

From: [Jessica Plachta](#)
To: [Alekkka Fullerton](#)
Subject: Helimap proposal, please distribute to HB administration and assembly members
Date: Wednesday, May 15, 2019 3:18:20 PM
Attachments: [Heliski Winter Goat Habitat.pdf](#)

May 15, 2019

Dear Manager Schnabel, Mayor Hill, and Assembly members

Attached is Lynn Canal Conservation's (LCC) proposal for amendments to the existing Haines Borough Approved Heli-ski Map. It is based on Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) data that is currently available to us. GIS layers showing specific location of mountain goats and brown bear denning areas are available to Haines Borough but not currently available to us. However, the ADF&G map used as the basis for our proposal depicts current winter mountain goat and brown bear denning areas. Therefore, our proposal is simply the removal of all modeled winter goat habitat and brown bear denning habitat from the attached maps.

Note that at this time we only propose that **winter** mountain goat habitat be removed from the map of approved heli-ski locations. Much of this habitat, along with important brown bear denning areas, does not appear to receive much or any use by heli-ski operators, although they continue to withhold information regarding the specific areas in which they operate as "proprietary."

Areas removed in our proposal do not include the 1.5 to 2 km buffer zone around important winter range, as recommended by the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council and ADF&G. Also, please note that lack of information when ski area boundaries were approved by Haines Borough in 2013 led to inclusion of much of the terrain we now propose removing. For example, a lower heli-ski limit along a 1500 foot contour line had been established by the state throughout much of the map to be protective of wildlife. This was removed by the 2013 Map Committee under the erroneous assumption that north facing slopes were generally not utilized by mountain goats as winter habitat. For example, a casual glance at the modeled mountain goat winter habitat map for the Takhinsha area makes this clear. 62% of winter mountain goat habitat in this area is within approved heli-ski boundaries.

We submit this map with the understanding that convening a map committee is discretionary action by the borough manager. If no committee is convened, we will present this map as our entry into a facilitated discussion with the heli-ski industry, Haines Borough, ADF&G and Bureau of Land Management when and if this occurs.

We contend that much of the area we propose for removal from the map is not and will probably never be utilized by the industry. Areas proposed for removal that are used by industry could potentially be replaced by adding similar terrain that is less important as wildlife habitat. Thus, little negative impact would be felt by the heli-ski industry. Such a process is more likely to succeed if specific heli-skiing areas (ski runs, pickup and dropoff locations) are delineated on maps and brought to the table by industry. Management of specific ski runs rather than broad swaths of land is the norm in many area where heli-skiing and mountain goats occur in close proximity. We strongly recommend that such an approach be adopted by the Haines Borough.

Finally, our map proposal does not include input from back-country recreationists, residents concerned with noise, or other stakeholders who may need to be considered by the Haines Borough as heli-ski management evolves.

Thank you for considering our submission of an amendment to the current heli-ski map.

Sincerely,

Jessica Plachta

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Jessica Plachta

Executive Director

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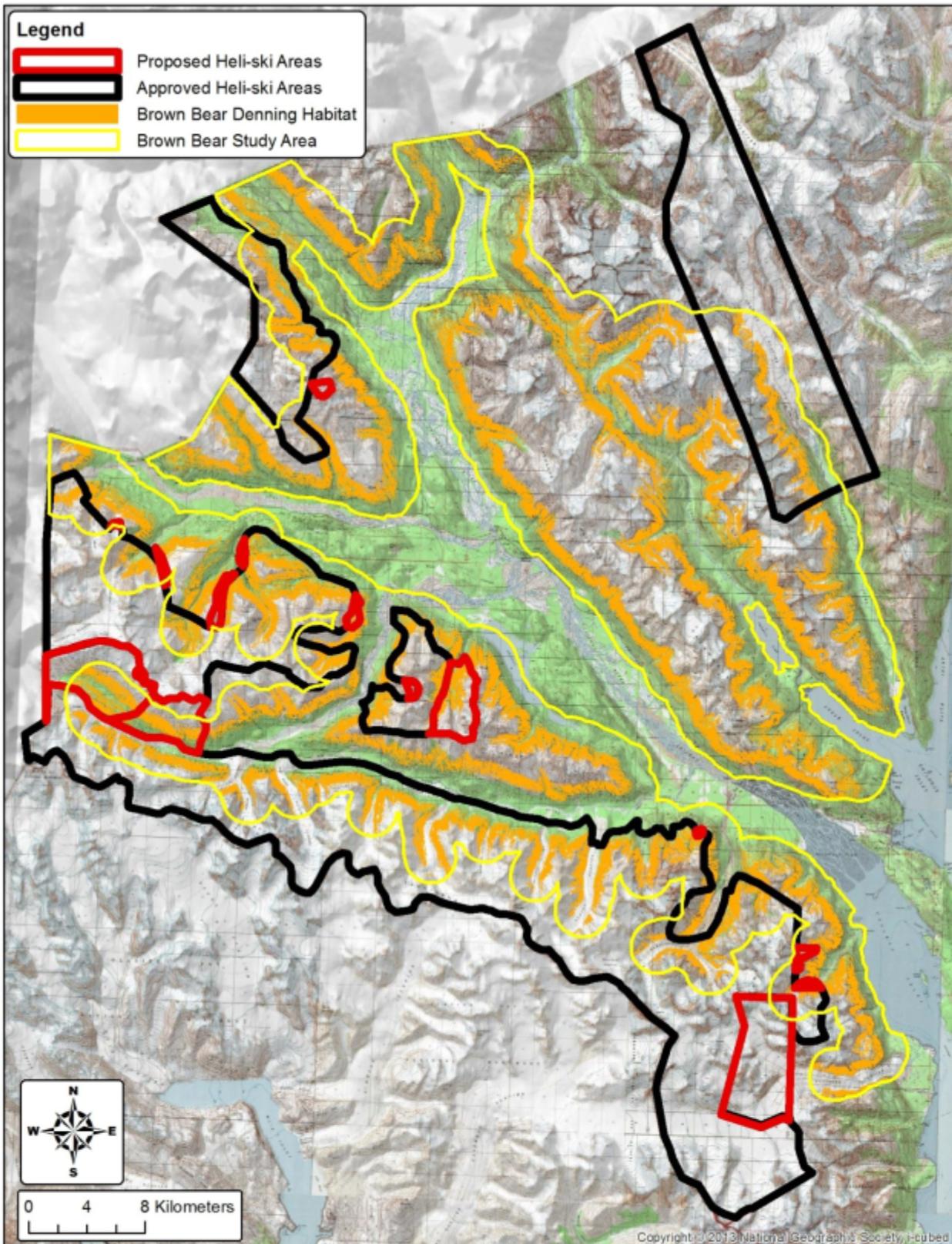
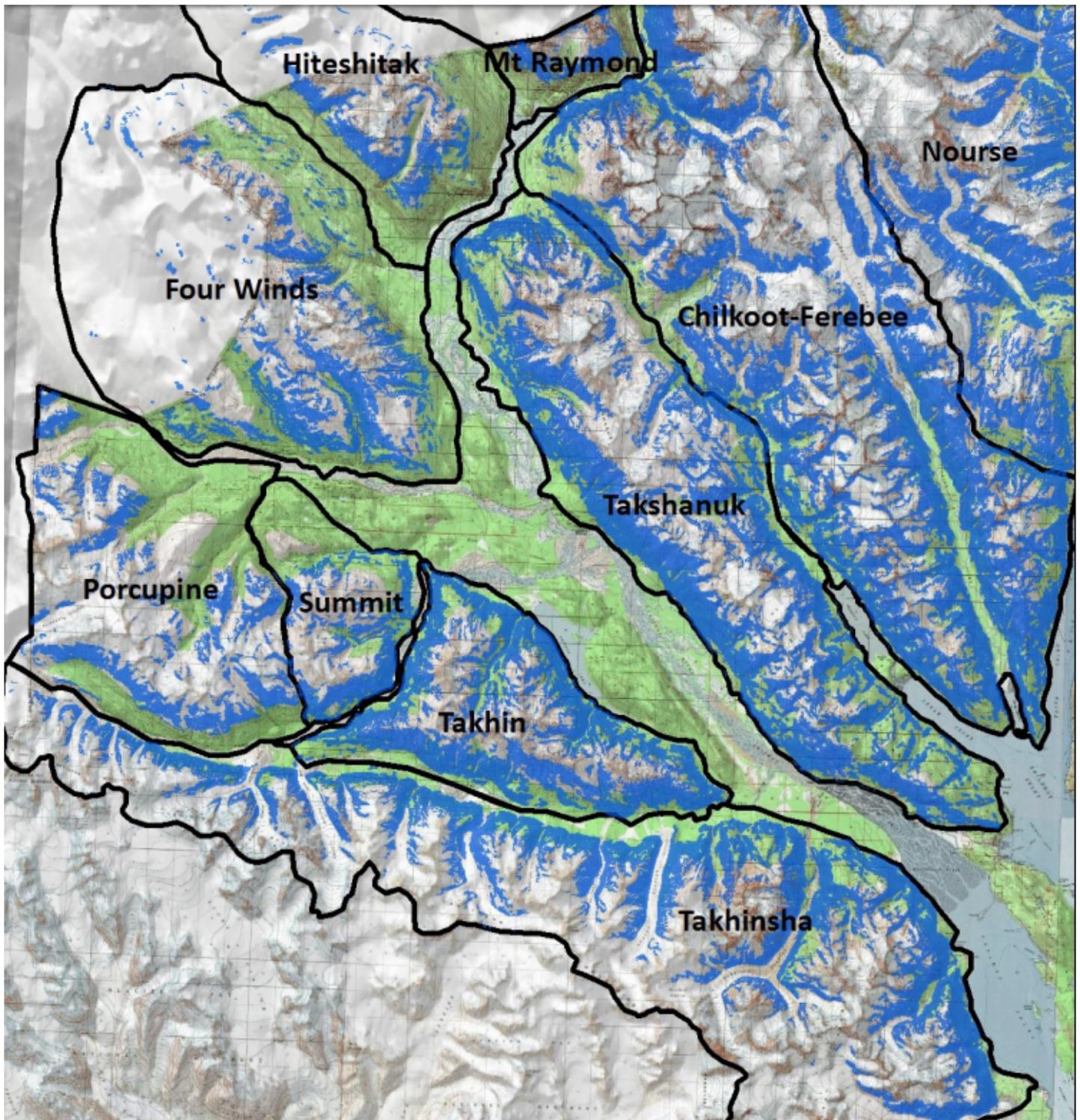
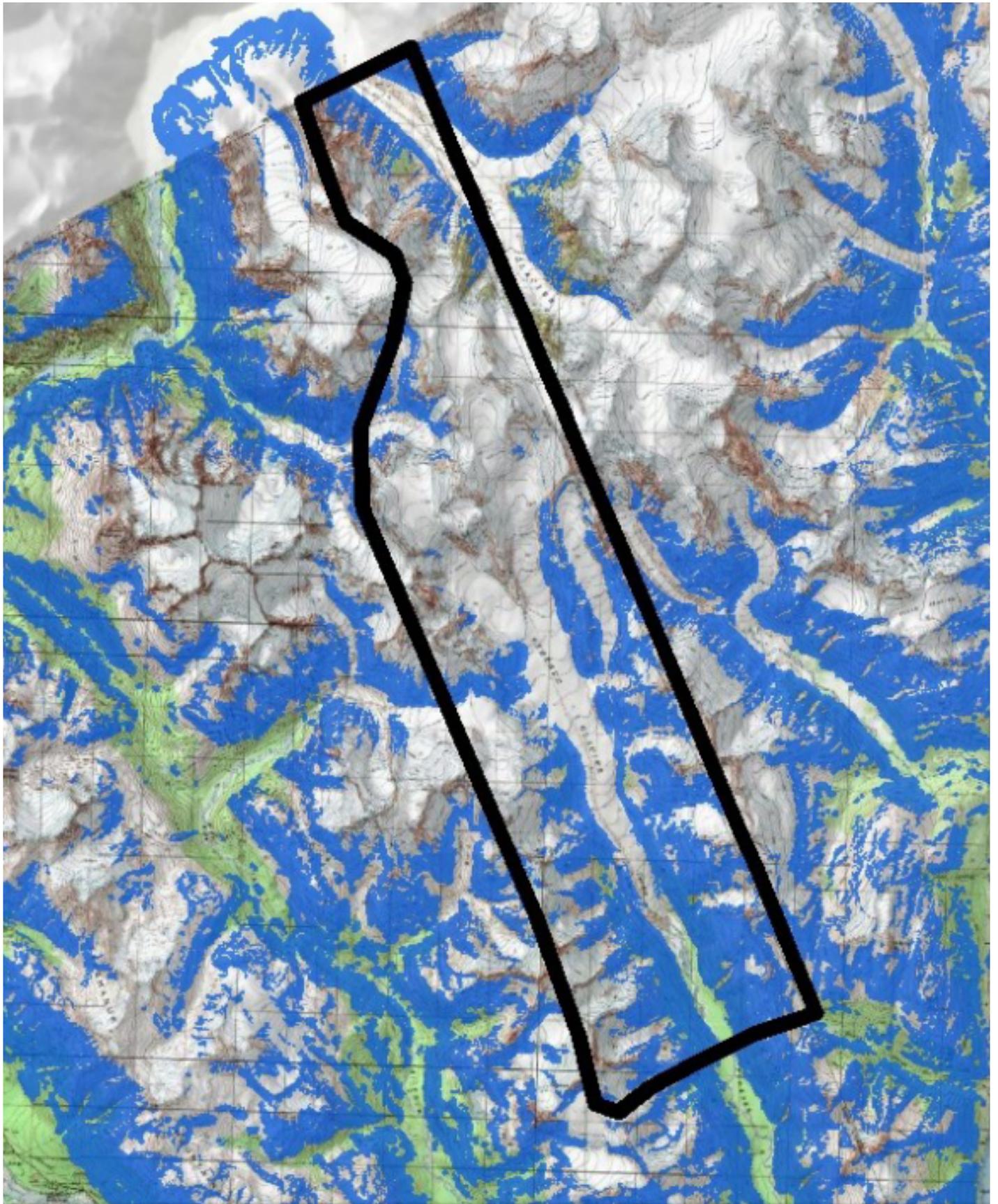


Figure 4. Modeled brown bear denning habitat in Haines, Alaska, relative to approved and proposed heli-skiing areas.

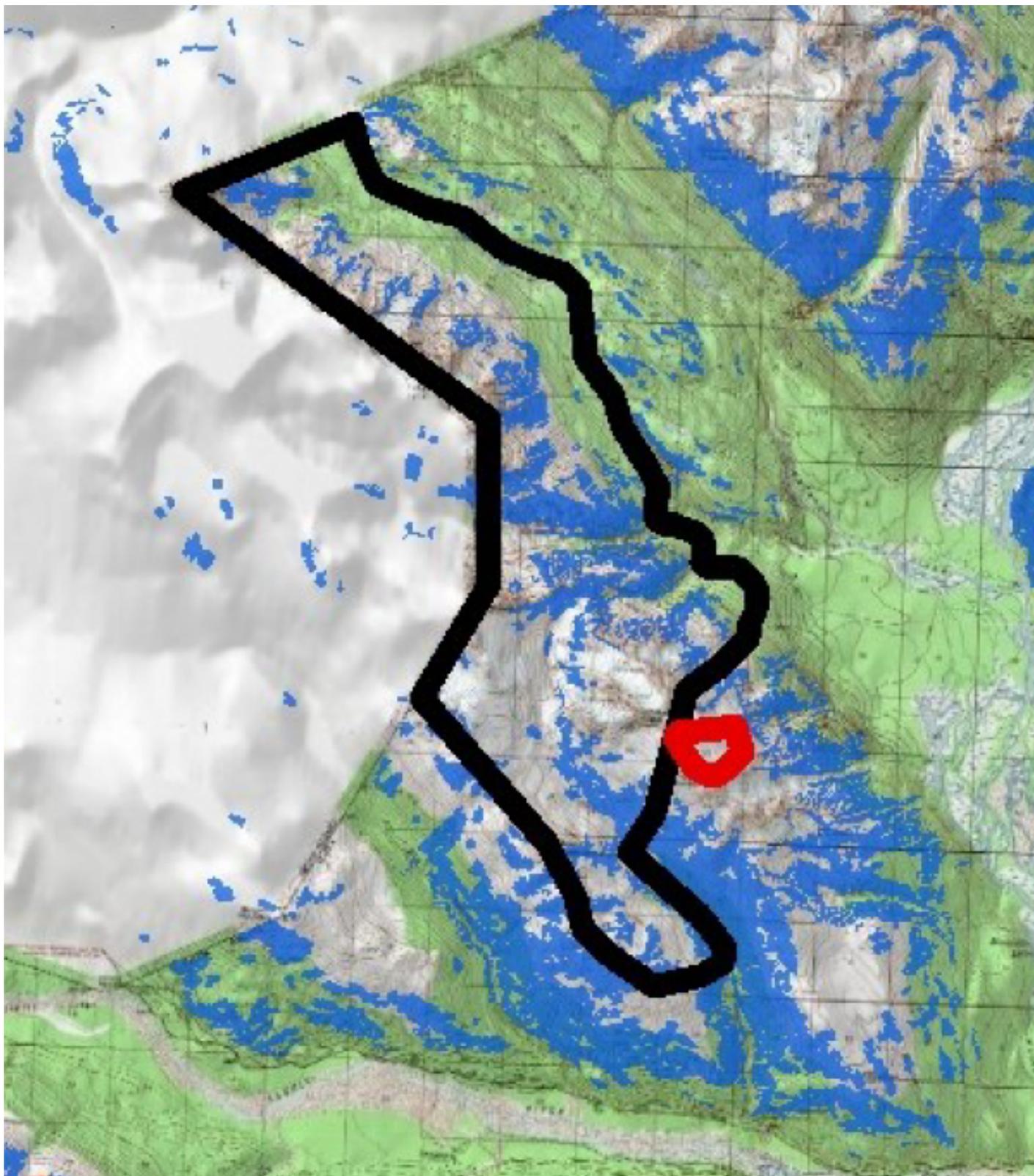
Map Courtesy of ADF&G



Area-Wide Modeled Mountain Goat Winter Habitat
Map Courtesy of ADF&G



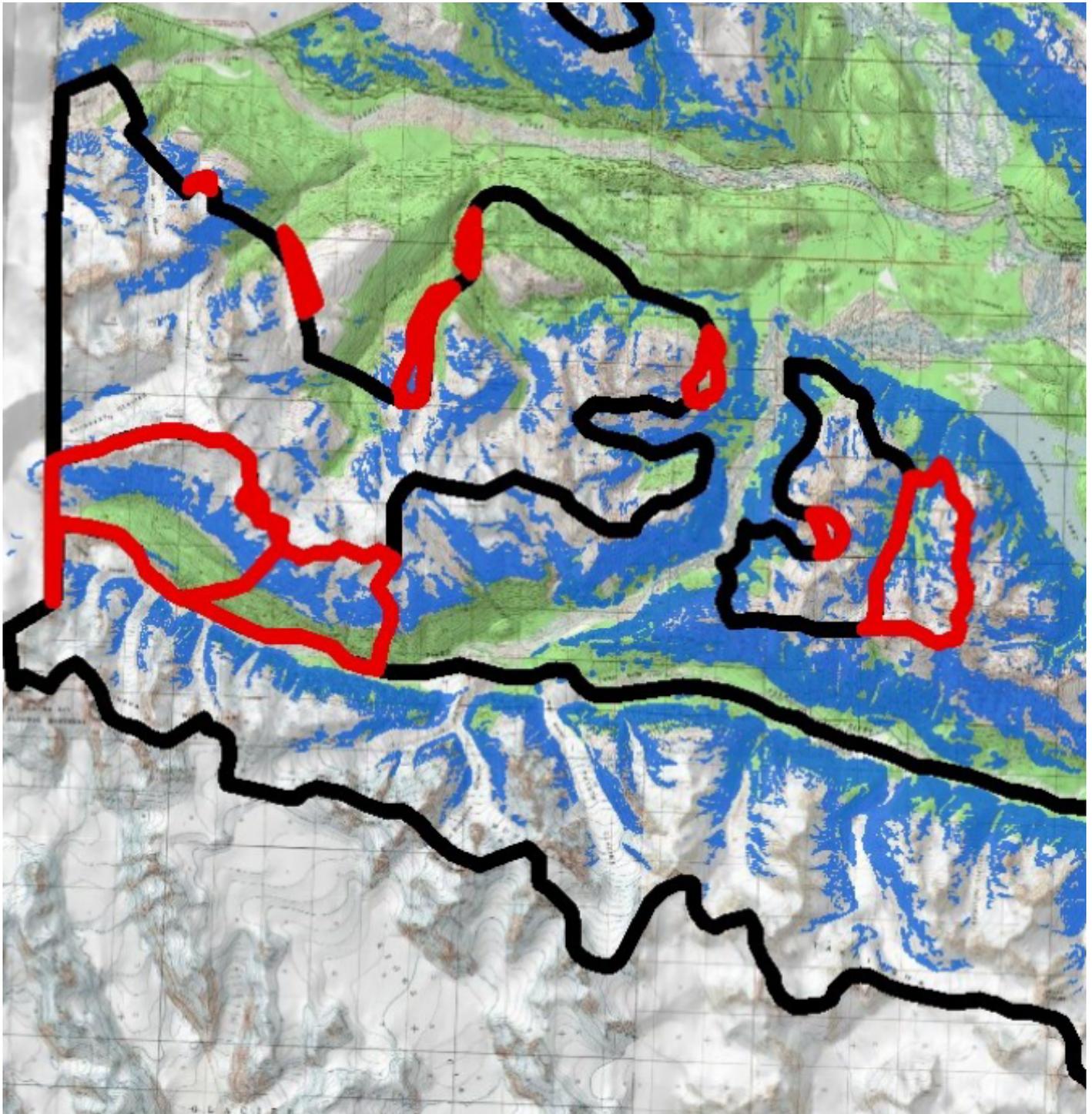
Upper Ferebee Heliski Area and Mountain Goat Winter Habitat Model
Map Courtesy of ADF&G



Four Winds Heliski Area and Mountain Goat Winter Habitat Model

(Red polygon is a proposed 2018 Borough heliski map change)

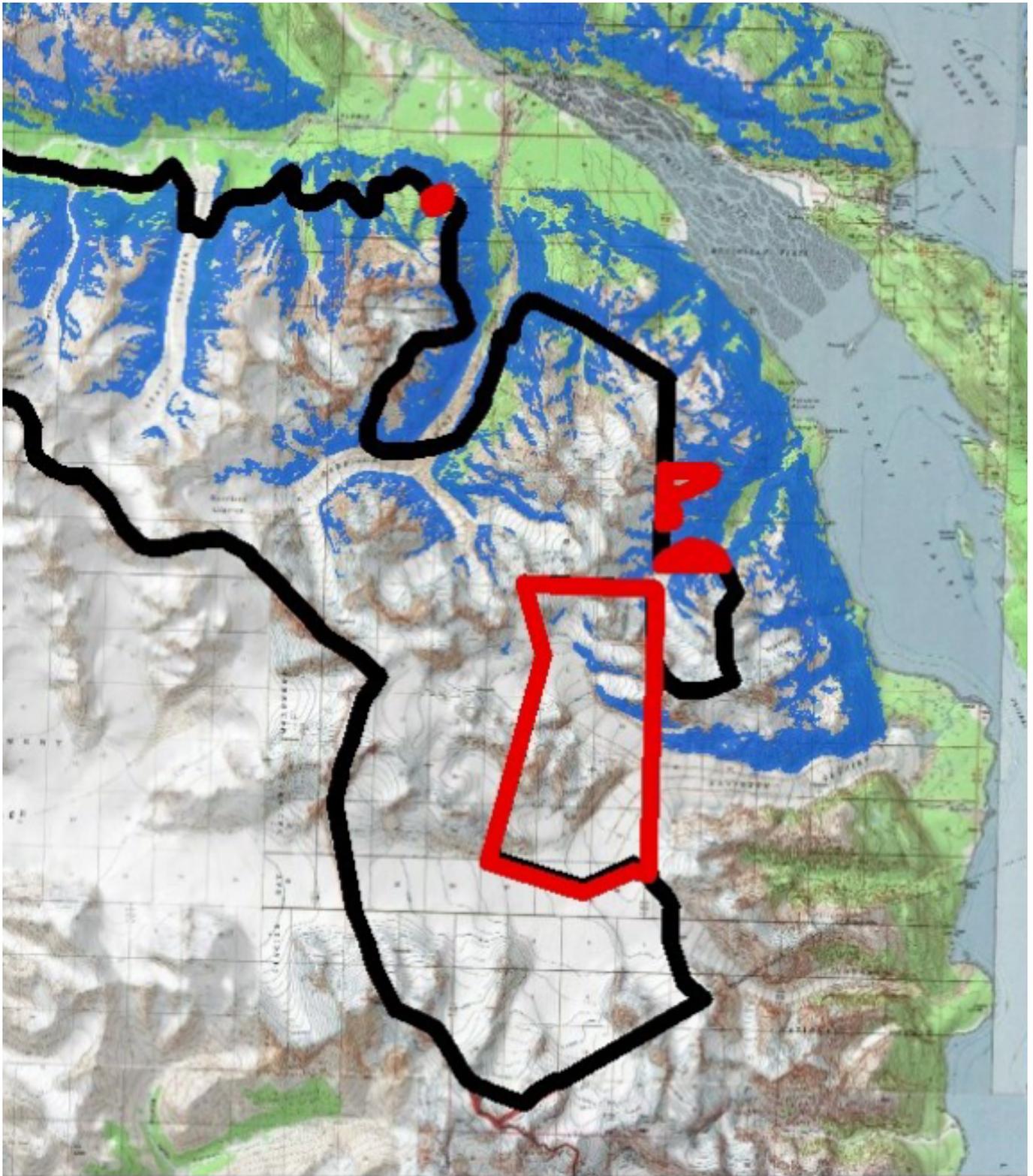
Map Courtesy of ADF&G



Porcupine, Takhin, and Upper Takhinsha Areas and Mountain Goat Winter Habitat Model

(Red polygons are proposed 2018 Borough heliski map changes)

Map Courtesy of ADF&G



Lower Takhinsha Heliski Area and Mountain Goat Winter Habitat Model

(Red polygons are proposed 2018 Borough heliski map changes)

Map Courtesy of ADF&G