



# **BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ALASKA CHAPTER**



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AK BHA

## **Position Statement Proposed Tangle Lakes State Wildlife Refuge**

The Tangle Lakes region off the Denali Highway is a unique area that is important to a wide array of Alaskans and nonresidents who hunt and fish and recreate there. Home to the wandering Nelchina caribou herd, abundant fishery resources, encompassing the Delta Wild and Scenic River, this area is the breadbasket of subsistence and recreational hunting and fishing and gathering for south central Alaska. It is also a growing and highly popular tourism destination.

Amidst the spectacular alpine scenery and abundant fish and wildlife resources, below the ground are platinum group metal deposits now being explored with the potential for large scale hardrock mining.

The potential for large scale hardrock mining concerns hunters, anglers and subsistence users of the Tangle Lakes region who depend on the renewable resources this area offers. They want some assurances that adequate protections are in place should any hardrock mining take place, that the Nelchina caribou herd and other resources won't be negatively affected, and that their traditional activities will continue unabated.

And so there has been a proposal to create a Tangle Lakes State Wildlife Refuge. Under Refuge status, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADFG) would have a lead role with DNR in any mine permitting process, and more adequate protections will be ensured for fish and wildlife and the habitat they depend upon. Hunting, fishing, trapping and other subsistence activities would also be protected.

For these reasons, AK BHA supports a Tangle Lakes Refuge. We believe more rigorous protection of our fish and wildlife habitat is necessary to ensure future productivity of the resources in the Tangles, and a refuge is a reasonable way to provide that protection. However, hard rock mining would not be precluded within the refuge. Areas with convincing mineral potential could still be developed as long as strong protections for fish and wildlife habitat were in force. Jobs associated with mining could still be created, while those associated with hunting, fishing, trapping, tourism and subsistence would be recognized, protected, and enhanced by refuge designation.