

Birch Creek Wild and Scenic River

For some people, Birch Creek represents an unforgettable float experience that offers the best of both worlds: the enjoyment of nature but also convenient road access at either end. For others, the river provides entry to moose habitat during hunting season. And for still others, Birch Creek's transition from a small headwater stream to a broad, meandering river presents a special window into the "stages" of an interior Alaska waterway.

Safety

Be a Trip Plan
Always file a trip plan with a friend. Write down where you are going, when you plan to return, a description of your vehicle, and your license plate number.

Unpredictable Conditions
River water temperatures range from a high of 60 degrees Fahrenheit to near-freezing in the fall. Even in a hot day, water temperatures are just as cold. Be able to recognize and treat hypothermia.

Drinking or cooking water from the river or side streams should be treated by boiling, adding water-treatment chemicals or filtration before using.

Weather conditions can change rapidly at any time of the year. Thunderstorms are rare, but water levels can rise rapidly downstream, so secure your boat at night. The river can swell tremendously during high-water events, and sweepers are an ever-present danger.

Emergency Survival Gear
Take survival gear and be prepared for the possibility of an earlier plan for high winds, deep snow, and extreme weather changes. Temperatures may be as much as 25 degrees colder than in Fairbanks. Overflow ice and open water can create hazardous conditions. Summer temperatures can reach the 80s and occasionally the 90s, but daily variations can be extensive. The heaviest temperatures have occurred in every month of the year.

Both grizzly and black bears roam the Birch Creek drainage. Floaters should always keep a clean camp and cook and store food far away from sleeping areas and other equipment.

Recreation

Birch Creek offers outstanding recreation opportunities for boaters experienced with raft, kayak or canoe. It is one of the very few clear water rivers in Alaska with road access at two locations on an increasingly undeveloped and scenic float. The usually take at least 50 hours of actual water time to travel from Upper Birch Creek Wayside to Lower Birch Creek Wayside, a distance of 110 miles.

Many boaters make this trip over a 7 to 10 day period, leaving leisurely days to fish, hike, hunt and enjoy the scenery.

River flow and rapids

Maximum river flows usually occur in early May as a result of break-up or late July or early August after drop resulting in shingles, exposed rocks and logs, sweepers and rock gardens.

In Birch Creek's upper reaches, floaters often alternate between floating their boats through flat miles and floating across small pools. As houses and Birch Creek, it changes from a headwater class creek to a larger river with stretches of Class I or Class II rapids as well as difficult, fast spots local between Curly's Fork and Wolf Creek. The lower segment flows and widens as the river seeks to reemerge through the Yukon Flats.

River flow and rapids

A new stream gauge has been installed on Birch Creek near the confluence of the upper Birch Creek Wayside at Milepost 94 Steese Highway. Using GPS satellite telemetry, water stage, water temperature, air temperature, cumulative precipitation and water turbidity are recorded at 15-minute intervals. Current observations are available on the National Water Service Hydro-meteorological Automated Data System (NWS) website.

Monitoring River Levels

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River Rafting

Less than 1.0 feet, very low flow, difficult floating, especially for raft.

1-2 feet, moderate flow, good float conditions.

3 to 3.5 feet or above, high water, be prepared for fast current, floating logs, flooded campsites, and potentially dangerous conditions.

Water Opportunities

During float, Birch Creek offers experiences that can test a person's skills, provide adventure, and instill a respect for the river and its summer floaters. Each float on the Yukon Quest is a special experience. Dog float offers the upper reaches of Birch Creek, and also crosses the river and stretches between Central and Circle.

Swimming and stonksouthern hiking typically occurs in many different sections, all characterized by a rocky or stable texture.

Along Birch Creek, you may see quartzite, as well as green, brown, maroon, or mafic chert. Minerals hidden within the schist may include pyrite, antimony, and tourmaline.

Special examples of schist are found in rock outcrops where stream rocks with have resisted the erosive action of water. Shoshonite Porphyry is one such location.

Two creeks
Also exposed in outcrops along Birch Creek are shoshonite porphyry, part of the permanently frozen soils, or permafrost, underlying much of the river valley.

Minerals are the world's largest member of the deer family and feed on mosses, lichens, and other forest products. For many fishermen the Arctic grayling is a new freshwater fish symbolic of the clear, cold waters of the northern wilderness.

Wildlife

The wildlife in this remote area do not see many humans. You may encounter moose, caribou, black or gray bear, lynx, beaver, fox and mink. Bald eagles, red-tail hawk, porcupine, porcupine, and weasel make their summer homes along the banks of Birch Creek. Otters are becoming more common in the area and may be seen diving for fish along Birch Creek. Common mergansers are the most frequently seen waterfowl.

Regions in recent decades, geographic features have become abundant enough along Birch Creek that sightings of one of these spectacular birds is almost assured on a summer float trip. Nests are located on cliffs and steep banks. If you're close to a nest, you will likely hear the loud, rasping cry of an adult warning you to stay away. Peregrine falcons return to the same nest site each year. When nesting, they prey on peregrine can reach speeds above 175 miles per hour. Also called a "bird hawk," the peregrine feeds on waterfowl, sandpipers and other small birds.

Fish

Arctic grayling, northern pike, steelhead and salmon all make their home in Birch Creek. For many fishermen the Arctic grayling is a new freshwater fish symbolic of the clear, cold waters of the northern wilderness.

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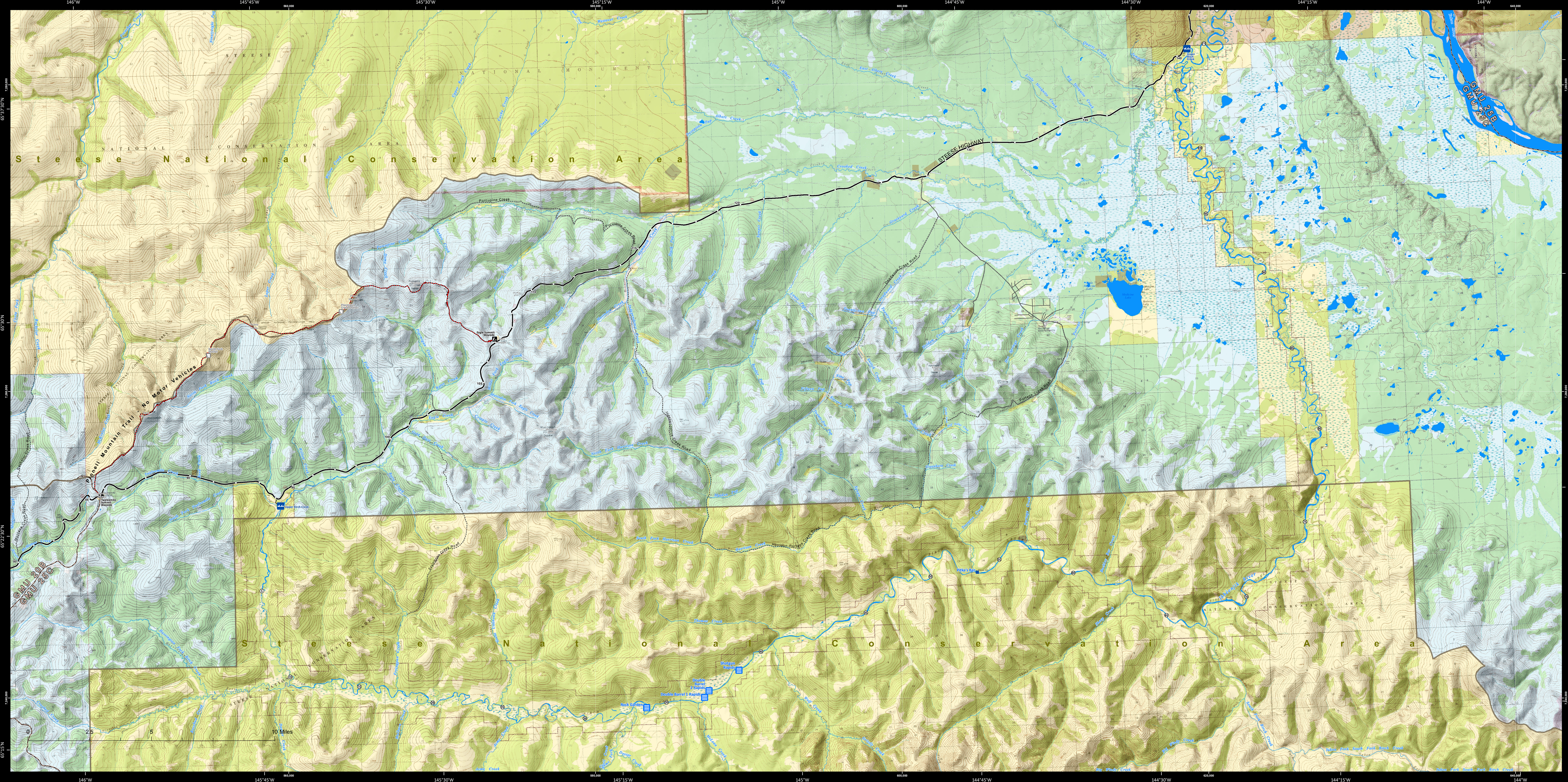
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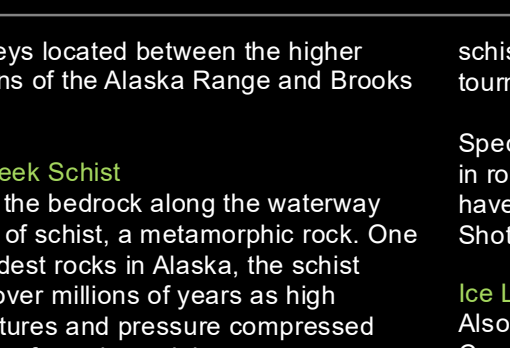
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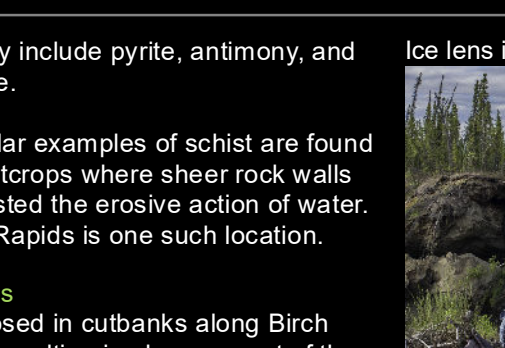
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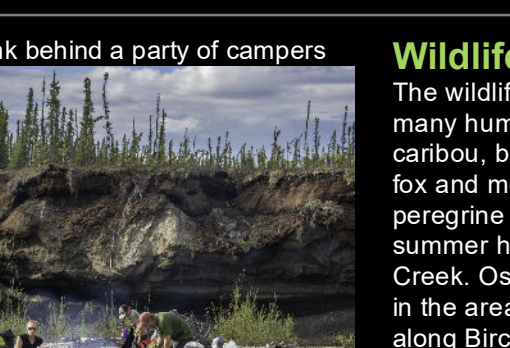
Shelton Rafting



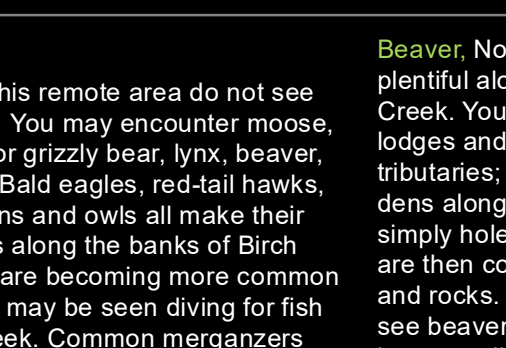
River Rafting



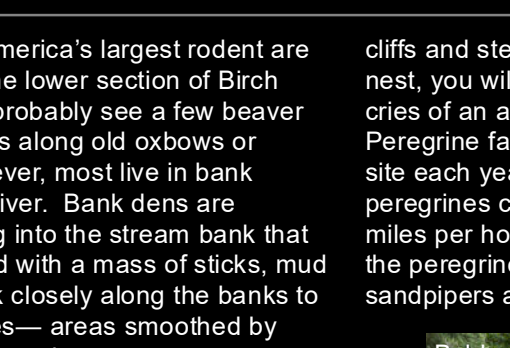
Upper Birch Creek Wayside



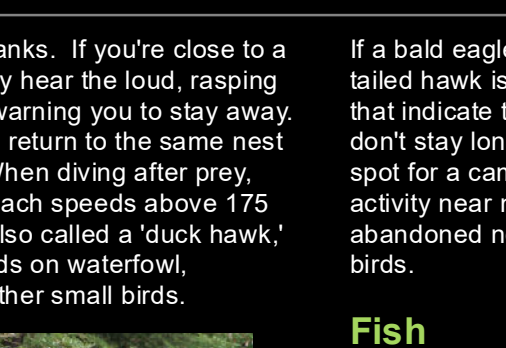
Boat Launch



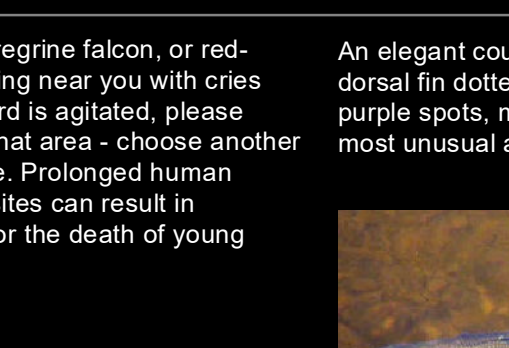
Rapid/Portage



Road



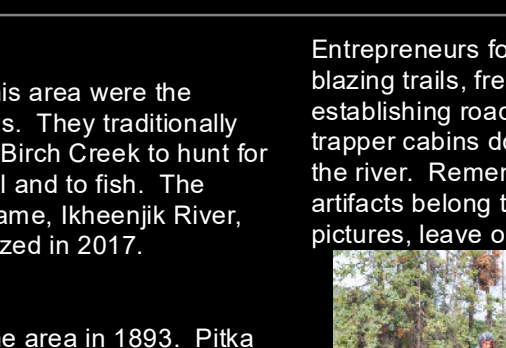
Trail Shelter: Non Reservable, No Fee



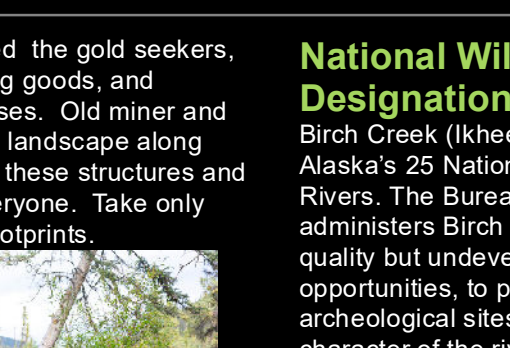
Highway Milepost (MP)



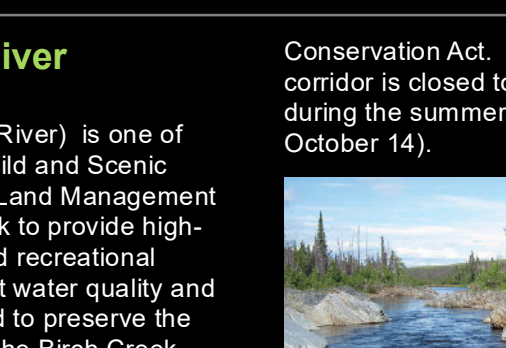
Administered Lands



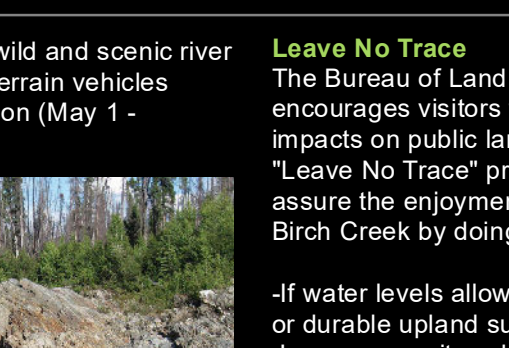
Bureau of Land Management



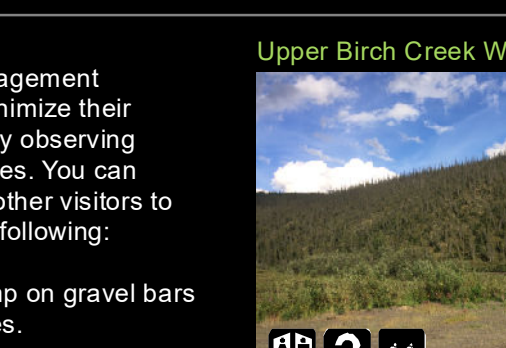
Native Allotment



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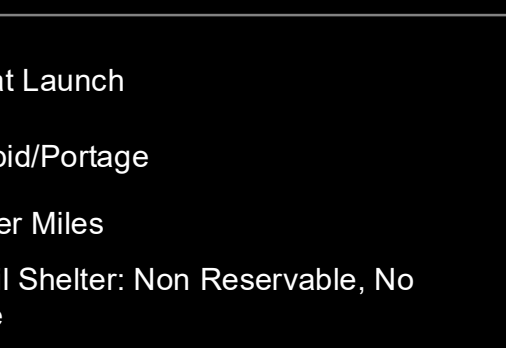
National Park Service



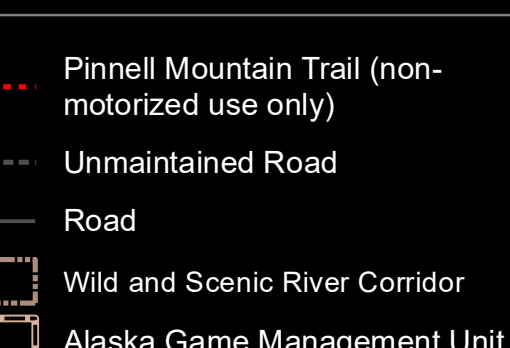
Private



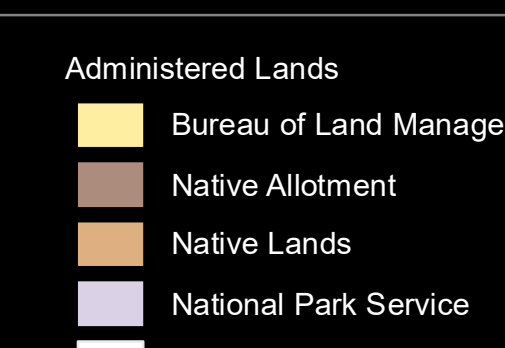
Wild and Scenic River Corridor



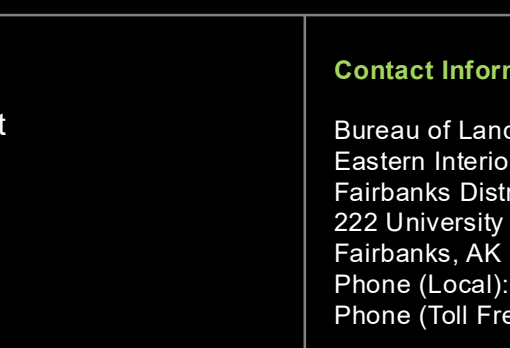
Alaska Game Management Unit



State



Contact Information



Bureau of Land Management



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https://www.blm.gov/alaska

Disclaimer: No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data was derived from various sources including the National Wetland Inventory. The project was developed through the National Wetland Inventory. The information displayed on this map should be used for graphic display only. For official land status information, refer to Coastal Survey maps, Master Title Plans, and land status case files.