



Important Information About the Alaska River Logs

These narratives about trips on Alaska rivers are valuable even decades after they were written. However, we recommend that you to keep the following in mind as you read.

First, a word of warning: use these river logs as one source of information that you will supplement with more. Alaska rivers can be very dangerous because of their remoteness, the climate, their sources, and other factors. Bring adequate and proper clothing, equipment, and food. File a "float plan" with someone who can call for help if you do not return on time. Take a satellite phone or other communications tool if at all possible (but not usually a cell phone because of their limited coverage in Alaska). You should plan carefully for a safe and pleasant trip.

Second, note also that land status information contained in these documents may no longer be accurate. These logs were compiled long before massive land transfers of unreserved public land to restrictive public ownership or private ownership. River users should be careful to follow federal or state regulations where appropriate, and to avoid trespassing on private land. [Here is some additional information Alaska native landowners.](#) You can obtain

information about access on public lands from the [Alaska Public Lands Information Center](#).

Third, be sure to also check current fishing or hunting regulations, as what was legal decades ago may not be legal today. You can obtain information about state fishing and hunting regulations from the [Alaska Department of Fish and Game website](#). More restrictive federal regulations may apply on certain federal lands.

Finally, there may be errors. We are working to make as much of this material as possible searchable by adding a text layer to the original image-only PDF files using a text capture process. This process is ongoing. Where possible, we have also converted these to HTML files. Please note that while we have corrected obvious errors generated during these processes, errors may still remain. There may also be errors in the original material.

[Return to Alaska outdoors areas](#) for more information about boating, fishing and hunting areas.

Provided by the Alaska Outdoor Supersite
www.outdoorsdirectory.com

Memorandum

: Task Force Leader

DATE: 007 19 1972

From : Noel P. Granzow

SUBJECT: Trip Report- Chitina River, Jake's Bar to mouth,
Aug 26-30, 1972

On Saturday morning, August 26, an interagency field task force met at the Chitina Airport in preparation for a four-day river evaluation float trip of the Chitina River. The trip was organized in anticipation of the Secretary of the Interior designating the Chitina River as one of several rivers in Alaska to be studied for possible inclusion in the national system of wild and scenic rivers. The Secretary's list of rivers is not to be released until late September; however, as early September ends the field season, we felt it advisable to run as many of the rivers on the preliminary list as possible during the remainder of the season.

Members of the Chitina field task force, in addition to myself, were as follows:

Lee Adler - BLM	Doug Clark - U.C. Santa Cruz
Bob Lund - BLM	Mike Wright - BOR
Roger Smith- ADF&G	

The U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Power Administration, U.S. Corps of Engineers and the Alaska Federation of Natives were also contacted but these agencies, for various reasons, were unable to participate.

The float trip was accomplished through the use of Avon Redshank rubber rafts with Mercury 4 HP motors. These were provided by BLM as the rafts which we ordered last June had not arrived. The rafts and equipment were airlifted to Jake's Bar in two trips. The chartered plane was also supplied by BLM.



5010-108

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

Presently the river area is used extensively for hunting. There is not much fishing in the Chitina but the ponds and lakes in the area receive heavy use. There is little evidence that the river gets much use as a canoeing stream. The old railroad grade from McCarthy to the Copper River is usable by four-wheel drive vehicles. This road roughly parallels the north bank of the Chitina approximately 3 miles from the river. The State Highway Department is considering grading this roadbed to make it usable for conventional automobile traffic.

Access is a minor problem in the Chitina. The prospective river user must fly in to the upper reaches, a situation not uncommon in Alaska; however, this does limit use to those who can afford to charter a plane or own one.

Being a glacial river, the Chitina is cold during all seasons. This presents a problem to the river user unless wearing a wet suit. The turbidity, common in glacial streams, adds to this problem as we cannot estimate depths readily and must constantly read the water surface to stay out of trouble. This is not difficult for an experienced canoeist but a novice could get into difficulty quite often. Another problem with turbid rivers is that, in the event of an accident, gear over the side is not likely to be recovered.

Rapids present a problem to the novice but for an experienced canoeist they can be negotiated with some care or, in some instances, avoided entirely.

There is a potential dam site located on the Lakina River, a tributary to the Chitina. Should this site ever be developed, flow characteristics in the Chitina below the confluence of the Lakina could be altered and, perhaps, present a problem to river users. Conversely, regulated flows could prove beneficial.

Several mining companies are reputedly interested in the area around McCarthy. It is primarily the mining interests pushing for the development of the road to McCarthy and the conservation groups in opposition. Mining interests in the immediate vicinity of a wild river area are a potential problem and must be considered should this river be listed by the Secretary for further study.

The Chitina River provides recreation opportunity canoeing, kayaking or rafting. Power boating is not recommended as the river is exceedingly turbid. The braided channels and gravel bars would preclude the safe use of a power boat, excepting of course a flat bottomed jet boat in the hands of a skilled operator who could read the river. As the Chitina is a glacial river and quite cold, kayakers should definitely wear wet suits, and they are recommended for those traveling in open canoes as well. The river has a fast current and there are numerous stretches where one is liable to swamp a canoe unless exercising extreme caution. Gravel bars are frequent and camping areas easily located.

While on the river we sighted peregrine falcons and eagles but other forms of wildlife were not seen. Evidence of the presence of moose and grizzly bear was plentiful and, on the flight up the river, two moose were seen in ponds on the south side of the Chitina within a half mile of the river. The land had the characteristics of good sheep country, particularly the ridges on the south side of the river. Grayling were caught at fresh water tributaries emptying into the Chitina.

Views from the river are excellent. Fireweed Mountain, MacColl Ridge and several unnamed mountains on the north and Nelson Mountain and other unnamed ridges on the south are visible for miles from the river. The river banks are forested with birch, alder, willows and black spruce. In some areas the forests screen out the distant vistas but generally this is not the case.

The old Kennecott Copper Mine was located north of the Chitina River and mining and trapping were carried on in the area in years past. We located an abandoned cabin just west of the Chitina River in the deep forest about a quarter mile from the Chitina. It appeared as though no one had been there in 30 years. Implements were neatly arranged in the cabin and would have been usable had not the roof caved in and exposed the interior to the elements. Nearby we found a double set trap, one of which had not been sprung. The entire area has historic significance for those interested in the trapping and mining era.

At the time of the river reconnaissance, the land status was 30% Native, 20% (d)(1) and 50% (d)(2). This situation may change as a result of the Secretary's final decision regarding (d)(1)-(d)(2) lands.

Recommendation: Although the Chitina river itself is not a particularly attractive river as a result of the extreme turbidity common to glacial streams, it is worthy of additional indepth study for possible inclusion in the national system. This recommendation is based on the scenic character of the area, the canoeing experience possible in this primitive environment and the excellent hunting potential along the river corridor.