

FISHING

The Chatanika River supports good populations of grayling, whitefish, and salmon. Salmon, mostly chums and some chinook, reach this part of the river by mid-July. Spawning pairs are often seen in large pools. They are hard to catch, but sometimes will hit bright spoons or streamers. Grayling are easily caught with small spinners or small dry flies (size 12 or 14). It is almost impossible to hook a whitefish, but a September float can be the key to some exciting spear fishing, if the Department of Fish & Game has designated it open to spear fishing.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Be sure to note on the map where private property is located, and respect where it's posted along the river. There is plenty of public land where boaters can go ashore.

FIREWOOD

Most of the woody vegetation in the floodplain is willow and alder. Alder makes a good cooking fire, but for starting fires, or for a large fire to dry wet gear, you will need to gather dry spruce. Look along the outer sides of major bends in the river for large white spruce that will have dry, dead "kindling" branches hidden underneath the living, outer branches.

DRINKING WATER

Good drinking water is sometimes available, most commonly from creeks flowing off steep mountainsides on the north bank. Although this water may be safe to drink, play it safe by bringing along fresh water, or by purifying water by boiling, with a filtering device, or use purifying chemicals. Avoid drinking untreated water from creeks flowing into the south side, as they may contain parasites that cause the intestinal illness, *Giardiasis*.

SUGGESTED GEAR LIST

This list contains the minimum equipment for a summertime, two-day (overnight), 19-mile float trip from the Steese to the Elliott.

- Tent (with rainfly/groundcloth/stakes)
 - Sleeping bags & ground mats
 - Gas stove for cooking, & fuel in container
 - Cooking & eating utensils
 - Food: pre-"bagged" to reduce waste & bear interest
 - Fresh water and/or water filter; purification chemicals
 - Tarp for rain cover
 - Insect repellent (& head nets for severe bugs)
 - Spare paddle secured in each canoe.
 - Personal flotation device for *each* boater
 - Rope for lashing, lining boats, rescue
 - Axe and/or bow saw - one in each canoe
 - Fishing gear
 - Bear protection
 - Warm clothing/spare set of clothes, including gloves & hat
 - Effective rain gear
 - Footwear: hiking boots and/or river shoes
 - Camera and film
 - Sunscreen
 - Sunglasses
 - Waterproof matches (& firestarting materials)
 - Flashlight or lantern
 - Maps: Livengood Quadrangle, 1:63,360 scale (one inch equals one mile), maps A-1 & A-2
- All gear should be stowed in waterproof containers and tied securely in the canoe.

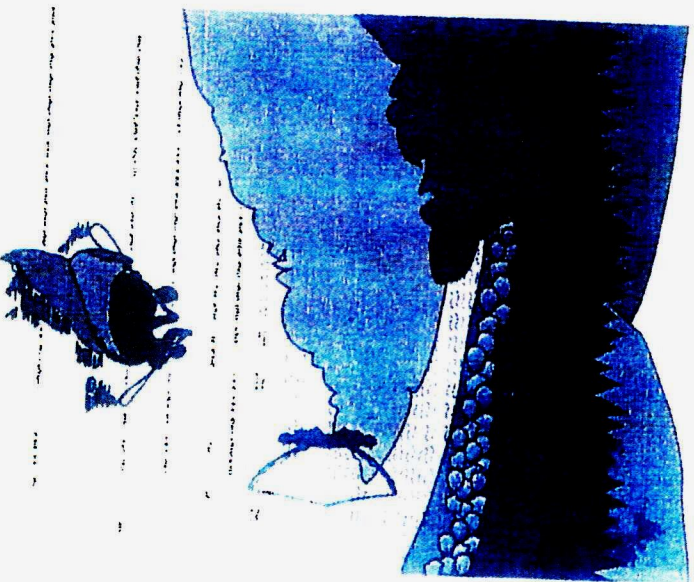
This pamphlet was originally researched by Boy Scout Jason Buisst as a service project for rank of Eagle, summer 1990, updated fall 1997.



CHATANIKA RIVER

FLOAT TRAIL

Steese Highway to Elliott Highway



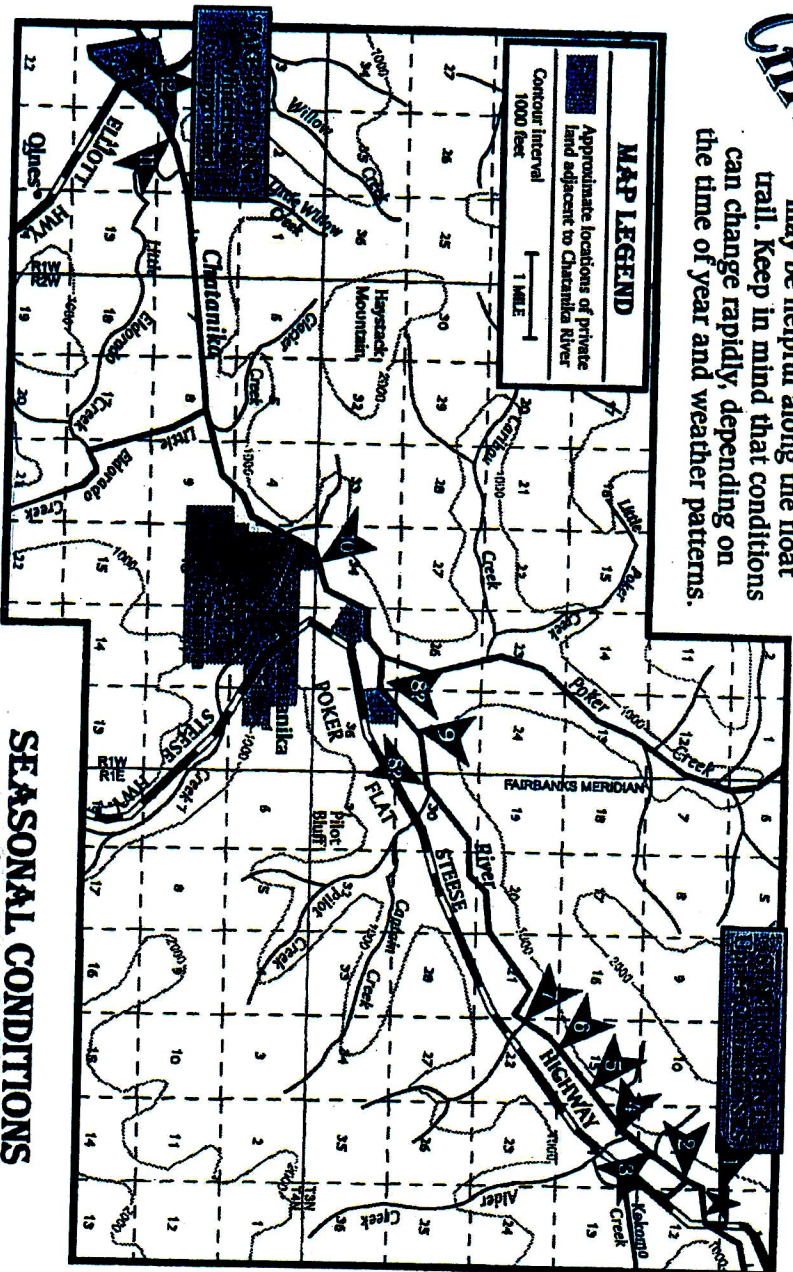
An informational guide to the 19-mile float from Mile 39 of the Steese Highway to Mile 11 of the Elliott Highway

THE CHATANIKA RIVER

Is an ideal one- to two-day canoe trip with enough fast water to make it exciting. River conditions and water levels can change with the weather and the seasons. Caution is advised in all conditions -- whether it is rainy and cold, or sunny and warm. Generally, it takes 8 to 12 hours to complete the float. While it can be made in one day with a minimum of gear, it's ideal to spend two days and a night. Good camping spots and firewood are easy to find.

The following list of features

may be helpful along the float trail. Keep in mind that conditions can change rapidly, depending on the time of year and weather patterns.



SAFETY TIPS:

- ◆ Sweepers (branches or trees hanging in the water) are dangerous. If you can't paddle around them, get out and guide (or "line") the canoe past them.
- ◆ Wear your personal flotation device (PFD or "life jacket") whenever you are in the canoe.
- ◆ Have an experienced canoeist in each canoe.
- ◆ Keep a clean camp; black and grizzly bears are common along the entire route.

SEASONAL CONDITIONS & WATER LEVELS

Water levels rise as much as 5 to 6 feet during spring breakup. High, fast, cold water and floating debris make early spring a bad time to float. Water levels stabilize by mid-May, but will rise or drop a foot or two depending on rain in the upper watershed.

Higher water levels mean a *faster* trip, so boaters should be extra alert to changes along the river. Lower water levels mean *slower* travel, so boaters can relax, but watch for more sweepers, gravel bars, and riffles.

FLOAT TRIP DESCRIPTION

~ KEYED TO MAP ~

1. Starting point, Upper Chatanika State Recreation Site, Mile 39 Steese Highway.
2. Shortly after beginning the float, there are many sweepers on both sides of the river. Use necessary caution.
3. Many clear water streams have beaver colonies in them. Do not use as a drinking water source without first purifying it -- see "Drinking Water" notes on other side.
4. Note there are numerous access points from the Steese Highway.
5. Always be careful of large, submerged rocks.
6. Watch for remains of the historical Davidson Ditch, which was used to siphon water from the Chatanika River to nearby mining operations. Please respect private property in this area.
7. If there is a log jam across the river, float to the top of the jam, and portage canoes and gear around the jam on the gravel bar side.
8. A cable is rigged across the river. The dirt road accesses the Steese Highway at Mile 31.
9. Be aware of the point that you move away from the Steese Highway access until you reach the Elliott Highway. There is private property for ½ mile upstream and down. After this, there are several sharp bends, and the river straightens and becomes much deeper and slower. In late summer, plenty of high-bush cranberries are found here.
10. When you see the small cabin with the rope swing out over the river, you are within 45 minutes of the end of your float. All land on the right bank from here to the Elliott Highway is privately-owned.
11. Take-out point: Elliott Highway bridge, mile 11, Whitefish Campground, right side of river.