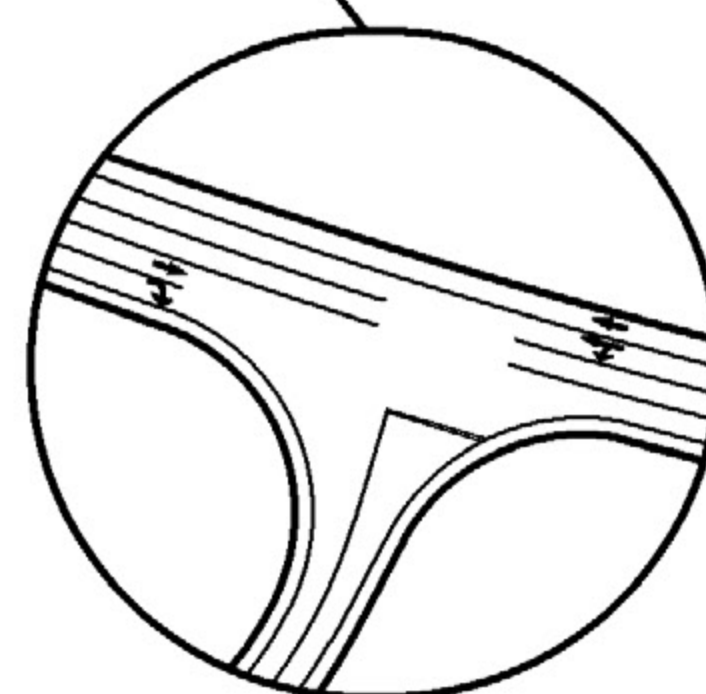
CONNECTION TO QUARTZ CREEK RD

EB RIGHT TURN LANE
WB LEFT TURN LANE



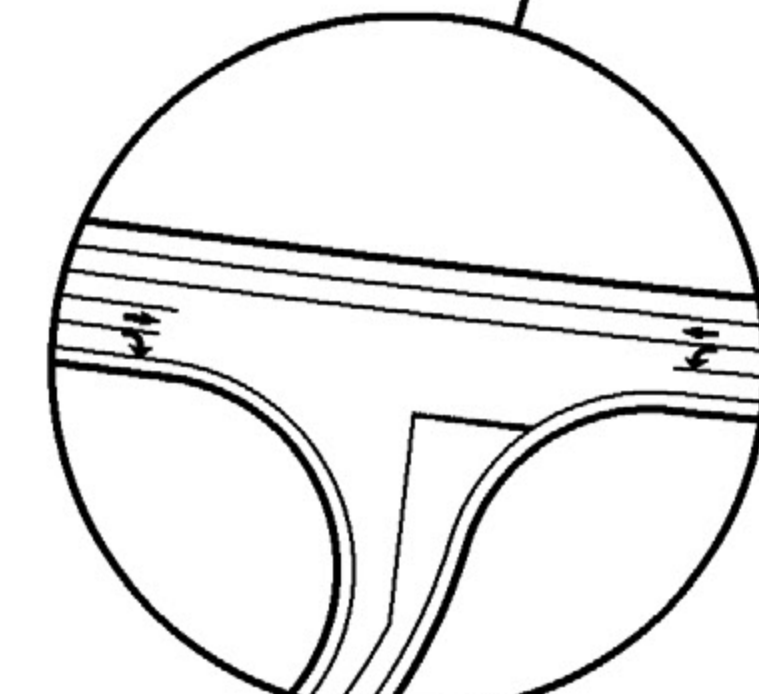
SKILAK LAKE RD INTERSECTION

EB RIGHT TURN LANE
WB LEFT TURN LANE



CONNECTION TO EXISTING HIGHWAY

EB RIGHT TURN LANE
WB LEFT TURN LANE



Environmental Issues in the Draft SEIS



The Draft SEIS describes the social and environmental conditions of the project area. The evaluation of project impacts covers required topics and discusses issues identified or raised by the project team, agencies, and the public throughout the long project lifespan.



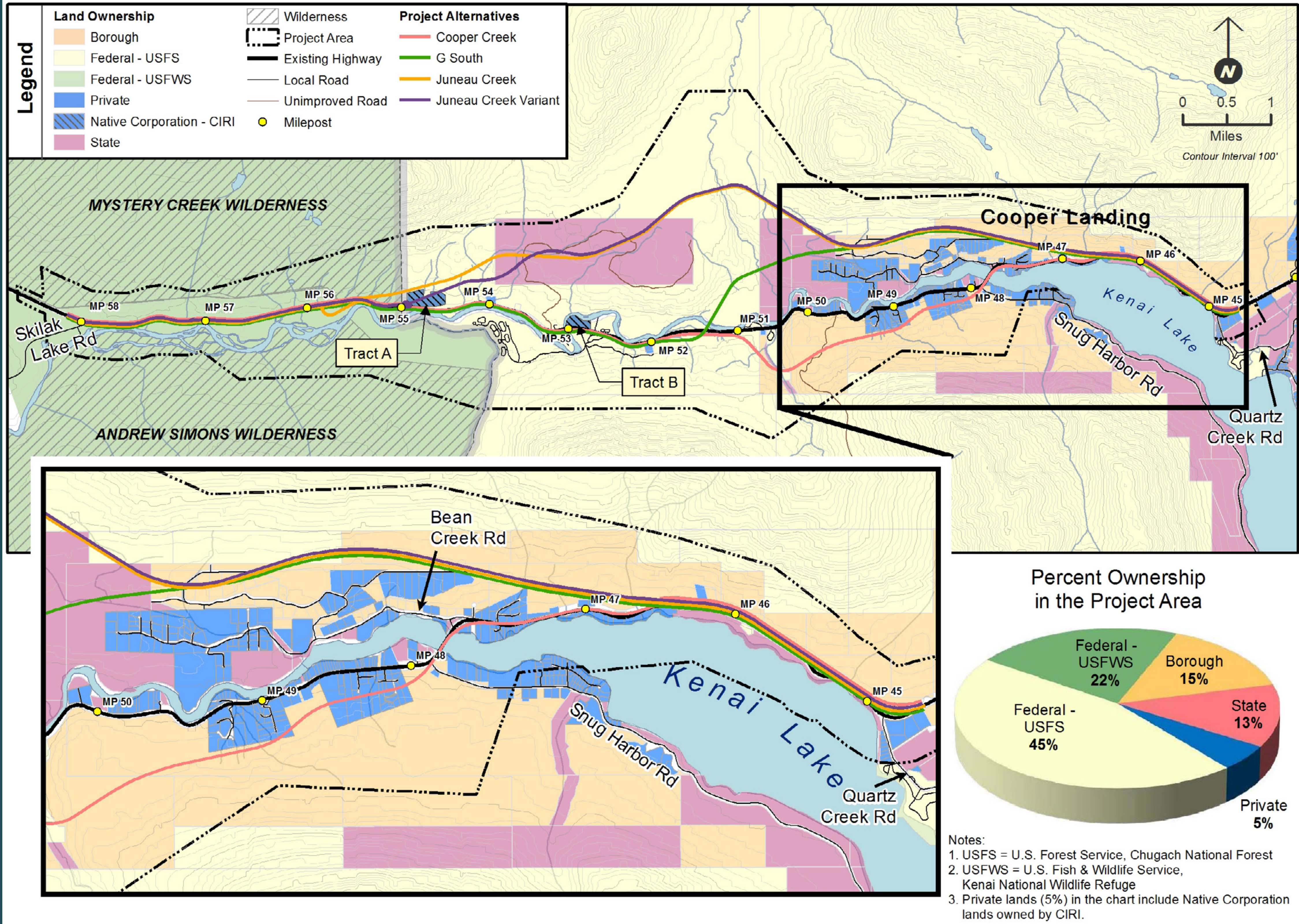
Key Issues:

- » Land Ownership / Land Use Plans and Policies
- » Housing and Relocation
- » Economic Environment
- » Parks and Recreation Resources; and Section 4(f)
- » Noise
- » Visual Resources
- » Wetlands and Vegetation
- » Fish and Essential Fish Habitat

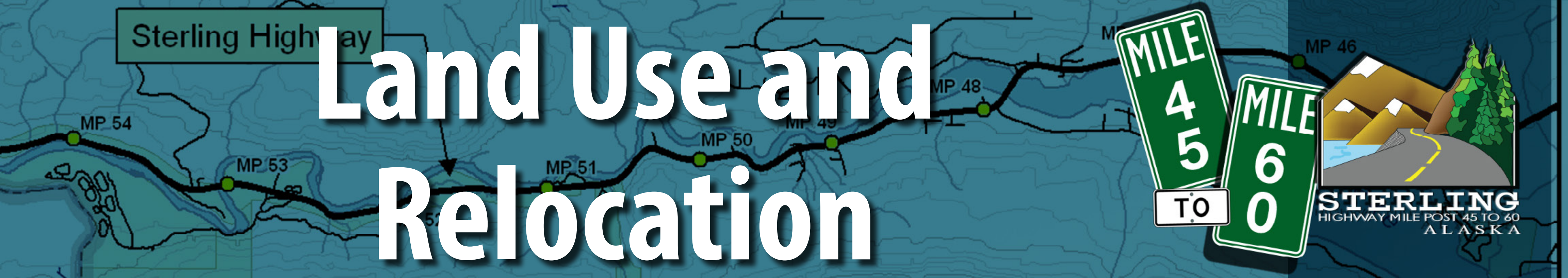


Other topics:

- » Social environment
- » Transportation
- » River navigation
- » Subsistence
- » Utilities
- » Geology and Topography
- » Air Quality
- » Hazardous Waste Sites and Spills
- » Energy
- » Floodplains
- » Coastal Zone Management
- » Permits
- » Short-Term Uses versus Long-Term Productivity
- » Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources
- » Cumulative Impacts



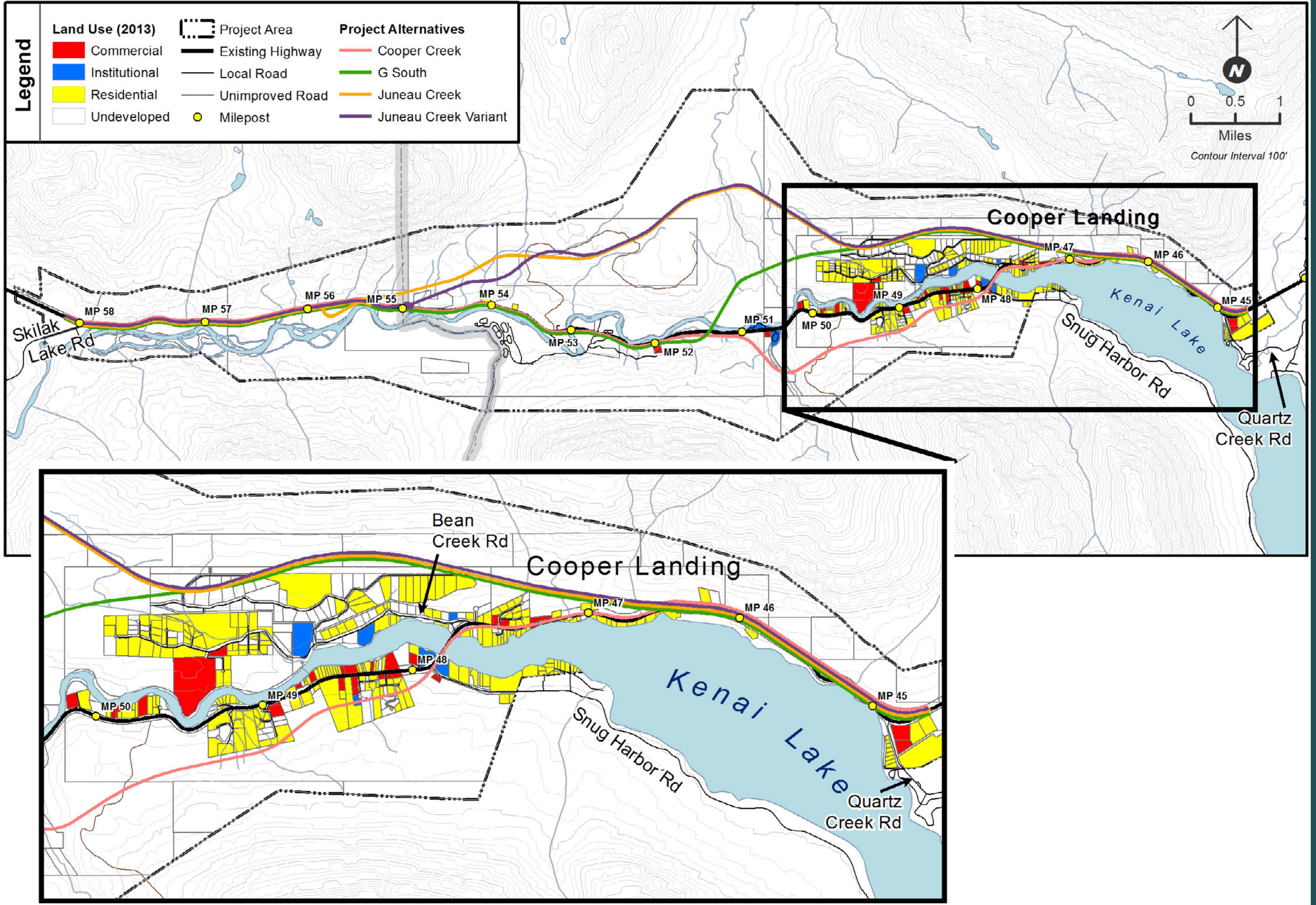
Impact Category		Impacts and Benefits				
		No Build Alternative	Cooper Creek Alternative	G South Alternative	Juneau Creek Alternative	Juneau Creek Variant Alternative
Land Ownership (acres)	Federal (9,008)	No impact	54	90	167	115
	State (1,720)		9	43	90	92
	Borough (2,013)		93	126	129	129
	Native (61)		1	1	-	12
	Private (698)		57	<1	<1	<1
	Total (13,500)		214	261	387	349
Land Use (acres)	Commercial (103)	No impact	1	-	-	-
	Institutional (58)		<2	-	-	-
	Residential (548)		41	<2	<2	<2
	Vacant (12,791)		170	260	385	347
	Total (13,500)		214	261	387	349



Land Use and Relocation

Private and Native Property Impacts and Relocations *(number of affected parcels)*

Impact Category	No Build Alternative	Cooper Creek Alternative	G South Alternative	Juneau Creek Alternative	Juneau Creek Variant
Private	No impact	38	4	4	4
Full Parcel	-	16 <i>(8 residential properties and approximately 14 people relocated.)</i>	0 <i>(0 relocations)</i>	0 <i>(0 relocations)</i>	0 <i>(0 relocations)</i>
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge	No impact	No KNWR land would be acquired, developed, or directly used as a result of the Cooper Creek Alternative outside the existing highway right-of-way.	No KNWR land would be acquired, developed, or directly used as a result of the G South Alternative outside the existing highway right-of-way.	New transportation right-of-way across a corner of the KNWR Mystery Creek Wilderness unit and the KNWR Intensive Management area would be needed. The process would require approval by the President of the United States and then a joint resolution of Congress.	No KNWR land would be acquired, developed, or directly used as a result of the Juneau Creek Variant Alternative outside the existing highway right-of-way.

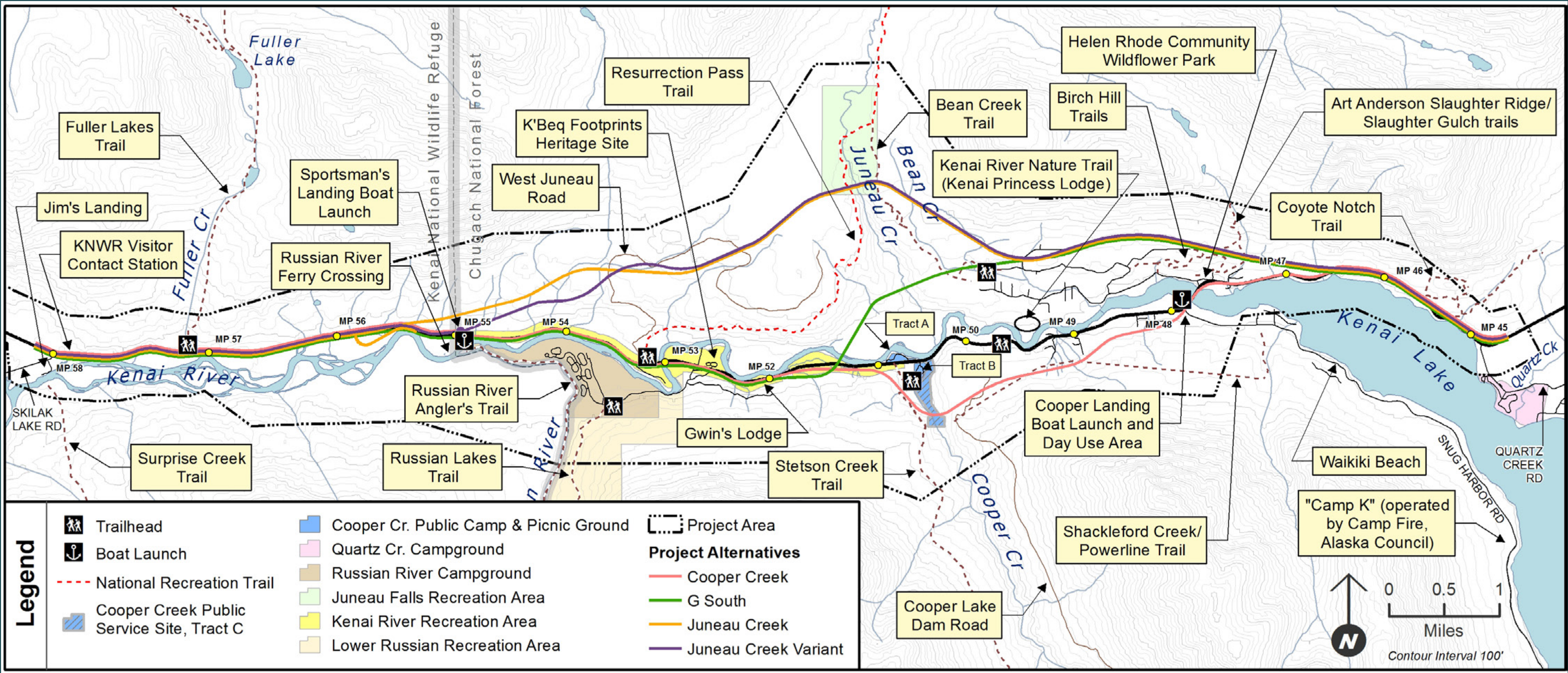




Economic Environment



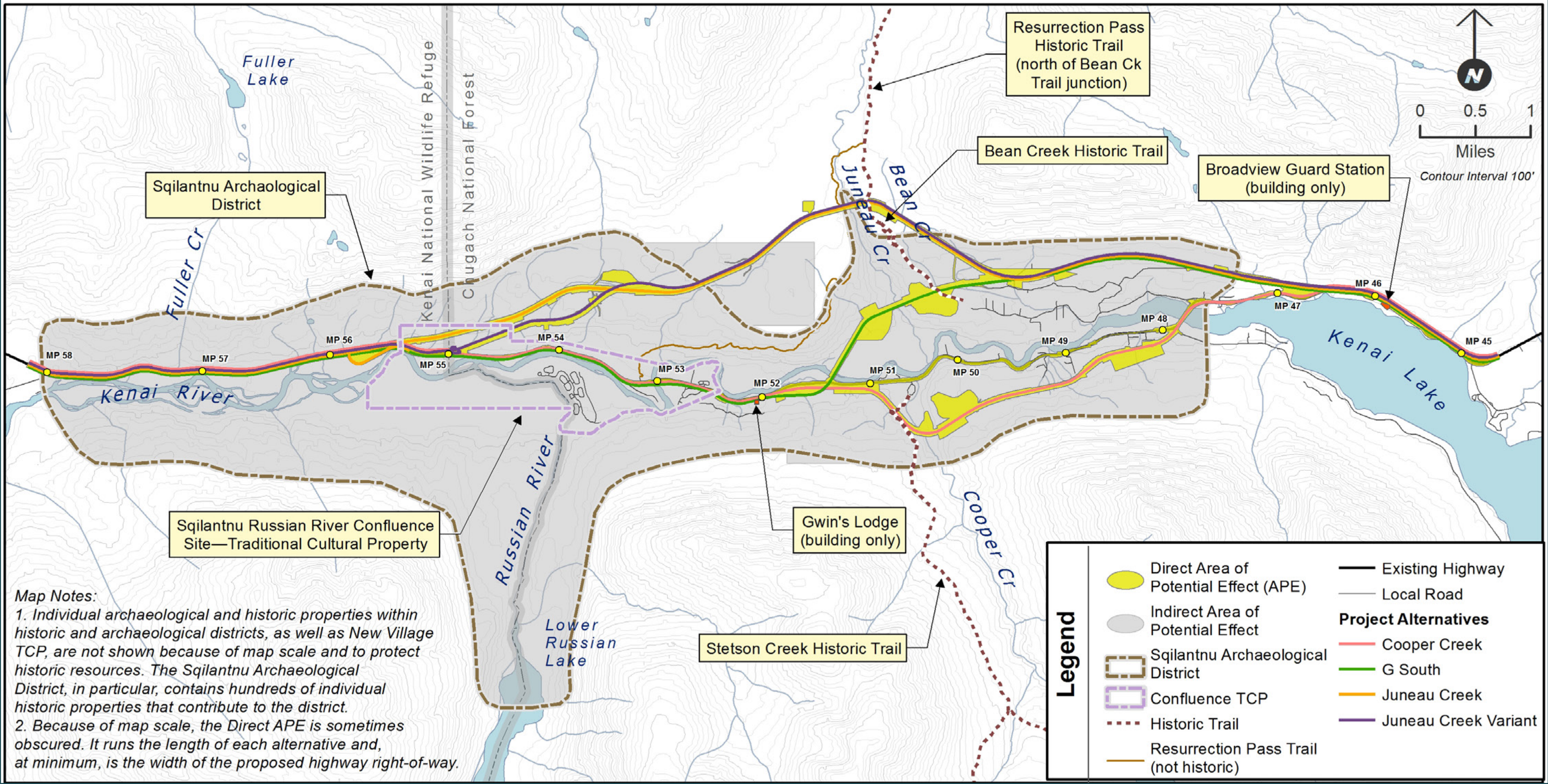
- » No alternatives would result in acquiring or relocating businesses.
- » Diverting through-travelers around all (GS, JC, JCV) or part (CC) of commercial development could negatively impact sales for roadside businesses.
- » No competing commercial development could result, as DOT&PF would not allow connecting driveways or side roads onto the new highway segment.
- » Improvements to travel time may increase visitation to popular vacation and fishing destinations, and increase truck-freight shipping through the project area.
- » Reducing risk of accidental spills from vehicles transport would protect economies of the communities and commerce dependent on the Kenai River.



Impact Category	Impacts and Benefits				
	No Build Alternative	Cooper Creek Alternative	G South Alternative	Juneau Creek Alternative	Juneau Creek Variant Alternative
Recreation Resources Affected	No impact	Kenai River Special Management Area	Kenai River Special Management Area	Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness	Kenai River Recreation Area
		Cooper Landing Boat Launch and Day Use Area	Kenai River Recreation Area	Resurrection Pass Trail <i>(crossed with bridge, added new trailhead)</i>	Sportsman's Landing boat launch <i>(temporary occupancy during construction only)</i>
		Kenai River Recreation Area	Sportsman's Landing <i>(temporary occupancy during construction only)</i>	Bean Creek Trail <i>(rerouted, crossed with bridge)</i>	Resurrection Pass Trail <i>(crossed with bridge, added new trailhead)</i>
		Sportsman's Landing <i>(temporary occupancy during construction only)</i>	Bean Creek Trail <i>(rerouted, crossed with bridge)</i>	Birch Ridge Trail <i>(shortened)</i>	Bean Creek Trail <i>(rerouted, crossed with bridge)</i>
		Stetson Creek Trail	Birch Ridge Trail <i>(shortened)</i>	Art Anderson/Slaughter Gulch Trail <i>(shortened)</i>	Birch Ridge Trail <i>(shortened)</i>
		Cooper Lake Dam Road/Powerline Trail <i>(crossed with bridge)</i>	Art Anderson/Slaughter Gulch Trail <i>(shortened)</i>	Juneau Bench Trails <i>(crossed with grade separation)</i>	Art Anderson/Slaughter Gulch Trail <i>(shortened)</i>
				Juneau Falls Recreation Area	Juneau Bench Trails <i>(crossed with grade separation)</i>
					Juneau Falls Recreation Area

Proposed Mitigation

- » Parking, trailheads, connections – Stetson Creek Trail (CC), Bean Creek Trail (GC, JC, JCV), Resurrection Pass Trail (JC, JCV).
- » Underpasses – Cooper Lake Dam Road (CC), extension of Slaughter Ridge Road, West Juneau Road (JC, JCV).
- » Juneau Falls Overlook added to Juneau Falls Recreation area, plus pedestrian walkway to connect trails on either side of canyon (JC, JCV).
- » Iditarod National Historic Trail Connection and Snow River Pedestrian Crossing at opposite end of Kenai Lake to accommodate Iditarod commemorative trail (JC, JCV).



Impact Category	Impacts and Benefits				
	No Build Alternative	Cooper Creek Alternative	G South Alternative	Juneau Creek Alternative	Juneau Creek Variant Alternative
Historic Properties Adversely Affected	—	Sqilantnu Archaeological District (28 contributing properties) — Confluence Traditional Cultural Property — Charles G. Hubbard Mining Claims Historic District — Kenai Mining and Milling Company Historic District — Stetson Creek Trail	Sqilantnu Archaeological District (25 contributing properties) — Confluence Traditional Cultural Property — Charles G. Hubbard Mining Claims Historic District — Bean Creek Trail	Sqilantnu Archaeological District (JC Alt: 13 contributing properties) (JC Variant Alt: 22 contributing properties) — Confluence Traditional Cultural Property — Bean Creek Trail	

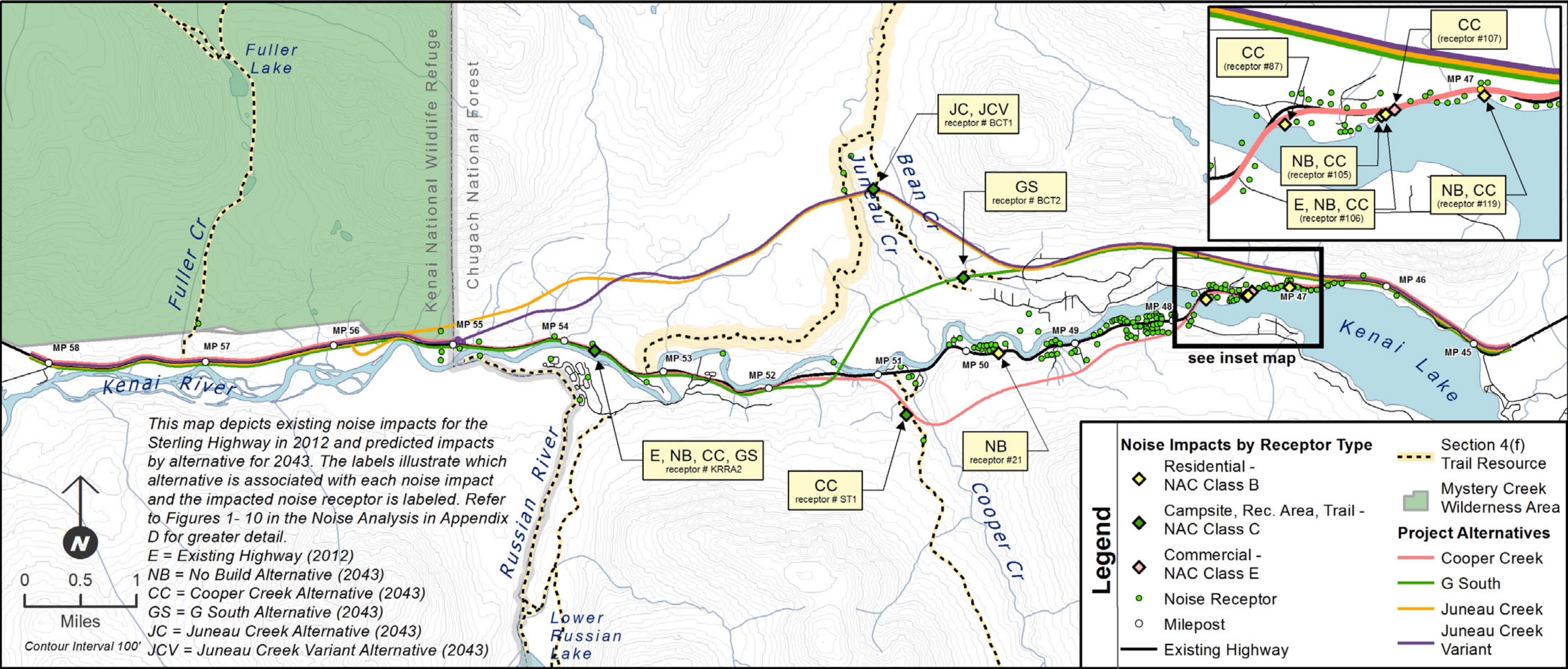
Proposed Mitigation

- » Substantial mitigation for effects to adversely affected historic properties is expected.
- » An agreement among tribal entities and agencies (consulting parties) will be presented in the Final EIS.

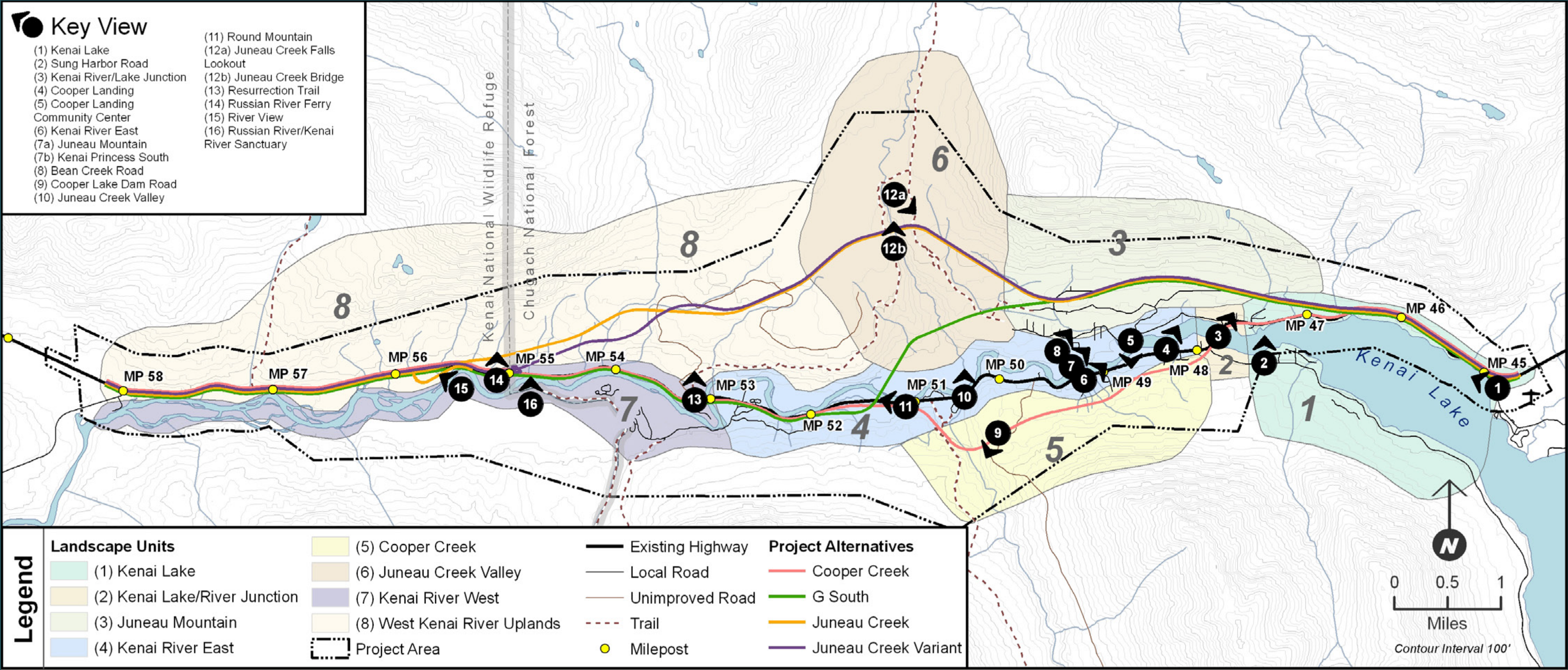


» Increases in traffic would cause increased noise levels, even under No Build Alternative.

Impact Category	Impacts and Benefits				
	No Build Alternative	Cooper Creek Alternative	G South Alternative	Juneau Creek Alternative	Juneau Creek Variant Alternative
Noise (number of receptors at which noise approaches or exceeds Noise Abatement Criteria, or where a substantial increase is predicted in 2043)	4 residential 1 recreational 5 total	4 residential 2 recreational 1 commercial 7 total	0 residential 2 recreational 2 total	0 residential 1 recreational 1 total	0 residential 1 recreational 1 total



» Noise walls, berms, or barriers are not geographically feasible.



Existing View



Visual Impact



Existing View

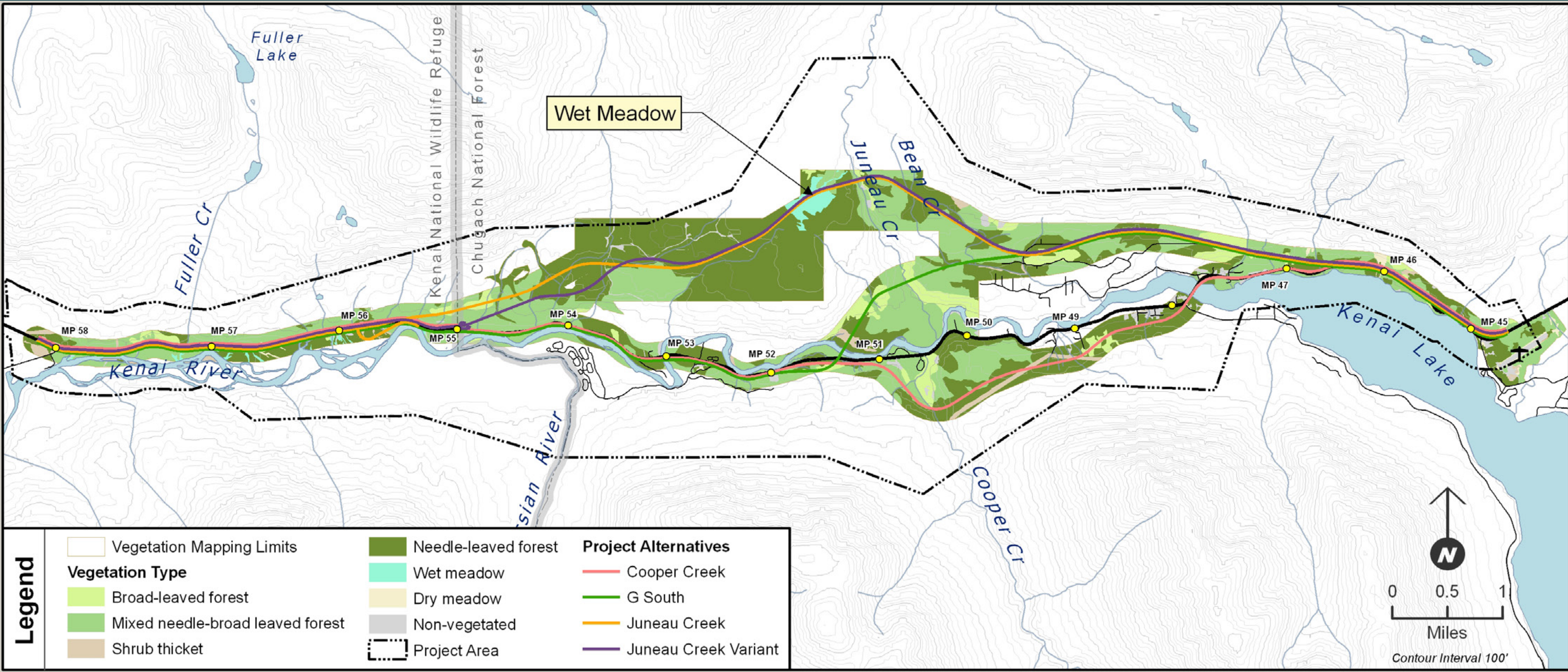
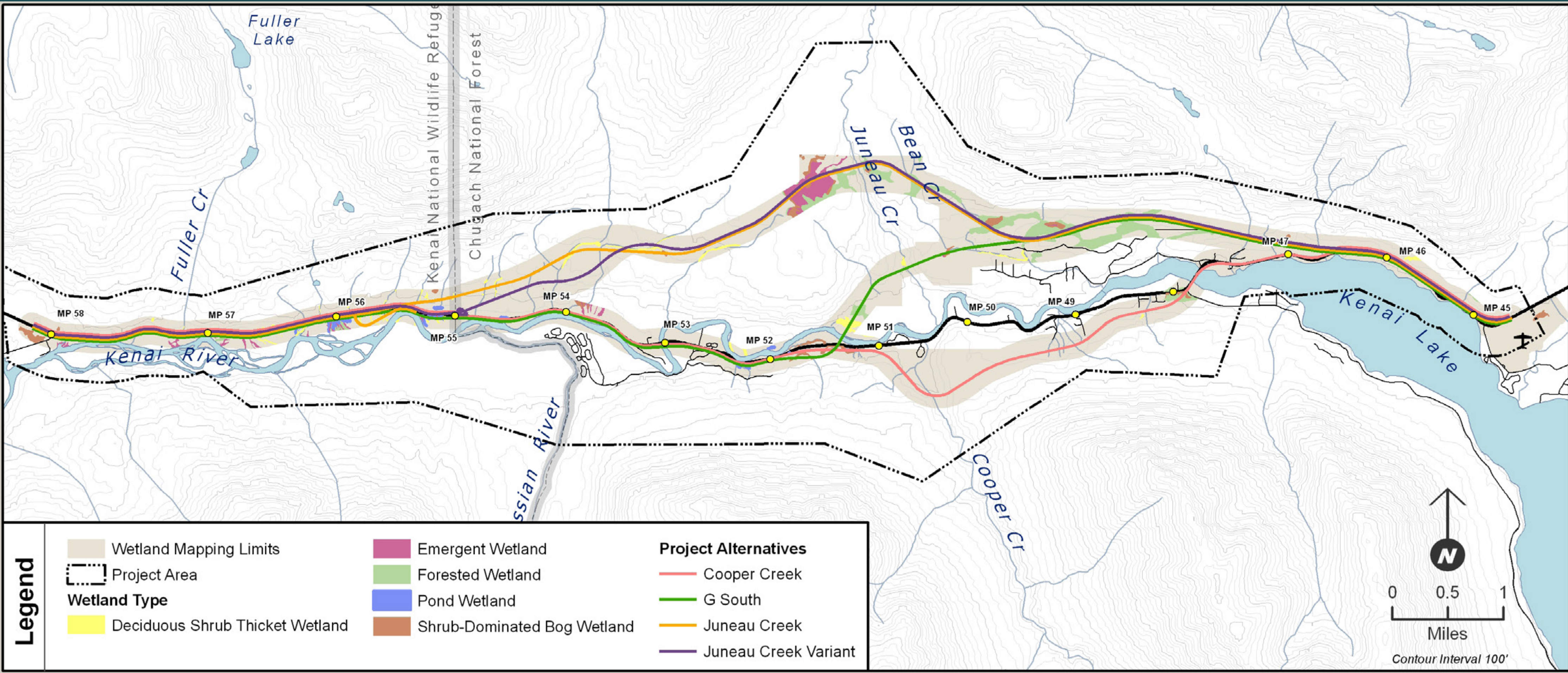
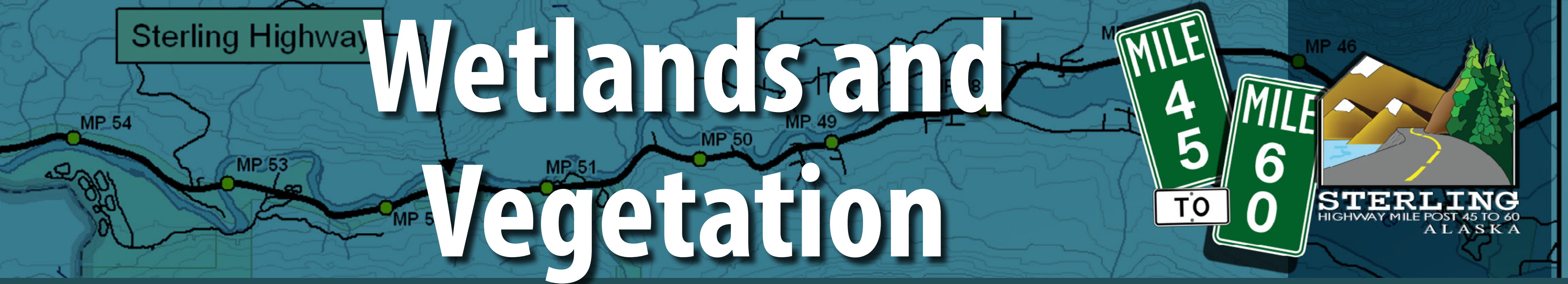


Visual Impact

All alternatives would adversely affect visual environment but also provide new views.

Proposed Mitigation

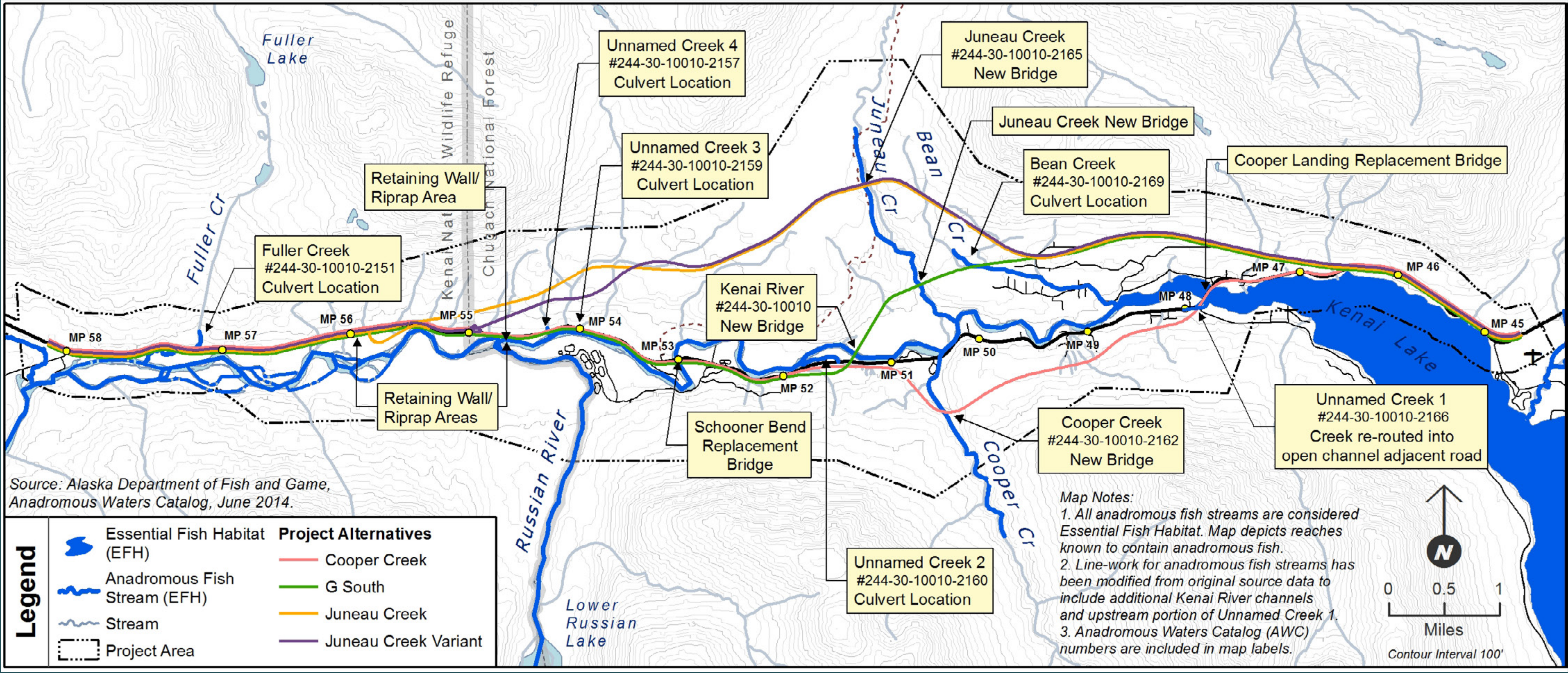
- » All cuts and fills would be constructed with care.
- » Bare soils would be seeded for quick greening of landscape.
- » Large new bridges under all alternatives would be designed with aesthetics in mind.



Impact Category	Cooper Creek	G South	Juneau Creek	Juneau Creek Variant
Wetlands (acres filled)	11	26.6	38.5	37.5
Vegetation (acres removed)	188	202	269	256

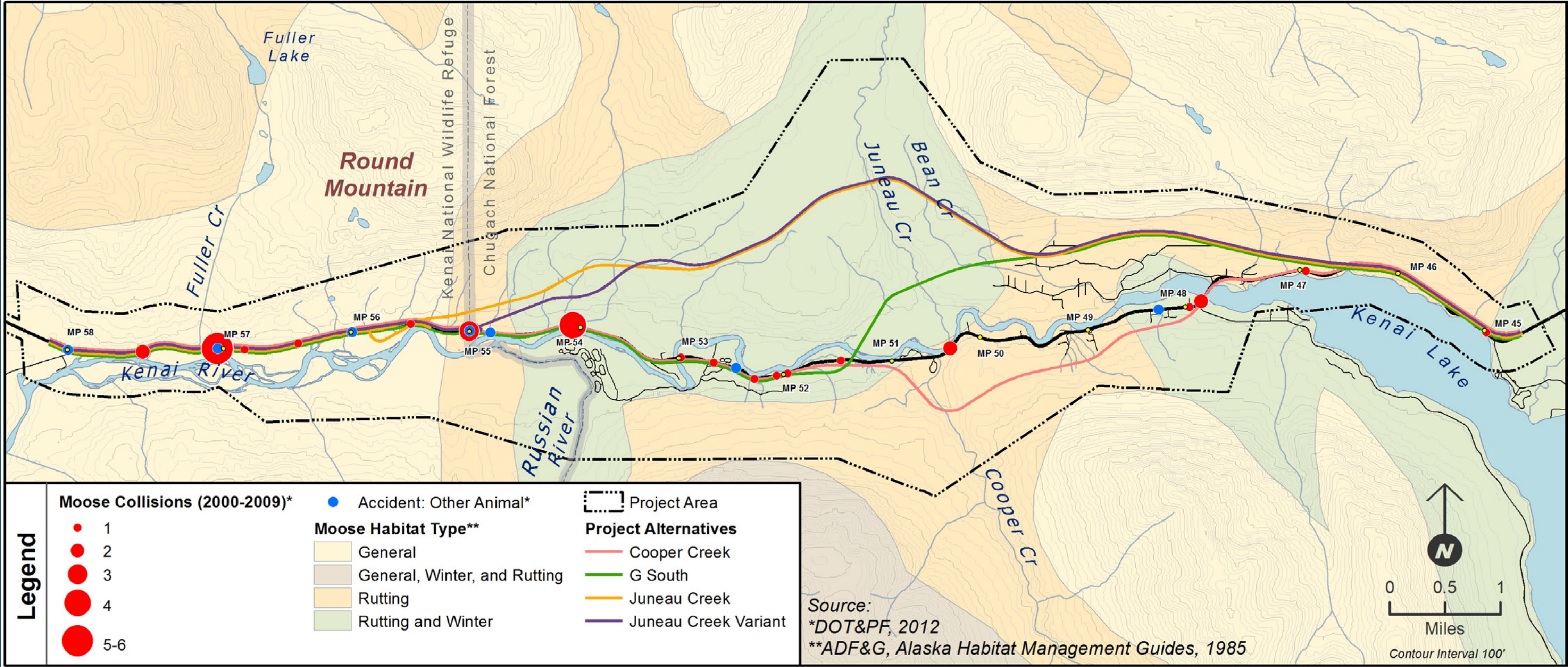
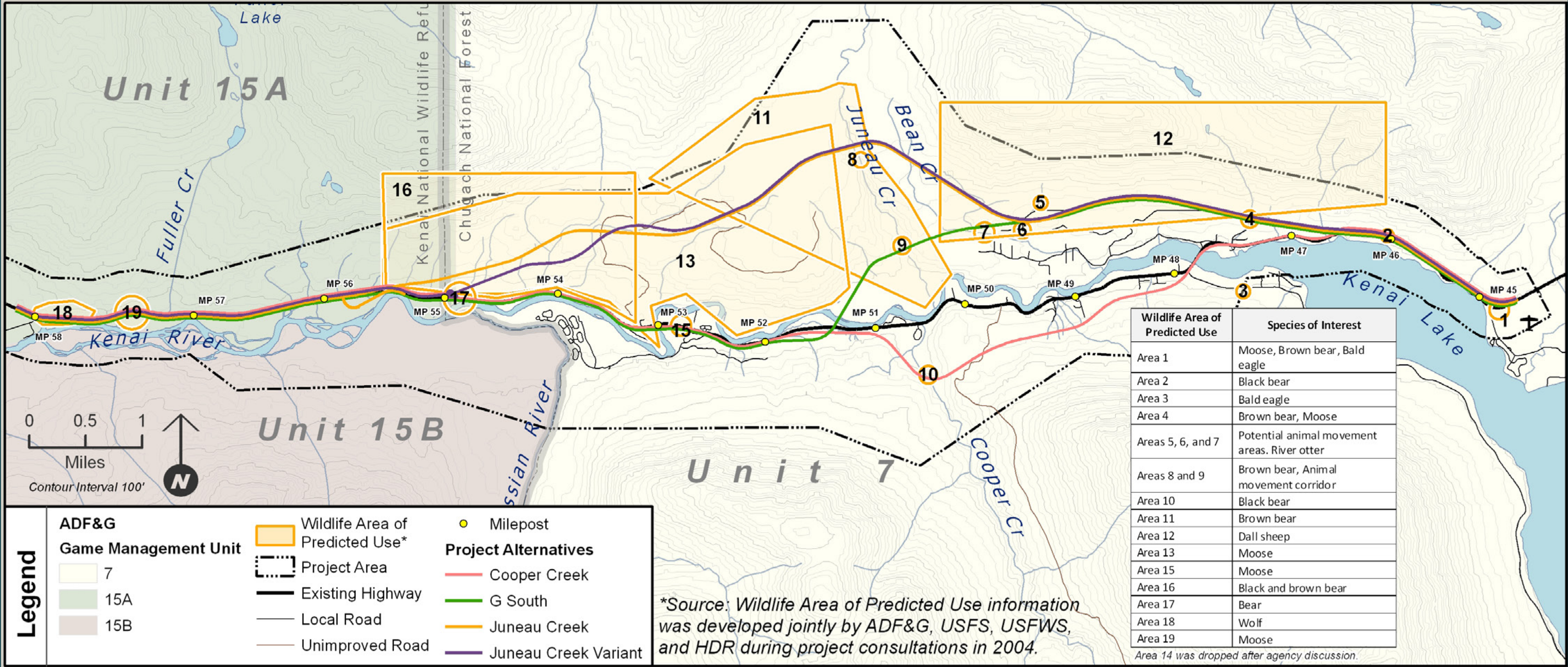
Proposed Mitigation

- » Construction best management practices.
- » Pay a fee to a wetland bank or land trust for protection or enhancement of wetlands in a critical location on the Kenai Peninsula.



Impact Category	Impacts and Benefits				
	No Build Alternative	Cooper Creek Alternative	G South Alternative	Juneau Creek Alternative	Juneau Creek Variant Alternative
Potential Risk of Water Quality Impacts Due to Spills <i>(percentage of roadway located within 500 feet of the Kenai River, Kenai Lake, Cooper Creek, Juneau Creek, and Russian River)</i>	77%	56%	45%	25%	26%
Essential Fish Habitat Impacts <i>(acres altered; crossings of anadromous fish streams with type of crossing)</i>	—	1.2 acres/8 crossings: — 4 culverts — 3 bridges — 1 creek re-routed	1.0 acre/8 crossings: — 3 bridges — 5 culverts	0.8 acres/2 crossings: — 1 culvert — 1 bridge	0.8 acres/2 crossings: — 1 culvert — 1 bridge





Imact Category	Impacts and Benefits				
	No Build Alternative	Cooper Creek Alternative	G South Alternative	Juneau Creek Alternative	Juneau Creek Variant Alternative
Brown Bear					
Habitat Avoidance Area (acres in addition to the avoidance area created by existing highway)	—	605	1,468	2,834	2,640
Moose					
General	—	37	37	59	40
Rutting	—	100	105	114	116
Rutting and Winter	—	67	74	104	110
Total Habitat Lost (acres)	—	204	216	277	266

Next Steps



**We
are
Here**



- » Draft SEIS has been issued for public and agency review.
- » Public and agency comments are being accepted through May 26, 2015.
- » Respond to comments and revise the SEIS as needed.
- » Identify a Preferred Alternative.
- » Issue a Final EIS for review and comment.

**Spring/Summer
2015**

**Draft SEIS 60-Day
Comment Period,
Public Hearing /
Open House**

**Fall/Winter
2015**

**Respond to
Comments on Draft
SEIS**

2016

**Final SEIS and
Record of Decision
(ROD)**

2016-17

**Design and
Right-of-way
Acquisition**

2018-23

Construction

2023

Completion

When the environmental process is complete, the FHWA will issue a Record of Decision.

Comments



May 26, 2015!
Comment Deadline

Your comments are important to the SEIS process! The public and agencies are encouraged to review the Draft SEIS, accompanying appendices, and technical reports. Comments should be postmarked no later than May 26, 2015!

The most helpful comments are those that:

- » Provide new information.
- » Identify a new issue.
- » Identify a flaw or gap in analysis, or identify unexplored lines of research that could materially alter the assessment of impacts.

Comments can be submitted:

- » Via the website using the comment form: www.sterlinghighway.net
- » Email: sterlinghwy@hdrinc.com
- » Standard mail:
DOT&PF Central Region
Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project
PO Box 196900
Anchorage, AK 99519-6900
- » In person at this meeting!