

# Bering Sea - Western Interior Resource Management Plan

BLM



## Visual Resource Inventory

**This report describes the visual resources in the context of the Visual Resource Management System.**

BLM Alaska  
Anchorage Field Office

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Alaska



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## **List of Acronyms**

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
SQRU	Scenic Quality Rating Unit
VRI	Visual Resource Inventory
VRM	Visual Resource Management

## 1. Introduction

Visual resource inventory (VRI) class areas for the Bering Sea Western Interior Planning Area were delineated using the process in BLM's Visual Resource Inventory Handbook (H-8410-1). Visual resources are described in the context of the Visual Resource Management (VRM) system, which is used by the BLM to inventory and manage visual resources. This system provides an analytical method to analyze potential visual impacts and to apply visual design techniques to ensure that surface-disturbing activities are harmonious with their surroundings. The VRM system is applied to the entire planning area, excluding non-federal lands (e.g., state, private).

Implementing VRM involves conducting an inventory, establishing management classes, and providing an impact assessment. During the inventory stage, data are collected to identify the visual resources of an area in order to designate VRI classes. The inventory consists of a sensitivity level analysis (Figure 7. VRI Sensitivity Class in the Overall Planning Area), scenic quality evaluation (Figure 8. VRI Scenic Quality in the Overall Planning Area), and a delineation of distance zones (Figure 9. VRI Distance Zone Class in the Overall Planning Area). These are described in the following sections.

Based on these three factors, BLM lands are placed into one of four VRI classes which represent the relative value of the visual resources. Classes I and II being the most valued, Class III representing a moderate value, and Class IV being of least value. The inventory classes provide the basis for considering visual values in the resource management planning process.

After completion of the visual resource inventory in Chapter 2 through Chapter 7, Chapter 8 discusses the next steps in order to assign preliminary visual resource management classes (I-IV) to lands in the planning area.

Conversion of these preliminary VRM classes to final classes involves assessment by the public and additional review from the BLM resource specialists as a part of the alternative and impact assessment in the resource management plan/environmental impact statement (RMP/EIS) process. Changes may be made to the classes or their boundaries to conform to the management objectives defined in the RMP/EIS. As such, the BLM will rely on public comments obtained during two additional planning phases that may help to inform BLM decisions about future Visual Resource Management in the planning area. These two planning phases are:

1. The Preliminary Alternatives Outreach Period
2. The Public Comment Period for the Bering Sea-Western Interior Draft Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement (DRMP/EIS)

## 2. Scenic Quality

Scenic quality is a measure of the visual appeal of a tract of land. All public lands have scenic value, but areas with the most variety and harmonious composition have the greatest value. The scenic quality evaluation describes the characteristic landscape and determines scenic-quality ratings for the visual resources (the land, water, vegetation, animals, and structures that are visible on the land) of the planning area. The evaluation is intended to represent the overall impression a viewer has of the visual resources from several viewpoints or locations, rather than the view from any one location, including an aerial view, or during any one season of the year.

The planning area is the frame of reference for rating scenic quality. Rapid Ecoregional Assessment areas, or ecoregions (BLM 2012), were used as a foundation for each Scenic Quality Rating Unit (SQRU). The planning area can be divided into seven major ecoregions: the North Nulato Hills, the South Nulato Hills, the Yukon River Lowlands, the Kuskokwim Mountains, the Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands, the Lime Hills, and the Ahklun Mountains. These divisions form a basis to describe the elements of landform, water, color and distinctiveness. Each of these divisions was considered a SQRU. The transitions between ecoregion divisions are generally subtle.

Landform is characterized by vertical relief, spatial composition, and color. Water is characterized by its shape, pattern, and color. Color is defined by its relative scales of hue (classifications of red, yellow, green, blue, or combinations) and value (lightness and darkness), and intensity (degree or strength). Distinctiveness is a measure of uniqueness within a region.

Each SQRU was evaluated to determine its scenic quality and is rated as Class A, B or C. There is a Scenic Quality Field Inventory Form for each SQRU in section D.3 Scenic Quality Evaluation. These inventory forms estimate the visual values which resulted in the Class A, B, or C rating. The SQRUs are summarized below:

- ◆ Class A SQRU has a great deal of visual variety, contrast, and harmony.
- ◆ Class B SQRU has a moderate amount of visual variety, contrast, and harmony.
- ◆ Class C SQRU has little visual variety, contrast, and harmony.

**North and South Nulato Hills SQRUs; Class Rating B & C:** These two adjoining SQRUs (Table 2. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – North and South Nulato Hills) create a large-size unit in the planning area. This area consists of low rolling hills that are the remains of an ancient mountain range after extended periods of down cutting, weathering, and erosion. East of Norton Sound, these hills ripple inland in a southwest-northeast orientation with streams flowing in intervening valleys. The hills have even-crested ridges, 1,000-2,000 feet in elevation, having rounded summits and gentle slopes. Due to their modest elevation, most of these hills have been spared from recent glaciations and were part of the ice-free Beringia corridor linking North America and Asia. Ecological affinities to Asia exist to this day with the presence of Eurasian birds (gray-headed chickadee, yellow and white wagtails, bluethroat), fishes (Alaska blackfish), and flora. Vegetation patterns generally follow the terrain, with Dryas-lichen and sedge-ericaceous shrub tundra on hilltops, grading into short, then tall, willow-birch-alder shrublands and eventually spruce and birch woodlands at progressively lower elevations. Moose, brown bears, caribou, arctic foxes, and Alaska hares are common. Huge summer runs of pink salmon ascend the Unalakleet drainage.

**Yukon River Lowlands SQRU; Class Rating B & C:** This SQRU is located east of the South Nulato Hills ecoregion (Table 3. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Yukon River Lowlands). This unit is characterized by an expansive wetland system associated with the lower stretches of the Yukon and Koyukuk Rivers in west-central Alaska. Although this area was unglaciated, meltwater flushes deposited vast quantities of sediment within these riverine corridors during glacial retreat. As such, deep deposits of undifferentiated sediments underlie these floodplains and adjacent lowlands. Permafrost is absent along the younger floodplains, but is thin, discontinuous, and relatively “warm” on the abandoned floodplains in the adjacent lowlands. Poor drainage caused by permafrost contributes to the prevalence of wet, organic-rich soils. Collapse-scar features from thawing permafrost are common. Water levels drop in the Yukon River and its tributaries in early fall during freezeup and remain low until spring breakup when

substantial ice-jam flooding can occur. The vegetation along the major rivers is highly productive and supports vigorous stands of white spruce and balsam poplar. Active floodplains and riverbars support tall stands of alders and willows. Robust wet sedge meadows and aquatic vegetation reside in infilling sloughs and oxbow ponds. The adjacent permafrost-dominated lowlands support black spruce woodlands, and birch-ericaceous shrubs and sedge-tussock bogs. Many flat organic surfaces are pockmarked with dense concentrations of lakes and ponds. These areas support large populations of moose and black bear, the oxbow sloughs and thaw ponds support abundant waterfowl, and the lowland forests are important to furbearers. The large rivers support important runs of chinook, chum, and coho salmon. This unit is distinguished from the Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands by having lower elevations, a slightly wetter climate, and more robust vegetation.

**Kuskokwim Mountains SQRU; Class Rating B & C:** This SQRU occurs in the central section of the planning area (Table 4. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Kuskokwim Mountains). It is characterized by low ridges having gentle slopes and rounded to flat summits from 1,500 to 2,500 feet with a few domes and mountains rising to 3,500 feet above broad irregular valley floors (1,000 feet). The entire unit is underlain by continuous permafrost. This SQRU has a moderate variation in topographic relief and has a wide variety of plant species within the vegetative types of closed spruce forests, open, low growing spruce forests and treeless bogs that create some diversities in color, texture and form between the tall growing hardwood forests of birch and spruce with tall shrubs of willow and alder, with lower growing black spruce, sedge and grass understory species and open bog areas. All rivers within the SRQU drain into the Yukon River with the clear water Black and Little Black being the dominate rivers which meander through broad irregular flats. The variety of water features creates contrast between the adjacent landform and vegetation and the barren soils of gravel bars, moderate cliffs and shore lines.

**Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands SQRU; Class Rating B & C:** This SQRU occurs in the eastern portion of the planning area (Table 5. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands). This area contains broad, rounded mountains of moderate height underlain by the metasedimentary Yukon-Tanana terrain. This terrain is a composite of transported crust blocks that includes former volcanic island arcs and continental shelf deposits. Most surfaces are comprised of bedrock and coarse rubble on ridges, colluvium on lower slopes, and alluvium in the deeply incised, narrow valleys. The region is underlain by discontinuous permafrost on north-facing slopes and valley bottoms. In valley bottoms, permafrost is thin, ice-rich, and relatively “warm.” Vegetation is dominated by white spruce, birch and aspen on south-facing slopes, black spruce on north-facing slopes, and black spruce woodlands and tussock and scrub bogs in valley bottoms. Floodplains of headwater streams support white spruce, balsam poplar, alder, and willows. Above treeline, low birch-ericaceous shrubs and *Dryas*-lichen tundra dominate. This area has the highest incidence of lightning strikes in Alaska and the Yukon Territory, causing frequent forest fires. Caribou, moose, snowshoe hares, marten, lynx, and black and brown bears are plentiful. The area’s abundant cliffs are important to peregrine falcons. The clear headwater streams are important spawning areas for chinook, chum, and coho salmon.

**Lime Hills SQRU; Class Rating C:** This SQRU occurs in the southeast section of the planning area, near the western border of Denali National Park and Preserve (Table 6. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Lime Hills). The Lime Hills are glacially dissected mountains descending from the west side of the Alaska Range. The effects of heavy glaciation are etched in the surface topography through a repeated sequence of sharp mountain ridges with steep headwalls and broad U-shaped valleys. The ridges and mountainsides are covered with colluvial rubble, while the valleys contain glacial moraines and outwash with some alluvial deposits along rivers. The area is underlain by isolated masses of permafrost. Vegetation is predominately tall and low shrub

communities of willow, birch, and alder. Spruce forests and woodlands are confined to valley bottoms and mountain toeslopes. These habitats support moose, bears, caribou, and various furbearers.

**Ahklun Mountains SQRU; Class Rating B & C:** This SQRU occurs in the extreme southwest section of the planning area, adjacent to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Table 7. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Ahklun Mountains). This coastal group of rugged steep-walled mountains spans two extensive wetland complexes (Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Bristol Bay Lowlands) along the southern Bering Sea. Here strongly deformed sedimentary and volcanic rocks are cut by great northeast-trending faults, including portions of the Denali fault. Here mountain glaciers coalesced during the Pleistocene and carved many broad U-shaped valleys. On the south side of the mountains, these valleys subsequently filled with water forming large “finger” lakes. These lakes have resident rainbow trout and nurture abundant runs of sockeye (red) salmon during the summer. Mountain soils have formed in very stony and gravelly colluvium over bedrock, whereas valley soils have formed in glacial till. Dwarf shrub and lichen tundra dominates mountain crests and upper slopes where permafrost is discontinuous. Shrubs (willows, birches, and alders) become progressively more abundant and robust at lower elevations as permafrost becomes more fragmented. In valleys, shrublands are punctuated by sedge-tussock tundra meadows (on very wet areas) and mixed forests. Moose, beavers, and arctic hares thrive in these shrubby habitats.

## 2.1 Vegetation Types

Vegetation is an important component in determining the visual quality of an area. Vegetation is represented by species, variety, extent and color. The more variety of species a landscape has the higher the scenic quality. General vegetation types based on Viereck and Elbert (1972) were used as a basis for this analysis and are described below. Table 1 displays vegetation types present in the subunit.

**Alpine tundra:** Alpine tundra vegetative type is predominately barren rocks and rubble interspersed with low mat plants such as white mountain-avens, low heath shrubs, such as bearberry, birch, *Cassiope*, diapensia, crowberry, alpine azalea, Labrador-tea, luetkea, mountain heath, rhododendron, blueberry, cranberry, prostrate willows and dwarf herbs.

**Closed spruce:** Hardwood forests are tall to moderately tall forests of white and black spruce, paper birch, aspen, and balsam poplar forests on moderate to well drained sites with many new and old burns. These stands are rather open under the canopy but contain shrubs of rose, alder and willow. The forest floor is usually carpeted with a thick moss mat. Other common shrubs are bearberry, crowberry, Labrador-tea, red current, buffaloberry, blueberry and cranberry. Quaking aspen stands may develop in well drained upland areas on south facing slopes or lowland river terraces. Paper birch occurs on east and west facing slopes and flat areas. Balsam Poplar occurs on flood plains of glacial rivers and along sandbars.

**Moist tundra:** Meadows are dominated by sedges, especially cotton grass in tussocks with scattered willows and dwarf birch. Shrubs include alder, bearberry, birch, *Cassiope*, mountain-avens, Labrador-tea, alpine azalea, mountain heath, rhododendron, rosebay, willows, spirea, blueberry, and cranberry.

**Open, low growing spruce:** Open, low growing spruce forests which occur on north facing slopes and poorly drained lowlands, usually underlain with permafrost. These are low growing open forest primarily of black spruce but often interspersed with tamarack, paper birch and willows, locally interspersed with treeless bogs. A thick moss mat, often of sphagnum mosses,

sedges, grasses and heath or ericaceous shrubs makes up the “under story” of this forest. Shrubs include bearberry, crowberry, Labrador-tea, rose, willow, blueberry, and cranberry.

**Treeless bogs:** Scattered areas of treeless bogs and are characterized by wet treeless areas of sedges and grasses usually with an abundance of willows, alders and resin birch, locally with widely spaced black spruce and tamarack. They occur throughout the division where conditions are too wet for tree growth on old river terraces, outwash areas, in filling ponds and sloughs and occasionally on gentle north facing slopes. The vegetation of these bogs consists of varying amounts of grasses, sedges and mosses, especially sphagnum. Shrubs occur on drier peat ridges and include bog-rosemary, birch, leatherleaf, Labrador-tea, sweetgale, cranberry, blueberry and willow.

**Table 1. Vegetation Types Present in the Subunit**

Vegetation Types Present in the Subunit	North Nulato Hills	South Nulato Hills	Yukon River Lowlands	Kuskokwim Mountains	Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands	Lime Hills	Ahklun Mountains
Alpine tundra	x	x		x		x	x
Closed spruce forests	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Moist tundra			x		x		
Open, low growing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Treeless bogs			x		x		

## 2.2 Cultural Modifications

Cultural Modifications are also taken into account in the scenic quality rating process. Cultural modifications can blend in with or stand out from the surrounding landscape. The planning area is still primarily a natural landscape where humans have not substantially changed the scenic quality. However some areas have been modified by the activities of humans. Trails are the most likely to be seen and have the most modification from the natural landscape within the planning area. Many of the winter trails, which can be seen year-round, primarily exist near and between small communities, including Unalakleet, Kaltag, St. Michael, Holy Cross, Shageluk, McGrath, Nikolai, and Rohn. The Iditarod winter trail also travels through many of these small communities, from Rohn to Unalakleet. Mining claims and Native allotments can also be found throughout the planning area. The existing trails outside a community, are in relative harmony with the landscape as they are narrow, unmaintained, not signed, were not constructed with heavy equipment such as road graders, and primarily follow the natural landscape of the area.

Other modifications include the a communication tower on the top of Otter Creek south of Unalakleet; small foot bridges and trail tripod markers along the Iditarod Trail; BLM public shelters cabins, also located along the Iditarod Trail; and other cabin structures located on nearby Native Allotments on or near BLM lands, which are primarily constructed using local materials and blend into the natural setting. Informal and unmaintained airstrips are found at Rohn, Lime Hills near Can Creek, the Golsovia River area in the South Nulato Hills, and the Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands region near the Tonzona River. While the profile of an airstrip is low, landform changes are introduced by brown colors in predominantly green vegetation and more regular lines than the surrounding irregular vegetation. Summer travel throughout most of the planning area is primarily by watercraft along the Unalakleet River, Yukon River, Kuskokwim River, and the Anvik River. As stated above, snowmobile trails can be seen from elevated

locations, which can often be seen at a great distance from hilltops and from aircraft. Summer off-highway vehicle travel on BLM-managed lands is rare outside of small communities, due to wet and boggy conditions and a lack of hardened trails to effectively travel on.

While these features introduce modifications to the landform, they also provide places of use and special interest or key observation areas from which to evaluate the sensitivity levels.

### 3. Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is a key component in identifying VRI classes. Sensitivity levels are a measure of public concern for the scenic quality of an area. There are six factors to consider when evaluating sensitivity levels: Type of Users, Amount of Use, Public Interest, Adjacent Land

Use, Special Areas and Other Factors. Areas identified as sensitive include known travel routes, especially State Scenic Byways, areas of human habitation, areas of traditional use, and Native allotments. Numerous areas are noted to have potentially high visual sensitivity because area residents and visitors view the natural landscape as very important and have a high level of interest and sensitivity to changes to the natural landscape.

There are three levels of overall sensitivity: High (H), Medium (M) and Low (L). See section 6 for Sensitivity Level Rating Forms for each SQRU. The results of the Visual Sensitivity inventory can be viewed in the Appendix, Figure 7. VRI Sensitivity Class in the Overall Planning Area.

### 4. Distance Zones

Distance Zones are also used in determining VRI classes. They are important in assessing visual impacts. The distance from an object affects how clearly elements of a landscape are perceived, with visible details of a particular object decreasing with increasing distance. Distance Zones are one basis for determining the visual sensitivity of planning areas. The VRM System recognizes three Distance Zones: Foreground-Middleground, Background, and Seldom-Seen as defined below (Appendix, Figure 9. VRI Distance Zone Class in the Overall Planning Area):

- **Foreground-Middleground Zone:** This is the area that can be seen from each travel route or assessment location for a distance of up to 5 miles where management activities might be viewed in detail.
- **Background Zone:** This is the remaining area that can be seen from each travel route or assessment location to approximately 15 miles. It does not include areas in the background that are so far distant that the only thing discernible is the form or outline.
- **Seldom-Seen Zone:** These are areas that are not visible within the Foreground-Middleground and Background zones, and areas beyond the Background Zone, generally over 15 miles and screened by natural landscape features.

### 5. Scenic Quality Worksheets

The following Scenic Quality Field Inventory forms show the scenic quality rating for each of the SQRUs in the planning area. Note the adjoining North and South Nulalo Hills SQRUs have been combined in the tables into one scenic quality worksheet (see Appendix, Figure 8. VRI Scenic Quality in the Overall Planning Area).

**Table 2. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – North and South Nulato Hills**

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: June 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Western portion of planning area</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>		<b>SQRUs: North &amp; South Nulato Hills</b>	
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (feature)</b>			
	<b>a. Landform/Water</b>	<b>b. Vegetation</b>	<b>c. Structure (General)</b>
Form	Low rolling hills with streams flowing in intervening valleys. The hills have even-crested ridges, 1,000-2,000 ft. in elevation, having rounded summits and gentle slopes.	Lichen and sedge shrub tundra on hilltops, grading into short, then tall, willow-birch-alder shrub lands and eventually spruce and birch woodlands at progressively lower elevations.	There are three BLM public log cabins, one commercial communication tower, one trail bridge, and approximately 50 trail tripod structures associated with the Iditarod Trail on BLM lands within this area.
Line	Gradual hills slopes that ripple inland in a southwest-northeast orientation with streams flowing in between.	Vegetation patterns generally follow the terrain, consisting of tall mixed forest to simple curving lines of low shrubs and lichens.	Regular straight vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines.
Color	Exposed grey colored, angular and jagged rocks are common on hill tops and mountain peaks. Blues of headwater streams. Grays and tans of gravel bars and boulder areas.	Vegetation includes the pale brown to olive low-lying tundra, which contrast the vibrant green and more amorphous patches of shrub cover, or vegetation lining drainages. Higher elevations and drainages are stippled with the darker green and vertical lines of spruce trees that contrast surrounding vegetation. Vegetation appears soft against the exposed rock of the hill tops and mountain peaks. Late fall, winter, and spring months are typically characterized by contiguous white snowpack.	<p>Otter Creek communication tower is a gray-color metal lattice structure coated with non-reflective paint.</p> <p>Cabin structures along the Iditarod Trail consist of natural browns and grays of logs, brown non-reflective painted metal roofs.</p> <p>Iditarod Trail bridge is rusted brown metal construction of one bridge along the Iditarod Trail. Brown natural logs used for Iditarod Trail markers.</p> <p>Trail tripod markers consist of both natural spruce wood color and commercial redwood color timbers.</p>
Texture	Hills exhibit smooth texture against the larger river segments.	Smooth log or wood texture.	Smooth log or wood texture of shelter cabins with fascia boards and decks. Medium texture of the continuous Iditarod Trail and various other winter trails associated with BLM lands in the area.
<b>3. Narrative:</b> The North and South Nulato Hills SQRUs were merged into one field inventory and analysis. The Iditarod National Historic Trail and the Unalakleet National Wild & Scenic River bisects these two VRM inventory areas. There are a three BLM public shelter cabins that can be viewed along the Iditarod Trail with these areas, with associated trail tripod markers and one small bridge. There is one communication tower within the South Nulato Hills unit.			

4. Score for Scenic Quality Field Inventory – North and South Nulato Hills					
	High	Med	Low	Explanation or Rationale	Scenic Quality Classification
a. Landform		3		Interesting erosional patterns, which are interesting though not dominant or exceptional.	Class A – 19 or more
b. Vegetation		3		Some variety of vegetation.	
c. Water		3		River and creeks are flowing but not dominant in landscape.	Class B – 12 -18
d. Color			1	Subtle color variations, contrast, muted tones.	Class B – 12 -18
e. Adjacent Scenery			0	Little or no influence on visual quality.	Class C – 11 or less
f. Scarcity			1	Common within the region.	Class C – 11 or less
g. Cultural Modification		0		Modifications add little visual variety to the area.	Class C
<b>Grand Total of all scores: 11</b>					<b>Class C</b>

Table 3. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Yukon River Lowlands

Form 8400-1 (September 1985)		Date: July 2014	
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT		Anchorage Field Office	
		Yukon River area	
		SQRU Yukon River Lowlands	
SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY			
1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk			
2. Landscape Character (feature)			
	<b>a. Landform/Water</b>	<b>b. Vegetation</b>	<b>c. Structure (General)</b>
Form	<p>This unit is characterized by an expansive, flat wetland system associated with the lower stretches of the Yukon and Koyukuk Rivers in west-central Alaska</p> <p>The lowland is dotted with innumerable thaw lakes, many of them 10 or more miles long. Some have scalloped shorelines.</p> <p>Approximately 30%-50%</p>	<p>The vegetation along the major rivers is highly productive and supports vigorous stands of white spruce and balsam poplar.</p> <p>Flat, marshy plains.</p>	<p>There are no major structures or any other significant manmade feature associated with BLM lands within this area.</p>

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: July 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Yukon River area</b>	
		<b>SQRU Yukon River Lowlands</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>			
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (feature)</b>			
	<b>a. Landform/Water</b>	<b>b. Vegetation</b>	<b>c. Structure (General)</b>
	of the lowland is lake surface. Lying underneath the area is discontinuous permafrost		
Line	The Yukon River flows along the base of hills on the north side of the lowland.	The variety of vegetation lining the major rivers is robust. Bands of several major rivers in the region results in contrasting linear forms.	Same as above
Color	Various hues of white to gray to brown to black of river bluffs.  Blues of water – streams and rivers and grays and tans of gravel bars.  During midday sun, glare from the reflection of large marshy areas is high	Irregular hues of green on mixed forest, marsh and tundra vegetation. Vivid fall colors.	Few, narrow winter-only trails.
Texture	Many flat organic surfaces are pockmarked with dense concentrations of lakes and ponds.  Many low hills of basalt surmounted by cinder cones, broad shallow volcanic craters, and a few craggy mountains of older rocks 2,300-2,450 ft. high, rise from the western part of the plain.	Irregular texture of various vegetation types from coarse trees to fine tundra. Medium scattered vegetation along gravel bars.	Same as above.
<b>3. Narrative:</b> This unit is distinguished from the adjacent Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands inventory area to the east by having lower elevations, a slightly wetter climate, and more robust vegetation. There are no roads and a few winter trails.			

4. Score for Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Yukon River Lowlands					Scenic Quality Classification
	High	Med	Low	Explanation Or Rationale	
a. Landform			1	A few wide waterways, flat and boggy lowlands, circular oxbow lakes.	Class A - 19 or more
b. Vegetation			1	Some variety of vegetation but only along a few major waterways and marshes.	
c. Water		5		Clear and clean appearing, still and slow moving, which is found in much of the landscape.	Class B- 12 -18
d. Color		3		Various hues but mainly along a rivers and lakes. High reflection in marshy areas. Subtle color variations in remaining areas.	
e. Adjacent Scenery			0	Little or no influence on visual quality.	Class C - 11 or less
f. Scarcity			1	Common within the region.	
g. Cultural Modification		0		Modifications add little visual variety to the area.	Class C
<b>Grand Total of all scores: 11</b>					<b>Class C</b>

**Table 4. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Kuskokwim Mountains**

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: July 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Central portion of planning area</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>		<b>SQRU: Kuskokwim Mountains</b>	
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (feature)</b>			
	<b>a. Landform/Water</b>	<b>b. Vegetation</b>	<b>c. Structure (General)</b>
Form	Monotonous succession of northeast- trending ridges having rounded to flat summits 1,500–2,000 ft. in altitude and broad gentle slopes. Valleys have flat floors 1–5 miles wide.  Oxbow and thaw lakes in the valleys and a few cirque lakes in the glaciated mountains.	Vegetation is dominated by white spruce, birch and aspen on south-facing slopes, black spruce on north-facing slopes, and black spruce woodlands and tussock and scrub bogs in valley bottoms.	There are no major structures or any other significant manmade feature associated with BLM lands within this area.

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: July 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Central portion of planning area</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>		<b>SQRU: Kuskokwim Mountains</b>	
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (feature)</b>			
	<b>a. Landform/Water</b>	<b>b. Vegetation</b>	<b>c. Structure (General)</b>
Line	All rivers within this SRQU drain into the Yukon River with the clear water Black and Little Black being the dominate rivers which meander through broad irregular flats. The variety of water features creates contrast between the adjacent landform and vegetation and the barren soils of gravel bars, moderate cliffs and shore lines.	Vegetation patterns generally follow the terrain, consisting of tall mixed forest to simple curving lines of scrub bogs in valleys.	Same as above.
Color	Light gray-colored flat-lying basalt locally caps much of the eroded surface of the mountains.	Variety of hues from the variety of plant species, mute tones. Vivid fall colors.	Same as above.
Texture	Most surfaces in this area are comprised of bedrock and coarse rubble on ridges, colluvium on lower slopes, and alluvium in the deeply incised, narrow valleys.  Ridge crests north of the Kuskokwim River rise about 2,000 ft. and are spaced at intervals of 10–30 miles by isolated circular groups of rugged glaciated mountains 3,000–4,400 ft. in altitude.  Lakes are few.	Irregular texture of various vegetation types from course trees to fine tundra.	Same as above.
<b>3. Narrative:</b> Moderate variation in topographic relief and a wide variety of plant species, that creates some diversity in color, texture and form between tall growing trees and shrubs, with lower growing sedge and grasses.			

4. Score for Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Kuskokwim Mountains					Scenic Quality Classification
	High	Med	Low	Explanation or Rationale	
a. Landform		3		Variety of topography but not exceptional to the region.	Class A - 19 or more
b. Vegetation	5			Wide variety of plant species as compared to the region.	
c. Water		3		Variety of flowing water features but not dominant in the	Class B- 12 -18
d. Color			1	Variety of colors but generally mute tones.	
e. Adjacent Scenery			0	Little or no influence on visual quality.	Class C - 11 or less
f. Scarcity			1	Common within the region.	
g. Cultural Modifications		0		Modifications add little visual variety to the area	Class B
<b>Grand Total of all Scores: 13</b>					<b>Class B</b>

**Table 5. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands**

Form 8400-1 (September 1985)		Date: July 2014	
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT		Anchorage Field Office	
		Eastern section of planning area	
SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY		SQRU: Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands	
1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner			
2. Landscape Character (Feature)			
	<b>A. Landform/Water</b>	<b>B. Vegetation</b>	<b>C. Structure (General)</b>
Form	<p>Broad, rounded mountains of moderate height, bordering the north flank of the Alaska Range.</p> <p>River outwash fans from the Alaska Range slope 20-50 ft. per mile to floodplains along the streams of the low-lands.</p> <p>Rivers from the range flow for a few miles at the heads of the fans in broad terraced valleys 50-200 ft. deep.</p> <p>Scattered low hills of granite, ultramafic rocks, and schist rise above the outwash.</p> <p>Abundant cliffs.</p>	<p>Vegetation is dominated by white spruce, birch and aspen on south-facing slopes, black spruce on north-facing slopes, and black spruce woodlands and tussock and scrub bogs in valley bottoms.</p> <p>Above treeline, low birch shrubs and lichen tundra dominate.</p>	<p>There is one BLM public shelter cabin associated with BLM lands within this area.</p>

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: July 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Eastern section of planning area</b>	
		<b>SQRU: Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>			
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (Feature)</b>			
	<b>A. Landform/Water</b>	<b>B. Vegetation</b>	<b>C. Structure (General)</b>
Line	Semicircular belts of morainal topography lie on the upper ends of some of the river fans.  Tightly meandering tributaries flow into the area from the	Vegetation patterns generally follow the terrain, consisting of tall mixed forest to simple curving lines of scrub bogs in valleys.	Regular straight vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines.
Color	The dominant schist, granite, loess ground cover consist of muted monotonous of olive gray and brown.  Clear running streams.	Irregular hues of green and white from deciduous trees and brown and olive grey from conifers. Vivid fall colors.	Cabin structure along the Iditarod Trail consists of natural browns and grays of logs, brown non-reflective painted metal roofs.
Texture	Most surfaces are bedrock and coarse rubble on ridges and loose sediment deposits on lower slopes, and alluvium in deeply incised, narrow valleys.  Large fields of stabilized dunes cover the northern part of the lowland and lower slopes of adjacent hills between Nenana and McGrath.  Braided glacial streams rising in the Alaska Range, flow north across the lowland at intervals of 5-20 miles.	Irregular texture of various vegetation types from course trees to fine tundra.	Smooth log or wood texture of shelter cabin with fascia boards and decks. Medium texture of the continuous Iditarod Trail and various other winter trails associated with BLM lands in the area.
<b>3. Narrative:</b> Broad rounded mountains of moderate height. Braided, clear, glacial, meandering rivers and tributaries.			

<b>4. Score For Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Tanana-Kuskokwim</b>					<b>Scenic Quality Classification</b>
	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Explanation Or Rationale</b>	
a. Landform		3		Abundant cliffs and interesting erosional patterns.	Class A - 19 or more
b. Vegetation		3		Some variety of vegetation.	
c. Water	5			High number of clear flowing streams somewhat dominate the landscape.	Class B- 12 -18
d. Color		3		Some variety in colors of vegetation.	
e. Adjacent Scenery		3		Adjacent Alaska Mountain Range moderately enhances overall visual quality in the area.	Class C - 11 or less

<b>4. Score For Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Tanana-Kuskokwim</b>					<b>Scenic Quality Classification</b>
	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Explanation Or Rationale</b>	
f. Scarcity			1	Common within the region.	Class C - 11 or less
g. Cultural Modification		0		Modifications add little visual variety to the area.	Class B
<b>Grand Total of all Scores: 18</b>					<b>Class B</b>

**Table 6. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Lime Hills**

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: July 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Southeastern section</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>		<b>SQRU: Lime Hills</b>	
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (Feature)</b>			
	<b>A. Landform/Water</b>	<b>B. Vegetation</b>	<b>C. Structure (General)</b>
Form	<p>These hills are glacially dissected mountains. The effects of heavy glaciation are etched in the surface topography through a repeated sequence of sharp mountain ridges with steep headwalls and broad U-shaped valleys.</p> <p>Some of the area rivers are braided muddy streams. Others are clear and meandering.</p> <p>Ponds are abundant in the moraine-mantled eastern part of the hills.</p>	<p>Vegetation is predominately tall and low shrub communities of willow, birch, and alder. Spruce forests and woodlands are confined to valley bottoms and mountain toe slopes.</p>	<p>There is one BLM public shelter cabin and one unmaintained airstrip associated with BLM lands within this area.</p>
Line	<p>Hills have broad gentle slopes and broad flat or gentle sloping valleys.</p>	<p>Vegetation patterns generally follow the terrain, consisting of tall and low shrubs.</p>	<p>Regular straight vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines.</p>
Color	<p>Some muddy streams.</p> <p>Glacial moraines and outwash generally muted tones.</p>	<p>Monotone hues of pure green, white, and olive gray from primarily deciduous trees and shrubs. Vivid fall colors.</p>	<p>Cabin structure along the Iditarod Trail consists of natural browns and grays of logs, brown non-reflective painted metal roofs.</p>

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: July 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Southeastern section</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>		<b>SQRU: Lime Hills</b>	
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (Feature)</b>			
	<b>A. Landform/Water</b>	<b>B. Vegetation</b>	<b>C. Structure (General)</b>
Texture	The ridges and mountainsides are covered with colluvial rubble, while the valleys contain glacial moraines and outwash with some alluvial deposits along rivers.  Local relief is 1,000-2,500 ft. Mountains in the northeastern part rise to an altitude of 4,200 ft.	Moderate texture of medium density of mostly deciduous trees.	Smooth log or wood texture of shelter cabin with fascia boards and decks. Medium texture of the continuous Iditarod Trail and smooth texture of the Rohn airstrip.
<b>3. Narrative:</b> Interesting glacially dissected hills. Adjacent to Denali National Park and Preserve. Includes the Rohn area. Glacial moraines from the nearby Alaska Mountain Range.			

<b>4. Score for Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Lime Hills</b>					<b>Scenic Quality Classification</b>
	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Explanation Or Rationale</b>	
a. Landform		3		Interesting erosional patterns but not exceptional.	Class A - 19 or more
b. Vegetation			1	Little variety as compared to the region.	Class A - 19 or more
c. Water		3		Clear to muddy flowing, not dominant in the landscape.	Class B- 12 -18
d. Color			1	Subtle color variations.	Class B- 12 -18
e. Adjacent		3		Adjacent Alaska Mountain Range	Class C - 11 or less
f. Scarcity			1	Common within the region.	Class C - 11 or less
g. Cultural		0		Modifications add little visual	Class C - 11 or less
<b>Grand Total of all Scores: 12</b>					<b>Class B</b>

**Table 7. Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Ahklun Mountains**

<b>Form 8400-1 (September 1985)</b>		<b>Date: July 2014</b>	
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT</b>		<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>	
		<b>Extreme southwest section of planning</b>	
		<b>SQRU: Ahklun Mountains</b>	
<b>SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY</b>			
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>			
<b>2. Landscape Character (feature)</b>			
	<b>a. Landform/Water</b>	<b>b. Vegetation</b>	<b>c. Structure (General)</b>
Form	Group of rugged steep-walled mountains spanning two extensive wetland areas.  Finger lakes.  A few small cirque glaciers are found in the highest parts of the mountains.	Dwarf shrub and lichen tundra dominates mountain crests. In valleys, shrub lands are punctuated by sedge-tussock tundra meadows (on very wet areas) and mixed forests.	There are no major structures or any other significant manmade feature associated with BLM lands within this area.
Line	U-shaped valleys produced by mountain glaciers.  Long narrow bodies of water in U-shaped canyons.	Vegetation patterns generally follow the terrain.	Same as above.
Color	Mountain soils.  Clear streams.	Irregular hues of green on mixed forest, lichen tundra and shrub lands. Vivid fall colors.	Same as above.
Texture	Stony bedrock to glacier till.  Peaks have sharp summits 2,000-5,000 ft. in altitude, separated by broad flat valleys and lowlands.  Most rivers are incised in bedrock gorges 20-50 ft. deep in the downstream parts of their valleys.	Moderate to coarse texture of mountain terrain and fine texture of lichen tundra.	Same as above.
<b>3. Narrative:</b> This area is has a number of glacial lakes, which are long narrow bodies of water in U-shaped canyons. Adjacent to the Yukon National Wildlife Refuge. Lack of any manmade structures.			

<b>4. Score for Scenic Quality Field Inventory – Ahklun Mountains</b>					<b>Scenic Quality Classification</b>
	<b>High</b>	<b>Med</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Explanation or Rationale</b>	
a. Landform	5			High steep peaks.	Class A - 19 or more
b. Vegetation		3		Some variety of vegetation.	
c. Water		3		Clear flowing streams but not dominate.	Class B- 12 -18
d. Color		3		Some color variety but not a dominate scenic element.	
e. Adjacent Scenery			0	Little or no influence on visual quality.	Class C - 11 or less
f. Scarcity			1	Common within the region.	
g. Cultural Modification		0		Modifications add little visual variety to the area.	Class B
<b>Grand Total of all Scores: 15</b>					<b>Class B</b>

## 6. Visual Sensitivity Worksheets

The following Sensitivity Level Rating Sheets show the sensitivity rating for each of the SQRUs in the planning area. The Sensitivity Level Rating Unit Key for interpreting the following tables is: H=High, M=Medium, and L=Low.

**Table 8. Sensitivity Level Rating Sheet – North and South Nulato Hills**

<b>Form 8400-6 (September 1985)</b>								
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Anchorage Field Office</b>				<b>Date: July 2014</b>				
				<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>				
				<b>Western section</b>				
				<b>SQRU: North and South Nulato Hills</b>				
<b>SENSITIVITY LEVEL RATING SHEET</b>								
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>								
<b>Sensitivity Level Rating</b>	<b>Type of User</b>	<b>Amount of Use</b>	<b>Public Interest</b>	<b>Adjacent Land Uses</b>	<b>Special Areas</b>	<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
	M	L						Hunting and harvest gathering, ATV and snowmobile riding, dispersed camping, wildlife viewing, motor boating. Seasonal organized, permitted group uses. Moderate commercial big game guide-outfitting.
			H-M					Interest in maintaining resource values of Iditarod National Historic Trail and Unalakleet Wild & Scenic River.
				M				Innoko National Wildlife Refuge to the east. State and Native lands in natural state with isolated Native Allotments.
					H		M	Fortymile Wild and Scenic River. Iditarod National Historic Trail. Several ACECs with a natural state.
<b>Medium</b>								

**Table 9. Sensitivity Level Rating Sheet – Yukon River Lowlands**

<b>Form 8400-6 (September 1985)</b>								
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Anchorage Field Office</b>					<b>Date: July 2014</b>			
					<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>			
					<b>East-Central section</b>			
					<b>SQRU: Yukon River Lowlands</b>			
<b>SENSITIVITY LEVEL RATING SHEET</b>								
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>								
<b>Sensitivity Level Rating</b>	<b>Type of User</b>	<b>Amount of Use</b>	<b>Public Interest</b>	<b>Adjacent Land Uses</b>	<b>Special Areas</b>	<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
	L	L						Subsistence from local communities. Hunting and trapping. Limited commercial big game guide-outfitting.
			M					Scoping comments reflect interest in maintaining subsistence uses.
				M				Adjacent to Innoko National Wildlife Refuge. All neighboring lands in a natural state.
					L		L	No Special Areas within this area.
<b>Low</b>								

**Table 10. Sensitivity Level Rating Sheet – Kuskokwim Mountains**

<b>Form 8400-6 (September 1985)</b>								
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE                  INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT                  Anchorage Field Office</b>					Date: July 2014			
					Anchorage Field Office			
					Central section			
					SQRU: Kuskokwim Mountains			
1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner								
Sensitivity Level Rating	Type of User	Amount of Use	Public Interest	Adjacent Land Uses	Special Areas	Other Factors	Overall Rating	Explanation
	L	L						Subsistence uses from several small communities. Limited commercial big game guide-outfitting. Scattered Native Allotments.
			M					Public comments reflect interest in maintaining subsistence resources.
				L				Some lands adjacent to Innoko National Wildlife Refuge. All neighboring lands mostly in a natural state.
					L		L	No Special Areas within this area.
<b>Low</b>								

**Table 11. Sensitivity Level Rating Sheet – Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands**

<b>Form 8400-6 (September 1985)</b>								
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Anchorage Field Office</b>					<b>Date: August 2014</b>			
					<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>			
					<b>Eastern section</b>			
					<b>SQRU: Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands</b>			
<b>SENSITIVITY LEVEL RATING SHEET</b>								
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>								
<b>Sensitivity Level Rating</b>	<b>Type of User</b>	<b>Amount of Use</b>	<b>Public Interest</b>	<b>Adjacent Land Uses</b>	<b>Special Areas</b>	<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
	L	L						Subsistence from several small communities, hunting and trapping, few Native Allotments. Limited commercial big game guide-outfitting.
			M					Scoping comments reflect interest in maintaining subsistence resources.
				M				Adjacent to Denali National Park and Preserve on the east. Remaining neighboring lands in natural state.
					L		L	No Special Areas within this division.
<b>Low</b>								

**Table 12. Sensitivity Level Rating Sheet – Lime Hills**

<b>Form 8400-6 (September 1985)</b>								
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Anchorage Field Office</b>					<b>Date: August 2014</b>			
					<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>			
					<b>Southeast section</b>			
					<b>SQRU: Lime Hills</b>			
<b>SENSITIVITY LEVEL RATING SHEET</b>								
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>								
<b>Sensitivity Level Rating</b>	<b>Type of User</b>	<b>Amount of Use</b>	<b>Public Interest</b>	<b>Adjacent Land Uses</b>	<b>Special Areas</b>	<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
	L	L						Subsistence from one small remote community, hunting and fishing, few Native Allotments.
			M					Interest in maintaining local subsistence resources.
				M				Adjacent to Denali National Park and Preserve. Remaining neighboring lands in natural state with no development, except at Rohn (public cabin and airstrip).
					L		L	No Special Areas within this division.
<b>Low</b>								

**Table 13. Sensitivity Level Rating Sheet – Ahklun Mountains**

<b>Form 8400-6 (September 1985)</b>								
<b>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Anchorage Field Office</b>					<b>Date: August 2014</b>			
					<b>Anchorage Field Office</b>			
					<b>Southwest section</b>			
					<b>SQRU: Ahklun Mountains</b>			
<b>SENSITIVITY LEVEL RATING SHEET</b>								
<b>1. Evaluators (names): Jeff Kowalczyk, Outdoor Recreation Planner</b>								
<b>Sensitivity Level Rating</b>	<b>Type of User</b>	<b>Amount of Use</b>	<b>Public Interest</b>	<b>Adjacent Land Uses</b>	<b>Special Areas</b>	<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
	L	L						Limited hunting and harvest gathering on BLM. Limited commercial big game guide-outfitting opportunities.
			M					No roads or trails.
				M				Remote scenic Alaska viewing opportunities of ridgelines and lakes.
					L		L	No Special Areas within this division.
<b>Low</b>								

## 7. Visual Resource Inventory Summary

The basis for the initial VRI, shown on the maps in the Appendix, Figures 1 through 9, was determined using the information contained in the inventories in the previous chapters, the Visual Sensitivity Levels (Table 14), as well geographical information systems (GIS).

**Table 14. Visual Sensitivity Levels**

		High			Medium			Low
<b>Special</b>		I	I	I	I	I	I	I
<b>Scenic Quality</b>	A	II	II	II	II	II	II	II
	B	II	III	III* IV*	III	IV	IV	IV
	C	III	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
		f/m	b	s/s	f/m	b	s/s	s/s
		<b>Distance Zones</b>						

**North Nulato Hills SQRU:** The North Nulato Hills SQRU is VRI Class IV, with the exception of the Unalakleet River corridor. This corridor contains the Unalakleet Wild River, and the Kaltag Portage segment of the Iditarod National Historic Trail. The central part of the corridor is VRI Class II, and the outer corridor is Class III.

**South Nulato Hills SQRU:** The South Nulato Hills SQRU is mostly VRI Class IV, with a small amount of Class III. The areas rated as VRI Class III include: the western edge of the SQRU, which borders the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge; the Anvik River; and the southern boundary of the SQRU, which borders the Yukon River. The northern part of this SQRU is within the Unalakleet River corridor, described above.

**Yukon River Lowlands SQRU:** The Yukon River Lowlands SQRU is mostly Class IV, with a small amount of Class III along the southwestern edge, where the Unit borders the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, and along a winter trail near Anvik.

**Kuskokwim Mountains SQRU:** The Kuskokwim Mountains fall under VRI Class IV, with a small amount of Class III present at the southwestern edge of the SQRU, and along some winter trails.

**Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands SQRU:** The Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands is the most heterogeneous SQRU in terms of VRI classes. About half of the Unit, mostly the southwestern portion, is Class IV. There are also several small blocks of BLM land that are entirely Class IV, and a few small blocks of Class III land. The Farewell Burn segment of the Iditarod National Historic Trail is within this SQRU, and it is categorized as Class II, with an outer area that is Class III. There are two small blocks of BLM land within this SQRU that are mostly Class II, with some small portions of Class III. There is also a small, isolated block of BLM, Class II land to the southeast of this SQRU, which contains the Rohn SRMA. The Tozona River block of BLM land within this SQRU is mostly Class III, with some Class II land on the eastern edge.

**Lime Hills SQRU:** The Lime Hills SQRU is all categorized as VRI Class IV.

**Ahklun Mountains SQRU:** The majority of the Ahklun Mountains SQRU falls under VRI Class IV, with a small amount on the northern and southwestern edges of the unit categorized as Class III.

## **8. Next Steps: Determine Visual Resource Management Classes**

The inventory findings in this report will be used to preliminarily indicate where protection of visual resources may be appropriate in the BSWI planning area. Next, the BLM will use public comment obtained through public scoping, future public comment submissions, and BLM specialist knowledge and reviews to make determinations regarding preliminary VRM classes across a range of alternatives in the Draft RMP.

Conversion of these preliminary visual resource management classes to final classes involves assessment by the public, and additional review from the BLM resource specialists as a part of the alternative and impact assessment in the resource management plan/environmental impact statement (RMP/EIS) process. Changes may be made to the classes or their boundaries to conform to the management objectives defined in the RMP/EIS. As such, the BLM will rely on public comments obtained during two additional planning phases that may help to inform BLM decisions about future Visual Resource Management in the planning area. These two planning phases are:

1. The Preliminary alternatives outreach period, with public comment accepted through March 20, 2015.
2. The future public comment period for the Bering Sea-Western Interior Draft Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement (DRMP/EIS).

## **9. References**

BLM Manual 1610, Land Use Planning

BLM Manual 8300, Recreation Management

BLM Manual 8351, Wild and Scenic River Policy

BLM Manual 8400-1, Visual Resource Management

BLM Handbook H-1601-1, Land Use Planning Handbook

BLM Handbook H-1790-1, National Environmental Policy Act Handbook

BLM Handbook H-8410-1, Visual Resource Inventory Handbook

BLM National Scenic & Historic Trails Manuals 6250, 6280, and 8353. September 2012.

BSWI RMP Internal Scoping and Public Scoping Comments

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### 10. Appendix – Maps of Visual Resource Inventory Classes

This appendix contains Figure 1, which is a map that shows the Visual Resource Inventory Overview for the overall planning area, Figures 2 through 6, which are maps that address Visual Resource Inventory Classes in specific sections of the planning area, and Figures 7, 8, and 9, which are maps that display Sensitivity Class, Scenic Quality Class, and Distance Zone Class respectively for the overall planning area.

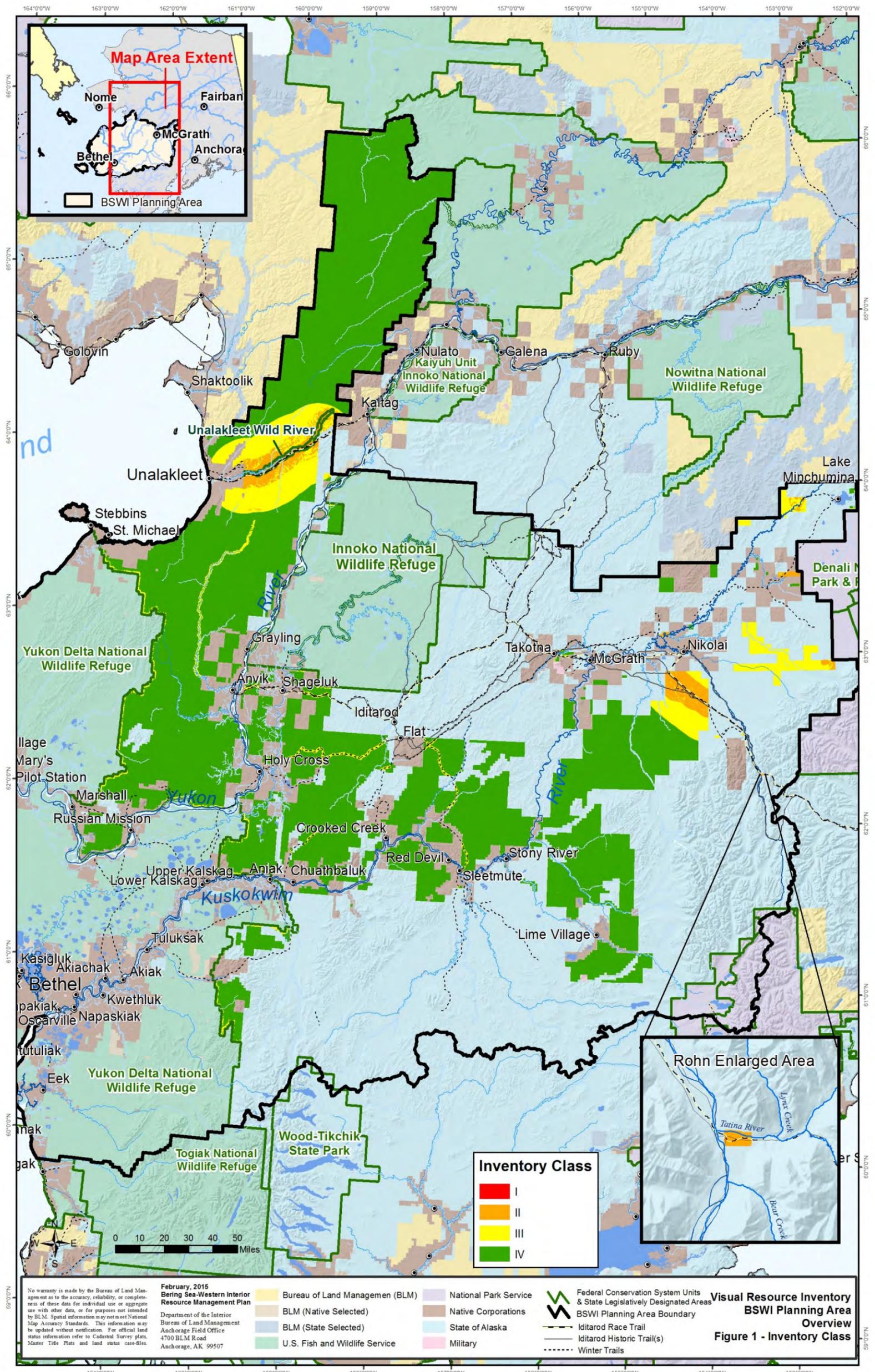


Figure 1. Visual Resource Inventory Overview

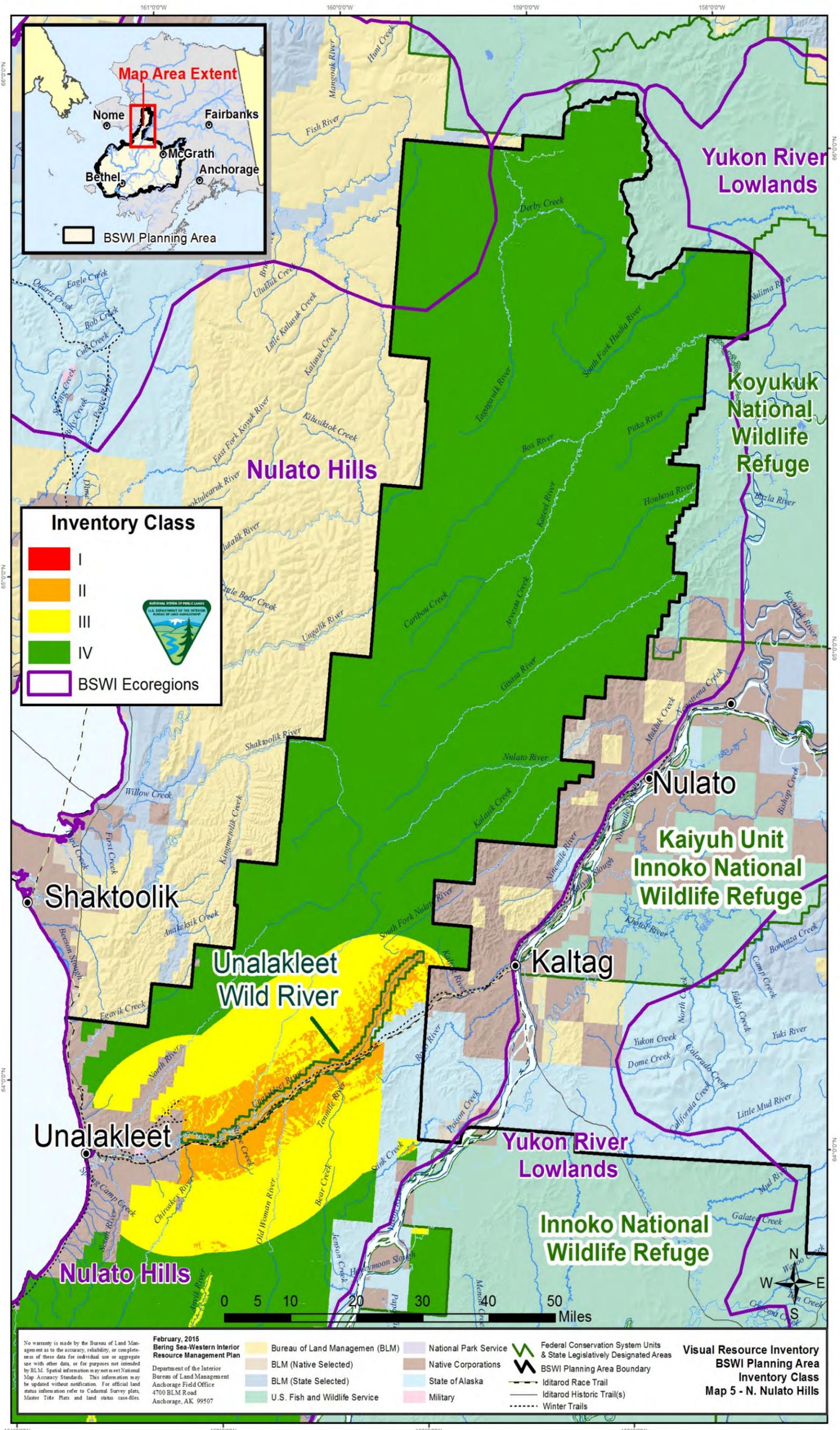


Figure 2. Visual Resource Inventory Class North Nulato Hills

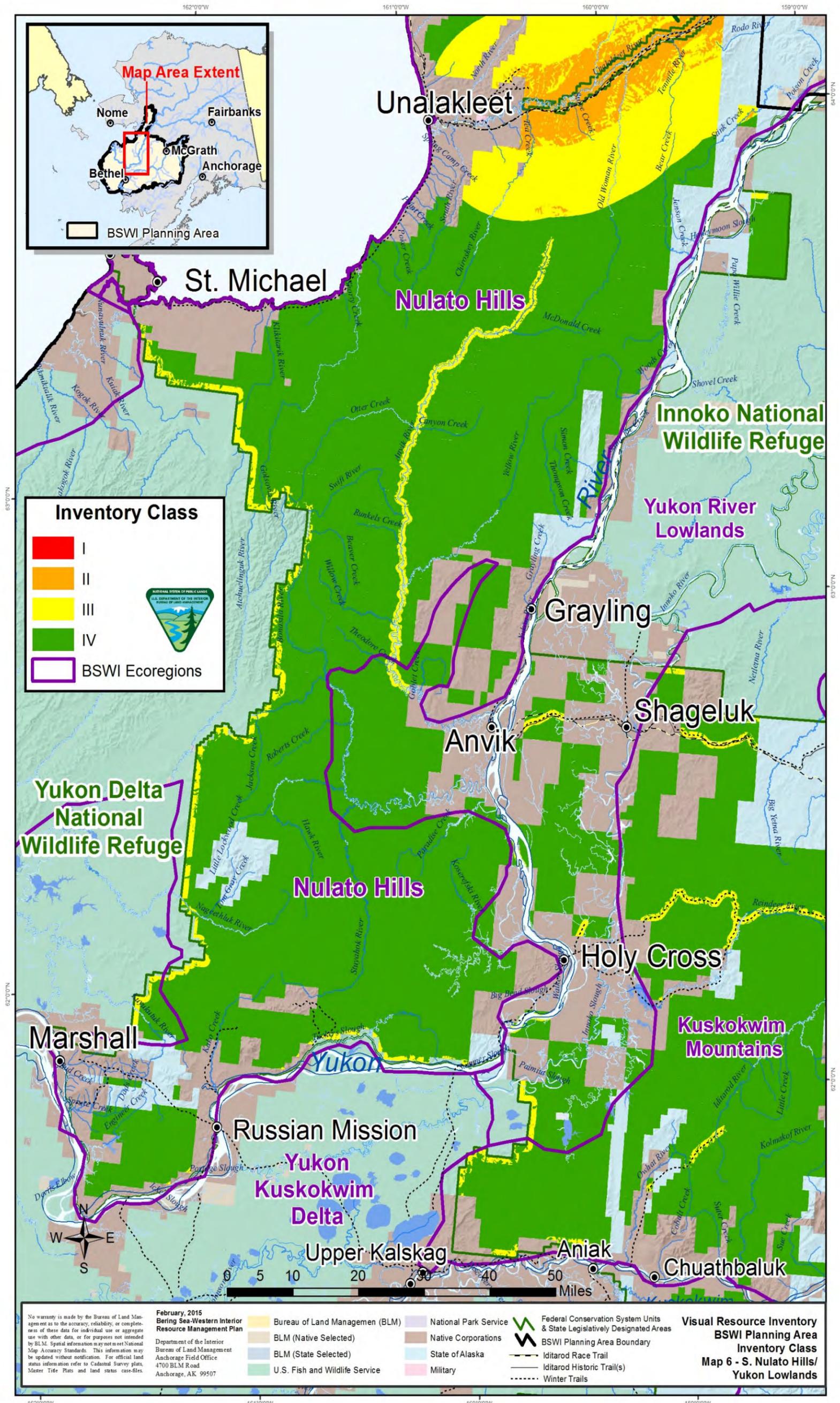


Figure 3. Visual Resource Inventory Class South Nulato Hills and Yukon River Lowlands

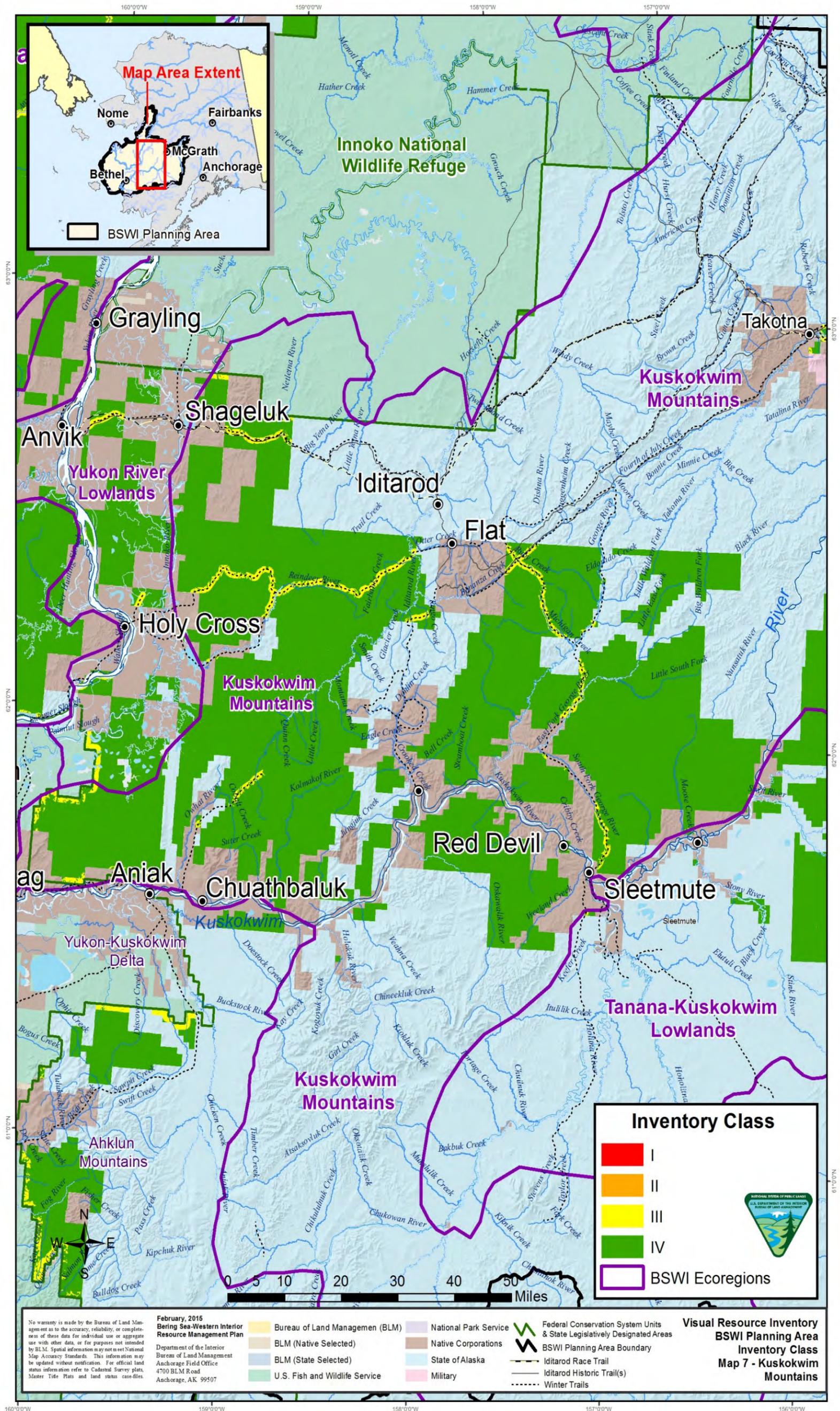


Figure 4. Visual Resource Inventory Class Kuskokwim Mountains

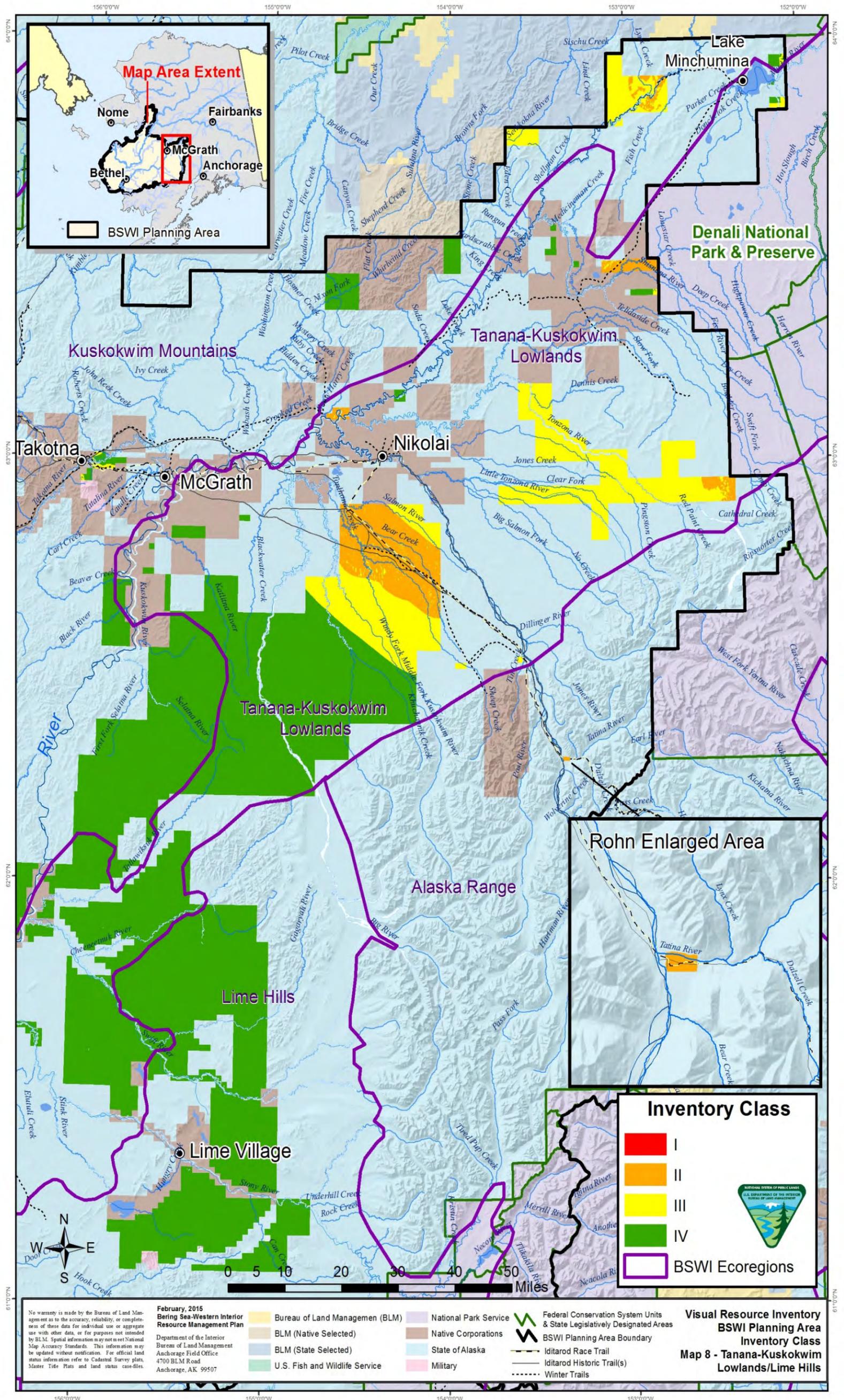


Figure 5. Visual Resource Inventory Class Tanana-Kuskokwim Lowlands and Lime Hills

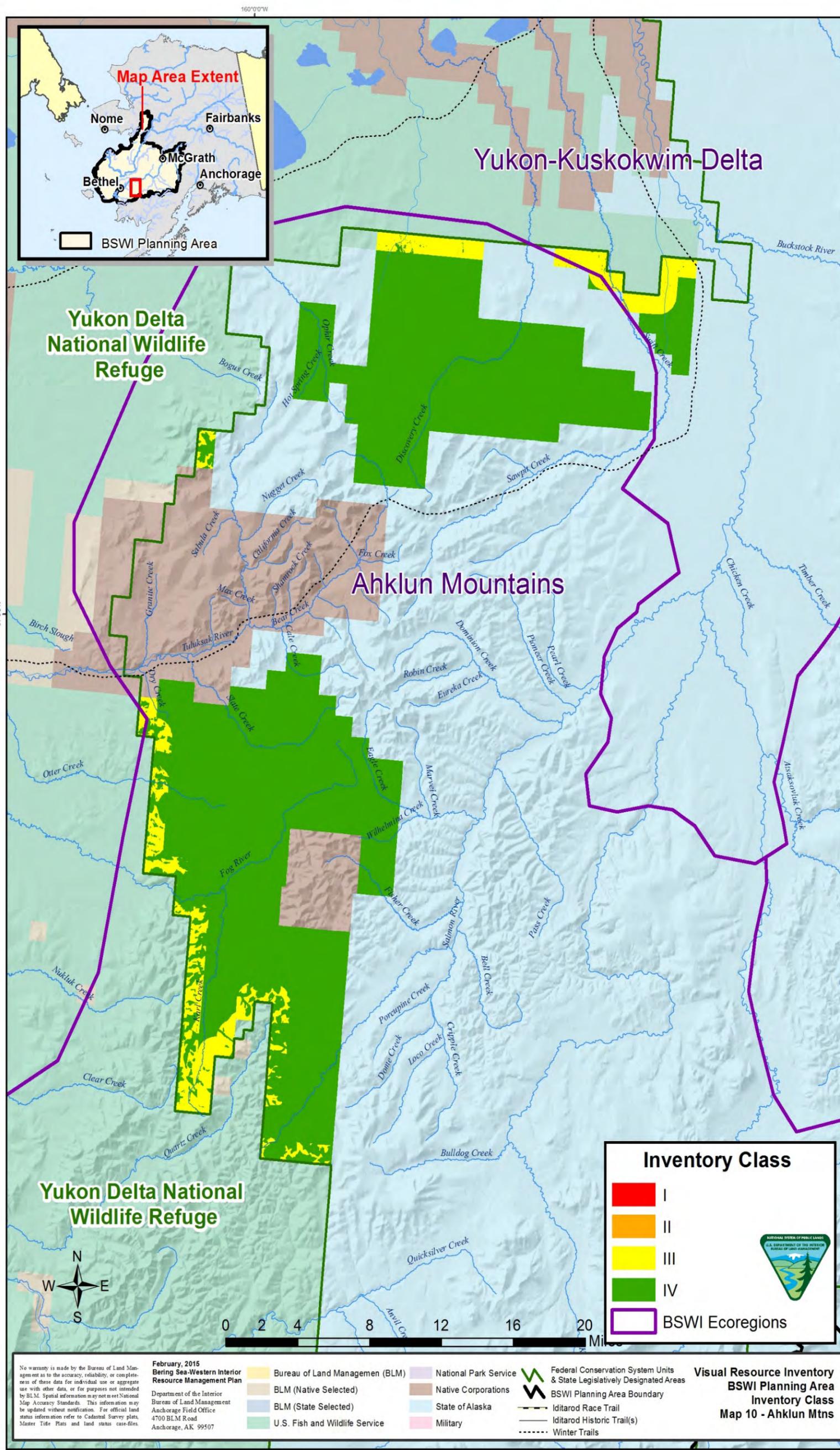


Figure 6. Visual Resource Inventory Class Ahklun Mountains

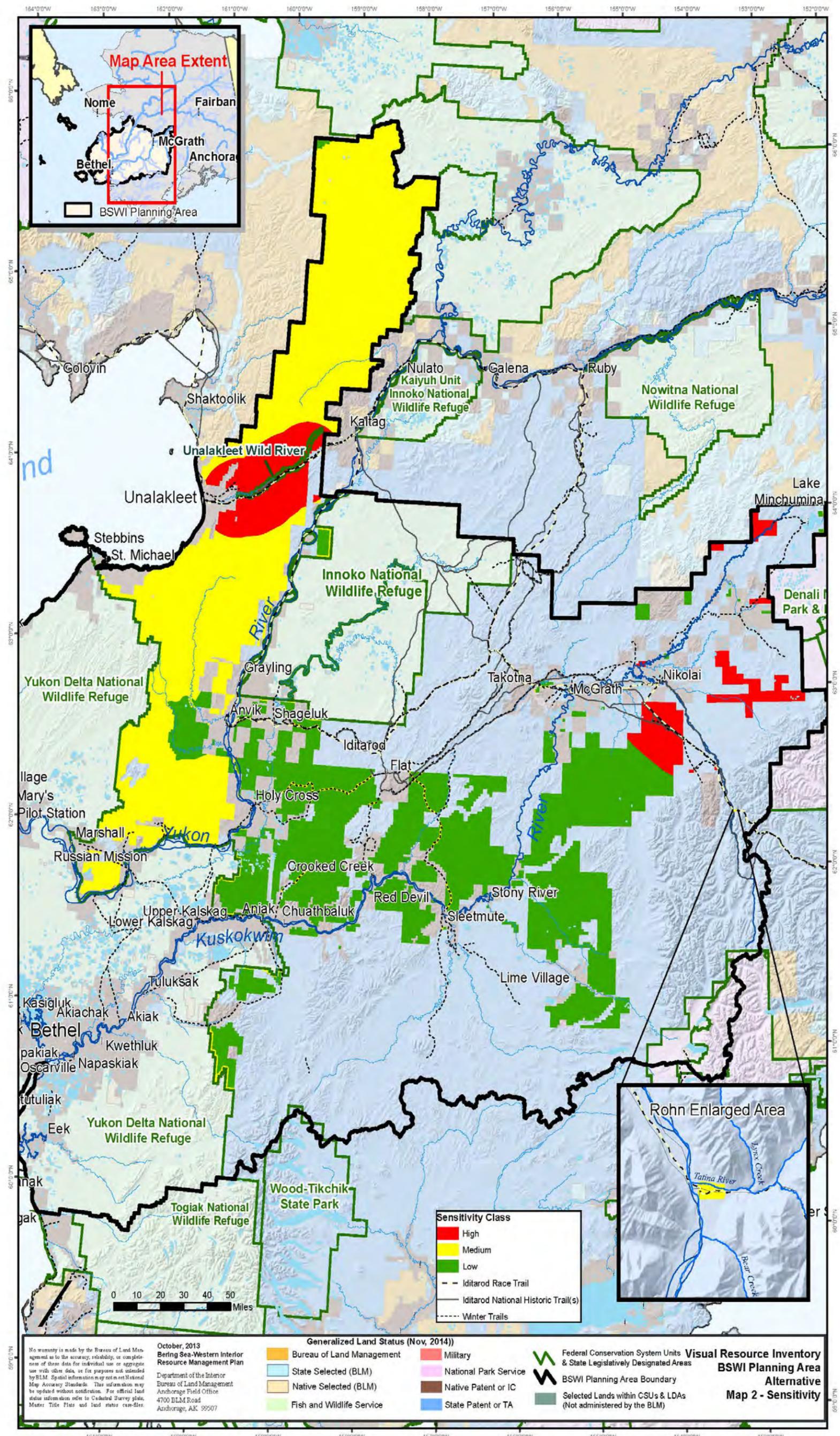


Figure 7. VRI Sensitivity Class in the Overall Planning Area

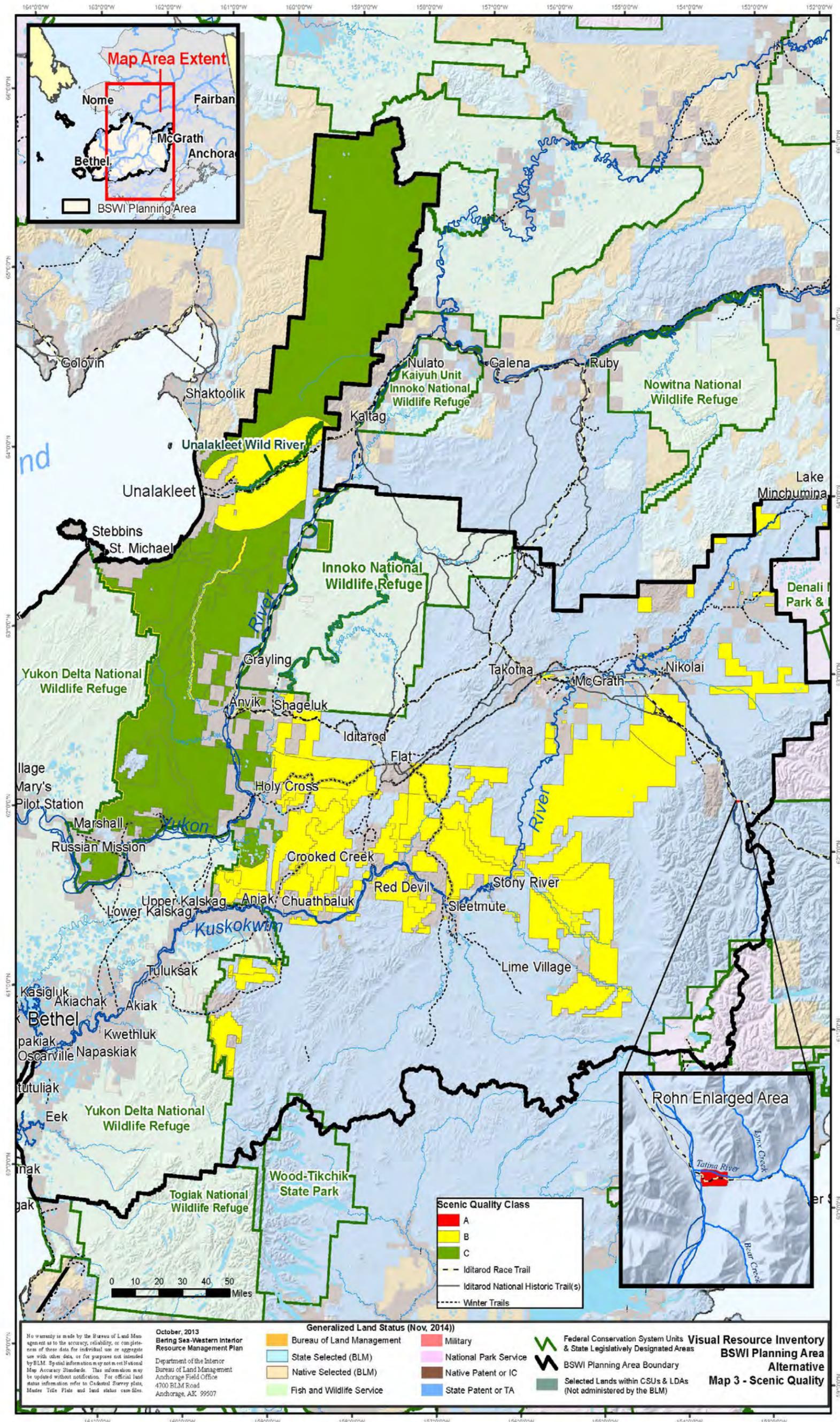


Figure 8. VRI Scenic Quality in the Overall Planning Area

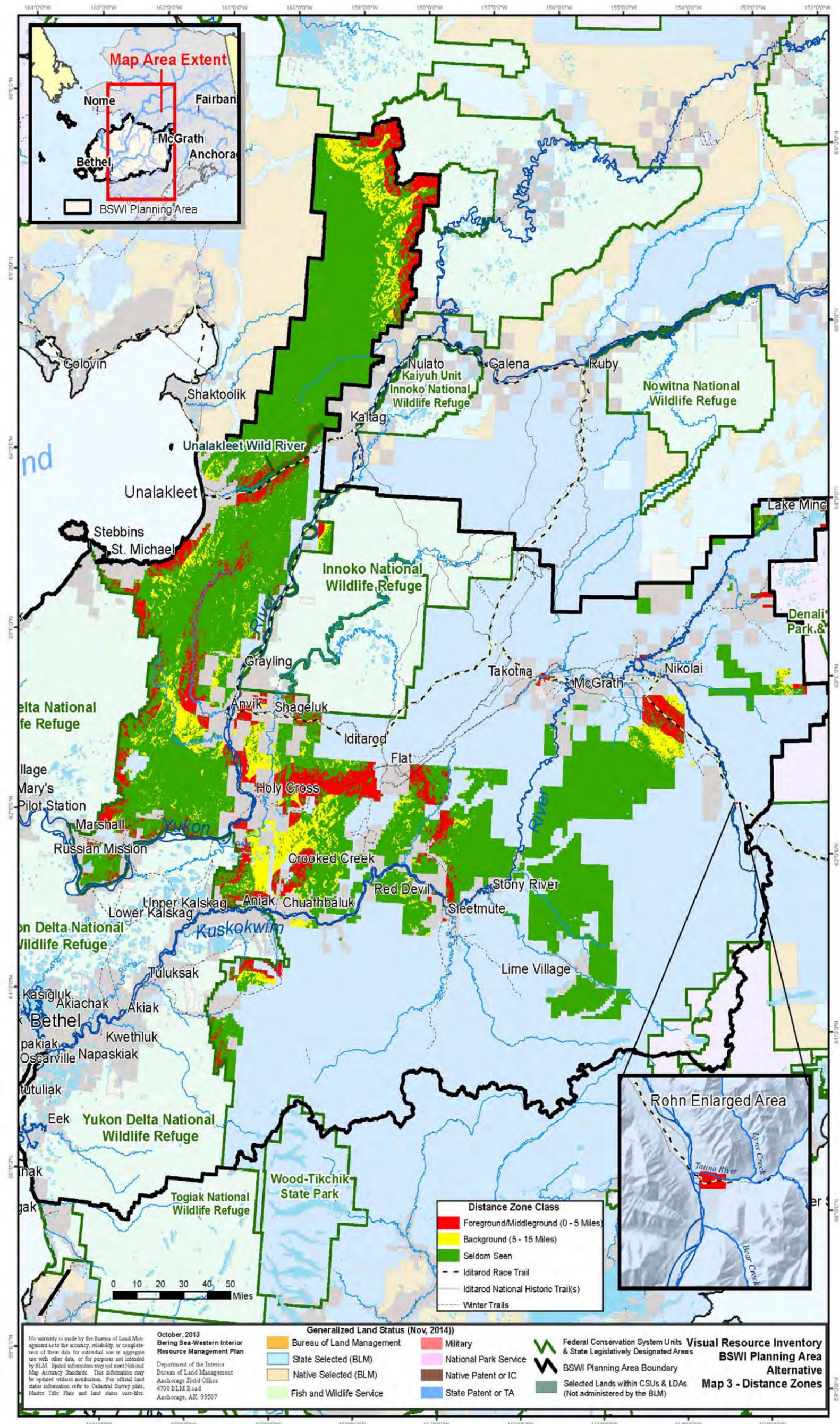


Figure 9. VRI Distance Zone Class in the Overall Planning Area