



*Nugakuk*

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## ALASKA RIVER LOGS

### INTRODUCTION

These river logs consist primarily of trip reports filed by the now-defunct Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, which surveyed Alaska's rivers for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River system in the early 1970's. They are supplemented by reports from the Bureau of Land Management, the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, and the National Park Service.

The Alaska Public Lands Information Center believes that, although the reports are quite old, the river information they contain is still useful and the detailed river descriptions provided are unavailable anywhere else in a public format.

The logs have also been supplemented with more recent federal and state agency brochures, agency handouts, news articles, and new logs developed by our staff.

**A WORD OF CAUTION:** As you read these logs, bear in mind that river conditions in Alaska can change drastically from year to year depending on weather and erosional processes. Rivers in Alaska are often given a higher classification on the International Scale of Difficulty than they would in a more temperate climate for two very important reasons: 1) most are very remote and help is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain in a short period of time, and 2) Alaskan rivers are extremely cold, as low as 35 F for glacial rivers, and 40 F to 50 F for clear rivers. During periods of high water, as after spring break-up or prolonged rains, rivers should be upgraded by at least one class, because the current will be much faster and more forceful, and erosion will create more hazards such as floating logs, overhanging trees ("sweepers"), and log jams. Also, most topographic maps of Alaska have not been revised since the late 1970's or early 1980's. Most braided Alaskan rivers change channels every year or even several times in one year, so maps may not reflect current conditions: you must have good river-reading skills in addition to map reading skills.

For more detailed information, please ask for a copy of our handout "Planning a River Trip in Alaska".

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

D4225 Alaska  
(W&SRS)

TO : Nuyakuk River File

DATE: September 27, 1973

FROM : M.S. Wright

SUBJECT: Field inspection log

The following constitutes a day by day summary of the Nuyakuk River field examination of June 4-8, 1973.

## Official Party:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Mike Wright - Leader	BOR
Neil Johannsen	Alaska Div. of Parks
Nate Johnson	Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
Stan Bronczyk	BLM
Odette Foster	ACS & Sierra Club
Scott Foster	News Media (KENI-TV)
Don Neilson	Bristol Bay Native Corp.
Birgit Wright	Conservation Groups & Recording Sec.

## June 4, 1973

All members of the official party except Messrs. Johnson and Johannsen and Neilson boarded a BLM turbo-geese in Anchorage at 8:00 a.m. Messrs. Johnson and Johannsen flew to Dillingham and met the party there. Mr. Neilson was already in Dillingham.

The party aboard the goose flew directly to the outlet of Tikchik Lake and unloaded the rubber rafts and gear. The plane then continued on to Dillingham where it picked up Messrs. Johnson, Johannsen and Neilson and flew them to the Tikchik Lake outlet. Following assembly and distribution of gear and a brief orientation to rafting procedures the party left the Tikchik Lake outlet at 1:00 p.m. Immediately downstream from the outlet a class II rapid was encountered and successfully negotiated. The party stopped just below the rapids to inspect a hunting and fishing guide camp previously owned by Mr. Jay Hammond of Dillingham but which had been sold to a Mr. Martin the year before. The camp was unoccupied but evidence of a recent visit by the owner was clearly visible as spring clean-up of the camp had started.



Approximately 2 miles further downstream we encountered the second major rapid (class II) and successfully negotiated it. In this section of the river the banks are relatively low (3-5 feet) with open stands of black spruce (occasional white spruce) and willow forming the major vegetative cover. In the vicinity of each of the rapids exposed bedrock and cliffs 80-100 feet high bordered the water course.

Six miles below the outlet we encountered the last major rapid. This rapid is a class IV to V cataract about 1/2 mile long and is unrunable except possibly by an expert Kayaker and only then at an extreme risk. The party disembarked upstream of the rapids and portaged approximately 1/2 mile over a well used trail to the lower end of the falls. The first evening's camp was spent at the end of the portage.

#### June 5, 1973

After a leisurely breakfast, the party departed at 10:00 a.m. In this section of the river, water conditions are flat and placid with about a 3-4 mph current. About a mile below the put-in we encountered a small class I riffle with a 150' high rock island in the middle. Inspection of the island revealed it to have a colony of herring gulls. Eight nests with a total of 4 eggs were found. Below the island the river flowed wide and smooth with cut banks of 5 to 15 feet in height. Several old cabin sites (former trapping cabins) were inspected along the river in the afternoon. Weather remained overcast with an occasional light shower. Evening camp was made approximately 12 miles below the previous night's camp. Fishing at the mouths of several small unnamed tributary streams yielded a good supper of grayling and rainbow trout.

#### June 6, 1973.

After a pleasant evening with no rain we left camp the following morning at 9:30 a.m. Progress throughout the day was leisurely with only enough paddling to stay in the current. Vegetation, weather and scenery were very similar to the previous day. Shortly before noon we passed out of the d-2 corridor and entered native village withdrawal land. In midafternoon we stopped at a state fish and game fish counting station approximately 10 miles

above the river's mouth. The station was located on a big bend in the river with 10-15 foot high gravel cut-banks. This was the only area of this high gravel cut-banks we encountered. Toward evening (4:00 p.m.) we started to look for a campsite. It was not until 6:30 p.m. that we found a decent site for our 8-man party. The campsite was the original site of the village of Koliganek and was located about 1 mile upstream from the mouth of the river. The old village site was reported to have been abandoned about 80 years ago. All that marked the site were a few mounds and pits in a sea of tall grass. Rain began falling about 3:00 p.m. and continued all night.

#### June 7, 1973

We broke camp at 9:00 a.m. and reached the Nushagak River about 9:15 a.m. We floated down the many channeled Nushagak to the abandoned village site of Old Koliganek arriving about 11:00 a.m. After lunch at Old Koliganek we continued downstream. In the afternoon we had sunshine, the first we had seen on the trip. As we neared the village of Koliganek we encountered more and more native fish nets set across the numerous river channels in the area. After a sunny afternoon of leisurely floating, we arrived at the village of Koliganek about 4:30 p.m.

#### June 8, 1973

We were picked up by the BLM goose in midmorning and returned to Anchorage with a stop in Dillingham to drop off Messrs. Johnson, Johannsen and Neilson.

General. The river is rather uniform in size and appearance below the big rapids. Cut banks of 5-15 feet with occasional hillsides up to 200 feet were encountered. Vegetation was a mixture of white and black spruce, willow and occasionally cottonwood. In the lower 5 miles, the river splits repeatedly into many channels, some of which become quite shallow. Camping areas along the river are at a premium with only a few available for our party of 8. Although we used rubber rafts, canoes could easily negotiate all stretches except the one big rapids.