



Fact Sheet: Nelchina Public Use Area

Background

The Nelchina Public Use Area covers about 2.5 million acres in the Talkeetna Mountains of southcentral Alaska. The Public Use Area was established by the legislature in 1985 to:

- Protect fish and wildlife habitat, particularly caribou calving areas, trumpeter swan nesting areas, and other important habitats for moose, Dall sheep and brown bear so that traditional public uses of fish and wildlife populations may continue;
- Perpetuate and enhance public enjoyment of fish and wildlife and their habitat including fishing, hunting, trapping, viewing, photography;
- Perpetuate and enhance general public recreation in a quality environment;
- Perpetuate and enhance additional public uses described in the Susitna Area Plan; and
- Allow additional public uses of the area in a manner compatible with the purpose specified above. (AS 41.23.010).

The legislation commits this land to public ownership, rather than land sales. The Susitna Area Plan also designates this area for exploration and development of mineral resources.

Most access to the area is along an extensive ATV and foot trail system. The trail system starts from the Glenn Highway, south of the public use area. Float planes and ski planes also land on lakes in the area. Motorboats are used along rivers to reach parts of the area.

What's special about this Public Use Area?

The Nelchina Public Use area is the biggest legislatively designated area on state land in Alaska. It is an outstanding area for hunting, fishing, recreation, and mining.

The vast area is home for the Nelchina Caribou herd, the third largest caribou herd in Alaska. It also supports important populations of trumpeter swans, moose, Dall sheep, and brown bear.

The area has a long history of mining, and mining activity continues. Early miners built many of the trails. Today, the trails provide access for mining, hunting, trapping, fishing,

hiking, snowmobiling, wildlife, and other recreation year-round.

Guidelines for the Public Use Area

The legislation directs DNR to adopt a management plan for this area. Management planning for this area has not yet been scheduled. In the interim, the land is managed subject to the legislation and the general guidelines in the Susitna Area Plan.

The Nelchina Public Use Area is managed for multiple use. The broad array of activities that have taken place on these lands continues to be allowed. Guidelines were adopted in the department's Susitna Area Plan to maintain or enhance the special values of this area and to ensure that the variety of public uses occur compatibly.

The guidelines set by the area plan cover mineral exploration and development in caribou calving areas during the calving season (May 1 to June 15). Guidelines also address road construction throughout the area. Grazing is currently prohibited in the public use area. The complete guidelines are found in the Susitna Area Plan.

There are not special restrictions on generally allowed uses on these lands. Generally allowed uses are those that occur at one site on state land for 14 consecutive days or less, and that do not require a DNR permit or lease. Examples of generally allowed uses include hunting, fishing, and trapping under state fish and game regulations, hiking, camping, boating, and aircraft landing.

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