



# 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

Mosby  
Walt  
Thomas

TO : Files NPR-A Work Group 2

DATE: August 7, 1978

FROM : Jim Morris

SUBJECT: Trip Report for Kasegaluk Lagoon; July 18-25, 1978

As part of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service's evaluation of recreation, wilderness, and scenic values contained in the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska, an interagency field inspection of Kasegaluk Lagoon from Wainwright to Icy Cape was made.

Participating in the inspection were:

Bill Ewing - Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage  
Jim Larson - National Park Service, Anchorage  
Brian McMillen - Bureau of Land Management, Anchorage  
Jim Morris - Heritage Conservation & Recreation Service

Two Klepper Aerius 20 (double seater, folding) kayaks were used on the trip.

## July 18

After carrying our gear to the beach, assembling the kayaks and loading the gear, we launched the boats and began the trip at 8:00 a.m. A beautiful day to begin a trip with mostly clear sky, noon-time temperature of 54oF and a mild wind blowing from the NE at our backs. The sea was relatively calm with swells only about two feet high and perhaps three feet in front of Wainwright Inlet. Water temperature was 43oF. The conditions in the Arctic Ocean are not always this favorable for small boats. The gentle northeasterly wind at our backs greatly aided the paddling. We reached our first night campsite at 4:30 with about six hours of paddling and traveled about 13 miles. The easterly wind however had also pushed the ice pack several miles from shore so that it was out of our view during the entire trip.

South of Wainwright Inlet we passed three separate fish camps, two of which were each occupied by three families. We spoke with some of the people who are residents of Wainwright and learned that they were now collecting mostly seals and fish (including pink salmon and Arctic char) and had been taking walrus when the ice pack was closer to shore. We also encountered three powerboats with hunters and their families.



Wildlife sighted included five to six individual caribou, several whales (.probably beluga), and four snowy owls (list of bird species follows this report).

### July 19

Although still mostly clear skies the air temperature was cooler today and the northeasterly wind stronger. We experienced swells up to three to four feet on the ocean. Whale watching was very good as we saw several a few hundred yards offshore swimming north. We also saw one seal and about 12 caribou along the beach. We traveled about 13 miles to Pingorok Pass where we entered Kasegaluk Lagoon. The barrier island is only about 75 yards wide. Sand and pea gravel and little or no vegetation cover the surface. Mosquitoes were surprisingly thick along the coast when there was no wind. However, relief from the mosquitoes is usually possible on the barrier island, which is fully exposed to the wind.

### July 20

Except for a brief rain during the night, good weather prevails. Temperature remains in high 50's, partial cloud covering, and northeasterly wind. We found the lagoon much easier to paddle in with no swells and only small waves. We traveled to the Nokotek River and up the river three miles. The river was too shallow for travel any further with the kayaks. The river water was still brackish so drinking water had to be gathered from an interior lake. Wildlife observed included three Arctic fox near their den, four snowy owls, and eight caribou. We saw fish jumping in the river but did not identify. We traveled 12 miles, including six miles on the river.

### July 21

Weather deteriorated during the night resulting in periods of fog, rain, overcast skies and cooler temperatures. This weather stayed with us for the next four days. The water surface of the lagoon was very smooth during the morning hours. Wildlife sighted included two Arctic fox, several snowy owls, and some caribou. We traveled nine miles and camped northeast of Nevat Point.

## July 22

We traveled a distance of ten miles today and camped just inside Avak Inlet on east side. We saw one grizzly bear at Nevat Point while exploring the area. He moved quickly away as soon as he became aware of our presence.

## July 23

Today we boated through Avak Inlet and about two miles up Tunalik River. The inlet is a very interesting place to explore. We saw two grizzly bears near mouth of inlet, six or more harbor seals in the narrow neck half way through the inlet, a family of six Arctic fox near their den, and several caribou including a band of about 25. We walked into a lake northeast of the river to collect fresh water and to try the fishing. The fishing was unsuccessful. Paddling back to camp was a chore in the thick fog and against the wind, which felt like it was coming directly off the ice pack.

## July 24

This morning we greeted a band of about 50 caribou standing on the beach about 50 yards from camp. Another group of eight walked up the beach from the opposite direction later in the morning.

Today was to have been a leisurely boating trip to Icy Cape with lots of time to explore the Cape. However, we encountered unexpected difficulty within the lagoon near the Cape. The tide, which ranges from eight to eleven inches along the Arctic coast (greater range during storm influenced tides), was out. The tidal flat is mud rather than sand, and almost impossible to walk upon. One quickly sinks up to his knees in the mud and could become stuck. Subsequently it is impossible to portage through the area or line the boats through, at least during low tide. The tide remained low through the following day. We made it only as far as an island in Section 28, T11N, R39W, before turning around. After paddling 13 miles we ended up about five miles from our previous camp on the barrier island opposite from the mouth of Avak Inlet. We portaged the boats and gear across the island to the ocean side and camped here. Temperature was in the high 30's.

July 25

Weather changed to the warm, mostly clear skies that we enjoyed during beginning of trip. The ocean was fairly smooth and ideal for travel. East of Icy Cape we watched several grey whales within 150 yards of shore and occasionally within 50 yards of our boats. We also saw one harbor seal southwest of the Cape and several caribou paraded by on the mainland south of Icy Cape. We reached the airstrip at Icy Cape via Icy Cape Pass. Even with the low tide we were able to paddle to within 200 yards of the strip. Although we didn't have time to explore the Cape, it appears to be a very interesting place with flocks of sea-birds congregating in the area, marine mammals swimming by, and evidence of a history of human use.

At 3:20p.m., we were picked up by two aircraft a C-207 and C-185 and returned to Wainwright. The airstrip at Icy Cape is 2,400 feet long.

### General Observations

Kasegaluk Lagoon and the ocean coast, as long as there is not stormy weather, is a good place for a recreational kayak trip. The prevailing wind is from the northeast, so the best direction to travel is from Wainwright towards Icy Cape. Although we did not have one, a sail would be very useful on the kayak. A rudder was practically a necessity. If travelers wanted to bypass the ocean and start the trip within the lagoon (bad weather might force travelers to do this), they might be able to hire someone from Wainwright to take them down by motorboat. Also, most of the barrier islands are suitable for landing planes such as a C-185. Camping sites along the barrier islands and along the mainland shoreline are essentially unlimited. Firewood (driftwood), however, is abundant only in intermittent places. Drinking water needs to be packed from nearby interior lakes and should be purified before use. Also, selecting camp sites should also be done carefully so as to avoid disturbance to any of the several archaeological sites (frequently located on points of land and often consisting of sod house ruins) and to avoid conflicting with local subsistence campsites. About 20 miles of shoreline south of Wainwright is private land owned by the Village of Wainwright.

To camp anywhere along this shoreline, permission should be received from the Village Corporation. The logical pick-up point is the airstrip on the mainland southwest of Icy Cape. However, during low tide and possibly at other times, it is not possible to paddle through the lagoon near the Cape. It is recommended that travelers cross the barrier island opposite from Avak Lagoon, pass around the north end of Icy Cape and approach the airstrip from the west.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim".

Jim

Enclosure

Birds Identified During Field Investigation\*

Glacous gull	Sabine gull
Old squaw	Dunlin
King eider	Pomarine jaegar
Arctic loon	Black legged kittiwake
Yellow-billed loon	Parastice jaegar
Snowy owl	Snow bunting
Black brant	Semi-palmated sandpiper
Long-tailed jaegar	Koot
Lapland longspur	Golden plover
Common eider	Northern phalarope
Red phalarope	Red-breasted merganser
Arctic tern	Savannah sparrow
	Pintail
	White-fronted goose
	Willow ptarmigan

"Compiled by Bill Ewing and Jim Larson