

General Description

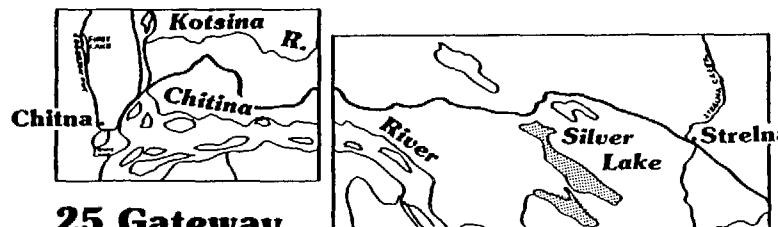
The road between Chitina and McCarthy, now commonly referred to as the "McCarthy Road," closely follows the old grade and alignment of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad. This railroad, built between 1908 and 1911, connected Cordova on the Gulf of Alaska with the Kennecott Copper Mines near McCarthy. This privately built and operated railroad ran until 1938 when, after falling copper prices and a threatened strike, the mine closed. Almost immediately efforts were made by citizen groups in Cordova, Chitina and McCarthy to convert the railroad alignment into a vehicular road since this was the only form of transportation connecting these small communities. However, such plans were never fully realized due to problems ranging from frequent washouts to lack of funding and political support.

It was not until 1971 that a highway bridge across the Copper River was completed, facilitating vehicle access to much of the McCarthy Road. However, the remainder of the road was plagued by continual bridge and trestle washouts and only for a short period of time could people actually drive all the way from Chitina to McCarthy. Today, the steel span Kuskulana Bridge is the only remaining functional railroad structure and the Gilahina Trestle is the last standing wooden railroad trestle. The old trestle is rapidly deteriorating and it will be a race against time to see if restoration efforts can begin before decay has progressed too far.

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Today the McCarthy road connects the two small communities of Chitina and McCarthy and provides

access to numerous scattered residences and recreational homesites. Even by Alaskan standards Chitina and McCarthy are small. In 1970, Chitina had a population of 50 and McCarthy's year round population is considerably less. Chokosna, a small dot on most maps, is nothing more than one family and numerous undeveloped lots clustered around an airstrip. Strelna, another name commonly seen on maps, has a number of scattered homestead-style developments and little else. Native allotments and homesteads are found all along the road, with the largest concentration around the Long Lake--Lakina River area, near McCarthy, and west of



**25 Gateway
McCarthy Wild
& Historic Road**

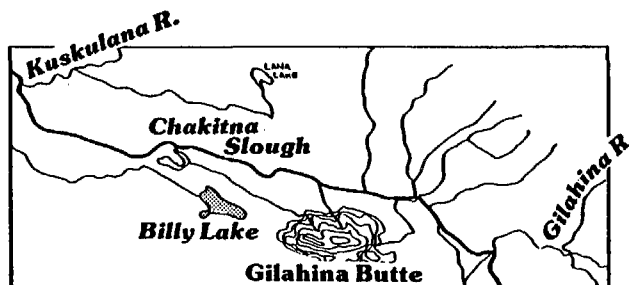
**26 Silver Lake-
Strelna**

Strelna. The only commercial/recreational developments, aside from those at Chitina and McCarthy-Kennicott, are the lodge-campground at Silver Lake about 10 miles east of Chitina and a small private campground nearby. While some mining activity still occurs up the Kuskulana River and east of McCarthy, it is not visible from the road and road use for hauling supplies and ore is limited.

The McCarthy Road follows the upland terraces above the Chitina River and, to avoid grade changes, gradually climbs from an elevation of approximately 500 feet at Chitina to close to

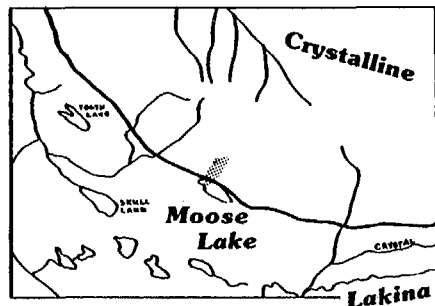
1500 feet at McCarthy. It is within a spruce-hardwood forest where natural openings occur within poorly drained bogs and around the numerous lakes. The Chitina Glacier sculptured the local topography. It carved out the valley; created the numerous shallow lake depressions; and deposited the moraines and various materials which are the basis for the present variable patterns of soils and vegetation communities. The landscape is generally typical of a river valley in Southcentral Alaska, and the surrounding distinctive mountains are distant and only visibly dominant at the road's eastern (near McCarthy) and western (near Chitina) ends.

Management Units- McCarthy Wild & Historic Road



**27 Kuskulana &
Gilahina**

28 Moose Lake



29 Lakina River-Long Lake



**30 Roads End-
McCarthy**

