



Alaska Public Lands Information Center / 605 West 4th Avenue / Suite 105 / Anchorage, Alaska 99501 / (907) 271-2737

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".



FORTY MILE RIVER REPORT

PUT IN: Fortymile Bridge at Milepost 112 (see map #1)

TAKE OUT: Eagle, Alaska on the Yukon River

RIVER MILES: 101 miles

TRIP LENGTH: 5 - 6 days at a leisurely pace

DIFFICULTY: overall - Class I, some rapids Class III and IV

WATERCRAFT: raft, canoe, kayak

MAPS: USGS Quadrangles: Eagle A-1, B-1, C-1, D-1
Canadian Maps: Fortymile 116-C7, Cassiar Creek 116-C8,
Shell Creek 116-C9, Mount Galdman 116-C110

Land Manager: Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River, Bureau of Land
Management; Private

Fish species: Grayling, Burbot, Sheefish (Fortymile); salmon (Yukon)

Description: This river trip offers the intermediate paddler a scenic as well as historic trip because it travels through the historic Fortymile district. A wide, cold, moderate flowing, and cloudy water due to runoff and mining describes the Fortymile River. A very wide, swift, cold and murky water describes the Yukon River. Caution must be taken on the Yukon River for pleasure boat and barge traffic.

The Fortymile section provides several challenges for the paddler requiring good paddling skills. The first being Deadman Riffle, (see map #2), Class III rapids which can be hazardous for canoes and may require lining the canoe. The second being 'The Canyon', Class IV rapids generally not possible for open canoes. Scouting from shore would be advisable during high and low water level.

Travel on the Yukon River presents different challenges. The Yukon River moves faster than the Fortymile and landings require more lead time due to the width and speed of the river. Be cautious of eddies, shallow and dead end river channels around islands, and debris.

Precautions: Always wear a properly fitting flotation device and warm clothes for weather changes. Knee or hip boots along with a complete rain outfit (pants and jacket) will help make rainy days more pleasant and comfortable.

River and creek water is not safe for drinking. Boil, filter, or treat all water used for drinking and cooking. Also follow the bear safety steps when camping to avoid any encounters. Mosquitos and other biting insects can be a problem. Lessen the problem with proper clothing (netting, hat, long sleeve shirt) and repellents.

Private and historic cabins line the river banks and should be treated as private retreats or mining claims. All cabins and buildings should be treated with respect by taking nothing

but pictures and leaving only footprints. The removal or destruction of the cabins or objects is illegal and punishable by fine or imprisonment. The removal or destruction of objects denies future visitors an opportunity to enjoy the rich and colorful history of Alaska.

Campsites: Gravel bars and islands make excellent campsites. Always be cautious for rising water level and camp on ground high enough to prevent flooded tents. Confine camp fires and cooking to the shoreline allowing the next high water to wash away any sign. Also, the shoreline will provide driftwood and water to put out the fire before turning in. Remember to break up the fire ring and scatter the rocks.

Customs: Contact Canadian and U.S. Customs before putting in. For more information contact Bureau of Land Management Office in Fairbanks for locations of customs, checks, and restrictions.

Points of Interest: The geologic history of the Alaska unfolds in plain view from every cut bank. A better understanding of the forces that created the landscape becomes apparent in the folding and uplifting of different geologic layers vividly present in the cut banks. This river trip truly becomes a journey through time when looking through geologic eyes.

Two old mining towns still stand along the banks of the Fortymile. When visiting old abandoned towns they should be explored from the outside for personal safety and respect. Steele Creek, seven miles down stream from Fortymile bridge contains several cabins and an old roadhouse. At the junction of the Fortymile and the Yukon Rivers lies the old mining community of Forty Mile. Established in 1887, the town was a supply hub for miners. Many of the buildings are identified and some of their history explained.

Several active and recently abandoned mining camps are visible for the river. These camps are not to be visited unless invited or an emergency.

Near the end of the trip high up the river bank sits the Native village of Eagle Village. Access to the village is from the river or from a road out of Eagle.

The river trip ends at the town of Eagle, with old Fort Egbert's parade field visible from miles down stream. Eagle offers summer tours of its historic district and Fort Egbert, a museum, and a large library. Camping is available at Bureau of Land Management campgrounds near Fort Egbert.

References: Bureau of Land Management brochures and River Guide books

This handout was prepared by:

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9/88

MAIN STEM, FORTY MILE RIVER REPORT, September 1988

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Watercraft: raft, canoe, kayak

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Author: Vince Mathews, Park Ranger, Alaska Public Lands Information Center, 250 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska 99712

6-23-67 - Notes of Forty-Mile Canoe Trip

6-9-67

Party composed of: Bob Krumm
Jerry Wickstrom }
Wandell Elliott } - BLM
Bob Olindorf }
Wayne Boden }

Paul Leroux }
Tom Cates } - State of Alaska
Bob Hinman } Fish and Game

Party left Chicken Airstrip on 6-9-67 at 0915; traveling down the Mosquito Fork of that South Fork of the Dennison River.

Mosquito Fork generally shallow.

Considerably more water in the South Fork of the Dennison River. Stopped at South Fork Lodge for a beer.

Found it necessary to live rapids just one mile south of Napoleon Creek. Very rocky and fast.

Stopped for coffee at skin diver gold camp on Napoleon Creek.

On down river to Franklin Creek. Old mining site about 40 years old. Arrived at about 1715.

Franklin composed of about seven buildings - full of junk - interesting. Most of crew panned gold successfully upcreek from the cabins.

Estimated days travel - 18 miles - 5 hours on the water.

6-10-67

Left Franklin at 0845. Good running until North Fork Junction - very rapid water at junction - full of current changes and hay stacks - suggest that area be classified for lining down stream though we ran it without accident though we did take on water.

Had lunch at junction.

River now deep and powerful but relatively smooth.

Stopped at Long Bar Mining Site which was occupied.

Stopped at Ruins #1 - worked in early 1925.

Some fast water after long bar, but no problems - off river at 1600. Estimate 22 miles traveled - 6 hrs on water.

6-11-67

Left camp at 0900.

Ran numerous but not dangerous rapids. One area west of 40 mile bridge (about 4 miles) is dangerous and should be lined down. Lunch just above bridge - saw sheep with full curl.

Spent some time with Bill Warwick at his cabin just below bridge.

Camped at Bonanza Bar - panned some gold, river generally good.

Stopped during afternoon at numerous cabins and at Steel Creek. No problems.

On river 7 hours - estimate 18 miles covered during day.

6-12-67

Left 0915

Lined around Deadman Rapids - bad place.

Lined down Elden Landing and swamped Fish & Game canoe. Trick run but could be negotiated if studied from lower side in advance. Lunched in same area.

Entered Canada about 1500.

96V over at about 1430.

Stopped early to dry out gear. Overnight at Browns Creek.

Traveled 16 miles - 6 hours on water.

6-13-67

Left 0830

Ran a few minor rapids to main canyon and lined down south side. During high water it would be necessary to line around the north side due to cliffs on south side.

No problems with rapids from here on out, a few minor rapids are encountered.

Lunch at an old dredge.

Arrived on Yukon River about 1500, camped next draw down river from Cliff Creek - good water - though creek entrance is difficult to find.

On water $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours - traveled about 26 miles. Yukon River powerful but not much of a problem - keep away from rocky points.

6-14-67

Left 0800

Floated all day - no incidents - Arrived Eagle 1500.

Floated about 42 miles - good trip but not equal to the Forty-Mile River.

Klepper Kayak River Trips

June 24- July 4

1974

Fortymile River

Copper River

RECEIVED

DEC - 8 1974

Fortymile River Trip (130 miles)

Arrived at Tok, Alaska via highway and met bushpilot and friend Charlie Warbelow. Charlie carried myself and gear in a Cessna 180 bush plane to Joseph (abandoned Indian village 120 miles north of Tok on the Middle Fork of the Fortymile River). We set down on a very short landing strip, the regrowth of alders touching the wings as we touched earth. This was my first river trip in a kayak and on a river with fast water and rapid with standing waves. There was only 3 days to accomplish the trip so I assembled the Klepper (folding type kayak) and at 10 PM I began on an exciting whitewater river trip.

The trip was slow at first as it took courage to enter 3-4 foot standing waves. After a few trials it became easy to run the rapids and then I really made good time. I arrived at the North Fork of the Fortymile River 14 hours later at 12 noon the following day and some 60 miles down river. At North Fork was several miles of telegraph line that was constructed in 1902 which was still standing. The poles, brackets, glass insulators, and wire were all in place. I photographed the telly line and also the main telegraph station (a huge log cabin) at North Fork. The station was in good repair except for the roof which had fallen in. On a door inside the cabin was a cartoon of President Teddy Roosevelt. Many other items were scattered around the place. Here I pitched tent and slept about 6 hours.

Then after a little rest and a hot meal onward down the North Fork of the 40 Mile River to its junction with the South Fork. Along this part of the river was a dozen or so old log cabins built by miners in the early 1900's. I had time to stop in at only a few and they were very interesting. Too far from any road and up a dangerous river for river boats, most of the miners belongings are where they left them. At one cabin was a rocking chair, completely hand carved and put together without nails. The seat and back was made of caribou hide- the hair still on. This rocker was a good example of numerous hand carved wooden furniture, tools, etc. I get the impression from seeing so much work on the cabins, caches, furniture, etc. that not too much time was devoted to mining. It would seem that many of the so called "miners" used this term as an honorable profession to be in Alaska but after finding so little gold, just enjoyed the living in this beautiful, peaceful country. At another cabin was found 2 beautifully hand carved dog sleds. Many other items such as tools- too numerous to mention.

For further information contact: Bill Quirk
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After making one more camp and getting a little rest, I completed the journey to the Fortymile R. and then down it to the Taylor Hwy. some 130 miles from the start. This river trip will be long remembered for the beautiful clear water, standing whitewater waves, and the historical aspect of the area. In future reading about men of the Fortymile, it will be almost like I was there in the early 1900's. Running this river alone, it was like a trip into past history.

