

Fact Sheet



Division of Mining, Land & Water
April 2010

Title: Petersville Recreation Mining Area

A new state law designates two areas of public land near the Petersville Road (southwest of Denali State Park) for recreational mining and other general public recreation. Senator Rick Halford proposed the new areas as part of a bill sponsored by Representatives Tim Kelly and Gene Therriault. The Legislature's action confirms an idea first proposed in 1993: to give Alaskans and visitors a place where they could find good "color" in their gold pans without worrying that they were jumping someone's mining claim. That's a problem in most gold-rich areas because of existing mining claims staked under state or federal law. To prevent this conflict, both units of the Petersville Recreational Mining Area are closed to the staking of new mining claims. The new area will give the public a chance to gain first-hand experience in recreational mining, help celebrate the Gold Rush Centennial, and maybe take home a few gold nuggets.

How do I get to the Petersville Recreational Mining Area? Although part of the new area is still in the process of being acquired from the federal government, the north unit is already in state ownership and open to public use. Access is via the Petersville Road. See the other side of this fact sheet for a map showing the general location of the Petersville Recreational Mining Area's north unit. The last few miles of the access route are rough. It is recommended only for four-wheel drive vehicles, vehicles with high clearance, four-wheelers, mountain bikes, etc be used.

How will the Petersville Recreational Mining Area be developed? The new law requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prepare a plan for the management, use, and development of the area, including the mining methods that can be used while still protecting important habitat such as for salmon in Peters Creek. The Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Transportation will participate in the management plan, with full public input. In the meantime, the unit is already open to use.

What facilities are there now? There are no developed campsites, sanitation facilities, drinking-water supplies, or trash cans at present. Visitors should be prepared for self-sufficient, low-impact camping. Please don't leave any trash or litter, and be careful with campfires.

What kind of mining can I do? Recreational gold panning, mineral prospecting, or mining using light portable field equipment, such as pick and shovel, pan, earth auger, or a backpack power drill or auger are allowed without any permit. Also, you can obtain a permit from the Department of Fish & Game, Division of Habitat to use a small suction dredge.

How can I get a permit for suction dredging? You need to contact Department of Fish & Game Division of Habitat at 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518; phone 907-267-2821 or fax 907-267-2499. Suction dredging in Peters Creek closes at midnight July 15th each year to protect salmon habitat.

Can I stake a mining claim in the Petersville Recreational Mining Area? No, new mining claims are not allowed.

Are there any mining claims already in the area? There are no mining claims within the Petersville Recreational Mining Area, but plenty of them outside the boundary. The Department of Natural Resources clearly marked the upstream and downstream ends of the north unit during the summer of 1997, and is looking for a way to show the side boundaries too. In the meantime, you can avoid any conflict by doing your prospecting and mining only on the Peters Creek valley floor, not up Cottonwood Creek or on the higher ground where there are likely to be mining claims. Any minerals within the boundaries of these claims are the property of the claim owner. Please respect the mining locators' rights under the laws of the State of Alaska. Of course, you are free to walk across these mining claims or use them for camping, hunting, fishing, four-wheeling, and other recreation, but you can't mine on them without the claimant's permission.

What else can I do in the area? The Petersville Recreational Mining Area and surrounding public lands are highly popular for hunting, fishing, hiking, four-wheeling, snowmachining, cross-country skiing, and dog mushing.

Where can I get detailed maps? You can purchase topographical maps that show more detail on the area. Ask for USGS Topographical map Talkeetna C2. The recreational area is located within the Seward Meridian, Township 28 North, Range 7 & 8 West. If you like, you can research status plats showing the location of existing mining claims weekdays between the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the DNR Public Information Center (see below).

How can I get more information? Contact the Department of Natural Resources:

Public Information Center
550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1260
Anchorage, AK 99503-5929
907-269-8400

Public Information Center
3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, AK 99709-4699
907-451-2705

Division of Mining, Land & Water
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1070
Anchorage, AK 99501-3579
907-269-8600

How do I get there? Petersville Road leaves the Parks Highway at Trapper Creek, about 115 miles north of Anchorage and 243 miles south of Fairbanks. The first three miles are paved. The next 15.7 miles (to the Forks Roadhouse) are maintained gravel road with several outstanding view points of Mount McKinley. Beyond the Forks Roadhouse are another 14.9 miles of primitive road before reaching the downstream end of the Recreational Mining Area. It is recommended that the last 14.9 miles be traveled using a 4-wheel drive vehicle or a vehicle with high clearance. Check at the Forks Roadhouse for road conditions, especially if it has been raining. There are no services beyond the Forks Roadhouse. Peters Creek must be forded to reach the upper end of the Recreational Mining Area. This ford and a second ford in the same area have been approved by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game as a vehicle crossing. **Do not** try to cross the creek with a passenger car. Stream crossings should follow the existing trail patterns. **Do not** drive either up or downstream in Peters Creek because it is important King Salmon rearing habitat. For more detailed information about stream crossing in other streams in the area, contact the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518 or call 267-2342.

This sketch shows the approximate upper and lower limits of the north unit of the **Petersville Recreational Mining Area**. Recreational miners should stay within the valley floor as the higher elevations are under active state mining claims.

