

# Appendix I: Wild and Scenic Rivers

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## APPENDIX I: WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

This Appendix contains detailed descriptions of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) for each of the eligible river segment within the planning area along with management actions to protect these ORVs in the interim. Maps 58-60 show the location and the surrounding land status of each eligible river segment.

### A. Introduction

Section 1326(b) of ANILCA states, “[n]o further studies of Federal lands in the State of Alaska for the single purpose of considering the establishment of a conservation system unit, national recreation area, national conservation area, or for related or similar purposes shall be conducted unless authorized by this Act or further Act of Congress.” A conservation system unit as defined by Section 102(4) of ANILCA includes wild and scenic rivers.

Inventory and review, however, may be conducted as part of a comprehensive planning effort, such as the creation or revision of a resource management plan. The settlement agreement for the 1993 case of *American Rivers et al. vs. the Secretary of the Interior* states:

The Director, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will rescind BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 91-127, which provides an exception for Alaska from the general BLM requirement to conduct wild and scenic river studies as part of the resource management plan (RMP) process, and instruct BLM, Alaska to follow the BLM guidelines, presently set out as part 8351 of the BLM Manual, for conducting such studies. It is understood that these guidelines may change with time and it is the mutual intent of the plaintiffs and the federal defendants that BLM, Alaska follow the same policies and procedures that are followed by BLM throughout the rest of the United States (U.S. District Court 1993).

Consistent with these directives, the East Alaska RMP planning team conducted an eligibility review for the planning area. Review was based largely on an earlier review conducted in 1989 as part of a draft RMP effort that was halted due to budget constraints and conveyance concerns. At that time, the team considered over 300 rivers in the area for eligibility based on criteria described in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and BLM’s 8351 Manual. After interdisciplinary review, the 1989 team came up with a list of 25 eligible rivers within the planning area. The 1989 team then classified the eligible rivers as wild, scenic, or recreational. The 2004 team reviewed the eligibility and classification of these 25 segments and assessed the segments for suitability, based on criteria listed in BLM’s 8351 Manual. The list of eligible rivers and the team’s suitability determinations were presented in the Draft RMP/EIS.

Of the 25 rivers listed as eligible in the Draft RMP/EIS, only one was shown to be suitable for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. Most river segments considered eligible run through uplands that are State or State-selected lands. In assessing suitability, this was a major consideration and in most cases the primary reason for a finding of non-suitability. According to BLM Manual 8351 (Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, and Management of Wild and Scenic Rivers):

“In situations where there is limited public lands (shoreline and adjacent lands) administered by the BLM within the identified river study area, it may be difficult to ensure those identified outstandingly remarkable values could be properly maintained and afforded adequate management protection over time. Accordingly...river segments may be determined suitable only if the entity with land use planning responsibility supports the finding and commits to assisting the BLM in protecting the identified river values.”

In their written comments throughout the planning process, the State of Alaska is opposed to any additions to the Wild and Scenic River system.

BLM received numerous comments on the Draft RMP/EIS on our eligibility and suitability determinations and on the lists presented in the Draft. Most comments supported protection of the identified eligible segments and opposed BLM’s finding of non-suitability. Several commenters asked BLM to defer suitability determinations until State entitlements are met and land status is determined in the planning area. BLM also received comments on proposed additions and deletions to the eligibility list. Based on public comments and on the fact that our primary consideration for suitability was land status (which is in a constant state of change until entitlements are met), the decision was made to defer suitability.

The planning team then re-considered the list of eligible rivers, based on public comment and on internal (BLM) comments received during the planning process. The edited list of eligible rivers is presented in Table 23 of the Final RMP/EIS. This appendix presents a more detailed description of the outstandingly remarkable values for each river, maps, and interim protective measures. In most cases (where adjacent uplands are State-selected), protective measures can only be prescribed on an interim basis. If State-selected uplands are conveyed to the State, these river segments will not be considered for suitability. For rivers that were included on the eligible list in the Draft RMP/EIS that were removed from the list, an explanation is provided.

To be determined eligible, a river segment must be free flowing and possess one or more Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV). The definition of free flowing is “existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway.” (section 16(b) Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; BLM Manual 8351) ORVs are listed in section 1(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and include scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar

values. BLM Manual 8351 further elaborates on the definitions of these ORVs by outlining standards to guide how these values are to be interpreted and applied on BLM-administered land. These standards, summarized below, were used by the planning team in the identification of eligible river segments.

- Scenic**                      The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors must result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attraction with the geographic region. The rating area must be scenic quality “A” as defined in the BLM Visual Resource Inventory Handbook, H-8410-1. Scenery and visual attraction may be highly diverse over the majority of the river segment length and not common to other rivers in the geographic region.
- Recreational**              Recreational opportunities are or have the potential to be unusual enough to attract visitors to the geographic region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. The river provides a critically important regional recreation opportunity.
- Geologic**                      The river or area within the river corridor contains example(s) of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is rare, unusual, or unique to the geographic region.
- Fish**                              The river is nationally or regionally one of the top producers of resident, indigenous, and/or anadromous fish species. The river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species. Of particular significance are populations or habitat for State, Federally listed, or candidate threatened and endangered species or the presence of unique or wild stocks.
- Wildlife**                      The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of resident or indigenous wildlife species dependent on the river environment. The river or area within the corridor provides exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance. Of particular significance are populations or habitat for State, Federally listed, or candidate threatened and endangered species.
- Cultural**                      The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must be rare, have unusual characteristics, or exceptional human-interest value(s).
- Historic**                      The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) or feature(s) associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare or unusual in the region.

**Other similar values**

While no specific evaluation guidelines have been developed for this category, additional values deemed relevant to the eligibility of the river segment should be considered in a manner consistent with the foregoing guidance.

(BLM 1993)

The planning team also determined tentative classifications for each eligible river or river segment, based on existing characteristics of a river area resulting from human-caused change or levels of development or use. Classification establishes a guideline for management until a suitability determination is done.

Once a river is deemed eligible through the Land Use Planning process and tentatively classified as a wild, scenic, or recreational area, BLM has the responsibility to institute management measures as “necessary to ensure appropriate protection of the value supporting the eligibility and classification determination” BLM Manual 8351 (BLM 1993). Protective management actions are subject to valid existing rights and shall not allow activities or authorized uses to adversely affect the free-flowing characteristic of the river segment, the outstandingly remarkable values, or the tentative classification of the segment. Protective management is initiated by the authorizing officer (District Manager) as soon as eligibility is determined. (BLM 1993).

## **B. Outstandingly remarkable values and interim protection for eligible rivers**

### **1. *Brushkana Creek***

#### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. This clear water creek flows north out of the Talkeetna Mountains, across the Denali Highway and into the Nenana River, a distance of 12 miles. Grayling fishing is a major activity near the Denali Highway and within Brushkana Creek Campground which the river flows next to for a short section. The clear water nature and larger water volume than many other runoff creeks in the area attract visitors to the river. The river can be floated, depending on water levels, by raft or canoe to the confluence with the Nenana.

## b) Tentative classification

**Scenic.** The segment from the headwaters to south of the Denali Highway where the river enters dual-selected lands is free of impoundments, with shorelines still largely primitive and undeveloped, but accessible in places by an OHV trail. **Recreational.** The segment from just south of the Denali Highway to the confluence with the Nenana. With the Denali Highway, Brushkana campground, and an OHV trail parallel to the river, the segment is readily accessible and has some development along the shorelines.

## c) Outstandingly remarkable values

**Historic:** The Brushkana Creek Cabin is the only standing example of late 1920's Alaska Road Commission shelter cabins along the Cantwell-Denali Trail, which connected the newly constructed railroad with one of the most modern mining communities in Alaska at that time, the town of Denali (Dessauer and Harvey 1980:45). Because of the destruction of the Denali townsite in the 1970's, this cabin remains one of only three structures that represent a unique era in the Alaska Range's mining history.

**Recreational:** This river offers a diversity of experiences and is road-accessible on the lower portion. It is also accessible north of the Denali via an OHV trail that parallels the river and provides access for fishing or other recreational pursuits. The Brushkana campground provides a roaded-natural recreation setting along the Brushkana. South of the Denali highway, an OHV trail parallels the creek and provides opportunities for a semi-primitive experience. The headwaters of the river are inaccessible and would provide a primitive non-motorized experience.

**Scenic:** South of the Denali Highway, this river flows through tundra and low-shrub vegetation, with the Talkeetna mountains providing a dramatic backdrop to the south. North of the Denali Highway, spectacular views of the Alaska Range and Clearwater mountains occur.

## d) Interim Protective Measures

Most land along Brushkana Creek is selected by the State of Alaska and is therefore segregated against mineral entry or leasing until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. This area will be designated as "limited" to OHVs under the East Alaska RMP, with OHVs required to stay on existing trails. No potential exists for forestry activities. Interim recreation management for this area (Denali Highway) is to manage to maintain existing ROS classes, which would maintain the diversity of experiences described under the ORVs.

## **2. Clearwater Creek**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. Clearwater Creek flows south from the Clearwater Mountains, crosses the Denali Highway, and then flows into the Susitna River. The river is 22 miles long. Grayling fishing is a popular activity near the Denali Highway and Clearwater Creek offers an accessible and highly productive fishing experience. As the name implies, this is a clear water creek with outstanding water quality. To the north, a hike along the creek and into the Clearwater Mountains offers a high quality semi-primitive and primitive experience. Water volume is marginal for floating in the upper segment of the river. During dry years, this segment is probably not floatable. In the segment of the river below the Denali Highway, water volume is sufficient to allow floating.

### **b) Tentative classification**

**Wild.** The segment from it's origin to one mile north of the Denali Highway is free of impoundments and inaccessible except by trail. The watershed is primitive.

**Recreational.** The segment from one mile north of the Denali Highway to the confluence with the Susitna river. With the Denali Highway, the Clearwater wayside, and Clearwater south OHV trail, this segment is readily accessible and has some development along the shorelines.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Scenic:** The river offers spectacular views of the Alaska range Clearwater Mountains to the north which are dominated by the U shaped valleys left behind by glaciers. To the south towards the Susitna, the flat plain extends for miles to distant foothills.

**Recreational:** The river offers a diversity of experiences and is easily accessed from the Denali Highway. Upstream of the Denali Highway is largely non-motorized, rugged terrain and offers a spectacular and primitive experience. Where the stream crosses the Denali Highway, the highway and the Clearwater wayside offer easy access to a roaded-natural experience and quality grayling fishing. Downstream, a hunting trail parallels the stream and offers occasional access via foot, horseback, or OHV.

## d) Interim protective measures

Most land adjacent to Clearwater Creek is selected by the State of Alaska and is therefore segregated against mineral entry or leasing until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. This area will be designated as “limited” to OHVs under the East Alaska RMP, with OHVs required to stay on existing trails. No potential exists for forestry activities. Interim recreation management for this area (Denali Highway) is to manage to maintain existing ROS classes, which would maintain the diversity of experiences described under the ORVs.

## 3. *Duktoth River*

### a) General description

Shown on Map 60, page I-27. From its origin in the Robinson Mountains north of Cape Yakataga, the Duktoth flows to the west and then south through BLM lands before entering State lands. While the entire river would easily qualify as eligible, this assessment only considers the segment on BLM lands. The river valley in this portion is narrow and flanked by steep mountain walls rising over 3,000 feet. It is inaccessible...there are no roads or known trails that access this upper portion and the closest fixed-wing landing site is at the junction of the Duktoth and Leeper rivers.

### b) Tentative classification

**Wild.** This river segment is free of impoundments and is inaccessible. Its' shorelines are primitive. This is as wild as it gets.

### c) Outstandingly remarkable values

**Scenic:** The river possesses expansive scenic views that create a visual gateway to the inland glaciers and massifs.

**Cultural:** Of cultural significance, the river served as a route used by native groups in the Interior to trade with native groups on the coast. The Duktoth River was a major prehistoric trade and travel route between the Eyak, Tlingit and Ahtna (De Laguna 1972:100-101). The area may also be part of the Kwackqwan migration route from the interior. Although this river has not been investigated for cultural resources, it is likely to contain significant heritage resources of the Eyak and Tlingit peoples.

**Recreational:** This river segment would offer a true wilderness challenge. The river above the confluence with the Leeper would be floatable but getting a raft or canoe into this segment would be a challenge.

#### **d) Interim protective measures**

This area would be part of the Bering Glacier Research Natural Area and will be managed to protect the unique ecological characteristics associated with the glacial environment. OHV trails would be designated within the RNA. None are known to exist in this river segment, so designation would maintain the status quo. While mature hemlock/spruce stands cover the valley bottom and slopes lower in the drainage, this portion of the river segment is sparsely vegetated, so no timber harvest would occur. Because of the inaccessibility, mineral development in this river segment is highly unlikely. However, a ¼ mile setback will be put in place on mineral leasing.

### **4. Hungry Hollow**

#### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. This creek flows southward from the lakes in the tundra near the Denali Highway to the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River over a distance of xx miles. Water volume in this clearwater stream would be marginal for floating. Canoeing may be possible in the lower segment of the stream. This stream is accessible from the Denali Highway or from the Swede Lake trail.

#### **b) Tentative classification**

**Scenic.** This stream is free of impoundments, with shorelines still largely primitive and undeveloped. The headwaters are accessed by the Denali Highway and the lower portion of the stream is accessed by an OHV trail. The area offers a semi-primitive motorized setting.

#### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

This stream is a tributary of the Gulkana River and shares some of the same outstandingly remarkable values as that river.

**Fisheries:** The waters host the northernmost steelhead spawning habitat as well as spawning habitat for sockeye salmon.

**Wildlife:** Bald eagles nest along the banks in the lower portion and the vegetation provides prime moose habitat. The Nelchina Caribou Herd migrates through the area in the fall or winter, providing subsistence opportunities as well as opportunities to view hundreds of caribou.

**Cultural:** The watershed is a part of the Tangle Lakes Archeological District, which is managed to protect the high density of cultural sites that exist within the area. See the description on page 260 of the Final RMP/EIS.

#### **d) Interim protective measures**

Land along Hungry Hollow is State- and Native-selected and is therefore segregated against mineral exploration or development until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. OHVs are limited to designated trails within the Tangle Lakes Archeological District and along the ½ mile of Hungry Hollow that currently flows through the Gulkana National Wild River corridor. Vegetation consists of low willow and black spruce and no potential for forestry activities exists.

### **5. Kulthieth River**

#### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 60, page I-27. This river is a tributary to the Kaliakh River, which flows into the Gulf of Alaska west of Cape Yakataga. The Kulthieth runs out of the Robinson Mountains, where it meanders through a wide valley bottom of wetlands and willow before its confluence with the Kaliakh. The Kulthieth is 20 miles long. The Kulthieth is inaccessible by road or trail, with the closest road at least seven miles distant. Gravel bars may provide landing areas for small aircraft.

#### **b) Tentative classification**

**Wild.** This river is free of impoundments and inaccessible. The watershed and shorelines are primitive.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Scenic:** Remarkable scenery seen from the river includes majestic mountains and the ice fields beyond. The wide and lush river valley provides stark contrast to a backdrop of mountains and glaciers.

**Cultural:** This river is part of the headwaters of the Kaliakh River, which figures prominently in the Eyak origin myth. According to the myth, the Eyak came to the area after the great flood, when they were attracted to the river's headwaters by a beautiful mountain above and next to the river. This was also the site of a famous Eyak village, Galiya or Galyax, where they fought an important battle with the Aleut (De Laguna 1972:101).

**Fisheries:** The Kulthieth River, a clearwater tributary of the Kaliakh River, is the primary spawning and rearing area for coho salmon in the Kaliakh watershed. The coho run supports commercial set net and sport fisheries and a dense population of eagles in the lower Kaliakh River system.

**Wildlife:** The river provides excellent wildlife habitat. It is a waterfowl nesting and molting area, provides habitat for moose, and the south slopes above the river provide important brown bear spring and fall habitat.

### **d) Interim protective measures**

The Kulthieth flows through State lands, then onto State and Native selected lands until it's confluence with the Kaliakh. Protective measures would only apply on selected lands. Because of the selections, mineral entry or leasing is prohibited until conveyance or relinquishment. OHVs would be limited to existing trails. None are known to exist. The river valley is extensively forested with mature spruce and hemlock. However, access limitations preclude any possibility of forestry activities in this area during the life of this plan.

## **6. Kosakuts River**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 60, page I-27. This river is another tributary to the Kaliakh River, which flows into the Gulf of Alaska west of Cape Yakataga. The Kosakuts runs out of the Robinson Mountains, where it meanders through a broad valley bottom of wetlands, willow, and stands of immature spruce and cottonwood before its confluence with the Kaliakh. The Kosakuts is about 10 miles long. The Kosakuts is inaccessible by road or

trail, with the closest road at least seven miles distant. Gravel bars may provide landing areas for small aircraft.

## **b) Tentative classification**

**Wild.** This river is free of impoundments and inaccessible. The watershed and shorelines are primitive.

## **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Scenic:** Remarkable scenery seen from the river includes majestic mountains and the ice fields beyond. The wide and lush river valley provides stark contrast to a backdrop of mountains and glaciers.

**Fisheries:** The Kosakuts River, a clearwater tributary of the Kaliakh River, provides spawning and rearing habitat for coho salmon in the Kaliakh watershed. The coho run supports commercial set net and sport fisheries and a dense population of eagles in the lower Kaliakh River system.

**Wildlife:** The river and surrounding environment provide excellent wildlife habitat. It is a waterfowl nesting and molting area, provides habitat for moose and brown bear, and the surrounding Robinson mountains provide mountain goat habitat.

## **d) Interim protective measures**

The Kosakuts starts on unencumbered BLM lands, then flows onto State and Native selected lands until it's confluence with the Kaliakh. Because of the selections, mineral entry or leasing is prohibited until conveyance or relinquishment. OHVs would be limited to existing trails. None are known to exist. The river valley is extensively forested with immature spruce and cottonwood. However, access limitations preclude any possibility of forestry activities in this area during the life of this plan.

## **7. Liberty Creek**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 59, page I-26. Liberty Creek originates in the open tundra of the Chugach Mountains at 5,000 feet elevation. Visitors to the area will see that its source is a series of lakes fed by high mountain runoff. The creek flows from one lake to the next creating a cascading network of waterfalls that eventually lead to a slotted canyon draining to the Copper River. Although non-navigable, Liberty Creek provides a primitive, non-motorized experience easily accessible from the nearby Edgerton highway.

### **b) Tentative classification**

**Scenic.** This creek is free of impoundments, with a watershed still largely primitive. The headwaters of the creek are accessible via the 5-mile road off the Edgerton Highway.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Scenic:** The grand landscapes and ridge tops of the Chugach provide an expansive backdrop. In the upper portion of the watershed, views of the Copper River and Copper Basin are provided, with views of Mt. Drum, Sanford, and Wrangell.

**Recreational:** The watershed provides a diversity of recreational opportunities. There is a developed campground just off the Edgerton Highway at Liberty Falls, with a hiking trail. There is motorized access to the upper portion of the watershed and some OHV trails in the area. There are hiking opportunities in the open tundra above timberline and hiking access further into the Chugach range and drainages further to the south for a primitive experience.

### **d) Interim protective measures**

Land along Liberty Creek is State- and Native-selected. Therefore a segregation against mineral exploration or development is in place until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. OHVs would be limited to existing trails. The upper portion of the drainage is sparsely vegetated and not a candidate for forestry practices.

## 8. Maclaren River

### a) General description

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. The Maclaren River, from the headwaters to the confluence with the Susitna River, is a free-flowing, glacial river, running approximately 50 miles. There is enough water for power boating on this river. Access to the headwaters is by OHV trail or airplane to a landing strip at the toe of the Maclaren Glacier. It is also accessible from the Denali Highway. Boating occurs from the highway crossing down river to the Susitna River. It is possible to continue down the Susitna River to the Tyone River, and upriver on the Tyone River to Lake Louise.

### b) Tentative classification

**Scenic.** This river is free of impoundments, though it is bridged where it is crossed by the Denali Highway. Aside from the Denali Highway crossing, the shoreline is still largely primitive and undeveloped.

### c) Outstandingly remarkable values

**Scenic:** There is excellent open scenery at the headwaters from the west fork. The river runs through low tundra vegetation in a broad glacial valley with a backdrop of tall rugged peaks of the Alaska Range. The lower segment is a broad meandering river. Views from the lower segment are of glacial features and the Alphabet Hills.

**Wildlife:** The Maclaren River valley is a known staging area for the Nelchina Caribou Herd on their fall migration and thus presents opportunities for subsistence hunting or viewing hundreds of caribou. The drainage also provides numerous backwaters, ponds, and lakes that provide excellent waterfowl habitat. It also provides habitat for moose and brown bear.

**Cultural:** The Maclaren River passes through the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District, a property that is on the National Register of Historic Places for its significant and continuous contributions to knowledge about the prehistory and history of Alaska. This National Register District contains over 400 listed and contributing sites, including two listed prehistoric sites close to the Maclaren River itself (Bowers 1992).

**Recreational:** The river presents opportunities for a diversity of recreational experiences, from roaded-natural in the vicinity of the Denali Highway to primitive and semi-primitive motorized if floating or powerboating the river.

## **d) Interim protective measures**

Most land along the Maclaren River is selected by the State of Alaska and is therefore segregated against mineral exploration or development until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. The area will be designated as limited to OHVs. Because of the vegetation (tundra and black spruce), no forestry activities would be considered.

## **9. Monsoon Creek and Lake**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. Monsoon Creek flows south from Monsoon Lake to the north branch of the West Fork of the Gulkana River, a distance of approximately 13 miles. The river is free flowing and clear. Access is by airplane to Monsoon Lake or other connected lakes. This river ties into the Gulkana River where access out is possible via the west fork and main stem of the Gulkana. This would be a canoe or kayak trip.

### **b) Tentative classification**

**Wild.** This creek is free of impoundments and inaccessible except by airplane or trail. The shorelines are primitive and undeveloped.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Fisheries:** Spawning habitat is present for Chinook and sockeye salmon. The lake and creek also provide habitat for resident species including grayling and lake trout.

**Recreation:** This creek provides an opportunity for a primitive, non-motorized experience. When combined with the Gulkana trip, it would be a 4 – 5 day float.

### **d) Interim protective measures**

Land along Monsoon Creek is State- and Native-selected. Therefore a segregated against mineral exploration or development is in place until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. OHVs would be limited to existing trails. Currently there are no

OHV trails present in the area. Vegetation consists of black spruce and shrubs and there is no access so forestry activities would not occur.

## **10. Nenana River**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. The Nenana River has its headwaters at the Nenana Glacier in the Alaska Range. A portion of the river parallels the Denali Highway providing access to floating and powerboating opportunities. The float can take out at points farther along the highway or continue on along the Parks Highway, into McKinley, and north towards Healy. Because most of the lower river portion flows through State or Native land, this eligibility determination and interim protective measures only apply to the river segment from the glacier to Wells Creek, a distance of about 30 miles. This is a glacial river.

### **b) Tentative classification**

**Recreational.** Most of the upper segment of this river parallels the Denali Highway. There are numerous OHV trails off the Denali Highway in this area, some that overlook the Nenana but none that directly access it.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Scenic:** The dominant visual features along this segment are the lower peaks of the Talkeetna mountains to the south and the impressive Alaska Range to the north. There is a dramatic display across Monahan Flat of Mt. Nenana, Mt. Deborah, Mt. Hess and associated mountains and glaciers.

**Recreational:** The road accessible nature and trips of varying lengths, difficulties, and modes of transportation make the Nenana River an exceptional recreational opportunity.

### **d) Interim protective measures**

Most land along the Nenana River is selected by the State of Alaska and is therefore segregated against mineral exploration or development until conveyance or

relinquishment occurs. OHVs will be limited to existing trails. Recreation will be managed for a roaded-natural experience in the vicinity of the Denali Highway; semi-primitive motorized and primitive experiences in the upper portions of the watershed.

## **11. Susitna River**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. The portion of the Susitna River considered includes the headwaters to the confluence of Kosina Creek. This is a glacial, free flowing river. The river is accessible from the Denali Highway. Jet boats go up through the East Fork. Boating occurs from the highway crossing down river to the Maclaren River and upriver on the Maclaren to the Denali Highway. It is also possible to continue down the Susitna River to the Tyone River, and upriver on the Tyone and out through Lake Louise.

### **b) Tentative classification**

**Scenic.** This river segment is free of impoundments, with shorelines still largely primitive and undeveloped. Exception in this segment is where the river is crossed by the Denali Highway. In the area of the Denali Highway crossing, the river is also paralleled for a short distance by the Valdez Creek road. South of the Denali Highway, the river is paralleled at a distance by the Susitna South OHV trail but this trail does not access the river. Powerboat use occurs on the river and is a traditional and established use.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Recreational:** This river and adjacent lands provide a diversity of recreational opportunities. The river is road accessible and the potential exists for several different semi-primitive motorized experiences. In the vicinity of the Denali Highway, there are numerous opportunities to access the river for short day hikes or simply viewing the river from the highway for a roaded-natural experience. Opportunities certainly still exist for quality primitive experiences along the river corridor.

**Cultural:** The Susitna River corridor contains over fifty-six known archaeological and three historic period sites, spanning from the 1940's through approximately 11,000 years ago (Dixon et al 1982). These sites are likely to provide information for the entire Holocene history of the northwestern Copper River Basin as well as the Talkeetna Mountains. Therefore, many of these sites may be eligible for the National Register of

Historic Places. The Ahtna also know this river as a rich subsistence area that was also the site of a long term territorial feud between themselves and the Nenana people. Ahtna tradition holds that the area near Swampbuggy Lake was the site of their most successful battle, which is often referred to as the Nenana War site (BIA 1993:3).

#### **d) Interim protective measures**

Most land along the Susitna River is selected by the State of Alaska and is therefore segregated against mineral exploration or development until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. OHVs will be limited to existing trails and much of the segment south of the Denali Highway is not accessed by any trail. Vegetation is a mix of low shrub, tundra, and black spruce so no forestry activities will occur.

### ***12. Tonsina River system including the Little Tonsina River, Tonsina Lake, Tonsina River, and Greyling Creek***

#### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 59, page I-26. The Tonsina River is a glacier-fed river that flows out of the Chugach mountains, into Tonsina Lake, and then through spruce-covered hills of the Copper basin for approximately 50 miles before it joins with the Copper River several miles above Chitina. The river is accessible at numerous locations along its length from the Richardson Highway and the Edgerton Highway. Because it is glacial, the river is slightly silted by glacial melt. The Little Tonsina and Greyling Creek are tributaries that are both clearwater streams.

#### **b) Tentative classification**

The BLM-managed segment above Tonsina Lake to just below Tonsina Lake, including Greyling Creek: **Wild**. This segment is free of impoundments and inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines primitive and waters unpolluted. The BLM-managed lands along the Little Tonsina and along the Tonsina mainstem from where it leaves State lands to its confluence with the Copper River: **Recreational**. Portions of this segment are readily accessible by road or trail. The Richardson Highway and the Trans-Alaska pipeline parallel the river for a portion of this segment. Most of this segment is not directly impacted by man-made alterations, but some alterations have occurred to prevent damage to the highway.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Scenic:** The wild segment in particular provides outstanding views of the glaciers and high mountains of the Chugach range as well as the Chugach foothills.

**Recreational:** This river system provides a tremendous diversity of recreational opportunities. Greyling Creek and the Tonsina river above the lake provide a remote and challenging primitive experience. Tonsina Lake and the river below it is accessible by a rough OHV trail. The section of the Tonsina from the Richardson Highway to the intersection with the Edgerton Highway is one of the most accessible and recreationally challenging rivers for floaters in the planning area. Water levels change rapidly with runoff and glacial melt affecting the whitewater experience. It's accessibility from both sides by major transportation systems makes this an exceptional one day river float.

**Fisheries:** The Tonsina river system provides spawning habitat for coho, sockeye, and Chinook salmon, vitally important subsistence, commercial and sport species.

**Cultural:** There are numerous historic and prehistoric archeological sites along the Little Tonsina and Tonsina Rivers, including a contact period Ahtna village as well as sites with artifacts similar to those of the Denali Complex, which dates to between 7,000 to 10,000 years ago (AHRs 2005; Keating and Jangala 2004:11). A few of these sites are in the vicinity of where the Tonsina River Valley intersects the ancient, late Pleistocene to early Holocene shoreline of pro-glacial Lake Ahtna, which existed in the area prior to about 9,000 years ago. This river corridor therefore holds the potential for archeological sites that would inform research about a largely unknown period in Copper Basin prehistory.

### **d) Interim protective measures**

Land status along these river segments is a patchwork of BLM-managed lands (both selected and unencumbered), State, and Native. On selected lands, there is a segregation against mineral leasing or mineral entry until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. Unencumbered lands within this area (the pipeline/utility corridor) are withdrawn from mineral leasing or entry. On unencumbered BLM lands, OHVs trails would be designated. On selected lands, OHVs would be limited to existing trails. This is a forestry emphasis area. However, because of access limitations, no forestry activities would occur in the wild segment. Forestry activities in the recreational portion would comply with visual resource objectives described in the RMP and the Required Operating Procedures to minimize visual impacts. This is consistent with management of a recreational segment.

## **13. Twelve Mile Creek**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. This Clearwater stream originates in the Alphabet Hills and runs for a distance of approximately 12 miles, where it joins the Gulkana River. It is accessed via the Gulkana River or by the Haggard Creek trail, which crosses the Gulkana and continues up Twelvemile Creek into the Alphabet Hills. Because of low water volume, this creek would not be floatable.

### **b) Tentative classification**

**Scenic.** This creek is free of impoundments, with shorelines still largely primitive. An OHV trail parallels the creek but does not directly impact it.

### **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Fisheries:** This creek provides spawning habitat for Chinook and sockeye salmon, as well as steelhead, a BLM sensitive species.

### **d) Interim protective measures**

The mouth of Twelvemile Creek is within the Gulkana National Wild River corridor. Outside of the corridor, the land is State-selected. Because of the selection, there is a segregation against mineral entry or leasing until conveyance or relinquishment occurs. OHVs trails within the corridor will be designated; outside the corridor on selected lands, OHVs will be limited to existing trails. There is only one in the area. Because of the difficult access and black spruce vegetation, no forestry activities will occur.

## **14. Victor Creek**

### **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. Victor Creek is a tributary of the Gulkana River. It flows southward through the Alphabet Hills and empties into the West Fork of the Gulkana

River. This creek is remote and only accessed via the Gulkana River. There are no roads or summer trails. There is a winter trail in the area. There are no good landing sites for small planes.

## **b) Tentative classification**

**Wild.** This creek is free of impoundments and inaccessible, with shorelines primitive and undeveloped.

## **c) Outstandingly remarkable values**

**Wildlife:** Trumpeter swans nest and stage in lakes and ponds on lands adjacent to the creek. Osprey and bald eagle nests are near the creek. The Alphabet Hills area is noted as prime habitat for bull moose.

**Fisheries:** Victor Creek provides spawning habitat for Chinook and sockeye salmon, species that provide critical subsistence, commercial, and sport fishing opportunities in the Gulkana and Copper Rivers.

## **d) Interim protective measures**

The area is currently selected by the State of Alaska and is therefore segregated against mineral exploration or development until conveyance or relinquishment of the land occurs. OHV use will be limited to existing trails. No summer trails are known to exist in the immediate area. No forestry activities would occur because of the lack of access.

# **15. West Fork Gulkana River, South Branch**

## **a) General description**

Shown on Map 58, page I-25. This portion of the Gulkana River was not included in the ANILCA designation of the Gulkana as a part of the National Wild and Scenic River system. The 1983 Gulkana River Management Plan recommended this portion for inclusion into the system. This clearwater branch of the Gulkana meanders through wetlands and black spruce lowlands before joining with the north branch of the west fork.

## b) Tentative classification

**Wild.** This segment is free of impoundments, with primitive and undeveloped shorelines. There is no road or trail access.

## c) Outstandingly remarkable values

**Recreational:** This free-flowing 15-mile stretch represents some of the wildest and remotest reaches of river within the Gulkana system. Expansive views of the Alphabet Hills can be seen from the river that is surrounded by low-lying wetlands. Recreational opportunities provide for an extended, primitive canoe experience accessed from the Tyone River through a series of portages or by floatplane on one of the many interconnected lakes in the area.

**Scenic:** Expansive views of the Alphabet Hills can be seen from the river, a contrast to the surrounding low-lying wetlands.

**Wildlife:** Wetlands in the area provide habitat for abundant waterfowl, including trumpeter swans. Osprey and bald eagle nests occur along this segment. The area provides outstanding habitat for moose and brown bear.

**Fisheries:** This segment provides spawning habitat for anadromous fish species including sockeye and chinook salmon, species that are vitally important to all residents along the Copper River for subsistence, sport fishing, and commercial fishing opportunities.

## d) Interim protective measures

The area is currently selected by the State of Alaska and is therefore segregated against mineral exploration or development until conveyance or relinquishment of the land occurs. The State has recognized the segment's outstanding recreational, fisheries, and wildlife values by designating it a State wild and scenic river. The East Alaska Final EIS includes this area in the Gulkana River SRMA designation as well as outlining several protective measures pertaining to wetlands and trumpeter swan breeding habitat preservation. All OHV use is limited to existing trails and no ADNR permitted river crossings exist within the area.

## C. Reasons for dropping rivers from original list of eligible rivers published in the Draft RMP/EIS.

**Bernard Creek:** This creek runs almost entirely through State lands.

**Chistochina River:** This river runs almost entirely through State or Native lands. Given the State's documented opposition to new additions to the national system, it would be difficult to ensure cooperation in protective management of any outstandingly remarkable values.

**Ewan Lake:** Same reasoning as the Tangle Lakes trail system. This is a lake, not a flowing body of water.

**Fish Lake system:** Same as Ewan Lake. In addition, there is significant development on the lake's shorelines, including several houses and an airstrip.

**Sourdough and Haggard Creeks:** The Draft RMP/EIS and the 1989 planning team listed "extension of Gulkana Wild and Scenic River" as a description of the outstandingly remarkable values for these two streams. However, the current planning team could not find any outstandingly remarkable values for these streams, given the standards described in section A of this Appendix. Just because they are tributaries of the Gulkana does not mean that they share the same outstandingly remarkable values.

**Suslota Creek:** Only a very small portion of this creek runs through BLM-managed lands. The remaining lands are State or Native.

**Tangle Lakes trail system:** The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act defines a river as a "flowing body of water or estuary or a section, portion, or tributary thereof..." This series of small lakes is not connected by a creek or river and requires several portages. The planning team did not feel that it fit the definition of river as provided in the Act.

**Tyone River:** This river's uplands are almost entirely State land. There is a small (5 – 6 mile) portion that is State-selected. Given the State's documented opposition to new additions to the national system, it would be difficult to ensure cooperation in protective management of any outstandingly remarkable values.

## **Map 58. Eligible River Segments Denali Highway Region**

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## **Map 59. Eligible River Segments Tielcel Region**

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## **Map 60. Eligible River Segments Bering Glacier Region**

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