

Chapter 7: Regional Recreation and Visitor Use



REGIONAL RECREATION PREFERENCES

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2004-2009 (SCORP), published by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation in July of 2004 determined that the availability of quality outdoor recreation opportunities is highly valued by Alaskans. The 2004-2009 SCORP contains detailed information about the preferences of railbelt and other Alaskan residents based on an independent survey. The Recreation Area is located within the railbelt. The railbelt includes those urban and rural communities accessible from Alaska's limited road and rail system, generally from the southern end of the Kenai Peninsula, north to Fairbanks and east to the Canadian Border. Survey results applicable to the management and development of the Chena River State Recreation Area follow. Appendix F contains some of the 2004-2009 SCORP results in table format.

The survey found:

1. Fishing, day hiking, bicycling and mountain biking, walking for fitness and sport hunting rank highest for overall favorite outdoor recreation activities for Alaskans. The Recreation Area currently provides opportunities for all these activities, with the potential for increasing and improving facilities, access and trails.
2. The majority of respondents report general satisfaction with outdoor recreation opportunities in their community, and within an hour's travel time (78% and 77% respectively). The Recreation Area falls within the report's findings related to satisfaction for residents in the general Fairbanks area.
3. Driving for pleasure or sightseeing, walking for fitness, day hiking, bird watching or wildlife viewing and picnicking ranked highest for the top participation activities. To meet this demand, the Recreation Area has undergone extensive renovations of pullouts, trails and trailheads, picnic areas and campgrounds.
4. Males participate more often in shooting, golf, ORV riding, court games, power boating, snowmobiling, sport fishing and hunting. Women participate in greater numbers in sledding, swimming, walking for fitness, kayaking, horse riding and back country skiing. The Recreation Area provides opportunities for a number of these activities, but not all.

5. Respondents were asked a series of value statements to determine what kind of facilities or experiences they would like. There was strong to moderate public support for all the proposed park facility improvements and developments. Tables 7-1 and 7-2 compare 1997 and 2004 data showing the percent of statewide support for the most frequently mentioned facility improvements and developments.

Table 7-1: 1997 Support for Facility Improvements and Developments

| TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT | % SUPPORT 1997 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Disabled accessible facilities | 86 |
| Public use cabins | 79 |
| Tent campgrounds | 77 |
| Trailheads along roads | 76 |
| Roadside toilets | 74 |
| Non-motorized trails | 74 |
| Road upgrade (park roads) | 71 |
| Picnic areas | 68 |
| New parks | 67 |
| RV dump stations | 64 |
| Boat launches | 63 |
| Recreation programs | 61 |
| Water/toilets in campgrounds | 59 |
| Off-road-vehicle trails | 56 |
| RV campgrounds | 52 |
| Visitor centers | 49 |
| Tourist facilities | 41 |

Table 7-2: 2004 Support for Facility Improvements and Developments

| TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT | % SUPPORT 2004 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Public use cabins | 77.09 |
| Roadside toilets | 75.88 |
| Trailheads along roads | 75.37 |
| Non-motorized trails | 71.06 |
| New parks | 69.42 |
| Disabled accessible facilities | 63.59 |
| Tent campgrounds | 60.84 |
| Picnic areas | 52.72 |
| Road upgrade (park roads) | 48.91 |
| Off-road-vehicle trails | 47.29 |
| Boat launches | 47.02 |
| RV dump stations | 43.15 |
| Water/toilets in campgrounds | 37.33 |
| RV campgrounds | 35.38 |
| Recreation programs | 34.42 |
| Visitor centers | 29.33 |
| Tourist facilities | 23.75 |

Despite strong support for the facilities and improvements mentioned above, when presented with the choice of using limited funds for facility development or maintenance, 78 percent of respondents favored maintaining current facilities.

6. Railbelt community outdoor recreation providers throughout the state were asked to rank in order of importance the outdoor recreation needs in their communities and regions. The top two needs over time have remained consistent: facilities and maintenance. Table 7-3 summarizes these results.

Table 7-3: Ranking of Community Outdoor Recreation Needs for Railbelt

| Need | 1992 | 1997 | 2004 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| Facilities | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maintenance | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Access | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Land | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Programs | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Other | 3 | 6 | 6 |

7. Most significant barriers to outdoor recreation are the chronic lack of funding for outdoor recreation facility maintenance and development, supervised programs, the shortage of land suitable or available for development and a lack of connecting trails.

REGIONAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND PROVIDERS

Designated, developed recreation areas or facilities are limited in the Fairbanks/Chena region. Providers are the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB), the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and a few private facilities (Map 7-1).

Approximately two-thirds of the land in the Fairbanks/Chena region is in state ownership with the majority of the remaining lands in federal ownership. Most of these lands are currently open to dispersed recreation wherever there is access, but this pattern is shifting and recreational opportunities will continue to be lost or displaced as public land goes into private ownership. Another significant provider of land for recreation is the Fort Wainwright military training land south of the Recreation Area. Access for recreation is allowed as long as it doesn't interfere with military training. The area receives high recreational use from the adjacent Eielson Air Force base and the community of North Pole due to its road and trail network. Appendix C lists recreation regulations on military lands.

Destinations with Facilities

On a regional scale, there are three federally managed recreation areas within a half-day drive of Fairbanks. Denali National Park and Preserve offers internationally renowned scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities as well as privately managed overnight facilities. The White Mountains National Recreation Area and Steese National Conservation Area offer a variety of year-round recreation opportunities including campgrounds, trails and public-use cabins. Beaver Creek and Birch Creek National Wild and Scenic Rivers are located within these areas.

MAP 7-1: REGIONAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Some of the more developed outdoor recreational opportunities within one hour's drive of Fairbanks are the Upper Chatanika State Recreation Site, Harding Lake State Recreation Area, Salcha River State Recreation Site, BLM's campground at Cripple Creek and trailhead access to the White Mountains National Recreation Area.

Within one-half hour drive of Fairbanks are the Lower Chatanika State Recreation Area, three areas managed by the borough: the Birch Hill Recreation Area that provides a Nordic ski complex and 32 kilometers of ski trails, the Heritage Forest in North Pole and Two Rivers Recreation Area.

Also, within a half-hour drive, the borough manages the very popular Chena Lakes Recreation Area. The area provides 78 campsites, 92 picnic sites, 3 group shelters, 2 boat launches, swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing areas and a trail network including a 2.5-mile nature trail. Chena Lakes Recreation Area also receives extensive winter use including cross-country skiing, skijoring and ice fishing. The table below shows the visitor count for the Chena Lakes Recreation Area in the summer (May through September). Other borough visitation studies show that winter recreation is as popular as summer recreation in the Chena Lakes Recreation Area.

Table 7-4: Summer Visitation Counts for the Chena Lakes Recreation Area

| Year | Number of Visitors |
|------|--------------------|
| 2000 | 40,980 |
| 2001 | 42,094 |
| 2002 | 41,675 |
| 2003 | 42,485 |

Within, or closely adjacent to, the Fairbanks metropolitan area are a state campground (Chena River State Recreation Site) and many urban parks, trails, paths and bike trails maintained by various agencies (the city, borough, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Department of Fish and Game, the School District and the University of Alaska). There are also several privately operated campgrounds. Also available in the city of Fairbanks are indoor recreation facilities and a full range of commercial facilities that support recreation.

Trails

Trail uses in the region are many and varied. Trails are used recreationally in many different ways, including hiking, jogging, backpacking, wildlife and nature viewing, horseback riding, biking, off-road vehicles, hunting, fishing access, trapping, snow machining, snowshoeing, dog sledding, skijoring, cross-country skiing, access to rock climbing, cabin access, races and group outings. Non-recreational and commercial uses of trails include mining access, research access and guided trips.

Trail use in the region has increased dramatically in the last two decades and is expected to continue increasing in the future.

Trails are numerous and heavily used along the Fairbanks to Chena River Corridor and in many locations throughout the area. Of the 60 trails identified in the Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan, nine of them are in the Chena River State Recreation Area: Chena Dome, Granite Tors, Colorado Creek, Stiles Creek and Connector, Angel Rocks and Connector, Angel Creek, East Fork, South Fork and the historic Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail. There is an extensive existing trail network between Fairbanks and the Recreation Area that, if protected, could provide permanent connections to the trails within the Recreation Area.

Trails within the Tanana Valley State Forest, BLM Recreation and Conservation areas and the military lands in the region, though not specifically designated in the FNSB Trail Plan, are important for recreation. The military land south of the Recreation Area contains approximately 125-miles of trails, which are used occasionally by hunters and fishermen.

One of the most heavily used trails is the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail, which includes a portion of the Yukon Quest race route. Due to its regional significance, the Tanana Basin Area Plan also recommends the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail for legislative designation as a State Trail.

All other trails in the region, no matter how heavily or continuously used, are subject to interruption or loss due to land use changes and development of private and agricultural lands.

Rivers

Of the many rivers accessible and utilized by recreationists in the Fairbanks region, only two outside the Recreation Area are designated and protected for recreation use; Beaver Creek National Wild River and Birch Creek National Wild River which are both part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. Along with the Chena River, other rivers in the region that receive heavy use include the Tanana, Salcha and Chatanika rivers.

Hunting

Hunting is an important seasonal recreational and lifestyle activity for residents and visitors alike and occurs on public lands around and within the Recreation Area. The BLM, DNR, the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the Military manage public lands around the Recreation Area where hunting is allowed. Significant acreages of state lands are open to hunting, especially north of the Recreation Area, and may be affected by future land disposals and private development of lands.

The Recreation Area provides many hunting opportunities for people residing in the greater Fairbanks area. Most hunting occurs during September when hunters use the rivers, trails and road system extensively. An average of 5-12 bull moose are harvested each year from the Recreation Area. Small game hunting, especially grouse hunting, is also popular in the Recreation Area. Waterfowl hunters set out decoys and jump shoot ducks from the river and area ponds.

Hunting also occurs in the spring and winter. Spring black bear hunting is popular. Approximately 30 bait stations in the Recreation Area are registered annually by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Snowshoe hare hunting and predator calling are enjoyed during the winter.

Fishing

Fishing is a popular activity for residents and visitors in the Fairbanks/Chena area. Fishing access and facilities in the region are often sponsored by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and Alaska State Parks.

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game statistics for 1996-2000 show that the upper Chena River received an average of 13,000 angler days a year, about 12 percent of the effort expended in the Fairbanks area, which is included in the Lower Tanana Management Area. This, combined with the effort expended on the lower river, makes it the most frequently used river in the interior. While the fishery in the lower river targets a mix of species, of which chinook salmon is an important component, the fishery in the Recreation Area is almost entirely directed toward grayling. The Chena River five-year-average annual grayling catch for 1996-2000 was about 45,000 fish, 30 percent of the total grayling catch for the Fairbanks area. Harvesting of grayling in the Recreation Area is illegal. To protect the health of the fishery, they are managed under a catch-and-release program.

The Salcha River, 50 miles to the south, has a fishery resource of comparable quality to the Chena River, but is less accessible. North of Fairbanks, another popular fishery is the Chatanika River, which is accessible from the Steese and Elliott highways. Grayling, chinook salmon, sheefish and whitefish are taken.

Stocked lakes within an hour's drive of Fairbanks include Chena Lakes, Birch, Harding, Little Harding and Lost lakes and several smaller ponds and gravel pits. These waters are stocked with rainbow trout, landlocked salmon, Arctic char and grayling. A single stream system, Piledriver Slough near Eielson Air Force Base, is stocked with rainbow trout.

CHENA RIVER STATE RECREATION AREA RECREATIONAL PREFERENCES

A study published late in 2006, titled "Effects of Military Overflights on Human Users of Selected Alaska Military Operations Areas" compiled survey information on recreationists visiting the Recreation Area. While the study focused on encounters with military overflights and their related impacts on recreationists, valid information was obtained in the process regarding visitation and activities performed by the visitors. The study used a combination of on-site/mail survey, qualitative interviews and a telephone survey completed during May 31 through August 31, 2001. Over 1,000 individuals participated in the study. It should be noted that data collection occurred during the weekdays as the study was interested in collecting data during military air operations. Significantly more local resident activity takes place during the weekend, so data may not directly reflect local resident information.

Demographic data obtained through the questionnaires and the contact interviews provide insight into the make-up of the individuals visiting the Recreation Area. See Appendix G for more information.

Two-thirds of respondents were male (67.5%) compared with one-third female respondents. Almost half (46.7%) of respondents reported a party size of two with approximately 15 percent reporting a party size of one, three or four. Thirty percent of respondents reported having at least one person under the age of 18 in their party. Respondents to the survey were fairly equally distributed by ages as depicted in Table 7-5.

Table 7-5: Age of Chena River State Recreation Area Respondents

| Age | Percentage |
|------------|------------|
| 60 or more | 18.8% |
| 50-59 | 24.7% |
| 40-49 | 22.8% |
| 30-39 | 21.6% |
| 20-29 | 12.0% |

Information was also gathered on the number of trips made to the Recreation Area in the last three years. Results are listed below in Tables 7-6 and 7-7.

Table 7-6: Number of Trips Respondents Made to Chena River SRA in Last Three Years

| | |
|------------|-------|
| 20 or more | 9.3% |
| 10 to 19 | 12.5% |
| 4 to 9 | 14.1% |
| 3 | 6.4% |
| 2 | 8.0% |
| 1 | 49.5% |

Table 7-7: Number of Trips Local Alaskan Respondents Made to Chena River SRA in Last Three Years

| | |
|------------|-------|
| 20 or more | 23.0% |
| 15 to 19 | 10.7% |
| 10 to 14 | 18.9% |
| 5 to 9 | 22.1% |
| 4 | 3.3% |
| 3 | 11.5% |
| 2 | 5.7% |
| 1 | 4.9% |

Survey results applicable to the management of the Recreation Area are described below. Appendix G contains a selection of other results of the study in table format.

The surveys also found:

1. About 40 percent of visitors lived within a 100-mile radius of the Recreation Area and about 40% were non-Alaskan U.S. residents. There were smaller percentages of non-local Alaskan residents (13.7%) and foreign residents (5.2%). Almost half of the parties visiting consisted of two people and 30% of the parties had people under the age of 18.
2. Local Alaskans made an average of 14.3 trips to the Recreation Area in the past three years compared to less than two trips for respondents who lived elsewhere. These findings indicate that some local residents make heavy use of the area.

3. The average trip length was about one day, and more than half of visitors stopped at only one specified location (e.g. campground, trail, public use cabin). For 39% of the visitors, their visit to Recreation Area consisted of driving through it without stopping until they reached Chena Hot Springs to the east of the Recreation Area.

4. The most common activities while visiting were driving around viewing scenery (62%), viewing wildlife (58%), taking photos (57%) and walking/hiking (56%).

Other activities respondents engaged in are shown in Table 7-8 below.

Table 7-8: Activities Respondents Engaged in at Chena River SRA

| Activity | Percent Engaged |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Drove around viewing scenery | 61.8% |
| Viewed wildlife | 57.8% |
| Took Photographs | 56.9% |
| Took walks or hikes | 56.0% |
| Went swimming/soaking in hot springs | 45.9% |
| Viewed wildflowers | 42.2% |
| Camped overnight in campground | 21.7% |
| Had a picnic | 21.4% |
| Fished | 19.6% |
| Picked berries | 10.1% |
| Went kayaking or canoeing | 7.6% |
| Shot targets | 4.3% |
| Camped overnight while backpacking | 3.4% |
| Rode all terrain vehicles | 3.4% |
| Rode mountain bikes | 2.8% |
| Stayed at the State Cabins | 2.1% |
| Other activities | 13.1% |

5. Almost 75% of visitors were motivated to “get away from the usual demands of life”, 69% were motivated to “experience tranquility” and 65% cited “doing something with family.”

Another visitor survey was conducted by telephone in Spring of 2006 by the University of Alaska Outdoor Recreation Management class, under direction of Dr. Peter Fix. From a random sample of 2,000 Fairbanks North Star Borough residents, they interviewed 483 individuals over 18 years of age in a statistically representative telephone survey to determine for those who had visited in the past 12 months:

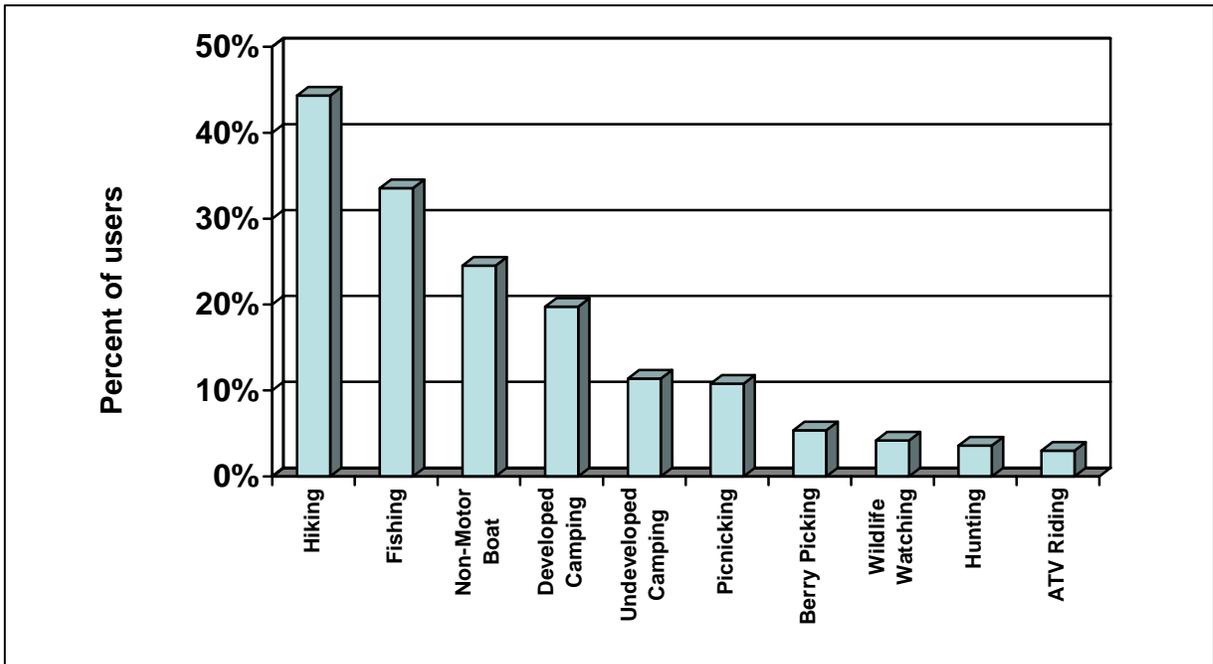
- frequency of use of the Recreation Area and activities in which respondents participate,
- reasons for visiting or engaging in respondents’ favorite activity,
- factors that contribute positively or negatively to the respondents’ experience in the Recreation Area, and
- for those who had not visited the Recreation Area, what were some of the reasons.

Overall, the survey results were consistent with those of the SCORP and of the earlier survey by the University (Girud 1999). Hiking and fishing were the most frequent activities in the summer, with skiing and snow machining the most frequent in the winter. Enjoying nature and spending time with family were the primary reasons for visiting the Chena River

SRA. The primary reason that people did not visit was a simple lack of time in their busy lives. Negative impacts associated with facilities, fees, service, resource conditions, and encounters with others were not salient among most respondents.

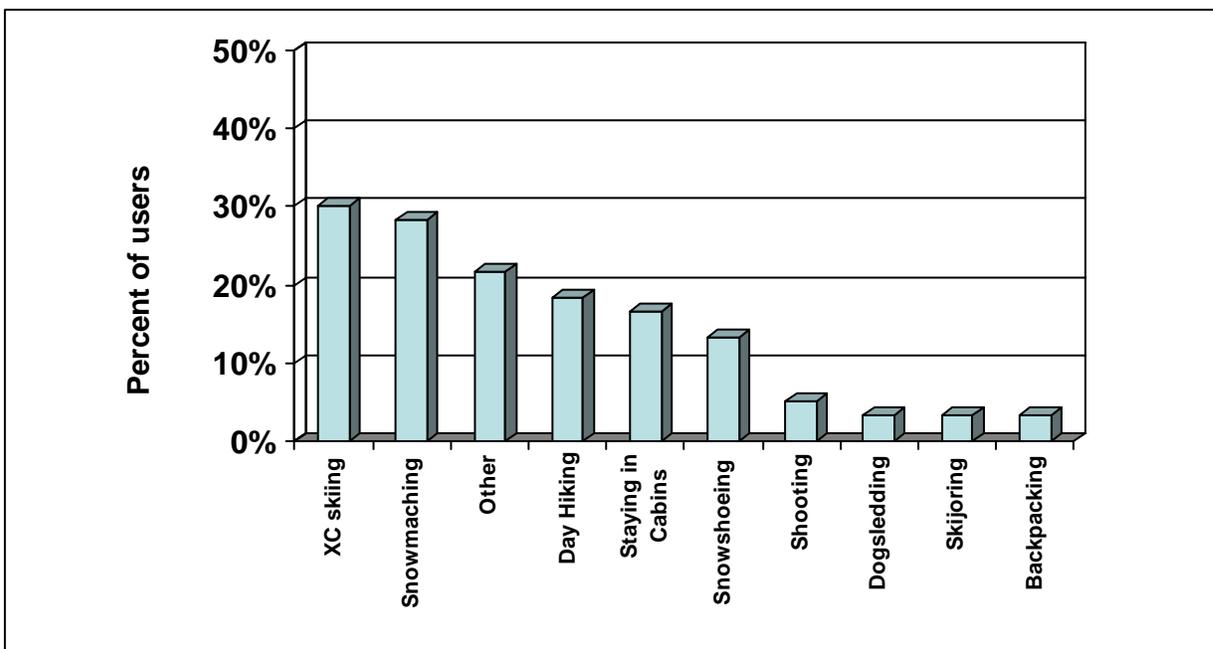
There were 172 respondents who answered questions on factors affecting their visitation experience. Encounters with other visitors were positive 47% and negative 8% of the time, whereas experiences with resource conditions were positive 73% and negative 5% of the time (remaining encounters neither positive nor negative). Experience based on services/employees, fee structures, and facilities were also far more positive than negative. Six usable responses were obtained from a follow up question regarding negative impacts associated with resource conditions; there were 8 usable responses to a follow up question to negative encounters. Diminished recall of positive or negative experiences may vary among people and can affect subsequent characterization of past events. This survey may be replicated at a future date to assess trends in use patterns and levels of satisfaction.

Figure 7-1: Popular Activities During the Summer in the CRSRA.



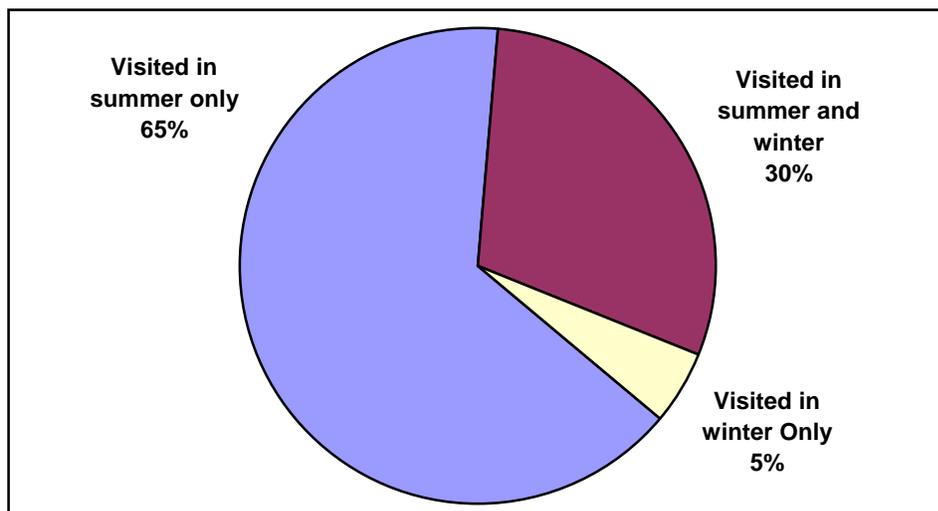
n = 167

Figure 7-2: Popular Activities During the Winter in the CRSRA.



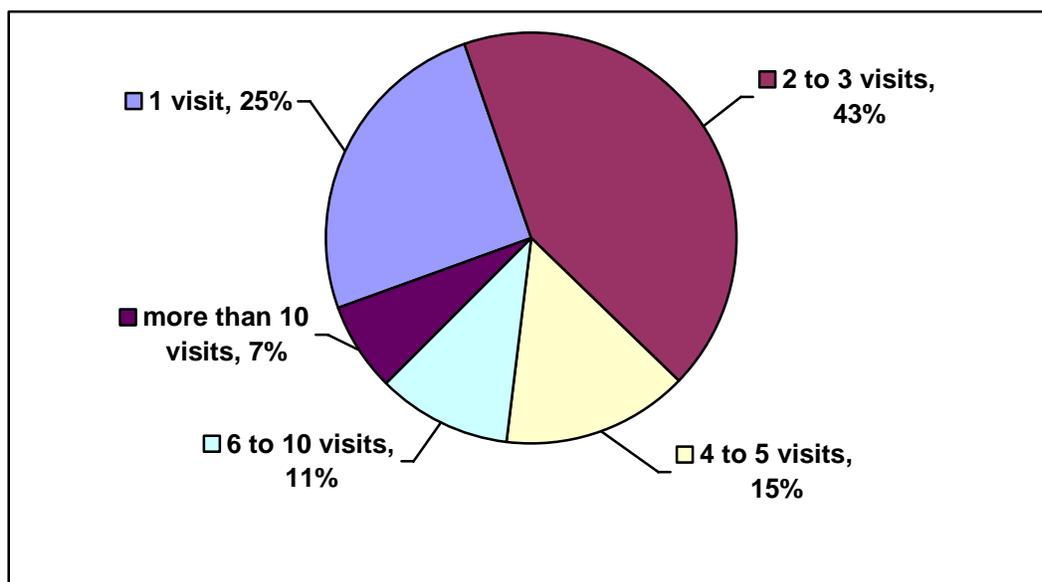
n = 60

Figure 7-3: CRSRA Visitation Patterns of Fairbanks North Star Borough Residents



n = 175

Figure 7-4: Frequency of Visitation in CRSRA During Summer

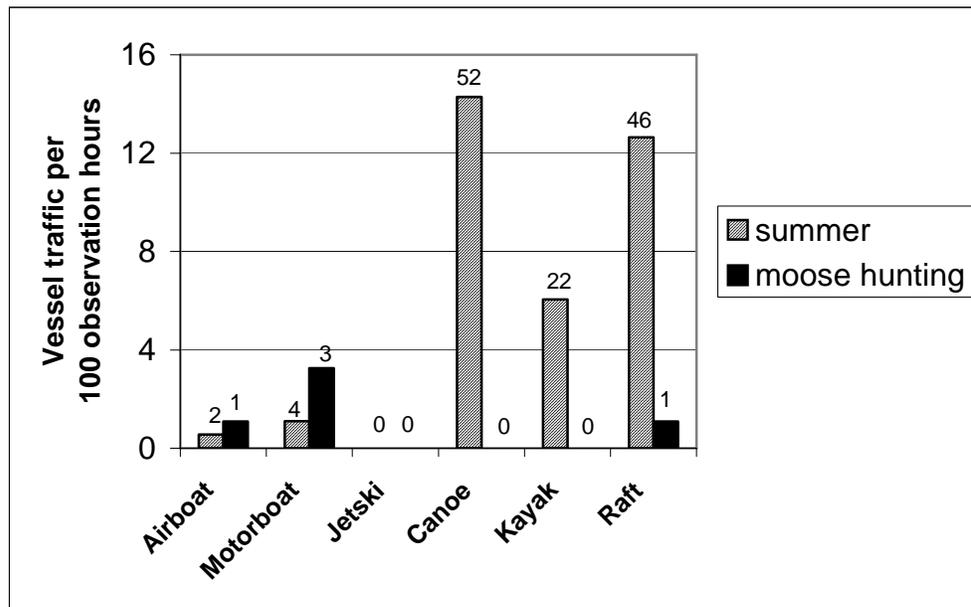


n=167

Additionally, the survey found that 28 percent (adjusted for non-response rate) of borough residents had visited the Chena River SRA during the past 12 months, 50 percent had visited previously, and 21 percent had never visited. The survey was designed to be repeated again in the future to identify trends and changes in visitation and use preferences that may influence management actions.

During the public review process for the management plan, questions were raised about extent of river use and potential conflicts between user groups. The Citizen Advisory Board for Alaska State Parks, Northern Area, designed a pilot study to quantify vessel traffic in 2004 and 2005 on the upper Chena River. Sampling was stratified by week, by randomly chosen daily observation periods, and by summer vs. hunting season (Table 1). The effect of sampling period and week stratum on vessel counts was evaluated by use of contingency tables, which statistically compare counts among different categories. In both years motorized traffic was much lower than non-motorized traffic over all periods of sampling (Fig. 7-5).

Figure 7-5: Comparison of Traffic Rate Between Motorized and Non-motorized Vessels During the Period of May 14th to September 25th 2005, Upper Chena River.



Because of unequal sampling efforts between summer (91 periods) and moose hunting season (23 periods), counts are standardized by hours of observation for comparison. Actual counts are shown above the bars.

CHENA RIVER STATE RECREATION AREA OPPORTUNITIES

Summer

Visitor use of the Recreation Area centers predominately in the first 13 miles of the road corridor (Milepost 27 - Milepost 40). This stretch is closest to Fairbanks and has the best developed access and facilities. The most popular activities are pleasure driving, fishing and use of the river gravel bars for camping, picnicking and socializing.

The following developed facilities receive heavy public use: Rosehip Campground (Milepost 27), Tors Trail Campground and day use/trailhead parking area at the second bridge (Milepost 39.6) and the smaller Red Squirrel Campground at Milepost 42.8.

Parking for trailhead access is available at Colorado Creek, Stiles Creek, Tors Trail, Angel Rocks Trail, Lower Chena Dome and Upper Chena Dome, which coincides with Angel Creek Valley Trail.

The undeveloped gravel bars in the Recreation Area are also heavily used because they are sunny, adjacent to water, generally more free of mosquitoes and have a good surface for vehicle parking and camping. Other areas along the road corridor that receive fairly heavy use are the access roads and pull-offs for fishing and roadside hunting. Scenic views and wildlife viewing occur at several locations along the road corridor.

Fishermen heavily utilize both sides of the main river and some venture up the tributary streams. Three ponds (former gravel pits) are stocked by ADF&G to provide fishing opportunity, often in conjunction with camping and picnicking at Milepost 30, 45.5 and 48. Some fishing occurs in the natural sloughs along the road corridor, though wild stock fish populations occupying these habitats are not as abundant as in the main river.

The main river is also used for river floating, especially the stretch downriver from Third Bridge at Milepost 44.1. Some motorized boaters put in on the main river from the access road at Milepost 27.9, motor up the South Fork and then float back down. Very occasionally the South Fork is used by river paddlers who put in from the military roads near Beaver Creek and float down to the main river. The East Fork of the Chena receives occasional use, with launches from gravel bars near Third Bridge, or fly-in to Van Curler's bar to start the float trip. Airboats find this route suitable for accessing the high country beyond the Recreation Area boundary.

Generally, visitors do not swim in the river because of the cold water, but sometimes the warmer surface waters of the ponds in the area attract swimmers and waders. Swimming occurs in the ponds with developed parking and other facilities at Mileposts 30.0, 36.4, 42.8, 45.5 and 48.0.

Of the backcountry trails, three stand out as the most popular summer hiking trails: Angel Rocks, Granite Tors and Chena Dome (Map 7.2). The most heavily used trail, perhaps in all of interior Alaska, is the Angel Rocks Trail. The loop trail provides a short half-day hike to a few of the large tors, dominant geologic features visible from the road near Angel Creek. In 2001, to accommodate the increasing use, the trailhead received a major upgrade with expanded parking, new toilets, interpretive displays and picnic area. In 2004, the trail was hardened and widened and a boardwalk was added around a low, wet section. In summer 1999, the estimated trail visitation was 2,500 users and in summer 2002 visitation was over 4,000. Another trail connects to the loop trail as it nears the ridge and continues another five miles to Chena Hot Springs Resort. These routes are used mostly from May through October. The trail is non-motorized up to the border of the Recreation Area. A trail shelter near that point offers protection from the weather that can change quickly in the high country. A motorized winter trail connects from the trail shelter to the East Fork Trail, making a 25-mile loop trail to the Hot Springs.

The Granite Tors Trail is another one of the most heavily used, leading hikers on a 15-mile loop trail up into the high ridges on which the tors are scattered. Though the use level is difficult to monitor or quantify, rough estimates indicate over 4,000 visitor days per year on this trail. A small percentage of this use is by cross-country skiers or snowshoers in the

spring, the rest is summer hiking and backpacking. This trail is partially board-walked and is closed to horseback use. A trail shelter near the ridge provides emergency cover for those caught by inclement weather. In 2001, the trailhead parking area near the campground was rebuilt and expanded with new toilets, picnic sites and interpretive displays. In 2004, a trail upgrade project is planned to add a shorter loop trail and replace the old boardwalk.

The upper parts of the Chena Dome Trail, the highest and most rugged of the three main trails, receive light to moderate hiking use and occasional use by hunters in the fall. The trail is a 30-mile "horseshoe" loop, with two trailheads separated by about 2 road miles. Visitors hiking in from the trailheads at Milepost 49.4 or 50.5 to the first lookout point frequently use the lower two miles. A trail shelter also exists near the ridge on the lower Dome side, and frequently placed rock cairns are used to guide hikers on the trail in poor weather conditions.

Stiles Creek Trail is popular to both motorized and non-motorized users, in part because it offers a public use cabin halfway along the 12-mile trail for use by reservation. A relatively new hiking and ORV trail leaves from the Twin Bears Camp and heads up to the top of the hill behind camp, about a 3-mile round trip. Colorado Creek and the South Fork and East Fork valleys are very wet, have no developed summer access and receive little or no summer use at present.

Winter

Winter conditions create expanded opportunities for trail use in the Recreation Area. The valley bottomlands, too wet for summer use, become ideal for winter trails with frozen ground and snow cover. A few drainages, particularly Angel Creek and Colorado Creek, may have extensive ice glaciating in the creek bed, which makes trail use very challenging.

Trail use in the winter centers mainly around the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail, which parallels the entire length of the road. The trail is a main thoroughfare of travel for snowmachiners, dog mushers and others. Dog mushers heavily use this trail for recreation and training for race competition. It is also used for several dogsled races. Currently it is used as a portion of the annual "Yukon Quest" 1,000-mile dogsled race (between Fairbanks and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory), the Junior Yukon Quest and medium distance dog races. This trail is especially versatile because it is long, it connects with trails extending beyond the park, and it has many access points from the road.

In addition to snow machining and dog sledding, cross-country skiing, skijoring and mountain biking also occur on the winter trail, with many trail users venturing up side trails. Several developed trails continue into the backcountry, and are used primarily to access public use cabins and by those adventuring away from the road. These trails include Stiles Creek, Colorado Creek, Angel Creek, East Fork and the South Fork trails. The five mile cross-country ski trail loop behind Twin Bears Camp is also used. There is increasing use of the Granite Tors Trail during the warmer days of spring.

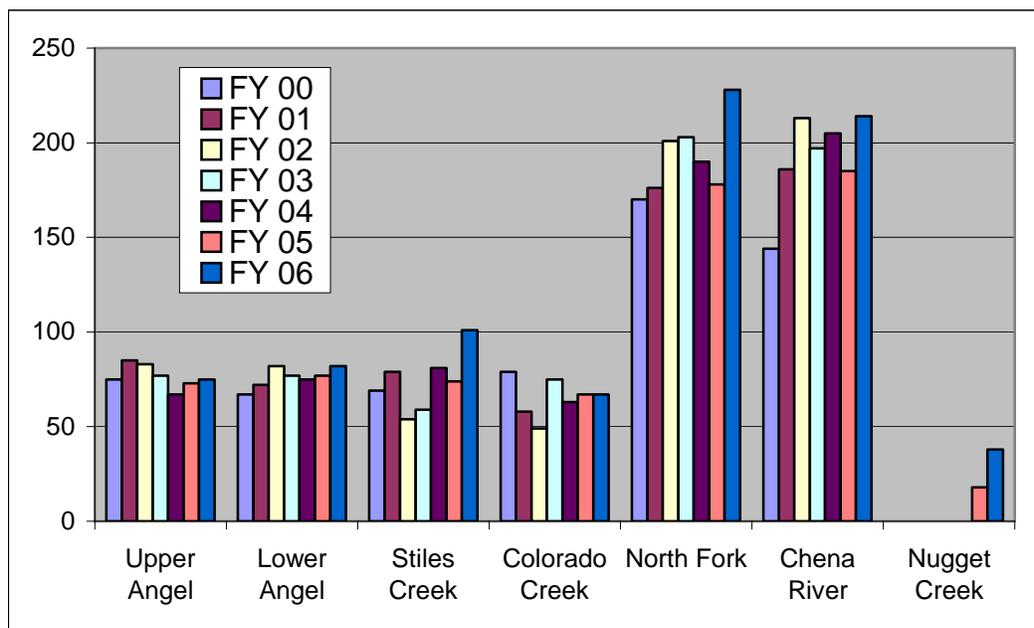
The East Fork Trail is also used non-recreationally in early spring, on a permit basis, by miners for access to placer mines beyond the east boundary of the Recreation Area. This use requires monitoring to ensure protection of natural resources.

Trapping is another winter activity that occurs throughout the Recreation Area. Beaver trapping in the spring is heavy along the road corridor and major tributaries. Upland furbearers (marten, fox, lynx, wolverine, wolf) are trapped throughout the Recreation Area during season. Several trap lines originate in the Recreation Area and extend for many miles beyond the boundaries.

The ponds are occasionally used for ice-skating when weather conditions are favorable, and are also used for ice fishing.

Public use cabins within the Recreation Area have continued to grow in popularity since 1984. There are six public use cabins (two-roadside accessible, four-backcountry) available by reservation. Four shelters are also provided in the Recreation Area. Shelters are used for emergency and first-come first-serve use. Figure 7-1 shows each cabin and shelter location. The Nugget Creek cabin became available for rent, rather than just as an emergency shelter, once trail signing and maintenance started in 2004.

Figure 7-6: Public Use Cabins (Nights Used From FY 2000 to FY 2006)



EXISTING FACILITIES

The existing facilities are listed here by Milepost location from Fairbanks along the Chena Hot Springs Road and on the right (R) or left (L) coming from town. Table 7-9 identifies current facility development (Map 7-2).

Table 7-9: Existing Facilities

| Location Mile Post | Name | Facilities | Unit |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 26.0 | SRA Boundary | Chena River State Recreation Area Highway Sign | 1 |
| 26.7 L | Chena Hot Springs Winter Trailhead | Parking area with 12 pull-through parking spaces, 22 regular parking spaces, a loading ramp, a bulletin board, and a connector trail to the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail. The Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail runs almost parallel to the Chena Hot Springs Road for 26.5-miles and continues past the Recreation Area's boundary and has multiple access points within the Recreation Area. | 1 |
| 26.7 R | Flat Creek Slough | Dispersed parking for approximately six vehicles. | 1 |
| 27.0 R | Rosehip Entrance Area | Parking with a vehicle capacity of 10, a vaulted toilet, bear-resistant trash receptacles, interpretive and informational displays, and a 24'x30' pad for a visitor station. | 1 |
| 27.0 R | Rosehip Campground | 36 campsites; each having a picnic table, fire grate, bench, parking, and tent pad. Also in campground are vaulted toilets, bear-resistant trash receptacles, water well and a camp host site. A picnic area includes picnic tables, interpretive displays, a self guided nature trail, canoe take-out, bear-resistant trash receptacles and a vaulted toilet. | 1 |
| 27.9 R | Access Road | A 0.6-mile river access road with a toilet and picnic table. | 1 |
| 28.2 L | Slough Lake | Dispersed parking for approximately three vehicles. | 1 |
| 28.6 R | Access Road | A 0.6-mile river access road. | 1 |
| 29.2 L | Pull-off with Wildlife Viewing Potential | Other possible wildlife viewing sites are located at MP 27.8, 28.2, 29.4, 38.8, 39.1, 41.6, 42.0, 42.8, 42.9, 46.0, 46.7 and 49.9. | |
| 29.4 R | Hodgins Slough | Dispersed parking. | 1 |
| 29.9 L | Undeveloped Trailhead | Undeveloped Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail access point and trailhead for Twin Bears Mountain Trail and the Compeau Trail. | |
| 30.0 L | Twin Bears Camp | Twin Bears Camp includes 13 primitive cabins, 3 insulated buildings (a recreation hall, a dining hall and a cabin); 4 vaulted toilets, pressurized water, laundry facilities, 2 shower houses, an electric generator, a camp host site, group fire ring, and 3 trailheads. | 1 |
| 30.0 L | Twin Bears Pond | Picnic area with a picnic shelter, bear-resistant trash receptacles, picnic tables, storage shed, and parking. The 4-acre pond is stocked by ADF&G with Rainbow Trout and Arctic Grayling, and is suitable for swimming, fishing, and non-motorized boating. | 1 |

| Location Mile Post | Name | Facilities | Unit |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 31.4 R | Access Road | A 0.2-mile river access road with dispersed parking for approximately ten vehicles and dispersed camping. | 1 |
| 31.6 L | Trailhead for Colorado Creek, Stiles Creek, South Fork, and Chena Hot Springs Winter trails. | <i>Trailhead</i> includes parking area for six vehicles, loading ramp, toilet, horse hitching rail, information board, water well, and a bear-resistant trash receptacle. <i>Colorado Creek Trail</i> is a motorized 5.8-mile destination to the Colorado Creek Cabin (sleeps four). <i>Stiles Creek Trail</i> is a motorized 17-mile loop trail with another trailhead at 36.4-mile. The Stiles Creek Cabin is located approximately 8.0 miles on the Stiles Creek Trail from this trailhead and sleeps six. <i>The South Fork Trail</i> is located in Unit 6. The Nugget Creek Cabin is located approximately 6.2 miles from the trailhead and sleeps three. <i>The Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail</i> can be reached from this trailhead. | 1 |
| 32.2 R | Chena River Public Use Cabin | The Chena River Cabin is road and river accessible, located 0.1-miles off Chena Hot Springs Road, and is gated. This cabin sleeps nine and is located next to the Chena River, with handicap ramps to the cabin and outhouse, with a firewood shed. | 1 |
| 33.0 L | Maintenance Compound | Access road to the compound is gated. Four volunteer housing cabins, pressurized water well, generator, dining hall, garage, washhouse and a recreation host site are within the compound. | 1 |
| 36.0 R | Granite Tors Viewpoint | Parking with a vehicle capacity of six, and interpretive displays on vegetation and the Granite Tors. | 1 |
| 36.4 L | Target Shooting Range, Pond and Stiles Creek Trailhead | <i>Target Shooting Range</i> has 3 benches, refuse container, and vaulted toilet. Dispersed camping at pond. <i>Trailhead</i> for Stiles Creek and Chena Hot Springs Winter trails. | 1 |
| 36.4 R | Mist Creek Trail | The beginning of a low-standard trail that connects to the South Fork Trail near Nugget Creek Shelter; river crossing is required. | 1, 5 & 6 |
| 37.7 R | First Bridge | Dispersed parking is available, gravel bar camping, river access, opportunities for fishing, and informational display. | 1 |
| 37.7 L | First Bridge | Some dispersed parking, river access, opportunities for fishing, and informational display. | 1 |
| 38.2 L | 37-Mile Levee | Dispersed parking is available, four picnic tables, four fire rings, river access, and opportunities for fishing and dispersed camping. | 1 |
| 39.4 | Second Bridge | <i>Granite Tors Trail</i> trailhead departs from the west end of the bridge; requires crossing the highway on a curve and climbing over the guardrail. | |
| 39.5 L | Tors Trail Campground and Granite Tors Trailhead | 24 campsites; each having a picnic table, fire grate, parking, and tent pad. Also in campground are vaulted toilets, bear-resistant trash receptacles, water well, and a camp host site. The picnic area includes picnic tables, interpretive displays, opportunities for fishing, bear-resistant trash receptacles and a vaulted toilet. Location of the <i>Granite Tors Trailhead</i> parking. | 1 |

| Location Mile Post | Name | Facilities | Unit |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 39.5 R | Granite Tors Trail | <i>Granite Tors Trail</i> is accessed by crossing over the second bridge from the trailhead parking area. Granite Tors Trail is a non-motorized 15.0-mile loop trail. The primitive, but enclosed, Granite Tors Shelter is located at approximately the mid-point and sleeps five (no furniture, just woodstove). | 1 and 5 |
| 39.6 R | Access Road | A 0.2-mile forked, river access road with 2 vaulted toilets, opportunities for fishing, a bear-resistant trash receptacle, and dispersed camping. | 1 |
| 41.6 L | Stiles Creek Bluff Trailhead | <i>Trailhead</i> includes parking area for 15 vehicles. <i>Stiles Creek Bluff Trail</i> is a motorized 4-mile connector trail that crosses the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail and connects to the Stiles Creek Trail on the ridge. | 1 and 2 |
| 42.0 R | Wildlife Viewing Pull-off | Parking with a vehicle capacity of 15, river access, and opportunities for fishing. | 1 |
| 42.3 R | Access Road | A 0.1-mile river access road with dispersed parking for three vehicles and/or camping, and opportunities for fishing. | 1 |
| 42.8 L | Red Squirrel Campground and Picnic Area | 5 campsites; each having a picnic table, fire grate, bench, parking, and tent pad. There is additional camping available for Self-contained RVs. Also in campground are vaulted toilets, bear-resistant trash receptacles, drinking water and a camp host site. Included in the picnic areas are picnic tables, two picnic shelters, interpretive displays, bear-resistant trash receptacles and a vaulted toilet. Opportunities for swimming and fishing and non-motorized boating are available. | 1 |
| 42.9 R | Pull-off | Parking with a vehicle capacity of six. | 1 |
| 43.0 R | Pull-off | Parking with a vehicle capacity of six; access to river. | 1 |
| 43.7 L | Access Road | Access road to a pond. | 1 |
| 43.9 R | Access Road | A <0.1-mile river access road with dispersed camping. | 1 |
| 44.1 L | Third Bridge | Dispersed parking is available, gravel bar camping, river access, with opportunities for fishing, vaulted toilet, and an informational display. Designated boat launch. | 1 |
| 44.1 R | River Access | Dispersed parking is available, gravel bar camping, river access, and opportunities for fishing. | 1 |
| 45.5 L | Access Road | A 0.1-mile river access road with dispersed parking, approximately three dispersed camping locations, and opportunities for fishing. | 1 |
| 45.5 R | Goldeneye Pond and East Fork Valley Trailhead | <i>Trailhead</i> includes dispersed parking for 30 vehicles, a picnic table, and dispersed camping. <i>East Fork Valley Trail</i> is a winter motorized non-loop trail that continues out of the Recreation Area. <i>Golden Eye Pond</i> is stocked by ADF&G with Rainbow Trout, suitable for fishing, swimming, and non-motorized boating. | 1 and 4 |
| 46.0 R | Pull-off | Parking with a vehicle capacity of two and river access. | 1 |
| 46.7 R | Pull-off | Parking with a vehicle capacity of 15 and river access. | 1 |
| 47.2 L | Levee | Dispersed parking for approximately ten vehicles, river access, opportunity for fishing and dispersed camping. | 1 |

| Location Mile Post | Name | Facilities | Unit |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 47.8 L | North Fork Public Use Cabin | The North Fork Cabin is located on a 0.3-mile gravel road that is gated. This cabin sleeps eight and is located near to the river; toilet, firewood shed. | 1 |
| 47.9 R | North Fork Pond | Dispersed parking, picnicking and camping, vaulted toilet. The pond is stocked by ADF&G with Rainbow Trout, suitable for fishing, swimming, and non-motorized boating. | 1 |
| 48.9 R | Angel Rocks and Angel Rocks to Chena Hot Springs trailheads | <i>Trailhead</i> includes parking area for twenty-four vehicles, a large overflow parking area, four picnic tables and four fire rings (two of the four are accessible to people with disabilities), a vaulted toilet, bear-resistant trash receptacle, and interpretive and informational displays. This trailhead also provides access to the river and opportunities for fishing. <i>Angel Rocks Trail</i> is a non-motorized 3.5-mile loop trail to large granite outcroppings near the north boundary of the Recreation Area. <i>Angel Rocks to Chena Hot Springs Trail</i> connects the Angel Rocks Trail to Chena Hot Springs Resort. The first 6.1 miles of the trail is non-motorized in the Recreation Area. The remaining 2.2 miles of trail to Chena Hot Springs is outside the Recreation Area and is open to motorized use during the winter only, and splits to form a loop. The left fork is named the Upper Trail and the right trail is named the Lower Trail. Approximately 6.1-miles along Angel Rocks Trail to Chena Hot Springs Trail is the Angel Rocks Shelter (sleeps four). The shelter is the point on the trail system that also connects to the East Fork Valley Spur Trail (motorized) connecting the East Fork Valley Trail (motorized winter only) to the Angel Rocks trail system. | 1 and 4 |
| 49.1 L | Lower Chena Dome Trailhead | <i>Trailhead</i> includes parking area for ten vehicles, toilet, water well, bear-resistant trash receptacle, and informational display. <i>Chena Dome Trail</i> is a non-motorized 29-mile loop trail that crosses the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail and connects to the Upper Chena Dome Trailhead. Chena Dome Shelter is located at approximately 17-mile of the trail (from the upper Trailhead) and sleeps four (primitive, enclosed, no furniture, just a woodstove). A steep spur trail connects to the Angel Creek Trail. Public use cabins are located at 6.4-mile and 3.6-mile of the creek trail. | 1 and 3 |
| 50.5 L | Upper Chena Dome and Angel Creek trailheads | <i>Trailhead</i> includes parking for ten vehicles, a toilet, bear-resistant trash receptacle, and an informational display. <i>Chena Dome Trail</i> is a non-motorized 29-mile loop trail that crosses the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail and connects to the Lower Chena Dome Trailhead at Milepost 49.1. Chena Dome Shelter is located at approximately mile 17 of the trail and sleeps four. <i>Angel Creek Trail</i> is a motorized 6.7-mile trail that ends at the Upper Angel Creek Public Use Cabin. This cabin sleeps five. The Lower Angel Creek Public Use Cabin is located at mile 3.6 on the trail and sleeps six. | 1 and 3 |
| 50.8 | Boundary | Chena River State Recreation Area Sign | 1 |

MAP 7-2: DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

Authorization for commercial activities is an integral part of the management of the Recreation Area. These activities not only provide revenue that is used to manage the Recreation Area, they also provide the public with services that enhance their enjoyment of the area. Such activities include guided river trips, canoe rentals, horseback treks, dogsled trips, ice fishing and guided hikes. Development of a visitor center in the future could incorporate private sector involvement in providing visitor services.

Commercial activities in the Recreation Area are authorized under permit. State Parks issues four types of permits:

- 1) **Non-competitive Compatible or Special Park Use Permits** are for regulated activities such as competitive events, large group picnics, or gathering plants for scientific study.
- 2) **Non-competitive Incompatible or Park Land Use Permits** are for activities that are generally incompatible uses, unrelated to recreation and that authorize long-term use of parkland or water.
- 3) **Commercial Use Permits** (Competitive and Non-competitive) are issued for activities that generate a profit to private sector permit holders.
- 4) **Concession Contract** is a permitted contract with gross receipts more than \$100,000 and/or major facility development. Contracts of this type have not been issued or requested for the Recreation Area.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Private sector businesses focusing on recreation have been long-standing users of public recreation facilities. They provide additional means in which to recreate in these areas and have offered support through suggestions, promotional events and volunteer work groups.

Beginning at Milepost 15, private recreational providers and support facilities along the Chena Hot Springs Road Corridor consist of the following:

Table 7-10: Private Recreational Related Facilities Near the Recreation Area

| Mile | Business | Amenities Provided |
|------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 15.0 | Two Rivers Lodge | Restaurant and bar |
| 17.5 | Transfer Site | (Public) Refuse disposal site |
| 18.6 | Chandalar River Outfitters and Ranch | Horseback riding |
| 22.4 | Poppa Wes' Little Store | General store |
| 23.2 | The Quickie Pizza | Restaurant/carry-out |
| 23.3 | U.S. Post Office | Postal services & PO boxes |
| 23.3 | Pleasant Valley Store | Convenience store, gas, liquor store |
| 23.7 | Soapy Suds | Laundromat and public telephone |
| 23.8 | Pleasant Valley Equipment | Equipment, hardware, propane |

| Mile | Business | Amenities Provided |
|------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 25.3 | HIPAS Observatory- University of CA | The High Power Aurora Stimulation (HIPAS) facility studies the Ionosphere using high-power radio transmitters as well as a state-of-the-art LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging). The facility occupies 120 acres and includes six buildings. The HIPAS facility could provide opportunities for undergraduates to conduct outdoor experiments on the environment. |
| 30.0 | Twin Bears Camp (private contract) | Cabins, central building, parking, picnic area and pond (Swimming and Fishing) |
| 50.0 | Angel Creek Lodge | Restaurant and bar, lodging |
| 61.0 | Chena Hot Springs Resort | Restaurant and bar, lodging, hot springs and airstrip, camping, touring services. |

With additional accommodations provided by the private sector, the Recreation Area accommodates a greater variety of users in all seasons. The two private overnight facilities closest to the Recreation Area are described below.

Angel Creek Lodge provides food and lodging for the public. Six rental cabins are available year round. Hunters use it in the fall and snowmachiners and dog mushers in the winter, often in connection with the winter dog sled trail use and races.

Chena Hot Springs Resort provides a wide range of activities and facilities on their 440-acres, including a historic lodge, restaurant, bar, hotel rooms, cabins, yurts, an outdoor natural mineral hot springs lake, an outdoor spa tub, indoor pool for swimming, two additional indoor spas, viewing wildlife, meeting and convention space and an activity center. It is open year-round with 25 miles of trails for activities such as cross-country skiing, snow machines, snow-shoeing, horseback riding, canoeing, year-round biking, flight seeing (utilizing the airstrip), fishing, ORVs and hiking. Many visitors are attracted to Chena Hot Springs Resort in the wintertime because of the exceptional opportunity for northern lights viewing. Visitation in 2003 was estimated at 80,000 people. The resort continues to expand and improve its facilities.

These nearby lodges, private recreational facilities and outdoor activity guides provide a working relationship between the State Recreation Area and the private sector, offering excellent opportunities for partnerships.

Recreational and hunting guides often acquire park use permits for specific activities within the Recreation Area. Approximately six Commercial Use Permits have been issued each year for the past three years. These permits include outfitters and guides, as well as vendors. For the past three years, approximately seven special Park Use Permits (personal use, organized recreation events, construction, access, etc.) have been issued each year. No park Land Use Permits have been issued during this time period.

Competitive events that have been occurring within the Recreation Area on a regular basis include the: Yukon Quest, Junior Yukon Quest, Run-N-Soak, Chena Hot Springs Bike Classic and Two Rivers Dog Mushers' Association races.