

## NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

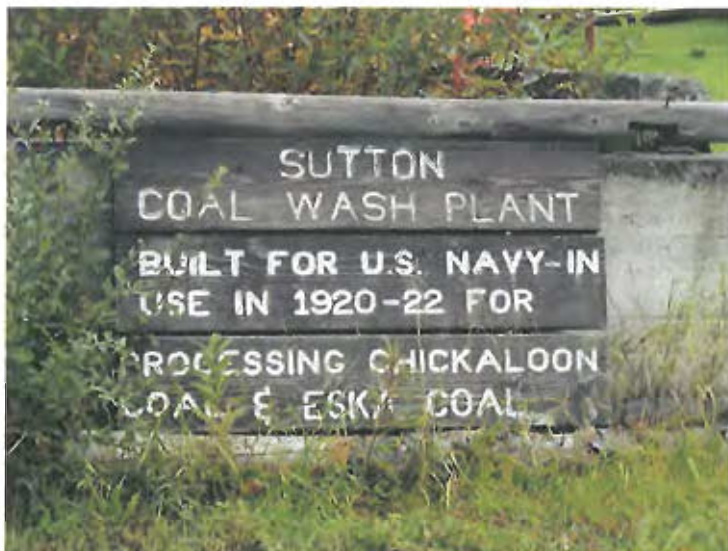
There is a long history of natural resource development in the community of Sutton, starting with coal mines in the early 1900's. Historic coal mining altered forest resources, utilized and altered water resources, and altered soils by removing the vegetative soil mat and creating steep erodible slopes. Also historic gold mining occurred in the upper Moose Creek valley. In recent history there has been minimal natural resource development. Many people gather firewood on private property or in permitted areas of public property, however this impact has been minimal on the resource to date. In addition, several private and public gravel pits have been in operation in the Sutton planning area.



Alaska State Library PUA 20-99

*Mining for Gold in Alaska. Horses helped. Photo found at [http://www.mccarthy lodge.com/specgallery.php?id\\_alb=7](http://www.mccarthy lodge.com/specgallery.php?id_alb=7)*

Since 1984 the Alaska Abandoned Mine Lands Program of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining Land and Water, has worked to rehabilitate historic coal mine sites in Sutton for public safety purposes. Land and water eligible for reclamation with Alaska AML funds are those that were mined or affected by mining and abandoned or left in an inadequate reclamation status before August 3, 1977, and for which there is no continuing reclamation responsibility under State or federal law. The Alaska AML Program has worked in the Sutton planning area to close numerous underground mine adits (horizontal passageways) and shafts (vertical or sloped passageways), remove water impoundments, reduce steep slopes, remove highwalls (the unexcavated face of exposed overburden and coal in a surface mine), and extinguish underground fires of burning spoils (waste material from mining).



*Sutton Coal Wash Plant Sign from <http://alpinehistoricalpark.org>*

**Recommendations:**

- **Protect residential neighborhoods and associated property values.**
- **Natural Resource development should be allowed as a conditional use, to allow for community input and placement of conditions of approval (such as noise, lighting, air quality, and times of operation restrictions) to ensure protection of the quality of life Sutton residents enjoy.**
- **Identify, protect, and enhance the quantity and quality of the community’s watersheds and groundwater; prevent degradation of fish and wildlife habitat, vegetation, and clean air resources.**
- **Protect natural systems and features from potentially negative impacts of human activities such as natural resource development.**
- **Provide site restoration if land surface modification violates Borough, state, or federal regulations or development does not occur within a reasonable amount of time.**
- **Protect natural systems and features including water and soils from potentially negative impacts of site restoration and reclamation activities.**
- **Minimize the impact of natural resource development on recreational uses in the area.**
- **Potential natural resource development will occur in the order of development preference as outlined in the Matanuska Valley Moose Range Plan (page 82).**
- **Limit construction site run off both during construction and long-term operation.**
- **Identify and mitigate disturbance and impacts on culturally or historically relevant sites or resources.**

The following provides specific recommendations for Water Resources, Soils, Forest Resources, Gravel Extraction, and Coal Bed Methane Development.

***Water Resources – Recommendations:***

- **Limit development in floodplains, wetlands and other water bodies.**
- **Monitor water quality and water availability during natural resource development.**
- **Protect and improve steep slopes and prevent erosion along water bodies.**
- **Provide a natural, vegetated buffer along water bodies and corridors.**

***Soils - Recommendations***

- **Safeguard soils by reducing soil erosion, especially near water bodies.**
- **Protect steep or erodible slopes.**

- To the extent possible, consider avoiding development in high risk earthquake zones (fault areas).

*Forest Resources – Recommendations:*

- After natural resource development, provide restoration of forest resources.
- Restore native species of vegetation.

*Gravel Extraction – Recommendations:*

- Protect groundwater supplies, water quality, and water availability.
- Prohibit gravel extraction within floodplains and flood hazard areas or near water bodies.
- Prohibit gravel mining into groundwater table.
- Provide visual screening and buffers.
- Provide noise mitigation.
- Identify and protect natural and cultural resources.
- After gravel extraction is completed, provide site reclamation; place sufficient organic material (i.e. organic soils) onto reclaimed surface and restore native species of vegetation.

*Coal Bed Methane Development – Recommendation:*

- Protect and mitigate negative impacts to surface property characteristics and values.
- Protect groundwater supplies, water quality and water availability.
- Protect soils, air quality, vegetation and wildlife.
- Provide visual screening and buffers.
- Provide noise mitigation.
- Provide fire hazard mitigation.
- When methane extraction ceases, provide site reclamation and revegetation with indigenous species.