

Lake Creek Management Unit

PAGE	3 - 50	Background
	3 - 52	4a. Lake Creek Mouth Subunit
	3 - 54	4b. Lower Lake Creek Subunit
	3 - 56	4c. Middle Lake Creek Subunit
	3 - 59	4d. Upper Lake Creek Subunit
	3 - 61	4e. Chelatna Lake Subunit

4. Lake Creek Management Unit

Background

MILES OF RIVER, RM 0 to RM 64

The Lake Creek management unit begins at the confluence of Lake Creek and the Yentna River, and extends to a point about 2 miles above Chelatna Lake on Snowslide Creek. In addition to including a mile-wide corridor along Lake Creek, the Recreation River includes Chelatna and Shovel lakes and their adjacent uplands, and the shorelands under Bulchitna Lake, near the mouth.

LAND STATUS

State	63,825 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	4 acres
76 Private Parcels	481 acres
Total	64,310 acres

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

Lake Creek begins at Chelatna Lake which is surrounded by the Alaska Range. The creek is moderately narrow and swift-moving, dropping 24 feet per mile until it reaches the RM 8, where it widens and slows down. The creek ranges in width from 75 to 250 feet, and from 2 to 6 feet in depth. A meandering stream with a point bar and cutbank channel, the estimated winter low flows are between 50 and 200 cfs. Summer highs are between 600 and 2000 cfs. Because most of the upper river runs through a canyon, most flooding in a 100-year flood event would occur below RM 12.5.

The scenic qualities of Lake Creek are perhaps the highest of all the Recreation Rivers. Starting at Chelatna Lake, there are many good views of the Alaska Range. The steep walls of the canyon and the clear water also contribute to the creek's scenic qualities. Some human modifications at Chelatna Lake and the mouth detract slightly from the visual quality of Lake Creek.

FISHERIES

Species Present

Chum Salmon	Pink Salmon
Burbot	Coho Salmon
Sockeye Salmon	Rainbow Trout
King Salmon	Arctic Grayling

Sockeye salmon run the length of Lake Creek and spawn in Chelatna Lake, and tributary lakes and streams. Coho, king, and pink salmon run up to Chelatna Lake and begin to spawn as far downstream as the mouth of Lake Creek. Chum salmon spawn from the mouth to the canyon. The tributaries of Camp and Sunflower creeks provide extensive king and coho salmon spawning habitat. Burbot, trout and grayling are present throughout the management unit, particularly at the mouths of tributaries.

Sport Fishing

The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on Lake Creek correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately June 4 to July 4, and July 4 to August 20, respectively. Also, in the late summer, many people fish for rainbow trout.

The more popular fishing areas are the mouth of Lake Creek and the Bulchitna Lake outlet. Other popular spots include the mouths of Coffee, Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks. The outflow of Lake Creek and some deep holes near Quiet Lake are also regularly fished.

Special Regulations

The Department of Fish and Game manages a catch-and-release area for rainbow trout that is 1/4 mile upstream from the outlet of Bulchitna Lake. Only unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used upstream of this marker.

WILDLIFE*Moose*

Moose are distributed throughout the management unit year-round. There are significant fall and winter concentrations of moose in the sections of the corridor adjacent to the Yenlo Hills area. Other important moose concentration areas are located in Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks.

Bear

Black bear and brown bear are also distributed throughout the unit, brown bear being perhaps more prevalent. Brown bear tend to concentrate along portions of Lake Creek when the salmon are in the creek. Brown bear concentrate along Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks during salmon spawning seasons.

Bald eagles

There are three bald eagle nests within the unit and two that are immediately adjacent to it. Nest trees are primarily in black cottonwood, always over fifty-feet tall, and usually within twenty feet of the river.

Trumpeter Swans

There are no known swan nests within the corridor. However, significant nesting habitat occurs in areas northwest of the corridor.

Hunting

Moose and bear hunting occurs along the upper and lower portion of Lake Creek and along Sunflower, Camp, Home and Yenlo creeks.

Trapping

Recreational trapping for otter, muskrat, mink, beaver, fox, coyote, wolf and possibly marten occurs along Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo creeks.

CAMPING

Lake Creek provides a popular four- or five-day float trip. The campsites that receive the heaviest use are on Chelatna Lake, major tributary junctions, and below Bulchitna Lake.

ACCESS

Lake Creek is accessible primarily by air. Boaters also travel up the Yentna River to the mouth of Lake Creek from the Deshka or Susitna landings on the Susitna River. Due to numerous rocks and a steep gradient, powerboat access is currently limited to the lower river and Chelatna Lake.

Management Guidelines for the Unit

Boating Restrictions

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>Non-motorized area</i> | Exit of Lake Creek canyon where whitewater ends to exit of Chelatna Lake where whitewater begins (RM 8.1 - 51.2). |
| Season: | May 15 - August 20. |
| Justification: | This segment provides high quality float trips and is not currently used by powerboats. This restriction is intended to protect high quality whitewater trips from future technologies which could provide powerboat access and result in use conflicts. Although there is private property along this segment, it is better accessed by air or ground vehicles rather than boats because of the whitewater. The flat-water stretches on Chelatna Lake and the lower creek are used by powerboats. There are no boating restrictions on these sections. |

2. *Voluntary no-wake* Along north bank of the Yentna River near the mouth of Lake Creek. area

Season: May 15 - August 20.

Justification: Boat anglers are concentrated near the mouth of Lake Creek during the fishing season. To protect public safety, signs will be placed on a one-year trial basis in this area. The effectiveness of these signs will be evaluated at the end of the trial period. If the signs are found to be effective in protecting public safety, they will be posted during succeeding seasons. Because the Yentna River is so wide, the no-wake area is not intended to apply to most of the southern 3/4 of the Yentna River used for floatplane landings and powerboat travel up and down the main river where wakes are unlikely to be a hazard to fishermen at the mouth of Lake Creek.

4a. Lake Creek Mouth Subunit

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 0 to RM 3.5

This subunit extends from the confluence of Lake Creek and the Yentna River to a point just above the outlet of Bulchitna Lake. It also includes Bulchitna Lake shorelands and a one-mile section of the Yentna River. The Yentna River is wide and turbid while Lake Creek is generally clear. Contiguous wetlands make up about half of the uplands in this subunit.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	2,722 acres
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	4 acres
12 Private Parcels	51 acres
Total	2,777 acres

FISHERIES

Most of the salmon fishing on Lake Creek is within this subunit and centers near the mouth of Lake Creek and the outlet of Bulchitna Lake.

WILDLIFE

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

CAMPING

The following undeveloped campsites have been identified in the subunit:

Primary campsites	1
Secondary campsites	10
Marginal campsites	2

DEVELOPMENT

There are four lodges and three cabins in the subunit. One lodge and 26 cabins are adjacent to the subunit. Many of the cabins are used commercially and host at least a few clients every year.

There is a dock at the King Point Lodge and on Bulchitna Lake. Several docks are located just outside the subunit on Fish Lakes and along the Yentna River.

ACCESS

There are several local footpaths and three-wheeler trails associated with lodges, cabins, and public use near the mouth. There are also four section or seismic lines near the mouth. Only one of these appears to be used during the summer. A historic wagon road that runs north from McDougall is located just east of the subunit.