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4. Lake Creek Management Unit

4a. Lake Creek Mouth Subunit 3 - 120
4b. Lower Lake Creek Subunit 3 - 123
4c. Middle Lake Creek Subunit 3 - 125
4d. Upper Lake Creek Subunit..... 3 - 128
4e. Chelatna Lake Subunit 3 - 131

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2 **4. Lake Creek Management Unit**

3
4 **Background**

5
6 Miles of River, RM 0 to RM 64

7
8 The Lake Creek management unit begins at the confluence of Lake Creek and the Yentna
9 River and extends to a point about 2 miles above Chelatna Lake on Snowslide Creek. During
10 a large flood event in 2012, the active channel at the mouth of Lake Creek migrated west. In
11 addition to including a mile-wide corridor along Lake Creek, the Recreation River includes
12 Chelatna and Shovel lakes and their adjacent uplands, and the shorelands under Bulchitna
13 Lake, near the mouth.

14
15 **Land Status**

16

State	63,429 acres
Private & Other	582 acres
Total	64,011 acres

17
18 **River Characteristics**

19
20 Lake Creek begins at Chelatna Lake which is surrounded by the Alaska Range. The creek is
21 moderately narrow and swift-moving, dropping 24 feet per mile until it reaches RM 8, where
22 it widens and slows down. The creek ranges in width from 75 to 250 feet, and from 2 to 6
23 feet in depth. A meandering stream with a point bar and cutbank channel, the estimated
24 winter low flows are between 460 and 538 cfs. Summer highs are between 879 and 2,214 cfs.
25 Because most of the upper river runs through a canyon, most flooding in a 100-year flood
26 event would occur below RM 12.5.

27
28 The scenic qualities of Lake Creek are perhaps the highest of all the Recreation Rivers.
29 Starting at Chelatna Lake, there are many good views of the Alaska Range. The steep walls
30 of the canyon and the clear water also contribute to the creek’s scenic qualities. Some human
31 modifications at Chelatna Lake and the mouth detract slightly from the visual quality of Lake
32 Creek.

33
34 **Fisheries**

35
36 *Species Present*

37

Arctic grayling	Coho salmon
Burbot	Pink salmon
Chinook salmon	Rainbow trout
Chum salmon	Sockeye salmon

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

7
8 *Sport Fishing*
9

10 The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on Lake Creek correspond with the Chinook and
11 coho salmon runs. These are approximately June 4 to July 4, and July 4 to August 20,
12 respectively. Also, in the late summer/early fall, many people fish for rainbow trout. Float
13 trips targeting resident species from Chelatna Lake to the mouth are common throughout the
14 summer.

15
16 The more popular fishing areas are the mouth of Lake Creek and the Bulchitna Lake outlet.
17 Other popular spots include the mouths of Coffee, Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo
18 creeks. The outflow of Lake Creek and some deep holes near Quiet Lake are also regularly
19 fished.

20
21 *Special Regulations*
22

23 Special management waters for rainbow trout are designated from a marker located a quarter
24 mile upstream of the stream that drains Bulchitna Lake upstream to Chelatna Lake. Only
25 unbaited, single-hook, artificial lures may be used upstream of this marker.

26
27 **Wildlife**
28

29 *Moose*
30

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

35
36 *Bear*
37

38 Black bear and brown bear are also distributed throughout the unit, brown bear being perhaps
39 more prevalent. Brown bear tend to concentrate along portions of Lake Creek when the
40 salmon are in the creek. Brown bear concentrate along Sunflower, Camp, Home, and Yenlo
41 creeks during salmon spawning seasons.
42
43

1 *Bald eagles*

2

3 Occupied and unoccupied bald eagle nests have been observed in recent surveys from the
4 Lake Creek Mouth subunit to the Middle Lake Creek subunit. Nest trees are primarily in
5 black cottonwood, always over fifty feet tall, and usually within twenty feet of the river.

6

7 *Trumpeter Swans*

8

9 Trumpeter swans have been observed in recent surveys from the Lake Creek Mouth subunit
10 to the Upper Lake Creek subunit. Significant nesting habitat occurs in areas northwest of the
11 corridor.

12

13 *Hunting*

14

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

17

18 *Trapping*

19

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

22

23 **Subsistence**

24

25 This area is utilized by Skwentna residents for the Tier II moose hunt. The southern portion
26 of the corridor is utilized for subsistence berry harvest as well.

27

28 **Camping**

29

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

32

33 **Access**

34

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

39

40

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1 **Management Guidelines for the Unit**

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Boating Restrictions

1. *Non-motorized area* 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 area* Along north bank of the Yentna River near the mouth of Lake Creek.
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.

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7 **4a. Lake Creek Mouth Subunit**

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Background

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Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 0 to RM 3.5

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This subunit extends from the confluence of Lake Creek and the Yentna River to a point just above the outlet of Bulchitna Lake. During a large flood event in 2012, the active channel at the mouth of Lake Creek migrated west. 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.

1 **Land Ownership**

2

State	2,071 acres
Private & Other	127 acres
Total	2,198 acres

3
4 **Fisheries**

5
6 Most of the salmon fishing on Lake Creek is within this subunit and centers near the mouth
7 of Lake Creek and the outlet of Bulchitna Lake.

8
9 **Wildlife**

10
11 An active bald eagle nest has been sighted in recent surveys of this subunit close to the
12 mouth of Lake Creek. Trumpeter swans have not been observed in recent surveys.

13
14 **Development**

15
16 There are several lodges and cabins within the subunit with others adjacent to the subunit.
17 Many of the cabins are used commercially and host at least a few clients every year. Many of
18 these are no longer on the active channel after the channel migrated west during the large
19 flood event of 2012.

20
21 There is a dock located at a lodge located on the eastern channel and several on Bulchitna
22 Lake. Several docks are located just outside the subunit on Fish Lakes and along the Yentna
23 River.

24
25 **Access**

26
27 There are several local footpaths and ORV trails associated with lodges, cabins, and public
28 use near the mouth. There are also four section or seismic lines near the mouth. Only one of
29 these appears to be used during the summer. Several of the ORV trails run from Bulchitna
30 Lake to Lake Creek and are used to tow boats. A historic wagon road and RS 2477 right-of-
31 way (RST 136) runs north from McDougal just east of the subunit.

32
33 The entire Lake Creek subunit receives ample snowcover during most years. The Iditarod,
34 Iditarod Trail Invitational, and Iron Dog Classic races have been run on the Yentna River
35 through this subunit in recent years. There is extensive winter travel by snowmachine and
36 dog teams during the winter months. The Yentna River is a winter highway for both local
37 residents and recreation users originating from points along the Parks Highway, and
38 Petersville and Knik roads. A series of seismic lines and tractor trails connecting Shulin,
39 Amber, and Trapper lakes is used to transport heavy equipment. In Winter, private property
40 owners and recreational users also travel up the lower part of Lake Creek. Open water
41 prevents snowmachines from running through the canyon.

42

1 Floatplane landing areas in the subunit include Bulchitna Lake and the Yentna River.
2 Floatplanes are often moored along the Yentna River in the subunit. There is one airstrip just
3 upstream from the mouth of Lake Creek on a bar in the Yentna River (outside the subunit) by
4 a private lodge.
5

6 **Heritage Resources**

7
8 The heritage site potential is high. There are historic mining trails, the nearby settlement of
9 McDougal, and signs of historic cabins.
10

11 12 **Management Intent**

13
14 **Class III.** This subunit receives intense public use in a relatively small area during the
15 Chinook and coho salmon runs. The area with the highest concentration of lodges in or
16 adjacent to the Recreation Rivers is at the mouth of Lake Creek. A large proportion of the use
17 is from fly-in commercial use. Bulchitna Lake is a popular fly-in access point for bank
18 fishing. The subunit provides high quality fishing, hunting, and camping opportunities for
19 powerboaters, floaters, and bank users. It also supports salmon spawning and winter moose
20 habitat. There are winter opportunities for snowmachining, dog mushing, and cross-country
21 skiing, particularly along the Yentna River. The subunit will be managed to provide and
22 enhance recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses
23 associated with private lands. The subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for both
24 motorized and non-motorized use. There are no non-motorized areas in this subunit. A
25 voluntary no-wake area was established at the mouth to protect public safety in this high-use
26 fishing area.
27

28 29 **Management Guidelines**

30
31 **Boating Restrictions.** None.
32

33 **Iditarod National Historic Trail.** A connecting trail from this historic trail passes through
34 the subunit and terminates at McDougal (See Chapter 2 guidelines on *Heritage Resources*,
35 *Iditarod National Historic Trail*).
36

37 **Public Access.** Public access between Bulchitna Lake and Lake Creek exists on the east side
38 of the lake along the small tributary that flows from Lake Creek. ADNR will not encourage
39 trespass on private land by marking the trail or trailheads that are on private land. However,
40 obtaining public access between the Bulchitna Lake and the Lake Creek is a high priority.
41

42 **Public Information.** Because of intense use by bank fishermen, a kiosk may be established
43 near Bulchitna Lake that displays information on the Recreation Rivers. A sign was
44 established near the mouth of Lake Creek identifying Lake Creek as a Recreation River.
45

1 **Anchor Buoys.** Anchor buoys are allowed at the mouth under the regulations proposed in
2 Chapter 2, *Shoreline Development, Anchor Buoys.*

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5 **Public Use Sites**

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

PU 4a.1 Lake Creek Mouth (RM 0). This is a heavily used area for fishing and camping. Numerous boats and floatplanes tie up on the banks. The parcel was acquired by ADF&G for sport fish access and Recreation purposes. It shall be retained and managed for that purpose

PU 4a.2 Bulchitna Lake (RM 3.5). The lake is state owned. The lands around the lake are in borough and private ownership. The trail to the lake and the shorelands along the river adjacent to the lake are heavily used for fishing, camping, hiking, and access to the lake. ADNR should develop a box toilet at this location to accommodate use.

10
11

12 **4b. Lower Lake Creek Subunit**

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14 **Background**

15

16 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 3.5 to RM 6.8

17

18 This subunit extends from just above Bulchitna Lake to the canyon exit. There are
19 considerable contiguous wetlands in the lower half of the subunit, and no significant
20 wetlands above RM 5.

21

22 **Land Ownership**

23

State	1,962 acres
Private & Other	38 acres
Total	2,000 acres

24

25 **Wildlife**

26

27 Bald eagle nests and trumpeter swans have not been observed in recent surveys of this
28 subunit.

29

30 **Development**

31

32 There is a private cabin and a dock on Lake 216 (elevation) near RM 6.

1 **Access**

2
3 The McDougal-Peters Creek Trail (RST 136) parallels the subunit on the east side and is
4 used for winter access by snowmachines and cat trains. Floatplanes may access the area on a
5 small lake near RM 6. A trail leads from it to the creek. Winter use is light. Snowmachines
6 are used to access private property. Several seismic lines that cross the subunit are used in the
7 winter.

8
9
10 **Management Intent**

11
12 **Class I.** Most of the summer use of this subunit is from powerboaters seeking alternate
13 fishing holes upstream from the mouth and by floaters ending float trips originating on
14 Chelatna Lake. The subunit features high quality fishing, camping, and hunting opportunities
15 in a relatively remote, undeveloped setting. The creek contains salmon spawning habitat. In
16 winter, the subunit receives limited snowmachine, dog mushing, and skiing use. There are
17 some private lands along the west bank of the river. The subunit will be managed to provide
18 and enhance recreation opportunities, primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat.
19 Maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment will be the focus of management.
20 The numbers of encounters on the river and at campsites will be managed to provide a
21 remote recreation experience. The subunit will be managed to provide opportunities for
22 motorized and non-motorized access. There are no restrictions on motorized access in this
23 subunit.

24
25
26 **Management Guidelines**

27
28 **Boating Restrictions.** None.

29
30 **Standards for Interaction Impacts.** See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper
31 Lake Creek.

32
33 **Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program.** See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper
34 Lake Creek.

35
36
37 **Special Management Area**

38
39 See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations
40 of sites are shown on the map at the end of this unit.

41
SMA 4b.1 Lake 216' (elevation) Campsite (RM 6) This special management area
(SMA) includes the land and water in and adjacent to an unnamed lake. A
private parcel and structural improvements are located in the SMA,

including a cabin and dock. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate access to private lands in and adjacent to the SMA while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities and fish and wildlife habitat.

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Public Use Site

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

PU 4b.1 Lake 216’ (elevation) Campsite (RM 6). This campsite shows evidence of frequent use throughout the fishing season.

8
9

4c. Middle Lake Creek Subunit

Background

Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 6.8 to RM 41.8

This subunit extends from the canyon exit to the mouth of Camp Creek. Below RM 25, there is no significant amount of wetlands. From RM 25 to RM 30, 20 to 30 percent of the area is wetland, mostly contiguous. Above RM 30, 75 to 90 percent of the uplands are contiguous wetlands.

Land Ownership

State	25,440 acres
Private and Other	163 acres
Total	25,603 acres

Wildlife

Recent surveys have found occupied and unoccupied bald eagle nests near the creek. Trumpeter swans have also been documented in recent surveys of the subunit. Brown bear densities along Yenlo Creek are high during the summer and fall when salmon are running. The Yenlo Hills and Yenlo Creek area have high fall and winter densities of moose.

Development

There are several private cabins and docks on Quiet Lake, and as well as on Lake 1,015’ (elevation) near RM 27.

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1 **Access**

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3 There is an extensive system of off-road vehicle trails in the wetlands along the northeast
4 side of the creek (from RM 32 to RM 42 and from RM 17 to RM 21 [the Quiet Lake area])
5 which receive year-round use. These trails are used heavily during hunting season. There are
6 a few airstrips associated with private cabins adjacent to the subunit, but these are not used
7 for activities associated with the creek. The McDougal-Peters Creek Trail (RST 136)
8 parallels the Lake Creek unit on the east side from RM 0 to RM 14. It is used as a tractor trail
9 and off-road vehicle trail. Several lakes in the subunit are used for floatplane access
10 including Quiet Lake, Shovel Lake, Lake 1,015' (RM 27), and Martana Lake (RM 26).

11
12 There are extensive areas of open bogs adjacent to the subunit used for snowmachine travel.
13 Two long seismic lines crossing the lower subunit are used in winter, in conjunction with the
14 summer off-road vehicle trails. In previous winters snowmachines were used for trapping in
15 the area.

16
17 **Heritage Resources**

18
19 The heritage site potential is high due, in part, to the history of mining in the area.
20

21 **Other Activities**

22
23 This subunit historically contained many active mining claims, however, all mining claims in
24 the subunit are now closed. Located at RM 10, there is an active mining lease that was
25 converted from a mining claim that predated mineral entry closure for the corridors. The
26 historic and currently active mining community of Collinsville is located above Camp Creek
27 8 miles northwest of the subunit. A dredge, cabin ruins, and cables, visible at RM 7.5, are
28 remnants of historic mining activity in the corridor.
29
30

31 **Management Intent**

32
33 **Class I.** This subunit is primarily used by floaters during the ice-free season. The subunit
34 provides high quality fishing, camping, whitewater, and hunting opportunities in a remote,
35 scenic setting. Class II, III, and IV whitewater provide risk values when floating the river.
36 Private lands are located primarily around lakes. Because the canyon has open water in
37 winter, there is little winter use. The creek and its tributaries contain salmon spawning
38 habitat. The subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a
39 primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with
40 private lands. With the exception of uses associated with private lands, the focus of
41 management will be on maintaining an essentially unmodified natural environment. The
42 numbers of encounters on the river and at campsites should be maintained at a low level to
43 provide for a remote recreation experience. Management of activities on existing mine leases
44 will focus on providing opportunities for mineral extraction while avoiding or minimizing
45 negative impacts on recreation, public access, habitat, and water quality. Maintaining public

1 use sites will be a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide non-motorized
2 opportunities during the fishing season with the exception of access to mine locations, private
3 lands, and special management areas.
4
5

6 **Management Guidelines**

7
8 **Boating Restrictions.** See management guidelines for the Lake Creek Management Unit in
9 this chapter.

10
11 **Standards for Interaction Impacts.** See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper
12 Lake Creek.

13
14 **Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program.** See management guidelines for Subunit 4d, Upper
15 Lake Creek.
16
17

18 **Special Management Areas**

19
20 See *Special Management Areas* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations
21 of sites are shown on the map at the end of this unit.
22

SMA 4c.1 Quiet Lake (RM 20). This SMA includes the land and water in and adjacent to Quiet Lake. Several private parcels and structural improvements are located in the SMA including cabins, docks, and trails connecting with Lake Creek. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate access to private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. An airstrip may be constructed on a public easement that exists west of the lake. Seasonal motor restrictions do not apply within the SMA.

SMA 4c.2 Martana Lake and Two Unnamed Lakes (RM 24-28). This SMA includes the land and water in and adjacent to Martana Lake, and two unnamed lakes. Several private parcels and structural improvements are located in the SMA including cabins, docks, and trails. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to accommodate uses associated with private lands in the SMA while providing for and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Seasonal motor restrictions do not apply within the SMA.

SMA 4c.3 Shovel Lake (RM 32). This SMA includes the land and water in and adjacent to Shovel Lake. Several private parcels and structural improvements are located adjacent to the SMA. There is a primitive trail connecting Shovel Lake with the river. The SMA will be managed as a Class II area. Class II area guidelines will apply. The area will be managed to

accommodate access to private lands adjacent to the SMA while providing for and enhancing recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitat. Seasonal motor restrictions do not apply within the SMA.

SMA 4c.4 Primitive Landing Area (RM 39). This SMA includes only a large gravel bar in the middle of the creek that has been traditionally used for wheelplane landings. This SMA will be managed as a Class I area and Class I guidelines will apply. Although the landing area may not be improved, wheelplane landings on this bar will continue to be allowed although upper Lake Creek is designated a non-motorized area. This exception for wheelplane landings does not apply to helicopters or boats on the river adjacent to the gravel bar.

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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 4c.1 Upper Hole (RM 7.9). This side provides fishing and camping opportunities at the point where motor restrictions begin upstream.

PU 4c.2 Yenlo Creek Junction (RM 13.5). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips down the river.

PU 4c.3 Two Unnamed Campsites (RM 20.8 and RM 21). These are frequently used for fishing and camping.

PU 4c.4 Home Creek Junction (RM 35.5). This site receives high public use for camping and fishing. It is a well-known destination point for float trips down the river.

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9

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

There are 8,226 acres of state land.

20
21
22
23

1 **Wildlife**

2

3 Bald eagle nests have not been sighted in recent surveys within this subunit. Trumpeter
4 swans have been documented in recent surveys.

5

6 **Access**

7

8 Originating in the Petersville area, two old tractor trails, Mills Creek-Cache Creek Trail
9 (RST 145) and Youngstown-Home Lake Trail (RST 1608), cross the river at RM 43 and
10 RM 46 respectively. These trails were once used to support mining activities and are used in
11 winter. Some winter recreation users travel from the Petersville Road area, via the Forks
12 Roadhouse and Pickle Creek, and to access the upper creek and Chelatna Lake. Travel is
13 dependent on overflow on the Kahiltna River. There is a floatplane landing area on Rock
14 Lake west of RM 45. It is connected by a trail to Lake Creek, and is used as a pick-up point
15 for commercial float trips beginning at Chelatna Lake.

16

17 **Heritage Resources**

18

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

20

21

22 **Management Intent**

23

24 **Class I.** This subunit is primarily used by floaters during the ice-free season. The subunit
25 provides high quality fishing, camping, whitewater, hunting, and other recreation
26 opportunities in a remote scenic setting. Class II, III, and IV whitewater provide risk values
27 when floating the river. The creek and its tributaries support salmon spawning habitat. There
28 are no private lands or mining claims in the subunit. Because of its remote location, there is
29 only limited winter use by snowmachiners. The subunit will be managed to provide and
30 enhance recreation opportunities, a primitive setting, and fish and wildlife habitat. Some
31 limited development may occur associated with an area that is open to new mineral entry
32 under lease. Management of activities on active mining locations will focus on providing
33 opportunities for mineral extraction while avoiding or minimizing impacts on recreation,
34 public access, habitat, and water quality. With the exception of uses associated with mining
35 locations, the focus of management will be to maintain an essentially unmodified natural
36 environment. The numbers of encounters on the river and at campsites should be maintained
37 at a low level to provide for a remote recreation experience. Maintaining sites for public use
38 will be a high priority. With the exception of the area open to mineral entry, the subunit will
39 be managed to provide opportunities for a non-motorized experience during the fishing
40 season.

41

42

43

1 **Management Guidelines**

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

5
6 **Mining.** The uplands between Camp Creek (RM 41) and Sunflower Creek (RM 46) are open
7 to new mineral entry under lease but the remainder of the subunit is closed to new mineral
8 entry. A 300-foot staking setback from ordinary high water from Lake, Camp, and Sunflower
9 creeks. The public use sites at the mouth of Camp and Sunflower creeks remain closed to
10 new mineral entry. Mining guidelines listed in Chapter 2 under *Surface Resources*, apply.
11 These guidelines are designed to protect water quality, recreation, and habitat values.

12
13 **Standards for Interaction Impacts.** The upper section of Lake Creek has among the lowest
14 use levels and offers one of the most remote, wilderness-oriented float trips in the Recreation
15 Rivers system. The cost, logistics, and technical skill required to float the river limit use to
16 experienced whitewater floaters. Key indicators for the type of experience desired by these
17 floaters include camp encounters (or camp sharing – the percentage of nights camping within
18 sight or sound of another party) and river encounters (the number of other parties seen on the
19 river). Users define Upper Lake Creek as a remote, wilderness whitewater float trip, and
20 excessive river and camp encounters can detract from this experience.

21
22 In order to provide for the type of experience Lake Creek floaters currently receive and
23 prefer, prescribed standards for these impacts are:

- 24
25 1. No camp encounters on Lower, Middle, and Upper Lake Creek (Subunits 4b, 4c and
26 4d).
27 2. Less than five river encounters per day.
28

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

32
33 At current use levels, these standards are rarely exceeded. However, use is increasing, and
34 competition may be anticipated. If this occurs, and users are forced to share camps or see
35 more than three groups per day on more than twenty percent of trips, a use limit system may
36 be developed and implemented.

37
38 **Voluntary Trip Scheduling Program.** For most users, current use levels do not cause
39 impacts greater than the standards described above. However, a minority of parties
40 experience greater impact levels than users consider acceptable particularly at public use
41 sites. If use increases, this problem could continue until a use limit is developed. To prevent
42 the mandatory trip scheduling associated with a use limit, a voluntary trip scheduling
43 program administrated by ADNR may be implemented for Lower, Middle and Upper Lake
44 Creek (Subunits 4b, 4c, and 4d) before limits are implemented.
45

1 Commercial and private trip leaders will be encouraged to register proposed trips as soon as
2 they have been planned. ADNR will maintain a list and notify trip leaders when more than
3 one trip has been scheduled for the same day (experience indicates that paired launches result
4 in unacceptable impacts). It will be the trip leaders’ responsibility to reschedule or otherwise
5 alter trips if they so desire.
6
7

8 **Public Use Sites**
9

10 See *Public Use Sites* in Chapter 2 for management guidelines. Specific locations are shown
11 on maps at the end of this unit.
12

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.

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14
15 **4e. Chelatna Lake Subunit**
16

17 **Background**
18

19 Miles of River/River Characteristics, RM 51.2 to RM 64
20

21 This subunit includes Chelatna Lake and the lower 2.5 miles of Snowslide Creek which drain
22 into Chelatna Lake. The subunit also includes the uplands within a mile of the lake, and the
23 uppermost segment of Lake Creek, downstream to a point where it begins to narrow and gain
24 speed. Chelatna Lake is 7 miles long and less than a mile wide and is the largest lake in the
25 Matanuska-Susitna Valley. The Alaska Range rises from its shores and Denali National Park
26 borders on the north half of this subunit. The upper section of Lake Creek in this subunit is
27 about 500 feet wide, slow, and placid. The areas around the south end of the lake and
28 headwaters of the creek are about 90 percent contiguous wetland.
29

30 **Land Ownership**
31

State	25,730 acres
Private & Other	254 acres
Total	25,984 acres

1 **Fisheries**

2
3 The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) occasionally operates a weir on the
4 outlet of Chelatna Lake to count sockeye salmon escapement. A camp near this site is also
5 used occasionally by ADF&G for northern pike eradication efforts.
6

7 **Wildlife**

8
9 Neither active bald eagle nor trumpeter swan nests have been sighted in recent surveys of this
10 subunit.
11

12 **Camping**

13
14 Camping is common along Chelatna Lake.
15

16 **Development**

17
18 A lodge sits at the outlet of Chelatna Lake. Several private cabins are scattered around the
19 lake, mostly on the north and east shores. Near the lodge, there is a dock, a boat storage area,
20 and an airstrip.
21

22 **Access**

23
24 Most trails are concentrated near the south end of the lake. Regional trails connect with
25 Collinsville and the Kahiltna River/Petersville Road. There are also a number of foot, off-
26 road-vehicle, and truck trails adjacent to the lodge on Chelatna Lake and nearby cabins. The
27 slopes near the remainder of the lake support only primitive game trails. Access to the cabins
28 on the north and east sides of the lake is by boat or floatplane. Some recreation users travel
29 from the Petersville Road in winter, via the Forks Roadhouse and Pickle Creek, to access
30 upper Lake Creek and Chelatna Lake areas. Winter travel is dependent on overflow on the
31 Kahiltna River.
32

33 The primary areas of the lake used for floatplane landing are near the lodge, the lagoon just
34 downstream from the lodge, near the mouth of snowslide creek and near the mouth of Coffee
35 Creek. The first two areas are used as drop-off and pickup points for lodge clients and the
36 public. Snowslide and Coffee Creeks are used as stopover picnic areas for Alaska Range
37 flightseeing trips.
38

39 **Heritage Resources**

40
41 The heritage site potential is high due to a long history of activity in the area.
42
43
44

1 **Management Intent**

2
3 **Class II.** This subunit is primarily used by floaters beginning their descent of Lake Creek,
4 sightseeing flights, and lodge-based recreation users. The lake contains important salmon
5 spawning habitat. The subunit provides high quality fishing, camping, and hunting
6 opportunities. The subunit is the most scenic in the Recreation Rivers, and is bounded on the
7 north by Denali National Park and the Alaska Range. Private lands are located along the
8 south and east shores of the lake. Because of its remote location, there is little winter use. The
9 subunit will be managed to provide and enhance recreation opportunities, a scenic setting,
10 and fish and wildlife habitat, while accommodating uses associated with private lands.
11 Maintaining public use sites is a high priority. The subunit will be managed to provide for
12 both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. There are no non-motorized
13 areas in this subunit.
14

15
16 **Management Guidelines**

17
18 **Boating Restrictions.** None.
19

20 **Chelatna Airstrip** (T27N, R12W, Sec. 13, SM). The Chelatna airstrip provides important
21 public access to Lake Creek, and surrounding land and water. It is strategically located at the
22 head of Lake Creek, and serves as the drop-off point for float trips and access to private lands
23 around the lake. No other wheelplane landing area exists in the vicinity. The airstrip is
24 managed as a remote, unmaintained public airstrip. As an unmaintained airstrip, it may be
25 improved or upgraded. It may receive maintenance on an as-needed basis, if included as a
26 line-item in a state agency’s budget. The shoreline adjacent the west end of the airstrip is also
27 important for mooring boats, inflating rafts, and as a drop-off point for floatplanes. Actions
28 in this area should ensure that public access to this area is maintained.
29

30 **Public Information.** A kiosk should be established near the Chelatna Airstrip and at one of
31 the primary floatplane drop-off points on Chelatna Lake to display information on the
32 Recreation Rivers. A sign should also be established near the outlet of the lake identifying
33 Lake Creek as a Recreation River.
34

35 **Foot Trails.** Development of hiking trails from the lakeshore to above tree line will provide
36 access to open tundra areas and Denali National Park which surrounds Chelatna Lake.
37 Development of these trails is a low priority for ADNR. Proposals to build hiking trails from
38 applicants or the National Park Service should be considered particularly if they provide
39 pedestrian access to the scenic high country around the lake.
40
41
42

1 **Public Use Sites**

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

5

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. ADNR should develop a box toilet at this location to accommodate occurring use.

PU 4e.2 Chelatna Airstrip (RM 54.3). This site is frequently used by both wheel and floatplanes for dropping off recreationists, private landowners, 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.

PU 4e.4 Snowslide Creek (RM 61.5). The mouth of this creek is frequently used by floatplane pilots and their passengers as a stopover during sightseeing trips of Denali.

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Location Map: Lake Creek Management Unit

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Map 1: Lake Creek

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Map 2: Lake Creek

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Map 3: Lake Creek

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Map 4: Lake Creek

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Map 5: Lake Creek

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Map 6: Lake Creek

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Map 7: Lake Creek

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