

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

3. Talkeetna River Management Unit

3a. Lower Talkeetna River Subunit 3 - 91
3b. Middle Talkeetna River Subunit..... 3 - 94
3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek Subunit..... 3 - 96
3d. Talkeetna Canyon Subunit..... 3 - 98

1
2

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

3. Talkeetna River Management Unit

Background

Mile of River

This unit includes 44.5 miles of the Talkeetna River from its confluence with the Susitna River to the upper Talkeetna River Canyon, and 9.5 miles Clear (Chunilna) Creek from its confluence with the Talkeetna River (RM 0) to RM 9.5. The unit also includes the mouths of Sheep River, Iron Creek, Disappointment Creek, and Larson Creek.

Land Ownership

State	29,719 acres
Native	20 acres
Private & Other	315 acres
Total	30,054 acres

River Characteristics

The volume and velocity of the Talkeetna is greater than the other five Recreation Rivers. The river in the Canyon is narrow and fast-moving. Below the Talkeetna River Canyon, the river is wide and braided, with numerous large, forested islands. Because the river is glacial in origin, it is laden with silt during the summer months. Summer streamflow depths vary from 1 to 6 feet, and the lower river channel varies in width from 200 to 500 feet. The mean annual flow varies from 2249 to 5856 cfs, with winter low flows averaging between 521-686 cfs and summer highs averaging between 766-10,600 cfs.

This unit is highly scenic because of the canyon on the upper river and views of the Talkeetna Mountains and Alaska Range from the lower river. Most human modifications in the unit are not visible from the river with the exception of those along Clear (Chunilna) Creek and in the vicinity of Talkeetna which somewhat diminish the visual quality of the river.

Fisheries

Species Present

Arctic grayling	Dolly Varden
Burbot	Pink salmon
Chinook salmon	Rainbow trout
Chum salmon	Slimy sculpin
Coho salmon	Sockeye salmon

1 Chum, coho, Chinook, and pink salmon spawn in Clear (Chunilna) Creek. Grayling and
2 rainbow trout are found throughout the Clear (Chunilna) Creek and Lower Talkeetna River
3 subunits. Throughout the remainder of the management unit, chum, coho, sockeye, and
4 Chinook salmon are present, along with Dolly Varden, rainbow trout, and grayling. While
5 chum and pink salmon occasionally spawn in the river itself, the remaining pink, chum,
6 Chinook, and coho salmon spawn in clear tributaries. Sockeye salmon spawn in several lakes
7 draining into the Talkeetna River, including Larson Lake.

8
9 *Sport Fishing*

10
11 The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on the Talkeetna River correspond with the
12 Chinook and coho salmon runs and late fall when rainbow trout and Dolly Varden drop down
13 and concentrate in the lower river near Talkeetna. These are approximately June 15 to
14 July 15 for Chinook, July 15 to September 15 for coho, and September 5 to ice up for
15 resident species. The most popular fishing spot is the mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek,
16 where all species of sport fish found in the river are caught. Near the railroad bridge and the
17 mouth of Disappointment Creek receive less use.

18
19 *Special Regulations*

20
21 Fish Creek, a tributary of Clear (Chunilna) Creek, is designated a catch and release special
22 management area for rainbow trout. Only unbaited, single-hook artificial lures can be used.

23
24 **Wildlife**

25
26 *Moose*

27
28 A resident moose population occurs throughout the unit. The river corridor provides essential
29 riparian habitat for wintering moose.

30
31 *Bear*

32
33 The unit provides food and cover for bears. Black bear and brown bear begin to frequent the
34 lowlands in early May, with high spring densities of black bear at the mouth of the river.
35 Both species of bear target moose calves as prey in May and early June. During June, July,
36 and August bear concentrate along portions of the unit where salmon can be caught. Brown
37 bear cover large areas in search of food and depend on the river as a transportation corridor.

38
39 *Bald eagles*

40
41 Several occupied and unoccupied bald eagle nests have been documented on the lower and
42 middle Talkeetna River. Nest trees are primarily black cottonwood over fifty feet tall that are
43 within twenty feet of the river.

1 *Trumpeter Swans*

2

3 Trumpeter swans have been sighted along the Lower Talkeetna River subunit. The unit
4 probably serves as a migration and staging area in the fall.

5

6 *Hunting*

7

8 Moose and bear hunting is concentrated in the lower reaches of the management unit, where
9 foot, boat and off-road vehicle access is possible. The river also serves as a transportation
10 corridor for hunters using boats to access upriver and tributary hunting areas, including
11 Sheep River, Wiggle, and Iron creeks. These upriver locations receive significant use.
12 Wildlife viewing, particularly of moose, is important in the Talkeetna area.

13

14 *Trapping*

15

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

18

19 **Subsistence**

20

21 Within Game Management Unit 13E, there are opportunities for moose and caribou harvests
22 under subsistence regulations. Harvest opportunities also exist for small land mammals and
23 furbearers.

24

25 **Access**

26

27 The Talkeetna Spur Road connects the town of Talkeetna to the Parks Highway. In
28 Talkeetna, there are boat launches where powerboats can access the river and floaters can
29 take-out. There are several airstrips in the Talkeetna area but none in the management unit.
30 Some gravel bars on the lower river are infrequently used for landing. There are no lakes in
31 the management unit and the river is too swift for floatplane landings. The mouth of Clear
32 (Chunilna) Creek is often accessed via helicopter and is a drop-off location for float trips.
33 Powerboaters use the river up to the mouth of Iron Creek. Because of Class IV whitewater,
34 the canyon is accessible only by rafts and kayaks to most users.

35

36

37 **3a. Lower Talkeetna River**

38

39 **Background**

40

41 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 0 to RM 15.5 (excluding the mouth of Clear
42 (Chunilna) Creek)

43

44 This subunit begins at the confluence of the Talkeetna River with the Susitna River and
45 extends to the mouth of Sheep River. The mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek is in a different

1 subunit. The subunit includes the wide floodplain between the hills and bluffs along the river.
2 Less than 5 percent of this subunit is contiguous wetland.

3

4 **Land Ownership**

5

State	4,849 acres
Native	20 acres
Private & Other	87 acres
Total	4,956 acres

6

7 **Wildlife**

8

9 Many bald eagle nests are located near the mouth of the river and long the corridor
10 throughout the subunit. Occupied and unoccupied nests have been documented. Trumpeter
11 swan adults and their young have been observed in recent surveys.

12

13 **Camping**

14

15 There are two public campgrounds adjacent to this subunit near the town of Talkeetna.
16 Camping is very popular near Larson Creek during salmon runs. In addition, several
17 undeveloped campsites exist within the area. An unlimited number of marginal campsites are
18 available because of the large number of gravel bars.

19

20 **Development**

21

22 The railroad bridge is the only bridge within the subunit. Existing erosion control structures
23 include a large rip-rap revetment near the confluence with the Susitna River and another rip-
24 rap revetment at RM 4. The USGS maintains a gauging station just upriver from the town of
25 Talkeetna. Numerous cabins and businesses are adjacent to this subunit in Talkeetna and in
26 the Chase and Talkeetna Bluffs subdivisions. There are two public facilities in Talkeetna, the
27 Talkeetna boat launch/campground on the river and another campground on the west side of
28 town. The Talkeetna sewage plant is adjacent to, but not in, the management unit. There is a
29 wet crossing location across Larson Creek just outside the subunit however, this requires a
30 Title 16 habitat permit from ADF&G.

31

32 **Access**

33

34 The Talkeetna Spur Road and the Alaska Railroad provide the primary access to the mouth
35 of the Talkeetna River. There are a number of roads associated with private lands in town
36 that parallel the river, and an ORV trail from Talkeetna Alaska Teleport to Larson Creek.
37 From there, trails branch out to Larson Lake, Bald Mountain, and Sheep River. Branches of
38 this ORV trail also lead to cabins in the two major subdivisions in the area. The Talkeetna
39 River Trail provides easy access for ORVs as well as boat access. The intertie transmission
40 line has been used to access the Talkeetna River from the south. There are also a number of
41 trails on the north side of the river between the railroad and Clear (Chunilna) Creek. The

1 Talkeetna River and associated trails are used extensively in winter, particularly below Clear
2 (Chunilna) Creek. Powerboats launch at Talkeetna and travel upriver as far as Iron Creek.
3 The primary destinations during the peak fishing season are the mouths of Clear (Chunilna)
4 Creek and Larson Creek.

5

6 **Heritage Resources**

7

8 The heritage site potential is high and includes the Alaska Railroad bridge, historical features
9 near Talkeetna, and remnants of an old Tanaina settlement.

10

11 **Other Activities**

12

13 There are some materials extraction sites in Talkeetna adjacent to but not within the subunit.

14

15

16 **Management Intent**

17

18 **Class II.** Because of its proximity to the town of Talkeetna, the river is easily accessed by a
19 variety of summer and winter users. This subunit features high quality fishing, hunting, and
20 camping opportunities for powerboaters and floaters. A boat launch, roads and trails along
21 the south side of the river, and several subdivisions are located within the subunit. In winter,
22 the subunit is heavily used for snowmachining, dog mushing, and cross-country skiing. The
23 subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and
24 wildlife habitat while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining public
25 use sites is a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

26

27

28 **Management Guidelines**

29

30 **Boating Restrictions.** None

31

32 **Heritage Resources.** Historic and prehistoric sites should be evaluated for their interpretive
33 values for tourism and general public interest. This particularly applies to the lower
34 Talkeetna River because of ready public access and concentration of sites.

35

36 **Public Information.** A kiosk which includes information on Talkeetna Recreation River
37 may be constructed at the Talkeetna boat launch.

38

39

40 **Public Use Sites**

41

42 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
43 on maps at the end of this unit.

44

PU 3a.1 River Mouth and Railroad Bridge (RM 0.0). The river mouth and railroad bridge are heavily used by Talkeetna residents and visitors to the area for fishing and recreation.

PU 3a.2 Larson Creek Mouth (RM 12.8) This site provides public access to the river by the Talkeetna Iron Creek Trail and by road from Talkeetna Alaska Teleport. The area is used for fishing, camping, and launching boats. The site is also one of the most popular areas for recreational use by the residents of nearby subdivisions. Because the area receives such wide use, no permits or leases should be issued which provide exclusive use of any portion of the site. An outhouse should be developed at this location.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29

3b. Middle Talkeetna River Subunit

Background

Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 15.5 to RM 31.1

This subunit begins above the mouth of Sheep River and extends to and includes the mouth of Iron Creek. Less than 5 percent of the area is contiguous wetland.

Land Ownership

State	12,682 acres
Private and Other	191 acres
Total	12,873 acres

Wildlife

Occupied and unoccupied bald eagle nests have been observed in recent surveys of the subunit.

Camping

There are many isolated sites and several segments of the river where there is an unlimited number of campsites on gravel bars.

Development

There are several cabins on private land between RM 17 and RM 20.

1 **Access**

2

3 Access to this portion of the river is by powerboat or by floating from points upstream. There
4 is no air access in the subunit although lakes north of the river are used by floatplanes.

5

6 **Heritage Resources**

7

8 The heritage site potential is high due to the high level of historic and prehistoric use.

9

10

11 **Management Intent**

12

13 **Class I.** Because of the limited fishing opportunities and the limited number of clear water
14 tributaries, this subunit receives moderate use. The area includes important moose winter
15 habitat. It is also used for camping and hunting. In winter, the subunit receives limited use by
16 snowmachiners, dog mushers, and skiers. Only a few private parcels are within the subunit.
17 The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish
18 and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the
19 focus of management. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. There are no non-
20 motorized areas in this subunit.

21

22

23 **Management Guidelines**

24

25 **Boating Restrictions.** None.

26

27 **Trapping Cabins.** There is one valid trapping cabin permit on the Talkeetna River located
28 near RM 22. This permit may be renewed if there are no significant conflicts with fish and
29 wildlife habitat, or recreation.

30

31

32 **Public Use Sites**

33

34 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
35 on maps at the end of this unit.

36

PU 3b.1 Disappointment Creek Junction (RM 23.5). This is an important creek
junction frequently used for camping and day use.

PU 3b.2 Iron Creek Junction (RM 31). This is an important site frequently used for
camping, day use and for those floating the river.

37

38

1 **3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek Subunit**

2
3 **Background**

4
5 Miles of River/River Characteristics, Clear (Chunilna) Creek RM 0 to RM 9.5

6
7 This subunit includes the uplands around the mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek, and the water
8 column and shorelands for the first 9.5 miles of Clear (Chunilna) Creek. Clear (Chunilna)
9 Creek is a clear-water stream which is only marginally navigable by powerboat for the first
10 few miles.

11
12 **Land Ownership**

13

State	575 acres
Private & Other	37 acres
Total	612 acres

14
15 **Wildlife**

16
17 Black bear concentrate over the length of the subunit during salmon season. Brown bear also
18 concentrate on the uppermost section of the subunit. Active bald eagle nests have not been
19 sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

20
21 **Camping**

22
23 Private uplands limit public camping areas to the vicinity of the mouth, where the public
24 camps on state-owned gravel bars. There are also some marginal campsite areas on state-
25 owned uplands.

26
27 **Development**

28
29 Several cabins are located adjacent to the subunit. Because the creek is entrenched in a
30 canyon, these cabins are located on high banks and are generally not visible from the river.

31
32 **Access**

33
34 Primary access to the mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek is by powerboat from Talkeetna.
35 Above the mouth, Clear (Chunilna) Creek is not easily navigated by boat; the primary access
36 is by trail. Trails along the west side of Clear (Chunilna) Creek connect private cabins with
37 the railroad tracks north of Talkeetna. A foot trail from the mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek
38 to Fish Creek crosses private land.

39
40 There are several airstrips along Clear (Chunilna) Creek on uplands outside the subunit. The
41 largest strip, at the Clear (Chunilna) Creek headwaters, is private.

1 **Heritage Resources**

2
3 There are a few known heritage sites in this subunit and the heritage site potential at the
4 mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek is high.

5
6 **Other Activities**

7
8 There is an active mining claim on Clear (Chunilna) Creek north of the boundaries of the
9 subunit.

10
11
12 **Management Intent**

13
14 **Class II.** Public use of this subunit is primarily during the Chinook and coho salmon runs
15 near the mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek. Because most of the subunit includes only the
16 Clear (Chunilna) Creek water column and shorelands, the subunit also serves as a greenbelt
17 adjacent to several parcels of private land that line the creek. The subunit features high
18 quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities. Boaters primarily use the Talkeetna
19 River and the lower half-mile of Clear (Chunilna) Creek. Upper Clear (Chunilna) Creek is
20 only marginally navigable by floatboats and has poor access for dropoffs. Winter use
21 includes snowmachining, skiing, and dog mushing. The subunit contains winter moose and
22 salmon-spawning habitat. There are several mineral locations on upper Clear (Chunilna)
23 Creek. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities and fish
24 and wildlife habitat. With the exception of uses associated with mining, maintaining an
25 essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management. There are no
26 nonmotorized areas in this subunit.

27
28
29 **Management Guidelines**

30
31 **Boating Restrictions.** None.

32
33
34 **Public Use Site**

35
36 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
37 on maps at the end of this unit.

38
PU 3c.1 Clear (Chunilna) Creek Mouth (RM 6.8). The state land and water in this
area is heavily used during the peak fishing season for fishing and camping.
While Fish Creek once flowed into Clear (Chunilna) Creek, the mouths are
now separate. Trail access to Fish Creek should be improved. A box toilet
could be installed near the mouth of Clear (Chunilna) Creek as previous
outhouses installed by ADF&G are now in the wooded area.

1 **3d. Talkeetna River Canyon Subunit**

2
3 **Background**

4
5 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 32.25 to RM 44.5

6
7 This subunit extends upstream from the mouth of Iron Creek to the middle of the Talkeetna
8 Canyon, and the south boundary of land owned by the Knikatu Corporation. The river in the
9 canyon drops approximately 29 feet per mile, and for most of this subunit the river is
10 entrenched in a steep-walled canyon. Talkeetna Canyon is one of the premier stretches of
11 whitewater in North America. It offers nearly 14 miles of continuous Class III rapids and
12 several Class IV areas. There are no significant wetlands within the subunit.

13
14 **Land Status**

15

State	11,613 acres
Total	11,613 acres

16
17 **Wildlife**

18
19 Active bald eagle nests and trumpeter swans have not been sighted in recent surveys in this
20 subunit.

21
22 **Camping**

23
24 There are only two or three marginal campsites at the upper end of the subunit. Campsites are
25 limited because of steep terrain and because there are few places where the river slows
26 enough for a boat to safely land.

27
28 **Access**

29
30 There are a few short foot trails for scouting the rapids in the canyon. There are no airstrips
31 or floatplane landing areas in the subunit. Float trips typically begin at Yellow Jacket Creek
32 landing area, outside the Recreation Rivers. Alternately, there are lakes used by floatplanes
33 on upper Prairie Creek. Use of the mouth of Prairie Creek by floatplanes is infrequent.
34 Wheelplanes occasionally use a primitive landing area on a river bar (RM 48.5) downstream
35 from the mouth of Prairie Creek.

36
37
38 **Management Intent**

39
40 **Class I.** Public use of this subunit is primarily by whitewater floaters. The canyon is very
41 scenic and provides high quality opportunities for Class II, III, and IV whitewater boating.
42 The subunit also provides primitive camping opportunities. There is open water year-round,
43 so the subunit receives little winter use. Because of the primitive nature of the recreation

1 opportunities, the number of camp encounters in the canyon will be managed to maintain a
2 low level of encounters. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation
3 opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural
4 environment will be the focus of management. There are no non-motorized areas in this
5 subunit.

6 7 8 **Management Guidelines**

9
10 **Boating Restrictions.** None.

11
12 **Emergency Caches.** Permits for storage of emergency caches may be issued in Talkeetna
13 Canyon. These caches may contain equipment, clothing, cover, food, and reserve gear to be
14 used in the event of a boating accident in the canyon. These caches should be bear-resistant,
15 and out of sight of the river and campsites.

16
17 **Recommended Addition.** The Talkeetna Recreation River should be expanded to include up
18 to RM 51.5. If added, it should be managed as part of this subunit. Prairie Creek is not
19 recommended for designation as a Recreation River at this time. See Chapter 4, *Areas*
20 *Recommended for Designation as Recreation Rivers, Upper Talkeetna River, and Other*
21 *Recommendations, Future Additions, Prairie Creek.*

22
23 **Public Information.** A sign may be placed on the public easement at the mouth of Prairie
24 Creek to clearly identify the site. The sign may also provide information on the Recreation
25 Rivers. The eastern boundary of the Talkeetna River may also be marked with a sign
26 identifying it as a Recreation River.

27
28 **Standards for Interaction Impacts.** The 14 miles of Class III and IV whitewater in the
29 Talkeetna Canyon is one of the longest stretches of continuous whitewater in North America.
30 The technical skill required to float this stretch limits use to a small, specialized group of
31 users. Among these users, there is a strong consensus about the type of experience offered in
32 the canyon, the impact levels acceptable for that experience, and the need for a permit system
33 if impacts rise above those defined levels.

34
35 Key indicators for the type of experience desired by these floaters include camp encounters
36 (or camp sharings – the percentage of nights camping within sight or sound of another party)
37 and river encounters (the number of other parties seen on the river). Users define the
38 Talkeetna Canyon as a remote, wilderness, whitewater float trip. Excessive river and camp
39 encounters can detract from this experience.

40
41 In order to preserve the type of experience Talkeetna floaters currently have, the following
42 standards should be applied.

- 43
44 1. No camp encounters in Talkeetna Canyon.
45 2. Less than two river encounters on the same day.

1 Monitoring river encounters and establishing a relationship between river encounters and use
2 levels, can be administratively difficult. Camp encounters are more easily measured and their
3 relationship to use levels in Talkeetna Canyon appears direct. The geography of the canyon
4 limits the number of usable campsites to two. Current use levels are low, and competition for
5 these campsites is light. However, if use increases, competition for campsites may be
6 anticipated in the future. If users are forced to share camps (or continue through the canyon
7 when campsites are full resulting, in safety hazards) on more than twenty percent of trips, a
8 use limit system may be developed and implemented.

9
10 **Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program.** For most users, current use levels do not cause
11 impacts greater than the standards described above. However, a minority of trips experience
12 greater impact levels than users consider acceptable. If use increases, this problem could
13 continue until a use limit is developed. To prevent the mandatory trip scheduling associated
14 with a use limit, a voluntary trip scheduling program administered by ADNR may be
15 implemented for the Talkeetna Canyon at this time.

16
17 Commercial and private trip leaders will be encouraged to register proposed trips as soon as
18 they have been planned. ADNR will maintain a list and notify trip leaders when more than
19 one trip has been scheduled for the same day (experience indicates that paired launches result
20 in unacceptable impacts). It will be the trip leaders' responsibility to reschedule or otherwise
21 alter trips if they so desire.

22 23 24 **Public Use Site**

25
26 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
27 on maps at the end of this unit.

28
PU 3d.1 Mouth of Prairie Creek (RM 51.5). If the upper Talkeetna Canyon is added to the Recreation River, the one-acre public site easement at the mouth of Prairie Creek will be a public use site. This site is located just downstream of the confluence on the north side of the Talkeetna River. It includes a one-acre site-easement and adjacent Talkeetna River shorelands. All the uplands in the area are Native-owned and this is the only site where the public can camp. There is also a private five-acre parcel between the site easement and the Talkeetna River - Prairie Creek confluence. The grant of site easement (Talkeetna Recording District, Book 124, pages 587-590) restricts the use of the site as follows: only members of the public traversing the Talkeetna River by watercraft may use the site. The use of the site is exclusively for use as a temporary site for camping. Use is limited to a maximum of twenty-four hours. The site cannot be used for fishing, unlimited camping, or other purposes not associated with the use described above. Signs shall be posted at the site defining both the use and area restrictions of the easement. The site cannot be improved except for those improvements appropriate for a primitive campsite (e.g. sanitary facilities, fire-rings, etc.)

1
2
3
4
5

Location Map: Talkeetna River Management Unit

1
2

1
2
3
4
5

Map 1: Talkeetna River

1
2

1
2
3
4
5

Map 2: Talkeetna River

1
2

1
2
3
4
5

Map 3: Talkeetna River

1
2

1
2
3
4
5

Map 4: Talkeetna River

1
2

1
2
3
4
5

Map 5: Talkeetna River

1
2

1
2
3
4
5

Map 6: Talkeetna River

1
2