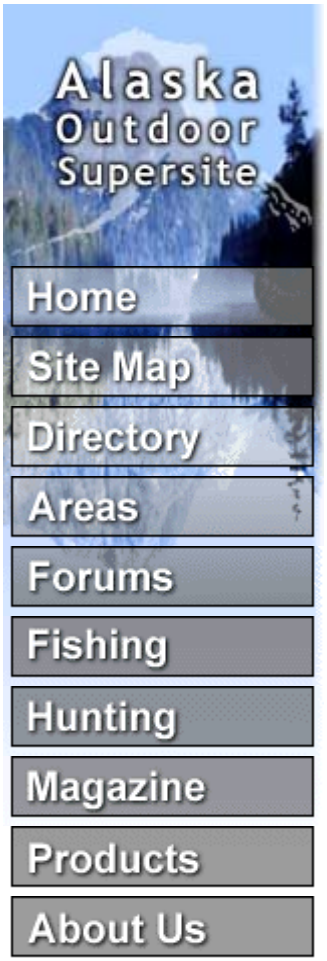


# Important Information About the Alaska River Logs

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 transferals 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:** NOV 24 1975

**FROM** : David Dapkus

**SUBJECT:** Field Inspection of the Tlikakila River, July 13–19, 1975

hs part of BOR'S technical assistance to the National Park Service in evaluating river-related resources within proposed National Park System areas, an interagency field inspection was conducted on the Tlikakila River July 13–19, 1975. The Tlikakila River is located entirely within (d)(2) lands proposed for designation as Lake Clark National Park. Participating in the inspection were:

Roy Sanborne, **NPS,** Alaska Task Force, Anchorage
Frank Bogardus, **NPS,** Alaska Task Force, Anchorage
Jack Durham, **BLM,** Anchorage District, Anchorage
David Dapkus, BOR, Alaska Field Office, Anchorage

Twelve foot Avon Redshank rafts were used for the river inspection.

July 13

The entire crew flew with Charlie Allen (Charlie Allen's Flying Service) from Lake Hood in Anchorage to Summit Lake in Lake Clark Pass. It took three two hour round trips between 8 a.m., and 2:30 **p.m.,** to transport crew and gear. The Tlikakila River is a glacial river, starting from a glacier and fed along most of its length by small glacial side streams. It has two major tributaries, Glacier Fork and North Fork, both glacial rivers. According to the USGS maps and to various other sources, the river supposedly flows out of Summit Lake southwest into Lake Clark. Apparently due to the past year's glacier action, however, we found that water from the lake ran northwest into the North Fork Big River and eventually into Cook Inlet. Several **small** glacier fad streams from both sides of the pass run onto a flat aluvial fan area and into the lake. We inflated and loaded the rafts, and lined them up the nearest stream (flowing **NE** into the lake) on the SE side of the pass hoping to cross the flat aluvial fan and get somewhat close to the Tlikakila River. (We had seen the river from the air, and thought it to start as one of the glacier fed streams on the **NW** side of the pass about 1/2 mile from the lake.) After about a 1/2 mile of lining, and much to our surprise, the stream became the Tlikakila River. It starts from a glacier on the SE side of the pass, flows down the mountainside and splits into two channels - one going NE into Summit Lake and the other SW as the Tlikakila River. Water depth at the split was about **8"** and water appeared to equally flow into each channel.

We then floated about two miles to the confluence of Glacier Fork, the river gathering size from the many small side streams. We had seen a blackbear sow and two cubs along the Big River on the flight in. Saw one beaver near Glacier Fork. The Tlikakila River valley was about 1/2 mile wide; lined with 6,000 foot high snow and glacier capped mountains; and except for some small alder and black spruce, the dominant vegetative cover was alpine tundra. These first two miles of river were Class I whitewater with no obstacles, flowing about 4 mph, about 50' in width, and 4' deep at Glacier Fork. Glacier Fork was fast (5/6 mph) about 3' deep at its mouth, and braided with the main channel about 25 feet wide.

The weather had been heavy, low overcast and rainy all day. Hiking in its alpine tundra covered valley and in Lake Clark Pass would be enjoyable and not difficult unless one started up the higher valleys and mountain walls.

July 14

We floated from Glacier Fork to the North Fork, covering about 12 miles. The river continued to gather size and speed while becoming braided. Channels were 20' to 75' wide, a few inches to 6' deep, temperature of 46oF, and traveling 5/6 mph. It was difficult at times to select the channel with the most water since it is a glacial stream and one cannot see more than 2/3 inches into the water. Although we did not encounter rocks, we began to cone upon submersion sandbars both under-water and exposed. It can be difficult and dangerous getting off a submersion bar because it will not support a persons weight. This river section had no rapids, was good Class I water. The North Fork flows through a 1/2 to 3/4 mile wide valley and across a 1/2 mile wide gravel aluvial fan about two miles long just before dumping into the Tlikakila. It is braided with the main channel about 25 feet wide, 2 feet deep, and flowing 5 mph.

We observed more than a dozen side stream waterfalls on either side of the valley in this section of the Tlikakila River. Hiking is possible up some of the side streams and along the river but generally is not good due to dense alder thickets. Also spotted a cabin high on a flat ridge acorss the Tlikakila (south side) from the North Fork. We saw three beaver lodges, and fresh and plentiful bear and moose sign but no animals. There are many gravelbars along the river which usually have large stands of willow plus dead timber brought downstream during breakup. These gravelbars offer excellent campsites with space for several tents.

The vegetation changed between Glacier Fork and North Fork from exclusively alpine tundra to dense stands of alder, willows, and black spruce along 'the river and 3/4 of the way up the valley walls. There the vegetation becomes alpine tundra which finally gives way to rock and ice fields. Stands of white spruce began at the North Fork and continued along the river to Lake Clark. The scenery is grand along the river with rock, snow, and ice capped mountains, numerous waterfalls and the varied vegetation.

The weather had been broken overcast with some sprinkles during the day, but it cleared in the evening.

July 15

About 1/4 mile downstream from the North Fork the channels come together into one 100' wide channel, probably 10' deep, creating Class III rapids for a distance of about one mile. It remains in one channel for the following three miles creating good Class II rapids before again braiding into several smaller channels. Neither set of rapids had noticable rocks. The rapids consisted of extremely fast water, and standing waves of 8 to 10 mph, 3 to 4 feet, and 5 to 6 mph, 1 to 2 feet, respectively. We floated about 12 more miles before making camp, for a total of 16 miles. The rest of the river was good Class I water, slowing to about 3/5 mph., the channels varying in depth from a few inches to 6', and in width from 201 to 100', with occasional small whirlpools and large eddies, and about six large (10-20 acre) islands.

The river valley remained about 1/2 mile wide with vegetation also remaining as it was the previous day. Stands of white spruce were interspersed with thick stands of alder and willow, and an occasional cottonwood on the valley floor. This turned to alder/willow mix brush for 3/4's of the distance up the mountain slopes before giving way to rock, then snow and ice fields. Wildflowers were plentiful, and included dwarf fireweed, standard fireweed, wild rose and lupen. Hiking was poor even along the river due to the heavy brush. The only wildlife observed was a yearling bull moose. Saw an abandoned beaver lodge and dam.

The continuous array of jagged ice and snow capped peaks, glaciers, waterfalls, caves, perpendicular rock cliffs, and glacial cirques are truely overwhelming. We again camped on a large gravelbar with a plentiful willow and alder wood supply. The weather had turned sunny and warm for the entire day.

July 16

We floated about 14 miles this day, camping about two miles downstream of Otter Lake. Water temperature at this lower section of the river was 50°F. The river remained braided with the main channel 75' wide, 3–4' deep, current fluctuating between 2 to 5 mph. There were no rapids. This section of the river falls in Class I on the International Whitewater Scale. We found it wise to avoid the small channels because they were shallow, and often had submersion sandbars covered with 2" to 6" of water. We'did not find, so far, any clearwater tributaries as expected; fishing was non-existing.

We had contemplated, before leaving Anchorage, on trying to portage from near Otter Lake on the Tlikakila River west over to the Kijik River. It had looked to be a strenuous task, but possible, from the overflight and on the maps. The alder and willow brush however, is so dense to make it difficult to move through without backpacks, so a portage was felt to be extremely difficult and not wise. We hiked in to Otter Lake which lies about 1/4 mile from the river. It appears to be a 20 acre beaver pond; the outlet is a stagnant 3' wide ditch.

The river valley widens to one mile about 30 miles from the rivers source, but otherwise remained in character. Vegetation became more dense, but also remained the same types. Campsites also remained plentiful on the numerous gravelbars. River vista's continued to be grand with high snow covered mountains lining the river valley, caves, tributary streams cutting narrow gorges through the rocky cliffs, and numerous waterfalls.

We observed one beaver swimming up the river at camp, seven ducks, Arctic terns,and fresh moose and bear sign. We had not yet been bothered by the fierce mosquitoe, however, found them.in full force and hungry at camp. Equal numbers of no-see-urn's also joined the bloodbath. The day ended as it begun with much sun, a few high clouds, and warm.

July 17

The river had lost it braided character near Otter Lake, about two miles upstream from the previous nights camp. It widen to about 100' deepen to 5' to 6', with the current staying at about 3 mph. There are many large wooded islands in this lower end of the river. There were no rapids, all Class I water. We floated six miles before reaching Lake Clark at noon and then paddled about 1 1/2 miles around the lake's north shore to a place we could camp and the goose could land to pick us up. The river braids out across many (suspect submersion)sandbars into Lake Clark discoloring the upper part to a dull dark green. We still did not find any clearwater tributaries to the Tlikakila as we had expected. But continued to cross large covered submersion sandbars.

Vegetation stayed the same as the previous day, as did the grand views from the river, except for the addition of several low wooded hills along the last three miles. The river valley also renained about one mile wide and lined with mountains. Beavers had been extremely active along the last few miles of river, leaving much evidence of their activities in the form of low paper birch stumps and lodges. We did not see any large aninals although there was much sign of moose, lynx and bear along the riverbenks. The sun shined brightly in a blue sky all day, makingthe floating very pleasant.

July 18

The USGS map shows the main river channel flowing east of a low hill into Lake Clark and several small channels flowing west into Lake Clark. We spent the day exploring these small channels that are now sloughs. The entire area was covered with dense vegetation–alder and willow brush, paper birch, white and black spruce, wild roses, iris, and other flowers. Saw two beaver's in one slough and a great horned owl resting on a tree limb nearby. Fishing was not good in the sloughs or the lake (probably due to the river's influence).

The lake shore at camp was about 10 yards wide, sandy and covered with driftwood. The lake is two feet deep just offshore, dropping to 6' to 10' rapidly. The lake is circled by high, snowcapped mountains just as was the river. The day again closed as it had begun, warm and sunny.

July 19

The day began sunny and warm as we broke cap. The OAS goose arrived at noon. As we flew back up the Tlikakila River, clouds began to form and the rain became heavy. The overcast clouds were low and unbroken through Lake Clark Pass and on to Anchorage. We arrived at Merrill Field at 1:30 p.m.

General

We covered the 50 mile long Tlikakila River in four easy days. It can be floated in three days. It offers an enjoyable float trip, with mostly Class I water. Just downstream from the North Fork there is one mile of Class III water followed by 3 miles of Class II. The current is fast in the entire river and extremely fast in the Class III and II stretches. The only hazards are the numerous submersion sandbars. They can be avoided however, if time is taken to recognize them. The river is best floated by raft, but would be a good trip for the experienced canoeist

The scenery along the river's narrow, mountain lined valley is the river's outstanding value. Glacier covered high mountains, perpendicular rock cliffs, caves, waterfalls, varied vegetative cover, and deep narrow gorges all add to the splendor.

David Dapkus