

## Management Guidelines

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**Boating Restrictions.** None.

**Land Exchange.** The owner of the Clear Creek Lodge, at the mouth of Clear Creek, is interested in a land exchange with the state. However, there are concerns that this parcel is subject to flooding and erosion. There may also be problems with the drinking water supply and septic system. DNR or DFG may consider an exchange or

purchase of this land. Consistent with the management intent for the Clear Creek subunit, permanent facilities including structures for accommodating guests or employees will not be allowed on exchange land. Septic systems on state land may be allowed as long as they are outside the protection area, meet stipulations in the plan, and meet all other agency requirements. (Also see Chapter 2)

## Public Use Sites

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

- PU 3c.1** **Clear Creek and Fish Creek Mouths (RM 6.8).** The state land and water in this area is heavily used during the peak fishing season for fishing and camping. Trail access to Fish Creek should be improved.

# 3d. Talkeetna River Canyon Subunit

## Background

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### **MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 32.25 to RM 44.5**

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

### **LAND STATUS**

State	9,137 acres
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,137 acres</b>

### **WILDLIFE**

Active bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys in this subunit.

### **CAMPING**

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

### **ACCESS**

There are a few short foot trails for scouting the rapids in the canyon. There are no airstrips or floatplane landing areas in the subunit. Float trips typically begin at Yellow Jacket Creek landing area, outside the Recreation Rivers. Alternately, there are lakes used by floatplanes on upper Prairie Creek.

Use of the mouth of Prairie Creek by floatplanes is infrequent. Wheelplanes occasionally use a

primitive landing area on a river bar (RM 48.5) downstream from the mouth of Prairie Creek.

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## Management Intent

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

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

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## Management Guidelines

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**Boating Restrictions.** None.

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

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

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

**Standards for Interaction Impacts.** The 14 miles of Class III and IV whitewater in the Talkeetna Canyon is one of the longest stretches of continuous whitewater in North America. The technical skill required to float this stretch limits use to a small, specialized group of users. Among these users, there is a strong consensus about the type of experience offered in the canyon, the im-

pact levels acceptable for that experience, and the need for a permit system if impacts rise above those defined levels.

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

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

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

Monitoring river encounters, and establishing a relationship between river encounters and use levels, can be administratively difficult. Camp encounters are more easily measured and their relationship to use levels in Talkeetna Canyon appears direct. The geography of the canyon limits the number of usable campsites to two. Current use levels are low, and competition for these campsites is light. However, use is increasing, and competition is anticipated in the near future. If users are forced to share camps (or continue through the canyon when campsites are full result-

ing, in safety hazards) on more than twenty percent of trips, a use limit system should be developed and implemented.

**Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program.** For most users, current use levels do not cause impacts greater than the standards described above. However, a minority of trips experience greater impact levels than users consider acceptable. If use increases, this problem will continue until a use limit is developed. To prevent the mandatory trip scheduling associated with a use limit, a voluntary trip scheduling program

administered by DNR should be implemented for the Talkeetna Canyon at this time.

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

## Public Use Sites

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

- 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.)