

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.

The primary areas of the lake used for floatplane landing are by Chelatna Lake Lodge, the lagoon just downstream from the lodge, and near the mouth of Coffee Creek. The first two areas are used as drop-off and pickup points for lodge clients and the public. Coffee Creek is used as a stopover picnic area for Alaska Range flightseeing trips.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

The heritage site potential is high due to a long history of activity in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There has been some recent earth moving associated with road/trail improvement at the south end of the lake. Winter use by cat trains has occurred in recent years.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit is primarily used by floaters beginning their descent of Lake Creek, sightseeing flights, and lodge-based recreation users. The lake contains important salmon spawning habitat. The subunit provides high quality fishing, camping, and hunting opportunities. The subunit is the most scenic in the Recreation Rivers, and is bounded on the north by Denali National Park and the Alaska Range. Private lands are located along the south and east shores of

the lake. Because of its remote location, there is little winter use. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a scenic setting, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands. Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Boat Storage. A public boat storage area should be designated near the Chelatna Lake airstrip. See *Shoreline Development, Boat Storage* in Chapter 2.

Chelatna Airstrip (T27N, R12W, Sec. 13, SM)
The Chelatna airstrip provides important public access to Lake Creek, and surrounding land and water. It is strategically located at the head of Lake Creek, and serves as the drop-off point for float trips and access to private lands around the lake. No other wheelplane landing area exists in the vicinity. The airport parcel is currently in BLM ownership and is high priority for state selection.

When conveyed to the state, the airstrip should be retained in public ownership. It should be managed as a remote, unmaintained public airstrip. As an unmaintained airstrip, it should be improved or upgraded. It will only receive maintenance on an as-needed basis, if included as a line-item in a state

agency's budget. The shoreline adjacent the west end of the airstrip is also important for mooring boats, inflating rafts, and as a drop-off point for floatplanes. Actions in this area should ensure that public access to this area.

Unauthorized Cabin. There is a trespass cabin on an invalid federal mine claim at the mouth of Snowslide Creek (RM 61.8). It has the highest potential of any known unauthorized cabin in the planning area for a public use cabin. This cabin should be evaluated for its suitability as a public use cabin under the guidelines described in Chapter 2.

Public Information. A kiosk should be established near the Chelatna Airstrip and at one of the primary floatplane drop-off points on Chelatna Lake to display information on the Recreation Rivers. A sign should also be established near the outlet of the lake identifying Lake Creek as a Recreation River.

Foot Trails. Development of hiking trails from the lakeshore to above treeline will provide access to open tundra areas and Denali National Park which surrounds Chelatna Lake. Development of these trails is a low priority for DNR.

Proposals to build hiking trails from applicants or the National Park Service should be considered particularly if they provide pedestrian access to the scenic high country around the lake.

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- PU 4e.1** **Unnamed Campsite (RM 54.0).** This site is frequently used by floatplanes to drop off floaters. Floaters often camp at this site.
- PU 4e.2** **Chelatna Airstrip (RM 54.3).** This site is frequently used by both wheel and floatplanes for dropping off recreationists, private land owners, and lodge clients. Residents of the lake also store their boats on the banks adjacent to this airstrip. The site is also used for camping prior to float trips.
- PU 4e.3** **Coffee Creek (RM 60.5).** The mouth of this creek is frequently used by floatplane pilots and their passengers as a stopover during sightseeing trips of Denali.

