



# Nic'anilen Na'

*“where the stream flows out into  
the current”*

Foundations for  
Conservation and  
Management

2023- 2033

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# Acknowledgments

This plan was prepared by a core team of the following people:

- Robin Mayo, WISE Executive Director
- Jolene Nashlund, WISE Development Director
- Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames
- Paul Boos, Gay Wellman, Margie Steigerwald, and Sarah Linnell, WISE Board of Directors
- Lizzy Dean and Zachary Babb, National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

A number of partners and individuals contributed to the development and review of this plan. We would like to thank the Great Land Trust for their ongoing assistance and final review of this document.

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance supported this planning process through a technical assistance grant.



# Executive Summary

Wrangell Institute for Science & Environment (WISE) is a locally-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 2001 with the mission of providing science and environmental education to all age groups, supporting scientific research, and sharing the natural wonders of the Copper River Basin.

Nic'anilen Na' is located at Mile 20 of the Edgerton Highway (Alaska Route 10) near the confluence of the Tonsina and Copper Rivers. It now includes two contiguous properties totaling 60 acres of land near the confluence of the Copper and Tonsina Rivers. Nic'anilen Na' is the traditional Ahtna name for the place, meaning "current flows out from shore creek" (Pronunciation "NEEK on a lynn NAH"). The property contains Conservation Values which are important to the owner, residents of the Copper River Basin, the state of Alaska, and visitors. Natural landscapes, including forests and wetlands, provide wildlife habitat and contribute to the health of surrounding ecosystems. The area provides numerous educational and recreational opportunities. The property has cultural resources including a cabin, artifacts, gravesites, and a rich history of use by the Ahtna people and later settlers. The Conservation Easement protects the natural habitat and allows improvements such as trails and interpretive signs on the property. There is a 2-acre limited development area where visitor facilities are permitted. On October 24, 2018, Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames conveyed the Nic'anilen Na' Conservation Easement to Great Land Trust. The remainder interest in the property was conveyed to WISE, who now owns the property subject to a life estate held by the donors.

In April 2021, WISE received a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA) to focus vision and goals, develop management strategies, and lay the foundation for future planning and development. The purpose of the planning process is to provide guidance for WISE to lead the long-term conservation and stewardship of the property. Our vision is that Nic'anilen Na' is a place with a cohesive management plan which guides the long-term conservation and stewardship of its natural and cultural values. WISE and NPS-RTCA worked together from May 2021 through May 2023 in a planning process that included convening a core planning team, visiting the property, and consulting with stakeholders. While Nic'anilen Na' is held in private ownership, WISE understands that this place is significant to many people in the region. Community and partner

involvement was a significant part of the planning process and will continue in the coming years. WISE was honored to have the involvement of donors Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames on the core planning team.

This document conveys what was learned and discussed during the planning process, including background information, policies for managing Nic'anilen Na', and proposed projects that will enhance the property.

Sections 1, 2, and 3 of this document provide an in-depth introduction, description of the place, and existing conditions assessment for Nic'anilen Na'.

Section 4 outlines WISE's vision for the property. WISE intends to use the property to support its mission to provide science and environmental education to all age groups, to foster and make readily available resources for learning, to support and participate in scientific research, and to share the natural wonders of the Copper River Basin with its members and guests. Desired uses for the property include year-round educational programs for all ages, scientific research, and recreational activities by invited guests. Property needs include simple visitor amenities such as parking, trails, signage, and primitive restroom facilities.

#### Vision

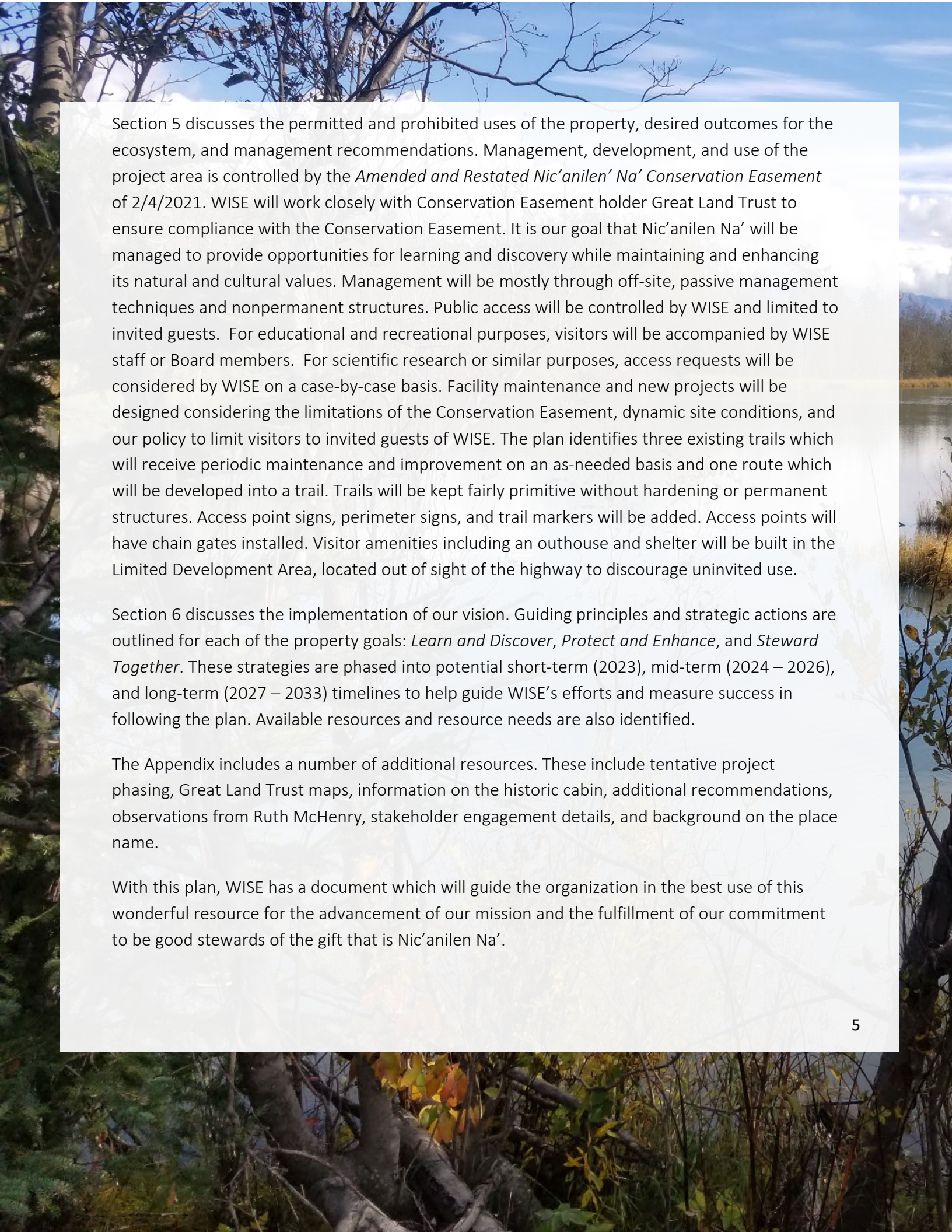
**Nic'anilen Na' is a place where invited guests can experience wildlife and natural habitats as they change through the seasons and years, discovering and learning about the aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora of this important Copper River riparian habitat. It is a place to expand scientific knowledge and outdoor skills, to enjoy non-motorized recreation, and to develop an enduring sense of stewardship and love of nature.**

#### Goals

**Learn and Discover:** Create outdoor learning and exploration opportunities through guided and instructional programs.

**Protect and Enhance:** Protect, and where appropriate restore and enhance, the property's natural and cultural resources.

**Steward Together:** Manage the property through partnerships and relationships with organizations which share our vision of the property.



Section 5 discusses the permitted and prohibited uses of the property, desired outcomes for the ecosystem, and management recommendations. Management, development, and use of the project area is controlled by the *Amended and Restated Nic'anilen' Na' Conservation Easement* of 2/4/2021. WISE will work closely with Conservation Easement holder Great Land Trust to ensure compliance with the Conservation Easement. It is our goal that Nic'anilen Na' will be managed to provide opportunities for learning and discovery while maintaining and enhancing its natural and cultural values. Management will be mostly through off-site, passive management techniques and nonpermanent structures. Public access will be controlled by WISE and limited to invited guests. For educational and recreational purposes, visitors will be accompanied by WISE staff or Board members. For scientific research or similar purposes, access requests will be considered by WISE on a case-by-case basis. Facility maintenance and new projects will be designed considering the limitations of the Conservation Easement, dynamic site conditions, and our policy to limit visitors to invited guests of WISE. The plan identifies three existing trails which will receive periodic maintenance and improvement on an as-needed basis and one route which will be developed into a trail. Trails will be kept fairly primitive without hardening or permanent structures. Access point signs, perimeter signs, and trail markers will be added. Access points will have chain gates installed. Visitor amenities including an outhouse and shelter will be built in the Limited Development Area, located out of sight of the highway to discourage uninvited use.

Section 6 discusses the implementation of our vision. Guiding principles and strategic actions are outlined for each of the property goals: *Learn and Discover*, *Protect and Enhance*, and *Steward Together*. These strategies are phased into potential short-term (2023), mid-term (2024 – 2026), and long-term (2027 – 2033) timelines to help guide WISE's efforts and measure success in following the plan. Available resources and resource needs are also identified.

The Appendix includes a number of additional resources. These include tentative project phasing, Great Land Trust maps, information on the historic cabin, additional recommendations, observations from Ruth McHenry, stakeholder engagement details, and background on the place name.

With this plan, WISE has a document which will guide the organization in the best use of this wonderful resource for the advancement of our mission and the fulfillment of our commitment to be good stewards of the gift that is Nic'anilen Na'.

# Section 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background



Nic'anilen Na' is the traditional Ahtna name for the place, meaning "where the stream flows out into the current"

It is pronounced  
"NEEK on a lynn NAH"

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE) became the owner of 40 acres of land near the confluence of the Copper and Tonsina Rivers in 2018. An additional 20 acres was added in 2021. Great Land Trust holds a Conservation Easement for the property. The intent of the donors and the WISE Board of Directors is that the property be used to support the WISE mission of providing science and environmental education, supporting scientific research, and sharing the natural wonders of the Copper River Basin. WISE recognized the need to focus these ideas into a clear vision and plan for management and development. In 2021, WISE requested support from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA) to focus their vision and goals, develop management strategies, and lay the foundation for future planning and development.

## 1.2 Purpose, vision, and goals of this plan

### 1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this planning process is to prepare the guidance that enables WISE to lead the long-term conservation and stewardship of the Nic'anilen Na' property within the bounds of the Conservation Easement.

### 1.2.2 Vision

Our vision is that Nic'anilen Na' is a place with a cohesive vision and management plan that guides the long-term conservation and stewardship of its natural and cultural values. It is a place where invited guests can experience wildlife and natural habitats as they change through the seasons and years, discovering and learning about the aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora of this important Copper River riparian habitat. It is a place to expand scientific knowledge and

outdoor skills, to enjoy non-motorized recreation, and to develop an enduring sense of stewardship and love of nature.

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*In this plan, we document what is known about Nic'anilen Na', collect perspectives from partners and community members regarding its use and management, and provide an initial guide to caring for and managing the property in the future.*

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### 1.2.3 Goals

Specific goals for this planning process are:

- Develop clear purpose and vision statements with achievable goals for the property, using input from a defined, intentional list of collaborators who are closest to the project.
- Identify and build relationships with partners who will support long-term success on the property.
- Develop guidance for future preservation and use consistent with the Conservation Easement.
- Plan for the protection of on-site cultural and natural resources, using input from the Native community and professionals in relevant sciences.
- Develop initial design parameters and recommendations for basic visitor and educational services. Compile these into a site plan that identifies active and passive programs and management strategies.



Photo credit: NPS-RTCA

## 1.3 Planning scope and process

The planning process facilitated by NPS-RTCA and the core planning team is focused on documenting a broad vision, goals, and strategies that lay the foundation for thoughtful management and development of Nic'anilen Na' into the future. This document conveys projects for development and policies for management of Nic'anilen Na'. Prior to the transfer of ownership to WISE, Great Land Trust carried out extensive baseline inventory and mapping on the property. WISE has met with representatives from the Native community to learn more about the graves and cabin. The WISE Board of Directors had several productive conversations about hopes and dreams for the place. The project was shared in the WISE annual newsletter, in articles in the local newspaper, and at a science symposium. WISE received technical assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program beginning in the spring of 2021 to



focus the goals and purpose of WISE’s stewardship of Nic’anilen Na’ within the bounds of the Conservation Easement.

## 1.4 Community and partner involvement

While Nic’anilen Na’ is held in private ownership, WISE understands that this place is significant to many people in the region. As such, community and partner involvement were a significant piece of the planning process and will continue to be in the coming years. Key stakeholders are listed here. Details can be found in Appendix 6.

- WISE Board of Directors and Staff
- Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames, donors, ecological knowledge
- Great Land Trust, holder of the Conservation Easement
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
- US Bureau of Land Management Glennallen Field Office
- Copper Country Alliance, local conservation group and WISE partner
- Chitina Native Corporation, nearby landowner, cultural knowledge
- Ahtna Inc., nearby landowner, cultural knowledge
- Local residents with knowledge of the area

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

### BUILD THE PLANNING TEAM

Establish a collaborative planning process with key project partners to support ongoing plan implementation.

### UNDERSTANDING NIC’ANILEN NA’

Understand the history, significance, and existing conditions of Nic’anilen Na’. Compile and document critical design opportunities and constraints for WISE programming and management.

### SITE AND PROGRAMMATIC VISION

Develop a unified vision and goals for Nic’anilen Na’.

### PRELIMINARY CONCEPT PLANNING

Using vision and goals, analyze project goals, opportunities, and constraints to develop preliminary design concepts and recommendations.

### ASSEMBLE VISION AND CONCEPT PLAN

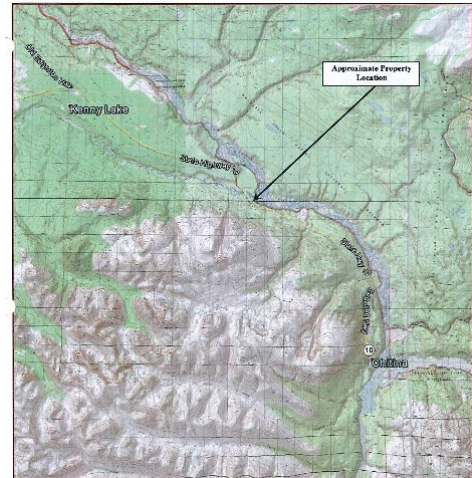
Develop a conceptual site plan outlining active and passive programming and management recommendations.

# Section 2: Description and Significance of Place

## 2.1 Background

### 2.1.1 Area overview

Nic'anilen Na' is a 60 acre property located at Mile 20 Edgerton Highway (Alaska Route 10) near the confluence of the Copper and Tonsina rivers. The closest communities are Kenny Lake 14 miles to the west, and Chitina 9 miles to the east. Nic'anilen Na' is the traditional Ahtna name for the place, meaning "current flows out from shore creek" (pronunciation "NEEK on a lynn NAH"). It is protected by a Conservation Easement held by Great Land Trust, which protects the natural habitat but allows limited improvements such as trails and interpretive signs on the property. There is also a 2-acre Limited Development Area where visitor facilities are permitted. WISE owns the property subject to a life estate held by the donors, Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames, which grants access and requires WISE to inform them of visits to the property. Great Land Trust also holds a Long-Term Management Fund which may be used by WISE to manage and protect the conservation values of the property.



*Property Vicinity Map, Great Land Trust Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation Report*

### 2.1.2 Ownership and use

This property and surrounding lands were traditionally used by Ahtna people for hunting, salmon harvesting, and trapping. There was a small village in the general area during the early to mid-1900s. In the 1960s, part of the property was utilized for gravel extraction to support the construction of the Edgerton Highway. There is still evidence of access and shoring along the edges of the existing pond. The island in the center of the pond is believed to be where excessive material was dumped. There is evidence of what is thought to be an old roadcut paralleling the Edgerton Highway (shown in the image to the right). In 2003, the Bureau of Land Management deeded the 40-acre parcel of land to Ella Billum Mahle as a Native allotment. In 2005, Mahle



*June 1967 Aerial Photograph, Great Land Trust Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation Report*

sold the land to Mary Matisinez. In 2014, Matisinez’s estate sold the land to Ruth E. McHenry and Henry C. Eames, Jr.

In 1998, the 20-acre parcel of land was deeded to Mabel Ann Heaton by the Bureau of Land Management as a Native allotment. Bruce Heaton lived in the cabin for a time. The land was sold to Dean Wilson, Jr. in 2012. Dean Wilson, Jr. and his friend Alpine Kameroff were known to trap, hunt, and observe wildlife in this area. It was purchased by Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames in 2019.



Photo credit: Great Land Trust

### 2.1.3 Natural and cultural landscape

This area is located on the southeastern edge of the Copper Plateau ecoregion, within the Boreal Cordillera. The area experiences extreme temperature changes, with an annual average high of 70F, an annual average low of -14F, and extremes from 90F to -60F. Average annual rainfall for the area is about 14”.

The Nic’anilen Na’ property consists of rolling hills on a glacial runout plain, interspersed with wetlands and riverine habitat. The elevation varies from 180 to 207 feet. Multiple creeks run through the property, with beaver ponds and wetlands being slightly lower than the forested wetlands around them. The influx of groundwater in this area provides rare, clearwater streams that remain open in winter. Along with the presence of beavers, proximity to the Copper and Tonsina Rivers, and the variety of vegetation, this has shaped the landscape into an oasis for wildlife. In this former gravel pit, the groundwater flows help drive the richness and diversity of species found in this area. This inspired Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames to purchase the properties, and over the years they have documented hundreds of sightings of migratory and resident birds as well as small and large mammals, amphibia, and three species of salmon at multiple life stages.



Example of beaver activity from Great Land Trust Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation

A thorough description of the natural resources including wetlands, forest, and wildlife can be found in the *Nic’anilen Na’ Baseline Documentation for a Conservation Easement*. It is important

to note that beaver activity continues to dramatically alter the landscape, as documented in Great Land Trust site assessment documents.



Cabin in 2022. Photo credit: NPS-RTCA

According to a Bureau of Indian Affairs survey, there were two cabins (one still standing), eight graves, and portions of an old Alaska Native village in this area. The graves are thought to contain the remains of Alaska Native villagers who died during the influenza pandemic of 1918. The small cabin is believed to have been built in the 1930s or 1940s. A driveway and clearing are adjacent to the cabin.

## 2.2 Conservation Easement Values

The *Amended and Restated Nic'anilen Na' Conservation Easement* describes the property's Conservation Values which are of value to the owner, the residents of the Copper River Basin and the state of Alaska which are worthy of preservation. These include natural habitat, open space, and opportunities for education. The property is of sufficient size that the values are likely to remain intact and become even more important as neighboring properties are developed. Natural habitat on the property include forested uplands, ponds, and riverine and riparian wetlands that directly contribute to the health of the adjacent rivers and surrounding ecosystems. The property provides a rich forest habitat for mammals and birds, river-connected habitat for anadromous fish, and wetland habitat for nesting and migratory birds and resident beavers. The property is situated at a scenic corridor at the confluence of the Tonsina and Copper Rivers and is part of a large area of open space consisting of forest and wetlands that provides valuable scenic views important to the character of the Copper River Basin. The property provides numerous educational and recreational opportunities and values. The property and surrounding lands were traditionally used by the Ahtna people, and several Native villages were located in the area during the early to mid 1900's. The property contains a few undeveloped trails and viewpoints, providing opportunities for outdoor exploration and education. The unique forest, riverine, and riparian wetlands offer opportunities to view and study the natural history, flora and fauna, birds, and fish in their natural environment, and observe natural processes such as plant succession and river morphology.

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*The Conservation Easement states that the property shall be managed for the following conservation values, among others. These are “of great value to Owner, the residents of the Copper River basin, and the State of Alaska in general”.*

- 1. Relatively Natural Habitat*
  - 2. Open Space*
  - 3. Recreation or Education*
- 

## 2.3 Important reference documents

Amended and Restated Nic’anilen Na’ Conservation Easement (Recorded as Document # 2021-000134-0 (308-Chitina) on 2/4/2021.): Details the Conservation Easement held by Great Land Trust, and the agreement between WISE and Great Land Trust. The Conservation Easement outlines the terms and restrictions placed on the property and includes specific activities allowed and forbidden in the Resource Protection Area and Limited Development Area.

Long-Term Management Fund Agreement: Specifies the allowed uses and policies for the \$25,000 Long Term Management Fund held by Great Land Trust for the management and protection of the property.

Nic’anilen Na’ Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation for a Conservation Easement: Details baseline condition for the 40-acre parcel acquired in 2018.

Amended and Restated Nic’anilen Na’ Conservation Easement Supplemental Conditions Report (to be used in conjunction with the above report): Details baseline condition for the 20-acre parcel acquired in 2021.

Property Use Agreement: Details the terms and restrictions for property use during the life estate held by the property donors.

*Question posed to the WISE Board in July 2022:*

*What are the values of this place to you?*

- \* Wetlands
- \* Adjoining Native land
- \* Adjoining lands in general especially with water resources
- \* Natural resources such boreal forest, swans, salmon spawning areas, beavers , etc.
  
- \* Swans
- \* Microorganisms
- \* Many changes that come with the seasons - especially around education
- \* Climate change - assessing, interpreting
- \* Stewardship
- \* Cultural story and narrative
- \* Resilience story, story of the gravel pit
- \* Grave/burial sites
- \* Cabin

# Section 3: Existing Conditions

The Great Land Trust has completed extensive baseline and supplemental documentation of Nic'anilen Na' to monitor compliance with the Conservation Easement and determine the ongoing condition of the conservation values protected by the easement. Much of Section 3 draws from the Great Land Trust's *Amended and Restated Nic'anilen Na' Conservation Easement* and *Nic'anilen Na' Conservation Easement: Baseline Documentation*. Additionally, Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames have kept meticulous record of their observations of the property, referred to in their field notes as "Grayling Patch" (Appendix 3).

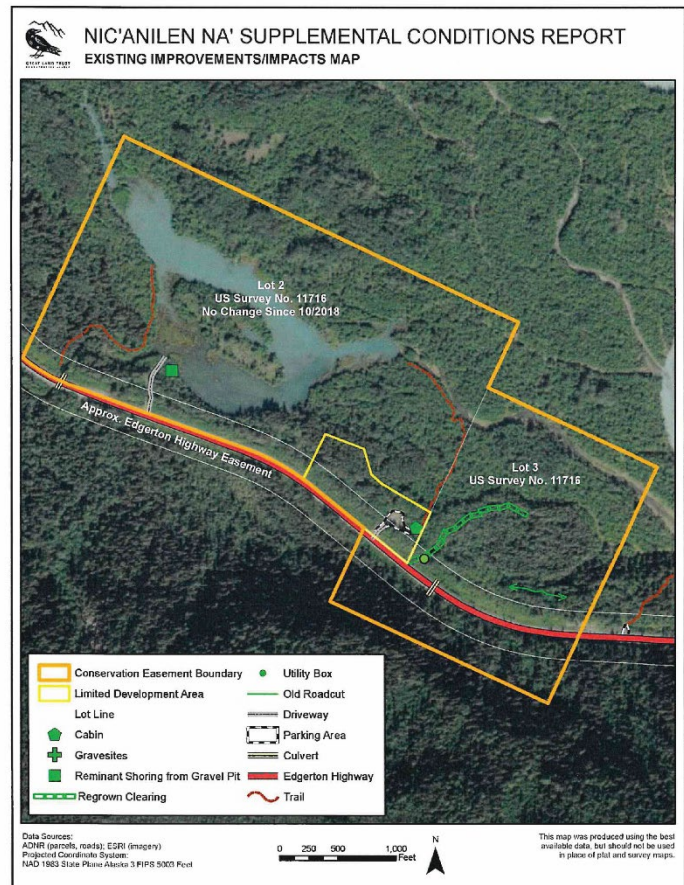
## 3.1 Overview

### 3.1.1 Wildlife and habitat

The influx of groundwater in this area provides rare, clear water streams that remain open in winter. Along with the presence of beavers, the landscape has been transformed into an oasis for wildlife. In this former gravel pit, the groundwater flows help drive the richness and diversity of species in this area and inspired Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames to purchase the property in 2014. They have seen and documented large numbers of migratory and resident birds, dozens of small and large mammals, amphibia, and three species of salmon at multiple life stages on the property. Their desire to see the land remain in a relatively natural state, subject to the ebbs and flows of natural change, influenced their decision to donate the land to WISE with a Conservation Easement. It is their intent to safeguard habitat for wildlife and provide a space for WISE to implement its goals of doing research, environmental education, and stewardship.

### 3.1.2 Existing Trails as of 2023

C. EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS/IMPACTS MAP

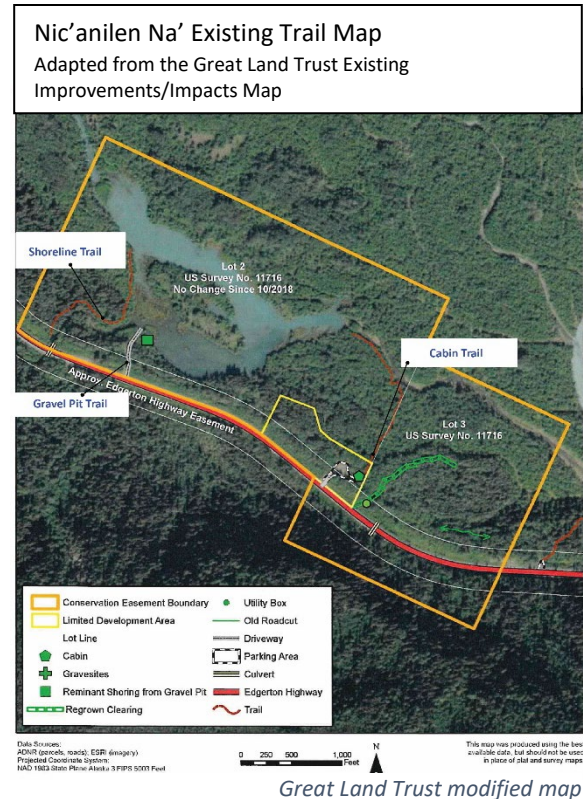


Existing Improvements/Impacts Map, Great Land Trust

1. Shoreline Trail This approximately ¼ mile trail begins near the culvert on the Edgerton Highway. It passes through the woods then along the shoreline of the pond.

2. Cabin Trail Directly adjacent to the cabin is an approximately 150 yard trail north to a slough. Low areas of this trail are subject to flooding from beaver activity. This trail provides access to the riparian habitat. As of Spring 2022, this trail no longer provides access to the creek. In fact, hip waders are needed, as the area is experiencing high water levels and more closely resembles a pond than a creek.

3. Gravel Pit Trail This trail (originally a highly compacted access road to the gravel pit) is a 200-yard trail which goes from the Edgerton Highway to the pond. It is currently being encroached upon by willows and brush.



### 3.1.3 Current use

Edgerton Highway The Edgerton Highway traverses the southern portion of the property from east to west. There is a highway easement extending 100 feet on either side of the centerline. The Alaska Department of Transportation maintains a cleared buffer within this easement.

Utilities Also within this easement is a utility box thought to be part of a Copper Valley Telecom fiber optic underground cable system.

Wildlife viewing By Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames.

Hunting and trapping. Prior to the purchase of this property by Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames, beaver trapping was common in this area.

### 3.1.4 Current management

The only current maintenance done by WISE is the project to put up signs and a driveway chain and checking in with Ruth and Cliff. The insurance cost is about \$100 a year, as part of WISE's umbrella policy. Cost would go up with major improvements.

### 3.1.5 Relevant policies

Right-of-way The property is subject to a right-of-way for ditches or canals constructed by the authority of the United States.

Highway easement The property includes an easement for highway purposes, extending 100 feet each side of the centerline of the Edgerton Highway held by the State of Alaska.

Right of access The property is subject to a right of access to the cemetery by Ella Billum Mahle's family members for visitation and maintenance purposes.

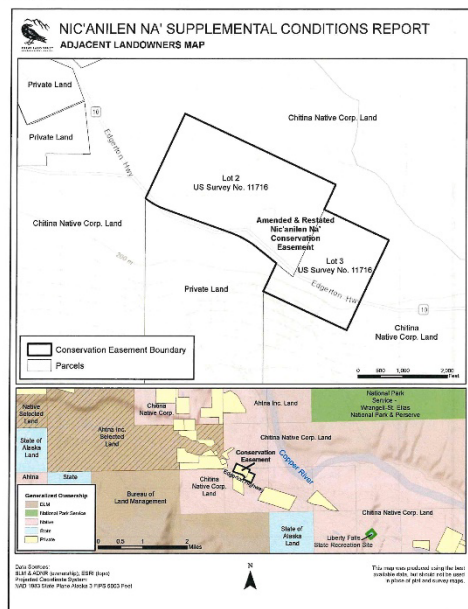
Conservation purposes The conservation values are to be protected in perpetuity under the Conservation Easement, according to the following Protection Objectives. Please refer to the Conservation Easement for full details.

1. Recreation and/or educational uses
2. Relatively natural habitat
3. Open space
4. Compatible land use and development
5. Resource Protection Area
6. Limited Development Area

Subsurface estate Pursuant to the Conservation Easement, the conducting, granting or leasing of surface or subsurface mining activities is prohibited.

### 3.1.6 Neighboring landowners and external stakeholders

D. ADJACENT LANDOWNERS MAP



Great Land Trust Adjacent Landowners Map

Chitina Native Corporation Adjacent to Nic'anilen Na' to the north, east and south is land owned by Chitina Native Corporation. Chitina Native Corporation owns other lands in the nearby area. This is private land.

Private land A private, Native allotment abuts the southwestern corner of the property. The surrounding area is predominantly rural, with several private residences in the Kenny Lake community nearby.

Federal land Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve lies approximately two miles north of the property. The Bureau of Land Management manages land to the south and west of the property.

State of Alaska The State of Alaska owns land to the south and west of the property.

Ahtna, Inc. Ahtna, Inc. owns large tracts of land in the area.



## 3.2 Opportunities

### 3.2.1 Natural values

The property contains natural habitat including forested uplands and wetlands that directly contribute to the health of the adjacent Tonsina and Copper Rivers and surrounding ecosystems. The property's forest and woodland habitat promotes biological diversity and allows for the growth of a healthy and unfragmented forest, and contains a continuous canopy with multi-tiered understory of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. The property contains numerous native species and provides rich habitat for mammals and birds, and in conjunction with the riverine and riparian wetlands, provides anadromous fish habitat and connectivity. See Appendix 3 for a summary of Ruth McHenry's meticulous field observations.



*Photo credit: NPS-RTCA*

*Photo credit: NPS-RTCA*



The property's aquatic resources primarily consist of riverine and riparian wetlands associated with the Tonsina River, a tributary of the Copper River. Nic'anilen Na' is the traditional Ahtna word used to describe the stream into the Copper River below the Lower Tonsina, meaning 'current flows out from shore creek', which perfectly describes the many channels and sloughs that traverse the property and contribute to the Copper River.

Resident beavers utilize the aquatic resources to build dams and lodges which in turn provide habitat for nesting waterfowl as well as a rare ice-free section of clear, flowing water providing an important year-round refugium in the Copper River Basin. The property's aquatic resources support anadromous fish species and help protect water resources and promote the infiltration, detention, and natural filtration of stormwater in the region.

### 3.2.2 Recreation and education

The property provides numerous educational and recreational opportunities and values. The property contains and is surrounded by multiple channels and sloughs mainly associated with the Tonsina River as it flows into the Copper River, providing a natural, scenic buffer for recreational users of these public river corridors. The property contains a few undeveloped trails and viewpoints,



*Photo credit: WISE*

providing opportunities for outdoor exploration and education. Access to and through the property's unique riverine and riparian wetland habitats afford opportunities to view and study the natural history, flora and fauna, birds, and fish in their natural environment, as well as observe natural processes such as plant succession and river morphology.

### 3.3 Concerns and constraints

#### 3.3.1 Visitor Safety

There are a number of visitor access and safety issues at the project area.

(a) The Edgerton Highway is adjacent and transects part of the property. Approximately 5 acres of Lot 3 lies southwest of the main property and is bisected by the Edgerton Highway. Any development or use of this part of the property would involve safety associated with people crossing the highway.

(b) Currently, a trail located near the west side of the property supplies access to the pond. It has been occasionally used by people who want to unload watercraft for use on the pond.

There is no parking on this trail. The closest parking is in a roadside pullout on the north side of the Edgerton about 100 yards west of the trail. This requires people to walk on the shoulder of the road after unloading their watercraft. There is no safe place to walk.

(c) There are hazards associated with being in and around ponds and streams, including getting wet, hypothermia, and drowning. In winter there is the risk of falling through ice.



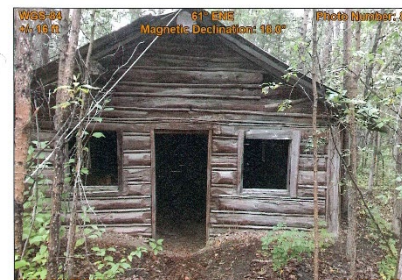
*Walking along the Edgerton Highway. Photo credit: NPS-RTCA*

#### 3.3.2 Cultural resources

The *Amended and Restated Nic'anilien Na Conservation Easement* directs WISE to "Protect and Enhance" the cultural resources. The known cultural resources largely involve Native grave sites and a historic cabin. A complete survey has yet to be completed.

##### 3.3.2(a) Cabin

The existing historic cabin located in the Limited Development Area is slowly succumbing to the elements. The cabin was reportedly used by Ella Billum Mahle and Bruce Heaton. Like most historic cabins in Alaska, it was built without a foundation and the lower logs continue to rot and sink in the soil. There is no floor, and the property has been used by visitors as a toilet and garbage disposal site. Previously there was an attempt to



*Cabin, photo from Great Land Trust Baseline Documentation*

control moisture by placing a canvas roof cloth over the cabin with limited success. The roof logs are sagging and deteriorating and have limited life left. Without intervention it is doubtful it will see many more years.

### **3.3.2(b) Grave sites**

There are several known grave sites on the property. Additional sites have been reported but not located. It is possible to see remnants of fences that were erected around the graves. It is believed that Ahtna Athabascan people who died of the 1918 flu are buried here, who may have been residents from the village that was located across the road. There have been visits and discussions with local tribal elders, and there is a note in the Conservation Easement about allowing access to the graves. Care needs to be taken to ensure that any activity in the grave areas is avoided, and cultural protocols are respected.

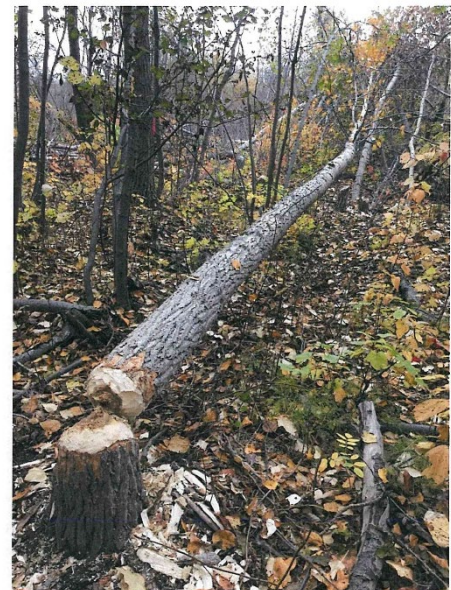
### **3.3.3 Environmental considerations**

#### **3.3.3(a) Invasive species**

There have been several common invasive plant species observed on the property. Many of the species were introduced when the road was built and associated with the seed mix used on the roadside.

#### **3.3.3(b) Environmental and hydrological changes**

Beaver activity is the most dramatic environmental change observed on the property in recent years. Trapping used to be common in the area. In the last five years there has been no trapping. Beaver populations are much higher as a result. This is both an interpretive and educational opportunity and a concern for safety and infrastructure planning. Changes to the ponds and streams as beaver activity and weather conditions raise and lower water levels are ongoing. For example, in 2006 a flood event breached the main dam and temporarily drained the pond. Low-lying sections of existing trail are periodically wet. Sections of trail that were once passable now require hip waders to cross.



*Photo from Conservation Easement Supplemental Conditions Report, Great Land Trust*

### **3.3.4 Visitor management**

Any visitor use of the property will create impacts and wildlife disturbance. The control of visitor activities is paramount to limit impacts. The focus of much of this plan is on visitor use associated with invited guests.

#### **3.3.4(a) Uninvited Guests**

The management of uninvited guests is also an issue. The Limited Development Area has been used for many years for road travelers as an overnight camping area with its associated impacts

(e.g. sanitation, fire building, garbage accumulation etc.). Measures should be taken to control and monitor physical access and use by unauthorized people. Other uses have included trapping, hunting, and exploration (water and land). These activities have not had a significant environmental impact but could affect the educational programs envisioned.

#### **3.3.4(b)Public Information**

The identification of the property as a conservation area and an educational area is an issue because it may invite unauthorized use. There are some “no trespassing signs” on site.

#### **3.3.5 Existing Encumbrances and Land Uses**

The Edgerton Highway traverses the southern portion of the Property, from the eastern boundary to western boundary, within an existing highway easement. The highway easement extends 100 feet on each side of the centerline, and the Alaska Department of Transportation periodically clears vegetation and maintains a buffer along the Highway within their easement. A small utility box is located within the highway easement near the cabin site on Lot 2. This is thought to be part of a Copper Valley Telecom fiber optic underground cable system.

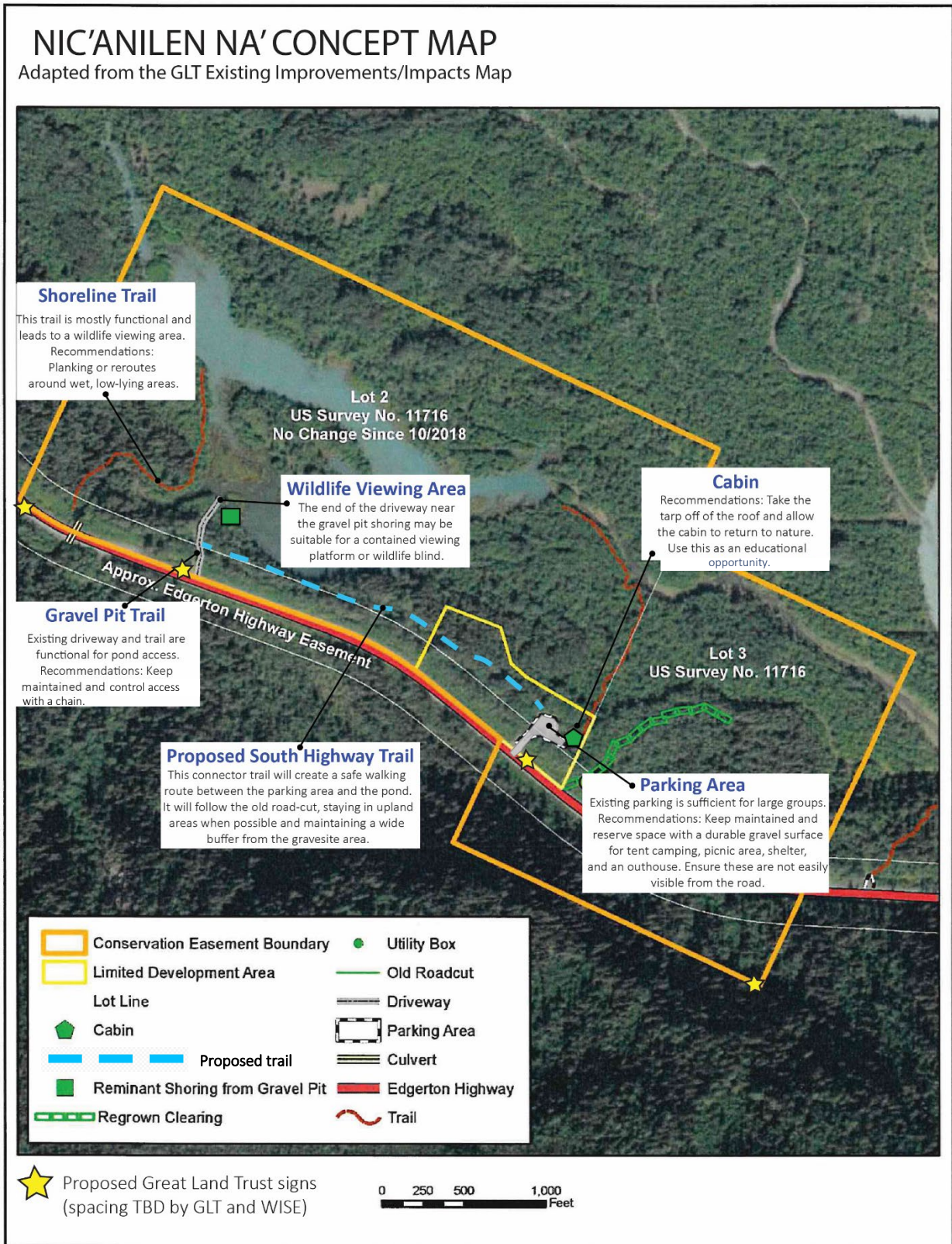
A high-angle, top-down photograph of a group of people standing in a circle on a grassy field. The people are wearing outdoor gear, including backpacks and hats. The central focus is a person with long blonde hair tied in a ponytail. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

## Section 4: Vision

### 4.1 Vision

Nic'anilen Na' is a place where invited guests can experience wildlife and natural habitats as they change through the seasons and years, discovering and learning about the aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora of this important Copper River riparian area. It is a place to expand scientific knowledge and outdoor skills, to enjoy non-motorized recreation, and to develop an enduring sense of stewardship and love of nature.

## 4.2 Concept Plan



## 4.3 Programming and Desired Uses

### 4.3.1 Winter use

In the wintertime, the following activities are both feasible and in alignment with WISE's goals and the Conservation Easement.

- ✚ Cross country skiing and snowshoeing
- ✚ Winter tracking
- ✚ Interpretation of plant and animal winter adaptations through guided programming and mobile materials, such as brochures

### 4.3.2 Spring, Summer, and Fall use

The following activities are both feasible and in alignment with WISE's goals and the Conservation Easement.

- ✚ Aquatic ecology day programs with groups of less than 20 people which include the following activities:
  - ✚ Walking on the trails
  - ✚ Wildlife viewing
  - ✚ Gathering near and accessing the ponds, including wading
  - ✚ Gathering for activities
- ✚ Multi-day youth programming
  - ✚ All of the above activities, plus tent camping
  - ✚ Gathering around a campfire
- ✚ Scientific studies (beaver activity, macroinvertebrates, climate change and plant phenology in different zones of the property, etc.)
- ✚ Sponsored WISE nature hikes
- ✚ Sponsored WISE wildlife viewing programs

### 4.3.3 Other uses

Other activities related to education or environmental monitoring and research may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

## 4.4 Needs

### 4.4.1 Needs

The following address programming needs to support the aforementioned uses and should be prioritized. Note that some improvements require the Great Land Trust's review per the Conservation Easement.

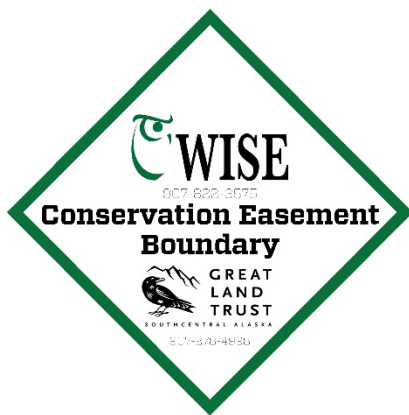
- ✚ Parking area within the Limited Development Area

- ✚ Flat, durable surface in a cleared area for temporary shelter (pop-up tent), pitching tents and having a campfire within the Limited Development Area
- ✚ Flat, open space for groups to gather for educational activities
- ✚ A plowed pull-out when there is active programming in the winter
- ✚ Walking trails
  - ✚ Safe connection between the parking area and the ponds
  - ✚ Bump-outs along the trails where groups can gather
- ✚ Gathering place near the ponds and other interesting locations for education programs
- ✚ Restroom (composting toilet/sustainable outhouse) within the Limited Development Area

#### 4.4.2 Possible amenities

The following amenities were discussed by the planning group but were not decided on at this time. They have the potential to enhance the property but are not necessarily required to implement basic programming.

- ✚ Outdoor classroom
- ✚ Tent platforms
- ✚ Permanent shelter
- ✚ Seating
- ✚ Signage (for safety, instructions, etc.)



*Example Great Land Trust/WISE signage*



# Section 5: Stewardship and Management

## 5.1 Requirements and Constraints

The management, development and use of the property is largely guided and controlled by the *Amended and Restated Nic'anilien Na' Conservation Easement* of 2/4/2021 recorded on 2/4/2021 as document 2021-000134-0 (308-Chitina). The Conservation Easement (CE) was voluntarily granted by the property owners to Great Land Trust to perpetually protect the property and its natural wetland areas, forest and wildlife habitat, open space and educational values and resources. The CE is a customized, legally binding agreement that runs with title to the land to protect the property from unwanted uses and development while allowing the landowner to continue day-to-day management and enjoyment of the property. The Conservation Easement is divided into nine Articles which outline the permitted and prohibited uses of the property as well as desired outcomes for the ecosystem. Article II contains the grant of easement and addresses other items related to the establishment of the Conservation Easement. Articles III, IV, and V contain the restrictions on the use and development of the property. In Article VI the Owner grants to Holder certain rights to enforce the restrictions in perpetuity against all Owners of the property ("Enforcement Rights"). Article VI also contains the procedure for Review applicable to those items permitted subject to Review under Articles III, IV and V. Article VII details the procedures for exercise of Enforcement Rights. Article VIII contains provisions generally applicable to both Owner and Holder. The last Article, entitled "Glossary," contains definitions of capitalized terms used in the Conservation Easement and not defined in Article I. It is important that the actual Conservation Easement is consulted for the detailed terms.

The remainder of the management options are addressed in this document.

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*This document outlines the agreed upon (1) uses of the property; (2) desired future condition and health of the property; and (3) environmental education opportunities that WISE and its partners will manage for.*

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## 5.2 Management Areas

*Note: Section 5.2 is a summary of the allowed improvements within the management areas, as stated in the Conservation Easement. We do not plan to implement all of the allowed uses and improvements stated in the Conservation Easement.*

The property has been divided into two management areas (1) Resource Protection Area and (2) Limited Development Area per the Conservation Easement. The guidelines for management are addressed in Article IV. This Article outlines the permitted and prohibited improvements as well as those which are subject to review by Great Land Trust in each Area. See map below.

### 5.2.1 Resource Protection Area

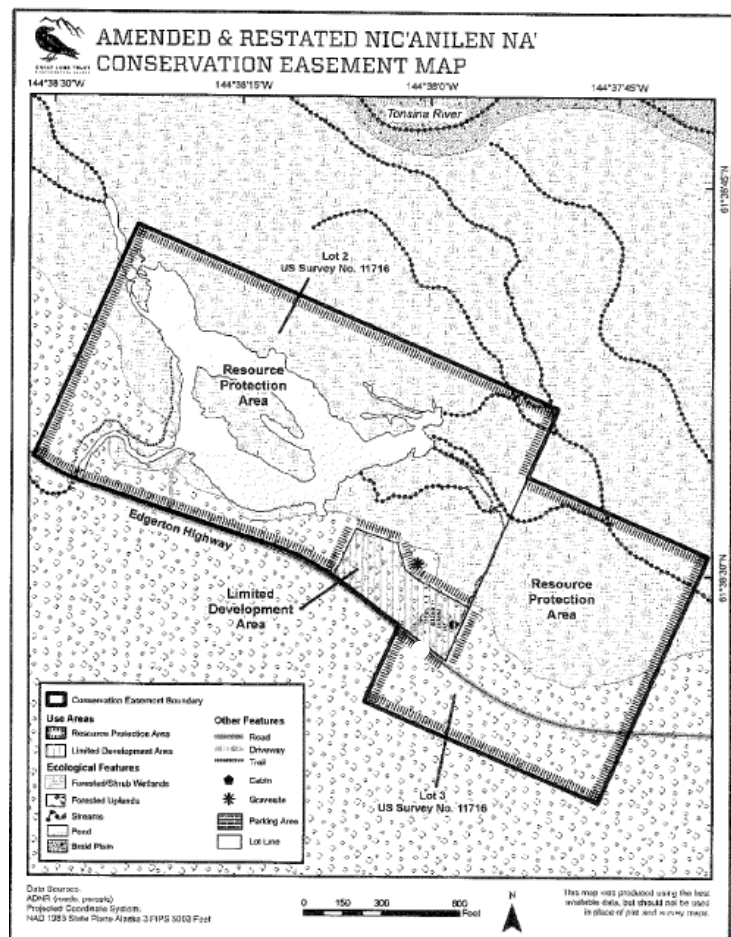
#### 5.2.1(a) Existing Improvements

(i) Any existing improvement may be maintained, repaired or replaced in its existing location. Existing Improvements may be expanded, improved or relocated, if the expanded, improved or relocated Improvement complies with requirements applicable to Additional Improvements of the same type. (See Article IV 4.02 (a)).

#### 5.2.1(b) Additional Improvements Not Subject to Review

The following improvement are allowed as long as they are consistent with the Conservation Purposes:

- (a) Regulatory and Educational Signs.
- (b) Habitat enhancement devices such as bird houses or bat houses.
- (c) Picnic tables and benches.



Great Land Trust Conservation Easement Map

(d) Any structures used to control unauthorized access to the Property if allowed in Section 5.03 of the Conservation Easement.

### 5.2.1(c) Additional Improvements Subject to Review

This is an abbreviated list of permitted improvements and their descriptors and should not be used in place of the recorded Conservation Easement. Review and approval by Great Land Trust is required for some improvements in certain areas. See Article IV 4.02 (c).

- (i) Non-motorized trails
- (ii) Foot bridges and boardwalks
- (iii) Fences, walls, gates
- (iv) Improvements necessary for restoration projects
- (v) Improvements designed to protect conservation values
- (vi) Fencing necessary for protection of cultural values

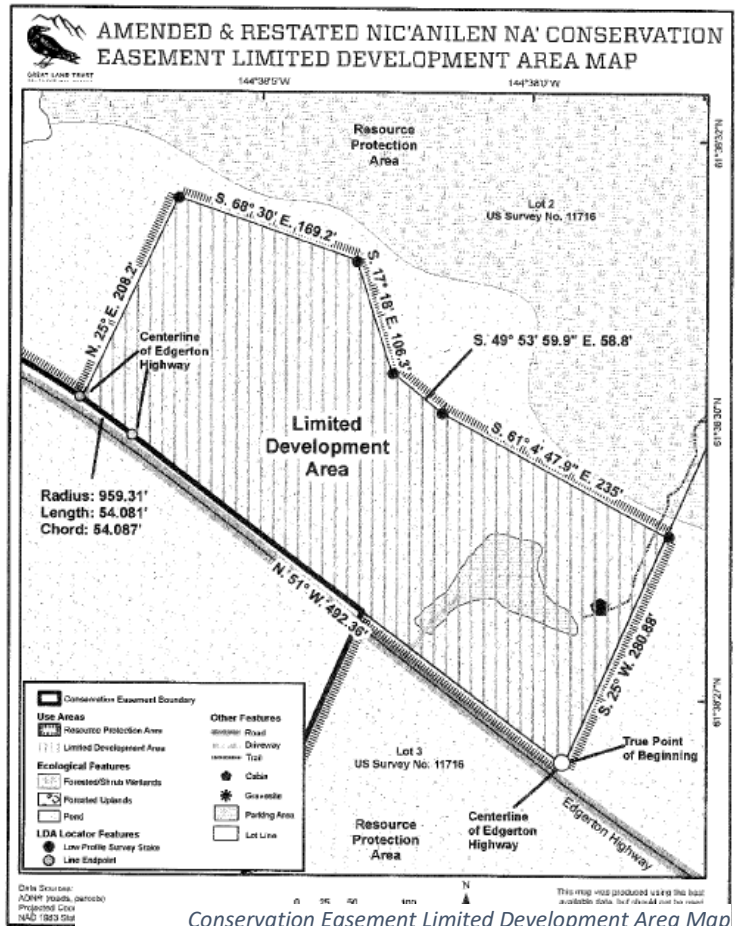
### 5.2.2 Limited Development Area

Any Improvement permitted under a preceding section of Article IV is permitted in the Limited Development Area in the same manner as permitted in the preceding section.

#### 5.2.2(a) Additional Improvements Not Subject to Review

The following Additional Improvements are permitted, so long as they are not located in Wet Areas. All Additional Improvements should be constructed using natural materials and colors, if practicable, to limit negative impacts on scenic values.

- (i) One Dwelling Unit.
  - (ii) Residential Improvements.
  - (iii) Outhouses, pit toilets, or other similar Improvements.
  - (iv) A facility intended to support nature study and related educational uses, such as a nature center.
  - (v) Accessory Improvements.
  - (vi) Utility improvements to service Improvements within the Property.
- These Improvements should be designed so that the scenic views over and across the Property described in



the Conservation Values are obscured to the smallest possible degree.

(vii) Bear or other wildlife-proof containers meant for the storage of food, trash, or other items.

### 5.2.2(b) Additional Improvements Subject to Review

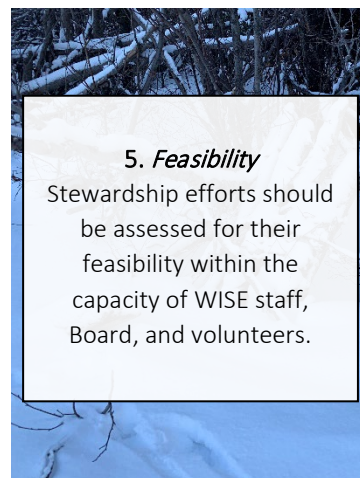
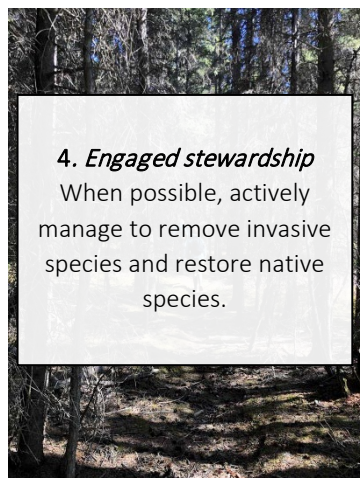
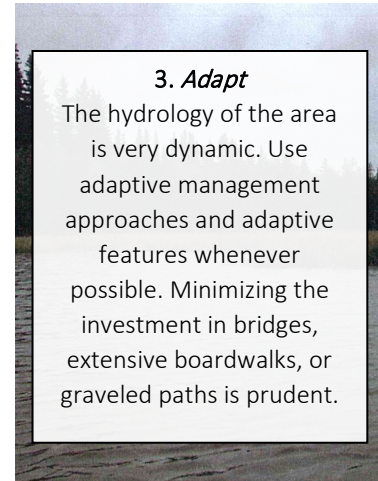
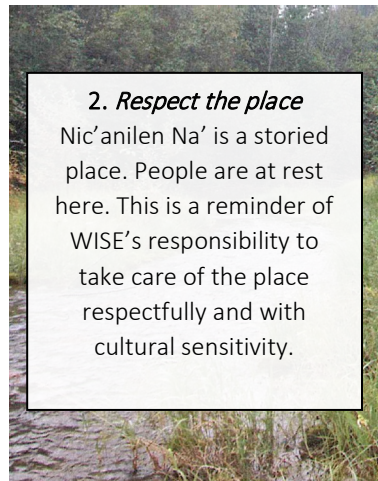
The following Additional Improvements are permitted subject to Review:

(i) Renewable Energy Improvements, as long as they are consistent with the Conservation Values and are exclusively for the benefit of and use on the Property.

## 5.3 Management Recommendations

This section outlines the guiding principles for management of the property. It is our goal that Nic'anilen Na' will be managed to provide opportunities for *learning and discovery, while maintaining and enhancing its natural and cultural values*. Management of the property will largely be through off-site, passive management techniques, largely relying on non-permanent structures for management. Control of public access will be a priority, relying on active initiatives. Public access will be controlled by WISE and limited to invited guests. In many ways, this makes the management of potential impacts in the total purview of WISE and its partners.

### 5.3.1 General management principles



### 5.3.2 Management of invited guests

All visitors must be invited by WISE and accompanied by a WISE staff or Board member, unless expressly permitted by WISE. See Section 4.3: Programming and Desired Uses for a complete list of allowed and encouraged activities.

#### 5.3.2(a) WISE Programs

WISE will primarily focus on education programs which utilize the natural and environmental resources of the property. The visitor experience will largely be dependent on the presenter and educational materials developed off site. Programs will focus on scientific exploration and research of natural values, observation of fauna and flora, and observation skills.

### 5.3.3 Management of desired natural resources conditions

Proposed educational, recreational, scientific, or monitoring programs will be dependent on providing opportunities for *learning and discovery, while maintaining and enhancing the natural and cultural values*. Management of the property will largely be based on off-site, passive management techniques, mostly relying on non-permanent structures for management. Any permitted use of the property will adhere to these principles. Routine maintenance and management will be dependent on the management area. Detailed descriptions of the constraints of the Resource Protection Area and Limited Development Area can be found in Section 5.3.2 Management Areas of this document and in the *Amended and Restated Nic'anilen Na' Conservation Easement*.

### 5.3.4 Routine maintenance of trails

Three existing trails will receive periodic maintenance and improvements.

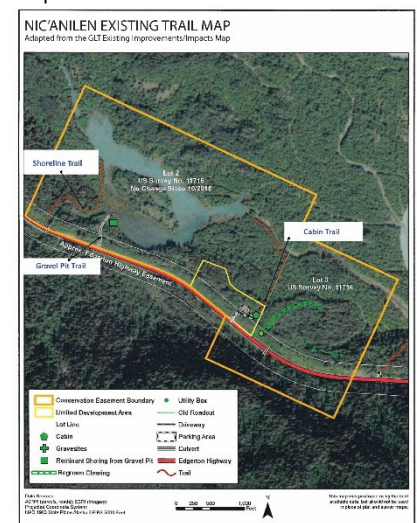
1. Shoreline Trail This approximately 150 yard trail goes from the Edgerton Highway through the woods then along the shoreline of the pond. It is entirely in the Resource Protection Area. It will be maintained to supply access to the pond in the northwest corner of the property.

#### 5.3.2(b) Other agency and school programs not supervised by WISE

We anticipate interest from partner organizations who may wish to conduct research or educational activities on the property. In these cases, WISE staff and Board will review the program and uses proposed and decide whether or not to permit other agencies (local schools, AK Department Natural Resources, Colleges and Universities, other federal agencies, etc.) to use the property for educational or monitoring purposes. Great Land Trust might need to review per 4.02(d) if improvements are included.



Photo credit: WISE



Existing Trail Map, modified from Great Land Trust map

2. Cabin Trail Directly adjacent to the cabin is an approximately 150 yard trail north to a slough. This trail begins in the Limited Development Area then crosses into the Resource Protection Area. This trail supplies access to aquatic education areas. Low areas of this trail are subject to flooding from beaver activity.

3. Gravel Pit Trail This trail (originally a highly compacted access road to the gravel pit) is a 200-yard trail which goes from the Edgerton Highway to the pond. This trail is entirely in the Resource Protection Area. It is the primary access route to the pond. It is currently being encroached upon by willows and brush.

\* Lookout points may receive periodic brushing to improve the wildlife viewing experience.

### 5.3.4(a) Routine maintenance of trails in the Resource Protection Area

Trails will not be hardened and may provide a limited amount of challenge to the user. Maintenance will include clearing of brush and hazard trees, planking over low areas where appropriate, and removing brush and vegetation to create spaces for group gatherings for education programs (e.g. sampling aquatic invertebrates, viewing wildlife, learning about boreal forest ecology.) This maintenance and improvement will be carried out on an “as needed basis”.

### 5.3.4(b) Routine maintenance of trails in the Limited Development Area

Maintenance and improvement of trails will be the same as above for the Resource Protection Area.

### 5.3.5 Parking area

The parking area near the cabin is located entirely in the Limited Development Area. Plowing for winter programs should be coordinated with the Department of Transportation. Removal of brush and vegetation may be needed to maintain existing space which is sufficient for anticipated usage. Some space within or adjacent to the existing parking area will be reserved for visitor amenities including campsites, a fire ring, shelter, and a toilet.



*Parking area, Great Land Trust Conservation Easement Baseline*

### 5.3.6 Historic Cabin

The cabin will be allowed to deteriorate naturally with no efforts to preserve the structure. The canvas tarp will be removed and returned to Cliff and Ruth. The cabin will be used as an educational opportunity to show the deterioration of manmade structures. WISE will limit access to the cabin because hazards will increase as the cabin deteriorates. See Appendix 5 for additional information.

### 5.3.7 New Improvements and Project Development

As identified above, the level of project development will be dependent on which management zone the improvement is located in. Operation demands will determine what infrastructure is needed. It is anticipated that there will be day use and overnight programs conducted at Nic’

anilen Na'. The following minimal visitor use facilities will be installed in the Limited Development Area to accommodate these programs. Group size will typically be 20 or less.

### 5.3.7(a) Trail Improvements

1. Trail Markers: Trail markers should be installed along the routes, including trail identification at the beginning of trails.
2. Gravel Pit Trail: Since the trail has direct access from the Edgerton Highway, a chain gate and "Closed Sign" is necessary to control access.
3. South Highway Trail: This is currently an undeveloped route that begins at the northwest corner of the parking area and ends at the Gravel Pit trail. This trail begins in the Limited Development Area and then crosses into the Resource Protection Area. Development of this trail will provide safe access to the pond and other resources from the parking area. Exact routing is yet to be determined. This trail may follow parts of the old roadcut as identified in the 1982 aerial photograph below.



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#### *Recommendations for the South Highway Trail*

A few low terrain features (dips in the terrain that might puddle or flow water) along this route may require planking. Upland terrain exists between the Department of Transportation clearing and pond shoreline that would allow for a foot trail that is similar to the Shoreline Trail. Developed pond/wildlife viewing areas along that route would avoid trampling the pond's edge the whole way. A hiking trail along this route would impact a small percentage of the pond's total shoreline habitat. Great Land Trust should be involved and approve a final alignment and trail maintenance strategy.

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*Old Roadcut visible in 1982 aerial photo, Great Land Trust Conservation Easement Baseline*

### 5.3.7(b) Signs

1. Perimeter Signs: Great Land Trust/WISE perimeter signage will be installed adjacent to the Edgerton Highway and intermittently along the property perimeter.
2. Entrance Sign: An entrance sign explaining the use of the areas and limitations on entering and use of the property from uninvited visitors. The sign should identify the ownership of the property by WISE, the restrictions placed on Nic'anilen Na' by the Conservation Easement, and

the management objectives for WISE. WISE will work with Great Land Trust to develop appropriate signage.

### 5.3.7(c) Visitor Use Facilities

The following facilities should be located out of sight from the Edgerton Highway. A likely location is near the old cabin.

1. Outhouse: Essential but must be located out of sight of the highway within the Limited Development Area to avoid use by travelers.
2. Picnic tables and permanent picnic shelter: Shelter would have a design capacity of 10 to 15 people (two picnic tables). An adjacent fire pit would be provided. Note: Picnic tables are allowed in both Areas, but a shelter/fire pit is allowed only in the Limited Development Area.

### 5.3.7(d) Interpretation and Education Programs

Overall management and vision for the project area dictate the amount and type of interpretative materials used, with the vision for Nic'anilen Na' being to maintain the natural environment and limit users to invited guests. This would limit the amount of on-site interpretation installations.

Interpretation Programs: On-site interpretive signs will be very limited because users will be limited to invited guests. All interpretive material will be supplied to users before or when they arrive at Nic'anilen Na'. These materials will be developed by WISE as needed and will predominantly be associated with education programs.

Educational Programs: WISE has well-established education programs which rely on natural environments and offer challenges to students. Nic'anilen Na' provides these natural values and will seamlessly fit into existing WISE programs.

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#### Potential educational/interpretive themes:

- \* Evolution of the gravel pit to a pond, including the influence of beavers
  - \* Natural history of fauna and flora
  - \* Sampling the site for evidence of changes
  - \* Aquatic ecology
  - \* Natural deterioration of the cabin
- 

### 5.3.8 Site monitoring and adaptive management

Great Land Trust completes a yearly conditions survey to assess for changes to the property. Great Land Trust is responsible for stewarding and enforcing the terms of the Conservation Easement, while WISE is responsible for management of the property. Best practices for conservation management encourage the development of this plan, to be updated every 5 - 10 years, to reassess and adjust the direction of goals and management practices.

### 5.3.9 Partnerships and relationship-building



As one WISE Board member put it, “our partnerships are our superpower”. WISE will work to identify existing and new partnerships to help steward the property. While the planning group decided that the current focus should be on planning and stewardship of the property itself for now, WISE may be interested in pursuing partnerships with nearby landowners in the future.

## Section 6: Implementation

### 6.1 Goals and strategies

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#### **Goal area #1: Learn and Discover**

Create outdoor learning and exploration opportunities, largely through guided and instructional programs.

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Guiding principles: Utilize the strengths that WISE has in natural science education. Utilize the many and varied partnerships that WISE has in the area. When programming requires specific expertise, utilize partnerships.

Strategies:

1. Develop primary interpretive areas/stories and primary talking points for the property.
2. Continue to host programs at the property.
3. Support scientific research when possible (examples: macroinvertebrate monitoring, beaver monitoring, monitoring plant phenology and climate change over time)

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#### **Goal area #2: Protect and Enhance**

Protect, and where appropriate restore and enhance, the property’s natural and cultural resources.

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Guiding principles: Ensure the security of the property. Control of public access is a priority, relying on active initiatives. Manage the property through off-site, passive management techniques, largely relying on non-permanent structures. Ensure that any enhancements are made with an understanding of local environmental systems and future climate change impacts.

Strategies:

1. Work with Great Land Trust to make signs and strategically place them at entrances. Put larger signs at the access points and smaller signs along the property lines.

2. Maintain and improve the existing access points and trails. Recruit volunteers to complete periodic, as-needed brushing and maintenance of trails, access points, and viewing points as described in Section 5.3 Management Recommendations.
3. Plan for new trails and gathering spaces (see Section 5.3.7 New Improvements and Project Development) that allow access to key educational and interpretive areas and are a safe distance from the road.
4. Install trail markers along routes.
5. Protect the gravesites.
  - Avoid, until otherwise directed. Keep people away from this part of the property. Unless the Native community is engaged to guide otherwise, do not plan any alterations or enhancements at, or near, the known gravesites.
  - Any protection or restoration efforts in this area will be led by Alaska Native people with connections to the property using the proper customs, practices, and ceremonies.
  - In the future: Understand the opportunities, constraints, and feasibility of completing a cultural resources survey.
6. Allow the cabin to return to nature by taking the tarp off the cabin to speed up its return to nature (see more on this in Appendix 5). Use this as a learning opportunity for students.
7. Further assess the feasibility of various site amenities.
  - Consider a wildlife viewing blind or platform, which can be easily relocated and adapted to the changing environment, possibly on the driveway trail that leads to the pond.
  - Plan for additional site amenities as outlined in Section 5.3.7.

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### **Goal area #3: Steward Together**

Take advantage of partnership opportunities, when appropriate, with organizations which share our vision of the property.

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Guiding principles: Utilize WISE Board members' strengths and experiences to help the project.

Strategies:

1. Involve the WISE Board in the planning and management of Nic'anilen Na'.
  - a. Make a yearly progress report.
  - b. Supply meeting minutes to the Board when they pertain to discussion of Nic'anilen Na'.
  - c. Ensure that the Board is familiar with Nic'anilen Na' through site visits.
2. Engage key partners and supporters about Nic'anilen Na' in order to build support and awareness.

- a. Include Nic'anilen Na' in WISE's regular communication and outreach, including an update in WISE's annual newsletter.
- b. Include Nic'anilen Na' updates in communications and activities with key partners.
- c. Continue to connect with local Elders who have connections to the property. Listen and learn with them.
- d. Make an email list of Nic'anilen Na' stakeholders and use this for big updates.

## 6.2 Resources

### 6.2.1 Available resources

A Long-Term Management Fund (LTMF) was created at time of conveyance of the Conservation Easement. At the time the LTMF was established, the total initial amount was \$25,000. The fund is held by Great Land Trust (GLT) and may be used by WISE to manage and protect the conservation values of the property. While the fund is held in an interest-bearing account and professionally managed to promote returns above inflation, it is important to note that WISE is obligated to manage the conservation easement-protected property annually and indefinitely no matter the LTMF balance. The provisions and obligations of both GLT and WISE are written in *the Amended and Restated Nic'anilen Na' Long-Term Management Fund Agreement*. This agreement stipulates that "GLT will hold, manage, and make available to Great Land Trust and WISE the Long-Term Management Fund to be used for management of the Property. Such actions may include installing signage, remediating toxic materials, removing abandoned vehicles and illegal camps, restoring vegetation, addressing man-made erosion or soil or vegetation damage, and other management actions meant to protect the conservation values that the Conservation Easement serves to protect. The Long-Term Management Fund may also be used to pay for staff time or contracts associated with these actions, including preparation for and evaluation of these actions. The Long-Term Management Fund may additionally be used for activities to prevent impacts to the conservation values of the Property under the Conservation Easement, such as the installation of signs and barriers." Great Land Trust will provide WISE an accounting of this Fund upon request. The process for disbursement of this Fund is outlined in the Management Fund Agreement and includes an annual meeting between WISE and Great Land Trust to discuss an annual plan and budget drafted by WISE if it desires to use the Fund. Once an annual plan and budget are approved by Great Land Trust, WISE "may then proceed in the implementation of the approved annual management plan and the incurrence of costs of implementation in accordance with the approved annual budget for the approved management plan". Upon incurring costs, WISE may then submit a written request to Great Land Trust to have funds distributed from the Fund. WISE may request that Great Land Trust pay a contractor directly if a contractor is used.

WISE will report all receipts or invoices to Great Land Trust. Funds may not be distributed more frequently than on a quarterly basis, per the Management Fund Agreement.

Great Land Trust holds a separate fund that provides earning that Great Land Trust uses for their annual monitoring and, if necessary, legal or other enforcement of the Conservation Easement. This fund is only accessible by Great Land Trust for land stewardship associated with the Conservation Easement. Funding for interpretation, site amenities, maintenance, and construction are the responsibility of WISE.

### 6.2.2 Resource needs

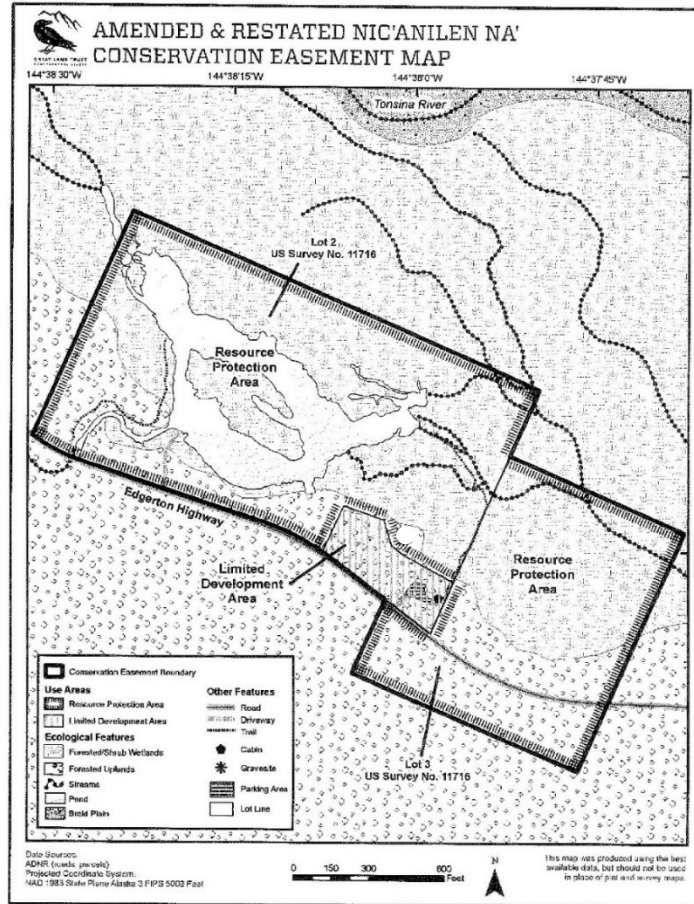
The on-site development of the property is guided by Articles III, IV and V of the *Amended and Restated Nic'anilien Na Conservation Easement*. These articles limit the development options of the property. This plan does not include projects requiring capital resources.

Future funding and personnel needs will be limited to the core purpose for the property and reflect the projects and management practices outlined in this plan. WISE could seek grants, partnerships, and Cooperative Agreements to accomplish these. WISE does not envision using the property for commercial purposes.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Great Land Trust Maps

EXHIBIT B  
EASEMENT MAP

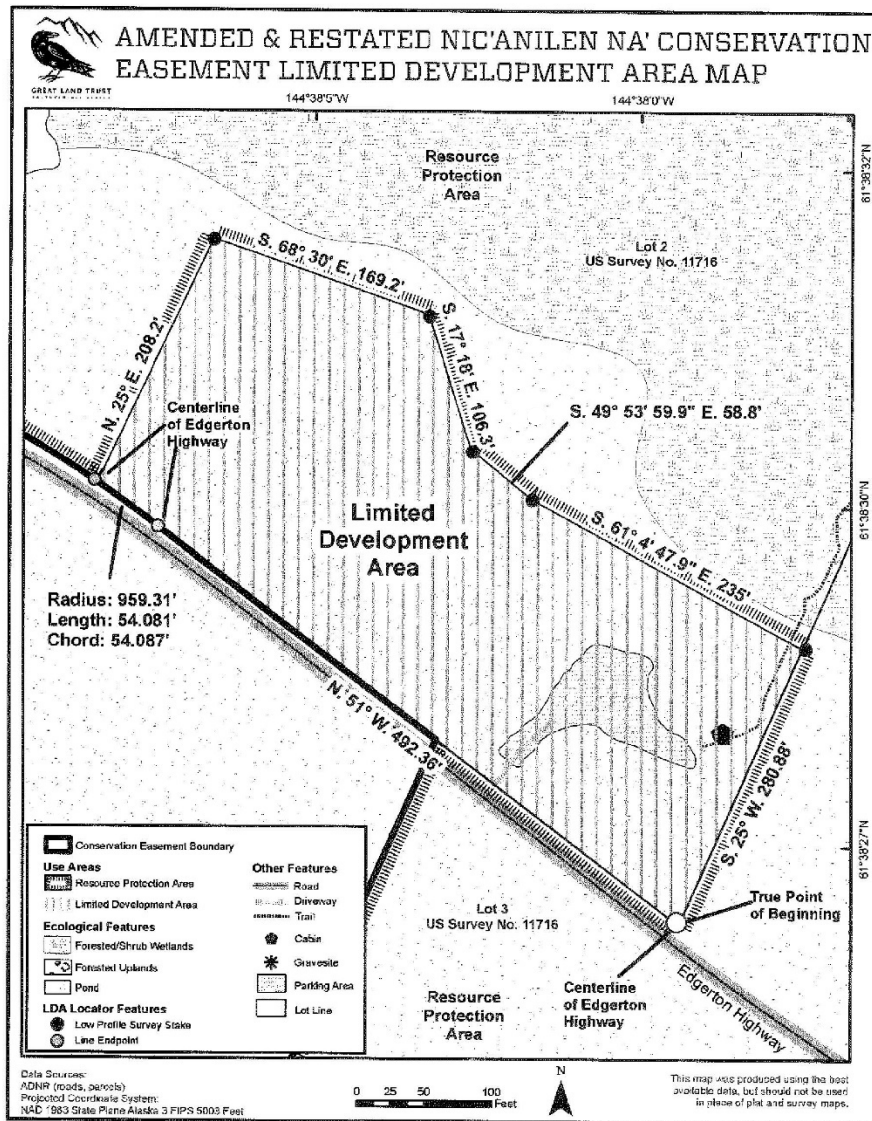


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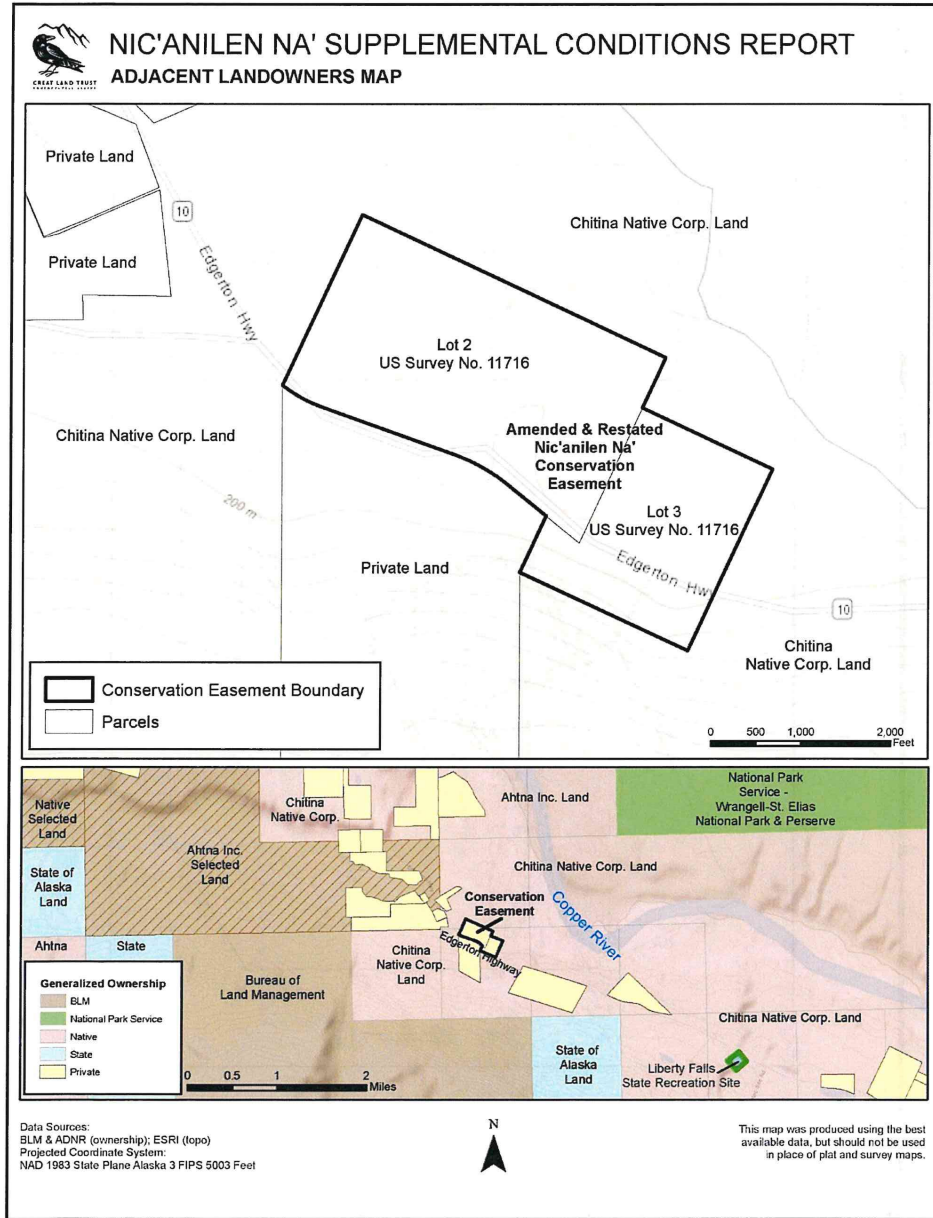


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EXHIBIT B  
EASEMENT MAP, CONTINUED



D. ADJACENT LANDOWNERS MAP



## Appendix 2

This outline is intended to guide WISE’s efforts over the next ten years or so. Certain actions will be changed, removed, and added as new needs and opportunities emerge and the land itself evolves.

### Near-term (2023)

This year, the focus is on celebrating our planning efforts over the past two years, ensuring the security of the property, and starting enduring stewardship traditions. We will continue working with Great Land Trust to make sure signs are installed at access points and along property boundaries. We will begin yearly regular maintenance by recruiting volunteers to brush existing routes. We will also put effort into keeping the WISE board and supporters updated on our work. In terms of new project development, this year we can consider working with Great Land Trust to select and approve an alignment for the South Highway trail. Establishing this route will allow us to host safe programming at the property with invited guests. See the action items below.

#### Learn & Discover

- Continue to host programs at the property.

#### Protect & Enhance

- Work with Great Land Trust to make signs and strategically place them at entrances. Put larger signs at the access points and smaller signs along the property lines.
- Work with Great Land Trust to flag and GPS the South Highway trail. Consider clearing and brushing the route so that it can be used to safely walk from the parking area to the pond.

#### Steward Together

- Maintain and improve the existing access points and trails. Recruit volunteers to complete periodic, as-needed brushing and maintenance of trails, access points, and viewing points as described in Management Recommendations.
- Make a yearly progress report to the WISE Board.
- Include an update on the property in WISE’s annual newsletter.
- Make an email list of Nic’anilen Na’ stakeholders and use this for big updates.

We are guided by the following management principles -

- *Light on the land*
- *Respect the place*
- *Adapt*
- *Engaged stewardship*
- *Feasibility*

See full descriptions in *Section 5.3.1: General Management Principles*.



The Amended and Restated Nic’anilen Na’ Long-Term Management Fund Agreement outlines a process by which “WISE shall prepare and submit to Great Land Trust an annual management plan if it desires funding from the Long-Term Management Fund for implementation of any of the activities in such plan. The phasing outlined here may help draft the annual plan and annual budget. This is discussed in more detail in *Section 6.2.1 Available Resources*.



## Mid-term (2024 - 2026)

In the next few years, we will continue to focus on hosting programs at the property, engaging in regular stewardship efforts, and sharing our progress. We can consider enhancements such as installing trail markers along routes, continuing development of the South Highway trail, installing an outhouse, planning for a covered shelter and picnic area, and taking the tarp off the cabin to speed up its return to nature. We will try to dedicate staff time to develop primary interpretive areas, stories, and talking points for the property so that we can share the wealth of the property's values with our invited guests.

### Learn & Discover

- Continue to host programs at the property.
- Develop primary interpretive areas/stories and primary talking points for the property. Develop partnerships when needed.

### Protect & Enhance

- Install trail markers along routes.
- Consider continuing development of the South Highway trail to allow for safe walking between the parking area and pond.
- Allow the cabin to return to nature by taking the tarp off the cabin to speed up its return to nature (see more on this in Appendix 5). Use this as a learning opportunity for students.
- Plan for and install/construct an outhouse.
- Plan for picnic tables, permanent picnic shelter, and fire pit.

### Steward Together

- Maintain and improve the existing access points and trails. Recruit volunteers to complete periodic, as-needed brushing and maintenance of trails, access points, and viewing points as described in Section 5.3 Management Recommendations.
- Make a yearly progress report to the Board and include an update on the property in WISE's annual newsletter.

## Long-term (2027 - 2033)

We will continue our stewardship and interpretation efforts. We can also further assess the feasibility of additional site amenities. Towards the end of this period, we can think about updating this plan.

### Learn & Discover

- Continue to develop educational program offerings at the property.
- Support scientific research when possible.

### Protect & Enhance

- Further assess the feasibility of various site amenities and put together a plan for implementation.
  - a. Consider a wildlife viewing blind or platform, which can be easily relocated and adapted to the changing environment, possibly on the driveway trail that leads to the pond.
  - b. Plan for additional site amenities as outlined in Section 5.3 Management Recommendations: Project Development.
- Understand the opportunities, constraints, and feasibility of completing a cultural resources survey.

### Steward Together

- Maintain and improve the existing access points and trails. Recruit volunteers to complete periodic, as-needed brushing and maintenance of trails, access points, and viewing points as described in Section 5.3 Management Recommendations.
- Make a yearly progress report to the Board and include an update on the property in WISE's annual newsletter.

## Appendix 3 Criteria for programming and activities

Programming and activities should be considered and designed with the following criteria in mind:

### 1. Alignment

Does this type of use align with the Conservation Easement and the strategic vision and goals that WISE has for Nic'anilan Na'?

Is it a good fit for both WISE and Nic'anilan Na'?

Does it minimize impacts on wildlife and consider seasonal concerns?

### 2. Feasibility

Is it feasible to offer and maintain this type of use at the property long-term?

Maintenance - What do we need in order to maintain this type of use at the property long-term, and is this within our capacity? What is the financial investment, and can we support it?

Safety - What do we need to ensure that this type of programming can happen safely at the property?

Access - What type of access does this programming require? Can we accommodate it at the property?

## Appendix 4 Observations

### Ruth McHenry's Grayling Patch Observations

Ruth has taken detailed flora and fauna observations at Nic'anilen na' (named "Grayling Patch" in her notes) since December 14, 2014. WISE has access to at least 70 pages of field notes. See an example entry and summary of species below.

May 14, 2016

Cliff, Ruth & Ritz the dog

P.C. 70 F

1 pm-1:45 pm

Part of International Migratory Bird Count

Upper end of West Pond, from north driveway:

Mallard	2
Green-winged Teal	2
Barrow's Goldeneye	1
American Robin	2
Varied Thrush	2
Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Dark-eyed Junco	1

Cabin, creek and lower end of Ponds

**Fingerling in creek**

Mallard	2
American Wigeon	2
Green-Winged Teal	2
Barrow's Goldeneye	1
Bald Eagle	2 (at nest to east)
American Robin	1
Varied Thrush	3
Orange-crowned Warbler	2
Yellow-rumped Warbler	2
Northern Waterthrush	2
Fox Sparrow	1
White-crowned Sparrow	1
Dark-eyed Junco	1

(We think all were different individuals from the ones we saw at the upper end. Flushed about a dozen other ducks from south end of east pond; too distant to i.d.)

Bird species observed via song or visual (not exhaustive):

American Dipper	American Wigeon	Barrow's
American Robin	Bald Eagle	Goldeneye

Belted Kingfisher  
 Black-billed  
 Magpie  
 Black-capped  
 chickadee  
 Bufflehead  
 Chickadee  
 Common Raven  
 Common Redpoll  
 Dark-eyed Junco  
 Fox Sparrow  
 Golden-crowned  
 Kinglet  
 Gray Jay

Green-winged Teal  
 Golden-crowned  
 Kinglet  
 Hooded Merganser  
 (2017)  
 Lincoln's Sparrow  
 Mallard  
 Northern Pintail  
 Northern Shoveller  
 Northern  
 Waterthrush  
 Orange-crowned  
 Warbler  
 Pine Grosbeak

Ruby-crowned  
 Kinglet  
 Ruffed Grouse  
 Solitary Sandpiper  
 Trumpeter Swan  
 Varied Thrush  
 Violet-green  
 Swallow  
 Wilson's Spine  
 Woodpecker  
 Yellow-rumped  
 Warbler

Other species observed via scat, tracks, or visual (not exhaustive): Wolf, fox, snowshoe hare, river otter, moose, red squirrel, coyote, weasel, lynx, vole, beaver, muskrat, wood frog, red salmon, Canadian Tiger Butterflies, *Bombus mixtus*

Flora observed (not exhaustive):

Wild raspberry  
 \*Prickly rose  
 \*Mastodon flower  
  
 Alder  
 \*Alpine milkvetch  
 \*Beautiful Jacob's  
 ladder  
 \*Birch  
 Black currants  
 \*Common  
 wormwood  
 \*Dwarf dogwood

\*Dwarf fireweed  
 \*H. mackenzii  
 \*Hedysarum  
 alpinum  
 \*Highbush  
 cranberry  
 \*Indian paintbrush  
 \*Meadow rue  
 \*Mertensia  
 \*Nagoonberry  
 \*Native chickweed  
 sp.  
 Pink mustard

\*Potentilla (tundra  
 rose)  
 \*Pygmy buttercup  
 \*Richardson's  
 Anemone  
 \*Rose hips  
 Starflower  
 Valerian  
 \*Wintergreen(large  
 -flowered)  
  
 \* = Native species

## Appendix 5 Historic Cabin

### Nic'anilen Na' Cabin Inspection

September 20, 2022

On July 22, Jim Baker and Paul Boos inspected the Nic'anilen Na' cabin in the Limited Development Area. The purpose of the visit was to get a preliminary estimate of the *condition of the cabin*, the *viability of restoration* and *estimate of cost of restoration*. Before a decision of restoration is considered, there are many *post restoration management decisions* which have to be considered. WISE needs to evaluate the need for the cabin for its programs, and cost of restoration and maintenance. At the last site visit these items and issues were discussed with no consensus reached. It could be considered a learning opportunity, which would involve showing students how old cabins deteriorate and the natural forces which are involved.

#### Condition

There is currently little known on when exactly the cabin was constructed and who built it. The cabin was originally directly adjacent to the road from Chitina to Copper Basin. There were reports that the cabin was used as a rest stop (food and supplies) for travelers. As far as WISE can determine, there is little historic significance to the cabin.

The cabin is interesting in that it was constructed from remnants of other cabins, as well as new construction. It was common to use salvaged remnants from other structures to reduce cost of construction. There are many examples of this when inspecting the cabin. Roof joists not matching the roof, window lenticels not matching, log preparation not matching, etc.

The bottom two to three feet of the cabin is below ground level. This has accelerated the decay of these logs. Any restoration would require raising the building and replacing the logs.

There was an attempt about 5-8 years ago to keep water from further degrading the roof. A canvas cover was placed on the roof. This cover did not completely cover the roof and the lower portion of the roof has received the runoff water from the canvas. This has further degraded the roof. There is significant dry rot in the roof and side walls due to water damage. It is estimated that the roof would fail within 5 years without restoration. This can be seen on most of the roof joists and wall decay on the south east corner of the cabin. Jim thought the roof would have to be replaced.

This site has been used for many years as an overnight rest stop for highway travelers. The limited use effects can be seen as fresh spray paint graffiti inside the cabin, carving of initials, trash, etc. There is also a propane gas stove (circa 1940's) which has received significant vandalism.

#### Viability of Restoration

Restoration, in this setting, is a function of what the facility would be used for. Would the cabin be used for shelter, visitors or just storage. Technically this cabin could be restored as any cabin in the condition could be.

Cost of Restoration/Stabilization At a minimum the cost of stabilization would involve replacing the roof, raising the cabin and replacing the 2-3 lower logs, installing windows and doors. The cost is based on securing a contractor and is estimated at \$30,000.

*Jim Baker was the restoration manager for the Kennecott Historic Site restoration for 17 years. He has had extensive experience in this field. He was very familiar with this type of common cabin construction and restoration possibilities.*

Photos of the interior and exterior of the cabin



## Nic'anilen na' Cabin Decision

Before a decision of restoration was considered, there were many post restoration management decisions which were considered. WISE evaluated the need for the cabin for its programs, and cost of restoration and maintenance. Based on consideration of all these factors, a decision was made to not restore the cabin, and to remove the tarp on the roof so natural deterioration could take place.

## **Appendix 6 Recommendations**

### Site Recommendations by Jared Zimmerman, Trails Work Leader at Denali National Park and Preserve

Infrastructure. What infrastructure is needed will depend on operational demands. Because the hydrology of the area is very dynamic (beavers changing the water level, dams getting washed out, river flooding, or dewatering of the pond entirely), **minimizing the investment in bridges, extensive boardwalks, or graveled paths**, is prudent. Structures like *viewing platforms and planked walkways that can easily be relocated and adapted to the changing environment may be most appropriate.*

Parking area and driveway. The parking area near the cabin is sufficient for large groups. Some space within the existing parking area with a durable gravel surface and within the Limited Development Area could be reserved for tent/shelter/toilet development if desired.

Secondary driveway with pond access. The narrow driveway and trail are functional for pond access but expanded brush clearing to allow for vehicle parking or turnaround may be needed. Some evidence of previous brush clearing and surface grading appears to be present about halfway between the highway and the pond.

- The end of the narrow driveway near the gravel pit shoring seems the best place to develop a viewing platform or wildlife blind—size determined by the anticipated operational needs. Should be large enough to keep groups contained on the developed surface, as trampling can be difficult to contain once it's started.
- Raised platforms, even low to the ground, are often the best way to keep groups contained to a defined area if trampling is an issue.

Trail. A trail between the parking area and driveway would allow for a nice nature hike without needing to cross water

- Deep duff layer through the forest will likely subside over time. If some places get wet or muddy, they *may require some hardening (planking or gravel) over the long term.* These projects would be *relatively low cost and could be completed largely with volunteer labor.*
- Any gravel going into soft soils would benefit from having *engineering fabric or weed mat underneath* to keep it from disappearing into the mud.
- A few low terrain features (dips in the terrain that might puddle or flow water) along this route may require planking.

- Upland terrain exists between the DOT clearing and pond shoreline that would allow for a foot trail like the one that goes to the swan nest. Better experience than walking the ditch line.
- Developed pond/wildlife viewing areas along that route would avoid trampling the pond's edge the whole way. A hiking trail along this route would impact a small percentage of the pond's total shoreline habitat.

*The trail to the swan nest is mostly functional and is already located on the most durable terrain. Some planking would be needed to avoid the need for rubber boots when the pond level is high.*

- This trail is a good example of what a **rustic trail** between the parking area and driveway could look like, if it meets operational needs.
- **This trail could be connected to the driveway and parking area with a short walk along the road and over the culvert.**
- Crossing the creek downstream of the culvert is more challenging.
  - Creek is wide enough that a bridge would require significant investment.
  - A floating boardwalk across the creek would be prone to damage during high flow events and would get in the beaver's way

*If the desired activities can be concentrated in these three areas, I don't see the need or value in extending a hiking trail network to the other side of the pond.*

- Some trails could be cleared through upland areas across the pond to allow for travel in winter time or to allow for hiking if the pond is blown out and water habitat is no longer the draw/concern.



*Evidence of brush clearing along driveway*



*Trail to swan nest*





*Pond viewing at the end of the driveway*

## **Appendix 7 Stakeholder engagement**

A planning team was convened and met roughly once per month from July 2021 through January 2023 (18 months). Participants of this planning team include: Robin Mayo (WISE), Jolene Nashlund (WISE), Gay Wellman (WISE), Paul Boos (WISE), Margie Steigerwald (WISE), Sarah Linnell (WISE), Lizzy Dean (RTCA), Zachary Babb (RTCA), and Morgan Urquia (RTCA).

Over the past 18 months, many conversations were had about the history of the area. WISE has record of many of these conversations, which may be useful for future management and interpretive work.

October 16, 2017: Notes from an informal meeting recorded in Ruth's "Grayling Patch" Observation Notes. Present: Robin Mayo from WISE, Sarah Dazkiewicz and Ray Stickwan from Ahtna Inc., Ruth McHenry, and the dog Ritz. 9:25 a.m.-~10:15 a.m. 31 F, mostly cloudy, v. light snow, skiff of snow on ground. Visited graves and cabin. Discussion: Uncertain who is buried there. Ahtna will check with few remaining elders who might know, such as Mae Marshall. Ray Stickwan said there are many graves around Lower Tonsina; Cliff Eames and Ruth McHenry will look for more on this land. Ahtna will return and rope off grave area. (note: this was not done) Ahtna will confer with Chitina people about how to deal with it; often hold potlatch for such discussions. Chitina people are grateful for our sharing the site.

Spring 2021: WISE Board member Gay Wellman had phone conversation with Bruce Heaton. He told her about living on the site and expressed interest in helping and sharing stories. He shared his memory that the graves were from the flu epidemic. Bruce passed away shortly after this conversation, and before there was an opportunity for a site visit with him.

6/8/21: Field visit with Robin, Cliff, Ruth, Joe Morse (potential bridge builder) and RTCA

7/29/21: Meeting with planning team Amanda Hults (GLT), and RTCA re: GLT role, beaver activity, and cultural resources management plan. GLT confirmed that a cultural resources management plan is not required by GLT. It can take place if WISE would like it to.

8/16/21: Meeting with RTCA and the WISE Board re: project foundations, vision, goals, concerns.

1/26/ 2022: Presentation on Nic'anilen Na' sent to Chitina Native Corporation. They viewed it at a meeting and CEO Ed Herndon reported that the board was in support of the project and had no concerns.

1/22/22: Conversation with Martin Finnesand and Taña Finnesand re: history of villages, cabin, graves, area families, and road construction

1/2022: Call with Barbara Cellarius, Subsistence Coordinator at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Lee Reininghaus, Archeologist at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park

3/14/22: Conversation with Sharon Faverty re: local area, cabin

5/17/22: Call with Sam Lawry, ED of Teller Wildlife Refuge re: management best practices, securing the property, etc.

7/11/22: Field visit and opportunities/constraints assessment with WISE Board members, landowners Cliff and Ruth, BLM staff, and NPS-RTCA

7/12/22: Work session with the WISE Board

Summer 2022: Field visit with Jared Zimmerman, recreation planner

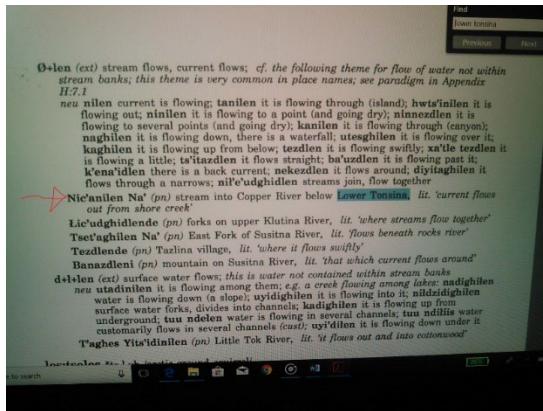
Fall 2022: Margie had email communication with Geoff Bleakely and Rolfe Buzzell re: graves, interpretive story, the Edgerton Highway, and connecting with the Billums to learn more about their ties to the site

Fall 2022: Jolene reached out to Precious Billum and Loni Lohse re: history of the site

December 2022: Ruth tried to meet with Martin Finnesand but a snowstorm hit.

## Appendix 8 Placename Background

Nic'anilen Na' pronunciation: "NEEK on a lynn NAH"

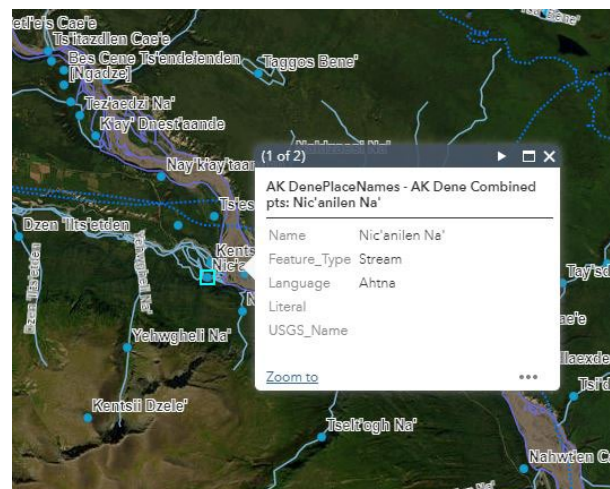


This is a page from Athabaskan Ahtna Dictionary by James Kari, 1990. Available online from the UAF Alaska Native Language Project website. This reference found with help from Ahtna Heritage Foundation and Ahtna Inc. Staff members, January 17, 2018.

"Out of respect to the traditional Ahtna use of the area at the confluence of the Tonsina and Copper rivers, Ruth and Cliff suggested an Ahtna name be used for the property. Robin Mayo, WISE Executive Director, agreed and researched Ahtna place names for the area and discovered the area was described as "Nic'anilen Na'".

Nic'anilen Na' describes the stream into Copper River below Lower Tonsina. It literally translates as "current flows out from shore creek". (Nic'anilen na' Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation for a Conservation Easement)

The Alaska Dene Traditional Place Names Web App is a repository of traditional Dene place names. It can be accessed at this link: [Alaska Dene Traditional Place Names \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com). Nic'anilen Na' can be seen on this map, as shown in the screenshots below.



Kari, James and Gerad Smith. 2019. Alaska Native Dene Traditional Place Names, published online February 21, 2019. Accessed 3/10/23.

Web address for Alaska Dene Traditional Place Names:

<https://st1.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3c4bc3e2e5e441f199e8a03956570e05>

## Appendix 9 Highway Research

### RESEARCH ON RE-ALIGNMENT OF THE EDGERTON HIGHWAY IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

By Rolfe Buzzell - December 7, 2022

- 1950s-No mention of Edgerton Highway in Alaska Road Commission Annual Reports, which ended in 1956 when the federal Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) took over the Alaska Road Commission. Prior to 1956, the BPR operated only in Alaska's national forests.
- 1957-1962- Annual report of 1957 for BPR has no mention of Edgerton Highway. No other reports by BPR or the Alaska Highway Department.
- 1963-Steel Arch Bridge at Liberty Falls completed, on Edgerton Highway (Source: Rolfe Buzzell, *Bridging Alaska: Historic Context for the Inventory of Alaska's Highway Bridges*, 2007, p. 214).
- 1963-Edgerton is classified as a Secondary Route by Dept. of Highways. Construction occurring on the Edgerton Highway from Lower Tonsina to Chitina (6.49 miles). Project put out to bid to relocate the Edgerton Cut Off from the Junction [with Richardson Hwy] to Kenny Lake. (Source: Dept of Highways, *Annual Report of the Dept. of Highways 1963*, p. 20).
- 1966-Relocation project on Edgerton Highway underway from Kenny Lake to Lower Tonsina (11.9 miles) (Source: Dept. of Highways, *Annual Report, 1966*, p. 20).
- 1967-Relocation project on Edgerton Highway underway from Lower Tonsina to Kenny Lake (11 miles) (Source: Dept. of Highways, *Annual Report, 1967*, p. 40).
- 1967-In 1967, the Alaska Department of Highways began rebuilding the road from the Chitina Airport to downtown Chitina. It changed the alignment of the Edgerton Highway within Chitina townsite from First Street to Fairbanks Street. The State purchased 3 lots about 1970 on the corner of Fairbanks and Main Street and demolished the Commercial Hotel, which was in the new right-of-way where the new alignment turned from Fairbanks Street to the Chitina Tunnel Cut. (Source: Rolfe Buzzell, *Chitina Hist. Bldg. Survey Report, 2022*, p. 169).
- 1969-1970-Construction of the Copper River Bridge east of Chitina. (Source: Rolfe Buzzell, *Chitina Hist. Bldg. Survey Report, 2022*, p. 95).
- 1970-Construction underway on Edgerton Hwy from Chitina [to the] north (8.3 miles) (Source: Dept. of Highways, *Annual Report of the Department of Highways, 1970*, p. 43).
- 1970-Preconstruction location survey underway on Edgerton Cut Off in the Lower Tonsina Bridge area, which was surveyed covering 2 miles. (Source: *Dept. of Highways, Annual Report of the Department of Highways, 1970*, p. 43).
- 1971-Opening Ceremony for the Copper River Highway Bridge east of Chitina. (Source: *Dept. of Highways, Annual Report of the Department of Highways, 1971*, p. 32).
- 1973-Reconstruction underway on the access road to Chitina Village. (Source: *Alaska Dept. of Highways, Annual Report, 1973*, p. 13).
- 1974-Reconstruction of the road [from Chitina] to Chitina Village completed. (Source: *Alaska Dept. of Highways, Annual Report 1974*, p. 13).

1977-Work done on the Lower Tonsina Bridge (Source: Alaska *Department. of Transportation and Public Facilities, Annual Report 1977*, p. 25).