

Metadata for

Title Examples of variations	Tab 1.01 Noatak River, Kotzebue Sound
Doc Type Always C&P	Case and Project
File Type	
File Number	
Project Name	Navigability River Files
Date of Document	
Current Time	
Doc Sequence	
Reference	HUC 5040101, 5040102, 5040103, 5040105, 5040106, 5040117, 5040205, 5040212, 5040214, 5040308, 5040310, 5040313, 5040316
DNR Case:	
BLM Case Number	

ROS

2650 (932)

Mr. William J. Wilson
Project Coordinator
Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center
707 A Street
Anchorage, AK 99501

OCT 12 1978

Dear Mr. Wilson:

We have reviewed the report on navigation of the Noatak River which your office submitted to the Bureau on September 12, 1978, in compliance with Contract No. YA-512-CT7-256. It is our opinion that the Contractor has researched a sufficient amount of historical information about the main channel of the Noatak River from tidewater to Noatak and therefore has satisfied the requirements of Phase II-A, and Phase II-B in part, of the subject contract for this particular stretch of the river. The Contractor will have satisfied the requirements of Phase II-B when it provides the Bureau with a description of physical characteristics data in existing computer banks, and when it provides the Bureau with a stream profile consisting of physical characteristics data not in existing computer banks, in the modified STORET format. The Contractor need not collect additional historical and physical characteristics information about the main channel of the Noatak River from tidewater to Noatak.

One additional reference from the BLM's bibliography might provide data about use of the Noatak River above Noatak. This information would be of great use to us. The reference is 02397.

In accordance with contract provision Phase II-A, the Contractor should continue to collect historical information about tributaries, including sloughs, of the Noatak River as well as historical information about the main channel of the Noatak River which is or may be relevant to a discussion about the navigability of tributaries and sloughs of the main channel of the Noatak River. In this case, information about crafts used on the Noatak River is relevant.

The Contractor's written summary of relevant information about the Noatak River to Noatak is a satisfactory product. Please defer revisions to the summary until draft reports on tributaries and sloughs of the Noatak River have been prepared and submitted to this office.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Sherman F. Berg

Sherman F. Berg
COAR

cc:
Ron Swanson Land Management Officer
Alaska Division of Land and Water Mgt.
323 E. Fourth Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501

NOATAK RIVER

Storet Number	1602047
L.U.P.R.	2.1
Latitude	67° 00' 19"
Longitude	162° 30' 40"
Meridian	Kateel River
Township	19 North
Range	18 West
Section	36

I. Activity at/Near Statehood (1954-1964)

A. Commercial Activity

In a series of informational plates concerning the Chukchi Sea, published by AEIDC, it is stated that an increase in sport fishing from 1950 to 1960 caused the number of charter boats, planes, and guided operations to increase. (4462)

According to a dietary survey based on field work accomplished 1956 to 1961, supplies are shipped from Kotzebue to Noatak village via plane, river barge, or heavy-duty caterpillar. (4708)

The Army Corps of Engineers Interim Report No. 6, published in 1957, states that barges can ascend the Noatak to a point about 18 miles below Noatak village. Navigation beyond that point is limited to small river boats unless a rain of several days' duration causes high water. (4058)

In People of the Noatak Claire Fejes refers to plywood barged to Noatak from Kotzebue around 1963. Enuk, My Son, also by Fejes, is centered around a trip made to Noatak in 1964. She states that barges loaded with supplies occasionally travel on the river. Float planes loaded with mail land in front of Noatak village. (749, 750)

B. Physical Data

Douglas Anderson's publication contains physical data on the Noatak River Valley collected during his archaeological expeditions in 1961 and 1964. (7078)

Fejes included physical descriptions of the Noatak River in both of her books. Observations were made during boat trips between Kotzebue and Noatak village in 1963 and 1964. Enroute to Noatak in August, 1963, a native commented that the river had changed the land so drastically within a few months, that it was almost unrecognizable. (749, 750)

C. Other Historic Uses

The Alaska Dietary Survey, 1956-1961, refers to native use of the Noatak River for subsistence purposes. They travel via boat to points beyond Noatak village. (4708)

In 1963 and 1964, Claire Fejes travelled by boat between Kotzebue and the village of Noatak. She also refers to native use of the river for subsistence and travel purposes between the same points. (749, 750)

In 1964 Anderson surveyed archaeological sites between Tunakachiak and Nushralutak Creeks on the upper Noatak. He travelled by boat to about 10 miles above Okak Bend which, according to Orth, is 15 miles southwest of Feniak Lake. (7078)

II. Historic Uses and Physical Data at Times Other Than Statehood

A. Commercial Activity

A summary of ground water developments in Alaska dated 1950 indicates that the Noatak River is utilized for shipment of supplies to settlements along the river. (1844) Noatak is the only community on the river.

In the 1953 reconnaissance report for Interim Report No. 6, two lighterage firms are said to serve Noatak, carrying 200 tons per year with the season extending from mid-May to October. Except during periods of heavy rain, extensive sandbars occur beginning 18 miles below the village, making it necessary to transfer freight to smaller boats for the remainder of the trip. (7187-202)

Local Freight Tariff No. 6-A, published in 1965, by B and R Tug and Barge, Inc. lists transportation rates for freight of all kinds to Noatak from Kotzebue, Ambler, Buckland, Kiana, and Kobuk. B and R is the common carrier by water during the season from June 1 to October 15 of each year. (7187-203)

In a book published in 1966, Norma Spring states that water from the Noatak was barged to Kotzebue from June through November. (2703)

The U. S. Coast Pilot No. 9, published in 1967, states that the Noatak is navigable by vessels of 3-foot draft for 40 miles, or to 18 miles below Noatak. To continue upriver to the village, boats must have no more than 2-foot draft. (2849-3)

B. Systematic Use (quasi-or non-commercial uses)

A post office was established at Noatak in 1940; until the advent of regular bush plane service, it was utilized only during the winter. (660)

Systematic usage of the entire Noatak River by natives for subsistence and travel is well documented. Archaeological excavations reveal that the earliest movement into the river valley was circa 1200. (1418, 2208, 2682, 2728, 2995)

Extensive documentation was found on the traditional native trade route between Kotzebue Sound and the North Slope. Traffic went via the Noatak River to its headwaters, across a portage, and down the Colville River. (478, 496, 896, 1338, 1418, 4077)

C. Incidental Uses

In 1885 McLenegan of the steamer "Corwin" explored the Noatak River from its mouth to headwaters in a 27-foot, 2-foot beam bidarka. During the same year, Lieutenant George M. Stoney examined the headwaters of the river. (1746, 5007, 5761)

In 1898 the Friends of California established a church at Kotzebue and soon after a mission at Noatak. Martha Hadley documents use of barges, launches, and rafts to collect wood on the Noatak by the missionaries in 1899. (750, 4766)

At the turn of the century, the gold rush generated some activity by miners in the headwater region of the Noatak. In 1911 Phillip Smith led a USGS expedition into the area and noted that no deposits of sufficient promise had been found and prospecting had practically ceased. According to Martha Hadley, miners travelled as far as 50 miles upriver with sleds, dogs, and boats. (2208, 3841, 4766)

The only settlement on the Noatak River with substantial documentation is Noatak. Claire Fejes mentions passing a cabin known as "Sauer's Place" just before entering a canyon on the way to Noatak. According to a villager, a man named Eckhardt operated a fox farm at this location around 1900. A 1972 Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) field report noted native fish camps at the mouth of the Kelly River. (750, 4077-30)

USGS field work was conducted in the Noatak region from 1910 to 1912 by Phillip Smith. In 1911 a six-man crew, utilizing three canoes, went up the Alatna, portaged across to the Noatak, and descended the river to its mouth. (2201, 2208)

In 1972, BOR conducted a field investigation of the Noatak River by air and canoe. The eight-man crew travelled 332 miles in four canoes from approximately 20 miles below the headwaters to the mouth. At least

one Sierra Club group followed the BOR expedition downriver in float boats. According to BOR, river boats regularly navigate upriver to the village of Noatak and on up to Kelly River. Natives reportedly have taken river boats as far as Okak Bend, or about half of the river's length. (4077-30, 49)

D. Physical Data

Excellent physical descriptions of the Noatak River are included in the documents concerning the expeditions of McLenegan and Stoney in 1885. (5007, 5761)

Two USGS documents by Phillip Smith contain thorough descriptions of the region as observed during a 1911 expedition. Dimensions and navigability statements are included for various camp locations. A map showing these sites is included in the graphics section. (2201, 2208)

USGS maintained a gaging station at Noatak from 1964 to 1971. Data collected is available from the USGS Data Bank.

Ice thickness measurements were taken in 1966 and 1967 at the village of Noatak. Width at this location is given as 255 feet. (6348)

The 1972 BOR field reports divide the Noatak River into quarters giving a complete physical description of each. Data includes the following: depths, widths, velocities, and seasonal variations. (4077-30, 49)

III. Graphics and Supporting Data

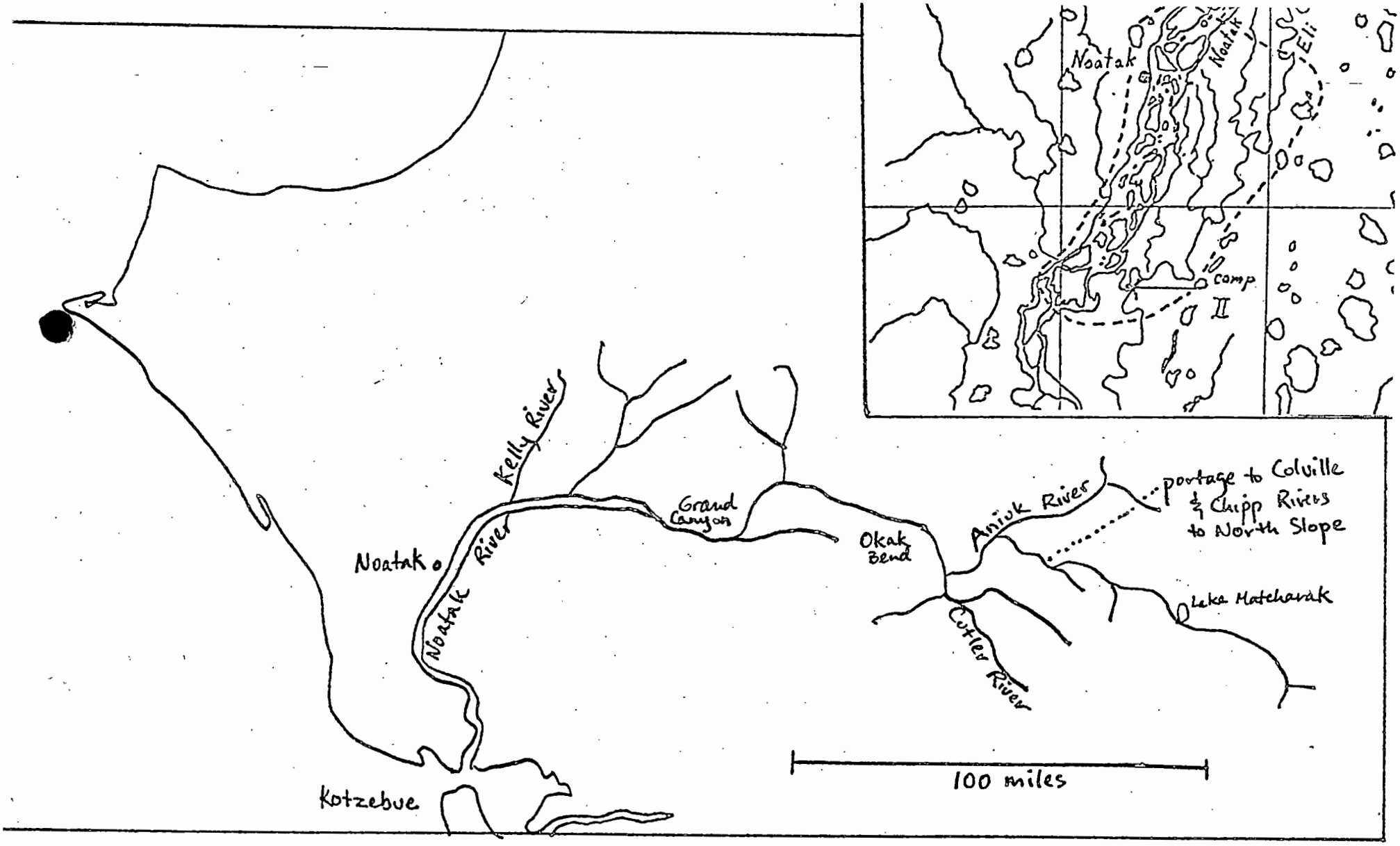
Relevant maps from researched documents were xeroxed. They are filed by reference number at the back of the folder.

Conclusions

Substantial evidence indicates commercial traffic at statehood to the village of Noatak or a distance of approximately 58 miles.

Historical expeditions of the 19th century travelled to the headwaters of the Noatak. Native use for subsistence and travel purposes has encompassed the entire length of the river, which according to Orth and BOR is 425 miles.

Contemporary Park Service expeditions have mentioned river boats as far as Okak Bend, about half the length of the river.


Noatak
Noatak
Eli
comp
II
Kelly River
Grand Canyon
Noatak River
Noatak
Okak Bend
Aniuk River
portage to Colville & Chipp Rivers to North Slope
Lake Matchavak
Cutler River
Kotzebue
100 miles