

Alagnak Wild River

***An Illustrated Guide to the Cultural History
of the Alagnak Wild River***

Purpose and Use of Guide

People of the area have used the Alagnak River and its natural resources for many hundreds of years. Evidence of prehistoric settlements, historic fish camps and cabins, as well as an abandoned contact-era village with a Russian Orthodox Church and cemetery, dot the landscape. The combination of natural and cultural resources represents an invaluable part of our shared heritage. The purpose of this guide is to help visitors *appreciate* and *enjoy* the Alagnak's distinctive cultural history. This guide is not intended for navigational use.

A circa 1912 John Thwaites photograph of a Yup'ik cache on Nushagak Bay, perhaps near Snag Point (modern-day Dillingham). The cache was made of hand hewn white spruce logs with square notched corners and a sod roof. Photo courtesy of John Thwaites Collection-0132-549, Special Collection Division, University of Washington Libraries.

Facing page: Elbert E. Sargent prospecting along the Alagnak in 1947. Photo courtesy of Joanne E. Sargent-Wolverton.





The Alagnak Wild River

The Alagnak Wild River meanders through a unique landscape of open tundra, spruce forests, and dramatic canyon walls. Established as a Wild River in 1980, the Alagnak is rich in cultural history, physical beauty, and natural resources. Here, evidence of past and present people intermingles along the banks of rolling tundra and among diverse populations of fish and wildlife. Today, the Alagnak is used by visitors and residents for recreational and subsistence activities—primarily fishing and angling, camping, gathering, rafting, paddling, and hunting. Whichever activity you choose, the Alagnak River provides a rare opportunity to connect with history and the surrounding landscape. So fasten your life-vest and get ready to enjoy the Alagnak Wild River!

Midriver braided channel.



The River

The Alagnak is a clear free-flowing river that drains an area of 3,600 square kilometers (2,237 square miles) and empties into the Kvichak River near Bristol Bay in southwestern Alaska. The river and its major tributary, the Nonvianuk River, flow westward from lakes located within Katmai National Park and Preserve. Headwaters of the 127 kilometer (km or 79 miles [mi]) long river and its tributary are Kukaklek and Nonvianuk Lakes, respectively. The Alagnak is managed free of impoundments and diversions. It is inaccessible by road, its shorelines are primitive, and its water unpolluted.

In the local language the word *alagnak* means, “making mistakes.” According to a life-long area resident, “the channel is always changing, causing mistakes and getting lost.” Every year the river changes and branches which is why it is known locally as “the Branch River.” The Yup’ik people pronounced Alagnak as “Ah-lock-anok.” Euroamericans anglicized its pronunciation as Lockanok. The Alagnak River was first documented by the Russian Captain Tebenkov in 1852.

River *Designation*

The upper 108 km (67 mi) of the Alagnak, including the two upper branches, were designated a Wild River in 1980 by Title VI, Section 601(25 and 44) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) according to the provisions of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. All but the lower 29 km (18 mi) of the river have been designated Wild River status.

The NPS manages the River to:

- Protect and enhance the River as a dynamic ecosystem by maintaining its free flowing nature and preserving water quality,*
- Preserve the outstanding natural values on the River that include its natural channels and flow, naturally occurring fish and wildlife populations, cultural resources, and its peaceful and scenic character for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations, and*
- Preserve the outstanding values on the River of subsistence and recreation that are compatible with the other values for which the River was designated.*



Marsh marigold

Land Ownership

Land ownership along the river is a checkerboard of public and private property; therefore, river users should not assume that every “pull-out” is open to public use. There are currently no established campgrounds. It is recommended that river users consult a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land status map to ensure property rights are observed.

Prehistoric Past

Ice from the last Ice Age receded from the Alagnak River drainage well before 12,000 years ago.



Pottery made of local clay and tempered with hair or down, and later with sand or gravel, is common in sites on the Alaska Peninsula beginning 2,500 years ago.

Present day

9,000 b.p.

2,200 b.p.

12,000 b.p.

2,500 b.p.

Cultural evidence of people who occupied the river banks and lake outlets since the last ice age, is found on the surface of the glacial drift and outwash deposits at the lake outlets. Some evidence of camp sites near the headwaters may be as much as 9,000 years old.

Most of the village sites along the banks of the Alagnak are less than 2,200 years old. The reconstructed ceramic vessel (shown above) from Alagnak site DIL-161 has a flat-bottom and is 7.5 inches high. It is about 2,100 years old.



Prehistoric Past

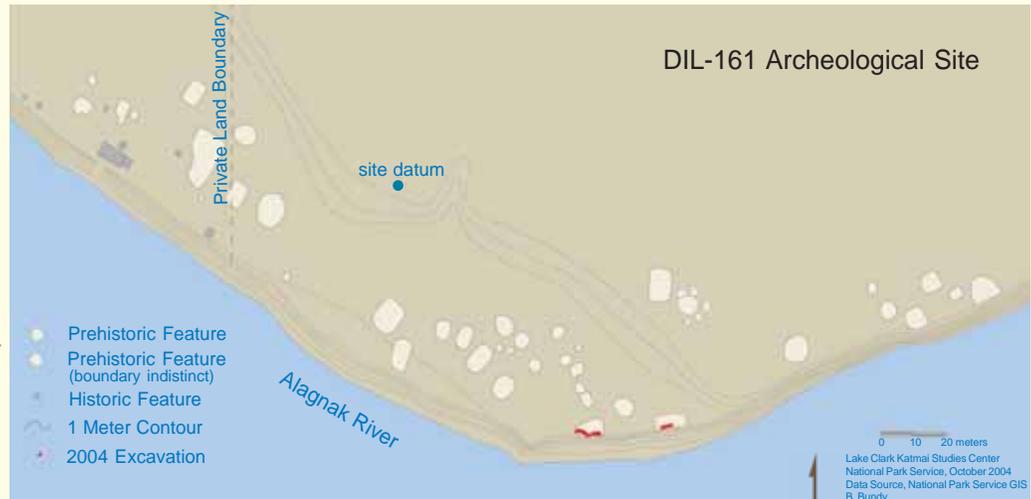
The human history of the Alagnak Wild River drainage is a rich and complex story that is beginning to unfold through the combined efforts of Native residents, archeologists, historians, and ethnographers. The story begins sometime after the close of the last great Ice Age 14,000 years ago, when glacial ice receded from the region and plants, animals, and finally early Americans colonized the pristine landscape over a period of some millennia. Archeologists don't know who the first people were to see this landscape or when they first set foot here. We will never know what language they spoke or what their belief systems were, yet, we can learn about aspects of their lives from the remains of their camps. Their traces are extremely rare and fragile. We ask that you help us protect these resources by leaving the ground or objects you might find undisturbed.

At the headwaters of the Alagnak, archeologists have found the remains of small camps whose occupants must have practiced a mixed economy of hunting, gathering, and probably some fishing. Based on the tools left behind (which are similar to those that have been radiocarbon dated elsewhere) people probably used these camps about 9,000 years ago. Stone tools they expertly fashioned from carefully prepared cores include long thin blades of varying sizes (shown below). Side-notched points found in the same area were hafted or fastened to spears and launched using a throwing board or *atlatl* by caribou hunters as early as 7,000 years ago.



*Microblade cores at near right
and microblades at far right.*

Although we know that the area must certainly have been occupied, there is up to a 5,000 year gap in the archeological record along the Alagnak Wild River until the settlement of winter villages about 2,300 years ago. Recent archeological investigations at one of these villages have shown that the large size and extent of the settlement results from a series of separate occupations spanning 1,100 years (see map below). This was a time of rapid and unpredictable climatic and cultural change, beginning with a widespread cold snap when houses were correspondingly large, single-roomed, multifamily dwellings heated by a central hearth. The use of outdoor, underground cold storage caches was probably adopted at this time. Occupation continued at this site through a warm spike called the Medieval Warm Period and ended at the beginning of another cold period called the Little Ice Age. Remains of small chipped stone points indicate that the bow and arrow replaced the use of darts and the atlatl during this period (see page 8).



Severe erosion of the stream-bank fronting site DIL-161 makes this one of the most threatened sites along the Alagnak corridor.



An archeologist, who braved isolation and a cold rainy summer in a tent to investigate this site in 2004, was impressed by the contrasting comfort that prehistoric villagers must have experienced in their well-built homes. She wrote:

The past people could catch salmon in the summer, either with a net across the river, or by traveling up to the lakes and spearing or trapping the fish in shallow water. In the fall, the berries are ready for picking, and the caribou are migrating through. A family that dried or smoked [or froze] salmon, berries and caribou meat could feast on

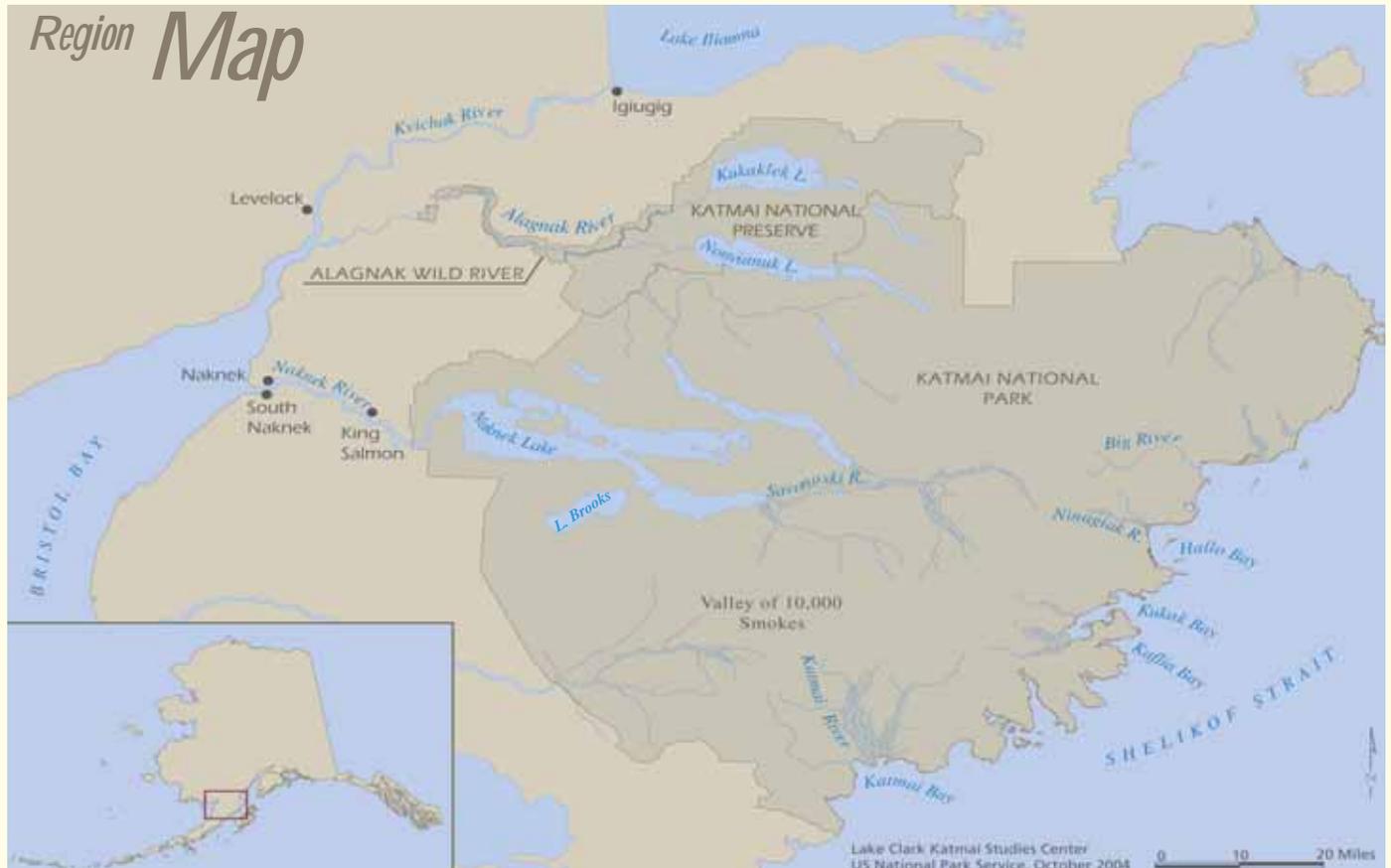
their bounty through the winter, and supplement their stores by ice fishing and trapping smaller mammals like beavers. Maybe the short winter days were passed by sewing clothing, making tools and mending nets, and the long nights spent dancing and socializing in their snug, sturdy homes.

The Alagnak River corridor was not abandoned during the Little Ice Age, which ended about 150 years ago. Archeologists have recorded camps and villages all along the Alagnak that were used during the last cold period and through the time of contact with Russian traders and missionaries. The Alagnak Wild River drainage was a homeland to Native people until the late nineteenth century when they moved to new settlements for commercial opportunities.



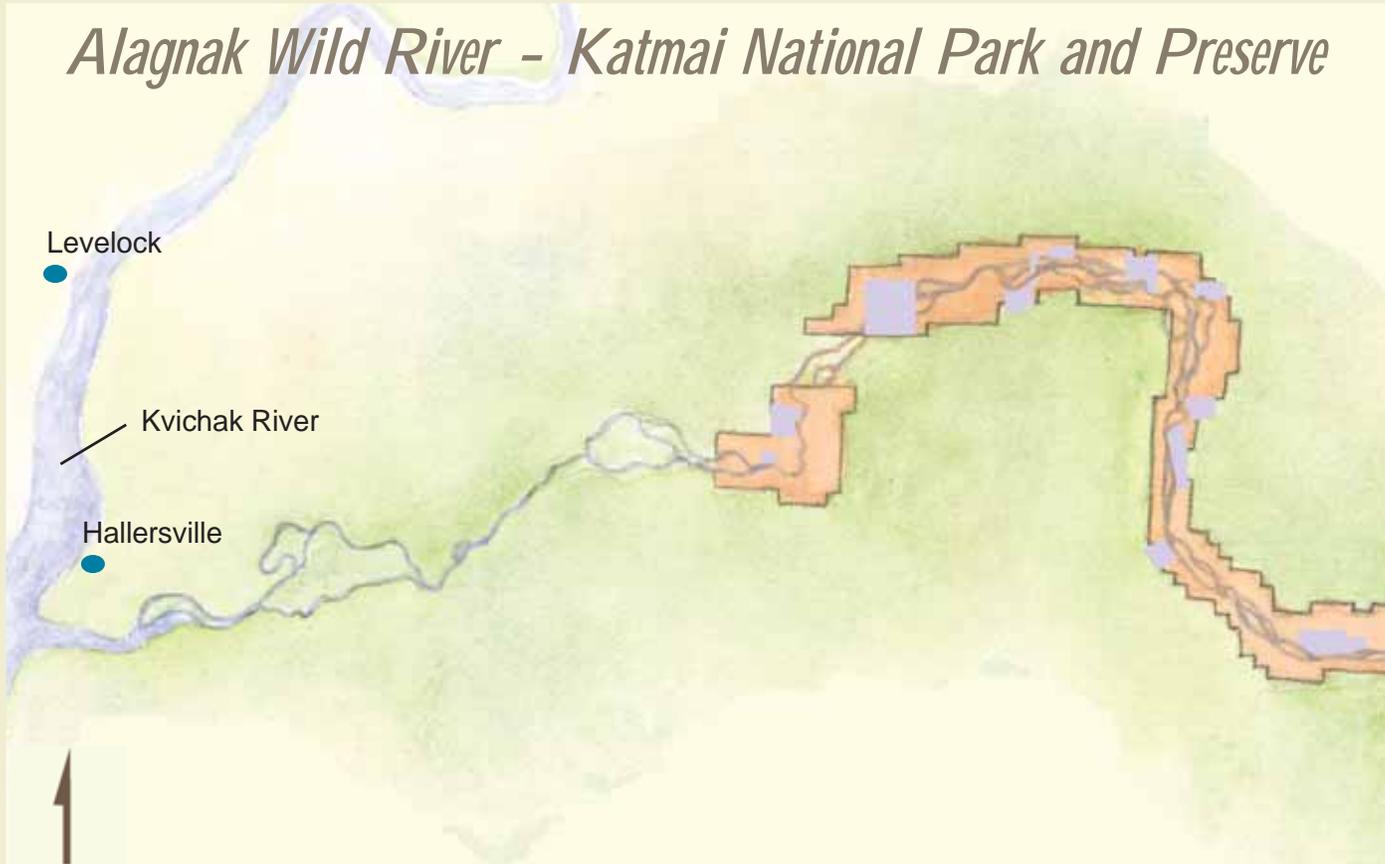
Above: Archeologists working at site DIL-161 along the Alagnak River. Right: Small arrow point.

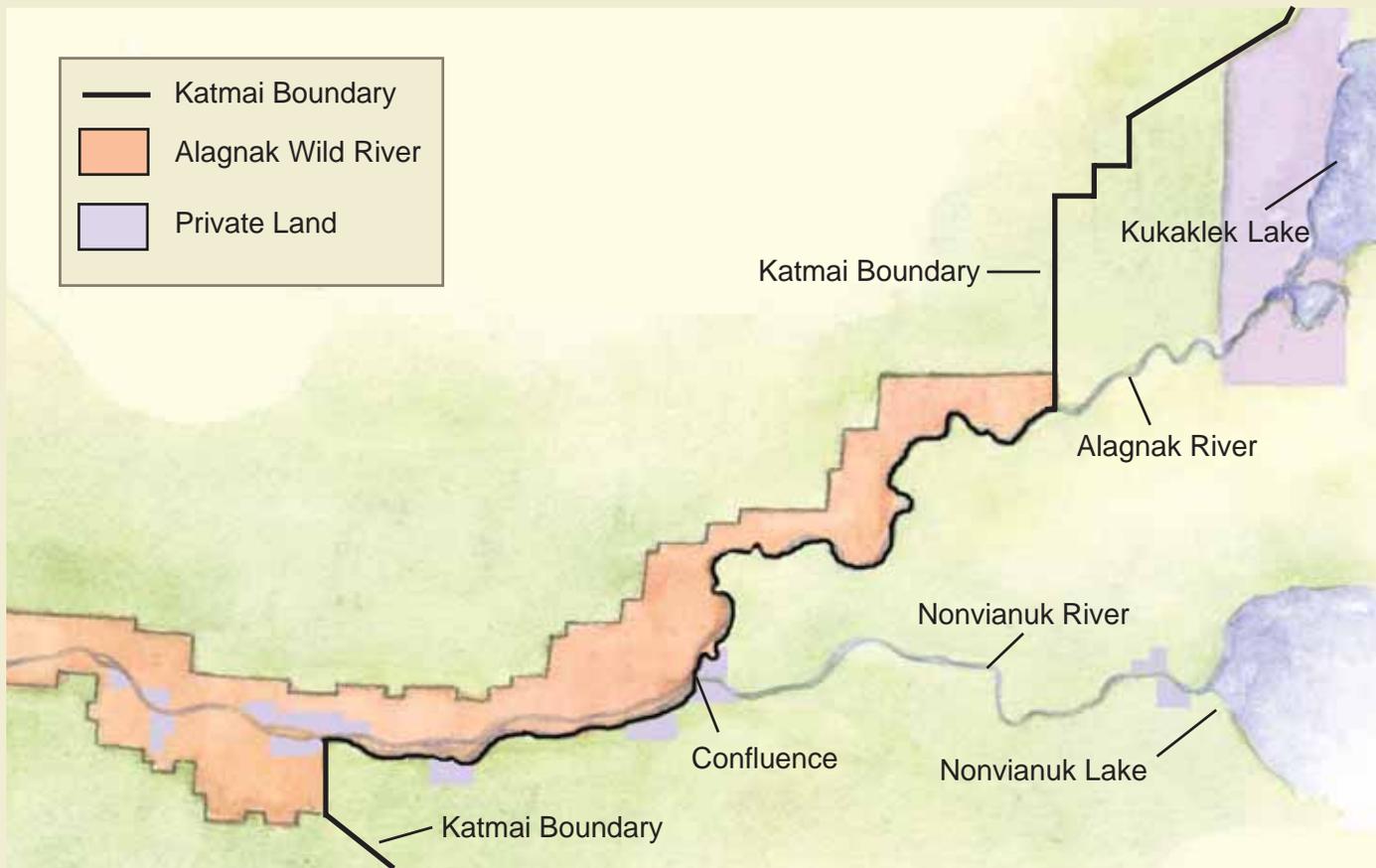
Region Map



Overview

Alagnak Wild River - Katmai National Park and Preserve





Koggiung village orphans during the summer of 1919 on the lower Kvichak River. The 1918 Spanish flu epidemic was first noticed at Koggiung on May 23, 1919 and raged until June 16th, killing 39 people and leaving 16 orphans. Sisters, Nina Klein Kraun and Mary Klein Kraun, are second and third from left, respectively. Annie Klein Aspelund is probably fourth from left. Photo courtesy of Vickie Herrmann.



Portrait of Traditional Lifestyle

A diversity of ethnic groups now comprises the communities in the Bristol Bay, Alagnak, and Iliamna regions. At contact Native residents were Alutiiq and Central Yup'ik speakers. People lived in small, closely-knit kinship-based communities and shared a similar lifestyle of subsistence hunting, fishing, and trapping. Hardships of weather, isolation, and a significant lack of modern conveniences bound communities together. Marriages, which were arranged by parents, usually depended on social status and were matriarchal in nature. Arranged marriages continued into the early part of the 20th century and served in part to enhance economic opportunities and to maintain strong familial ties with neighboring villages.

Games were also an important aspect of life. Though fun and entertaining, games were considered excellent preparation of youngsters for life on the river. “Congregations of children and adults usually resulted in some kind of competition.” Kayak races were particularly popular.

Dancing, singing, and story-telling further connected people to their communities and to their ancestors. Folktales tell of many strange beings that still inhabit the area, though rarely spoken about today. One traditional story often retold was that of the Little People. These magical creatures were believed to change forms, move mountains, and dwell in tall grassy meadows. However friendly, they were thought to capture humans and keep them for what appeared to be a short period of time while in reality many decades of the person’s life may have passed. Another popular legend was that of a giant pike that inhabited the waters of Nonvianuk Lake chasing residents crossing the lake in their moose hide canoes.

Spring beaver trapping along the Alagnak River in 1938-1939. From left to right: Vivian O’Neill, an unidentified woman, Eau Andrew, John Knutsen, and two unidentified boys. The Knutsen and Andrew families lived on the Alagnak River and summered on the Kvichak River. Photo courtesy of Alex Tallekpalek.



Headwaters of Alagnak River at Kukaklek Lake



From the Kukaklek Lake outlet to the Canyon (p. 16) the first 9.5 km (about 6 mi) flow slowly through rolling tundra. As the river enters the valley it becomes increasingly narrow and eventually hemmed in by a vertical rock wall canyon. In this section, the valley and canyon are densely covered by white spruce forest.



Salmon are traditionally dried on fish racks constructed with white spruce poles and an assortment of driftwood.

In late May or early June, residents hunted beluga whales in Bristol Bay. Bird eggs, sourdock, wild celery, and fiddlehead ferns were gathered for personal consumption. In summer, fish were caught for smoking, drying and freezing for the winter. In the past, fish were even stored in underground pits for the preparation of fermented fish heads, a local delicacy. This practice has largely been discontinued due to the risk of botulism. As colder weather approached, residents collected salmon berries, blackberries (also known as crowberries) and blueberries for winter use. Moose, caribou, and bear were hunted after the animals had grown fat from a brief season of plentiful food. In winter, smelt, trout, and grayling were harvested by ice fishing.



The Canyon

River speeds pick up to 11-13 kph (7-8 mph) as the canyon becomes progressively deeper (up to 200 feet).

Visitors can expect between Class I - Class III rapids at the heart of the canyon. During average water levels, the rocky rapids are generally negotiable in a 12-13 foot raft.

23 km

11.5 km

The upper Alagnak is not recommended for inexperienced rafters or small rafts, especially during high water conditions. A boat cannot be lined-through these rapids; however it is possible, although difficult, to portage by ascending the gorge.



Subsistence trapping was also an important activity. Mink, otter, martin, beaver, fox, wolf, lynx, wolverine, rabbit, weasel, and squirrel were trapped for their furs. Furs may have been sold outright or used for clothing. Today some trapping still occurs to supplement income by selling furs to lodges and tourists.

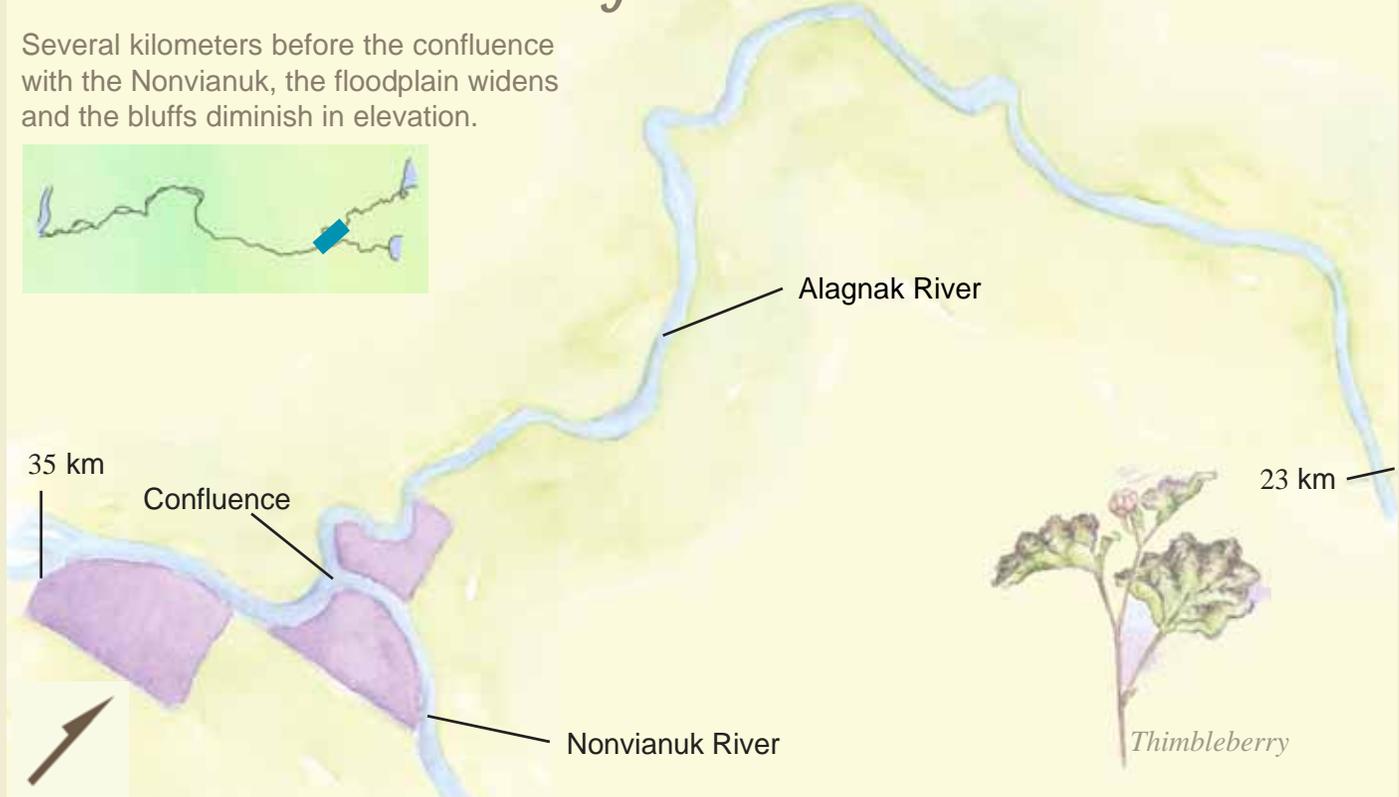
The abundance of large game species such as moose has increased over the last century, perhaps due to changes in vegetation. Historic subsistence hunting of moose was much more difficult as this species was once less common. In the event that a moose was harvested, the hunter would construct a kayak on site using the fresh hide (as well as some wolverine) to transport the meat. Assembling a kayak in this manner usually took two to three days to complete. Although kayak building was an exhaustive undertaking, in this case the benefits were twofold: the hunter was assured of food *and* transportation. Kayaking was the primary means of transportation during open water. Dogsleds were used in the winter once the river was frozen.



This photo taken in the 1930s shows one moose hide boat in the foreground and a two-hatch kayak, as well as a plank skiff in the background.

Confluence of Alagnak and Nonvianuk Rivers

Several kilometers before the confluence with the Nonvianuk, the floodplain widens and the bluffs diminish in elevation.



Thimbleberry

The 20th Century

In 1900 the North Alaska Salmon Company built two canneries near the junction of the Alagnak and Kvichak Rivers. The cannery at the river mouth became known as Lockanok and the other cannery, 1000 feet upstream on the Kvichak River, was called Hallerville, in honor of J.P. Haller, president of the company. The two canneries were connected by a narrow gauge railroad that brought salmon from Hallerville to be processed at the Lockanok plant.

The Alagnak River was not only used by Yup'ik people from the Kvichak River but also from the Nushagak and even Yukon and Kuskokwim drainages, a testament of its rich subsistence resources during the historic period. In addition, availability of commercial fishing jobs at Kvichak canneries also attracted subsistence users from as far away as the Yukon River. Cash income from the commercial salmon industry allowed Alagnak subsistence users to purchase more store-bought food, such as coffee, tea, sugar, and salt.

The Libby, McNeill and Libby cannery at Lockanok was built in 1900 at the mouth of the Alagnak River by the North Alaska Salmon Company from San Francisco. The cannery reportedly burned in 1937. Photo circa 1920-1930.



Headwaters of Nonvianuk River

9 km

The 17.5 km (about 11 mi) from Nonvianuk Lake outlet to the confluence are characterized by Class I rapids with moderately swift 8 kph (5 mph) single-channeled flat water.

During low water conditions Class II rapids may be encountered 6.5-8 km (4-5 mi) from the lake outlet.

Nonvianuk River

Royal Wolf Lodge

Nonvianuk Lake

0

NPS Ranger cabin



Facing page: This photo shows Okalina Nelson, Pat Andrew, and John Nelson (from left to right) at Eau Andrew's house on the Branch River or at Levelock, circa 1940. Many frame houses on the lower Alagnak and Kvichak Rivers were constructed of salvaged lumber from abandoned canneries.



Historically there had been many villages and cabins at various locations on the Alagnak River, including near the forks of the Alagnak and Nonvianuk Rivers and another village known as “Sleepy Town” on the right side downstream from the forks. Apparently, some of the houses in these settlements were traditional semi-subterranean and

some were above ground log houses. Branch River village was the last historic settlement on the river and was abandoned by the 1960s. It was located about 4.8 km (3 mi) above the Alagnak-Kvichak confluence on the north side of the river. Some of the families who lived at the village or who were dispersed along the river were: the Andrews, the Chukwoks, the Tallekpaleks, the Apokedaks, the O’Neills, the Frenchie Brooks, Lars Olson, the Guy “Sonny” Groat, Jr. family, and the George Petersons. Previously, Peterson, a crack marksman, had worked for Father Bernard Hubbard in his explorations around the Alaska Peninsula. The Branch River was the site of the Saint Innocent Russian Orthodox church, which was last visited by a priest from Newhalen in the 1950s.

Another small historic community, Lockanok, was located about one and a half miles up river from the Lockanok cannery. Lockanok village consisted of a few Euroamerican fishermen who also trapped and prospected and who built framed houses made from salvaged cannery lumber and sided with sheet iron.

Confluence of Alagnak and Nonvianuk Rivers



Approximately 11.5 km (about 7 mi) from the headwaters of Nonvianuk Lake, the Nonvianuk River joins the Alagnak River at the confluence.



Blue flag iris



Pomela Benet Fischer or “Yukon Pom” (1920-1991) with her son, Jerry Benet, near Branch River village in 1947. Pomela was born on the lower Kuskokwim River at Old Napaimiut to a Yup’ik mother and French Canadian father. Pomela was a lifelong subsistence gatherer who was known for her excellent smoked salmon and dog teams. Photo courtesy of Joanne E. Sargent-Wolverton.



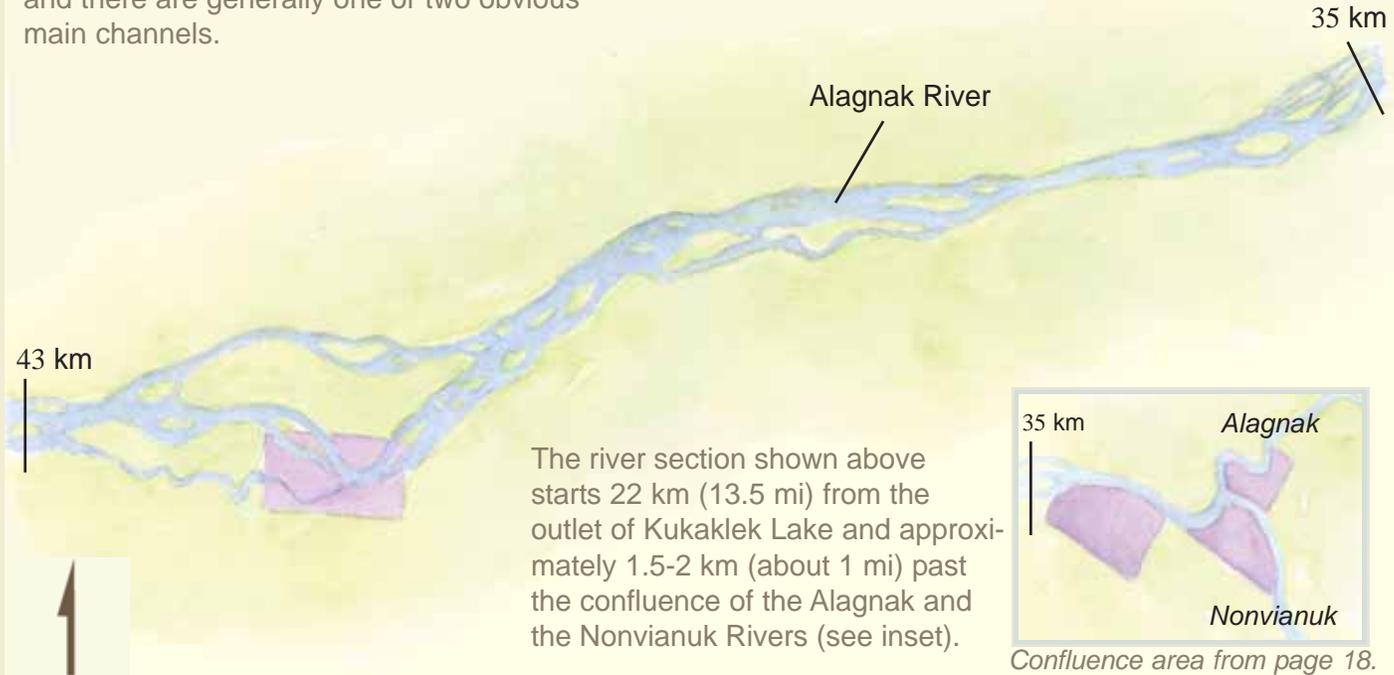
Information from local Native elders has revealed that the Lockanok village site contains a mass grave of Spanish flu epidemic victims. The adult population of two nearby Kvichak villages, Koggiung and Kaskanak were also decimated by the Spanish flu of 1919.

Some of the men who lived at the village were Martin Monsen, Jr., Simeon Larson, Charlie Olson, Frenchy Rosseau and his son Oscar Rosseau, Harry Langord, and Billy Gleason. The Canadian-born Rosseau frequently prospected the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes in Katmai National Monument and the Irish-born Gleason had long been a Portage Creek, Lake Clark placer gold miner since about 1913. The Euroamericans copied their Native neighbors in dividing their time in seasonal economic pursuits: trapping in the fall and winter, cannery work in the spring, and commercial fishing in the summer.

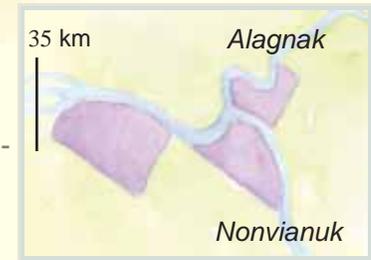
Beyond the Confluence



Islands Abound! In the 21 km (13 mi) below the confluence, islands become numerous and there are generally one or two obvious main channels.



The river section shown above starts 22 km (13.5 mi) from the outlet of Kukaklek Lake and approximately 1.5-2 km (about 1 mi) past the confluence of the Alagnak and the Nonvianuk Rivers (see inset).



Confluence area from page 18.

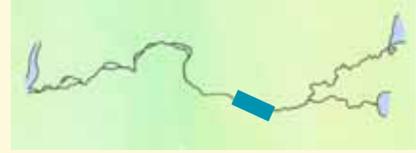


In 1916 Libby, McNeill & Libby purchased both the Lockanok and Hallerville canneries from the North Alaska Salmon Company. Kvichak River erosion and shifting channels rendered Hallerville inoperable in the early twentieth century but the Lockanok cannery ran until 1936 when a change in the Kvichak channel made it impossible to operate economically and much of the plant burned in 1937.

Subsequently, much of the usable cannery lumber was salvaged and used for homes in the nearby Kvichak River village of Levelock. Salvage efforts were so thorough that entire buildings were moved over the ice of the frozen Kvichak River to Levelock.

Lockanok cannery was built in 1900 by the North Alaska Salmon Company near the confluence of the Alagnak and Kvichak Rivers. Photo courtesy of Violet Willson.

Alagnak River



50 km



43 km

Alaska Trophy Adventure Lodge



*Alaskan brown bear--
a possible sighting.*



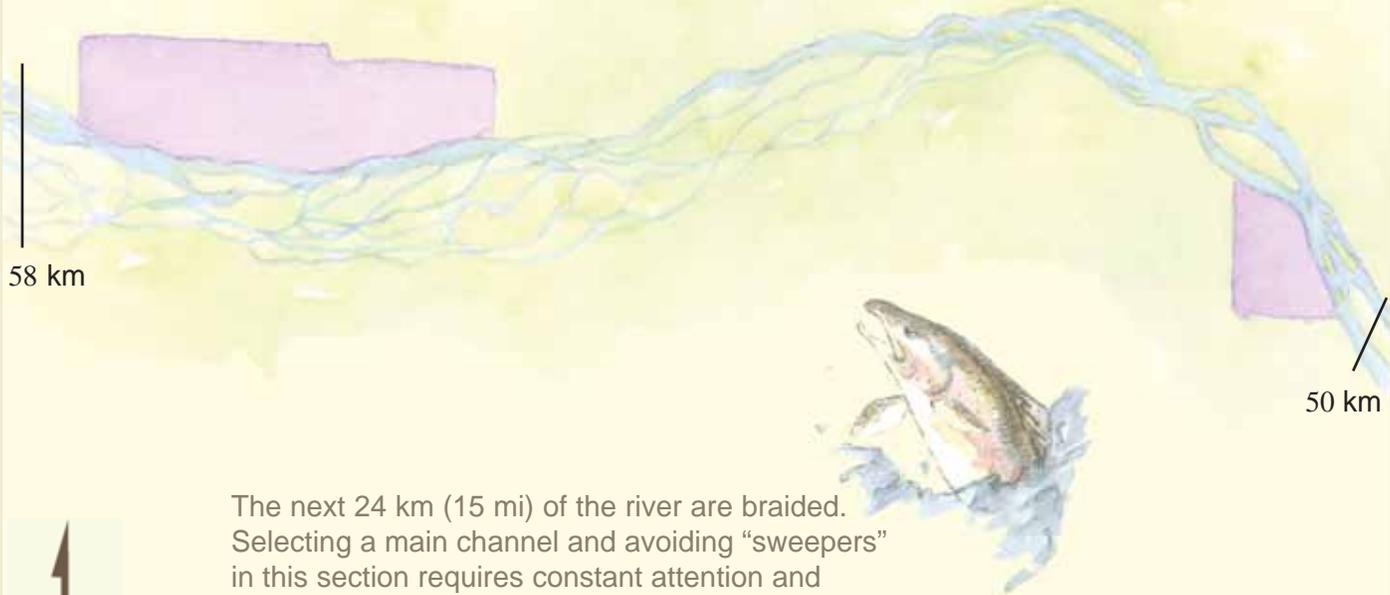
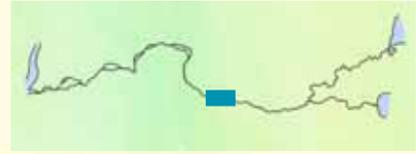
One of the most significant historical events in Bristol Bay history occurred in June 1927 when pilot Russell Merrill of Anchorage Air Transport flew a Travel Air to Lockanok cannery marking the first airplane landing in the Bristol Bay region. This was a transformative event that would effectively lead to a new era of air transport for this formerly inaccessible region.

By the 1960s and early 1970s all the Alagnak families had left Branch River village for nearby communities of Levelock, Igiugig, Kokhanok, and Naknek. The modern world with all its opportunities and pressures had intruded on isolated Branch River village. Since children were now required to attend school most families moved to Levelock where the closest school existed.

A view upstream along the intertwining channels of the Alagnak River at a popular ending point for rafters. Photo courtesy of Janet Curran, United States Geological Survey (USGS).



Braided Water



The next 24 km (15 mi) of the river are braided. Selecting a main channel and avoiding “sweepers” in this section requires constant attention and quick maneuvering.

Presently, Natives from surrounding villages, many with deep roots on the river, use the Alagnak for subsistence hunting, fishing, and trapping activities. In addition, there are a number of lodges on the Alagnak and a great amount of sport fishing effort.

Big game guide Bud Branham stated that he had guided hunters and sport fishermen on the Alagnak as early as 1937. New York sportsman and writer, Dan Holland, writing in the April 1941 issue of *Field & Stream* magazine, probably made the first mention of the Alagnak River as a great trophy rainbow trout stream. Sport fishing on the Alagnak dates mostly from the post WWII era. The major guides of this era were Bud and Dennis Branham, John Walatka, Ed Seiler, Sonny Groat, Jay Hammond, and Dean Paddock of King Salmon in the 1960s. Hammond first saw the Alagnak River when he flew to Nonvianuk Lake with guide Bud Branham to visit Bill Hammersley in 1946 or 1947. Between 1940 and 1945, Rufus Knox "Bill" Hammersley and his wife Margaret constructed a cabin, cache, and root cellar near the outlet of Nonvianuk Lake. A resident of Alaska since 1926,



Small islands and gravel bars dot the Alagnak upstream from the Braids. Photo courtesy of Janet Curran, USGS.

Bill fished in Bristol Bay, worked as a manager of the nearby Northern Consolidated Airlines camp, and trapped, hunted, and guided throughout the area. In 1957 Hammond had an arrangement with John Tallekpalek to use his cabin while guiding sport fishermen on the Alagnak River. Bob Cusack established the first lodge, a restored cannery galley-scow that was towed up the Alagnak from Naknek about 1973.

Braided Water



Most rafting parties complete their trip near Estrada's Camp (also known as the Cutbank), or Grassy Point which is private property, and should either arrange for pick-up on the opposite side of the river or downstream.



*A variety of wildlife, including cranes,
gather in and along the river to feed.*

58 km

65.5 km



Historic Structures

The cabins that appear along the Alagnak were generally used by trappers or subsistence hunters. Traditionally, a few of these cabins were considered “open” to passers-by, if unoccupied by the rightful owner, with an understanding that the cabin would be left as it was found. However, evidence of vandalism has taken its toll on these historic structures. In particular, dismantling cabins for firewood has become a serious threat the future of some structures. Please explore and enjoy historic sites but leave them as you have found them. We all share the responsibility of protecting and preserving important cultural resources for others to enjoy.

Mary’s Camp along the Alagnak River. Clumps of vegetation slide down the eroding bank as the river moves closer to these historic structures. Photo courtesy of Janet Curran, USGS.





*Heating rocks outside a steambath on an open fire before taking them into the bath at left.
Photo circa 1920s -1930s at Branch River.*

Preservation

What are prehistoric, historic, and/or archeological remains?

Sites are places where people lived, camped, or conducted other activity.

Graves, marked or unmarked, are the locations of human remains and may be Native or non-native.

Deposits are accumulations of refuse in and around a dwelling place. Typically, these deposits consist of shell fragments, fish bones, animal bones, charcoal, broken tools, fire-cracked rocks, tin cans, or other household debris.

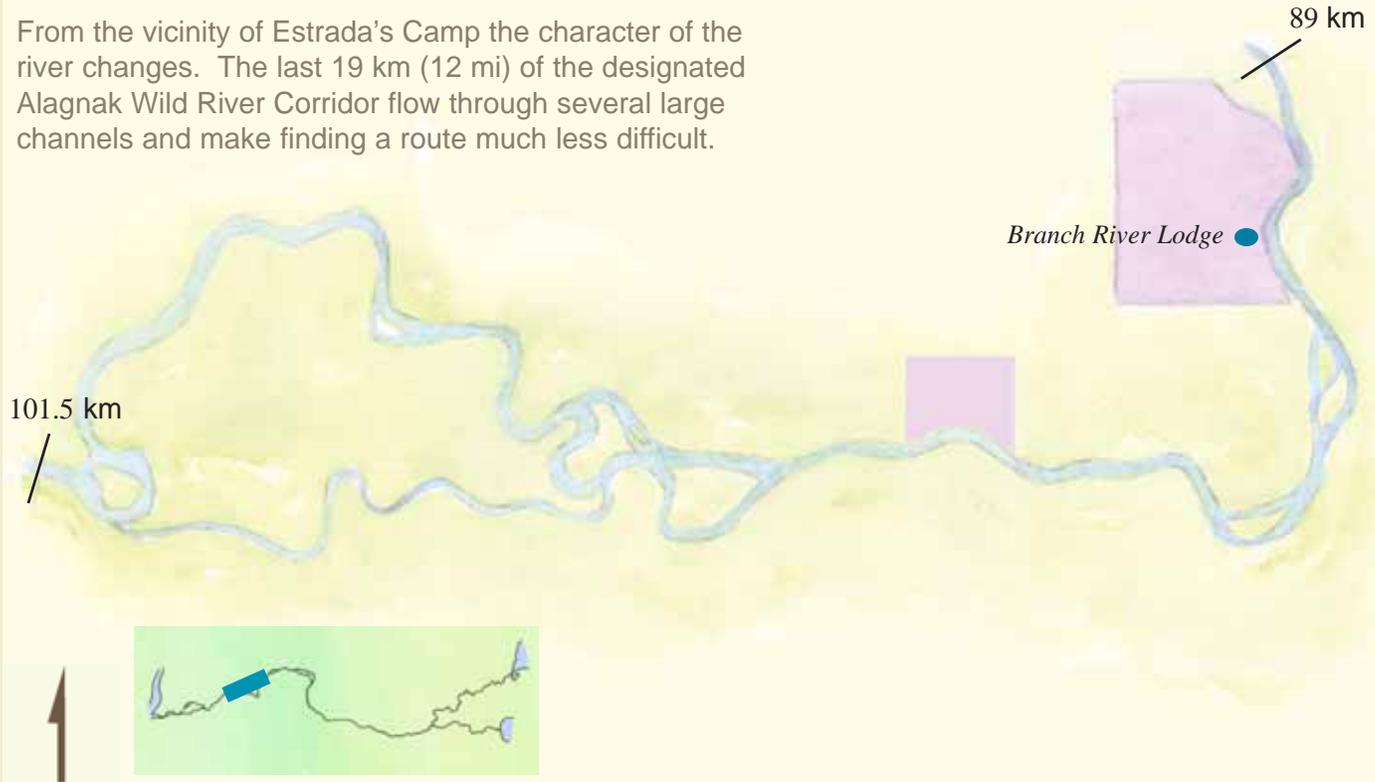
Structures, ruins, and buildings are such things as cabins, cabin foundations, aircraft, boats, fish weirs, drive lines or fences, semi-subterranean house depressions, or cache pits.

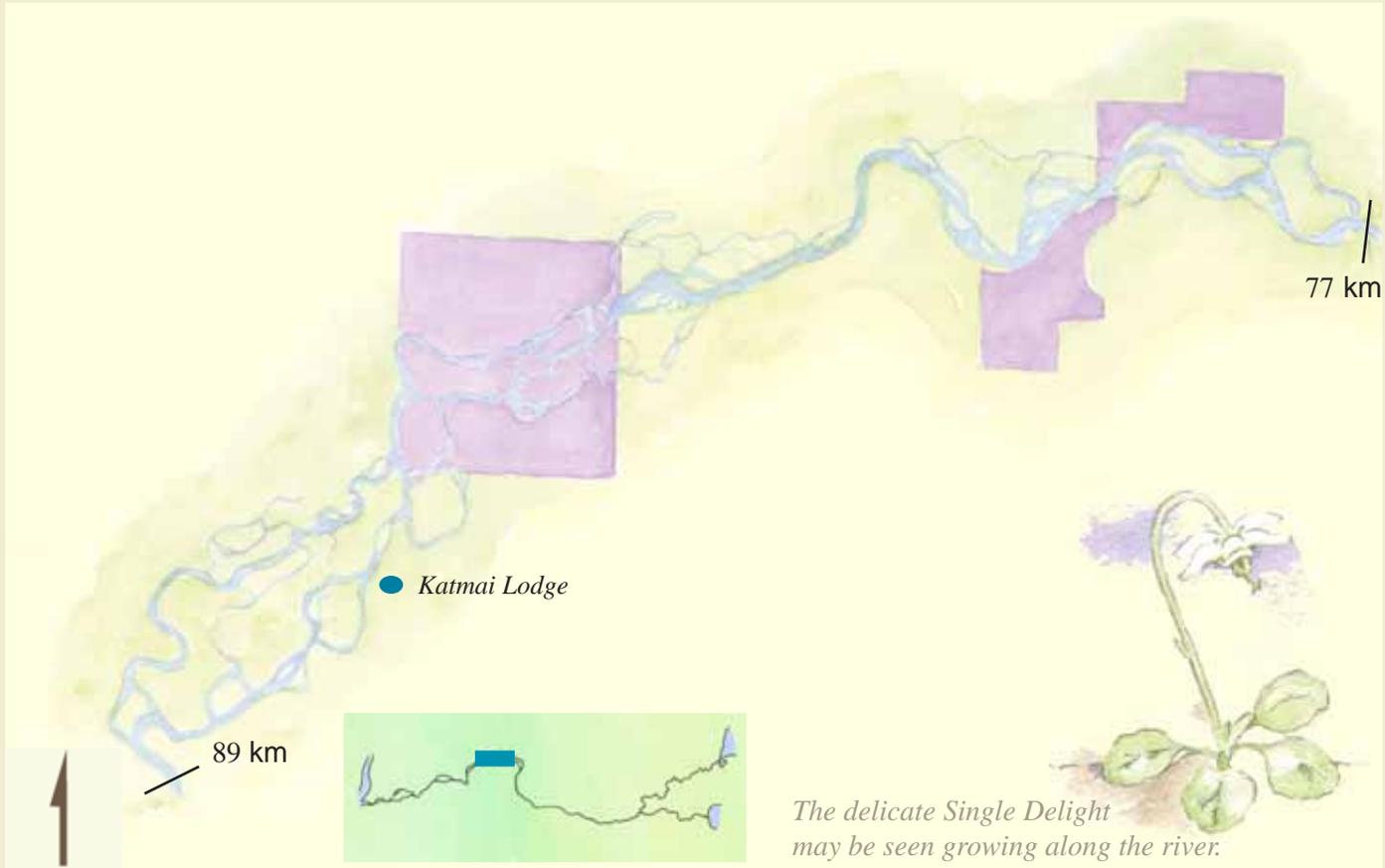
Artifacts typically consist of tools and household items (made of wood, bone, ivory, stone, metal, glass, or plastic), art objects, and pottery (including Native made).

Fossils are any remains, impressions, or other trace of an animal or plant that was once buried and may now look rock-like.

The Cutbank to the Corridor's End

From the vicinity of Estrada's Camp the character of the river changes. The last 19 km (12 mi) of the designated Alagnak Wild River Corridor flow through several large channels and make finding a route much less difficult.





The delicate Single Delight may be seen growing along the river.

Protection of Cultural Resources

Please observe and enjoy but do not touch, move, collect, or otherwise disturb artifacts, cultural sites, or paleontological materials (fossils). If you find cultural material or fossils:

Record the location on a map or make a sketch map referencing prominent landmarks.

Take compass bearings or note general compass orientation.

Estimate site size.

Photograph the artifacts or fossils in place. Include an object for scale. Photograph the site area and the surrounding landscape.

Note any human or natural disturbances to the site.

Report any information to either address below:

Cultural Resources Manager
National Park Service
240 West 5th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907/271-1383 (until 12/2005)

Chief Ranger
Katmai National Park & Preserve
P.O. Box 7
King Salmon, Alaska 99613
907/246-3305

Safeguarding Cultural Resources

The unauthorized collection or destruction of cultural resources (any historic, prehistoric, or archeological) or paleontological [fossil] resources on lands owned or controlled by the Federal Government is prohibited by law and may carry serious criminal (felony) and civil penalties. Do not dig impromptu privies or fire pits that may disturb buried cultural deposits.

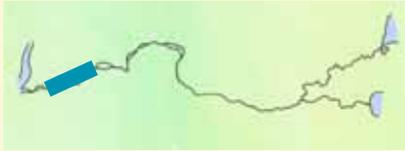
Respect Private Property

Although the National Park Service administers the Alagnak Wild River there are many parcels of private property along the river corridor. Some owners have marked their property with “No Trespassing” signs; others have not. It is important to know where you can legally camp. All cabin sites should be considered private property. Visitors should obtain a BLM land status map intended for navigational purposes to insure that you do not trespass or camp on private property.

According to local resident, “Auntie” Roehl, this photo was taken at Diamond J, (Alaska Packers Association) cannery at Koggiung on the Kvichak River. Some individuals in the photo include: Maxie “Black Maxie” Evan (at left), Mary Newyaka (center) holding her first baby (a girl) with her first husband, Boukawal.



Alagnak River



101.5 km

118 km



*Fiddlehead ferns--
a traditional subsistence food.*

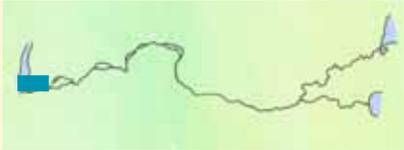
Impact of Erosion

One of the greatest threats to archeological sites along the riverbank is erosion. Erosion of riverbanks from river currents and waves is a natural process. However, increased wave action due to motorboats has become a serious concern over the years with an increase in park visitation. Actively eroding and denuded riverbanks are especially vulnerable to further wave action as high banks composed of loose sand and gravel are undercut. Visitors using motorboats can help reduce continued erosion by significantly slowing their craft in areas where erosion is evident.



Eroding riverbanks threaten important cultural resources. Reducing motorboat speed can help protect streambanks from further damage. Photo courtesy of Janet Curran, USGS.

Confluence with the Kvickak River



Rafters enjoy a wide channel downstream from the Cutbank, approximately 85 river kilometers (53 mi) from the mouth.

Photo courtesy of Janet Curran, USGS.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Katmai National Park and Preserve/
Alagnak Wild River
P.O. Box 7
King Salmon, Alaska 99613



The Lake Clark-Katmai Studies Center, established in 1999, is a research and curatorial facility for the museum collections of Katmai National Park and Preserve, Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve and the Alagnak Wild River. The center supports the Cultural Resource Program for these parks with responsibilities that include stewardship of historic buildings, museum collections, archeological sites, cultural landscapes, oral and written histories, and ethnographic resources.

Our mission is to identify, evaluate, and preserve the cultural resources of the park areas and to bring an understanding of these resources to the public. Congress has mandated that we preserve these resources because they are important components of our national and personal identities.

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