

# 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.

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : Files

DATE: NOV 12 1975

FROM : David Dapkus

SUBJECT: Field Inspection of the Delta River, June 26-30, 1975

A field inspection of that portion of the Delta River from and including Tangle Lakes to mile 212 Richardson Highway (near Miller Creek) was conducted by a interagency team as part of a BCR study of the river for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The river section under study mainly lies within State selection land and Federal lands. Most are set aside for the oil pipeline corridor. There are also several private landholdings. The Richardson Highway parallels the river from Phelan Creek to its confluence with Tanana River. Participating in the inspection were:

Gerry Zamber, Assistant District Manager, Anchorage District, BLM  
Lou Waller, Anchorage District, BLM  
Gary Matlock, State Office, BLM  
David Dapkus, Alaska Field Office, BCR

Seventeen foot Gruman aluminum canoes were used for the river inspection.

## June 26

Chuck Hewitt, NPS, and I pitched a tent on the Glennallen BLM Area headquarters land at the offer of Darryl Fish, Area Manager, for the night of June 25. We had finished the Gulkana River inspection that day. Chuck then returned to Anchorage on June 26 while I traded the rafts used on the Gulkana for the canoe previously left at the BLM office and headed for Tangle Lakes.

Arrived at Tangle Lakes campground at Round Tangle Lake (BLM administered) about 1 p.m., set up camp, sorted gear used on the previous trip, and dried one tent. Spent remainder of the day hiking around the lake and surrounding ridges with Larry Kayden, BLM Glennallen, looking for 1200 year old native flint chipping sites. Scattered patches of snow still remained on the ridges. Gerry, Lou, and Gary arrived in the evening, brought the second canoe. Weather was clear, sunny, and warm all day.



June 27

Left the vehicles with BLM staff at the lakes, who were to bring them to our takeout on Sunday. Spent the morning exploring the nearby ridges looking for flint chipping sites. Left camp at noon, stopped to fish and explore the ridges around Tangle Lakes several times. Found three probable flint sites. The Delta River starts at the last of about five lakes known collectively as **Tangle** Lakes; there are short outlets connecting each lake making it possible to float from the upper/south end of Round Tangle Lake, which is accessible from the Denali Highway. The Denali Highway is a graveled summer road (State) running east/west connecting the Richardson and the George Parks Highways. The lakes are deep (10' or more) with the outlets generally shallow 6" to 3'. Very little current in the outlets.

The two miles of river between the lower lake and the portage were fast (4 mph), rocky, shallow (only inches deep), and about 25 yards wide. It is Class I whitewater. Due to spring breakup being late, about two weeks prior to trip, the river was still slightly high and almost opaque.

There is a short falls about 2 1/4 miles downstream of the lower lake that must be portaged. Because of its funneling character, it is not advisable to run the falls in any type of boat. **BLM** has erected a carved wooden sign at the start of the portage trail inscribed "Delta Falls Portage." The trail is fairly good, although it was wet and muddy, probably due to the recent breakup. We camped at the end of the 1/2 mile long portage trail. The entire day was clear, sunny, and hot.

Grayling fishing in Tangle Lakes and the Delta River was superb. The first mosquito hatch was out, giving reason for the grayling to rise well. We observed about four dozen ducks, several loons, Arctic terns, two beaver, and a bald eagle. Also saw four bank beaver lodges which due to there excellent condition were probably in use.

Scenic views along Tangle Lakes and the river are varied - 10,000 to 14,000 foot high mountains of the Alaska Range in the background and lower tundra covered hills in foreground which show interesting evidence of past glaciation, and the Delta Falls - and beautiful. The Delta Falls canyon is about 1/2 mile long and 75' deep with several pinnacle rocks rising from the water's edge.

## June 28

The first two miles of river from the falls were good Class II whitewater, rocky, shallow, and fast (4 mph). The canyon becomes a narrow valley immediately past the falls, but the rock walls of the canyon continue into the valley for about two miles. The river remains fast and rocky for the next four miles; good Class I whitewater. It then becomes smooth Class I water until the confluence of Eureka Creek; there are three deep lake like pools and three braided stretches in this distance. Water depth varied often from 6" to 6', river width also varied from 25' to 75', with the current slowing to about 3 mph along this reach. The Delta River is a clearwater stream until the glacial influx of Eureka Creek changes it to a glacial river. Tributaries on downstream continue to feed glacial water into the river. The river appeared to be about 12" higher than normal.

The excellent views of high mountains and tundra covered hills continued along this part of the river. In addition heavy stands of willows, white spruce, and black spruce appeared in the valley about three miles after the falls giving contrasting colors and shapes to the scenery.

Inspected two cabins, one new on the left bank and one older one on the right bank. Both are being used and are located about six miles from the falls and 1/4 mile apart. Also observed several red or yellow painted mining stake markers in the two miles before Eureka Creek. Grayling fishing remained excellent with several caught for supper. Observed twelve beaver dams, five beaver, ducks, Arctic terns, and one cow moose with this year's twin calves. We camped near Eureka Creek on a gravel bar which produced several good leaf fossils.

## June 29

Floated through seven miles of glacial water from Eureka Creek to the takeout point at mile 212 on the Richardson Highway, arriving at 1 p.m. This reach of the Delta consists of braided channels from 25' to 200' wide, one inch to six feet or more deep, and generally flows about 4 mph. Due to the glacial character we could not judge water depth readily making it difficult to pick the best channel. It therefore is not good canoeing; would be better rafting water.

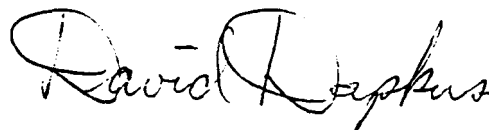
Vista's from the river of snow capped mountains, tundra covered hills, and mixed spruce/birch forest continued along this portion of the river. An old quonset hut was resting between channels about three miles downstream of Eureka Creek. Apparently it was washed down during a breakup of several years ago. Also saw two more staked mining claims below Eureka Creek. Met two fisherman in a riverboat about five miles downstream from Eureka Creek; who had put in at mile 212.

Winter ice was still along the edge of the river starting about 1/2 mile above the takeout and continued intermittently for about two miles. The channel running next to the shore and usually used to reach the takeout was iced over at the upstream end and could not be seen. We took the closest channel to the highway stopping parallel to the takeout but about 200 yards away. We lifted the canoes onto the 4' thick ice and slid them to shore, found the channel generally used to be open from the takeout point downstream.

We had lunch and waited about two hours for the BLM staff at Tangles Lakes to arrive with our vehicles. Lou and I then drove north to Rapids Hunting Lodge across the Delta from Black Rapids Glacier, a distance of 13 miles. This section of the Delta is fast (5/6 mph) heavy glacial water. It is also heavily braided. It is not runnable to open canoe, but has been run in rafts and could be run in kayaks. It is suitable only for the properly equipped (raft/kayak, wetsuit) and experienced who should plan to take in water/flip over. The weather had started as sunny and warm but had turned windy and rain had begun by 3 p.m. Gerry and I drove to Gakona and spent the night, returned to Anchorage the next day.

### General

The Delta River, including Tangle Lakes, to mile 212 on the Richardson Highway is an outstanding river to float. It offers varied water—quiet lake, fast and rocky Class I to the falls, good Class II rapids following the falls, Class I meandering water to Eureka Creek, and fast glacial water to the takeout. Scenery is superb with canyon, tundra covered hills, heavy forested areas, and snow-capped mountains. Wildlife is plentiful — moose, bear, beaver, and waterfowl, and grayling fishing is excellent. It is also accessible by good highways at Tangle Lakes and at the takeout on the Richardson Highway. It lies about halfway between Alaska's two population centers, Fairbanks and Anchorage. The Delta can be floated in two easy days, thereby making it a favorite week-end float for the recreationist.



David Dapkus