

Alaska's Historic Steese and Elliott Highways

Follow the historic mining trails that once guided a torrent of prospectors into Alaska's heartland. Explore the vast landscape of the Great Interior, traditional homeland of the Athabaskan people. Encounter local people who still hunt, trap, and mine in the same spirit as earlier Alaskans.

In summer, wild rivers, hiking trails, hot springs, and public recreation cabins offer a diversity of outdoor pursuits. View the midnight sun, experience the quiet beauty of alpine hills, and enjoy the friendliness of once-bustling gold rush towns.

In winter you may thrill to the sight of the aurora borealis crowning the night sky while traveling the spectacular White Mountains by dog team, skis, or snowmobile. Relive the courage and fortitude of Interior Alaska's early travelers by following the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race as the trail weaves back and forth across the Steese Highway.

This brochure introduces you to the outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) along the Steese and Elliott highways. It also highlights sites of interest and the visible remnants of gold rush days which will make your journey a memorable one.

**Bureau of Land Management
Fairbanks District Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3844
Local: 907-474-2200
Toll Free: 1-800-437-7021
<http://www.blm.gov/ak>**

Steese & Elliott Highways Travel Guide



Hiking along the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail.

Steese Highway Alaska Route 6

The Steese Highway begins in Fairbanks at the junction of the Richardson Highway and Airport Way.

Trans-Alaska Pipeline

Mile 8.4 (13.5 km)
A pipeline viewing site sponsored by the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company provides information displays and parking.

Gold Dredge #8

Mile 9.5 (15.3 km)
Constructed in 1927, Gold Dredge #8 displaced millions of tons of gravel during 32 years of operation, creating symmetrical rows of gravel tailings that are still visible. Privately owned, it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Fox

Mile 11 (17.7 km)
Named for Fox Creek, this community was founded as a mining camp in 1905. Turn right just before the Alaska Department of Transportation weigh station to continue up the Steese Highway.

Felix Pedro Historic Monument

Mile 16.5 (26.6 km)
In 1902 Felix Pedro became the first prospector to discover gold in this area. He made his way to E.T. Barnette's Chena River camp for supplies, where word of his gold strike spread, and the ensuing gold rush led to the founding of Fairbanks. Well over 7 million troy ounces of gold were eventually dredged from the Tanana Valley.

Cleary Summit

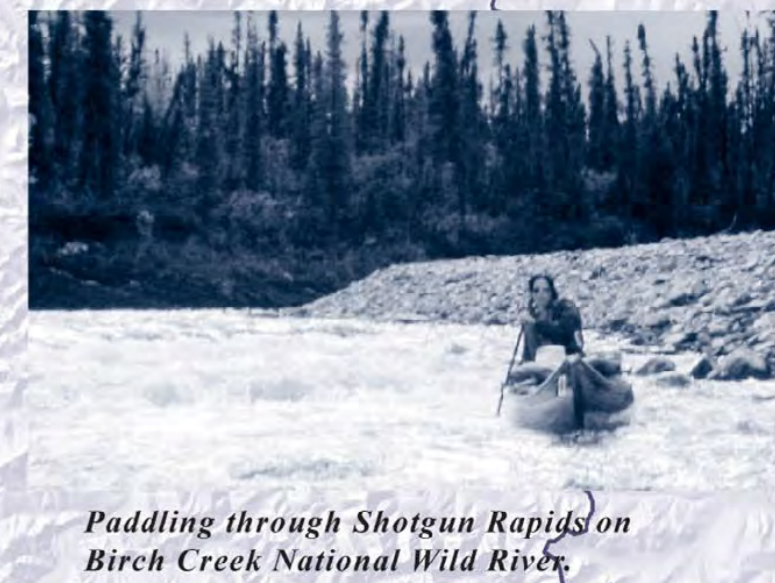
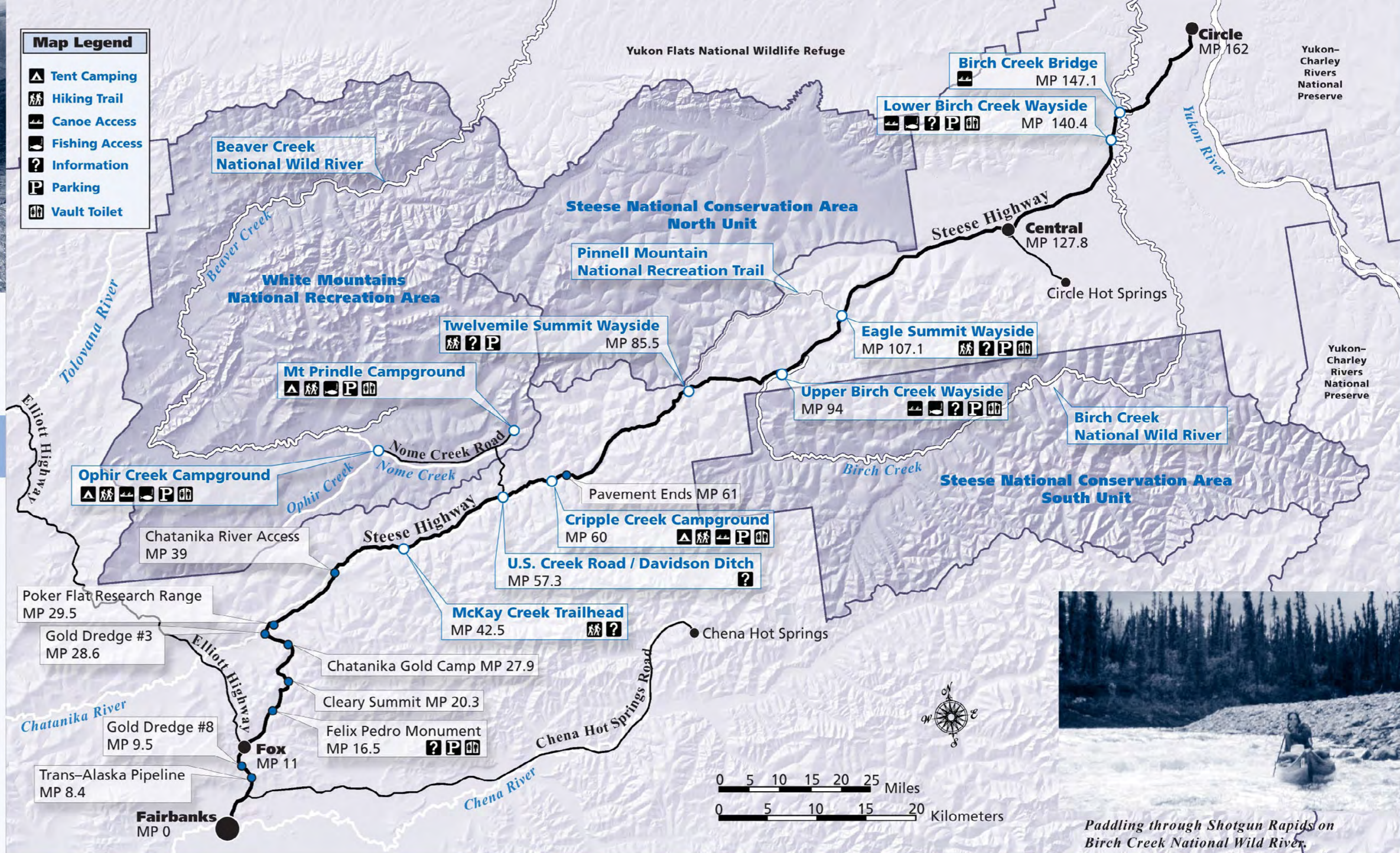
Mile 20.3 (32.7 km)
From this high point at 2,233 feet (681 m), the White Mountains and Yukon-Tanana Uplands are visible to the north. The Circle-Fairbanks Historic Trail starts 4 miles (6.4 km) east of here on Fairbanks Creek Road and ends approximately 58 miles (93 km) later at Twelvemile Summit on the Steese Highway.

Chatanika Gold Camp

Mile 27.9 (44.9 km)
The Chatanika Gold Camp is the site of the historic Fairbanks Exploration (F.E.) Company gold camp and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Tanana Valley Railroad carried supplies from Fairbanks to miners in the Chatanika area from 1905 to 1930.

Gold Dredge #3

Mile 28.6 (46 km)
Visible amid its tailings on the left side of the highway is Gold Dredge #3. Built on Cleary Creek in the winter of 1927-28, the privately owned dredge eventually produced \$10 million.



Paddling through Shotgun Rapids on Birch Creek National Wild River.

Steese Highway

Poker Flat Research Range

Mile 29.5 (47.5 km)
Operated by the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, this is the only university-owned rocket launching facility in the world. Research on the aurora borealis (northern lights) is the major focus.

Chatanika River Access

Mile 39 (62.8 km)
River access is available. Boaters can put in for a 20-mile (32 km) class I-II float to mile 11 (17.5 km) on the Elliott Highway. This area is owned by the State of Alaska, but is not maintained.

McKay Creek Trailhead

Mile 42.5 (68 km)
Access is provided to 200 miles of winter trails and public recreational use cabins in the 1-million-acre White Mountains National Recreation Area.

Davidson Ditch

Mile 57.3 (92.2 km)
View part of the historic Davidson Ditch, a 90-mile system of inverted siphons and ditches completed in 1929. It carried water from the Chatanika River to Fairbanks to power the gold mining operations of the F.E. Company.

U.S. Creek Road to White Mountains National Recreation Area

Mile 57.3 (92.2 km)
U.S. Creek Road continues 7 miles (11 km) to the White Mountains National Recreation Area, where you may camp, pan for gold in Nome Creek, or hike through boreal forest and alpine tundra. Camp sites are available at Mount Prindle or Ophir Creek campgrounds in Nome Creek valley, which also offers access and parking for Beaver Creek National Wild River.

Cripple Creek Campground

Mile 60 (96.6 km)
Overnight camping, a riverside day-use area, and fishing access are available, including universal design campsites. A class I-II float trip to the Upper Chatanika State Recreation Site at milepost 39 is approximately 25 miles (40 km) long. Occasional low water may require some boat dragging. Fee Site.

Twelvemile Summit Wayside

Mile 85.5 (137.6 km)
(elev. 2,982 feet/909 m)
Early prospectors named this spot for its location, 12 miles from Mastodon Dome, the site of early gold discoveries. You may see caribou between here and Eagle Summit from late July to mid-September. A parking area on the right provides access to the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail and the Circle-Fairbanks Historic Trail. Beware of high winds and rapidly changing weather conditions. Blowing snow sometimes closes this portion of

the highway. For trail details see BLM's *Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail* brochure.

Upper Birch Creek Wayside

Mile 94 (151.3 km)
An access road to the right leads to Birch Creek National Wild River. It is a 110-mile (177 km) class I-III float to Lower Birch Creek Wayside at milepost 140.4. Take a leisurely pace of 7 to 10 days to complete this primitive trip.

Eagle Summit Wayside and Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail

Mile 107.1 (172.4 km)
Parking area for the start of the 27-mile (43 km) Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail. Around the summer solstice (June 21), you may see the midnight sun may be seen from the parking area or points along the trail. For more information see the BLM's *Eagle Summit: Window to the Midnight Sun*. Enjoy the quarter-mile, universal design, interpretive loop trail with a viewing deck. Eagle Summit is one of the most challenging portions of the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race.

Central

Mile 127.8 (205.7 km)
This log cabin community on Crooked Creek remains the center of the region's mining activity and is home to the Central Mining District Museum. It is also a popular check-point on the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race.

Lower Birch Creek Wayside

Mile 140.4 (226 km)
An access road to the right leads to a parking area and Birch Creek National Wild River. This is the first take-out point along the river. You can also put in here and take a day trip to the bridge at milepost 147 Steese Highway, a distance of 16 river miles. This class I section of the river meanders from here down to the Yukon River.

Birch Creek Bridge

Mile 147.1 (236.7 km)
A river access easement is located on the right side of the road, just after the bridge. Boaters can travel the 200 miles to the Yukon River through private land and the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

Circle

Mile 162 (260.7 km)
The discovery of gold on Birch Creek led to the founding of Circle in 1893. Early residents thought the town was within the Arctic Circle, hence its name, but it is actually 50 miles south. It is also a checkpoint on the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race. Upriver from Circle the Yukon River travels through the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

BLM

ALASKA



Agency Information

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Recorded Trail Conditions
 Phone: 907-474-2372

Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT)
Road Conditions
 Phone: 511
 Website: <http://511.alaska.gov>

Alaska Public Lands Information Center (APLIC)
 250 Cushman St., Suite 1A, Fairbanks, AK 99701
 Office: 907-456-0527
 TTY: 907-456-0532
 Toll Free: 1-866-869-6887
 Website: <http://www.nps.gov/aplic>

Alaska Department of Fish & Game
 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701
 Phone: 907-459-7200
 Website: <http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/>

Alaska State Parks
 Northern Area Office
 3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709
 Phone: 907-451-2705
 TDD: 907-451-2770
 Website: <http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks>

Know Before You Go!

Drive carefully
 Sections of the Steese and Elliott highways have not yet been paved. Gravel sections are well-maintained and can be driven by two-wheel-drive vehicles. However, you may encounter tight corners, soft road shoulders, and dusty or slippery conditions depending on the weather, commercial traffic, and road-maintenance equipment. Rocks kicked up by other vehicles can crack your headlights or windshield—slow down and keep your distance. Drive with your lights on to increase visibility in dusty or rainy conditions.

Limited Services
 The Steese and Elliott highways traverse wild and scenic country, and basic services may be more limited than you are accustomed to. Go prepared!

We recommend you carry:

- one or two good spare tires mounted on rims
- tire jack and tool kit
- emergency flares
- extra gasoline, oil and windshield cleaner
- drinking water and food
- emergency camping gear
- first aid kit, insect repellent and sun screen

Exploring Safely

Sterilize all stream or pond water before drinking by boiling, filtering or using appropriate chemicals. Giardia parasites are common in Alaska's waters and can cause considerable intestinal discomfort.

RV dump stations are available in Fairbanks. Please use them and help keep our backcountry healthy for others.

Practice bear safety by keeping a clean camp and making noise when hiking in dense brush.

Prevent wild fires by making sure campfires and smoking materials are completely out.

Know the rules and follow all hunting and fishing regulations. Many road-accessible streams close to Fairbanks are heavily fished and are catch-and-release only.

Leave no trace by packing out all trash and burying all human waste.

Protect our heritage. Historic and prehistoric artifacts on federal lands are part of our nation's heritage, and it is illegal to disturb or remove them. Artifacts lose their scientific value if disturbed and are lost to future generations if stolen.

Gold panning. There are many patented mining claims in the region, and only a few places remain open to recreational gold mining. Get information beforehand from BLM, APLIC, or the Alaska Division of Mining, Land & Water.

Respect private property, mining claims, and people's personal privacy.

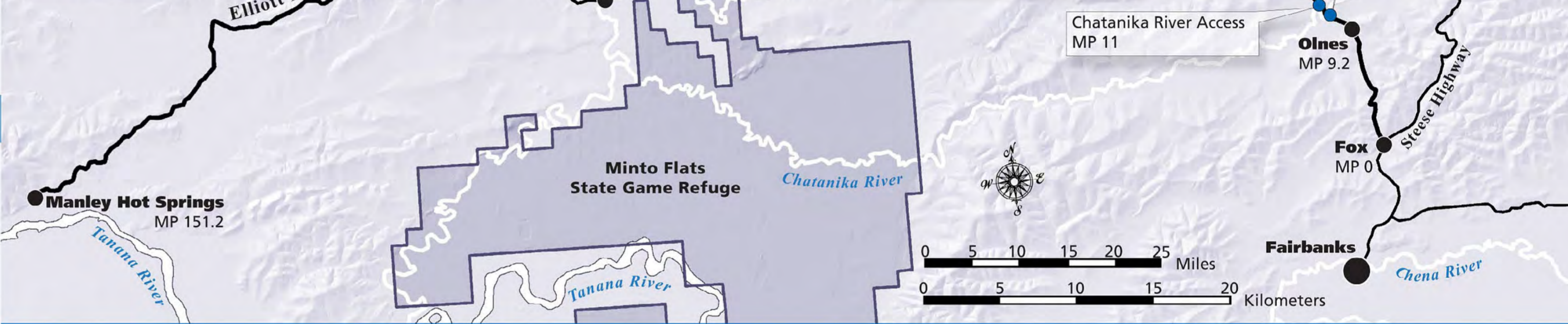
Avoid feeding wildlife by storing your food properly. Animals that learn to associate food with people can cause problems and often have to be destroyed.

Watch the wildlife from a distance. People and pets can unintentionally cause stress on wildlife and may affect their survival.



Canoeing and fishing on Beaver Creek National Wild River.

Map Legend	
	Tent Camping
	Hiking Trail
	Canoe Access
	Fishing Access
	Information
	Parking
	Vault Toilet



Elliott Highway

Elliott Highway Alaska Route 2

Mile 0 of the Elliott Highway begins at the Alaska DOT weigh station in Fox, at Mile 11 (km 17.7) Steese Highway.

Olnes
 Mile 9.2 (14.8 km)
 Little remains of this early mining town reportedly named after Nels Olnes, a prospector who arrived during the winter of 1907-8. Olnes was once home to 250-300 miners and had general stores, lodges, hotels, livery stables, and mail and telephone service. It was also a station on the Tanana Valley Railroad.

Olnes Pond
 Mile 10.6 (17.1 km)
 Turn left and follow the gravel road one mile (1.6 km) to reach Olnes Pond. Picnic and camping sites, swimming, fishing and non-motorized boating access is available. This area is owned by the State of Alaska, but is not maintained.

Chatanika River Access
 Mile 11 (17.7 km)
 Turn left just past the bridge. Picnic areas, campsites, river access, and a boat launch are available. This area is owned by the State of Alaska, but is not maintained.

Wickersham Dome Trailhead
 Mile 27.7 (44.6 km)
 This is a parking area for the White Mountains National Recreation Area. The Summit Trail leads up Wickersham Dome, a scenic summer hiking and berry picking area, before continuing 20 miles (32.2 km) to Beaver Creek. The Wickersham Creek Trail leads 7 miles (11 km) to Lee's Cabin, a year-round public recreational use cabin.

Grapefruit Rocks
 Mile 39 (62.8 km)
 The large rock outcrops visible from the highway are a popular site for technical rock climbers. A short hike will bring you to the rocks. Turnouts are available for parking.

Colorado Creek Trailhead
 Mile 57.1 (91.9 km)
 The Colorado Creek Trail crosses extensive wetlands and is used only in winter. It connects with the White Mountains National Recreation Area winter trails and cabin system. In summer, the Tolovana River offers grayling fishing.

Fred Blixt Cabin
 Mile 62.5 (100.5 km)
 A short road leads to this public recreation cabin. Built in 1935 by Swedish trapper and prospector Fred Blixt, the original cabin burned down in 1991. A new wheelchair-accessible log cabin was built on the site. A permit for staying at the cabin must be obtained in advance at the BLM office in Fairbanks.

Livengood Junction
 Mile 70.8 (113.9 km)
 In 1914, prospectors Jay Livengood and N.R. Hudson discovered gold on a nearby creek named for Livengood. A right turn leads to what remains of the town that was founded near their claim during the winter of 1914-15. No services are available.

Dalton Highway Junction
 Mile 73.1 (117.6 km)
 The Dalton Highway is Alaska's only road to the Arctic. It terminates 414 miles (662.5 km) to the north in Deadhorse, just 6 miles from the Arctic Ocean. Built to support development of the Prudhoe Bay oilfields, it is still used by large and fast-moving commercial traffic. The highway has extremely limited services—go prepared! The Elliott makes a sharp left turn at this intersection—be sure you are on the correct highway.



Taking a break at the BLM Summit Trail shelter cabin in the White Mountains National Recreation Area.

Ptarmigan Pass
 Mile 95 (152 km)
 This high point offers superb views of the surrounding country. Sawtooth Mountain is to the northwest, and the White Mountains are to the northeast. The Minto Flats stretch to the south.

Minto Road Junction
 Mile 110 (177 km)
 The Athabaskan village of Minto is 11 miles (17.5 km) to the south. Many residents enjoy traditional lifestyles, using the abundant wildlife of nearby Minto Flats. Please respect personal privacy and private property. Much of the wetland habitat is within the Minto Flats State Game Refuge.

Manley Hot Springs
 Mile 151.2 (243.3 km)
 During the peak of mining activity in the Eureka and Tofty mining districts, Manley was a busy trading center. It is now a quiet town with a trading post, roadhouse, hot springs, and an airfield. A 2.5-mile (4 km) gravel road leads from town to the Tanana River.

Other BLM recreation brochures

- Birch Creek National Wild River
- Beaver Creek National Wild River
- Eagle Summit: Window to the Midnight Sun
- Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail
- White Mountains National Recreation Area



Rafting on Birch Creek National Wild River.

White Mountains National Recreation Area

About an hour's drive from Fairbanks, the one-million-acre White Mountains National Recreation Area offers stunning scenery, peaceful solitude, and outstanding opportunities for year-round recreation. Summer visitors to the White Mountains can pan for gold, fish, hike or camp under Alaska's 'midnight sun.' The Nome Creek Road provides access to two BLM campgrounds, trails, a gold-panning area and a departure point for float trips on Beaver Creek National Wild River. In winter, visitors can travel by ski, snowshoe, dog team, or snowmobile to enjoy the 13 public-use cabins and 250 miles of groomed trails that make the White Mountains one of Interior Alaska's premier winter destinations.

Steese National Conservation Area

The Steese National Conservation Area (SNCA) encompasses 1.2 million acres of public land—an area nearly the size of Delaware. Located about 100 miles northeast of Fairbanks, the SNCA's special values include Birch Creek National Wild River, crucial caribou home range and calving grounds, Dall sheep habitat, and the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail. Road access into the SNCA is extremely limited, so many people visit the area by hiking the 27-mile-long Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail or by floating Birch Creek National Wild River.