

Area History

The name Chatanika is derived from the Lower Tanana Athabascan name *Dradlaya Nika*, meaning "whitefish river." Native placenames record the geographic significance of this landscape to the Tanana Athabascans.

In 1907, the Tanana Valley Railroad began operating a route from Fairbanks to Chatanika. The town site of Olnes, just southeast of the park, served as a railroad depot and had a general store, hotel, post office, and 300 residents at its peak. Named after Nels Olnes, a Norwegian prospector, the town of Olnes served as a transportation hub for mining areas near Livengood and Tolovana. The town bustled for over a decade, but once the easy gold had been taken, mining communities dwindled. When the railroad finally shut down the Chatanika route in 1930, Olnes quickly became a ghost town. All of its buildings have since been scrapped, dismantled, or burned, the last falling in the early 1990s.



Olnes, photo 1930-1932. Photo courtesy of University of Alaska Fairbanks UAF-2003-63-47



For More Information

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Alaska State Trails Program
www.alaskastatetrails.org

Lower Chatanika River

State Recreation Area

ATV Trail Map

Welcome

Set between the winding banks of the Chatanika River, Lower Chatanika River State Recreation Area (SRA) gives riders a chance to travel a network of trails that explore the forest and riverside. With a mostly flat profile, and only the occasional steep grade, Lower Chatanika River SRA's trails are a great place for beginners to get riding.

Riding

Wildlife Viewing

Hiking

Relaxing

Fishing

Hunting

Canoeing

Camping

Spearfishing

Background photo: Olnes Pond



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Alaska State Parks

Highlights

Camping

Whitefish Campground has eight campsites adjacent to the Chatanika River. If you'd like to camp near Olnes Pond, there are 12 sites around its edge.

Campsites are equipped with fire rings, picnic tables, and nearby water and toilets. These campgrounds have no RV size limit.

Quiet hours are from 11 p.m.-6 a.m., so no midnight rides.

Olnes Pond Campground

Whitefish Campground, in the northern part of the park, can be accessed from the Elliott Highway and offers camping and a boat launch onto the Chatanika River.

Olnes Pond Campground

In the heart of the park, Olnes Pond and its waterside campsites are a great place to cool your heels and cook your dinner after a day of riding, fishing, or fishing and riding.



Camping at Olnes Pond



Blueberries can be found in late summer for a quick snack.

Fishing the Chatanika

This area is a local hot-spot for lake and river fishing. The Chatanika River has Arctic grayling, Arctic lamprey, burbot, chum salmon, humpback whitefish, king salmon, least cisco, longnose sucker, northern pike, sheefish, and slimy sculpins. Olnes Pond has burbot, Arctic grayling, lake chub, longnose sucker, rainbow trout, and whitefish. A boat launch onto the Chatanika River is available at Whitefish Campground. Fans of fishing the oldway take note: Chatanika River has limited openings for spearfishing in fall. Check www.adfg.alaska.gov for regulations and information about local fisheries, before you head out.

Do not ride your ATV in the river. Sediment stirred up by tires is bad for fry, which means less fish for your cooler.



Whitefish spawn in autumn and are most active at night, so back your headlamp or lantern along with your spear and permit.

Pipeline Right-of-Way Access

The Alyeska Pipeline gate and road, south of the park, accesses the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Right-of-Way. Security measures for the areas adjacent the pipeline require you to have a Right-of-way Use Guidelines, or RUG, issued within the past year to access this area. Contact Alyeska Pipeline Security for more information or to apply for a RUG.

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ATV Trailrider Pro-Tips

1. Always wear a helmet -DOT or Snell Certified- and other protective gear.
2. Avoid riding on public roads.
3. Don't ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
4. Never carry a passenger on a single-rider vehicle.
5. Ride an ATV that's right for your size and age.
6. Children under 14 must be supervised while riding ATVs.
7. Proper instruction and practice are important. ATVs can be hazardous to operate.

It's the Law

Children riding ATVs on state park lands must be at least 14 years old, unless they are supervised by an adult.

11AAC 20.951: the use of off-road vehicles is allowed in Lower Chatanika SRA on **designated trails** and in areas **posted as open** to off-road vehicles.



Whitefish Campground

Background photo: Lower Chatanika River

Background photo: Looking down the Alyeska Pipeline.

Access

The Olnes Pond access road is located at milepost 11 of the Elliott Highway. Access to Whitefish Campground is about a quarter mile north at mile 11.2.



Olnes Pond

A Web of Trails

Lower Chatanika River SRA is a great place for ATVs, bikers, and hikers to choose a route and explore the northern boreal forest and the banks of the Chatanika River. The trails extend from Olnes Pond in nearly every direction, toward the meandering Chatanika River. You can make a half-loop from the northern to the southern ends of the pond on the western trails that stick close to the river. Or, you can just explore the trails and see what you find.

Hazardous areas are marked on the map, so choose a route that matches your skill level. Keep in mind that conditions change seasonally and that all hazards may not be noted.

Legend

- Existing Trails
- Steep Grade
- Mud or Trenching
- Proposed Trail Upgrade
- Camping (Tent and RV)
- Toilets
- Drinking Water
- Picnic Shelter
- Hand Boat Launch
- Boat Ramp
- Camp Host
- Information
- Bear-Resistant Trash Can
- Alyeska Security Gate
- Park Boundary

This Green Line Shows the proposed route of trail upgrades. Alaska State Parks plans to establish a loop trail around Olnes Pond as funding becomes available.



You may encounter muddy, rutted trails in highly trafficked areas.



Many trail routes parallel the Chatanika River



Protect Your Park

This area has long been a haven for riders. Please stay on marked and flagged trails to minimize erosion and keep this area healthy enough to support generations of riders. Many social trails crisscross and braid through the area, but using them is not recommended.



Staying on the marked and flagged trail can help prevent erosion like this.

- **Stay on the marked trails to reduce damage to the surrounding area and resources.**
- **Share the trail with other trail users by respecting other types of use and modes of travel, such as hikers and mountain bikers.**
- **Respect private property by staying on the trail easement when crossing private lands.**



Get a Trans-Alaska Pipeline Right-of-way Use Guidelines, or RUG, from Alyeska Pipeline Security before traveling along the pipeline.