

## **Talachulitna River Management Unit**

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# 5. Talachulitna River Management Unit

## Background

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### MILES OF RIVER

This unit includes 64.5 miles of the Talachulitna River and 22 miles of Talachulitna Creek.

### LAND OWNERSHIP

|                           |               |              |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| State                     | 50,258        | acres        |
| Matanuska Susitna Borough | 900           | acres        |
| 23 Private Parcels        | 118           | acres        |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>51,276</b> | <b>acres</b> |

### RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

The Talachulitna River begins in the Beluga Mountains and runs 65 miles to join the Skwentna River. Talachulitna Creek is the main tributary of the Talachulitna River. The lower half-mile of the following major tributaries are also included in the Recreation River: Grayling, Friday, Deep, and Thursday creeks. The management unit also includes about 3 miles of the Skwentna River. Important lakes include Judd, Talachulitna, and Wolf lakes.

The clear water of Talachulitna Creek, good views of the Alaska Range and Beluga Mountain, and the steep-walled canyon of the Talachulitna River make this unit very scenic. The limited number of man-made improvements detract only slightly from the visual character.

### FISHERIES

#### *Species Present*

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Chum Salmon | Sockeye Salmon  |
| Coho Salmon | Arctic Grayling |
| King Salmon | Rainbow Trout   |
| Pink Salmon |                 |

Chum, coho, and pink salmon begin spawning at the mouth, and reach as far up as RM 39, the confluence of Talachulitna Creek and Talachulitna River. Sockeye salmon reach Talachulitna Lake.

King salmon migrate most of the way up the Talachulitna River, and as high as Judd Lake on Talachulitna Creek. Rainbow trout and grayling are found throughout the management unit.

#### *Sport Fishing*

The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on the Talachulitna River correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately June 20 to July 4, and August 1 to August 21, respectively. The more popular fishing areas are the mouth, tributary junctions, the confluence with Talachulitna Creek, and the outlet of Judd Lake.

#### *Special Regulations*

The Talachulitna River is designated as a catch-and-release special management area for rainbow trout. Sport fishing is by unbaited, artificial lure, single hook only.

### DEVELOPMENT

In 1989, eight lodges were operating on the river. Most private cabins and commercial lodges are around Judd Lake, at RM 20, and near the mouth. Water-dependent improvements such as docks, stairs, and storage sheds are associated with most of these lodges and cabins. There is one private airstrip near the mouth.

### WILDLIFE

#### *Moose*

Moose are generally distributed throughout the unit. Fall moose hunting occurs along the upper and middle reaches of the unit. There are significant fall concentrations of moose in the upper reaches of the Talachulitna Creek below Judd Lake. Hunters fly in and float the river to a lower pick-up point.

*Bear*

Guided brown and black bear hunting occurs along the upper river. During the salmon spawning season, black bear concentrate on the Talachulitna River between the confluence with the Skwentna River and Talachulitna Creek.

*Bald Eagles*

There are a few bald eagle nests in the unit. However, eagles are known to roost along the river and feed on salmon when available.

*Trumpeter Swans*

Swans are known to nest within the corridor. Lakes with suitable nesting habitat also occur adjacent to the corridor.

*Hunting*

The Talachulitna River and Creek are important for moose and bear hunting from Judd Lake to the Skwentna River confluence. Most of the hunting occurs from rafts or boats or from tree stands along the river.

*Trapping*

Trapping for otter, muskrat, mink, beaver, fox, coyote, wolf and wolverine occur in the corridor during spring and winter seasons.

**CAMPING**

The Talachulitna River receives mostly overnight use. Undeveloped campsites along the river were inventoried in a survey of the river in 1989 and the number of sites are noted in each subunit. Camps mostly occur at sites identified by the plan as the public use sites on the upper river. Camping is also common at the mouth.

**ACCESS**

The river mouth is accessible to powerboaters traveling up the Skwentna River, and by floatplanes and wheelplanes. The airstrip is in private ownership. ORV use is primarily by private landowners. The middle river is accessible by floatplanes, wheelplanes, and powerboats. Judd Lake supports frequent floatplane traffic associated with lodges and float trips. Small powerboats are also used on the lake. Float trips typically start at Judd Lake and end at RM 19 or at the Skwentna River. Winter travel is limited primarily to local residents because of the area's distance to the railbelt.

## Management Guidelines for the Unit

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### BOATING RESTRICTIONS

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1. *Non-motorized area*      Talachulitna Creek mouth to exit of Judd Lake (RM 0.0 - 17.1)
 

Season:                      June 15 and August 20.

Justification:              This segment is rarely used by powerboaters. This river segment provides high quality float trips. This restriction will protect high quality float trips from future technologies which could allow powerboat access, resulting in conflicts. Restrictions were not proposed for the mouth or the middle portion of the Talachulitna River because of frequent use by powerboats and private property. The Talachulitna River above the forks has no restrictions because it is used infrequently by powerboaters but is inaccessible to floaters.
2. *Non-motorized area*      From the Talachulitna River confluence with Thursday Creek to Hell's Gate (RM 9.0 to 18.0).
 

Season:                      June 15 and August 20.

Justification:              See justification above.