



SECTION 3

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction: Section 3

Section 3 describes the environment affected either by renewal of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) Right-of-Way (ROW) or by the no-action alternative. Section 3.1 covers the physical environment, Section 3.2 the biological environment, and Section 3.3 the socio-economic environment.

It is important to note that unlike most projects covered in environmental impact statements, TAPS has been in operation for over 20 years. As a result, the existing environment includes an existing, already constructed and functional pipeline system and related facilities. Consequently, current environmental conditions include the changes caused by construction and operation of TAPS.

Nearly all environmental assessments (EAs), environmental reports (ERs), and or environmental impact statements (EISs) are drafted before the project is built. This was the case for the original TAPS EIS, but for the TAPS renewal, the pipeline system has existed for over 20 years and is now part of the affected environment. The same is true for the ANS oil fields and the marine transportation link. Thus, the affected environment as discussed in Section 3 includes the following three study areas (Figure 3-1):

- Alaska North Slope,
- The pipeline route from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez, and
- The Prince William Sound/North Gulf Coast region.

Numerous EAs, ERs, and EISs have examined various portions of the study areas over the years. Relevant literature includes reports on Alpine (USACE, 1997); Northstar (USACE, 1999); NPR-A (BLM and MMS, 1998); Alaska Natural Gas Transportation System (BLM, 1976); Trans-Alaska Gas System (BLM and USACE, 1988; FERC, 1995); various Beaufort Sea oil and gas lease sale EISs, including Sale 97 (MMS, 1987a); Sale 124 (MMS, 1990); Sale 144 (MMS, 1996a); Sale 170 (MMS, 1998); various Alaska Chukchi Sea oil and gas lease sale EISs, including Sale 109 (MMS, 1987b); Sale 126 (MMS, 1991) and the

original TAPS EIS prepared by the Federal Task Force on Alaskan Oil Development (BLM, 1972).

Relevant material in these and other reports is summarized and updated where appropriate and feasible, and pertinent new material is presented where appropriate.

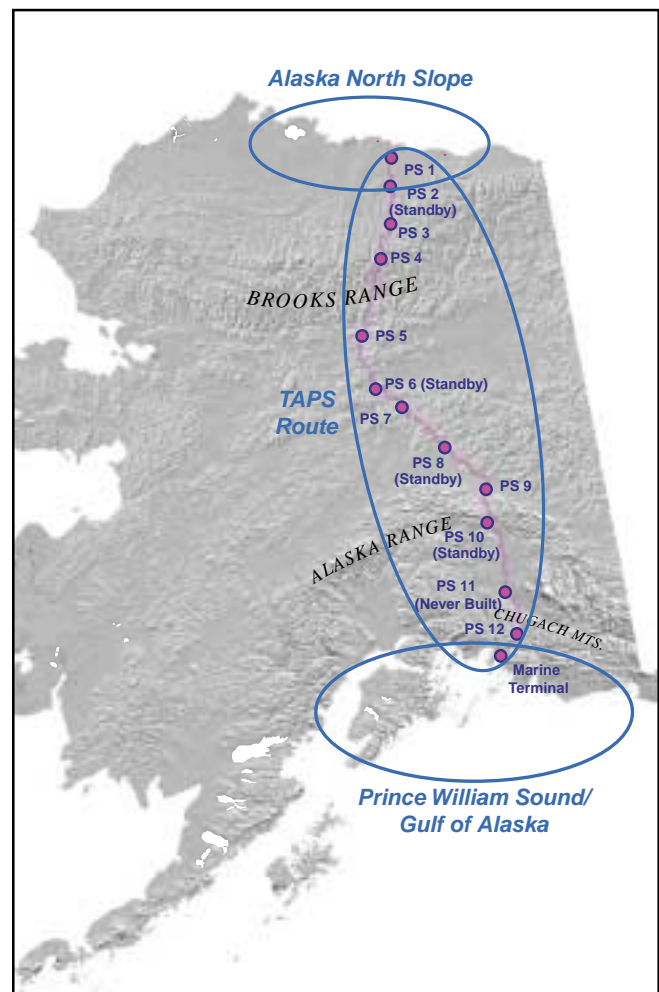


Figure 3-1. General study areas used in preparation of this Environmental Report.