



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.

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Files

DATE: SEP 20 1976

FROM : Pat Pourchot

SUBJECT: Field Inspection of Bremner River, (and lower Copper River)
August 26-September 1, 1976

The Bremner River is currently proposed in legislation before Congress for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as a wild river area. The entire drainage is currently a part of the proposed Wrangell Mountain National Forest.

Participating in the inspection were the following personnel:

Jerry Coutant - USFS, Anchorage
Larry Kajdan - BLM, Glennallen
David Cohen - NPS, Anchorage
Pat Pourchot - BOR, Anchorage

August 26

The previous day, Dave and I had driven to Crystal Lake, about Mile 43 of the McCarthy Road. We spent the night at the small, grassy airstrip there. Nice night under the stars. Saw red-tailed hawk near airstrip in early morning.

The BLM fire helicopter arrive at 7:10 a.m., with Larry from Glennallen. After loading up, Dave and I flew over Chitina River, up Klu River, up Monahan Creek, over the old Golconda mining area (where we were flagged down by two older men, apparently miners but may be hunters, who wanted us to have Chitina charter people to pick them up), down Golconda Creek and then down North Fork of the Bremner to Middle Fork confluence. Arrived put-in camp on Middle Fork one mile - above North Fork at 8:00 a.m. Clearwater creek comes into river (glacial) behind camp. Larry and Jerry (who flew into Crystal Lake strip that morning) arrived about 10:00 a.m.

Several old cabins, mining structures (lode mining) in Golconda pass area. Old trail up Pocket Creek to mines from Monahan Creek and Klu River. No trail down to Bremner; very rough, thick, steep terrain down into N. Fork.

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In flying over, N.F. 12-mile canyon didn't look that bad except for very narrow rock slot/drop near canyon entrance near Amy Creek - looked like no room to scout, line, portage. Rest looked like swift, continuous Class III-IV whitewater with sharp turns, scattered holes, and lots of standing waves. No apparent drops or falls and few exposed boulders in channel. Walls very steep and brushy - often vertical.

Old moose tracks on bar at camp. Found 2-2 1/2" gill cover and section of large fish backbone along little clearwater creek by camp - apparently salmon. Also 7-inch trout-like fish dead in bottom of pool in creek.

Middle Fork 18-20 yards wide, 2-3' deep, 5-7 mph current. Small rapids - no exposed rocks, 1-2' waves, Class I whitewater. Very silty. Evidence of recent higher water in several now-dry channels around camp. Nice sand for tent sites.

7:00 a.m., Crystal Lake air 43°F.; 8:00 a.m., camp air 43";
9:00 a.m. M.F. water 37"; 6:00 p.m., air 56", water 40".
Mostly cloudy today.

In afternoon we hiked up North Fork canyon, leaving camp at 12:40 p.m., and returning about 6:00 p.m. We covered about four miles roundtrip, reaching a point on the N.F. about three miles above M.F. confluence (at boundary of Bering Glacier and McCarthy Quadrangles). We hiked up along canyon rim; good views down into canyon but hard to see far up or downstream because of tight bends. One mile above confluence Class III whitewater, fast with all but a couple huge rocks covered; 2-3' holes and standing waves. Water down-3-4' from previous high levels.

Three miles above confluence some Class IV constrictions and sharp turns with water piling up on sides and rocks. But still places to sneak-readily kayakable. Climbed down about 200 feet to river at one point but too tough a climb to attempt more than once.

We left river at quad boundary and hiked uphill (east) and then south to camp along base of mountain. Very hard going. Lots of ravines, alders, devil's club and brush. Lots of stumbling, swinging, and cursing leader. Going up much easier through more open mature spruce-birch forest.

and birch predominant trees, but also mountain ash, willow trees (6-8 inches in diameter), elderberry. Also large aspen on dry ridges, raspberry, high and low bush cranberry, bunch berry, dog berry, along river Kinnikinnick.

Lots of chickadees (blackcap and a few boreal), some bear sign, moose browse areas seen.

When we returned to camp river had risen 6-8".

August 27

High overcast in morning, partly cloudy in afternoon.

7:00 a.m., air 43O, water 37O; 4:00 p.m., air 60°, water 43O; 7:30 p.m., air 54o. River dropped 6-8" overnight.

Left camp 8:45 a.m., and hiked up Middle Fork about a mile before being stopped by steep canyon/cliff sides along south bank. We then hiked up to a high point of land (marked elevation 1525 on map) and then down to a small lake shown on map. After eating lunch at lake we returned to MF generally following the clearwater creek back to camp. Away from river it was hard, steep, brushy hiking, lots of alder and willow. Along M.F. up from camp over 1/2 mile of old river terrace with level, lichen-covered terrain with widely scattered spruce. Arrived at camp 4:00 p.m., five miles roundtrip.

Saw flock of bohemian wax-wings along river, lots of beaver workings, rusty blackbirds, loon at lake. Saw spruce hen, some old bear, moose sign - not much evidence of recent large game animals or any animals for that matter.

Beautiful scenery; good views up and across M.F. valley; mountains all around, lake very picturesque with alder-covered and then alpine-tundra covered mountains in immediate background. Although mountains all around difficult to reach alpine country. because of high tree and brush line (about 3000 feet) compared to low river elevation (about 650 feet) and very steep, brushy terrain.

Mosquitoes light but white sox and a weird red biting fly bad at times.

Jerry had hiked down ridge in back of camp, reported good views down Bremner but brushy going (had scrape mark across forehead to prove it).

August 28

Clear skies turning mostly cloudy by evening. 7:00 a.m., air 36°, water 36°; 5:00 p.m., air 58°, water 41°.

Left camp 9:30, arrived new camp 4:15. Traveled 17 miles in three hours on water. Easy, fun day, little paddling.

North Fork entered one mile from camp 1/3 to 1/2 more volume than M.F. First two or three miles Class II with 2-3 foot standing waves in a couple spots. One Class III bend with ledge drop of 2-3 feet over half of river with standing waves below but pretty easily sneaked on inside of curve. Then choppy Class I whitewater - very few exposed rocks. Very swift current averaging six mph.

Ate lunch at Price Creek, a clearwater stream. Found jaw and backbone remains of small salmon-looking like female.

We stopped just above entrance to Threemile Canyon (boundary between Section 15 and 16 on Cordova D-1 Quad) and walked down along river and up on top of small gorge to scout rapids. First drop at entrance biggest rapid in 300-400 yard stretch of rapids in canyon. It's a ledge drop with a big 4-foot trough and roller all across the river - Class III-IV, not much water breaking backwards into trough and the rafts rode right over with little water coming in. Below were several tight, rock-wall bends with 3-4' standing waves over one-half of river but we easily sneaked them along the right side of river - Class III.

Rest of Threemile Canyon easy Class I and II water requiring no scouting. Beautiful narrow rock canyon 50-100 feet deep, 25-50 yards wide. River mostly wall to wall but several nice bars and two small clearwater creeks coming in made excellent stopping places. Canyon ends 1/2 mile above South Fork.

Right at S.F. confluence is a big hole and roller about 10 yards wide over a part of the river. Although it is easily avoided Dave and I went right into it, feeling somewhat cheated of thrills in Threemile Canyon. Here we took in more water (gallons) than anywhere on trip, soaking the bowman (Dave) from the top of his head to his toes.

South Fork about the size of the M.F. above the N. Fork. After S.F. we got first close-up views of glaciers on side of valley and on downriver mountains. Although no rapids exist, the river pinches down to 20-25 yards between two pairs of rock about 1 1/2 miles below S.F.; very scenic.

We camped at very small clearwater tributary which drains a small marshy pond 1/4 mile from the river about two miles below S.F. Little pond is dammed up by beaver and lots of beaver cuttings and trails around. Six trumpeter swans, four adults and two cignets, were on pond. They trumpeted frequently during the night.

Saw bald eagle, hawk (goshawk?), flock of bohemian wax-wings. Bear, moose tracks at new camp. Otter tracks at several clear-water tributaries.

Most of day river in single channel. After S.F. in front of camp river in three or four channels separated by low, narrow gravel bars. Active river bottom 75-100 yards wide. Riffles 5-7 mph current, pools or "runs" 3-4 mph current, 2-4 feet deep although much deeper in canyon.

Mostly white spruce-birch forest with alder, willow understory. Some aspen on dry, south-facing slopes. A few poplar or cottonwood

Bugs light in evening. Wilson's 185 with BLM "checker-uppers" from Glennallen over today.

August 29

Mostly sunny and clear. 7:00 a.m. air 40°, water 36"; 1:30 p.m., air 60"; 7:30 p.m., air 56°, water 47". 10-20 mph headwinds in afternoon.

Left camp 9:40 a.m., arrived new camp 6:10 p.m. Traveled 13 miles in **six** hours on water, mostly hard, steady paddling from one mile below Salmon Creek confluence due to headwinds and slow, shallow water.

Stopped at Salmon Creek (missed little channel on right and had to hike back upriver to outlet) saw bald eagle, bear and wolf tracks, and partial remains of dead salmon - looked like pink or small red.

After Salmon Creek, no real riffles or rapids; current 2-3 mph. About a mile below Salmon Creek the river leaves its small valley closely flanked by bluffs and ridges and enters glacial flood plain 1/2 - 2 miles wide with many channels. Most channels very shallow 1-3' deep and choices sometimes hard - got hung up several times.

On bars much shallow quicksand affectionately known as "quagsuck" (almost). Often hard to land boats and walk around.

We tried to stop at Little Bremner River confluence to hike up to cabin shown on map at MacCreel Creek confluence one mile above Bremner. But most of river swings to far side of valley and we were unable to get over to where Little Bremner came in.

A black bear crossed bars and swam river in front of us. At new camp several sets of large bear tracks and old moose tracks. In evening saw four swans and eagle along south side of river.

Although we had been following "main" channel along south bank in late p.m., we were unable to find good camp site, although we did fill up water bottle at clear water stream coming off of Bremner Mountain. So, we crossed river to north side and camped on immense, desolate-looking sandbar. Crossing difficult due to downriverwinds and very shallow channels - had to drag and line some.

Beautiful scenery surrounding campsite; Henry Glacier across Copper, Bremner Peak to south, the Peninsula to northwest, mountains upriver - huge dust cloud over Copper caused by upriver winds.

Vegetation still white spruce with a few birch (no Sitka spruce seen). Lots of alder on islands and shorelines.

Clearwater scarce, but found clear pools in sand by camp at edge of river. Firewood scarce.

I August 30

Mostly clear and sunny - afternoon wind 5-15 mph. 7:00 a.m., air 42o, water 40o; 12:45 p.m., air 60°, water 55" (very shallow) 6:30 p.m., air 58", water 50o. River did not drop overnight as had previously.

Swans trumpeting last night by Peninsula. Four Canada geese over in morning. Two swans flying up Bremner near camp.

Left camp 9:40 a.m., arrived new camp one mile above Copper 5:45 pm. Traveled about 14 miles in 6 1/2 hours on water with steady, moderate paddling for 1/2 time', floating and easy paddling 1/2 time.

One mile below camp Bremner 'bends sharply south to parallel the Copper. Here scenery spectacular with huge amphitheater of mountains and glaciers. At bend current 3 mph and had just as good luck floating and letting current choose channels as choosing ourselves. Still we got stuck in very shallow spots and had to get out and push off or line through several times. Most channels 6"-1 1/2' deep. If wind had been blowing would have been tough.

After lunch about five miles below bend much easier finding good channels - more confined. After 2:30 p.m., headwinds came up and steady, moderate paddling required to make headway in 1-3 mph current, couple places had to get out and line/drag boats to deeper channel. Channels near confluence not like shown on map-most water goes out across sand flats toward Copper while only very small channel was along east side next to mountain slope.

We kept in small channel to find suitable camp site - nice sand bar between Bremner and Wernicke Rivers, a little clear water in pools and trickles out of sand bank but we had to rely on water jug filled earlier in day.

No spruce along river, only a few scattered cottonwood. Mostly alder. Small willows growing around new camp.

Saw eagle nest in cottonwood, magpie, two teal, pigeon hawk (merlin), bald eagle. Bear (looked like black) crossing from west side of Copper, across sand flats and across Bremner in evening above camp, weasel in camp. Bear, otter tracks on bars.

Scenery from new camp again spectacular: Peninsula to north, Allen Glacier to west, Baird Canyon to south, mountains at our backs to east. Again, big dust cloud over Copper around Peninsula and north. During day passed sand dunes 10-20 feet high along west bank.

August 31

Partly cloudy most of day, although mostly cloudy south of us and mostly clear north of us. Rain in evening. 6:40 a.m., air 40o, water 44o; 1:45 p.m., air 52o, water (Copper) 45o; 4:30 p.m., air 49o, water 44o (below Miles Glacier).

Left camp 9:10 a.m., arrived new camp between Million Dollar Bridge and Childs Glacier 5:30 p.m. Traveled one mile on Bremner' and 17 miles on Copper River in six hours on water with light to steady, moderate paddling above Miles Glacier and floating below.

At Bremner confluence saw seal in river. Saw 10-12 seals during day all way down to new camp. Looked like spotted seals.

Right below Bremner part of Copper goes between rock bank and rock island causing short Class II-III rapid with 3-4' standing waves. Although easily avoided by going on west side of river or easily sneaked down east side, we went through okay and took a little water.

Baird Canyon striking with sheer mountains towering over narrow river on east. No rapids, 3-4 mph current. Stopped in canyon above Allen River to look at historic Copper River Railroad - also tent frame there and work road used by highway Department. in now-suspended attempt to construct road generally following old railroad grade. Railroad trestle washed out over small creek; work road culvert crossing of creek also washed out.

Stopped and scouted Abercrombie Rapids. Saw bear and people track: Rapids Class II - 2' standing waves, could be canoed by experienced people or easily sneaked by less-experienced people. Very fast current 7-8 mph. We went down middle and jumped up and down in raft and still didn't net much out of rapid - very disappointing but probably more exciting in peak glacier melt time (July).

Ate lunch below rapids and watched pigeon hawk (merlin) and two magpies play cat and mouse. Although falcon made many dives and passes never really connected and magpies seemed unshaken. We say young magpie creeping around - parents probably distracting falcon from young.

Miles Lake was not really a lake. The water had receded into a large channel which flowed around the eastern and southern perimeter of the "Lake" exposing a 2-3 foot high silt flat over most of the northern half of the lake as shown on Cordova C-2 quadrangle. Current above Miles Glacier 2-3 mph, below to Million Dollar Bridge 1-2 mph.

Due to headwinds we paddled steadily to Miles Glacier, stopping on bar opposite glacier to view and to warm up - very cold. Miles Glacier huge and ominous with lots of cracking, groaning, and ice calving off. Below Miles we just drifted downriver among the many small ice bergs and cakes to Million Dollar Bridge. Wind died and water almost glassy. Very beautiful with Miles Glacier to rear and Childs covering the foreground and mountains all around.

Under bridge river 5-6 mph. We camped 200 yards below bridge in full view of Childs Glacier, 300 yards downriver, Childs cracked and groaned in evening. Numerous ice bergs and cakes crashed into each other and grounded on river bottom in front of camp all evening and night. Although startling and somewhat unsettling, the noise gave one a great sensation of a dynamic earth and the tremendous power of natural processes.

In evening we hiked over Million Dollar Bridge. Although 1964 earthquake knocked one span down of highway bridge (converted from original 1910 railroad bridge), highway department has put in a temporary plank and steel incline which spans gap in bridge. No evidence of recent use of bridge or road (we found out later traffic closed just beyond 1st bridge at Flag Point).

No clear water at camp - clear water pools at Abercrombie.

September 1

High overcast, drizzly and rainy in afternoon. '7:00 a.m., air 44o, water 43"; 2:00 p.m., air 52o, water 44o.

Left camp 9:45 a.m., arrived Flag Point 3:30 p.m. Traveled about 24 miles in about 4 1/2 hours of floating - no paddling. Great, easy day.

Passing by face of Child's Glacier uneasy, but no calving occurred - very spectacular under shadow of 80-foot wall of ice. Below Glacier 100 yards of 3-4' rolling waves, a couple breaking. Fun down middle, only one splash over bow of boat. Could easily be sneaked by open canoe on left or right. Waves bigger than Abercrombie. Current 7-8 mph.

More seals below Childs - several hauled out on gravel bars. Still lots of ice bergs but many grounding out on shallow bars and riffles.

Lunch at clearwater creek two miles below Goodwin Glacier river confluence on west bank. Only clearwater streams seen during day. Saw 20 dusky Canadian geese.

River 6-8 mph most of day - very enjoyable floating - stayed in main channel, no difficult choices, no real danger of missing bridge take-out. Main channel stays close to mountains on west side of valley most of the way down.

Saw several bald eagles - saw no sheep or goats on hillside despite lots of glassing. Saw another pigeon hawk.

Could hear heavy machinery and could see cranes against skyline over flat delta area. Highway Dept. working on bridges spanning islands across Copper River Delta.

Scenery still great with mountains rising steeply along west bank. Only occasional cottonwoods - mostly alder along river and on adjacent slopes.

Took out on upstream side of Cordova Road bridge in small back-water. Seal at take-out. Called Forest Service from Highway Department station 1/2 mile up road. FS rig came out, picked us up and took us into Cordova (28 miles). Spent night in Cordova and flew to Anchorage next day via Alaska Airlines.

General

In five days on river covered 45 miles of Bremner River and 41 miles on Copper River averaging five hours a day on water.

The upper two fifths of Bremner swift, narrow, riffles, and rapids. The lower 3/5 wide, braided, slow and shallow. Except for Miles Lake, Copper swift, big, some standing waves. Except for lower Bremner, an excellent floating river. Upriver winds could be problem on slower stretches. Not for novice or intermediate canoeists. Not really challenging for kayakists. Clearwater scarce, must bring water jug.

Wildlife viewing fair to good (no moose, sheep, goats, wolves see, but probably varies with season). Seals common and of special attraction as they are 50 miles from ocean. Sport fishing poor to non-existent. Trumpeter swans along Bremner also of special value.

Scenery spectacular. Mountain-Glacier terrain seemingly unending, and along Copper unsurpassed by any other major river in Alaska that I know. Threemile Canyon on Bremner and Baird Canyon on Copper outstanding.

The Bremner is a wilderness in the truest sense - we saw no signs of man along river. Despite railroad bridges Copper very primitive.

Hiking very rough in whole river area.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.