

TAKOTNA RIVER RDI HISTORICAL REFERENCE LIST

ITEM	AUTHOR	YEAR	REPORT NAME
1	Bureau of Land Management	1985	Alaska's Kuskokwim Region: A History, M. Brown, Extract.

EXTRACT* OF

**ALASKA'S
KUSKOKWIM RIVER REGION**

A History

By

**C. Michael Brown
Bureau of Land Management
State Office
Anchorage, Alaska**

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* The original document is over 800 pages in length. This extract was compiled to support the State of Alaska's Recordable Disclaimer of Interest Application for the Takotna River. The font type and paragraph spacing has been modified to reduce paper. A full version of this document is available through the Alaska Resources Library & Information Services (ARLIS).

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently transferring title to about 145 million acres of land to the State of Alaska Native corporations in compliance with the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958 and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, respectively. A serious impediment to the conveyance of land title is the unknown acreage and location of nontidal navigable waters in Alaska.

By authority of the Statehood Act of 1958 and the Submerged Lands Act of 1953, the State of Alaska owns the beds of tidal waters and nontidal navigable waters unreserved as of January 3, 1959, the date of Alaska Statehood. Submerged land acreage of navigable waters unreserved as of this date may not be charged against the State's entitlement under the Statehood Act; and by virtue of the fact that ownership of these submerged lands passed to the State in 1959, may not be included in conveyances of land title. On the other hand, lands underlying nonnavigable waters as well as those submerged lands in a reserved status in 1959, remain in the public domain or in trust for the riparian owner.

During the 1960s the BLM made determinations of navigability for water bodies on lands to be conveyed to the State. After the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the subsequent promulgation of regulations requiring, among other things, the BLM to make navigability determinations for waterways on lands to be conveyed to the Native corporations and to account for the submerged land acreage, the State quickly asserted its claim to potentially navigable waters on ANCSA-selected lands by two methods. First, the State provided the BLM with its definition of navigable waterways and a set of maps known as Water Delineation Maps illustrating waterways on ANCSA-selected lands that the State considered to be navigable. Second, the State routinely notified Native corporations in the instance of a proposed conveyance that the BLM may be attempting to convey lands underlying navigable waters owned by the State since 1959. Well aware of the differences between the BLM and State definitions of navigability, and the State's position that these differences must one day be resolved by the courts, many corporations excluded in their selection applications most waterways identified by the State as navigable. Consequently, whenever the BLM made a determination of navigability contrary to the State's claim and charged the submerged land acreage to the corporation's land entitlement, the corporation appealed to the Alaska Native Claims Appeal Board for a ruling on the question whether the submerged lands were in fact Federal lands or State lands in

1959. In the late 1970s, as the BLM prepared to resume land conveyances to the State and to accelerate conveyances to the Native corporations, the BLM and the State agreed that there was a need for more information about the physical character and history of waterways as routes of travel and transportation. This information would satisfy BLM's need to make timely determinations of navigability; and it would facilitate the BLM's and the State's need to develop test cases of navigability for the courts. Thus, in 1977, the BLM let a major contract to the University of Alaska to research pertinent information from the literature about Alaska waterways. Completing the project in early 1979, the contractor provided BLM with a great deal of valuable information about Alaskan water bodies, information that was and is used to support determinations of navigability in the land conveyance programs. However, the contractor provided insufficient information about many minor waterways, some of them located on lands to be conveyed to the State or the Native corporations. The need for additional documentary research and possibly field investigations was apparent.

In 1979, representatives of the BLM and the State of Alaska met several times to discuss and decide upon methods by which: 1) the BLM could make timely determinations of navigability in connection with the land conveyance programs; 2) the BLM and the State could reach agreement on what waterways were clearly navigable and nonnavigable under BLM and State criteria; and 3) the BLM and the State could identify water bodies that best reflect differences in the BLM'S and the State's criteria of navigability for the purpose of litigation. The decisions that were made then are still valid today, although some have been modified as necessary to take into account unexpected developments.

Three alternatives in establishing priorities for administrative determinations of navigability were identified: 1) make determinations only for water bodies on land to be conveyed to the Native corporations and the State on a township-by township basis; 2) make determinations for all nontidal water bodies in Alaska on a regional or subregional basis; or 3) make determinations for nontidal water bodies on a township-by-township basis as well as on a regional or subregional basis.

It was decided to adopt the third alternative. This entailed the formation of three independent but interacting teams: one in the BLM State Office to make navigability recommendations in connection with the State and ANCSA land conveyance programs; the others in the BLM State Office and State Department of Natural Resources to prepare

factual reports on waterways in a region or subregion. These highly detailed reports, based upon the best information available, are useful to the BLM in making recommendations for waterways on land to be conveyed to the Native corporations and the State. Once the final draft of the report has the approval of the State and other parties as a technically adequate document, the BLM will have the means to make reliable and consistent determinations for entire waterways. This in turn will give the State the opportunity to identify waterways that best illustrate differences in BLM and State criteria of navigability for development of test cases. As these differences are settled by the courts, the BLM and State criteria will eventually be the same. Whatever decisions are reached by the courts, the BLM will have a source document on which to rely in reviewing the validity of previous determinations in light of the courts decisions.

While the first alternative would have met the immediate need for determinations in land conveyance programs, it would have in the long run generated many problems of an administrative and legal nature. With an accelerated land conveyance program, it would have been impossible to collect and analyze a great deal of information about water bodies, much less to prepare thoroughly documented and well-reasoned rationales for determinations. The high probability that incorrect and inconsistent determinations would be made, and that disputes over the fact relating to a waterway would be taken to the courts, was all too clear. In this eventuality, the BLM would have been repeatedly forced to research and write reports to defend (or change) determinations of navigability for the use of the Regional Solicitor. On the other hand, the second alternative, which would entail the preparation of reports on a watershed, subregional, or regional basis, would not have met the pressing need for navigability determinations on State- and ANCSA-selected lands. Without a much larger staff, the BLM would not have been able to research, analyze, and synthesize a great deal of information into written reports needed to determine navigable and nonnavigable waters on these lands. These lands are scattered throughout Alaska, and involve many waterways--too many to be covered adequately in a short time frame. Yet it is clear that these reports will be needed more and more as questions of navigability are brought before the courts, and as land managers reviewing proposed actions on a waterway attempt to determine ownership of the submerged lands.

Alaska's Kuskokwim River Region is the third such report issued by the BLM. Researched and written by the lead historian in the BLM Alaska State Office with the assistance of Joan Antonson, the report summarizes

geographic knowledge about the region and its water bodies; traces the history of explorations, mining, hunting, fishing, and trapping activities, as well as communities; describes in detail water and land transportation developments in the region; and finally describes the process by which the BLM reached a determination of navigability for water bodies on land conveyed or in the final stages of being conveyed to the State or Native village and regional corporations. The BLM has relied upon some of the information in this report in making navigability determinations for water bodies on land conveyed or to be conveyed; it will continue to consult the report as needed in future conveyances. Later, the report will be revised to take into account public comments and to include information from the BLM land records pertaining to those water bodies about which little or nothing is presently known.

C. Michael Brown

Lead Historian

INTRODUCTION

This report is designed to aid government land managers in the identification of navigable waters in the Kuskokwim River region. The report describes the geography and history of exploration in the area, presents an historical overview of the mining industry, identifies the principal settlements, and traces the history of water and land transportation developments in the region. In addition, the report summarizes the steps by which the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reached navigability determinations for water bodies in the region.

Under the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Native village and regional corporations selected most of the land along the Kuskokwim River and Bay. Most of these lands have been conveyed or are in the last stages of being conveyed to the corporations. This means that the BLM has made navigability determinations for title purposes for most tributaries of the Kuskokwim River and rivers and creeks emptying into Kuskokwim Bay. This report identifies the navigable waters in the region; it does not include a discussion of every river, creek, or lake that the BLM considers or determined to be nonnavigable. Only those nonnavigable water bodies about which there is documentary information, is described in the report. Thus, if the water body is located on land selected by or conveyed to a Native village or regional corporation, and if it is not specifically mentioned in Chapter Six of this report, the reader is correct in assuming that the BLM considers the water body to be nonnavigable.

The report incorporates much of the information presented in a report on the upper Kuskokwim basin which the BLM released on May 6, 1980. Researched and written by the lead historian in the BLM Alaska State Office, the upper Kuskokwim report was originally intended to include the entire Kuskokwim basin within its scope. However, following the BLM's decision to convey lands to MTNT, Incorporated and Doyon, Limited, the Native corporations appealed many of the BLM's determinations of navigability in the area to the Alaska Native Claims Appeal Board. This action, together with a recent decision of the Board on the navigability of the Nation and Kandik rivers in central Alaska, which significantly modified Departmental navigability criteria, spurred the BLM to reconsider its position on the navigability of water bodies in the area. Research on the lower Kuskokwim region was thus suspended and the report on the upper Kuskokwim basin written. This report was used to make additional navigability determinations for water bodies in lands selected by the Native corporations.

From early 1980 to mid-1981, Joan Antonson researched and wrote a draft report on the middle and lower Kuskokwim areas before terminating her employment with the BLM. The lead historian subsequently merged the upper Kuskokwim report with Antonson's report, and expanded the report with information obtained from BLM land records.

This report draws upon a wide variety of sources. Local newspapers, Geological Survey bulletins, records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, Alaska Road Commission, Corps of Engineers, and the BLM, and the pioneering works of Wendell H. Oswalt, proved to be the most valuable sources of information. The papers of the Territorial governors, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game were examined but not researched to completion. These records, in addition to those of the BLM pertaining to Native allotments, headquarters, and trade and manufacturing sites, and small tracts, may yield additional pertinent information about use of water bodies in the region for the purpose of travel.

Many people contributed their time and skills to the preparation of this report. The librarians of the Alaska Resources Library, the Z. J. Loussac Library, and the librarians of the Alaska at Anchorage and Fairbanks, aided the writer in locating rare books. Joan Antonson's research notes and draft report greatly facilitated the writer's task. Chapter Four is largely her work. James Ducker and Dwight Tuttle provided constructive criticisms and encouragement. Last, and most important, the secretarial staffs of the BLM Division of Resources and Division of ANCSA and State Conveyances gave exceptional service in typing the various drafts.

CHAPTER ONE

THE KUSKOKWIM RIVER REGION

(See page 27 of original document)

Formed by Moore Creek and Little Waldren Fork, the Takotna River flows in a northeasterly direction before swinging southeasterly near the small community of Takotna to empty into the Kuskokwim River at its river-mile 445. The river is about one hundred miles in length, and drains an area of 2,180 square miles. From its head to Takotna, the river is shallow and winding. Beyond Takotna, the river gradually becomes deeper, especially after it is joined by Nixon Fork. According to one report, the water depth at the mouth of Nixon Fork was thirteen feet in 1910. The river has a sluggish current and averages four hundred to five hundred feet in width. 20/ The river slope is about 4.7 feet per mile.

Chapter One -- The Kuskokwim River Region

20. Anton Eide to Alaska Road Commission, August 18, 1910, Historical Documents Geological File, U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park, California.

CHAPTER THREE

MINING

(See page 111 of original document)

Of all the rivers in the upper Kuskokwim basin, Takotna River has received the greatest attention by prospectors. Successful mining operations in the McKinley district have occurred on Moore Creek, Candle Creek, and Nixon Fork. The only hard-rock mines in the entire Kuskokwim basin are located on Nixon Fork.

CHAPTER SIX

WATER TRANSPORT

(See page 253 of original document)

During the gold rushes to Ganes Creek and Ophir Creek in 1907 and 1908, many people from Nome and the Kuskokwim basin ascended the Takotna River in boats to points twelve to twenty miles from Ganes Creek, where they found portages to the upper Innoko River. Some prospectors took advantage of the rush to earn money by transporting passengers and supplies to Takotna. Tom Odale, for example, purchased provisions at McGrath and necked his twenty-six-foot boat up the river to Takotna, then known as Berry's Landing. After prospecting awhile on Spruce Creek, he returned to the Takotna River by way of Yankee Creek, and found employment with a storekeeper from Nome freighting about 3,500 pounds of goods up the river to Berry's Landing at a charge of six cents per pound. Later, he returned to McGrath, purchased a winter outfit of five thousand pounds, and ascended the Takotna River and Nixon Fork, where he intended to prospect during the winter. 34/

As one strike after another occurred on the upper Innoko River and the tributaries of Takotna River, and in view of the shortage of supplies in the district, the Kuskokwim Trading and Transportation Company, locally known as Joaquin, Twitchell and Fowler, moved into the field. In the spring of 1908, the company received several hundred tons of supplies from San Francisco. The goods were landed at Bethel, and in the summer transported to McGrath. The company then hired Arthur Berry to take the supplies up the Takotna River in his sternwheel steamboat, the Star. Berry hauled about forty tons of freight to Takotna, where a store was built to supply miners on Yankee Creek. In order to supply miners on upper Ganes Creek, the company decided to establish another store near the mouth of Big Creek. So Arthur Berry, Archie Higgins, Louis Blackburn, and John Felder ascended the river in two poling boats, each loaded with three tons of goods. They landed near the mouth of Big Creek, and there constructed a log cabin store. 35/

When, in the summer of 1908, Alfred G. Maddren of the USGS visited the district, he early recognized the importance of the Takotna River as a water route to the Innoko district. He noted that Joaquin, Twitchell and Fowler had established trading posts at the termini of the portages to the Innoko River, and predicted that the trail at Takotna

would prove the superior route. According to Maddren, an auxiliary gasoline schooner of fifteen tons burden with a draft of four feet, ascended the Takotna River a distance of thirty miles without any difficulty.

Boats with a draft of two feet had ascended the river as far as Takotna. With a view to lowering transportation rates by reducing the number of times that freight must be transferred, Maddren recommended the construction of a road from a point near the mouth of Nixon Fork to Takotna and Ganes Creek. Boats operating on the Kuskokwim River could discharge freight at the terminus of the road, and teamsters could then haul the freight to the diggings in summer and winter. 36/

The Kuskokwim Commercial Company implemented Maddren's recommendations in part. In the fall of 1909, the company constructed a sled road from Nixon Fork to Takotna, and thence to Ganes Creek. Whenever water in the Takotna River was low, steamboats landed freight at the Forks for shipment to Takotna. Whenever possible, however, the company continued to use small steamboats and launches to haul freight from the Forks to Takotna. Anton Eide of the Alaska Road Commission visited the area in the summer of 1910, and provided the best available description of the methods of water transportation on the Takotna River. 37/ Arriving at Bethel on July 7 on the ocean steamer A. G. Lindsay, Eide boarded the steamboat Quickstep for the journey to McGrath. Owned by the Kuskokwim Commercial Company, the Quickstep was 126 feet long with a beam of twenty feet and drew four feet of water. In this particular case, the boat was hauling 150 tons of merchandise for the company's post at Takotna.

Although not operated at full capacity, the Quickstep required seven days to reach McGrath. The steamboat then ascended the Takotna River to the Forks, arriving there early in the morning of July 23. Here, Eide wrote, was the transfer point from large steamboats to smaller ones. Boarding the Hattie B., a fifteen-ton sternwheel steamboat with a draft of eighteen inches, Eide continued up the Takotna River as far as Victoria Bar, a distance of about twelve miles. Eide observed that the river began to get shallow at a point about eight or ten miles above the Forks. At the bar, freight was transferred from the steamboat to two scows, which coupled together were towed by a horse the remaining twenty-three miles to Takotna. According to Eide, this was the ordinary method of water transport to Takotna, although in periods of high water steamboats drawing eighteen or twenty inches of water ascended the river to the portage.

Eide himself did not board the scows for the trip to Takotna. Having brought a Peterborough canoe with him, he pulled and poled the canoe to Takotna, arriving there on July 25. The trip was made with little difficulty, as the river had a hard gravel bottom which made it a "good poling stream." Upon reaching Takotna, Eide learned that poling boats could be taken farther upriver to Moore Creek, but that the trip was "rather difficult on account of riffles and shallows." Since his mission was to investigate possible trail routes to Iditarod and Otter, Eide continued his journey overland, following the high ridges from Ophir to Iditarod.

This method of water transportation on Takotna River continued to be used until the late 1930s. The large steamboats of the Kuskokwim Commercial Company, Northern Navigation Company, and later the Alaska Rivers Navigation Company ascended the river as far as Nixon Fork, where freight was transferred to small steamboats, launches, or horse-drawn scows for shipment upriver to Takotna. If the steamboats arrived too late in the season, the freight was landed at Nixon Fork and then sledged to Takotna in the winter. The Quickstep, Lavelle Young, and Tana were among the largest steamboats engaged in the Bethel-Nixon Fork run in the 1920s and 1930s.

As the navigation companies relied upon small steamboats on the Nixon Fork Takotna run, and as the volume of freight increased dramatically with the introduction of dredges in the Innoko mining district, an important transportation industry developed in the upper Kuskokwim basin. Local residents constructed small steamboats and launches for use in the transportation of passengers and freight from McGrath or Nixon Fork to Takotna. Boats used on this run included: E. W. Miller's Alaskan, Shamrock, and Whippoorwill; Robert Lourie's Pioneer and Annabelle; Frank Larson's Sea Wolf No. 2; Charles Nicollet's Spud and Argonaut. E. W. Miller's boats were used on the Takotna River as late as 1937. 38/

Not infrequently, freighters on the Takotna River found the water too shallow to navigate. In 1921, for example, the Kusko Times reported that freighters were having serious difficulty on the Nixon Fork - Takotna run owing to the low water. All freight was being landed at the mouth of Charlie Wood's slough, about two and one-half miles below Takotna. A contract was let to clear the slough of snags, in the belief that gasoline-powered boats could reach Takotna by that route. 39/ Apparently the project was unsuccessful, for in 1923 or 1924, the Alaska Road Commission constructed a wagon road (one and one-half miles) from Takotna to a steamboat landing place for low water stages. The landing was located about four rivermiles below Takotna. 40/

The problems of shallow water navigation led to the construction of various novel crafts. Robert Lourie's boat, the Pioneer, was completed in the summer of 1921; it was designed especially to haul freight between McGrath and Takotna. In 1925, he constructed the Annabelle, which was sixty-four feet long, fourteen feet wide at the bottom with an eighteen-foot beam. ^{41/} In 1922, Charles Nicollet constructed the stern-sidewheeler Spud, which was powered by a Ford engine and equipped with an adjustable device reaching through the bottom of the boat which was used to shove the craft over shallow places. ^{42/}

The small boats on the Nixon Fork-Takotna run could not handle the volume of freight destined for the Innoko district, and at times of extreme low water were forced to suspend operations. Beginning in the mid-1920s, some people in the upper Kuskokwim basin began agitating for a road from Takotna to deep water at the mouth of Nixon Fork. With each season of low water, the need for the Takotna-Nixon Fork road was voiced. Petitions calling for the construction of the road were sent to the Alaska Road Commission in 1929, 1933, and 1936. The season of 1933 was particularly hard for the district; some people were forced to transport foodstuffs in airplanes from McGrath to Takotna at a cost of \$60 to \$80 a ton.

In 1937, the Alaska Road Commission finally obtained funds to construct a road from Takotna to the mouth of Nixon Fork. Construction materials were hauled by boat from McGrath to the mouth of Shorty Creek. In September, the M.S. Sea Wolf under the command of Frank Lange and Charlie Smith, arrived with twenty-five tons of mixed cargo, most of it being bridge material for the Alaska Road Commission. ^{43/} In the following year, however, the Road Commission abandoned the proposed

Takotna-Nixon Fork road project, and began construction of a road from Takotna to the Kuskokwim River via Candle Creek. Completed in the same year, this road became the primary route to the Innoko district for the transportation of heavy freight. As a result, freight boat traffic on the Takotna River declined dramatically. While some operators continued services on the Takotna River, they could not compete against the shorter and more reliable land route, and were eventually forced to suspend operations.

Boat traffic on the Takotna River above Takotna was limited to poling boats and canoes. As noted before, in 1908 the Kuskokwim Trading Company transported about three tons of goods in poling boats to found a store near the mouth of Big Creek. Following the construction of the Takotna-Iditarod winter trail in 1911, the store became a

roadhouse, serving miners on Moore Creek and Fourth of July Creek as well as travelers on the winter trail. In 1910, Anton Eide noted that it was possible to take poling boats upriver to Big Creek. 44/ Visiting Iditarod in August 1911 to purchase supplies, Aaron Longnecker, a miner on Moore Creek, reported that it was difficult to transport supplies up Takotna River to Moore Creek owing to low stages of water, and that even poling boats were unable to reach the diggings. He predicted that miners on Moore Creek would in the future obtain all their supplies from Iditarod by way of the winter trail. 45/

Subsequent events were to prove Longnecker correct. All supplies for the Moore Creek diggings came from Iditarod or Flat. In the mid-1910s, the Kuskokwim Commercial Company undertook the construction of a wagon road from Big Creek to Ganes Creek, with plans to transport a dredge to the Innoko district. In this connection, it was reported that launches were able to haul considerable loads up the Takotna River to Big Creek. The freight was then transported by wagon to Ganes Creek. 46/

In later years, hunters and trappers frequently ascended the upper Takotna River in small boats. According to Allan Anderson, who was born at Takotna, Deacon Deaphon used to transport supplies to trappers located above Joaquin, just below the Waldren Forks, until the late 1960s. He used small boats and barges about twenty feet in length and eight feet in width. Another resident of McGrath, Mike Harrington, stated that Deaphon used to ascend the river during the 1930s and 1940s in a riverboat with an inboard engine loaded with trapping supplies. 47/ In the summer of 1979, Diane Gudgel-Holmes of the Alaska Division of Research and Development interviewed numerous people at McGrath for information about potentially navigable waterways. Several individuals, most of them trappers and hunters, stated that they had ascended Takotna River and one or more of its tributaries in recent years. Allan Anderson stated that he had ascended the upper Takotna River many times in the spring, as well as Little Waldren Fork and Big Waldren Fork. On Little Waldren Fork, Anderson reached a point just below the mouth of Moore Creek in the northwest part of T. 28 N., R. 41 W., Seward Meridian. He ascended Big Waldren Fork three or four times in the spring when the water was high. Using an eighteen-foot riverboat with a propeller unit, he reached the northwest corner of Section 8, T. 28 N. , R. 29 W., Seward Meridian.

Ralph Anderson, a forty-year resident of McGrath, stated that he ascended the Takotna River as far as the mouth of Fourth of July Creek. Beyond that point, he said, the water is "tricky." However, Mike Harrington, a

trapper, stated that although shallow in places near the mouth of Fourth of July Creek, the water is deeper farther upriver. Using a seventeen-foot canoe with a four-horsepower motor, Harrington had ascended Moore Creek, Big Waldren Fork, and Little Waldren Fork. He stated too that the late Vic Hooper ascended the river to the mouth of Little Waldren Fork many times in an eighteen-foot boat. In 1974, he ascended the creek five or six times with loads of supplies and building materials.

Another long-time resident of McGrath, Frank Miller has traveled frequently on the upper Takotna River to trap, hunt, and fish. He has used a 24-foot riverboat with jet units to ascend the river to Waldren Fork. He then used canoes on the tributaries, namely Big Creek, Fourth of July Creek, Minnie Creek, and Moore Creek. According to Miner, he has taken a canoe up Big Creek as far as the west border of Section 16, T. 33 N. , R. 38 W. , Seward Meridian; and up Minnie Creek to a cabin in the southeast corner of T. 30 N., R. 40 W., Seward Meridian. He stated as well that Pete Snow had ascended Minnie Creek to the cabin, and that people may take canoes up Moore Creek and Big Waldren Fork. As a matter of fact, he said, people may ascend Moore Creek with a canoe and motor at high water as far as the former mining camp.

Both Jim Pierson and Peter Shephard of McGrath have also ascended the upper Takotna River. Pierson ascended the river in a nineteen-foot boat with jet units on fishing and camping trips to points above the mouth of Fourth of July Creek. In 1978, he said, the river somewhere above Fourth of July Creek was too shallow for his motor-powered boat; he was then taking supplies to a trapper's cabin. Shepard, a biologist employed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, has frequently ascended Takotna River to the mouth of Little Waldren Fork or Moore Creek in recent years while counting beaver and moose. He used a twenty-foot riverboat with jet units. 48/

The BLM first considered the navigability of Takotna River in 1977 in connection with land selections made by Takotna Village under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. On June 8, 1977, the BLM easement and navigability task force recommended that the river be determined navigable to the mouth of Big Creek, a point just within the area selected by the village corporation. This recommendation was apparently based upon a report prepared by the Anchorage District Office. This report stated that the river was used as a route of travel during the gold rush days to Big Creek Raodhouse. In more recent times, there was heavy recreational use of the river near

McGrath and Takotna, and lighter use upstream of the Takotna bridge. Skiffs, rafts, and canoes were used on the river. 49/

Following the issuance of easement regulations, the BLM changed its position on the navigability of the river, proposing to determine the river to be a major and navigable waterway through the area selected by the village.

Receiving no objections to the proposal, the BLM on March 30, 1979 released a Decision to Issue Conveyance (DIC) for certain lands to Doyon, Limited and MTNT, Limited (a corporation formed by the merging of the village corporations of McGrath, Takotna, Nikolai and Telida on November 15, 1976). In the decision, the BLM determined the Takotna River to be navigable through the village selection area. Both Doyon, Limited, and MTNT, Limited, appealed the decision to the Alaska Native Claims Appeal Board (ANCAB), contesting BLM's determination that many water bodies in the selection area were nonnavigable. 50/

In view of a recent decision issued by the ANCAB regarding the navigability of the Nation and Kandik rivers in eastern Alaska, a decision that modified the Interior Department's criteria for navigability determinations for title purposes, the BLM initiated a study of water bodies in the upper Kuskokwim basin that might be navigable under the modified criteria. Completing the study entitled "Navigable and Nonnavigable Waters in the Upper Kuskokwim Basin" in early May 1980, the Division of Resources in the BLM State Office recommended that the Takotna River be determined navigable to the mouth of Fourth of July Creek. According to the report, "Until the construction of the Sterling Landing Takotna Road in the late 1920s, all freight to the Innoko mining district went over the Takotna River to Takotna in steamboats and launches, and sometimes to Big Creek in launches and pole boats, The physical character of the river is such that launches and pole boats may be used to the site of the former Indian village at the mouth of Fourth of July Creek." All tributaries of the Takotna River, excepting Nixon Fork, were recommended to be determined nonnavigable. The BLM State Director concurred with the recommendations on May 6, 1980. One month later, the BLM conveyed lands in Tps. 33 and 34 N., R. 36 W., T. 33 N., R. 37 W., and T. 32 N., R. 38 W., Seward Meridian. The bed of the Takotna River was excluded from the conveyance. 51/

Chapter Six -- Water Transportation

34. Odale, "Some Alaskan Adventures," pp. 44-45.

35. Alfred G. Maddren, "Gold Placers of the Innoko District," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., Mineral Resources of Alaska . . . 1908, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 379 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1909), p. 248; Oswalt, Historic Settlements, p. 80.

36. Maddren, "Gold Placers of the Innoko District" (Bull. 379), pp. 247-249.
37. Anton Eide to Alaska Road Commission, August 18, 1910, Historical Documents Geologic File, U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park, California, hereafter referred to as USGS Records.
38. Kusko Times, June 1, July 6, September 17, 1921, May 24, June 17, September 7, 1922, October 6, 1923, July 5, 14, October 30, 1924, May 23, 30, September 5, 1925, February 5, September 17, November 19, 1937.
39. Kusko Times, July 13, 1921.
40. U.S. Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, Annual Report of the Alaska Road Commission, Fiscal Year 1926 (Juneau: Alaska Daily Empire Print, 1923), II, p. 88; U.S. Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, Annual Report . . . FY-1924, (Juneau: Alaska Daily Empire Print, 1924), II, p. 132.
41. Kusko Times, June 15, 1921, May 30, September 5, 1925.
42. Kusko Times, September 7, 1922.
43. Kusko Times, September 17, 1937.
44. Anton Eide to Alaska Road Commission, August 18, 1910, USGS Records.
45. Iditarod Pioneer, August 5, 1911.
46. Iditarod Pioneer, June 10, 1916.
47. Diane Gudgel-Holmes, Ethnohistory of Four Interior Alaskan Waterbodies (Boulder, Colorado: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1980), p. 51.
48. Ibid., pp. 51-54.
49. Clifford D. Ells, "Navigability Field Report - Takotna River," June 6, 1977, Clifford D. Ells to Richard Tindall, November 4, 1977, Curtis V. McVee, "Notice of Proposed Easement Recommendations for the Village of Takotna," June 27, 1978, file F-14942-EE, ANCSA file.
50. Clifford D. Ells to State Director, February 1979, Robert Arnold to President, MTNT, Ltd., March 8, 1979, Curtis V. McVee to Chief, Division of ANCSA Operations, March 28, 1979, Decision to Issue Conveyance, March 30, 1979, file F-14942-EE, ANCSA file.

51. Interim Conveyance No. 327, June 11, 1980, file F-14942-EE; C. M. Brown to Chief, Division of Resources,
May 6, 1980, H. W. Gabriel to State Director, May 6, 1980, file F-14906-EE, ANCSA file.