

STEESE HIGHWAY

Distance in miles	Central	Chena Hot Springs	Circle	Fairbanks
Central		180	34	128
Chena Hot Springs	180		213	61
Circle	34	213		161
Fairbanks	128	61	161	

Connects: Fairbanks to Circle, AK **Length:** 161 miles
Road Surface: 33% paved, 67% gravel **Season:** Open all year
Highest Summit: Eagle Summit, 3,624 feet
Major Attractions: Gold Dredge No. 8, Pipeline Viewpoint, Davidson Ditch, Nome Creek Valley, Yukon River

2 6

The Steese Highway connects Fairbanks with Circle, a small settlement 161 miles to the northeast on the Yukon River and 50 miles south of the Arctic Circle. The scenery alone makes this a worthwhile drive. It is especially colorful in late August and early September when the leaves turn.

The first 53 miles of the Steese Highway are improved pavement. From pavement end at **Milepost F 53**, it is a wide gravel road into Central at **Milepost 127.5**, where there is a short stretch of paved road. From Central to Circle, the highway is a narrow, winding gravel road.

The highway is open year-round; check with the Dept. of Transportation in Fairbanks regarding winter road conditions. The Steese Highway was completed in 1927 and named for Gen. James G. Steese, U.S. Army, former president of the Alaska Road Commission.

Among the attractions along the Steese are Eagle Summit, highest pass on the highway, where there is an unobstructed view of the midnight sun at summer solstice (June 21); and the Chatanika River and Chena River recreation areas.

The Steese Highway junctions with Chena Hot Springs Road 4.9 miles north of Fairbanks. This 56.6-mile side road provides access to the Chena River Recreation Area and to Chena Hot Springs Resort. (See "Chena Hot Springs Road" log on pages 435-436 in the FAIRBANKS section.)

The Steese Highway also provides access to the richest gold mining district in Alaska. Artifacts from the region's early mining days include dredges (at **Mileposts F 9.5** and **F 28.6**) and the Davidson Ditch (at **Milepost F 57.3**). Chatanika Gold Camp at **Milepost F 28** has a display of old mining equipment. Two commercial operations on the Steese Highway—Gold Rush Camp and Gold Dredge No. 8—offer gold panning. Recreational gold panning is allowed at Pedro Creek, across from the Pedro Monument at **Milepost F 16.6**, and at Nome Creek Valley, accessible from **Milepost F 57.3**. (For information on Nome Creek gold panning, check with the Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Fairbanks or visit <http://aurora.ak.blm.gov/WhiteMtns/html/nomecr.html#goldpan>.)

Emergency medical services: Between Fairbanks and Circle, phone the state troopers at 911 or (907) 452-1313. Use CB Channels 2, 19, 22.



Historic Old F.E. Co. gold camp on the Steese Highway. (© Lynn Owen)

Steese Highway Log

Distance from Fairbanks (F) is followed by distance from Circle (C).

ALASKA ROUTE 2

F 0 C 161.3 Junction with the Richardson Highway at Airport Way and Gaffney Road in Fairbanks. Begin 4-lane Steese Expressway northbound.

Turn to end of RICHARDSON HIGHWAY section on page 481 and read log back to front for log of that highway from Fairbanks south to Delta Junction, Paxson and Valdez.

- F 0.4 C 160.9** Tenth Avenue exit.
- F 0.6 C 160.7** Expressway crosses Chena River.
- F 0.9 C 160.4** Third Street exit.
- F 1 C 160.3** College Road exit to west and access to Bentley Mall; shopping, fast food, restaurants and other services.
- F 1.3 C 160** Trainor Gate Road; access to Fort Wainwright.
- F 2 C 159.3** Johansen Expressway west to College Road, Peger Road and University

Avenue. City Lights Blvd. to east.

F 2.2 C 159.1 Distance marker northbound shows Fox 8 miles, Livengood 76 miles, Circle 156 miles.

F 2.8 C 158.5 Gas station (diesel, unleaded) with foodmart at junction with Farmers Loop Road (to west) and Fairhill Road (to east).

Exit east for **Birch Hill Recreation Area**. Drive 1.8 miles to 'T' and turn right; continue 0.3 mile on gravel access road for this Fairbanks North Star Borough recreation area. Nordic skiing only (no dogs, sleds or foot traffic) Oct. 15–April 15.; chalet.

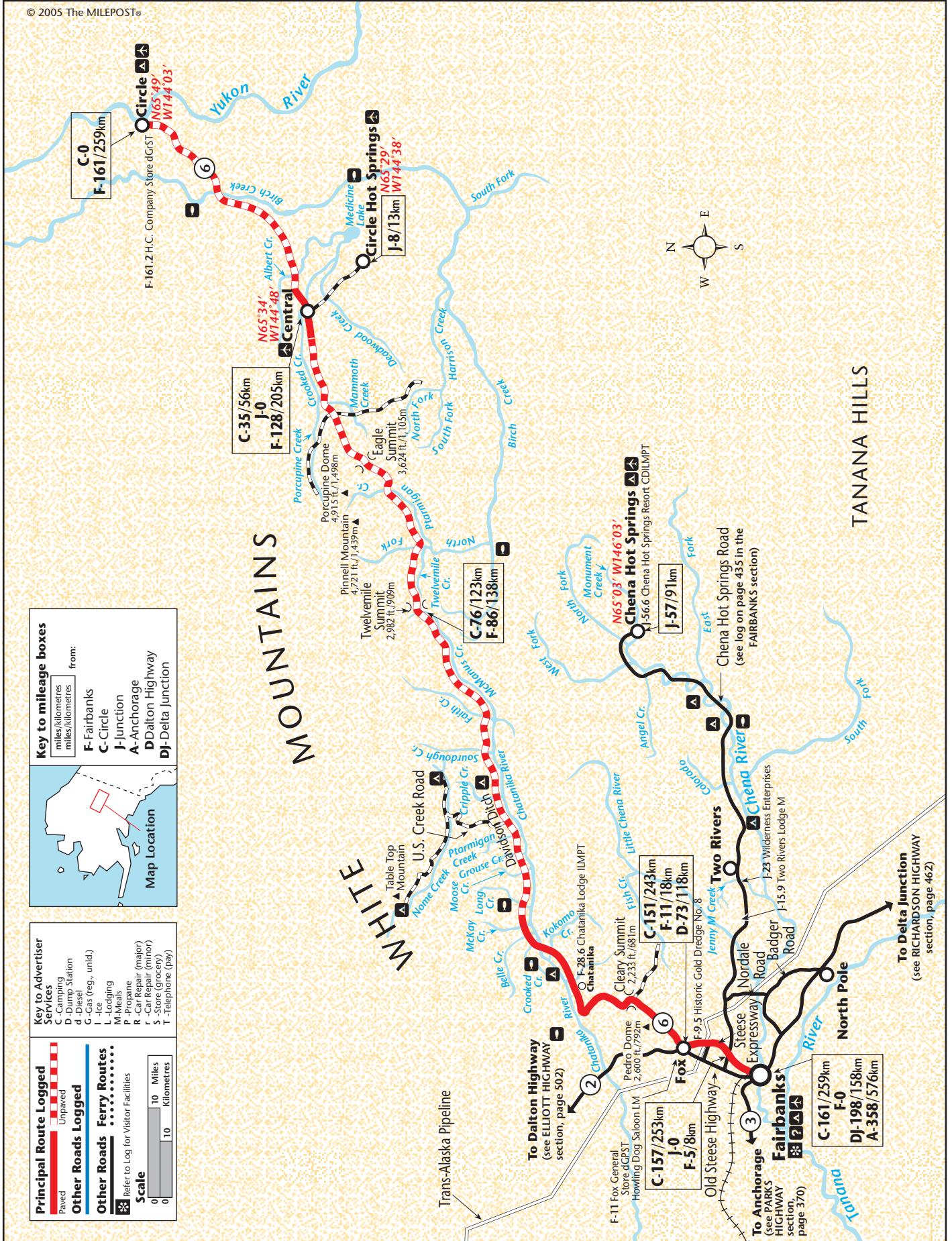
F 2.9 C 158.4 Frost heaves.

F 4.9 C 156.4 Junction with Chena Hot Springs Road northbound and southbound off ramps. Exit west for Curry's Corner (gas pump, grocery) and access to **North Star Golf Club** on Old Steese Highway (0.7 mile north from Curry's Corner). Exit east for Chena Hot Springs Road, which leads to Chena Hot Springs Resort (56.6 miles). Access to Chena River Recreation Area via Chena Hot Springs Road.

See "Chena Hot Springs Road" log on pages 435-436 in the FAIRBANKS section.

STEESE HIGHWAY Fairbanks, AK to Circle, AK

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Key to mileage boxes

miles/kilometres	from:
F-Fairbanks	C-Circle
J-Junction	A-Anchorage
DD-Delta Highway	DD-Delta Junction

Map Location

Key to Advertiser Services

- C-Camping
- D-Dump Station
- d-Diesel
- G-Gas (reg., unid.)
- I-Ice
- L-Lodging
- M-Meals
- R-Car Repair (major)
- r-Car Repair (minor)
- S-Store (grocery)
- T-Telephone (pay)

Principal Route Logged

- Paved
- - - Unpaved

Other Roads Logged

Other Roads Ferry Routes

Refer to Log for Visitor Facilities

Scale

0	10	Miles
0	10	Kilometres

Distance marker northbound shows Fox 5 miles, Livengood 72 miles, Circle 153 miles.

F 6.4 C 154.9 Steele Creek Road. Exit for Bennett Road, Hagelbarger Avenue, Old Steese Highway and Gilmore Trail. Exit to left northbound on Hagelbarger for scenic viewpoint of Fairbanks a short distance west of expressway.

F 7 C 154.3 View northbound of pipeline from top of hill.

F 8 C 153.3 *End 4-lane divided highway, begin 2 lanes, northbound.*

CAUTION: Watch for moose.

F 8.4 C 152.9 **Trans-Alaska Pipeline Viewpoint** with interpretive displays. Excellent opportunity for pipeline photos. Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. visitor center open daily, May to Sept. Free literature and information; phone (907) 456-9391. This is Mile 449.6 on the pipeline.

F 9.1 C 152.2 **Gold Rush Gold Camp**, an operating underground gold mine offering tours and gold panning.

F 9.5 C 151.8 Goldstream Road exit to Old Steese Highway and **Gold Dredge Number 8 National Historic Site**. The dredge, built in 1928, was added to the list of national historic sites in 1984 and designated a National Historical Mechanical Engineering Landmark in 1986. The 5-deck, 250-foot-long dredge operated until 1959; it is now privately owned and open to the public for tours (admission fee). McKersey Court to east; gravel.



Historic Gold Dredge No. 8 (Gray Line of Alaska). Gold Dredge No. 8 is a monu-

ment to the miners who used the machinery to produce more than 7.5 million ounces of gold and the engineers who built it. Visitors tour the only dredge in Alaska open to the public. Gold panning and a Miner's lunch are also available at this national historic site. [ADVERTISEMENT]

F 11 C 150.3 Steese Expressway from Fairbanks ends at **junction** of Steese and Elliott Highways (Alaska Routes 6 and 2). Weigh station with pay phone at northeast corner of intersection.

Access west to **FOX** (description follows); food, gas, groceries. Dalton Highway information sign. Turn east for continuation of Steese Highway, (now Alaska Route 6); log follows. Distance marker shows Chatanika 17 miles; Central 118 miles; Circle 152 miles. **NOTE: Next gas on Steese Highway is 117 miles from here.**

Fox General Store. See display ad this section.

Junction with Elliott Highway (Alaska Route 2) which continues northeast to the Dalton Highway and Manley Hot Springs See ELLIOTT HIGHWAY section on page 504 for log.

FOX (pop. 316), has Fox General Store and gas station and the Howling Dog Saloon. Fox was established as a mining camp before 1905 and named for nearby Fox Creek.

Howling Dog Saloon. See display ad this section.

ALASKA ROUTE 6

F 11.1 C 150.2 Distance marker eastbound shows Chatanika 17 miles, Central 118 miles, Circle 152 miles. "Next gas 117 miles" (sign).

F 12 C 149.3 Tailings (gravel and boulders of dredged streambeds alongside highway) from early mining activity which yielded millions of dollars in gold.

F 13.6 C 147.7 Eisele Road; turnoff on right northbound for NOAA/NESDIS Command and Data Acquisition Station at Gilmore Creek. This facility tracks and

commands multiple NOAA polar orbiting, environmental satellites. Tours are not available. Information kiosk at entrance.

Junction with Old Steese Highway on left northbound.

F 16.1 C 145.2 Beaver lodge in pond to southeast.

F 16.6 C 144.7 **Felix Pedro Monument and Wayside.** Paved parking area with pedestrian ramp (wheelchair-accessible) to monument; picnic shelter, benches and toilets. Felix Pedro was the prospector who discovered gold in July 1902 and started the rush that resulted in the founding of Fairbanks. Information signs here provide facts and figures about gold discoveries in this area. Approximately \$1.8 million in gold was taken from the Fairbanks mining district between 1903 and 1910. The price of gold at that time was \$17.73 an ounce.

Recreational gold panning is allowed on the west side of Pedro Creek, directly across from the monument. This is the Discovery Claim, owned by Igloo No. 4, Pioneers of Alaska. Recreational gold panning only (no mechanical devices). Pedro and Gilmore creeks join just downstream of the panning area to form Goldstream.

F 17.5 C 143.8 Paved parking area to east.

F 18 C 143.3 *Winding ascent (7 to 8 percent grades) northbound to Cleary Summit .*

F 19.9 C 141.4 Paved turnout.

F 20 C 141.3 Twin Creek Road (no public access) to Fort Knox Gold Mine, Alaska's largest operating gold mine.

F 20.57 C 140.8 **Cleary Summit** (elev. 2,233 feet) at Fairbanks Creek Road turnout. Side road leads east 0.2 mile to Skiland Road (ski area is 0.8 mile up access road) and 0.9 mile east to parking area at junction with Fish Creek Road. Access to residential area and Circle to Fairbanks Historic Trail (2.6 miles).

F 20.9 C 140.4 **Cleary Summit Scenic Viewpoint**; parking. The summit was named for early prospector Frank Cleary. View of current mining operation and old buildings from early mining and dredging on Cleary Creek below. On a clear day there are views of the Tanana Valley and Mount McKinley to the south and the White Mountains to the north.

Highway descends steep winding 7 percent grade northbound.

Fox General Store

11.5 Steese Hwy

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Located 10 miles North of Fairbanks in Fox Alaska

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F 23.9 C 137.4 Gravel turnout.

F 26.9 C 134.4 Old Chatanika Road to northeast; gravel trail (no vehicle access).

F 28 C 133.3 Sharp turn up hill to southeast for historic Old F.E. Camp (Fairbanks Exploration Co. gold camp) at CHATANIKA; food, lodging, mining relics on display. The camp was built in 1925 to support gold dredging operations in the valley. Between 1926 and 1957 the F.E. Co. removed an estimated \$70 million in gold. The gold camp is on the National Register of Historic Places.

F 28.6 C 132.7 Chatanika Lodge to east; food and lodging. Old gold dredge behind tailing piles to west. Originally a trading post for miners beginning in the late 1930s, Chatanika Lodge burned down in 1974 and was then rebuilt and expanded to offer food, lodging and entertainment.



Chatanika Lodge. Cafe open 9 A.M. daily (year-round). Halibut/catfish fry Friday and Saturday, country-fried chicken on Sunday, served family-style, all you can eat. Diamond Willow Lounge. Rustic atmosphere, Alaska artifacts. Historic Alaska gold dredge across from lodge, plus aurora borealis videos on big-screen TV. Good grayling fishing. Great winter snow machining on groomed trails; snow machine rentals. Rooms available. See display ad this section.

[ADVERTISEMENT]

The old gold dredge across the highway from Chatanika Lodge operated from the 1920s until 1962. It is the second largest staker dredge in Alaska. (*Dredge is on private property; do not trespass.*)

F 29.5 C 131.8 Turnoff to east for Neal Brown Road. Access to 29.5 Mile Pond (stocked) public fishing access.

Also access via Neal Brown Road to **Poker Flat Rocket Facility**; off-limits except to authorized personnel and sponsored public tours. The Poker Flat Research Range, operated by the Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska Fairbanks—primarily under contract to NASA, Wallops Island Flight Facility—is dedicated to auroral and upper atmospheric research. It is the only university-owned sounding rocket range in the world and the only high latitude and auroral zone launch facility on U.S. soil. Poker Flat is also the home of NASA's Alaska Ground Station, providing 24/7 satellite data downlinking. Tours of Poker Flat may be arranged through the Geophysical Institute Information office, phone (907) 474-7558. Web site: www.themilepost.com.

F 31 C 130.3 Turnoff to Water Shed Road. Access to **Imaging Riometer Antenna Array**, a joint 10-year study of polar middle and upper atmosphere by CRL of Japan and UAF's Geophysical Institute. "The Aurora Borealis makes the atmosphere opaque to radio noise from our galaxy at altitudes of 60–100 km, reducing the intensity of the noise received at the ground. The imaging riometer works like a camera, taking a picture of the radio noise once a second."

F 31.6 C 129.7 Public fishing access to 31.6 Mile Pond to west; pond stocked with grayling. 🐟

F 32.3 C 129 Captain Creek bridge.

F 34.6 C 126.7 Mile 34.6 Pond public fishing access to east; stocked with rainbow. (*Most stocked ponds with public fishing access along the Steese Highway are marked by signs.*) 🐟

F 34.8 C 126.5 Double-ended turnout to west.

F 35.8 C 125.5 Mile 35.8 Pond public fishing access to east. 🐟

F 36.3 C 125 Paved turnout.

F 36.6 C 124.7 Mile 36.6 Pond public fishing access to west; stocked with grayling. 🐟

F 37.3 C 124 Kokomo Creek bridge.

F 39 C 122.3 Chatanika River bridge.

Upper Chatanika River State Recreation Site, just north of the bridge, is a beautiful state campground with river access and rocky beach. Registration at entrance to campground. There are 25 sites with fireplaces and a gravel parking area with toilets and a water pump at the entrance. Firewood is usually available during the summer. Camping fee \$10/night. Campground host. Operated by private vendor. Look for wild roses here in June. ▲

Boats can be launched on the gravel bars by the river. Bring your mosquito repellent and suntan lotion. This is an access point to the Chatanika River canoe trail. See **Milepost F 60** for more information on canoeing this river.

Chatanika River, grayling 8 to 20 inches, use flies or spinners, May to September. 🐟

F 39.3 C 122 Mile 39.3 Pond to west; private property.

F 40.4 C 120.9 Bridge over Crooked Creek. Private pond (no public access).

F 41.5 C 119.8 Bridge over Belle Creek. Private homestead.

F 42.5 C 118.8 Double-ended gravel turnout to west; sled dog unloading area. **McKay Creek Trailhead.** McKay Creek Trail is 17.5 miles long. It climbs steeply for 5.5 miles to ridgetop at boundary of White Mountains National Recreation Area. The first 8 miles are suitable for summer use, according to the BLM. Winter use from November to April. This trail intersects with the Lower Nome Creek Trail.

F 42.6 C 118.7 Bridge over McKay Creek.

F 43.9 C 117.4 Double-ended turnout to west.

Highway parallels the Chatanika River for

the next 10 miles northbound.

F 45.5 C 115.8 Long Creek bridge. Long Creek Trading Post to west at north end of bridge; gold panning equipment (and advice), groceries, liquor store, camping. Fishing (and gold panning) in Long Creek; grayling 8 to 14 inches, use spinners or flies, May to September. 🐟▲

F 48.1 C 113.2 Turnout.

F 48.2 C 113.1 Large double-ended turnouts to southeast.

F 48.5 C 112.8 Northbound views down Chatanika River valley to east.

F 50.2 C 111.1 Gravel parking area.

F 50.8 C 110.5 Begin series of long, straight uphill and downhill grades (7 to 8 percent) northbound.

F 53 C 108.3 *Pavement ends, gravel road begins, northbound.*

F 57.1 C 104.2 Entering BLM White Mountains National Recreation Area northbound. Access to this area's trails and cabins is from Milepost F 57.3.

F 57.3 C 104 Turnoff for the BLM's Nome Creek Valley Gold Panning Area via U.S. Creek Road to west (description follows). **Davidson Ditch Historical Site** immediately to the west on U.S. Creek. The large pipe was built in 1925 by the Fairbanks Exploration Co. to carry water to float gold dredges. The 83-mile-long ditch, designed and engineered by J.B. Lippincott, begins near Milepost F 64 on the Steese Highway and ends near Fox. A system of ditches and inverted siphons, the pipeline was capable of carrying 56,100 gallons per minute. After the dredges closed, the water was used for power until 1967, when a flood destroyed a bridge and flattened almost 1,000 feet of pipe.

U.S. Creek Road (steep gravel) winds up and over the hills to the northwest 6.9 miles to the **Nome Creek Valley Gold Panning Area**; large gravel parking area, outhouse and signs about White Mountains National Recreation Area and the Nome Creek Gold Panning Area. *NOTE: Check with BLM in Fairbanks regarding status of U.S. Creek Road in wet weather.*

Recreational gold panning in Nome Creek Valley is limited to the designated area and non-motorized tools, such as gold pans, rocker boxes, sluice boxes, picks and shovels.

Nome Creek Road forks at the gold panning area. Follow Nome Creek Road to the upper end of Nome Creek Valley for Mt. Prindle Campground and Quartz Creek Trail (4 miles). Follow Nome Creek Road to the lower end of the valley for Ophir Creek

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See log ad at Mile 28.6 Steese Highway

Campground and Beaver Creek National Wild River put-in point (12 miles).

F 59 C 102.3 Double-ended dirt parking area to east.

F 60 C 101.1 Cripple Creek BLM Campground and river access to east; 7-day camping limit, 6 tent, 12 level trailer sites; water pumps, firepits, outhouses, bear-proof dumpsters, picnic tables, nature trail. Camping fee \$6. Parking for walk-in campers. Firewood is usually available all summer. Recreational gold panning permitted. *Bring mosquito repellent!* ▲

Access to Cripple Creek BLM recreation cabin. Preregister and pay \$10 fee at BLM office, 1150 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99709; phone (907) 474-2200.

Cripple Creek bridge is the uppermost access point to the Chatanika River canoe trail. Follow 0.2 mile side road near campground entrance to canoe launch site; parking area, outhouses. **CAUTION: This canoe trail may not be navigable at low water.** The Chatanika River is a clear-water Class II stream. The Steese Highway parallels the river for approximately 28 miles and there are many access points to the highway downstream from the Cripple Creek bridge. No major obstacles on this canoe trail, but watch for overhanging trees. Downstream pullout points are Perhaps Creek, Long Creek and Chatanika Campground.

F 62.3 C 99 Viewpoint to east overlooking Chatanika River.

F 63.3 C 98 View of historic Davidson Ditch pipeline to west (see **Milepost F 57.3**).

F 65 C 96.3 Turnoff to southeast for scenic viewpoint (visible from highway); large parking area.

F 65.6 C 95.7 Sourdough Creek bridge.

F 65.7 C 95.6 Davidson Ditch Road; trailhead.

F 67.8 F 93.5 Dirt turnout.

F 69 C 92.3 Faith Creek bridge. Creek access to east at north end of bridge.

Highway climbs 7 percent grade northbound.

F 72 C 89.3 View ahead for northbound travelers of highway route along mountains, McManus Creek below.

F 79.1 C 82.2 Road widens for parking next 500 feet.

F 80.1 C 81.2 Montana Creek state highway maintenance station to west. Long double-ended turnout to east. Montana Creek runs under road and into McManus Creek to the east. McManus Dome (elev. 4,184 feet) to west.

F 81.2 C 80.1 Turnout to east. Spring water (untested) may be available from roadside pipe.

Wide gravel highway begins ascent to Twelvemile Summit. Avalanche gates.

F 83 C 78.3 **CAUTION: Slow down for 30 mph curve.**

F 84.5 C 76.8 Small dirt turnout.

F 85 C 76.3 **CAUTION: Slow down for 30 mph curve.**

F 85.5 C 75.8 Turnoff to east to **Twelvemile Summit Wayside**; parking area and viewpoint. Distance marker on highway shows Central 40 miles, Circle 74 miles.

Twelvemile Summit (elev. 3,190 feet) is on the divide of the Yukon and Tanana river drainages. Wildflowers carpet the alpine tundra slopes. Entering Game Management Unit 25C, leaving unit 20B, northbound. Fairbanks-North Star Borough limits. Circle to Fairbanks Historic Trail trailhead 0.4 mile. This is caribou country; from here to beyond Eagle Summit (**Milepost F 108**) migrating bands of caribou may be seen from late July

through mid-September.

Access to Pinnell Mountain national recreation trail (Twelvemile Summit trailhead). The trail is also accessible from Eagle Summit at **Milepost F 107.1**. Named in honor of Robert Pinnell, who was fatally injured in 1952 while climbing nearby Porcupine Dome. This 27-mile-long hiking trail winds through alpine terrain, along mountain ridges and through high passes. Highest elevation point reached is 4,721 feet. The trail is marked by rock cairns. Shelter cabins at Mile 10.7 and Mile 17.7. Vantage points along the trail with views of the White Mountains, Tanana Hills, Brooks Range and Alaska Range. Watch for willow ptarmigan, hoary marmot, rock pika, moose, wolf and caribou. Mid-May through July is the prime time for wildflowers, with flowers peaking in mid-June. Carry drinking water and insect repellent at all times. Additional information on this trail is available from the Bureau of Land Management, 1150 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99708-3844; phone (907) 474-2350.

Distance marker northbound shows Central 40 miles, Circle 74 miles.

F 86.6 F 74.7 Small dirt turnout.

F 88.8 C 72.5 Bridge over Reed Creek.

F 90.6 C 70.7 Double-ended turnout to east.

F 93.4 C 67.9 Bridge over the North Fork Twelve Mile Creek. Nice picnic spot to west below bridge.



F 94 C 67.3 **Birch Creek Access.** Side road leads 0.2 mile down to north fork of Birch Creek; parking area and canoe launch for Birch Creek canoe trail. This is the main put-in point for canoeing Birch Creek, a Wild and Scenic River. Informal campsite by creek. Extensive mining in area. **Birch Creek**, grayling to 12 inches; use flies, June to October. ➤

F 95.8 C 65.5 Bridge over Willow Creek.

F 97.6 C 63.7 Bridge over Bear Creek.

F 98 C 63.3 Watch for gold mining activity in streams along this part of the highway. These are private mining claims. **IMPORTANT: Do not trespass. Do not approach mining equipment without permission.**

F 99.7 C 61.6 Bridge over Fish Creek.

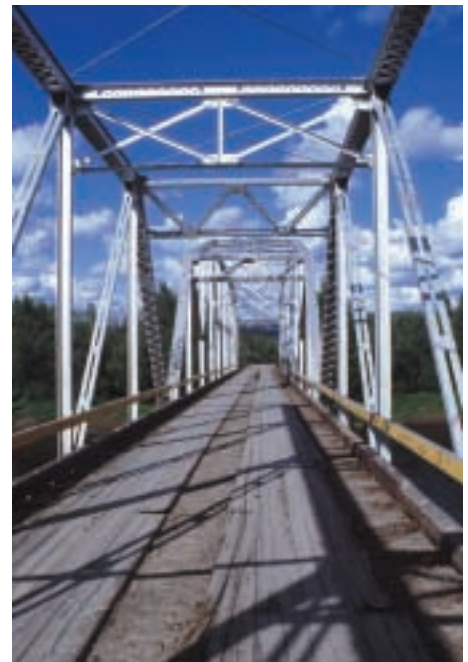
F 101.4 C 59.9 Remains of old 101 Lodge. Yukon Quest dog drop.

Avalanche gates. May be closed if road conditions are hazardous over the summit.

F 101.5 C 59.8 Bridge over Ptarmigan Creek (elev. 2,398 feet). Alpine meadows carpeted with wildflowers in spring and summer for next 9 miles.

F 103 C 58.3 Highway climbs to summit northbound. Good view to east of mining activity down in valleys. Scalloped waves of soil on hillsides to west are called solifluction lobes. These are formed when meltwater saturates the thawed surface soil, which then flows slowly downhill.

F 107.1 C 54.2 **Eagle Summit wayside**; large parking area 0.2 mile west with



One-lane bridge crosses Birch Creek at Milepost F 147.2.

(© Kris Valencia, staff)

wheelchair-accessible toilet, bear-proof litter container, emergency shelter and display. Hike to summit. Favorite spot for local residents to observe summer solstice (weather permitting) on June 21. Best wildflower viewing on Alaska highway system. Wildflowers found here include: dwarf forget-me-nots, alpine rhododendron or rosebay, rock jasmine, alpine azalea, arctic bell heather, mountain avens, Jacob's ladder, anemones, wallflowers, Labrador tea, lupine, oxytropes, gentians and louseworts. The museum in Central has a photographic display of Eagle Summit alpine flowers to help highway travelers identify the wildflowers of this area.

Pinnell Mountain Trail access (Eagle Summit trailhead); see description at **Milepost F 85.5**. Weather station. ♿

F 107.5 C 53.8 **Eagle Summit** (elev. 3,685 feet). This is the third and highest of 3 summits (including Cleary and Twelvemile) along the Steese Highway.

F 109.2 C 52.1 Large parking area to east; no guardrails. *Highway begins steep descent northbound.*

F 111.4 C 49.9 Parking area to east.

F 114.2 C 47.1 Parking area to east overlooks the Mastodon, Mammoth, Miller and Independence creeks area (although the view has been somewhat obscured by foliage). Prospectors were finding gold on these creeks 2 years before the Klondike gold rush. Active mining still takes place in this area.

The historic Miller House, which began in 1896 as a cabin built by prospector Fritz Miller, was located near here. Miller House was originally a stopover on the sled trail between Circle City and Fairbanks. With the completion of the Steese Highway, it became a year-round roadhouse, offering meals, gas, groceries, a post office and rental cabins, operating until 1970.

Avalanche gates.

F 116.2 C 45.1 Road east to Mammoth Creek.

F 116.4 C 44.9 Bridge over Mammoth

Creek. Near here fossil remains of many species of preglacial Alaska mammals have been excavated and may be seen at the University of Alaska museum in Fairbanks and at the museum in Central.

F 117 C 44.3 Highway crosses over Stack Pup Creek. From here the highway gradually descends to Central.

F 117.5 C 43.8 Parking area to west.

F 119.1 C 42.2 Bedrock Creek. Turnout. Access to creek.

F 120 C 41.3 View northbound through foliage of mining operations to west.

F 121 C 40.3 Bridge over Sawpit Creek.

F 122.5 C 38.8 Road west to parking space by pond.

F 125.4 C 35.9 Bridge over Boulder Creek.

F 126 C 35.3 Lupine and wild roses bloom along the road in June. **CAUTION: Road narrows, no shoulders; slow down for curves northbound.**

F 126.7 C 34.6 **Paved highway begins northbound. Begin 30 mph speed zone northbound.**

F 127.1 C 34.2 Central elementary school.

F 127.5 C 33.8 **CENTRAL** (pop. 113; elev. 965 feet). This small community has a post office (ZIP code 99730), state-owned airstrip (at Milepost F 128.4) and a park with picnic area. Gas, laundry and showers, rooms and other services also available.

Formerly called Central House, Central is situated on Crooked Creek along the Steese Highway. Central is the central point in the huge Circle Mining District, one of the oldest and still one of the most active districts in the state. The annual Circle Mining District Picnic for local miners and their families is held in August.

The **Circle District Historical Society Museum** has displays covering the history of the Circle Mining District and its people. Also here are a photo display of wildflowers, fossilized remains of preglacial mammals, a minerals display, library and archives, gift shop and visitor information. Admission fee charged; members free. Open daily noon to 5 P.M., Memorial Day through Labor Day; \$1 donation requested.

F 127.8 C 33.5 **Junction** with Circle Hot Springs Road, which leads 8.2 miles to Circle Hot Springs resort (closed in 2004, current status unknown). This side road also provides access to Ketchem Creek Road (at Mile 4.7), a 1-lane dirt and gravel road which leads to private mining claims and rock formations (keep right at forks in road) before petering out about Mile 3.4.

Primitive camping is available on Circle Hot Springs Road at the former Ketchem Creek BLM campground at Mile 5.8, on the west side of Ketchem Creek bridge.

The hot springs were used as a gathering place by area Athabascans before the gold rush. Local prospectors used the springs as early as the 1890s. Cassius Monohan homesteaded the site in 1905, selling out to Frank Leach in 1909. Leach built the airstrip, on which Noel Wien landed in 1924. (Wien pioneered many flight routes between Alaska communities.) Leach also built a 3-story hotel, which formed the core of the resort complex.

F 127.9 C 33.4 Bridge (1-lane) over Crooked Creek. Remains of Central House roadhouse on north side of bridge. Distance marker northbound shows Circle 33 miles.

F 128.1 C 33.2 Central DOT/PF highway maintenance station.

F 128.2 C 33.1 **Pavement ends, gravel**

begins, northbound.

Watch for ptarmigan and snowshoe hares between Central and Circle.

F 128.4 C 32.9 **Private Aircraft:** Central state-maintained airstrip, adjacent north; elev. 932 feet; length 2,700 feet; gravel; unattended.

F 130.5 C 30.8 Pond frequented by a variety of ducks.

F 130 C 31.3 Albert Creek bridge.

F 138 C 23.3 **Road narrows northbound. Winding road to Circle.**

F 140.5 C 20.8 **Lower Birch Creek Wayside** (BLM) to east. Drive in 0.1 mile via wide gravel road to large wayside with out-house and bearproof garbage containers. Area is suitable for tent camping and RV parking. Birch Creek access point: Boaters can put in here and float down to Birch Creek bridge at Milepost 147.2. Much of the bedrock along this waterway consists of Birch Creek Schist, one of the oldest rocks in Alaska. Area wildlife includes marten, red fox, wolves, peregrine falcons, sandhill cranes, bald eagles and waterfowl (lesser and greater scaups, widgeons). Fishing for northern pike and grayling.

F 141 C 20.3 Small pond with turnout at one end.

CAUTION: Narrow, winding road with blind curves next few miles northbound. Drive carefully!

F 147.2 C 14.1 One-lane bridge over Birch Creek; clearance 13 feet, 11 inches. Spur roads at south and north ends of bridge lead to turnouts on creek (muddy in wet weather; check before driving in). Primitive camping at turnouts. Usual takeout point for the **Birch Creek Canoe Trail**.

F 147.5 C 13.8 Turnout to east.

F 147.7 C 13.6 Large gravel parking area (muddy when wet).

F 147.9 C 13.4 **CAUTION sign northbound reads: "Go 20 mph for next 11 miles."**

F 148.6 C 12.7 Turnout in gravel pit to east. Look for bank swallow nests in cliffs.

F 155.6 C 5.7 **CAUTION: Slow for dangerous curve.**

F 156.6 C 4.7 Turnout and gravel pit. **CAUTION: Gravel pit is unstable.**

F 157 C 4.3 **NOTE:** Edge of road can be dangerously soft.

F 159.5 C 1.8 Old Indian cemetery to east.

F 161 C 0.3 Circle post office (ZIP code 99733).

F 161.1 C 0.2 **Private Aircraft:** Circle City state-maintained airstrip, adjacent west; elev. 610 feet; length 3,000 feet; gravel; fuel 100LL.

F 161.2 C 0.1 **H.C. Company Store.** See display ad this section.

Circle



F 161.3 C 0 "Welcome to Circle City" sign. From here you are looking at one channel of the mighty Yukon River. **Population:** 73. **Elevation:** 596 feet. **Climate:** Mean monthly temperature in July 61.4°F, in January -10.6°F. Record

high 91°F July 1977, record low -69°F in February 1991. Snow from October through April. Monthly precipitation in summer averages 1.45 inches.

Located on the banks of the Yukon River, 50 miles south of the Arctic Circle, Circle City was the largest gold mining town on the Yukon River, before the Klondike Gold

Rush of 1898 created Dawson City, YT. The town began as a supply point to the new gold diggings on Birch Creek in 1893, and grew as a hub for various gold camps in the Interior.

The town was named Circle City because the early miners thought it was located on the Arctic Circle.

Today, Circle serves a small local population and visitors coming in by highway or by river. There's a lot of summer river traffic here: canoeists put in and take out. Gas, groceries, snacks and sundries are available at the H.C. Company Store. Free camping at unmaintained parking area on the banks of the Yukon at the end of the road. ▲



A large motel adjacent this parking area remained unfinished in summer 2004. Inquire locally about guided river trips and air service.

The old Pioneer Cemetery, with its markers dating back to the 1800s, is an interesting spot to visit. Walk a short way upriver (past the old machinery) on the gravel road to a barricade: You will have to cross through a private front yard (please be respectful of property) to get to the trail. Walk straight ahead on the short trail, which goes through dense underbrush (many mosquitoes), for about 10 minutes. Watch for a path on your left to the graves, which are scattered among the thick trees.

In 1989, when the Yukon River flooded, water covered the bottom of the welcome sign at the end of the Steese Highway in Circle. The H.C. Company Store had more than 4 feet of water in it. Inside the store are depth and date marks for various floods.

The Yukon is Alaska's largest river. The 2,000-mile river heads in Canada and flows west into Norton Sound on the Bering Sea.

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