

1c. Upper Little Susitna River Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 74 to RM 100

The subunit extends from the City of Houston's east boundary to the Hatcher Pass Management Unit, just above the Hatcher Pass Bridge. The river is generally shallow and relatively swift in this subunit. Below RM 81.4 the river becomes silty. The uplands within this subunit contain no significant wetlands.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,400 acres
University of Alaska	80 acres
Total	2,480 acres

CAMPING

Due to access provided by Schrock, Schrock-Pitman, Fishhook, and Wasilla-Fishhook Roads, there are several popular day-use sites along the river.

Below RM 84 many undeveloped campsites were identified in a 1989 survey:

Primary Campsites	0
Secondary Campsites	45
Marginal Campsites	14

DEVELOPMENT

While there are no lodges or cabins within the subunit, there are at least 85 homes and associated structures adjacent to the subunit. Five bridges cross the river in this subunit. Only the Shushana

Bridge is located where there are state-owned uplands. The other four bridges span the Little Susitna shorelands and water column but the adjacent uplands are not state-owned.

ACCESS

This subunit is accessible from three paved, well-traveled roads. Schrock Road and Fishhook Road are important routes between Wasilla and Palmer and are key residential areas in the Matanuska Valley. A series of unpaved roads parallel the river outside the subunit to the north and south, with many spur roads to access private residences. Boat traffic is minimal. Float boats can launch at Schrock Road or Fishhook Road. The upper portion of the river is too rocky for powerboats. It is used by white-water kayakers when the water is high enough. The lower portion of the subunit is seldom used by powerboaters because of log jams and the closure to salmon fishing.

Winter use of the area is primarily by snowmachine on or adjacent to the river. Several off-road vehicle trails and seismic lines cross the subunit.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

While only one known site exists in this subunit, the potential for more is high. Considerable historic mining activity has occurred in the area.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There is a DOTPF gravel pit located within the subunit at RM 84.5. Car dumps are located near the subunit at RM 81 on both sides of the river.

Management Intent

Class II. This subunit includes mostly shorelands and the water column bounded by private land. It features fishing (trout and Dolly Varden only) and camping opportunities for powerboaters, floaters, and bank users in an accessible, moderately developed area. It also features salmon spawning habitat and winter moose habitat. Numerous developed and un-

developed private parcels are adjacent to the subunit. The subunit will be managed to maintain and enhance these recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands in the subunit. Maintaining public use sites will be a high priority. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit.

Management Guidelines

Boating Restrictions. None.

Grazing. Livestock grazing may be authorized in part of this subunit by permit. The area includes the upland parcel just south of Bench Lake in Sections 15, 16, and 17. Grazing guidelines in the Deception Creek Land Use Plan which apply to the Deception Creek Plan, Subunit 4 (Bench Lake) will apply in this subunit with the following exceptions:

- A. Grazing is not allowed in the protection area as defined in Chapter under *Riparian Management Areas*.
- B. Pens and holding areas for livestock are prohibited in this area.
- C. Livestock may not have access to the Little Susitna River.

Personal-Use Forestry. The Division of Forestry may designate personal-use cutting areas on the upland parcel just south of Bench Lake in sections 15, 16, and 17 on the upper Little Susitna River. See *Forestry, Personal Use in Road-Accessible Areas*.

Public Information. Signs should be placed on either side of the Hatcher Pass bridge, identifying the Little Susitna Recreation River.

DOTPF Materials Site. There is an existing DOTPF material site in this subunit near RM 14. DOTPF manages this site under an interagency land management transfer (ILMT) from DNR (ADL 59287). The site will be managed consistent with the ILMT which allows DOTPF to construct, maintain or improve, and remove buildings, roads, airports, and works of any description, and to use or remove sand, gravel, timber, or other materials necessary to make use of the lands for public purposes. Plan guidelines and management intent do not apply to this site. However, management of the site must be consistent with the Recreation Rivers Act. After materials extraction is completed, the site will be rehabilitated consistent with the DOTPF standards. If surface jurisdiction and management of the site returns to DNR, it will be managed consistent with the plan guidelines and management intent for the subunit.

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 1c.1 **Day Use Site** (RM 81). This site is accessed by road on the south side of the river and is used for fishing and camping.
- PU 1c.2 **Schrock Road** (RM 84.5). This road crossing is used for accessing the river, launching floatboats, fishing, and day use. There are primitive roads and cleared areas adjacent to the bridge used by vehicles for overnight camping.
- PU 1c.3 **Shushana Road Bridge** (RM 87.7). This is a popular fishing spot.
- PU 1c.4 **Carney Road Bridge** (RM 90.5). This is a popular fishing spot.
- PU 1c.5 **Welch Road Bridge** (RM 92.8). This site is popular for fishing.
- PU 1c.6 **Hatcher Pass Bridge** (RM 99.5). This is the entrance to the scenic Little Susitna River canyon, running through the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. Sightseeing from the bridge is popular, and DOTPF has recently provided a parking area for sightseers. The banks adjacent to the bridge are also used for taking out kayaks.