



# 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: OCT 27 1976

FROM : Dave Dapkus

SUBJECT Field Inspection of the Huslia River - June 11-18, 1976

As part of BOR's technical assistance to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in evaluating river-related resources within proposed National Wildlife Refuge-Range System areas, an interagency field inspection was conducted on the Huslia River June 11-18, 1976. The North and South Forks of the Huslia River are located within Sec. 17(d)(1) lands except for about three miles along the middle of the South Fork which is Native Regional Deficiency withdrawal lands and approximately the lower 15 miles of each fork which lie in Sec. 17(d)(2) lands. The main stem Huslia River lies approximately half (upper) within Sec. 17(d)(2) and half (lower) within Native village withdrawal lands. Participating in the inspection were:

Fran Mauer - USF&WS, Anchorage  
Elliott Lowe - BLM Fairbanks District Office, Fairbanks  
Scott Grundy - Alaska State Dept. of Fish and Game, Fairbanks  
David Dapkus - BOR, Alaska Field Office, Anchorage

Two Klepper kayaks were used for the river inspection.

## June 11

Fran Mauer and I flew to Fairbanks via Alaska Airlines and met Scott and Elliott at Fairbanks International Airport about noon. The crew then flew to Galena, jump off point for the trip, via Wien Consolidated arriving about 2:30 p.m. Due to high fire danger we waited until 9:00 p.m. to be flown into the river. We flew in via BLM fire control helicopter (Bell 205), landing about two miles downstream of the confluence of the North and South Forks of the Huslia River. The main stem of the Huslia River is approximately 110 miles long starting at the confluence of the North and South Forks to its meeting with the Koyukuk River about seven miles above the village of Huslia. There were few decent landing sites near start of the main river for the chopper and none for any fixed wing aircraft.



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The river resembled a large irrigation ditch with 20' vertical mud banks rising to flat, brush covered uplands. The water was dark brown in color, 75' wide and 6' deep, and exhibited a complete lack of current. On the flight in, as well as at our put-in point, we noted that much of the uplands for miles on either side of the river had burned. We spent the night on the brushy, mosquito invested, flat uplands near the rivers edge.

### June 12-17

After some difficulty assembling the Klepper kayaks in the brush without damaging them, we then began the task of moving them down the slick, muddy bank to the waters edge. There was not one level place to stand at the waters edge from which to load the Kleppers making the job fraught with opportunities to get wet. We finally got underway with no damage to the boats or ourselves and began what was to be a continual paddling "float" down the Huslia.

The Huslia River turned out to be a river of almost continual sameness for its entire length. For approximately the first 40 miles it has 20' high mud banks rising almost perpendicular from the waters edge. The uplands were almost flat and covered with willow and alder brush, white spruce, black spruce, and paper birch. Much of this upper river area has been burned with different areas apparently being more intensely burned than others. The understory vegetation consisted of high and low bush cranberry, blueberry, Labrador tea, wild rose, mosses and lichens. Lakes, ponds, and bogs were extremely numerous along the entire river and dot the land for miles away (perpendicular from the river). Low ridges (highest 500' a.s.l. - river 150'-200' a.s.l.) lay to the south of the river from 1/2 mile to 2 miles distance.

The river itself was about 75' wide, 6-10' deep, mud brown in color, and had virtually no current (Class I water on the International Whitewater Scale). There were no rapids. We had to paddle the entire length of the river. It was like "floating" a long narrow lake. A few small side streams entered the river at intervals. None carried appreciable amounts of water. Views from the river and the uplands were poor with no outstanding features. Campsites on gravel bars or sandbars like we usually experienced along Alaskan rivers were non-existent along the upper 40 miles of river. Camps were made in the burned and brushy uplands.

The only outstanding feature of the river (entire river, not only this upper part) and its immediate surrounding area was its wildlife. This feature however has certain limitations. The river provides good habitat for white-fronted geese. We saw 12 to 20 broods per day with approximately four goslings per brood; plus seeing many adult white-fronted geese each day that were in flight or for some unknown reason we could not ascertain whether they had goslings. June, according to the biologists is the prime month for seeing the geese on the river. After the chicks are older they tend to move off the river to the surrounding lakes. The river also provides good habitat for beaver, otter, and muskrats. Beaver were frequently observed, beaver lodges, cut willows, and beaver tracks were plentiful. Two otter were observed as well as some muskrats. Only one moose was seen along the river, however the habitat is excellent and according to biologists and local residents of Huslia and Galena, moose are both plentiful and large. Because of the brushy uplands and high banks along the river it is unlikely that many moose would be seen on a float trip.

The lower 70 miles of river changed little from the upper section. Vegetation was basically the same except that it had not been burned in recent years. The steep mud banks became generally lower (5'-10'). A five mile long ridge paralleled the river in the vicinity of Billy Hawk Creek. The Huslia River changes course at the eastern end of the ridge from east north east to south. This ridge was different in that it was closer to the south side of the river and was the highest (675' a.s.l.) land in close proximity to the river.

The river also began to widen gradually. It averaged about 125' in width until the last few miles where it was about 200' in width. It remained mud brown in color with no discernible current however. A few large tributaries entered the river along this lower section, notably Billy Hawk Creek, Nulitna River, Tom Cook Slough, and First Hills Slough. Scenery did not change appreciably even though we could see the 3500' high Purcell Mountains which laid some 20 miles away to the north. Sandbars began to appear at regular intervals at large bends along this lower section of river which offered good camping sites. Wildlife observation continued to be excellent. Other birdlife seen along the river besides that previously mentioned includes ducks (most commonly seen were wigeons), a variety of passerines, a large bank swallow colony, great gray owl, great horned owl, and a hawk owl. Norther pike were caught mainly where small creeks and sloughs joined the river. The river provides

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good pike fishery. Only one grayling was caught (along the lower river). We were on the river too early in the season to ascertain the salmon fishery although gill nets were set at the mouth of First Hills Slough and on the Koyukuk River (by local people) Two cabins were seen, one belonging to Bobby Vent of Huslia at the mouth of the Nulitna River and the other at the mouth of Tom Cook Slough.

### June 17

We paddled into the village of Huslia on the Koyukuk River (the Huslia joins the Koyukuk about seven miles upstream) late in the afternoon. We had enjoyed five consecutive days of sunshine with temperatures in the +80's with today being the only exception with heavy rain and cooler temperatures. We spent the night at the Native owned Bin Googa Lodge which was a new facility consisting of two bedrooms with a single bed in each room and a one room office. It was about 1/2 mile from the river to the airstrip so we hired a local resident to haul our gear in a pickup to the airstrip.

### June 18

We flew from Huslia to Galena via Wien where Fran, Elliott, and Scott caught another flight home. I stayed overnight at Galena AFB with a new crew who had flown in to Galena to participate in the field inspection of the Selawik River starting on June 19.

### General

We covered the 110 mile long Huslia plus seven miles of the Koyukuk in six days of steady, day after day, paddling. The only outstanding feature of the trip was the wildlife, particularly the waterfowl. The Huslia River is Class I water with the only hazard, if it can be called that, its slick muddy banks and bottom. It offers an uneventful float trip probably any time of the summer except perhaps in June when the geese are there. It is doubtful that even this is enough to entice people to float the river for recreational purposes.

*Dave Daphus*