

4d. Upper Lake Creek Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS RM 41.8 to RM 51.2

This subunit extends from a point just above the mouth of Camp Creek to a point below Chelatna Lake. Seventy-five to ninety percent of the uplands in this subunit are contiguous wetlands.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	8,040 acres
Total	8,040 acres

WILDLIFE

One active bald eagle nest has been sighted in recent surveys just outside this subunit on upper Sunflower Creek.

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites were identified:

Primary campsites	2
Secondary campsites	5
Marginal campsites	4

DEVELOPMENT

There is a derelict cabin on state land (on the east side of the river) at RM 46.5, above the mouth of Sunflower Creek.

ACCESS

Two old tractor trails, originating in the Petersville area, cross the river at RM 43 and RM 46. These trails are used to support mining activities and are used in winter. Some winter recreation users travel from the Petersville Road area, via the Forks Roadhouse and Pickle Creek, and to access the upper creek and Chelatna Lake. Travel is dependent on overflow on the Kahiltna River. There is a floatplane landing area on Rock Lake west of RM 45 is used by floatplanes. It is connected by a trail to Lake Creek, and is used as a pick-up point for commercial float trips beginning at Chelatna Lake.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high due in part to the mining history in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are several active mining claims on upper Sunflower Creek just northwest of this subunit.

Management Intent

Class I. This subunit is primarily used by floaters during the ice-free season. The subunit provides high quality fishing, camping, whitewater, hunting, and other recreation opportunities in a remote scenic setting. Class II, III, and IV whitewater provide risk values when floating the river. The creek and its tributaries support salmon spawning habitat. There are no private lands or mining claims in the subunit. Because of its remote location, there is only limited winter use by snow-machiners. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat. Some limited development may occur associated with an area that is open to new mineral entry under

lease. Management of activities on active mining locations will focus on providing opportunities for mineral extraction while avoiding or minimizing impacts on recreation, public access, habitat, and water quality. With the exception of uses associated with mining locations, the focus of management will be to maintain an essentially unmodified natural environment. The numbers of encounters on the river and at campsites should be maintained at a low level to provide for a remote recreation experience. Maintaining sites for public use will be a high priority. With the exception of the area open to mineral entry, the subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for a non-motorized experience during the fishing season.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. See management guidelines for the Lake Creek Management Unit described earlier in this chapter.

Mining. There are currently no mining locations in this subunit and it is closed to new mineral entry. The uplands between Camp Creek (RM 41) and Sunflower Creek (RM 46) will be open to new mineral entry under lease. A 300-foot staking setback from ordinary high water from Lake, Camp, and Sunflower creeks. The public use sites at the mouth of Camp and Sunflower creeks will remain closed to new mineral entry. Mining guidelines listed in Chapter 2 under *Surface Resources*, will apply. These guidelines are designed to protect water quality, recreation, and habitat values.

Standards for Interaction Impacts. The upper section of Lake Creek has among the lowest use levels and offers one of the most remote, wilderness-oriented float trips in the Recreation Rivers system. The cost, logistics, and technical skill required to float the river limit use to experienced whitewater floaters. Key indicators for the type of experience desired by these floaters include camp encounters (or camp sharing -- 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 Upper Lake Creek as a remote, wilderness whitewater float trip, and excessive river and camp encounters can detract from this experience.

In order to provide for the type of experience Lake Creek floaters currently receive and prefer, prescribed standards for these impacts are:

1. No camp encounters on Lower, Middle, and Upper Lake Creek (Subunits 4b, 4c and 4d).
2. Less than five river encounters per day.

Monitoring these impacts and establishing a relationship between them and use levels can be administratively difficult. However, through a monitoring program, it is possible to generate the necessary information.

At current use levels, these standards are rarely exceeded. However, use is increasing, and competition is anticipated in the near future. If this occurs, and users are forced to share camps or see more than three groups per day 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 parties experience greater impact levels than users consider acceptable particularly at public use sites. 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 Lower, Middle and Upper Lake Creek (Subunits 4b, 4c, and 4d) before limits are implemented.

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.

Unauthorized Cabin. There is one known unauthorized cabin ruin at RM 46.5, on the east side of the river. This log cabin is unusable, barely visible from the river, and does not present any significant conflicts at this time. Unless the cabin causes a significant conflict, as described in Chapter 2, *Unauthorized Cabins*, its removal is a low priority.

Public Use Sites

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

- PU 4d.1** **Camp Creek Junction** (RM 41.8). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips.
- PU 4d.2** **Sunflower Creek Junction** (two sites) (RM 46). These two sites are located on either side of the river. They receive high public use for camping and fishing. The junction is a well-known destination point for float trips.

4e. Chelatna Lake Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 51.2 to RM 64

This subunit includes Chelatna Lake and the lower 2.5 miles of Snowslide Creek which drain into Chelatna Lake. The subunit also includes the uplands within a mile of the lake, and the uppermost segment of Lake Creek, downstream to a point where it begins to narrow and gain speed. Chelatna Lake is 7 miles long and less than a mile wide and is the largest lake in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. The Alaska Range rises from its shores and Denali National Park borders on the north half of this subunit. The upper section of Lake Creek in this subunit is about 500 feet wide, slow, and placid. The areas around the south end of the lake and headwaters of the creek are about 90 percent contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	25,243 acres (includes 20-40 acres of state-selected land)
24 Private parcels	249 acres
Total	25,492 acres

WILDLIFE

Neither active bald eagle nor trumpeter swan nests have been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit.

CAMPING

Two primary campsites have been identified on Chelatna Lake.

DEVELOPMENT

There are two lodges on Chelatna Lake: Chelatna Lake Lodge at the outlet, and the Chelatna Shores Resort, about two miles north of the lake outlet. Eighteen cabins are scattered around the lake, mostly on the north and east shores. Near the Chelatna Lake Lodge, there is a dock, a boat storage area, and an airstrip. The Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association has a temporary camp and fish counting station at the outlet of the lake, adjacent to an old cable that extends over the river.

ACCESS

Most trails are concentrated near the south end of the lake. Regional trails connect with Collinsville and the Kahiltna River/Petersville Road. There are also a number of foot, off-road-vehicle, and truck trails adjacent to the Chelatna Lake Lodge and nearby cabins. The slopes near the remainder of the lake support only primitive game trails. Access to the cabins on the north and east sides of the lake is by boat or floatplane. Some recreation users travel from the Petersville Road in winter, via the Forks Roadhouse and Pickle Creek, to access upper Lake Creek and Chelatna Lake areas. Winter travel is dependent on overflow on the Kahiltna River.