

MANAGEMENT UNIT 29: Upper Gakona, Chistochina, and Slana River Drainages

Background

This very large management unit includes state-owned and state-selected lands south of the Alaska Range and land within the drainages of the Gakona, Chistochina, and Slana Rivers. The topography is generally flat, but gradually rises toward the Alaska Range. Rivers are glacier fed, braided, and, with some notable exceptions, do not provide good habitat for fish. The area is popular for hunting and trapping because of fairly good populations of moose and caribou and relative accessibility to off-road vehicles and snowmachines. Most vegetation is tundra; trees are found only along creeks and rivers at the lower elevations. The land is physically suitable only for scattered cabins. This management unit is in the minimum protection category of the interagency fire management plan. The Slate Creek - Chisna mining area is in management unit 31.

Land around Mankomen Lake (subunit 29B) is used for hunting, trapping, and camping. BLM built a small campground on the lakeshore. Several cabins and many parcels of private land are located on the northern and eastern shore of the lake. The lake is accessible by trail from the Chistochina River or from Mentasta, by a private airstrip near the lake, or by floatplanes.

The U.S. Air Force is currently evaluating two areas within this management unit as possible sites for an Over-the-Horizon Backscatter Radar System. The areas are east of Summit Lake and near Indian Creek.

Management Intent

Land throughout this unit will be retained in public ownership and managed for multiple use with emphasis on wildlife habitat, hunting, and dispersed recreation. The entire unit, except for segments of a few rivers and streams, is open to mineral location. As with all areas open to mineral entry, mining is recognized as an allowed use. The streams closed to mineral location to protect salmon spawning and rearing areas and resident fish populations are listed in management guidelines. Under the Remote Cabins Permit program, 48 private cabins are allowed in this unit in the numbers and areas identified below. This large unit has many dispersed sites suitable for individual cabins. Areas within the unit where cabins are not allowed have higher wildlife values, are too high in elevation for cabins, or are within relatively easy access from roads.

If the state acquires sufficient land suitable for settlement at Mankomen Lake (subunit 29B), a land offering for settlement of up to 500 acres is allowed. Mankomen Lake will be managed as a recreation lake (see p. 2-41).

Management Guidelines

Mineral Closure. Streams that will be closed to new mineral location to protect fish habitat and populations are listed below. In all cases, stream closures include land 200 feet on both sides of the stream plus the stream itself.

- Upper Gunn Creek and Gunn Lake (tributary to Summit Lake)
- Upper Fish Creek and Fish Lake (tributary to Summit Lake)
- two small tributaries to the Gakona River near Swampy Lake
- the East Fork of the Chistochina below Mankomen Lake
- Slana River above Lost Creek
- Ahtel Creek to 2 miles above Flat Creek
- Spring Creek

Remote Cabin Permits are allowed in certain areas of this management unit. These permits allow individuals to build privately owned cabins on state land and are valid for up to 25 years. To avoid conflicts with access, brown bears or salmon spawning, remote cabin permits will **not** be issued in the following areas:

1. Within 1/2 mile of existing airstrips.
2. Within 1/4 mile of existing trails (identified in the Copper River Plan Transportation Element).
3. Within 1/4 mile of the East Fork Chistochina River.
4. Within 1/4 mile of Indian Creek from the junction of the east and west forks upstream along the east fork for 5 miles and along the west fork 2 miles to a waterfall.
5. Within 1 mile from the point where the East Fork Chistochina River joins the main stem of the Chistochina River.
6. Where public access for hunting, recreation, or mining would be hindered.

Additional guidelines for remote cabins in this unit are:

1. The cabins will be spaced at least 1/2 mile apart except on Sinona Lake and two lakes near lower Excelsior Creek (in T. 11 N., R. 2 E., Section 8 and T. 12 N., R. 2 E., Section 22). The Director of DLWM can approve closer spacing on these lakes.
2. No cabins can be constructed within 2 miles of the Tok cut-off (Glenn Highway) or 5 miles of the Richardson Highway. The different distances reflect relative ease of access from the Richardson Highway to state land compared to access from the Tok cut-off to state land.
3. DLWM will notify the Division of Forestry Fire Management Planning Team of the location of these cabins.
4. Remote cabins are subject to guidelines in Chapter 2, particularly guidelines for fish and wildlife and settlement.
5. DNR will provide cabin permit holders with information on legal access routes to remote cabin areas.
6. The assignment of permits for new remote cabins shall be phased over a 20-year period. For example, DNR could issue 10 permits every 4 years.
7. The implementation of the remote cabin program should ensure that opportunities to acquire these permits are phased over the 20-year life of the plan.

Remote cabins are allowed in the areas shown on the management unit map. A specific number of remote cabins permits may be issued:

Ahtel Creek Area - Five permits if most land that is presently state selected is conveyed to state ownership; otherwise a lesser amount determined by the Director of DLWM.

Indian Creek - Seven permits

East Fork Chistochina River drainage (excluding Mankomen Lake) - Eight permits

Chistochina River drainage - Ten permits

Sinona Creek and Lake - Eight permits

Middle Gakona - Excelsior Creek area - Ten permits, three of which may be located west of the Gakona River and the remainder east of the Gakona River.

The number of cabins refer only to cabins authorized under 11 AAC (and any similar program), but do not apply to trapping cabins.

Remote Cabin Permits - Fire Protection. DNR will not alter fire management plans because of the presence of remote cabins. Cabin permit holders will be advised before permit issuance and in the permit that DNR does not assume liability due to loss or damage to the cabin from wildfires and will not provide fire protection if the fire management plan does not call for such protection in the area.

Chistochina River Trail Management. These trails provide access to the upper Chistochina River. Use of the Chistochina River Trail and East Fork Chistochina River Trail by heavy equipment (cats, graders, large trucks) currently requires a permit. Permits should require heavy equipment operators to avoid use of snowmachine and dogsled trails where alternate routes exist. The trails should be better signed to indicate which trails are for snowmachine and dogsled use.

Backscatter Radar. If the USAF selects a site in this area for the proposed backscatter radar facility, the facility should be developed to minimize impacts on fish, wildlife, and recreation resources. Access roads will be designed to minimize impacts on habitats and to enhance public use of state lands.

The complete set of management guidelines is presented in Chapter 2. Any of the guidelines could apply to uses within this management unit; however, guidelines that are most likely to apply are:

- Fish and wildlife habitat
- Settlement
- Public access

LAND USE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

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SUBUNIT	LAND OWNERSHIP (GENERALIZED)	LAND USE DESIGNATIONS				PROHIBITED SURFACE USE(S)*	COMMENTS
		SURFACE		SUBSURFACE			
		PRIMARY USE(S)	SECONDARY USE(S)	LOCATABLE MINERALS	LEASEABLE MINERALS		
29A	State, State selected	Wildlife habitat	Forestry Public recreation Remote cabins	Open to mineral entry except certain streams (see guidelines)	Available for leasing	Land offerings	Remote cabins permitted; see guidelines for remote cabins
29B	State, State-Native selected	Public recreation Wildlife habitat	Settlement	Open to mineral entry except East Fork Chistochina River	Available for leasing	Trapping cabins in land offering area	Mankomen Lake - estimated net land offering 500 acres

* Other uses such as material sales, land leases, or permits, that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed. Such uses will be allowed if consistent with the management intent statement, the management guidelines of this unit, and the relevant management guidelines listed in Chapter 2.

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RESOURCE INFORMATION SUMMARY

Management Unit 29 - Upper Gakona, Chistochina, and Slana River Drainages

RESOURCE	SUBUNIT	
	29A	29B
Fish	salmon - s/r steelhead - s	salmon - s/r steelhead - s
Forestry	low	low
Historic-Cultural	unknown	unknown
Minerals	moderate to low	low
Oil and Gas	unknown	unknown
Recreation	variable, dog sledding, snow- mobiling, some floating potential	high for fishing, boating, camping at Mankomen Lake
Settlement Suitability	generally low, many scattered existing cabins	moderate, some cabins
Transportation	Tok Cut-off Hwy., landing areas	airstrip, floatplanes
Wildlife	A-2 (caribou), B-1 and B2 habitats, some trumpeter swan nesting areas	A-2 habitat - moose

Important trails:

Subunit 29A: Indian Creek and Ahtel Creek Trails from Glenn Hwy. (Tok Cut-off). Both reserved by 17(b) easements. Trail from Tok Cut-off, near Cobb Lakes, north towards the Dome. Slana River winter trail.

Chistochina trails - From west side of river at Tok Cut-off. Portion through Ahtna, Inc. lands reserved through ANCSA 17(b) easement. Trails branch out into main fork and middle fork. This trail is the primary land access to the Chistochina - Slate Creek mining area.

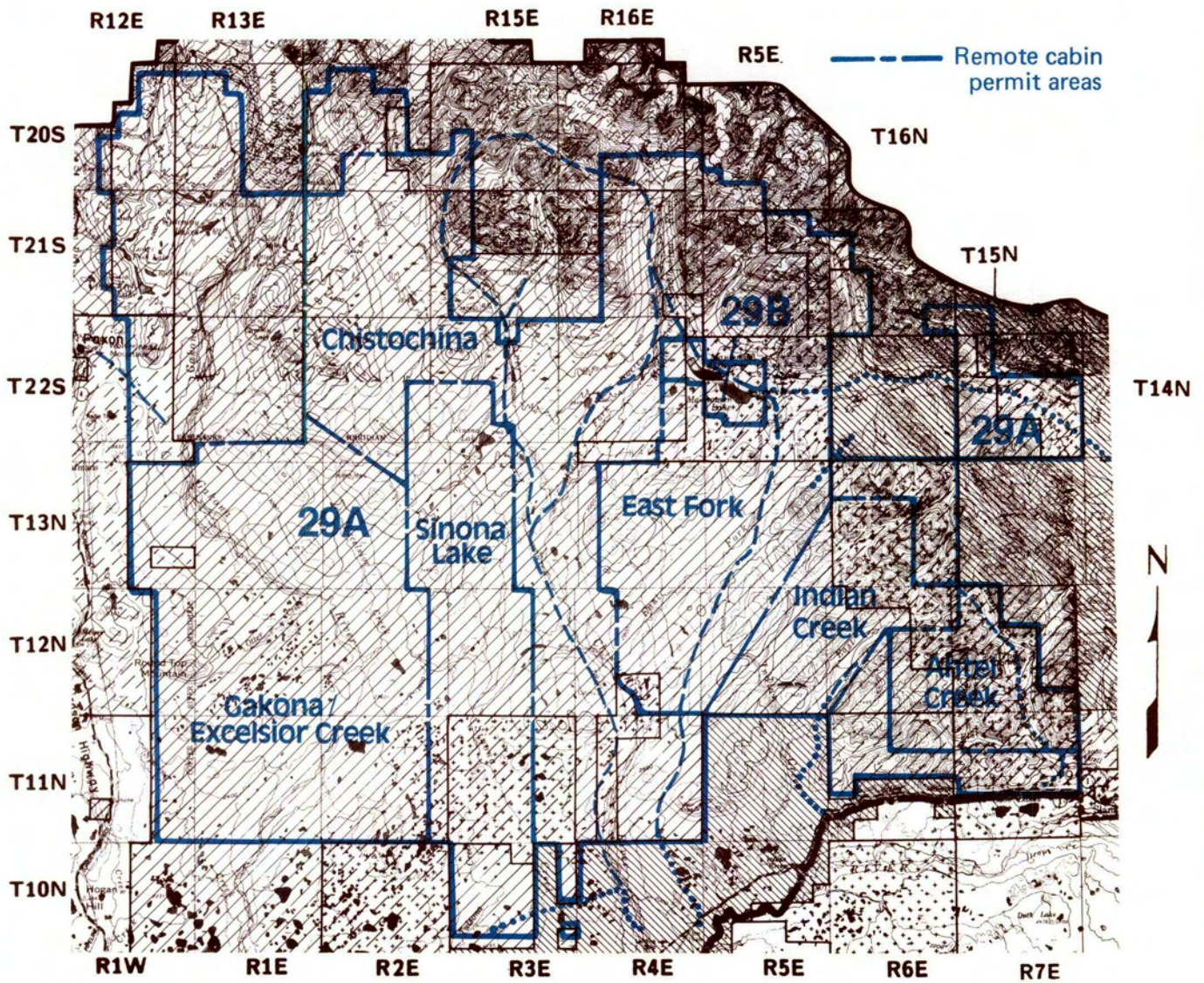
Subunits 29A and 29B: East Fork Chistochina trail leaves Tok Cut-off east of river; 17(b) easement reserved across Ahtna land.

Mankomen Lake Trail - North side of Slana River from Mentasta to Mankomen Lake; connects with Chistochina trails; reserved by 17(b) easement across Ahtna lands.

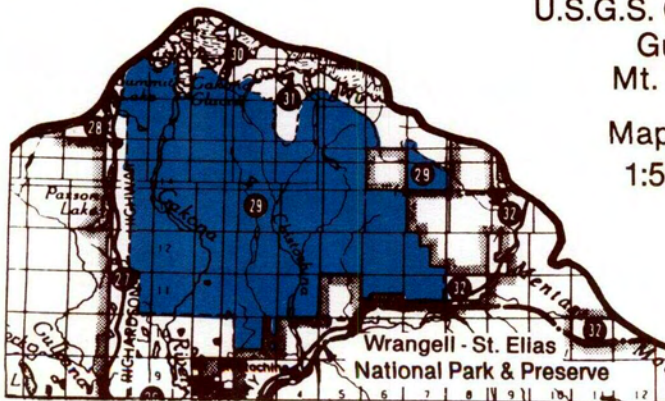
For definitions of ratings, see glossary. For more detailed information on any resources, see resource elements published under separate cover.

MANAGEMENT UNIT 29

Upper Gakona/Chistochina/Slana River Drainage









Location Map



U.S.G.S. Quads:

Gulkana
Mt. Hayes

Map scale:
1:500,000

-  State Owned
-  State Selected
-  Native/Private Owned
-  Native Selected
-  Federal
-  Trails on public lands
-  Public easements to state land - ANCSA 17(b)

Map shows approximate location of easements to state land and major trails across state land. Portions of trails may cross private lands. See appendix D.