

NPS File Copy Do Not Remove

final wild and scenic river study

september 1984

KISARALIK RIVER



ALASKA

FINAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY
KISARALIK RIVER, ALASKA

Abstract: Pursuant to section 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542, as amended), the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, has prepared this Final Wild and Scenic River Study for the Kisaralik River in Alaska. The study has concluded that the Kisaralik River is eligible for inclusion in the national wild and scenic rivers system as a wild river. However, the river was found to be nonsuitable for inclusion because the state of Alaska, as well as local residents, do not support designation of the river.

SECTION I

DRAFT KISARALIK RIVER WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY

The draft document was widely distributed on and after April 11, 1984. It has not been reprinted and is incorporated here by reference. A limited number of copies are available at the office of the regional director, Alaska Region, National Park Service, 2525 Gambell Street, Room 107, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.

SECTION II
CHANGES TO THE DRAFT STUDY

Page

- 7 In the second line of the second paragraph, "Fish and Wildlife Service" should be changed to "Department of the Interior."
- 21 The asterisk in the last row of the "grizzly bear" column should be deleted.
- 22 In the third line of the first paragraph, "whistling swan" should be changed to "tundra swan."
- 25 The following should be added to the last sentence of the second paragraph:
- . . .; however, development of the Kisaralik River has not been ruled out.
- 27 In the fourth line of the fourth paragraph, the word "some" should be deleted.
- 30 The last paragraph should be deleted. The parcels referred to in the draft study are no longer recommended for sale as a result of the Bristol Bay Cooperative Management Plan.
- 45 Under the "Study Team," it should show that Joe Wehrman works for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry.

SECTION III

COMMENTS FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES, STATE AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS, NATIVE AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS



**U.S. Department of
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

Office of Assistant Secretary

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

AM

The Honorable G. Ray Arnett
Assistant Secretary for Fish
and Wildlife and Parks
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Arnett:

Thank you for your recent letter to Secretary Dole, transmitting a copy of the draft wild and scenic river study report for the Kisaralik River, Alaska. The study found that although the Kisaralik River is eligible for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, it is not suitable for inclusion.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the draft report. We have no comments.

Sincerely,

Matthew V. Scocozza
Assistant Secretary for Policy
and International Affairs



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20310

18 JUN 1984

Honorable G. Ray Arnett
Assistant Secretary for Fish
and Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. Arnett:

This is in response to your letter of April 9, 1984, requesting comments of the Department of the Army on your proposed report on the Wild and Scenic River Study of the Kisaralik River, Alaska.

While the report finds that the Kisaralik River is eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as a wild river, it finds the river unsuitable for inclusion because of a lack of state and local support. Also, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages that portion of the river within the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, does not favor designation of the Kisaralik as a wild river.

In view of the study conclusion, we have no further comments to offer.

Sincerely,

Robert K. Dawson
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army
(Civil Works)



Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585

JUN 21 1984

G. Ray Arnett
Assistant Secretary for Fish
and Wildlife and Parks
U. S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. Arnett:

We have reviewed the Wild and Scenic River Study prepared for the Kisaralik River in Alaska, as requested in your April 9, 1984, letter to Secretary Hodel.

With respect to energy resources, the study indicates that there may be some potential for hydroelectric, geothermal, and petroleum development in the Kisaralik area. However, we note that the study resulted in a determination that the Kisaralik River is not suitable for designation as a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System. We understand that this determination of nonsuitability and the associated selection of the no action alternative will not result in any changes in land use, ownership, or management policies. Consequently, we do not believe that potential energy resources will be affected.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this study.

Sincerely,


Jan W. Mares
Assistant Secretary for
Policy, Safety, and Environment

STATE OF ALASKA

BILL SHEFFIELD, GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
DIVISION OF GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

2600 Denali St., Suite 700
Anchorage, AK 99503
267-2199

June 29, 1984

Mr. Roger Contor
Regional Director
National Park Service
2525 Gambell St., Rm. 107
Anchorage, AK 99503-2892

Dear Mr. *Contor*:

The State has completed its review of the Kisaralik River Draft Wild and Scenic River Study. We concur with the proposed alternative (no action) presented in the draft. This alternative is particularly suitable since the question of navigability is still unresolved. The following technical corrections or comments are offered for your use in preparation of the final river study document.

Page 7, paragraph 2: The Bristol Bay Cooperative Management Plan is being prepared by the State of Alaska and the U. S. Department of the Interior, not just the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Page 21, Table 6: This table can be improved by centering the "moose" column with its corresponding data, and by deleting the asterisk from the last row of the "grizzly bear" column.

Page 22, paragraph 1: "whistling swans" are now referred to as "tundra swans" by the American Ornithological Union.

Page 25, paragraph 2: As you know, the Kisaralik River was at one time under study for hydroelectric potential with which to supply the Bethel region. It appears, however, that the outlet of Chikuminik Lake on the Allen River is a better site from which to supply the region. Conclusions are not yet final and development of the Kisaralik River remains a possibility for the future.

Page 27, paragraph 4, last sentence: Local contacts report that many Bethel residents use the river frequently for sport fishing as well as hunting.

Page 30: The two parcels referred to as possible state disposal (Gold Lake and North Fork Lake) are no longer recommended for sale as a result of the Bristol Bay Cooperative Management Plan.

June 29, 1984

Page 45: Joe Wehrman works for the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry.

Finally, should Congress elect to include any portion of the Kisaralik into the Wild and Scenic River system, National Park Service should recognize its responsibility for any additional enforcement that might be necessary as a result of any designation. The Alaska Department of Public Safety has noted that they will not be able to provide this service.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft river study. If you or your staff have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Sally Gibert
State CSU Coordinator

cc: S. Leaphart, CACFA
J. Leask, AFN
R. Davidge, DOI
M. Frankel, ALUC
N. Olson, USFWS
State CSU Contacts



Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas

515 Seventh Avenue
Suite 310
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

July 6, 1984

Roger Contor
Regional Director
National Park Service
2525 Gambell Room #107
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Mr. Contor:

The Commission concurs with the study team's decision that the Kisaralik River is **not suitable** for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS). The Commission therefore endorses the "no action" alternative.

The Kisaralik River is almost entirely within the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Designation as a wild and scenic river would not provide any significant added protection to the river. The USFWS has also recommended the river to be unsuitable for inclusion into the NWSRS.

Designation has been opposed by the State, local residents and private landowners in the area for fear that such a designation would unnecessarily impede the use of the river and the resources in its corridor. A considerable amount of the land in the corridor is privately owned land belonging either to corporations or to individual allotment holders. The State owns land in the upper reaches of the river as well.

The Commission would like to be provided with a copy of the final study report to the President and the Congress.

Sincerely,


Stan Leaphart
Executive director

DON YOUNG
CONGRESSMAN FOR ALL ALASKA

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2331 RAYBURN BUILDING
TELEPHONE 202/225-5765

COMMITTEES:
INTERIOR AND INSULAR
AFFAIRS
MERCHANT MARINE AND
FISHERIES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 1, 1984

National Park Service Regional Office
2525 Gambell Street
Room 107
Anchorage, Alaska 99503 - 2892

CONCERNING THE KISARALIK AND PORCUPINE RIVER STUDIES
REMARKS BY CONGRESSMAN DON YOUNG

I would like to be placed on record as approving of the decision by the National Park Service not to include the Kisaralik and Porcupine Rivers in the National Wild and Scenic River System. I would also like to thank the National Park Service for giving the people of Alaska an opportunity to comment on this decision.

It is my belief that the Porcupine River is unsuitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River because of the rivers' navigability and its' riverbed and both banks belonging to the State of Alaska. In addition, the river is an essential water highway for local commerce and for local travel. On the lower reaches, there is extensive private ownership of lands along the river including numerous native allotments and native regional and village corporation land. The State of Alaska, people living in the area, and Doyon Limited all expressed concern about further restriction of access to private or state land. Local residents and the State of Alaska strongly support the decision to deem the river not appropriate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

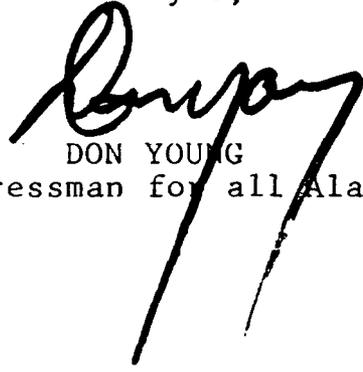
The National Park Service and I are in agreement in that the Kisaralik River should not be included in the Wild and Scenic River System because of the numerous native allotments and private land selections that are adjacent to the middle and lower river segments. Local residents near the Kisaralik expressed concern about the additional regulations and restrictions that might result from designation of this river. The Fish and Wildlife Service does not favor designation of the river as Wild and Scenic inside the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge because Wild and Scenic River status would not add significantly more protection to the river. Thus, this river is unsuitable for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System.

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National Park Service
May 1, 1984
Page two

Again, I wish to thank the National Park Service for giving me the opportunity to comment on this decision. It is this type of cooperation between the State of Alaska, its' people, and the National Park Service that we wish to continue in the future.

Thank you,



DON YOUNG
Congressman for all Alaska

DY:DKac

Sierra Club

Alaska Field Office

241 E. Fifth Avenue, Suite 205, Anchorage, Alaska 99501, (907) 276-4048



by Walbur Mills

July 8, 1984

Mr. Roger Contor
Regional Director
National Park Service
2525 Gambell Street
Anchorage, AK 99503-2892

Re: Sierra Club comments on Kisaralik River Draft Wild and Scenic River Study

Dear Mr. Contor:

Your study team has found that the Kisaralik River is eligible but not suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. However, the Sierra Club believes that the Kisaralik River is entirely suitable for inclusion and that it should be designated as "wild" pursuant to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA).

The Kisaralik possesses many outstanding qualities that amply qualify it for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. It is a beautiful clearwater stream that flows through four major ecosystems and very scenic landscapes. A wide variety of fish are found in the river system, including all species of Pacific salmon, lake trout, rainbow trout, arctic char, and Dolly Varden. As such, the river offers excellent sport-fishing opportunities and also contributes to the commercial and subsistence fisheries of the Kuskokwim River on which many area residents depend. Abundant wildlife exists in the area, including one of the highest concentrations of nesting eagles, falcons, and hawks in Alaska, including the Peregrine falcon, an endangered species. The recreation resources of the Kisaralik are also exceptional. As your report points out, "the Kisaralik River and surrounding area offer outstanding opportunities for kayaking and rafting" while "both day-hiking and backpacking opportunities are excellent in the upper half of the river area and around Kisaralik Lake."

The two main arguments which the study team used to support non-suitability are:

- 1) That "local residents near the Kisaralik expressed concerns about additional regulations and restrictions that might result from designation."
- 2) That "because most of the river is located within this refuge [the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge]...wild and scenic river status would not add significantly more protection."

That some local residents expressed concerns about additional regulations and restrictions that might result is a fairly common occurrence in wild and scenic river studies. However, other local residents indicated full support for stringent protection of this resource. Hence, the final report should include an analysis of the public comments received and a comparison of management of the Kisaralik under refuge and wild river classifications.

The second argument is simply incorrect. Wild and scenic river status would add significantly more protection.

- 1) Such status would preclude the construction of any dams within or affecting the designated portion.
- 2) Designation would close the river and its corridor to oil and gas leasing.
- 3) The riparian zone would be protected from artificial habitat manipulation and would be preserved in its present natural state.
- 4) More concrete management guidelines would be set for the future and the river would be less vulnerable to the whims of each changing administration and what they determined to be "compatible".

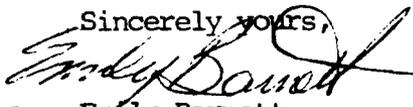
Hence the study team's argument is invalid.

An issue related to the extent of protection that wild and scenic status would assure is the implementation of title 11 of ANILCA regarding transportation and utility systems across conservation system units. How would the application of title 11 differ for a non-wilderness refuge and a wild river? Another issue that needs to be addressed in the final study report is why the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the portion of the river within the Yukon Delta Refuge, does not favor designation of the Kisaralik. What are its reasons for being against inclusion?

The Kisaralik River is unquestionably one of the outstanding rivers of Alaska, and of the nation, and should be protected under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Your study team's conclusion that the river is non-suitable for designation should be reconsidered and the issues raised above taken into account.

We favor stringent protection for the entire Kisaralik River-Lake system and its surrounding watersheds. Accordingly, we recommend a variation of Alternative #2 as the preferred alternative which best meets this goal: wild river status for the federal (refuge) lands in the river corridor, encouragement for state action to place the upper river and Kisaralik Lake in the national system under state management, and development of a cooperative management agreement with Native landowners for the private lands along the lower river.

I hope that these views and recommendations will prove helpful to you and your study team. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely yours,

Emily Barnett
Coordinator, ANILCA Rivers Project

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

Publication services were provided by the editorial and graphics staffs of the Denver Service Center. NPS 2181A