
Talkeetna River Management Unit

PAGE	3 - 40	Background
	3 - 41	3a. Lower Talkeetna River Subunit
	3 - 43	3b. Middle Talkeetna River Subunit
	3 - 45	3c. Clear (Chunilna) Creek Subunit
	3 - 46	3d. Talkeetna Canyon Subunit

3. Talkeetna River Management Unit

Background

MILES OF RIVER

This unit includes 44.5 miles of the Talkeetna River from its confluence with the Susitna River to the upper Talkeetna River Canyon, and 9.5 miles Clear (Chunilna) Creek from its confluence with the Talkeetna River (RM 0) to RM 9.5. The unit also includes the mouths of Sheep River, Iron Creek, Disappointment Creek, and Larson Creek.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	29,004 acres
Mental Health	1,077 acres
University of Alaska	204 acres
19 Private Parcels	216 acres
Total	30,501 acres

RIVER CHARACTERISTICS

The volume and velocity of the Talkeetna is greater than the other five Recreation Rivers. The river in the Canyon is narrow and fast-moving. Below the Talkeetna River Canyon, the river is wide and braided, with numerous large, forested islands. Because the river is glacial in origin, it is laden with silt during the summer months. Summer streamflow depths vary from 1 to 6 feet, and the lower river channel varies in width from 200 to 500 feet. The mean annual flow is 4,047 cfs, with winter low flows of 509 cfs and summer highs of 11,000 cfs. A 100-year flood of 121,000 cfs could result in a river width of one mile, and depths up to 20 feet near the mouth.

This unit is highly scenic because of the canyon on the upper river and views of the Talkeetna Mountains and Alaska Range from the lower river. Most human modifications in the unit are

not visible from the river with the exception of those along Clear Creek and in the vicinity of Talkeetna which somewhat diminish the visual quality of the river.

FISHERIES

Species Present

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

Chum, coho, king, and pink salmon spawn in Clear Creek. Grayling and rainbow trout, are found throughout the Clear Creek and Lower Talkeetna River subunits. Throughout the remainder of the management unit, chum, coho, sockeye, and king salmon are present, along with Dolly Varden, rainbow trout, and grayling. While chum and pink salmon occasionally spawn in the river itself, the remaining pink, chum, king, and coho salmon spawn in clear tributaries. Sockeye salmon spawn in several lakes draining into the Talkeetna River, including Larson Lake.

Sport Fishing

The peaks in recreation and fishing activity on the Talkeetna River correspond with the king and coho salmon runs. These are approximately June 15 to July 15, and July 15 to September 15, respectively. The most popular fishing spot is the mouth of Clear Creek, where all species of sport fish found in the river are caught. Near the railroad bridge and the mouth of Disappointment Creek receive less use.

Special Regulations

Fish Creek, a tributary of Clear Creek, is designated a catch and release special management area for rainbow trout. Only unbaited, single-hook artificial lures can be used.

WILDLIFE*Moose*

A resident moose population occurs throughout the unit. Moose from other areas migrate into the lower portion of the unit during the fall and winter seasons.

Bear

The unit provides food and cover for bears. Black bear and brown bear begin to frequent the lowlands in early May, with high spring densities of black bear at the mouth of the river. During June, July, and August bear concentrate along portions of the unit where salmon can be caught. Brown bears cover large areas in search of food, and depend on the river as a transportation corridor.

Bald eagles

There are two known bald eagle nests on the lower Talkeetna River and another just outside the unit on the Susitna River. Nest trees are primarily black cottonwood over fifty-feet tall that are within twenty feet of the river.

Trumpeter Swans

No swan nests are known to occur in the unit. However, the unit probably serves as a migration and staging area in the fall.

Hunting

Moose and bear hunting is concentrated in the lower reaches of the management unit, where foot, boat and off-road vehicle access is possible. The river also serves as a transportation corridor for hunters using boats to access upriver and tributary hunting areas, including Sheep River, Wiggle, and Iron creeks. These upriver locations receive significant use. Wildlife viewing, particularly of moose, is important in the Talkeetna area.

ACCESS

The Talkeetna Spur Road connects the town of Talkeetna to the Parks Highway. In Talkeetna, there are boat launches where powerboats can access the river and floaters can take-out. There are several airstrips in the Talkeetna area but none in the management unit. Some gravel bars on the lower river are infrequently used for landing. There are no lakes in the management unit and the river is too swift for floatplane landings. Powerboaters use the river up to the mouth of Iron Creek. Because of Class IV whitewater, the canyon is accessible only by rafts and kayaks.

3a. Lower Talkeetna River

Background

MILES OF RIVER/RIVER CHARACTERISTICS, RM 0 to RM 15.5 (excluding the mouth of Clear Creek)

This subunit begins at the confluence of the Talkeetna River with the Susitna River and extends to the mouth of Sheep River. The mouth of Clear Creek is in a different subunit. The subunit includes the wide floodplain between the hills and bluffs along the river. Less than 5 percent of this subunit is contiguous wetland.

LAND OWNERSHIP

State	5,907 acres
State/Mental Health	1,077 acres
University of Alaska	204 acres
13 Private Parcels	124 acres
Total	7,312 acres