

Unit 15. Lower Mulchatna River Corridor

Background

Land Status. Most of the lower portion of the unit is owned or selected by Koliganek Natives Ltd. Most of the rest of the unit is owned by the state. The Mulchatna River is navigable; the state owns the shorelands. Eight Native allotments are located in the unit.

Miles of River. The main channel of the Mulchatna River extends for 41 miles.

Access. The unit is easily accessible by motorboat, float and wheeled airplanes, and snowmobile. The unit is about a one-hour flight from Iliamna and Dillingham.

Existing Development. Seven cabins are located in this unit. Three sites have been used for commercial camps.

Fisheries. The Mulchatna River serves as a major salmon migration corridor and provides important spawning and rearing habitat for king, chum, and coho salmon.

Subsistence fishing use is moderate for freshwater species and spawning salmon. Sport fishing use is moderate and generally associated with floating activity. There is locally high sport fishing effort at the mouths of the Stuyahok and Koktuli rivers because they provide good fishing and access, and excellent camping and staging opportunities. Anglers target primarily salmon. Commercial recreational use is high and is associated with guided floating, commercial camps in the unit, and fly-in day use. Day use may rely on motorboats stored in the unit.

Wildlife. The unit provides essential winter range for moose and densities are seasonally high. Caribou migrate through the unit and densities are moderate to high. The unit is a waterfowl staging area during spring and fall migrations.

The unit is primarily a travel corridor for all user groups. Subsistence hunting for caribou and moose is high during the fall and winter. Sport hunting use is low but has increased as float trips down the Mulchatna, Stuyahok, and Koktuli rivers to pickup points in this unit have become more popular.

Trails and Easements. The following 17(b) easements are located in this unit: EIN 25 and 25a. (Refer to the maps in the envelope in the back of this document for descriptions of these easements.)

Other Values. Scenic values in the unit are low because of constricted views and low landscape diversity. Floating use is high and originates from drop-offs on the Stuyahok, Koktuli, and upper Mulchatna rivers. Floating use is chiefly unguided and is increasing. The unit is used for trapping by local residents. Four cultural sites are located in the unit, including Stuyahok, the site of the old village located at the mouth of the Stuyahok River, which is especially significant to local residents.

Management Intent

Semi-primitive use experience.

Management Guidelines

Long-term Use (longer than 14 consecutive days at one site)

Permanent facilities	Prohibited.
Temporary facilities	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Trapping cabins	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Boat storage	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Airstrip development	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Docks: permanent	Prohibited.
temporary	May be allowed (case-by-case).
Other uses	May be allowed (case-by-case).

Short-term Use (14 consecutive days or less at one site)

See Short-term Uses (generally allowed uses) in Chapter 2.

Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit

- U15.1 Short-term Uses at the Mouth of the Stuyahok River (Public Use Site 21). Because of high public use, this public use site is designated as a "special use area" under 11 AAC 96.010. In public use sites, short-term uses can take place for 14 consecutive days or less without a permit. In this special use area, allowed short-term uses can take place for 7 consecutive days or less without a permit. Allowed uses that take place for longer than 7 consecutive days are considered long-term uses and require a permit or lease. All other public use site guidelines apply to this special use area (see Chapter 2, Public Use Sites).
- U15.2 Long-term Uses Associated with Mineral/Oil and Gas Activity. For long-term uses associated with mineral and oil and gas exploration and development, see Chapter 2 guideline.
- U15.3 Siting Criteria. Long-term uses will be sited to minimize evidence of human use.

Public Use Sites

See Public Use Sites in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations of sites are shown on maps in Appendix C.

- Site 21 This site is a special use area. See "Other Guidelines Specific to this Unit." Campsite and floatplane landing area on the Mulchatna River at the mouth of the Stuyahok River. There is a pending Native allotment in this site.

Site 22 Campsite and floatplane landing area on the Mulchatna River, 1.5 miles downstream from the mouth of the Kaktuli River.

Site 23 Campsite and floatplane landing area on the Mulchatna River at the mouth of the Kaktuli River.

Recommendations for this Unit

Management of Public Use Sites at the Stuyahok and Kaktuli Rivers: Use of the sandbars at the mouths of the Stuyahok River and Kaktuli River (public use sites # 21 and # 23) for camping, fishing, and waiting for floatplane pickups is steadily increasing. Problems with overcrowding, garbage, and waste are beginning to develop at the mouth of the Stuyahok River. In implementing the recommendations for a monitoring program for the planning area (see Monitoring, Chapter 4), these sites should be assigned a particularly high priority. Possible management actions that should be considered are 1) developing public information materials suggesting alternative sites and recommending measures for keeping the sites clean, 2) developing privies at the sites, and 3) changing the number of days that short-term (generally allowed) uses can occur.