

## NABESNA RIVER BIBLIOGRAPHY REFERENCE

Name	Author	Year	Reference	Report Name
Nabesna River	Grumman Ecosystems Corporation	April, 1975		Report on Navigability of Streams Tributary to the Tanana River, Alaska. Prepared for US Army Engineer District, Alaska pp. 4-470-475, 479-482 Copy No. 6 Vol III pp. 8-28 Copy No. 6 Vol IV
	BLM	October 16, 1975		Navigability Investigation Report on Nabesna River. Background, land status, physical data, historical use and current use. Personal statements of boat use on Nabesna River.
	AEIDC & University of Alaska	1979		A Study of the Historical Use and Physical Characteristics of Alaska's Inland Water Bodies, Navigable water study report for BLM. pp. 59-60.
	Cole, Terrence M.	May, 1979		Historic Use of the Chisana and Nabesna Rivers, Alaska. Department of Natural Resources
	Stern, Richard O.	March 2, 1979		Personal Interview of Ted Lowell taken by Richard Stern and Terrence Cole of the Alaska Department Natural Resources regarding boat use and history on the Nabesna River.
	US Depart. of Interior BLM Navigability Bibliography	July, 1979	04700	McKenna, Robert A. The Upper Tanana Indians. New Haven. 1940.
	US Depart. of Interior BLM Navigability Bibliography	July, 1979	04969	Powell, Addison Monroe. Trailering and Camping in Alaska. N. Y. : A. Wessels, 1909.
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	National Park Service	October 20, 2004		NPS-Commercial Transporters Activity Report- 2004
	ADF&G	February 4, 2005		Waterbody Use and Observation Questionnaire, Bob Tobey (interview)
	ADF&G	February 9, 2005		Waterbody Use and Observation Questionnaire, Corey Schwanke (interview)
	ADF&G	March 7, 2005		Waterbody Use and Observation Questionnaire, Mark Keech (interview)

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REPORT ON NAVIGABILITY

of

STREAMS TRIBUTARY TO THE TANANA RIVER, ALASKA

Prepared for

U. S. Army Engineer District, Alaska

**ARLIS**

Alaska Resources  
Library & Information Services  
Anchorage Alaska

by

GRUMAN ECOSYSTEMS CORPORATION

April, 1975

4.1 (Continued)

on non-glacial tributaries of the Tanana. There are generally no sub-peak flows, as are found on those streams.

o Where boatable, the Nabesna is usable for about 4 months during the year, when open flows are above normal.

o Pertinent facts relating to the Nabesna River are discussed at length under various other headings in the following referenced sections. Those discussions are not included herein:

- 2.8 Water Resources
- 2.8.2.1 Runoff
- 2.8.3 Major Rivers
- 2.9.3.2 Mining
- 2.9.4 Power
- 2.9.4.2 Nabesna River
- 3.1 Historical Development
- 3.1.1.1.2 Nabesna Native Group
- 3.1.2 Early River Usage
- 3.2.3 Recreational Usage
- 6.0 River Profiles

o Nabesna River characteristics pertinent to navigability

4.1 (Continued)

consideration, and discussed elsewhere, are highlighted below:

- no known historic commercial river usage
  - historic native settlement of Nabesna Village located on lower reach of river
  - no known present-day river usage
  - apparent boatability to mile 43, the mouth of Lick Creek
  - several mining and hunting cabins located in upper reach
  - potential exists for increased recreational usage in form of boating, fishing and hunting
  - potential for commercial shipment of freight not probable
- o The Nabesna River previously has had an undetermined navigability classification, not being ruled as such in a State or Federal court decision.
- o The Nabesna River is recommended, as of this date, to be determined navigable to the mouth of Lick Creek, mile 43.
- o Subsequent paragraphs present a two-reach analysis of the Nabesna River, moving downstream from its headwaters.

Nabesna River in Upper Reach (M-43 to head)

o From its headwaters at the foot of the Nabesna Glacier, about 60 miles SSW of Northway in the Wrangell Mountains, the Nabesna River descends from 2980 feet to 1980 feet, at Lick Creek, at an average gradient of 23.2 feet per mile.

o Landform in this reach is extremely high and rugged. The Wrangell Mountains are among the highest mountains in Alaska. Most of the peaks exceed 5000 feet and many are over 10,000 feet. The Nabesna Glacier, which forms the headwaters of the Nabesna River, descends from Mounts Wrangell and Blackburn, both over 14,000 feet. Nearly all the peaks in the Wrangell Mountains are glaciated, and have slopes in excess of 4000 feet per mile. Because of the severity of climate that exists in this area, and the steepness of the slopes, no trees are present in the mountains, and brush-type vegetation is limited below 2000 feet. Some trees can be found north of the mountains, in the area of Pickerel Lake. These are primarily black spruce, found on poorly-drained soils. This area north of the mountains is primarily outwash plain, a remnant of the last Elstocene glaciation. This plain, in contrast to the Wrangell Mountains is featureless. All of the tributary valleys were V-shaped and had steep gradients. The Nabesna valley although broad

4.1 (Continued)

and U-shaped, nevertheless had steep walls.

o Development in the upper reach of the Nabesna River is limited to hunting and mining settlements near the headwaters. Below the mouth of Jack Creek, mile 68, no cabins or camps were observed during the July 1974 helicopter reconnaissance survey. There are several cabins and lodges located on the Slana-Nabesna Road along Jack Creek. At the head of the Nabesna River, at the foot of the Nabesna Glacier, a copper-mining community has begun to develop within the past year. A rich supply of copper ore has been discovered in the vicinity of Orange Hill, mile 83.

o The Nabesna River is characterized, in this reach, by extreme channel braidedness. During the July 1974 helicopter reconnaissance survey the main channel of flow was extremely difficult to detect. The water was heavily silted due to its glacial origin. Channels were numerous and narrow throughout, and flow was extremely swift, with standing waves present. Although there were no snags or blockages observed, the numerous narrow and shallow channels would pose a threat to navigation. The stream gradient of 23.2 feet per mile is relatively steep.

o River velocity was not measured directly in this reach

4.1 (Continued)

during the July 1974 helicopter reconnaissance survey. Velocity was observed to run at least 5 feet per second throughout the upper reach of the Nabesna River.

o Depth, although not measured directly during July 1974, was observed to be very shallow, often only inches deep, in areas of extreme channel braidedness. Where channels came together, depth was assumed to be greater. However, visual evidence was that depth was extremely shallow throughout the entire reach.

o Width was highly variable, as observed by helicopter in July 1974. Single channel widths ranged from 20 feet to about 1000 feet. The entire reach was extremely braided and variable.

o Several tributaries enter the Nabesna River in this reach and augment flow significantly. Moving downstream from the foot of the Nabesna Glacier, the first significant tributary encountered is Bond Creek. At mile 77 Bond Creek, draining an area of approximately 70 square miles, discharges an estimated 150 cfs average flow. At mile 71.7 Jacksina Creek, the largest tributary of the Nabesna River, with a drainage area of approximately 500 square miles, discharges an estimated 1000 cfs average flow. At mile 68 Jack Creek, draining an area of approximately 140 square miles, discharges an estimated 200 cfs average flow

4.1 (Continued)

into the Nabesna River. At miles 64.8, 62.1 and 59.1, Platinum, Cooper and Stone Creeks enter the Nabesna River respectively. Each drains an area of approximately 70 square miles and discharges an estimated 150 cfs average flow into the Nabesna River.

o Visual observation, made during the July 1974 helicopter reconnaissance survey, resulted in subjective evaluation that, due to the excessive braidedness of the river channels, relatively high fall rate, and shallow depth, the upper reach of the Nabesna is not practically boatable.

o It is therefore recommended, as of this date, that this reach of the Nabesna River, above the mouth of Lick Creek, mile 43, be considered non-navigable.

4.1 (Continued)

Nabesna River in Lower Reach (M-43 to mouth)

o From the mouth of Lick Creek, mile 43, east of the Mentasta Mountains, the Nabesna River descends 280 feet to the Tanana River, at an average rate of 6.5 feet per mile.

o Landform in this reach is characterized by both high, hilly terrain, flat, but sloping outwash plain, and featureless muskeg and bog flats. Running parallel to the river, down to mile 25, are the eastern edge of the Mentasta Mountains. These mountains rise to over a mile in elevation and have slopes in excess of 1000 feet per mile. On the east side of the river is outwash plain, from the last Pleistocene Glaciation. Many small lakes and streams are found in this area. Between miles 30 and 25, the river cuts through a section of hills; the Black Hills. These hills represent the maximum northward extent of Pleistocene Glaciation in southern Alaska. The Black Hills are thus a terminal moraine. North of the Black Hills is an area of black spruce muskeg and bog lakes, through which the lower 20 miles of the Nabesna River flows. Slopes in this section measure only in feet per mile.

o Development in this reach is limited to the lower 10 miles

4.1 (Continued)

of river, where Northway, Nabesna Village and Northway Indian Village are located. The eastern boundary of the Tetlin Indian Reservation follows the river from mile 25 to mile 15. A winter trail, with several cabins, incrementally spaced, follows up the west side of the river from Nabesna Village to the Wrangell Mountains.

o The Nabesna River, in this reach, is characterized by swift, turbulent flow, braided stream channels, relatively shallow stream gradient, and an abundance of flow volume. Although the river still exhibits a braided character in this reach, the main channel of flow becomes more recognizable. Flow was observed to be very swift, even near the mouth, as standing waves were present. There were no snags or blockages observed during the July 1974 helicopter reconnaissance survey. Log pile-ups on large gravel bars were observed, however. The river began to exhibit a meandering characteristic in its lower few miles, flowing through the muskeg and bog lakes area near Northway.

o Velocity was measured just below the mouth of Lick Creek during the July 1974 helicopter reconnaissance survey: 5 feet per second in the main channel, and 7 to 8 feet per second in a side channel. Throughout the entire lower reach flow was extremely powerful and swift, with standing waves observed in many locations. The river stage was

4.1 (Continued)

observed to be moderately high, as there was some inundation of vegetated areas, yet not all gravel bars were covered over.

o Depth could not be measured directly in the lower reach of the Nabesna River during July 1974 because of the tremendous flow of the water upon our weighted depth line.

o Width was observed to range from 100 to 1000 feet in the main channel of flow during July 1974. Bank-to-bank width in many cases exceeded one half mile, and approached one mile.

o Two relatively significant tributaries of the Nabesna River enter in this reach. At mile 43 Lick Creek, the only major non-glacial tributary of the Nabesna draining an area of approximately 80 square miles, discharges an estimated 100 cfs average flow into the river. The Cheslina River, draining approximately 120 square miles of the eastern Mentasta Mountains, discharges an estimated 200 cfs average flow into the Nabesna River at mile 25.8.

o Visual observation, made during the July 1974 helicopter reconnaissance survey, resulted in subjective evaluation that, due to a substantial decrease in fall rate, an abundance of flow, and the pres-

4.1 (Continued)

ence of a well-defined channel of flow, the lower reach of the Nabesna River is boatable, but with much caution.

o It is therefore recommended, as of this date, that this reach of the Nabesna River, below the mouth of Lick Creek, mile 43, be considered navigable.

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REPORT ON NAVIGABILITY  
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REPORT ON NAVIGABILITY  
of  
STREAMS TRIBUTARY TO THE TANANA RIVER, ALASKA

Prepared for  
U. S. Army Engineer District, Alaska

by  
GRUMMAN ECOSYSTEMS CORPORATION  
April, 1975

UNISANA

NAVIGABILITY INFORMATION REFERENCE FORMAT

for

SIGNIFICANT WATERWAYS

<u>Information</u>	<u>Summary Data</u>
◦ Name of Waterbody	Nabesna River
◦ Tributary to:	Tanana River
◦ Physical Characteristics:	Length: 78.4 miles D.A.: 2185 sq. miles Width at mouth: 600 ft. Depth at mouth:
Approximate Discharge Volume:	4900 cfs
Fall per mile:	15.5 fpm
Description of improvements to navigability:	none
◦ Nature and location of significant obstructions to navigation in portions of the waterbody used or potentially capable of use in interstate commerce:	Pages 4-469 through 4-488
◦ Authorized Projects:	none
◦ Past or present interstate commerce:	not known
◦ Potential use for interstate commerce, if applicable:	none
◦ Nature of jurisdiction known to have been exercised by Federal Agencies, if any:	none
◦ State of Federal court decisions relating to navigability of the waterbody, if any:	none
◦ Finding of Navigability (with date) and recommendation for determination:	navigable to mile 43 (April 1975)

NAVIGABILITY INVESTIGATION REPORT

on NABESNA RIVER

Affecting Northway Natives, Inc. Selection F-14912 A&B  
Doyon Ltd Selection F-19155-20

I concur with the findings of this report

*Thomas D. Williams 10/16/75*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gerald D. Timmons, Fortymile Area Manager

*Richard H. Ledosquet*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard H. Ledosquet, District Manager

## BACKGROUND

The State of Alaska asserts that the Nabesna River is navigable through the Northway Village Selection. Northway Natives, Inc and Doyon Ltd also assert that the Nabesna is navigable.

## LAND STATUS

About eight miles of the Nabesna River, from its mouth on the Tanana lies in land selected by Northway Natives, Inc. Another three miles of the river lies in lands selected by Doyon, Ltd. The rest lies in D-1 lands.

## PHYSICAL DATA

The channel is braided to a small degree but quite well defined. It contains many sandbars. Width is variable but a general figure would be 250 to 1000 feet wide including sandbars and braids. Depth is 5 to 15' and varies 5 to 10' in a given spot, depending on runoff, rains, and time of season.

## HISTORICAL USE

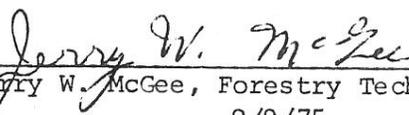
The river has traditionally been used as a travel route by natives in their subsistence activities. They have boated on it for travel for hunting, and fishing. They have also fished the river itself and hunt muskrats and game from the river clear to the accessible headwaters.

The river was also used as a travel route by Gold miners. Supplies were hauled from Fairbanks by steamboat, as early as 1913, to the Nabesna gold mining area. The Kessler Store at Northway was supplied by riverboat on the Nabesna from 1921 to 1950. Small villages and fish camps along the river were supplied by boats using this river as a travel route.

Several signed statements document the use of the Nabesna River as a historical travelway, particularly from Northway Village downstream to the Tanana River.

## CURRENT USE

The Nabesna River is still used as a travel route for hunting, fishing and trapping. It provides access by motor boat to areas used for these activities. This use is both on a subsistence basis and on a recreational basis. The river itself is also used for fishing and trapping of muskrats. Several locals indicate in their signed statements that they travel annually up the Nabesna 35 miles for hunting activities.

  
Jerry W. McGee, Forestry Tech.  
9/9/75

*JDW*

NAVIGABILITY FIELD REPORT

PHYSICAL DATA

Number/Name of Water Body Nabesna River Quadrangle 1:63,500 Tanuross A-2

Native Selection Impacted F-14912 Nabesna 0-2  
F-17155-20 D-3  
No. Thury Ng River & Deyan Limited

Location of Water Body T R S M  
T-15N R-17E T-13N R-18E T-12N R-17E  
T-14N R-18E T-13N-R-17E CRM

Length 20 mi Width 250-1000 ft Depth 5-10 ft

Area Unknown

Discharge Unknown

Bank Characteristics very variable

Channel Characteristics braided channel, somewhat meandering

Obstructions to Navigation none permanent - sandbars & log jams & ice jams possible

Flood Characteristics - 3-4 ft high water-marks above present level

Length of Useable Season \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Watercraft Commonly Used in Area river boats, canoes

Other Transportation Systems Available airplane

Need of Use of Water Body in Future continued use for upstream access to hunting and trapping areas for subsistence & recreation

Tidal Influence none

Remarks:

Report Prepared by Jerry W. McGehee <sup>Forestry Tech</sup> Review DRJ

Date 8/6/75 Date 10/16/75

NAVIGABILITY FIELD REPORT

HISTORICAL OR PRESENT USE DATA

Number/Name of Water Body Nabesna Quadrangle Tararuaq/Nabesna

Native Selection Impacted F-14912 - Northway F-19155-20 Jayon LTD.

Location of Water Body T 15 R 19E S 13N M 18E  
T13N R17E C.R.M

Type of Use(s) 1913 - steamboat "Tanu" hauled freight up Nabesna River clear to Nabesna.

Much activity on the river during gold rush.

Supplies hauled from banks by river boat to Kessler store (1921-1930)

Natives have always used this river for travel by river boat

get to & from places

Amount of Use Consistently in the past used by natives for

travel to other places - Less use now that road

system is developed

Also used for hunting

Area of Use all of Nabesna River.

Season of Use/Date May - Firecamp - by boat - Trails on

ice in winter

Type Watercraft Used river boats, canoes, log boats, steamboat.

Development Along Water Body

Past several villages & fish camps

Present several villages & fish camps

Future Possible agricultural development on flats, mineral

development in Alaska Range and continued subsistence &

recreational development.

Sources of Information Walter Northway - 98, old resident of Northway (typed sta

Albert Eggbraten, Kenny Albert

Physical Report prepared? Yes  No

Report Prepared by Tony McGee Review TDW

Date 10/16/75

c/o F.A.A.  
Northway, Alaska 99764  
February 6, 1975

To whom it may concern:

I have traveled by 12' boat and 10HP motor up the Nabesna River in the falls of 1973 and 1974 to hunt. I have ascended approximately 21 air miles above Northway Village. I made two trips each year all at least as far as the Black Hills. One trip we met a 16' boat above the Black Hills.

I plan to continue these activities while at Northway.

*Albert L. Eggebroten*  
Albert L. Eggebroten

RECEIVED  
ANCHORAGE, AK.  
JUN 6 10 01 AM '75  
BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

May 5, 1975

To Whom it may Concern:

I was born on the Chisana River near the mouth of Gardner Creek when my family and other people from Northway were hunting. Since then I have traveled the Chisana River many times a year by motor boat, going all the way to the mouth of Scotty Creek.

I have also been, by motor boat, up the Nabesna River for hunting many times.

I can remember, before the Alaska Highway was built, a store owner at Northway, Herman Kessler, hauled his supplies from Fairbanks to Northway by inboard motor boat.

Kenneth P. Albert

ANCHORAGE  
RECEIVED  
JUN 6 10 01 AM '75  
MAIL ROOM  
BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT

BURDEN ISLAND  
MAIL ROOM  
Northway, Alaska 99764  
May 5, 1975

ANCHORAGE AK.

Dear Sir:

I for myself & other elders that still live here in Northway, have used the Nabesna River for many years. It was our way of getting to & from places: Tetlin, Tanacross & also to Nabesna Village. To get to Tetlin, Tanacross or Delta Area, we have to go down Nabesna River to get to Chisana River.

In 1913 a large steam boat came up Chisana River into Nabesna River hauling freight to gold mine camp in Nabesna. The name of the steam boat was called Tana. This time the boat came up the river, it unloaded passengers at the mouth of the Nabesna River to lighten the boat so it could travel easier on up the river. The passengers (about 100-150) built log boats and poled up the river to the gold mine at Nabesna. There was much activity on this river during this gold rush.

I have traveled up Chisana River by river boat all my life, first with my folks and later by myself and with my family, for hunting, hauling supplies to our camps and our house at 10-Mile. We also go up river to stay at our fish camp. We go up much further than the mouth of Scotty Creek.

Before the Alaska Highway was built, store owner, Herman Kessler, hauled his store ~~six~~ supplies to Northway by river boat from Fairbanks. He had his store here from about 1921 until he died in the 1950's. He's buried at Northway cemetery. During the same time, I worked for other store owners here in Northway: John Hidavich & Teddy Lowe. They also hauled their supplies by river boat from Fairbanks to Northway. And I hauled supplies for them by river boat from Northway Village up the Chisana River to people living along the river all the way up to Scotty Creek.

The unnamed lake in Section 23, 24, 25 & 26 of Township 14N., R18E., C.R.M. is not unnamed in our language. We use it by canoe and small boat. There are hardly any lakes around here that the people of Northway have not used.

I am 98 years old.

~~six~~ Walter Northway

Walter Northway

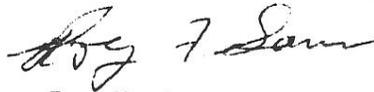
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ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

May 7, 1975

I have been traveling up Nabesna River by motor boat for the last 28 years, about 35 miles (river miles) up.

I have also traveled up the Chisana River, about 90 river miles up, starting at Northway Village. Every year most of my life we go up Chisana River by motor boat, many times past mouth of Mirror Creek.

I have seen many float planes land on Skate Lake. Gas from Airport is driven down to them or the pilots walk to Airport to get gas and then ride back to their plane.



Roy F. Sam  
P.O. Box 467  
Northway, Alaska 99764

A STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL USE AND  
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALASKA'S INLAND WATER BODIES.

Vol. 10 Southeast Region  
Summary Report

by

Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center

Report for U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

1979.

Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center  
University of Alaska  
707 A Street  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

## NABESNA RIVER

### Activity at Times other than Statehood

Commercial Activity: In 1940 the Morison-Knudsen Company had a CAA contract to build an airfield at Northway. They contracted with Bob Reeve to have him fly equipment from Nabesna to Northway. Reeve selected a river bar on the Nabesna River about 5 miles from the Nabesna Mine. By the time Reeve finished the job in 1941 he had transported over 1,100 tons (681).

Systematic Use: A USGS report of 1908 sums up the surveys of this area Schwatka, Hayes, and Russell traveled through the Nabesna area on their way from the Lewes River; they came through Skolai Pass and down the Copper River. In 1899 Peters and Brooks traveled from the head of Nabesna River northeast to Eagle. In 1908 Moffit and Knopf mapped the Nabesna-White River district (2141).

In 1929 and 1930 Robert McKennan traveled through the headwater region in order to study the Tanana natives (4700).

As shown on a 1923 American geographical map, a pack trail from Chisana to Slana River crossed the Nabesna River (124).

A USGS reconnaissance for radioactive deposits in eastern Alaska was made in 1952. The report indicates that access to the Orange Hill mining area was from Nabesna, where the Nabesna River can be crossed in a boat or on horseback. The crossing should be made at low water; high melt waters at the time of the reconnaissance prevent the party from crossing the river (1853).

Incidental Use: In 1899 Abercrombie reported that Oscar Rohn and another man had walked and traveled with a small canvas-covered canoe along the length of the river (6893).

Prospectors came to the area via the military trail from Valdez or by a route from the White River in Canada (2130).

John Flannigan of Fairbanks forded the Nabesna River on horseback in October 1913. The location is given only as "a place where the current was very swift" (76-91317-X).

In 1934 Harold Gillian landed a small plane on the ice at Nabesna in order to transport a man who had been hurt. In 1940 Bob Reeve landed on the river at Nabesna Indian Village to transport sick natives (681).

Physical Data: There is no record of physical data obtained at times other than statehood.

Other Uses: Reference 2491 gives a summary of the mining companies that operated on the Nabesna River.

The Alaska Nabesna Corporation had some mining claims on this river in 1943. The Nabesna Mining Corporation owned and operated the Nabesna

Mine from 1931 until it was exhausted in 1943. Total output of that mine was \$1,870,000 (2586). More on the Nabesna Mine is included in 1870 and 108-94121-U.

Abstracted information of the Tanana River notes that the Chisana stampede brought many newcomers up the Tanana River so that from 1912 on there have been trading posts at Tetlin and the mouth of the Nabesna. In the 1930's two rival traders, Ted Lowell and Milo Hadjukovitch, operated stores at Tanana Crossing, Tetlin, and the mouth of the Nabesna. Goods were brought in during the summer in power-driven, shallow-draft scows and distributed to their various stores where the Indians came in to meet them. During the spring the traders journeyed from camp to camp via outboard motors. Northway Indian Village is on the Nabesna River. This suggests that the river to this point was possibly used by the traders mentioned (4700-Tanana River).

Conclusions: The Nabesna River was not being used commercially at the time of statehood.

In 1940-1941 Bob Reeve used a river bar near the Nabesna Mine as a landing field for a small plane in which he transported equipment to Northway for the Morrison-Knudsen Company.

Boat traffic has been negligible and communities sparse along the Nabesna River. This area received very little attention during the gold rush to surrounding districts.

Further research on this river will probably provide no additional information. Other USGS reports than those cited here may contain passing reference to the Nabesna River but would probably contain nothing concerning the use of this waterbody at the time of statehood nor any significant data which has not already been collected.



HISTORIC USE OF THE CHISANA AND NABESNA RIVERS, ALASKA

STATE OF ALASKA  
Jay Hammond, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
Robert E. LeResche, Commissioner

DIVISION OF LANDS

Allan Carson, Acting Director

DIVISION OF FOREST, LAND AND  
WATER MANAGEMENT

Theodore G. Smith, Director

May, 1979  
Report prepared by  
Terrence M. Cole  
Historian

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#### IV. History of the Nabesna Valley

In his account of his trip down the Tanana River in 1885, Lieut. Henry Allen noted that the Indians of the Upper Tanana referred to the Tanana River as the Nabesna. When Alfred Brooks made the first systematic exploration of the Tanana Valley 13 years later in 1898, he found that the name Nabesna was no longer being used by the natives. "For the sake of preserving this euphonious Indian name," Brooks wrote, "we have applied it on the map to the chief tributary of the Upper Tanana, for which we were unfortunately unable to find the true Indian name" (Brooks 1900a:436). In Brooks' opinion the newly named Nabesna River was the "most important tributary of the Upper Tanana," but it must be noted that he considered the Chisana River to be part of the Tanana (Brooks 1900a:459).

The natives had several more or less permanent communities on the Nabesna. On the upper river the settlements were mostly along the route of the old trail which ran from Batzulnetas village in the Copper River valley, to the Nabesna, Chisana, and White River valleys. The trail went down Platinum Creek to the Nabesna, and ascended Cooper Creek to Cooper Pass, from where it followed Notch Creek and Cross Creek to the Chisana. The Indians living at the mouth of Cross Creek on the Chisana, often wintered near Cooper Creek on the east side of the Nabesna, or near the mouth of Platinum Creek, on the west side of the Nabesna. When anthropologist Robert McKennan visited the area in 1929, the Indians were camped on the east bank of the Nabesna near the mouth of Cooper Creek, and the population was 16.

Seventy-five miles downstream was another Indian settlement referred to by McKennan as the "Mouth of the Nabesna," where 59 people lived. This group formerly had only one permanent village called "Fish Camp," located about 13 miles above the mouth of the Nabesna. Fish Camp was on a clearwater stream where the Indians gathered from May to July during the summer run of caribou and whitefish." The natives moved to Nabesna Village nearer the mouth of the river when trading posts were established there in the early years of the twentieth century (McKennan 1959:18). According to McKennan this group of natives ranged "well up the Nabesna Valley" (McKennan 1959:18). The U.S. Geological Survey also said there was "an old Indian trail" which ran down "the south bank of the Nabesna River" (Moffit 1943:110).

The Nabesna River Valley was part of the area that had been described by C. W. Hayes in 1892 as a geographic blank. When William Peters and Alfred Brooks reported on their 1898 trip down the Tanana, Brooks wrote generally of the routes and means of transportation in this part of Alaska.

In the past the few prospectors who penetrated this region limited their journeys chiefly to the larger waterways. In the open season they followed these in boats, or more often in downstream trips on rafts, and in the winter traversed their frozen surfaces with dog teams. The Indians also use

cumbersome rafts for navigating the rivers, which they construct very ingeniously without the use of tools. When they are unprovided with axes, they use drift timber or burn off dead trees, and fasten them together with withes. They also construct well-shaped birch-bark canoes, which are decked over in the kayak fashion and are usually only large enough for one or two persons. These are propelled by a single paddle, with which they alternate from one side of the canoe to the other at every second stroke. Canoes of a similar pattern are also covered with moose skin in lieu of birch bark, and these are sometimes made much larger. In going up shallow streams in their small canoes, the Indians make use of two short poling sticks, one in either hand. In this manner they are able to make fairly rapid progress against a 4 or 5 mile current. The swifter parts of the river are seldom navigated by the Indians, and then only in downstream trips, the return being made by portage. The Indian canoes are very frail craft and are easily injured on rocks and snags, and this is probably the reason they have such a fear of swift water and why their statements in regard to the danger of rapids are almost always overdrawn. In winter the Indians make long journeys with their dog teams, and this is undoubtedly the best time to travel in the region (Brooks 1900a:439-440).

Brooks marked the Nabesna on his 1898 map from where it leaves the mountains to the Tanana, but like the Chisana the Upper Nabesna had not yet been explored. The United States government remedied that situation somewhat a year later, when two exploring expeditions reached the Nabesna. The first was a six man party with 15 horses; again led by topographer William Peters and geologist Alfred Brooks. While examining the copper deposits on Kletsan Creek, a tributary of the White River, the survey party met two prospectors named E. J. Cooper and H. A. Hammond. These two men brought the first pack train through Cooper Pass on the old Indian trail.

"Mr. Cooper gave us some valuable information about the region," Brooks wrote later (Brooks 1900b:339). When the geologists crossed into the Tanana watershed, they retraced the trail of the two prospectors going through Cooper Pass to the Nabesna River. Brooks described the Nabesna as "the largest tributary of the Tanana" (Brooks 1900b:351). Like the Chisana, it was a "swift flowing stream." They followed the Nabesna downstream for about 20 miles below the mouth of Cooper Creek, before heading overland to the northwest towards the Tetlin River. Though their expedition had gathered more information about the Nabesna than was known before, the river was still a mystery. As Brooks stated in his report, "The headwaters of the Nabesna have not been explored above the point where our route crossed the river" (Brooks 1900b:351).

In the geologist's opinion much of the White-Upper Tanana region was not favorable for boating, but Brooks thought the Nabesna and the

Chisana below the gorge, and the large lakes, were all "favorable for the use of small boats" (Brooks 1900b:384).

Brooks makes no mention of the specific rivers they crossed by boat on their journey. He does say however that to cross the large rivers they "used a heavy, waterproof canvas, which we stretched over a frame built by the use of a few simple tools: (Brooks 1900b:384).

Shortly after the USGS survey party passed through the valleys of the Chisana and the Nabesna, two men working for the US Army, Oscar Rohn, and A. H. McNeer, traveled 47 miles across the Nizina Glacier in 15 days to the Chisana River. Rohn and McNeer had no idea where their glacier trip had taken them, as Rohn explained in his report:

During the trip over the glacier the storms which are almost constant on the summit at that time of the year, the difficulties of traversing glacial ice, and snow-blindness absorbed our attention and left us no time to speculate on what drainage we were reaching. When, however, the glacier had been crossed, the latter became the all-absorbing question. After following the stream which headed in the glacier for a distance of 12 or 15 miles in a northeasterly direction, and finding that it led out of the mountains in a direction almost due east, we became convinced that it was the Tanana River, and we decided to make a portage through a gap in the mountains to the west, by which we hoped to reach what we felt sure was a branch of the Copper River. At the end of a seven-days' packing trip we reached a large river, which, however, proved to be merely a branch of the Tanana, called by the natives Nabesna (Rohn 1900:407).

Rohn and McNeer followed the tracks left by Peters and Brooks through Cooper Pass. They were running out of food and decided the quickest way to get to a trading post or return to a settlement in the Copper River valley would be to raft down the Nabesna to the Tanana, instead of trying to find a pass through the mountains. The two men constructed rafts, probably at a spot near the mouth of Cooper Creek. They did not raft very far down the Nabesna, however, as the Indians informed them of the easy overland trail to the Copper River.

Rohn's account of the event states:

The season being so far advanced that ice was rapidly forming in the streams, and our provisions being reduced to less than ten days' rations, we decided to build rafts and make our way down the Nabesna and Tanana with all possible haste. Before proceeding down the Nabesna very far, however, we met natives, from whom we learned that a portage of five or six days led to the headwaters of the Copper River. Securing these natives as guides and packers, we made our way overland to Batzulnetas, on Copper River, which was reached on the 2d day of October (Rohn 1900:408).

In the same year that these two expeditions penetrated the Nabesna Valley, the first major mineral discovery was made in the area. On Jacksina Creek, a tributary of the Nabesna, several prospectors discovered quartz gold. Years later Jacksina Creek was the site of one of the most successful hard rock mines in Alaska, however, the prospectors of 1899 were looking for placer gold, not quartz gold. Unlike most parts of Alaska, the gold of the Upper Nabesna was not in placer form. To separate the gold from the rock in the mines on the Nabesna, a stamp mill was needed, not just a pick, a shovel, and a gold pan. Because the Nabesna was not a "poor man's camp" like the Klondike, Nome, or the Chisana, there was never a large stampede of any magnitude to the area.

One early account of the discovery of quartz gold on Jacksina Creek, is contained in an issue of the Valdez News. The newspaper had one of their reporters interview Mr. K. J. Fjeld, one of the original discoverers, in 1903.

In 1899 a party of prospectors were camped on the Jacksina and were looking for placer gold. Mr. Fjeld was one of the party and during his prospecting he discovered that a certain slide which came off the mountain contained much fine gold though not sufficient to pay. He concluded that this gold came from a quartz ledge which could be plainly seen above the slide but as in those days quartz in that locality was considered worthless and he continued his search for placer (Valdez News, 9/12/03).

The USGS did a study of the Mineral Resources of the Wrangell Mountains in 1902, in which they reported that lode gold had also been found on Monte Cristo Gulch, California Gulch, and Orange Hill. The investigators for the Survey said that gold could be found above the head of the river on the east side of the Nabesna glacier, but though the prospectors in the area were typically optimistic about its potential, the scientists had a different view of the future.

We regret our inability to present as encouraging a report for this section as has been made by the prospectors referred to, and feel that all that can be safely affirmed is that a considerable amount of low-grade gold-bearing rock exists at the head of the Nabesna River, in which economic values may be found in the future (Mendenhall and Schrader 1903:44-45).

Prospectors also had their hopes vested in the copper resources of the Nabesna. Since the discovery of the Bonanza copper claims at Kennecott, miners believed that on the north side of the mountains near the head of the Tanana, there might be other deposits just as rich. In the winter of 1901-1902 a man named McCleary arrived in Valdez saying he had discovered a ledge of copper 500 feet long, between the Chisana and Nabesna rivers. According to Mr. McCleary there was about \$1,000,000 worth of copper exposed on the face of the ledge (Alaska Prospector,

4/12/02). In the spring of 1902 a large well-equipped six-man party with nine pack horses set out for the copper district at the head of the upper Tanana (Valdez News, 5/24/02). An Indian from the upper Tanana arrived in Valdez later that summer, with news that there were many copper prospectors in the area. The Alaska Prospector quoted the Indian as saying, "White man all same mosquito" (Alaska Prospector, 6/5/02).

In July of 1902 a man named Mr. Dickey discovered copper on the Nabesna. Dickey was working for another man named Millard, who had been sending copper prospecting parties into the upper Tanana for several years. Dickey staked 41 claims on the Nabesna and brought out 60 pounds of sample ore to Valdez (Valdez News, 7/26/02; 8/16/02).

The Nabesna was thoroughly prospected by small parties in the early years of this century, but there is little record of their activity except for a few scattered accounts in the newspapers of Valdez 200 miles to the southwest. One typical article about miners going to the Nabesna appeared in January of 1903.

J. F. Roy of this place, has sent C. F. Johnston, L. M. Best, and N. M. Patterson to the Nabesna River, a tributary of the Tanana to prospect and locate mineral lands known to exist on that stream. Johnston and his father left here very early last spring with a large outfit, 1500 pounds of which Johnston claims to have cached on the Nabesna, and it is to this cache the present outfit is going, which enables them to travel light. When the snow disappears they will prospect for placer gold, as Johnston claims to have found some very good free-milling quartz in that vicinity last year (Alaska Prospector, 1/29/03).

Through 1903 and 1904 the Nabesna country still seemed promising to some prospectors, but most of the true stamperders in Alaska at that time were then on their way to the new strikes at Fairbanks. A sizable number of men from the Nizina district, who joined the stampede to Fairbanks, crossed over the mountains and boated down the Nabesna from its upper reaches to the Tanana, and continued downstream all the way to Fairbanks.

For the minerals on the Nizina it was far shorter to go on the trail through Skolai Pass to the White River, and across the divide to the heads of the Chisana or the Nabesna, then to descend the Chitina to the Copper River. All summer reports were arriving in Valdez of the stampede from the Nizina mines to Fairbanks. A dispatch dated May 29, 1903, stated, "A great many people leaving Nizina for the Tanana" (Valdez News, 5/30/03).

In June a long article detailing the activities of the miners of the Nizina district was mailed to the Valdez News, and the letter included a discussion of the Tanana stampede.

Red McConnell, who bonded from A. J. Kelsey the jumped claims on White Gulch or upper Chitutu, did considerable prospecting on the claims during the early part of the season, but evidently without results, as he pulled up stakes and started to the Tanana. The old saying that "distance lends enchantment to the view," is found to be as true here as elsewhere, as many people have the Tanana fever.

At least 25 men and probably more have left for there, and others are talking of going (Valdez News, 6/9/03).

Ten years later in 1913, Ed "Red" McConnell was one of the men who joined the stampede to the Chisana. When talking about his earlier days in the Nabesna-Chisana District, he said that while on the stampede to Fairbanks in 1903, he "built a boat at the head of the Nabesna and floated down the Tanana River" (Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/18/13).

The other paper in Valdez, the Alaska Prospector, received the news of McConnell's departure later in the summer. The Prospector said, "Red McConnell and Joe Hueston together with Tony Pierault and Arthur Meurn built boats at Nabesna and have gone to Fairbanks" (Alaska Prospector, 9/3/03).

It is impossible to say exactly where McConnell and the other Fairbanks stampeders put their boats in the water on the Nabesna. McConnell's statement that the boat was built at "the head of the Nabesna," and the fact that McConnell was also quoted as saying that the Chisana strike was only seven miles from the place where he built his scow in 1903, could mean that the boat was built at the end of the trail near the mouth of Cooper Creek, but this is not certain (Fairbanks Daily Times, 8/15/13).

On the Chisana River there was good timber to make boats as far upstream as Euchre Mountain, not far from the foot of the Chisana Glacier. Geologists Moffit and Knopf said the best timber they saw during the summer of 1908 was on the flats near Euchre Mountain, "where a sawpit had been erected and boat material had been cut. Trees 18 to 20 inches or more at the butt are common here" (Moffit and Knopf 1910: 14).

Altogether probably several dozen people left Nizina and went down to Fairbanks by boat. The Valdez News received a partial list of the stampeders, who went by way of the upper Tanana route.

Word was brought out by Mail Carrier Jefferson of some of the people who left Nizina for the head of the Tanana and for Fairbanks; Judge Roy, Mrs. Shields, Ed Mullins, C. G. Grimm, Bill Lemeragee, Harry Behrens, Bill Crumb, R. Rettig, John Cascaden, Harry Hare, E. S. Scafford and others have gone down the Tanana (Valdez News, 8/15/03).

Even after the stampede to Fairbanks was over, there were parties which took the upper Tanana route from Nizina to Fairbanks. In the fall of 1904 the Alaska Prospector reported that many travelers bound for Fairbanks went down the Chisana.

A number of men have gone from Nizina to Fairbanks this fall. The route followed by most of them is over Scolai Pass to White River, and from there across to Shushana (Chisana), a tributary of the Tanana, and thence down the Tanana (Alaska Prospector, 9/22/04).

The recorded information about the area is so scanty, it is impossible to even make a guess as to how many men descended the Navesna or Chisana by boat. But for the men in the Nizina District, the water routes down the twin sources of the Tanana River were well established. More than three years after the first recorded instance of travel from the Navesna to Fairbanks, the Alaska Prospector reported on the activities of several men who were involved in the development of the lode mines on the upper Navesna River.

Pontius Magnusson arrived yesterday from the Navesna, where he has been on a prospecting trip....The Levensaler party is still prospecting in the neighborhood and so is Geo. Wilson. Jas. Casey, and Shay have gone to Fairbanks, moving their supplies down the river in row boats (Alaska Prospector, 3/2/06).

Earlier in the summer the newspaper had noted that, "George A. Shea, who has been on the Navesna in the interest of outside parties, came down the Tanana 500 miles in a row boat to Fairbanks . . ." (Alaska Prospector, 6/27/06).

There was other traffic on the Navesna, not by travellers bound to Fairbanks, but in connection with an effort to develop the lode mines on the upper river. Though the stamperders of 1899 had no interest in the quartz mines of the Navesna, there were men who were willing to spend their money to develop them. In 1903, K. J. Fjeld, the original discoverer of the gold deposit on Jacksina Creek, returned to the spot he had seen in 1899, with his partner Paul Paulson, and seven others. They staked a total of 28 claims, including a copper ledge they had also discovered. In addition to Fjeld and Paulson, 26 other people, mostly from Valdez, were investing in the mines. Fjeld and Paulson later formed a company called the Royal Gold Mining Company, which was annulled and replaced by the Royal Development Company in 1905, capitalized at \$2,500,000, to manage these 28 claims near Jacksina Creek (Valdez News, 9/12/03; Alaska Prospector, 12/21/05).

In 1907 the Royal Development Company brought in a three stamp mill to crush the rock at the mine; this was said to be the first stamp mill taken into the Interior of Alaska from the port of Valdez (Alaska Prospector, 1/17/07).

Another mining man who was interested in the lode prospects of the Nabesna was millionaire Henry Bratnober, a quartz mining expert who did exploratory work for certain English and American capitalists, and was said to have formerly worked for the Rothschilds (Alaska Prospector, 12/24/03). Bratnober's experience in this part of Alaska dated back to 1898, when he was led by Jack Dalton to a point on the White River to look over copper prospects in the area. In 1903 Bratnober and Dalton, with an eight-mule pack train, again examined potential mining sites in the Upper Tanana (Valdez News, 6/20/03).

When Bratnober left Alaska at the end of the field season in 1903, he described how there were 300 starving prospectors at the "head of the Tanana." The Valdez News was furious with Bratnober for the unfavorable comments he was making about Alaska; the truth according to the News was that most of the miners Bratnober referred to had returned to Valdez or had "gone down the Tanana" (Valdez News, 9/26/03). "This pot-bellied old reprobate has some object in spreading these slanderous reports," the newspaper predicted, "aside from the mere pleasure which some people take in lying" (Valdez News, 10/3/03).

Whatever the case may be, Bratnober was back in 1904 and he examined the Fjeld prospects on Jacksina Creek. He refused to invest in the property because after assaying the ore he declared "there was nothing in it" (Alaska Prospector, 8/10/05). But Bratnober was back again the following year in the summer of 1905. This time he was out just a little curious. He had a steamboat specially built to ascend the Tanana and Nabesna Rivers, and put together a four-man crew outfitted with forty tons of provisions (Alaska Prospector, 8/10/05).

His steamboat, the Ella, was launched at Whitehorse on May 20, 1905. Bratnober and a fellow investor in the proposition, C. H. Gray, were both on board the gasoline-powered sternwheeler when it reached Dawson City on June 22, 1905. Bratnober explained to the Dawson Daily News that he was bound for the upper Tanana, and planned to go 200 miles above Tanana Crossing. The Dawson paper said, "Mr. Bratnober has been in the upper Tanana and at the head of the Copper and the White Rivers a number of times. Evidently he thinks that country has a future" (Dawson Daily News, 6/22/05).

Bratnober explained that his plan was to return to Dawson by October 1, 1905, and freeze the Ella in on the upper Yukon. "From that point the boat will be able to make an early start for the upper Tanana next spring" (Dawson Daily News, 6/22/05). The newspaper interview also contained a description of the Ella.

The Ella draws 11 inches of water, is 120 feet long and 26 feet beam. She is a sternwheeler, built light especially to navigate shallow streams. She carries no cargo this trip except supplies for her own use. The boat first was constructed outside, and reassembled at Whitehorse. She is under the American flag. Captain J. B. Geer is in command of the craft (Dawson Daily News, 6/22/05).

If Bratnober's plan was to go 200 miles above Tanana Crossing, as he told the Dawson Daily News, he intended to go far up the Nabesna River. The trip did not go as well as they had hoped. While steaming up the Tanana River, they lost a man overboard who was killed. Though the Ella was specially designed to navigate shallow streams, the boat had great difficulty ascending the Tanana River. Late in July the Ella was still struggling upstream far below the Nabesna. An article detailing the progress of various steamers on the Tanana River stated:

The novel gasoline boat Ella was reported to be on a bar about 100 miles above Fairbanks, in the neighborhood of the Delta country. It struck the bar at high water, and was soon a good mile from sufficient water to float her (Dawson Daily News, 7/24/05).

The Ella did eventually reach the mouth of the Nabesna River on July 24, 1905, and started upstream, but by that time it was very late in the season. They had little time to spare, otherwise the boat might get caught in the open and they would risk having it destroyed by ice floes during spring breakup.

Bratnober's sternwheeler Ella ascended the Nabesna to a point about 15 miles above the mouth, where his men unloaded the party's 40 ton load of supplies. Apparently the Ella then headed back down the Nabesna into the Tanana, and on below Fairbanks. The Ella did not make it to Dawson City by October 1, as Bratnober originally planned, and instead the boat spent the winter at Nenana.

Bratnober returned to Fairbanks on the Ella. He said he had left four men in charge of his stockpile of provisions on the Nabesna, "who will devote their time toward opening copper mines in which the company is interested" (Alaska Prospector, 9/14/05; Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/6/13).

Walter Fisher, who spent the summer of 1905 prospecting in the Chisana and Nabesna valleys, gave an account in 1913 to the Fairbanks Daily Times of what happened to the Bratnober party.

In the fall of 1905, Mr. Fisher reports, the Bratnober outfit brought their boat Ella 15 miles up the Nabesna, where they unloaded their outfit and awaited the freezeup. As soon as the ground was in condition, they freighted over the ice to Camp Creek, a tributary of the Nabesna, where they did a lot of prospecting for copper. They staked a lot of ground, which has never been developed to any extent, owing to the poor transportation facilities. The last ever done with these claims was in 1908, when Jim Galen went in to represent the claims (Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/6/13).

Bratnober believed that his trip on the Ella had been very successful. "I think this expedition will be the means of opening up a good district," he said (Dawson Daily News, 10/3/05). Bratnober claimed that in the

past he had seen tons of pure copper on the headwaters of the White, Chisana, and Nabesna rivers. Like all of the early twentieth century promoters and developers in Alaska, Bratnober thought that transportation meant just one thing: railroads. Only steel rails across the mountains could provide the cheap transportation costs that would bring millions of people to the country, as Bratnober and many others so fervently desired. Trails or roads could not quench the thirst of men with railroad fever. "It is no use to build wagon roads," Bratnober said while discussing the Nabesna, "for what would you do with them when built" (Dawson Daily News, 10/3/05)?

Bratnober hoped that the Copper River Railroad would be extended to the Nabesna and cross over to the Fortymile District and the Yukon. Railroads were far preferable to steamboats as far as convenience, speed, and shipping costs, were concerned, but until the day when railroads would crisscross Alaska, the promoters would have to be satisfied with the continual hazards and inconveniences of river traffic, and expeditions like that of the Ella.

To promote the further development of the mineral resources of the Nabesna area, the United States Geological Survey sent a seven-man party into the district in 1908. They were equipped with 11 horses and had a large outfit, which had been brought in by sled the previous winter to their base camp at Sargent's Cabin on the Nabesna, near the mouth of Camp Creek. At the time of their visit the stamp mill on Jacksina Creek was not in operation. Three men were working on the property, but no ore was being taken out. In 1907 the Royal Development Company had milled 60 tons of ore, but the season had not been as profitable as the company had hoped. Though the ore was assayed at \$30 worth of gold per ton, only about \$12 in gold was recoverable from each ton of ore, which was not enough to cover the high costs of operation and transportation (Moffit 1943:276; Moffit and Knopf 1910:58).

The assessment work was done on the claims owned by the Royal Development Company until at least 1914, but like the claims staked by the Bratnober party, these too were allowed to lapse. About the time that the Royal Development prospect was abandoned, gold was discovered on the Chisana River, bringing a new phase of development to the upper Tanana region.

During the stampede traffic on the Nabesna was not nearly as heavy as the traffic on the Chisana. From the Tanana River, it was shorter for a man to pole up the Nabesna to Sargent's Cabin and then cross through Cooper Pass to the diggings, than to pole up the Chisana. One party which planned to take the Nabesna route was headed by E. E. Dilley, who was in charge of transporting a two-kilowatt wireless plant to the Chisana for Fairbanks promoter Falcon Joslin. Dilley planned to have the steamer White Seal take him to the mouth of the Nabesna River, and if possible he would send the wireless equipment up the Nabesna in poling boats. As previously noted the White Seal had left too late in the season to make it to the mouth of the Nabesna, and Dilley had no opportunity to try his plan (Fairbanks Daily Times, 1/2/13; 11/16/13). Most of the other stampedees however, wished to take their boats as

close to the goldfields as possible, and for them the Chisana was the preferable route.

As previously discussed in the history of the Chisana River, there was a great deal of boat traffic up the Tanana River from Fairbanks in the summer of 1913 with hundreds of stampedeers on their way to the Chisana strike. The trip of the 291-ton sternwheeler Reliance in August of 1913 seemed to establish the mouth of the Nabesna as the upstream limit of navigation for large sternwheelers on the Tanana. The Reliance made a fast 12-day round trip between Fairbanks and the mouth of the Nabesna with little difficulty. Near the mouth of the Nabesna the freight and passengers on the sternwheeler were unloaded at a spot they called Reliance City. From here the stampedeers had to pole their boats up the Chisana or Nabesna rivers, or go overland to the strike at the head of the Chisana.

When the steamboat men on the Reliance returned to Fairbanks after their trip to the mouth of the Nabesna, they had little good to say about the Nabesna River.

Officers of the steamboat state that the Nabesna River at its mouth is unnavigable for steamboats. The delta is wide and the water is very swift and very shallow. Even poling boats would have a hard time in getting up the river, although it is probably better water beyond the delta. The Chisana River, which, with the Nabesna, forms the Tanana, is, on the other hand, almost sluggish. It is very wide at the mouth, and full of islands, but it is very shallow, there being not more than one and one-half feet of water....

Most of the men who went up on the Reliance at once started over for the diggings, some in poling boats and some on foot. Tetlin Indians claimed that they could go up the Nabesna and across to the Chisana, on foot, in three days, while it would take five days to pole up the Chisana. Some of these Indians were hired by the stampedeers, some of who took the Chisana Route, others by way of the Nabesna (Fairbanks Daily Times, 8/19/13).

Some of the men from the Reliance did decide to pole up the Nabesna. Four of those who poled up the river were Frank Lawson, Jack Biglow, Frank Carpenter, and J. C. Wood. Later in the year Carpenter gave an account of their trip up the Nabesna River after getting off the Reliance, to a Fairbanks newspaper.

When they were landed at the mouth of the Nabesna, it was decided to go in by poling up that stream and then crossing over the divide into the Chisana. With that intention Frank Lawson, Jack Biglow, and J. C. Wood started out, and proceeded with great difficulty as far upstream as Sargent's Cabin, which is located about sixty miles from its mouth.

They then cached the boat and each carrying a pack, started over the summit (Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/9/13).

The Lawson party did not go all the way into the Chisana, however, because about 25 miles short of the diggings they met some people they knew who described the poor conditions in the Chisana camp. After hearing the bad news, Lawson, Carpenter, Wood, and Biglow, retraced their steps and ran their poling boat back down the Nabesna from Sargent's Camp to the mouth of the river.

While taking their poling boat down the river, the four men met the 65-ton steamer Tetlin at a point about halfway between Sargent's Cabin and the mouth of the River. Lawson estimated that the Tetlin was about 35 miles above the mouth of the Nabesna. Lawson described the situation on the Tetlin when they passed it.

He told of having met the steamer Tetlin at a point 35 miles up the Nabesna River. The boat was unloaded and the passengers were preparing to strike out overland for the Chisana River. Dave Cascaden, who went up on the Tetlin, and several others expected to spend the winter prospecting in the foothills between the two forks which compose the Nabesna and the Chisana. They have built a cache where the boat was unloaded, and will make that their base of supplies, relaying from time to time as they need the provisions. Everybody in the Tetlin party was well equipped and all were ready to spend the winter in the district (Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/9/13).

The Tetlin was a 65-ton sternwheeler under the command of Captain Northway. It had departed Fairbanks for the upper Tanana on July 29, drawing somewhere between 18 and 20 inches of water. The boat was carrying a "full crew" and six tons of supplies. She was a "high powered boat for her size" and appears to have been the largest boat ever brought any great distance up the Nabesna River (Fairbanks Daily Times, 7/29/13; 7/30/13). At the present it is not known for certain, but it appears that the Tetlin never got off the Nabesna. The remains of a sternwheeler that was wrecked during the Chisana stampede are reportedly still buried in the mud about 15 miles above the mouth of the Nabesna River. Though it has not been positively identified, it appears that the wreck may be that of the Tetlin.

Another party of stampeders came down the Nabesna in poling boats on their way back to Fairbanks, and they too said that they passed the steamer Tetlin. On the return of Pat O'Connor and Pete McDonald from the Chisana district the Fairbanks Times gave an account of their trip.

O'Connor and McDonald report that they started down the Nabesna River in a small boat with Lysle Brown and Billy Thorpe and that the craft upset and the greater part of the outfit was lost. Brown and Thorpe then joined

Dave Cascaden, Hershberger, and Estby, who were starting on a prospecting trip from the Nabesna River across to the Chisana.

Later, McDonald and O'Conor were able to recover the boat, but the supplies were ruined. They then started downstream and picked up the other two men at the mouth of the Nabesna. While coming down the Nabesna they passed the steamer Tetlin, which was hopelessly high and dry on a bar. The water has fallen so far that they do not think the boat can possibly get over this year. All of the crew had deserted the Tetlin and were making their way downriver as best they could (Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/12/13).

A few weeks later in October of 1913 the Tetlin was still reported to be "high and dry in the Nabesna River" (Fairbanks Daily Times, 10/14/13).

In the early spring of 1914 the chances of moving the Tetlin from its resting place on a Nabesna River bar appeared to be good. The first steamer to reach Fairbanks from the upper Tanana in May of 1914 brought the following news: "The little steamer Tetlin is reported to be in good condition on the Nabesna River, and will come downstream as soon as conditions permit, which probably will be in a couple of weeks" (Fairbanks Daily Times, 5/19/14).

If the wreck is indeed that of the Tetlin, something must have gone wrong in the summer of 1914. Hudson Stuck, the Episcopal Missionary who traveled throughout Alaska, stated that the Tetlin was one of at least six wrecked steamboats he knew of, which had been destroyed on the Tanana River and its tributaries during the Chisana stampede. In the spring of 1917, Stuck said that wrecks of the steamers Koyukuk, Dusty Diamond, S & S, Atlas, Samson, and Tetlin, were still visible (Stuck 1917:307).

Like most of the sternwheelers which ran on the western rivers of the United States in the age of steam, the riverboats which traveled on Alaskan rivers before and after the gold rush had short lives. Western riverboats were generally designed to carry a large amount of freight in shallow water; the boats were built at the lowest possible cost and were often poorly constructed (Hunter 1969:62-100). Because of the nature of the shallow streams on which they operated, (steamboat captains sometimes joked that they could tap a keg of beer and run for miles on the suds) wrecks were frequent even on heavily traveled rivers.

In their history of steam navigation on the Brazos River in Texas, Puryear and Winfield, describe the lives of the sternwheelers on that river. A similar account could be written about the short lifespans of the sternwheelers which operated in Alaska, like the Tetlin.

The life of a Brazos paddlewheeler was busy, hazardous, and short. Most boats endured only four to five years against

the factors that conspired to sink them. This brevity of existence may be attributed in part to the attitude of the owners, who decreed that a steamboat should be built as cheaply as possible and exploited to the limit of its capability in order to wring maximum profits from a short-term investment. Despite extravagant claims of staunchness, the western riverboat simply was not built to last--its hull was light, its superstructure flimsy. To secure maximum speed with shallow draft, builders sacrificed strength and rigidity of construction. The average steamer captain, more concerned with profit than safety, subjected his boat to persistent abuse . . . (Puryear and Winfield 1976:39-40).

At present it is not known if the wreck still on the river is that of the Tetlin. It is also impossible to say how far upstream the 65-ton Tetlin ascended the Nabesna River; the farthest upstream the boat was reported as being was 35-40 miles above the mouth (Fairbanks Daily Times, 10/7/13; 9/9/13). According to Ted Lowell, who first arrived on the upper Tanana in the late 1920's, an old timer who had been on the Chisana stampede named Jack Yarich, told him that the men on the wrecked steamboat had intended to ascend the Chisana River, but went by mistake up the Nabesna (Lowell 1979:17).

Another account of the reasons why the Tetlin ascended the Nabesna River was given by the Captain of the Tetlin himself to a reporter from the Cordova Daily Alaskan in 1913. Captain Northway, who had a trading post near the mouth of the Nabesna River, and had spent the last six years in the upper Tanana, explained that he ascended the Nabesna because he was told that he could not make it up the Chisana. The newspaper article describing the interview with Northway states:

Captain Northway took a party of 18 from Fairbanks on his launch Tetlin. He had no trouble in reaching the mouth of the Nebesna (sic), but instead of continuing up to the Chisana he took the report of men coming down who stated that it would be impossible for him to get up. This he afterwards found to be incorrect. He succeeded in getting up the Nebesna (sic) about 30 miles. But he was then more than 60 miles from the diggings.

Among the men on the Tetlin were many old timers like Dave Cascaden, E. W. Hershberger, Ben Estby, Teddy Kittleson, T. Anderson, Lisle Brown, Mr. Report, and Mr. Thrift. These men all had at least 500 pounds each of grub and plenty of money (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 10/13/13).

The stranded passengers on the Tetlin started prospecting the tributaries of the Nabesna. Some good mining ground was located and there was even a small stampede to the creeks near the Tetlin in early September, 1913 (Cordova Daily Alaskan, 10/13/13).

In summary, it was possible for Chisana stampeders to pole all the way up to Sargent's Cabin between 60 or 70 miles above the mouth of the Nabesna and then go overland to the diggings, on the major trail in the district. This route was definitely not as popular for men with poling boats as ascending the Chisana itself, where they could bring their boats far closer to the scene of the strike and not have to pack their supplies overland any great distance.

For a prospector or a trapper, a poling boat was as important as a modern American's family car; he went everywhere in it. A man could haul large quantities of freight and supplies in a poling boat drawing only a few inches of water.

Ted Lowell remembers that his old friend Jack Yarich, a veteran of the Chisana stampede of 1913, was very skillful with his poling boat.

Well, Jack, he was a great man with a pole. It was a long time before he ever got a gasoline engine, he always figured he was going to have trouble with it . . . . Oh, a good many times he poled from this cabin I spoke of six miles below the mouth of the Nabesna; he poled up the Tanana and then he poled up the Nabesna River (Lowell 1979:31).

Lowell said that Jack Yarich "had poled boats up all them rivers along there" in the Upper Tanana. From what Yarich told him, Lowell believes that the farthest upstream Yarich had ever taken his 28-foot poling boat was to the native settlement known as Upper Nabesna. McKennan identifies Upper Nabesna as the native village located between Platinum and Cooper creeks, about 60 to 65 miles above the mouth of the Nabesna River (McKennan 1959:16). This is the same spot near Sargent's Cabin, where the Chisana gold stampeders who poled their boats up the Nabesna in 1913, had taken their boats out of the water, before heading up the trail on Cooper Creek to cross the divide into the Chisana Valley.

Lowell later brought Yarich's poling boat from him, so he remembers it well. He said it was 28-feet long and was "a marvelous piece of work." Yarich had whipsawed the lumber himself and built it by hand. The boat was 32 inches wide on the bottom and was flared out on the top, like the batteau used by the Hudson's Bay Company traders had been. The top was flared out so that the boat could hold a large amount of freight. Lowell says that he personally has hauled more than a ton in that 28-foot boat many times, and he estimates that with a full load on it the poling boat would not draw more than three or four inches of water (Lowell 1979:32).

During the Chisana stampede a large party of men without poling boats walked up the Nabesna River for a short distance, while enroute to the Chisana strike on foot. An account of their trip was given by C.W. Peterson, when he returned to Fairbanks in September of 1913.

Mr. Peterson...left Fairbanks on the steamer Reliance on the night of August 6, and, together with the rest of the

passengers, was landed at the mouth of the Nabesna River ten days later. Together with twenty companions, among whom were William Brown, formerly of the Eagle saloon; John Smith, of Cleary; Jack Allman, of Fairbanks; Oscar Enstrom of Eva Creek; Ben Holben, a cook; two men, both named Martin, and a man named Buchols, led by an Indian guide, he set out overland for the scene of the strike. They followed along the Nabesna River for about seven miles, after which they cut off between the two forks which form the Nabesna and Chisana, and landed on the latter stream within thirty miles of Wilson Creek (Chavolda Creek) (Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/9/13).

Another overland route through the Nabesna valley followed by many stampedeers to the Chisana was the old Indian trail from Batzulnetas village in the Copper River valley to the head of the White River, which crossed the upper Nabesna valley. The stampedeers knew this route as the Gulkana trail, and it entered the Nabesna valley through the heads of Jack or Platinum creeks. The trail crossed the Nabesna near Sargent's Cabin and then headed up Cooper Creek to Cooper Pass and down Notch Creek to the Chisana (Fairbanks Daily Times, 8/1/13). The stampedeers who poled boats about 60 miles up the Nabesna River to Sargent's cabin, continued their journey to the goldfields on the last portion of this trail through Cooper Pass.

Many stampedeers believed that the Gulkana trail was the best route to the Chisana diggings. The major obstacle along the route was crossing the Nabesna river itself. Jack Sullivan had his mule sink in the quicksand along the Nabesna, and it was only with great difficulty that he and his companions were able to pull the poor animal out (Fairbanks Daily Times, 9/20/13).

Despite the hazard of the quicksand along the Nabesna, two men who went all the way to the diggings on the trail from Gulkana, said they believed it would be possible to take a wagon in on the trail at least to the Nabesna River and perhaps as far as the Chisana River. Ed Bartlett, Claud Kelly and two other men left Fairbanks with two wagons and four horses on August 1, 1913. They left one wagon at Gulkana and their plan was to take the other wagon loaded with supplies in as far as possible. It was reported that they used the wagon for at least 60 miles on the well-blazed Indian trail to the head of Platinum Creek (Fairbanks Daily Times, 8/28/13). Kelly and Bartlett brought one of the "largest overland outfits" from Fairbanks to the Chisana in 1913 and in their opinion it was an excellent trail. Others who went in to the Chisana over the Gulkana trail with horses and outfits of varying sizes that summer included: Gene Huckins, Jess Myers, George Hainsinger, Bert Johnson, Horace Huddlestone, Frank Huddlestone, Phil Lynch, Jim Mogan, N. Barbettini, Theodore Rehn, T. Calvin, Neil McLeod, Frank Manley, Arthur McNeer, and H.I. Miller (Fairbanks Daily Times, 8/2/13; 8/3/13; 8/15/13; 8/24/13; 8/14/13). The USGS stated that during times of high water both the Nabesna and Chisana "are dangerous if not practically impassable" (Moffit 1943:110). For many years

however, the overland trail across the Nabesna was a major route to the Chisana mining district.

The gravel bars in the Nabesna River were described by the USGS as being good grazing ground for livestock. In his 1943 report on the geology of the Nutzotin Mountains Fred Moffit wrote:

Certain parts of the district support stock in both winter and summer. They are places where either the snow does not become so deep that the horses cannot dig out the feed or where the wind keeps the ground bare. The bars of the Nabesna River illustrate both these conditions, and they have supported from 25 to 30 horses in winter for many years (Moffit 1943: 111).

Riding a horse along the Nabesna River could be a dangerous trip. When Milton Bennett Medary Jr. came to Alaska on a hunting expedition in 1924, he had an exciting ride from Camp Creek to their hunting camp a few miles above Bond Creek, near the headwaters of the Nabesna.

Our trip on Tuesday, August 19th, took us up the Nabesna River to its head (about 16 miles) at the glacier which forms the river. The trail required crossing the river twice and most of the trip was on the river bars. The water in some of the channels was very deep and swift and in one channel my horse got into quicksand and plunged and struggled for a footing, with the water racing over the top of the saddle. Fortunately it was a small pocket and he got a footing after a few plunges during which he got deeper at each plunge, and I got thoroughly soaked (Medary 1924:20).

Medary said the the upper hunting camp he visited above Bond Creek was set up nicely with equipment from the wreck of the Tetlin on the lower Nabesna.

This camp is equipped with a fine stove and all kinds of useful things taken from a steamboat which was wrecked about 34 miles below the lower camp (Camp Creek) during the gold rush, when it tried to come up the river with supplies. The range was brought up to this camp on dog teams over the ice and snow in winter (Medary 1924:23).

Overland access to the Nabesna was greatly increased when the Alaska Road Commission completed construction of the Nabesna Road to Nabesna in 1933, replacing dogsleds, caterpillars, and pack trains, with automobiles and trucks (Wayland 1943:177). At that time one of the richest gold lode mines ever discovered in Alaska was in full production on Jacksina Creek, the old Nabesna Mine, and a fleet of trucks began hauling the ore out over the new road.

The old Nabesna mine which had first been discovered by K.J. Field in 1899, had a series of owners after the Royal Development Company

abandoned the prospect at the time of the Chisana stampede. Finally in 1924 Carl Whitham, one of the original discoverers of the lode mine and a veteran of the Chisana stampede, restaked the claims on Jacksina Creek for himself (Alaska Prospector, 8/10/05; Wayland 1943:177).

The Nabesna Mining Corporation was formed in the fall of 1929 to develop the mine. Carl Whitham was the President and General Manager. In a paper by Russell G. Wayland, "Gold Deposits Near Nabesna," published by the geological survey in 1943, the author gives a summary of the operations of the Nabesna mine.

A tram was built to the mill site at the base of the cliff, and by the summer of 1931 a small mill was in operation and a permanent camp under construction. The scale of operation was gradually expanded until the mill was treating about 60 tons of ore a day, and the operating season reached a year-round basis in 1935. The mill recovery increased from 50 to 90 percent, and the costs were reduced to permit the mining of ore carrying only \$15 worth of gold to the ton. . . .

Work on the 250-foot level began in 1931 and on the 650-foot level in 1933. After 1936 almost all stoping was done between the 250 and 450-foot levels. In 1937 the important No. 49 vein was discovered. Most of the known veins were worked out by early 1939. Since that time much disappointing development work has been done, and it now appears as if the mine may be exhausted.

The gross production by the end of 1940 was \$1,869,396. (Wayland 1943:177)

Before the road was constructed, ore from the mine was flown out from the Nabesna airstrip, which was known as Reeve Field and was located on a bar in the Nabesna River. As in other parts of Alaska, the airplane revolutionized transportation in the area. Eventually the runway at Nabesna was 13,000 feet long and 200 feet wide, one of the largest strips in any of the outlying areas in Interior Alaska (Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 7/28/41).

A major airstrip was also built at Northway during World War II along the Air Transport Command route for lend-lease aircraft. According to a military historian, James D. Bush, who described World War II construction projects in Alaska, the Northway base was built with supplies and equipment hauled by small river boats seven miles up the Nabesna to Northway, above Northway Indian Village and Nabesna Village. "Small river boats of 45-ton capacity," Bush wrote, "can travel up the Tanana River from Big Delta to the Nabesna River, thence approximately seven miles upstream to the Northway garrison" (Bush n.d.:110-111).

On the lower miles of the Nabesna River traffic was extremely heavy, and still is today. The traders on the lower Nabesna regularly brought their large 40-foot freight boats up to Nabesna village. With a load

on them, these boats drew about six inches of water (Lowell 1979:1-2). The sphere of influence of the traders extended a much shorter distance up the Nabesna River than it did up the Chisana River. Ted Lowell said that the farthest he ever ascended the Nabesna was about 15 miles by dogteam to the spot where the wreck of the steamer Tetlin lies. McKennan, however, noted that the band of Indians at Nabesna Village near the mouth of the river, ranged "well up the Nabesna Valley" (McKennan 1959:18). In his description of their seasonal movements in search of food, McKennan states that the Nabesna Indians often went fishing during the summer far upstream at a small lake where the Nabesna cuts through the Nutzotin Mountains (McKennan 1959:46).

The natives currently living at Northway have also stated that they regularly use the river. Walter Northway, who is close to 100 years old, said in 1975:

I for myself and other elders that still live here in Northway, have used the Nabesna River for many years. It was our way of getting to and from places; Tetlin, Tanacross and also to Nabesna Village. To get to Tetlin, Tanacross or Delta area, we have to go down Nabesna River to get to Chisana River (Northway 1975).

Another native resident of Northway, Kenneth P. Albert, said, "I have also been, by motor boat, up the Nabesna River for hunting many times" (Albert 1975). Informant Roy Sam stated: "I have been travelling up Nabesna River by motor boat for the last 28 years, about 35 miles (river miles) up" (Sam 1975).

In a 1972 study of the wilderness resources of the Mt. Wrangell area, the Nabesna River was identified as a river which was "suitable for water sports" (Gaw 1972:79). A recent book by Sepp Weber called The Wild Rivers of Alaska contains sketches providing "basic information on a select group of waterways for prospective paddlers of Alaska's wild rivers," and includes a discussion of the Nabesna River. Weber floated down the Nabesna River in 1969 from a point below the Nabesna Road to near the mouth of the Nabesna. He was in a party of three, and they were using a plastic fiberglass boat, drawing four to five inches of water (Weber 1979).

On his river chart Weber noted that Nabesna could be safely floated by any of the following watercraft based on its average water volume: decked one-man canoe, decked two-man canoe, decked one-man kayak, decked two-man kayak, an open canoe, and a rubber raft. Weber classified the lower 40 miles of the Nabesna as "standing water or slow-flowing water" and "current that can be overcome by backpaddling," with a slope of 5 feet per mile. Between 40 and 55 miles above the mouth of the Nabesna, he described the river as having a "current faster than backpaddling, some skill needed for bends and back eddies," with a slope of 13 feet per mile. For the lower 55 miles of the Nabesna,

Weber classed the stream as being one which does "not present white-water difficulties under normal conditions" (Weber 1976:59, 93). For the ten-mile stretch of the river in the area around Nabesna Road, from 55 to 65 miles above the mouth, Weber classified the river as White Water 1 and White Water 2, which are defined as being "very easy--small regular waves, sandbanks, riffles," and "easy-rapids of medium difficulty, wide clear passages, low benches" (Weber 1976:58). The slope in this upper stretch of the river is about 20 feet per mile.

In the past, men searching for gold travelled up and down the Nabesna and Chisana rivers in little handmade boats. Few of the people who float down the Nabesna or Chisana in the future, will make their way in boats made of whipsawed lumber, but the fiberglass boats and rubber rafts that will be used by the readers of Sepp Weber's book are about the same size as the cruder craft which were used to navigate these rivers eighty years ago.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF FOREST, LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT

THE FILES

March 2, 1979

RICHARD O. STERN  
Historian *ROS*

Nabesna/Chisana Rivers-  
Interviews with Ted Lowell

On Tuesday February 20th and Wednesday February 21, 1979 Mr. Ted Lowell was interviewed by Richard Stern and Terrence Cole in Fairbanks. The interview on Tuesday took place at Doyon, Ltd.'s offices. Elizabeth Taylor, Counsel for Doyon was present. The interview on February 21st took place at Mr. Lowell's home in Fairbanks. Present at that interview were the three persons named above and Mrs. Lowell. The interview on Tuesday was tape recorded. Terry Cole is working on transcription of that tape. The interview on February 21st was not taped, this interview was largely discussion and commentary on a number of historic photographs which Mr. Lowell showed to us.

Following is a summary of notes taken during the interview on February 20th. Ted Lowell was an employee for John Hajdukovich. Hajdukovich operated three trading posts during the early part of the twentieth century. These trading posts were located at the villages of Tetlin, Tanacross and Nabesna. Ted Lowell worked for Hajdukovich intermittently between 1929 and 1935. During the summers of 1930 and 31 he worked for Hajdukovich and spent his winters in Fairbanks. During the winter season of 1932 and 1933 he operated the trading posts on the upper Tanana River.

Lowell indicated that there were two so called Nabesna villages. The "upper" Nabesna village was further up the Nabesna River from the "lower" Nabesna village. Ted Lowell never visited the upper Nabesna village. During the 1913 Chisana stampede a Jack Yarich used poling boats to travel up and down the rivers in the upper Tanana River region. Yarich died at Northway, according to Lowell.

According to Lowell three traders operated trading posts at Nabesna village. Herman Kissler operated one there and another ten miles above Gardiner Creek on the left bank of the Chisana River. Milo Hajdukovich operated a trading post at Nabesna. Milo was a cousin to John Hajdukovich. In addition a person by the name of "Cap" O'Flanagan operated a trading post but was later bought out by Milo Hajdukovich. Later John Hajdukovich bought out the interests in the trading post owned and operated by Milo. At Scottie Creek Athapaskan Indians were supplied by Herman Kissler. According to Lowell Kissler operated a thirty foot long boat with a twelve horse power kicker motor. This boat was capable of carrying one and one half tons of supplies. The trading operated by Kissler for the benefit of the Scottie Creek Natives was a temporary post. Indians from the Canadian side of the Yukon Alaska border would come to Lowell's temporary post.

For all of these trading post operators the community of Big Delta was the source of supplies. Steamboats brought supplies from Fairbanks to Big Delta. After the construction of the Richardson Highway and a river crossing at Big Delta trucks took over this transportation link. Small river boats were utilized to take the supplies the remaining distance from Big Delta to the upper Tanana region where the trading posts were operated.

Typical items included in the trading post were finished clothing, raw materials such as bulk calico and cotton, food supplies especially staples such as flour, sugar, tea, etc., no perishable goods because of the problems in storage, tents, traps, rifles, ammunition, and related supplies. When questioned Lowell indicated that the Indians of the region seldom did any reloading of spent cartridge cases. He indicated that one reason for this was the low prices of ready to use ammunition. A box of 22 caliber shells cost only 75¢. A box of 30.30 shells cost only \$2.00.

When questioned about the types of furs that were trapped and traded in that part of Alaska Mr. Lowell indicated that lynx, otter, fox, wolf and mink were the primary furs. At the time Lowell was in the fur trading business beaver was closed in that part of Alaska. Perhaps the most important animal that was trapped and hunted by residents of the region was muskrat. Muskrats or rats as they are know colloquially were procured by the thousands by Indian hunters and trappers. At one time John Hajdukovich had a small cabin trading post at Gardener Creek located not far from Kissler's post. Thirty thousand rats taken during a season would be considered a good season. Indian trappers using 25 to 30 foot boats would travel through the lake and slough covered country trapping and shooting muskrats at the push ups in the spring time. Rats could be sold to the trading post operators almost as fast as they could be dried. Lowell recounted that Steve Northway at one time took 110 rats over night. Prices were variable for muskrat skins. In 1931 the traders purchased them at a rate of three for one dollar from the Indians. At other times prices went as high as two dollars per skin. In recent years prices have ranged from four to six dollars per skin. We questioned Lowell on the types of boats used in connection with muskrat hunting and the locations utilized by Indian residents of Northway and Nabesna villages. He indicated that the larger lakes further away from the villages were seldom used during the time that he was resident in the area. This was apparently because muskrats and moose were plentiful near the village and there was no need or incentive on the part of the people to have to travel any great distance away from the village.

Muskrat trapping took place during the open water period in late winter and early spring. Most muskrat are trapped at "push ups." A 0 or #1 trap was utilized. Because melting ice leaves the shores of fresh water lakes first open water in the spring allows the passage of small boats through the lakes between the remaining ice and the shore. During this time muskrats can be shot from boats. A small caliber rifle is used. Towards the end of the month of May or the first week in June muskrat season finishes. By this time in the annual cycle of subsistence and trapping activities, summer fishing and now in later years wage labor, takes over as the more important part of the economy.

We questioned Lowell concerning the alleged existence of the steamboat Tetlin on the Nabesna River. He indicated that he believed the steamboat was still located approximately eight miles up the Nabesna River from the village of Northway. This is the steamboat that apparently went up the Nabesna River taking stampeders to the Chishana River gold strike in 1913. Apparently the captain of the boat mistook the Nabesna River for the Chisana and was attempting to get back down the Nabesna when the boat ran hopelessly aground. Approximately 10 miles beyond Gardiner Creek on the Chisana River a number of prospectors got frozen in during that stampede. The temporary city which developed at that point was called Gasoline City. A man by the name of Sam Schucklin was prominent in the trading and business enterprises at Gasoline City. Ted Lowell said that he knew Sam.

Information obtained from Jack Yarich by Ted Lowell about steamboats and other boats used during the Chisana stampede was elicited. The steamboat White Seal travelled a stretch of water up the Chisana River and back down. The White Seal was later wrecked at the mouth of Billie Creek on the Tanana River. The steamboat Samson was used during the Chisana stampede and also travelled some distance up the Chisana River. This boat was named after Samson Hardware in Fairbanks. The Samson was later wrecked at the mouth of the Little Gerstle River.

According to Lowell Jack Yarich died in 1946. He had been a construction worker and lived what might be described in terms that Melody Grauman has used as leading a "typical frontier subsistence lifestyle." His home cabin or base was located approximately six miles below the mouth of the Nabesna River on the right bank of the Tanana River. In addition Yarich maintained a cabin at Northway. Further he had a trapping cabin located some ten miles up the Chisana River. Yarich prospected different creeks at various times including Gardiner Creek, the Chisana River, and the Nabesna River.

At John Hajdukovich's trading post at the mouth of Gardiner Creek Ted Lowell twice took the large motor boat with the grey motor belonging to Hajdukovich loaded with supplies up to this cabin. This boat had a six ton capacity for various supplies and items to be sold at the trading post. The trading post itself was log construction some sixteen or eighteen feet by twenty feet. In addition a log cache for storing supplies was kept at the trading post. Getting to this post was most difficult in the fall of the year when water is low. The best water for travelling to the trading post was in June and July. Hajdukovich owned and operated a number of boats in connection with his trading posts on the upper Tanana River and the Nabesna and Chisana Rivers. (See research notes from VA-F Archives). Some five hundred to six hundred gallons of gasoline were necessary to support these boats for the summer season of operation. Lowell indicated that ferrying supplies of gasoline between and to the trading posts was a necessary step in the logistics of operating the boats and the trading posts. One always tried to utilize as best possible travelling time and cargo space to balance the cargo that needed to be taken and the movement of gasoline to various points. Compared with the costs of air freight which began in the 1930's boating was much less expensive. Wein Airlines charged 40¢ per pound in some of the early air freighting operations.

The boats were utilized during the open season of water on the interior waterways. A winch and some skids for putting the boats up on dry land out of the water for the winter were located at Northway. A major occupation during the late summer and early fall was cutting a winter supply of wood for the trading cabins. After the construction of the Richardson Highway trucking of supplies between Fairbanks and Big Delta and then up the river was an important part of the operation. The yearly salary of \$1,800 plus board and clothes was considered a good job during the 1930's.

Hajdukovich had a reputation as being a generous man to the point of over extending credit to people who utilized the trading posts. In one year according to Lowell some thirty thousand dollars had been distributed and was, in the terms of the fur trade, "on the books." The 1936 trapping season was a bad one for Hajdukovich and 1937 almost completely wiping his trading post out. Hajdukovich attempted some prospecting on the Goodpastor River. In 1936 and 1937 Ted Lowell was in with him as a partner. Hajdukovich also operated as a big game guide on Jarvis Creek. He maintained line cabins throughout his big game guiding area. Wealthy sport hunters paid \$2,500 a piece for a guided hunt that lasted 30 days. Four sport hunters at a time were taken in on these hunts.

Lowell himself operated as a trader for a short period of time. In 1935 he bought the trading post located at Healy Lake in an estate sale. John Knight, who was an old man at the time helped him with the trading post at Healy Lake. Lowell kept the Healy Lake post until 1942. At that point the younger resident Indians in the area largely moved away from Healy Lake after the construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942. Older ones died out and Lowell was not certain if there was anyone in permanent residence even any longer at Healy Lake.

Lowell was questioned on the uses of rivers for floating saw logs. He indicated that a saw mill was transported from Fairbanks to the Goodpastor River area by himself. From there it was hauled up the Tanana River to Tetlin village. The mill was first used to saw three sided logs for the Tetlin school. After that the saw mill was either sold or given to the Natives. Lowell indicated that logs were floated down Tetlin Creek to the saw mill site. Lowell added that he seemed to recall that one of the big game hunters had purchased the saw mill for the use of the Tetlin Natives in a spirit of generosity after seeing their poor condition. It appears then that the first saw mill in the area was at Tetlin and that later it was boated from the Tetlin Creek location up the river to the village of Tetlin. A wheeled tractor was used to snag logs in the cutting area and pull them to the rivers. From there the logs were floated down river to the mill site.

Lowell was questioned about the use of specific rivers in the country around the upper Tanana. He indicated that on Moose Creek just prior to break-up each season he would dog sled supplies into an area that would later be used as rat trapping country. A cabin some six to seven miles from Northway was erected there for the purpose of trading during ridding season. Lowell used a thirty foot boat, with an outboard engine for transporting equipment and supplies to trade to this cabin. Although the boat had capacity for one and a half tons maximum he generally would carry about a ton of supplies in each trip. Herman Kissler operated a saw mill at the mouth of Moose Creek during

the time of the construction of the Alaska Highway. Kissler obtained his logs from up the Chisana River and transported them by boat to the saw mill. After the highway was constructed logs were transported to the saw mill by truck over the highway. Lowell recalled that the tractor mentioned above was at the village of Big Delta now. He remembered seeing it there during the summer of 1978. At one point Lowell recalled that there were thirteen saw mills in operation in connection with the construction of the Alaska Highway during the winter of 1941, 1942.

Lowell was questioned about various types of boats used for travel in the upper Tanana River region. He recalled that Jack Yarich was an excellent boat man in a poling boat. He recalled that Yarich could pole up the Tanana River and then up the Nabesna River to get to the trading posts. Jack had a 28 foot poling boat which he had constructed himself. He used lumber which had been hand whipsawed. This poling boat could carry over one ton of supplies. Its dimensions were 32 inches wide at the bottom, with flared out sides. Even with a full load of over one ton of supplies this poling boat drew only three or four inches of water. With poling boats such as this one people in the region could travel thirty to thirty five miles up the Nabesna or Chisana River without encountering great difficulty. Beyond that point the soft sandy bottoms of the rivers did not give enough purchase to the pole in order to be able to easily move up the rivers.

We questioned Lowell concerning the steamboat Nabesna. He indicated that a captain O'Flanagan owned and operated the Nabesna. Milo Hajdukovich had bought out O'Flanagan's trading operation on the Tanana River. Lowell believed that the Nabesna had originally been called the Eagle. The capacity of the Nabesna was between two hundred and two hundred twenty five tons. Its usual route was between Tetlin and Tanacross and the middle part of the Tanana River. Lowell recalled that O'Flanagan originally came from Oklahoma to Alaska. About 1932 or 1933 the Nabesna was abandoned at Big Delta in a slough opposite the town. This information corroborates information given to us by Bob Mitchell at the Alaska Division of Parks who is researching the history of the Nabesna for a possible National Register of Historic Places nomination.

We inquired about the topic of freight rates. Lowell indicated that rates typically were greater for upstream movement of goods than downstream. Furthermore the construction of roads reduced freight charges because truck transportation was less expensive than river transportation. From Big Delta to Northway, a trip up the Tanana River, Hajdukovich charged 10¢ per pound on the goods to his stores. By contrast after the construction of the Richardson Highway from Valdez to Big Delta freight carried by truck was only charged 2½¢ per pound.

With regard again to the Healy Lake trading post operated by Lowell he recalled that he was able to bring all three boats belonging to John Hajdukovich but used by Lowell in connection with his trading post into the Healy Lake area from the Tanana River. Chief Johnny Healy was hired during the summers by John Hajdukovich. Chief Healy was remembered to be a very good boat man by Lowell. As much as six tons of supplies were brought in on one boat to Healy Lake. The trading post operated by Lowell was actually located on the Tanana River

March 5, 1979

approximately one mile below the confluence of the Healy River with the Tanana.

One final note on information concerning Scottie Creek and the trading post operations there. Lowell recalled that the Canadian Indians who came across the border to trade at the Scottie Creek post especially liked American guns and trading goods. They believed these were superior in quality to the items that they could obtain from the Canadian trading post located on the Snag River in the Yukon Territory. Lowell recalled that an independent trader operated that post but could not remember his name.

The bulk of the information dictated in this memo to the files comes from the interview conducted on February 20th. As noted above the February 21st interview was concerned mostly with descriptions and commentary on the numerous black and white photographs which Lowell has in possession. He kindly lent us twenty three of those photographs. They are currently being duplicated with a copy negative to be retained by the Alaska Division of Forest, Land and Water Management in the research files for the Nabesna River.

WATER BODY HISTORICAL DATA

06/10/79 2370

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA RIVER 974 NABESNA RIVER

REFN 05189  
STOR 160339907005001230000000000000  
MOUT M650945 M1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
LUPR 32 TANANA RIVER  
KEYM NO TRAFF, LAND TRANSPORT  
ABST IN THE RECENT PAST, MOST HARVESTING OF CARIBOU HAS OCCURRED ALONG THE NABESNA ROAD (P289)

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA RIVER 899908 NABESNA RIVER

REFN 05560  
STOR 1603399070050012300  
MOUT M650945 M1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
LUPR 32 YUKON RIVER  
KEYM TRAFFIC-UNSPECIFIED TRANSPORT, PAST USAGE, RIVER BASIN, RIVER-MINING  
ABST THE NABESNA MINING CORPORATION IS LOCATED AT THE HEADWATERS OF THE NABESNA RIVER. THIS RIVER FLOWS NORTHWARD INTO THE TANANA RIVER. (P2) THE NABESNA-WHITE RIVER DISTRICT WAS FIRST EXPLORED BY W J PETERS AND ALFRED H BROOKS IN 1899 AND MORE CAREFULLY IN 1902 BY F. C. SCHRADER AND D. C. HITHERSPORN. IN 1908 FRED H. MOFFITT AND ADOLF KNOPE WENT OVER MOST OF THE SAME AREA AND EXTENDED THEIR OBSERVATIONS TO COVER THE REGION AROUND THE NABESNA MINE. (P9) NEAR THE HEAD OF NABESNA RIVER AND BELOW NIKONDA CREEK, SOME WORK HAS BEEN DONE ON A PROSPECT (THE SHAMROCK CLAIM) WHICH IS SITUATED 2,000 FEET ABOVE THE FLOOR OF THE VALLEY. (P11)

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA RIVER 973 NABESNA RIVER

REFN 06337  
STOR 1603399070050012300  
MOUT M650945 M1515955 F004N 0220M 22  
LUPR 32 YUKON RIVER  
KEYM RIVER CHANNEL, NO TRAFF, RIVER BASIN, DISCHARGE  
ABST SLOPE OF NABESNA RIVER, A TRIBUTARY TO THE TANANA AT MILE 530.6, FROM MILE 0 TO 27 AVERAGES 3.0 FT PER MI FROM MI 27 TO 61 SLOPE AVERAGES 11.8 FT PER MI FROM MI 61 TO 75 SLOPE AVERAGES 75.7 FT PER MI. IT HAS A DRAINAGE AREA OF 2,130 SQ MI. AT NABESNA D S THE DRAINAGE AREA IS 1910 SQ MI AND ESTIMATED AVERAGE ANNUAL RUNOFF IS 4,600 CFS.

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA RIVER 974 NABESNA RIVER

REFN 06215  
STOR 1603399070050012300  
MOUT M650945 M1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
LUPR 32 YUKON RIVER  
KEYM NO TRAFF, COMMUNITY, RIVER, FISHING  
ABST A FISH CAMP WAS SITUATED ON THE NEBESNA AT THE FOOT OF THE NUTZOTIN MOUNTAINS, AND ANOTHER NEAR THE MOUTH OF COPPS CREEK ON THE NEBESNA. (P48)

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA RIVER 961962 NOBESNA RIVER

REFN 02691  
STOR 1603399070050012300  
MOUT M650945 M1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
LUPR 32 YUKON RIVER  
KEYM NO TRAFF  
ABST NOBESNA RIVER IS LOCATED IN THE UPPER TANANA TRIBAL AREA. (P2)

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA SLOUGH 941 NABESNA SLOUGH

REFN 04585  
STOR 160339907005001230005876006970  
MOUT M630000 M1420000 C140N 0180E 23

VARIOUS STAGES OF EVALUATION INTO HEADQU. (P62) THE NABESNA INDIANS HAD SMALL SETTLEMENTS ON THE NABESNA RIVER. (P10) FROM SLANA ON THE GLEN HIGHWAY A ROAD EXTENDS TO NABESNA, AN OLD MINE SITE, AND IS PASSABLE TO AUTOMOBILES DURING THE DRIER PART OF THE SUMMER. A HUNTING LODGE IS ALSO LOCATED AT THE END OF THIS ROAD WHICH COMES WITHIN 5 MILES OF THE NABESNA RIVER. (P62&63) A TRAIL EXTENDS FROM THE ROAD TO REEVE AIRFIELD ON THE NABESNA RIVER. (P63) THERE IS PRESENTLY A GRAZING LEASE FOR THE STOCK OF A HUNTING GUIDE ON THE NABESNA RIVER. (P79) THE RESEARCHERS HAVE DETERMINED THAT POTENTIAL MINERAL SITES ARE IN THE DRAINAGE OF THE NABESNA. THEY HAVE ALSO DETERMINED THAT THE NABESNA RIVER IS "SUITABLE FOR WATER SPORTS." THE REPORT GIVES NO EXPLANATION AS TO HOW THESE TWO DETERMINATIONS WERE MADE.

\*\*\*\*  
 MAIN NABESNA RIVER 926 NABESNA RIVER  
 REFN 03496  
 STOR 1603399070050012300  
 MOUT N650945 W1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
 LUPR 32 YUKON RIVER  
 KEYM NO TRAFF,ROUTE,EXPEDITION  
 ABST IN SAN JOHNSON'S "ROADS AND TRAILS IN ALASKA", A MANUSCRIPT IN THE VERTICAL FILES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ARCHIVES, A DISTRICT OPERATIONS REPORT, 1926, STATED, "SLANA-CHISANA, A RECONNAISSANCE WAS MADE OF THE ROUTE CROSSING THE SLANA RIVER IT EXTENDS OVER A LOW DIVIDE INTO THE NABESNA RIVER VALLEY. THIS VALLEY AND ANOTHER DIVIDE WERE CROSSED INTO THE CHISANA RIVER VALLEY..." (P477)

\*\*\*\*  
 MAIN NABESNA RIVER 933941 NABESNA RIVER  
 REFN 04585  
 STOR 1603399070050012300  
 MOUT N650945 W1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
 LUPR 32 YUKON RIVER  
 KEYM TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER-AIR CRAFT,MISC TRANSPORT,MINING,LAND TRANSPORT,COMMUNITY  
 ABST EMERGENCY REPAIRS WERE MADE ON A SMALL PLANE AFTER A FORCED LANDING ABOUT 20 MILES FROM THE NABESNA MINE IN MARCH,1933. THE PLANE WAS PULLED TO THE "SHELTER OF THE NABESNA RIVER BAR" WITH A FOUR-HORSE TEAM. (P93) IN 1941 ON AIRFIELD WAS BUILT IN NORTHWAY, WITH SUPPLIES BROUGHT IN BY PLANE FROM A SMOOTH STRETCH OF RIVER BAR ON THE NABESNA RIVER BED, ABOUT 5 MILES FROM THE NABESNA MINE. THE SUPPLIES HAD BEEN BROUGHT IN BY TRUCK TO THAT POINT. (P210)

\*\*\*\*  
 MAIN NABESNA RIVER 929930 NABESNA RIVER  
 REFN 04700  
 STOR 160339907005001230005820006910  
 MOUT N630242 W1415147 C150N 0190E 29  
 LUPR 36 TANANA RIVER  
 KEYM TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,MISC TRANSPORT  
 ABST ROBERT A MCKENNAW TRAVERSED THE HEADWATERS OF NABESNA RIVER TO STUDY THE TANANA NATIVES IN 1929 AND 1930. (P3) FRANK SAH TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD SEEN HIS FIRST WHITE MAN WHEN HE HIKED WITH HIS FATHER, OLD CHIEF SAH, FROM THE LOWER NABESNA TO DAN CREEK VIA SKOLAI PASS. (P28)

\*\*\*\*  
 MAIN NABESNA RIVER 899900 NABESNA RIVER  
 REFN 04969  
 STOR 1603399070050012300  
 MOUT N650945 W1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
 LUPR 32 YUKON RIVER  
 KEYM PAST USAGE,TRAFFIC,WATER CRAFT,RIVER,LAND GEOLOGY  
 ABST ON SEPTEMBER 1,1900, POWELL AND HIS PARTY ARRIVE AT THE NABESNA RIVER WHERE HE NOTES THE LOCATION OF AN OLD CAMP GROUND. (P215) POWELL WRITES THAT IN THE SPRING OF 1899 SOME PROSPECTORS HAD BUILT A BOAT AT THIS SPOT ON THE NABESNA RIVER FOR THE DESCENT OF THE TANANA RIVER. POWELL NOTES THAT AT THE SOURCE OF THE NABESNA RIVER WERE NUGGETS OF NATIVE COPPER, AND HE DESCRIBES LARGE PDRIOUS BOULDERS WITH SMALL HOLES WHERE COPPER HAD BEEN MELTED FROM THEM. (P216)



KEYM NO TRAFF,DISCHARGE,DIMENSION  
ABST STATION 146 WAS AT THE MOUTH OF MYSTERY CREEK. IT IS 30 FT WIDE AND FAST MEANDERING. (FIELD NOTES, 7-16-73)  
(P6)

\*\*\*\* MAIN MYSTERY CREEK 898904 MYSTERY CREEK

REFN 05310  
STOR 16028680006300000090000270000050  
MOUT N644000 N1642500 K1005 0290M 02  
LUPR 22 SOLOMON RIVER  
KEYM MINING,NO TRAFF  
ABST MYSTERY CREEK IS A TRIBUTARY OF SHOVEL CREEK IN THE SOLOMON RIVER DISTRICT. GOLD PLACER DEPOSITS ON MYSTERY CREEK WERE RICH ENOUGH TO FURNISH A "CONSIDERABLE PROFIT" TO THEIR OWNERS USING ONLY PICK AND SHOVEL METHODS. (P55)

\*\*\*\* MAIN MYSTIC CREEK 906 MYSTIC CREEK

REFN 02099  
STOR 160339907005001230001917003660084300380  
MOUT N635730 N1474740 F110S 0010M 18  
LUPR 35 MOOD RIVER  
KEYM NO TRAFF,LAND GEOLOGY,RIVER,MAP  
ABST IN HIS 1906 REPORT (USGS BULLETIN 314), PRINDLE NOTES COAL DEPOSITS ON MYSTIC CREEK, "ABOUT 2 MIS FROM MOOD RIVER, WHERE 2 BEDS 20 FT AND 12 FT THICK WERE EXPOSED IN A SECTION 80 FT HIGH". (P226) A MAP IS PART OF THIS RECORD.

\*\*\*\* MAIN MYSTIC CREEK 910912 MYSTIC CREEK

REFN 02183  
STOR 160339907005001230001917003660084300380  
MOUT N635730 N1474740 F110S 0010M 17  
LUPR 35 MOOD RIVER  
KEYM NO TRAFF,LAND GEOLOGY,RIVER,MAP,EXPEDITION  
ABST IN HIS 1912 REPORT (USGS BULLETIN 501), CAPPS WRITES: BY FAR THE LARGEST PROJECT UNDER WAY IN THE BONNIFIELD REGION AND ONE WHICH MAY HAVE A MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE UPON ITS FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IS THAT OF THE BERRY AND HAMIL CO, WHICH IS MAKING PREPARATIONS TO MINE ON A LARGE SCALE THE HIGH GRAVELS IN WHICH THE BASINS OF GOLD KING AND BONNIFIELD CREEKS HAVE BEEN ERODED. THE COMPANY CONTROLS A LARGE AGGREGATE OF LAND IN THESE TWO VALLEYS. NO MINING HAS SO FAR BEEN DONE; BUT 45 MEN WERE EMPLOYED DURING THE SUMMER OF 1910 IN BUILDING DITCHES AND ROADS, ERECTING BUILDINGS, ETC. IT WAS EXPECTED THAT DURING THE SUMMER THE DITCHES WOULD BE COMPLETED SO THAT ACTIVE MINING MIGHT BE COMMENCED EARLY IN THE SPRING OF 1911. THE DITCHES INCLUDE ONE 2 1/2 MILES LONG AND ONE 2 MILES LONG TO TAKE WATER FROM THE HEADS OF MYSTIC AND MOOSE CREEKS, RESPECTIVELY, AND DROP IT INTO THE UPPER END OF THE GOLD KING DRAINAGE BASIN. (P50) A MAP IS PART OF THIS RECORD.

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA RIVER 899 FORK OF TANANA RIVER

REFN 06893  
STOR 1603399070050012300  
MOUT N650945 N1515955 F040N 0220M 22  
LUPR 36 TANANA RIVER  
KEYM TRAFFIC,PAST USAGE,WATER CRAFT  
ABST OSCAR ROHN AND ONE OTHER TRAVELED ALONG AND DOWN THIS RIVER BY WALKING AND IN A SMALL CANVAS COVERED CANOE. (P129)

\*\*\*\* MAIN NABESNA RIVER 909910 NABES RIVER

REFN 00660  
STOR 1603399070050012300  
MOUT N650945 N1515955 F040N 0220M 22

# NPS - COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTERS ACTIVITY REPORT - 2004

**Oct 2004**  
 (Incidental Big Game Transport Service, Air Taxis, Shuttles, Charter Boat service)  
 (DO NOT use this form for KATMAI, ANIAKCHAK, ALAGNAK, LAKE CLARK, and KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH.)

**Use this form to report use in these park units only, regardless of whether you used your permit.**

Bering Land Bridge, Cape Krusenstern, Denali, Gates Of The Arctic, Glacier Bay, Kenai Fjords,  
 Kobuk Valley, Noatak, Sitka, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley

(If you are a licensed Big Game Commercial Transporter, do not use this form. Instead, mail us a copy of your Alaska Big Game Transporters Activity Report - which is the same report required by the State.)

**BUSINESS NAME:** Nabesna OTR

I did not use my permit this year.

**DAYTIME PHONE:** 907/822-5312      **SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

1) DATE TRIP STARTED IN PARK	2) DATE TRIP ENDED IN PARK	3) SERVICE PROVIDED (SEE RESERVE)	4) NUMBER OF CLIENTS	5) WHICH PARK(S) DID YOU USE (USE CODES ON REVERSE)	6) SPECIFY DROP OFF LOCATION	7) SPECIFY PICK-UP LOCATION	8) BRIEFLY DESCRIBE CLIENT'S ACTIVITIES	9) This section for Incidental Big Game Transport Service providers Only. Please check all that you transported. (See reverse for definition of "incidental"). Attach a separate sheet if more space is needed.
06/15/04	06/15/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST	Horsefellt		Horse Wraught for another outfitter	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____
06/20/04	06/20/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST	Horsefellt		Camp Help for another outfitter	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____
07/03/04	07/03/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST	Nabesna	Horsevelt	Camp Help for another outfitter	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____
07/09/04	07/09/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH		WRST	Horsefellt		Horse shoe person for another outfitter	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____

**This report must be postmarked no later than November 15<sup>th</sup>. (more on reverse)**

**(Incidental Big Game Transport Service, Air Taxis, Shuttles, Charter Boat service)**

DO NOT use this form for **KATMAI, ANIAKCHAK, ALAGNAK, LAKE CLARK, and KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH.**

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Bering Land Bridge, Cape Krusenstern, Denali, Gates Of The Arctic, Glacier Bay, Kenai Fjords, Kobuk Valley, Noatak, Sitka, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley

OCT 20 2004

(If you are a licensed Big Game Commercial Transporter, do not use this form. Instead, mail us a copy of your Alaska Big Game Transporters Activity Report - which is the same report required by the State.)

BUSINESS NAME: Nabesna Air

I did not use my permit this year.

DAYTIME PHONE: 907/822-5312

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

1) DATE TRIP STARTED IN PARK	2) DATE TRIP ENDED IN PARK	3) SERVICE PROVIDED (SEE REVERSE)	4) NUMBER OF CLIENTS	5) WHICH PARK(S) DID YOU USE (USE CODES ON REVERSE)	6) SPECIFY DROP OFF LOCATION	7) SPECIFY PICK-UP LOCATION	8) BRIEFLY DESCRIBE CLIENT'S ACTIVITIES	9) This section for Incidental Big Game Transport Service providers Only. Please check all that you transported. (See reverse for definition of "Incidental"). Attach a separate sheet if more space is needed.
07/11/04	07/14/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST	Horsefett		Camp help for another outfitter	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____
07/18/04	07/18/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	5	WRST	Orange Hill		Rafters Nabesna River	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____
07/24/04	07/24/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST	Horsefett	Horsefett	Horse shoe person for another outfitter	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____
08/18/04	08/18/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST	Chisana		Hunter for another outfitter	Game (Species) _____ Sex _____ Hunters (Name) _____ Equipment (Type) _____

**This report must be postmarked no later than November 15<sup>th</sup>. (more on reverse)**

# NPS - COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTERS ACTIVITY REPORT - 2004

(Incidental Big Game Transport Service, Air Taxis, Shuttles, Charter Boat service)  
 (DO NOT use this form for KATMAI, ANIACKCHAK, ALAGNAK, LAKE CLARK, and KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH.)

**Use this form to report use in these park units only, regardless of whether you used your permit.**

BL OCT 20 2004  
 Bering Land Bridge, Cape Krusenstern, Denali, Gates Of The Arctic, Glacier Bay, Kenai Fjords,  
 Kobuk Valley, Noatak, Sitka, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley

(If you are a licensed Big Game Commercial Transporter, do not use this form. Instead, mail us a copy of your Alaska Big Game Transporters Activity Report - which is the same report required by the State.)

**BUSINESS NAME:** Nobessee Air  I did not use my permit this year.

**DAYTIME PHONE:** 907/822-5312 **SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

1) DATE TRIP STARTED IN PARK	2) DATE TRIP ENDED IN PARK	3) SERVICE PROVIDED (SEE RESERVE)	4) NUMBER OF CLIENTS	5) WHICH PARK(S) DID YOU USE (USE CODES ON REVERSE)	6) SPECIFY DROP OFF LOCATION	7) SPECIFY PICK-UP LOCATION	8) BRIEFLY DESCRIBE CLIENT'S ACTIVITIES	9) This section for Incidental Big Game Transport Service Providers Only. Please check all that you transported. (See reverse for definition of "incidental"). Attach a separate sheet if more space is needed.
09/01/04	09/01/08	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST	<del>Horsefelt</del>	Horsefelt	Hunter of another outfitter	___ Game (Species) ___ Sex ___ Hunters (Name) ___ ___ Equipment (Type) ___
09/18/04	09/18/08	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	1	WRST		Horsefelt	Camp Help out another outfitter	___ Game (Species) ___ Sex ___ Hunters (Name) ___ ___ Equipment (Type) ___
09/23/04	09/23/04	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH	3	WRST	Orange Hill	Orange Hill	Owner of Orange Hill checking property	___ Game (Species) ___ Sex ___ Hunters (Name) ___ ___ Equipment (Type) ___
		<input type="checkbox"/> AT <input type="checkbox"/> IH <input type="checkbox"/> CB <input type="checkbox"/> SH						___ Game (Species) ___ Sex ___ Hunters (Name) ___ ___ Equipment (Type) ___

This report must be postmarked no later than November 15<sup>th</sup>. (more on reverse)

**Waterbody Use and Observation Questionnaire**

**Return mailing:**

**Attn: ANILCA PROGRAM  
Access/Navigable Waters Section  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, AK 99518**

Date: February 09, 2005 \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Interviewee: Corey Schwanke \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Interviewee: Telephone interview \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: Alaska Department of Fish and Game,  
Division of Sport Fish  
P. O. Box 47 \_\_\_\_\_  
Glennallen, Alaska, 99588-0047 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: 822-3461 \_\_\_\_\_

Waterbody Name: Nabesna River \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S.G.S quadrangle map name known: Nabesna, Tanacross \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAPER OR INFORMATION TO BEST  
DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCES**

- A. Please describe the waterbody. Please be as specific as possible and include widths, depths, gradients, obstructions (artificial and natural), and seasonal water flows, i.e., lower dry periods, flood periods, and freeze up periods.
- B. Have you ever used the waterbody? Yes.
- 1) How long have you been using the waterbody, and how often? Include months and years. I was on the river in 1999 and 2002 during the month of August.
  - 2) What sections of the waterbody are you most familiar with? Attach a map if necessary. From the mouth of the river near the Tanana river, upstream as far as Jimmy Brown Lake and Stone Creek.
  - 3) What types of activities have you conducted on the waterbody? Example fishing, hunting, boating, transportation, and guiding. The river serves as our transportation corridor to get to sheep hunting areas in the mountains near the river.

C. How do you access the waterbody?

- 1) Where do you actually enter the waterbody? We put in at the bridge over the Chisana river.
- 2) Where do you travel to? We go upstream to get to sheep hunting areas along the river.
- 3) Where do you take out at? List names of roads, trails, etc. Near Jimmy Brown Lake.
- 4) Are there more access points that you are familiar with but have not used? I have been told there is another spot where you can put in a small boat near the mouth of the Nabesna on the Tanana.
- 4) If there are obstructions, is it possible to portage?

D. What type of craft do you use when you are on the waterbody?.

- 1) What is the size of the craft used? 14 ft. flat bottom river boat (1999), 18 ft, flat bottom river boat (2002)
- 2) What type of propulsion is used on the craft? 40 hp jet outboard (1999), 120 hp jet outboard (2002)
- 3) What is the weight of the craft?  
Less than 100 lbs            100-400 lbs            400-800 XX            800-1000+ lbs.
- 4) What is the estimated weight of the gear and people transported? 2 persons w/hunting gear for 1 week and 50 gals. of gas (1999). In 2002 there were 3 persons with gear for 1 week and 50 gals. of gas.  
Less than 100 lbs.            100-400 lbs            400-800            800-1000+ lbs XX.....
- 5) What is the largest size craft you have seen on this waterbody? Based on your experience, what is the largest craft this waterbody could support? I have seen and used an 18 ft. flat bottom boat with a 120 hp jet outboard motor. I think that under good water conditions, a boat as large as a 20 ft. I/O jet could use the river.

E. Have you observed other people on the waterbody? In what types of crafts? What activities? Yes. I have seen inflatable rafts with 2 persons floating down the river from near Nabesna. These people appeared to be hunters looking for hunting locations.

- 1) Do you know of anyone who is paid to take people out in a boat on the waterbody as a guide? No.
- 2) Do you know of anyone that has used this waterbody but not actually seen them on the waterbody? Yes.

F. Please list any other contacts that would provide first hand accounts of use on this waterbody. Bob Tobey, Mark Keech, David Kelleyhouse.

**Waterbody Use and Observation Questionnaire**

**Return mailing:**

**Attn: ANILCA PROGRAM  
Access/Navigable Waters Section  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, AK 99518**

Date: February 4, 2005 \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Interviewee: Bob Tobey \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Interviewee: Telephone interview \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game  
P. O. Box 47  
Glennallen, Alaska \_\_\_\_\_  
99588-0047 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: 907 822 3461 \_\_\_\_\_

Waterbody Name: Nabesna River

U.S.G.S quadrangle map name, if known: Nabesna, Tanacross

**PLEASE ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAPER OR INFORMATION TO BEST  
DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCES**

A. Please describe the waterbody. Please be as specific as possible and include widths, depths, gradients, obstructions (artificial and natural), and seasonal water flows, i.e., lower dry periods, flood periods, and freeze up periods.

B. Have you ever used the waterbody? Yes.

- 1) How long have you been using the waterbody, and how often? Include months and years. We went on a sheep hunting trip by boat up the Nabesna River in August 1989.
- 2) What sections of the waterbody are you most familiar with? Attach a map if necessary. We put in at the bridge on the Chisana River, went downstream to the Nabesna, and then up the Nabesna River to the mountains. We tied the boat up near Jimmy Brown Lake and hiked up into the mountains to go sheep hunting.

- 3) What types of activities have you conducted on the waterbody? Example fishing, hunting, boating, transportation, and guiding. As mentioned, we used the river to get to our sheep hunting spot

C. How do you access the waterbody? By boat.

- 1) Where do you actually enter the waterbody? We put the boat into the Chisana River at the bridge, and then went downstream to the mouth of the Nabesna.
- 2) Where do you travel to? We went upstream on the Nabesna River to where the mountains come down close to the river.
- 3) Where do you take out at? List names of roads, trails, etc. We tied up the boat on the west bank of the Nabesna River, near Jimmy Brown Lake.
- 4) Are there more access points that you are familiar with but have not used? No. There may be other put-in points, but the bridge site is the only place where I have launched a boat. For sheep hunting, you just glass the mountains along the river until you see sheep or a good area and then tie up the boat in any good spot, and then hike up the mountain. There are many spots where you could leave the boat and go hunting.
- 5) If there are obstructions, is it possible to portage? There are no obstructions to boat travel.

D. What type of craft do you use when you are on the waterbody?.

- 1) What is the size of the craft used? We used an 18 foot flat bottom aluminum river boat.
- 2) What type of propulsion is used on the craft? We used a 75 hp outboard jet motor.
- 3) What is the weight of the craft? 400-800  
Less than 100 lbs      100-400 lbs      400-800      800-1000+ lbs.
- 3) What is the estimated weight of the gear and people transported? 1000+ lbs.  
Less than 100 lbs.      100-400 lbs      400-800      800-1000+ lbs.  
Three persons =600 lbs., camping/hunting gear = 150 lbs., 100 gals. Gas = 600 lbs., two sheep, with horns, capes and meat =125 lbs.

- 4) What is the largest size craft you have seen on this waterbody? Ours is the biggest boat I have seen on the river.  
Based on your experience, what is the largest craft this waterbody could support? Depending on water levels, you could take a bigger boat on the river, maybe 20+ feet or so, as long as it was a shallow draft.

E. Have you observed other people on the waterbody? In what types of crafts? What activities? Yes. Local residents on the lower part of the river using small boats.

- 1) Do you know of anyone who is paid to take people out in a boat on the waterbody as a guide? No.

2) Do you know of anyone that has used this waterbody but not actually seen them on the waterbody? Yes.

F. Please list any other contacts that would provide first hand accounts of use on this waterbody. Corey Schwanke

**Waterbody Use and Observation Questionnaire**

**Return mailing:**

**Attn: ANILCA PROGRAM  
Access/Navigable Waters Section  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, AK 99518**

Date: March 7, 2005 \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Interviewee: Mark Keech \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Interviewee: Telephone interview \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: Alaska Department of Fish and Game,  
Division of Wildlife Conservation  
1300 College Rd.  
Fairbanks, Alaska, 99701-1599  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: 459-7213 \_\_\_\_\_

Waterbody Name: Chisana River \_\_\_\_\_

U.S.G.S quadrangle map name known: Nabesna, Tanacross \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAPER OR INFORMATION TO BEST  
DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCES**

A. Please describe the waterbody. Please be as specific as possible and include widths, depths, gradients, obstructions (artificial and natural), and seasonal water flows, i.e., lower dry periods, flood periods, and freeze up periods.

B. Have you ever used the waterbody? Yes.

- 1) How long have you been using the waterbody, and how often? Include months and years. I have been on the Chisana River every year since 1995 during the months of August and September. The last trip was in 2002.
- 2) What sections of the waterbody are you most familiar with? Attach a map if necessary. From the mouth of the river, upstream as far as King City and at least 4 times as far as Medicine Man Creek.

- 3) What types of activities have you conducted on the waterbody? Example fishing, hunting, boating, transportation, and guiding. The river serves as a transportation route to get to sheep hunting areas in the mountains near the river.
- C. How do you access the waterbody?
- 1) Where do you actually enter the waterbody? We put in at the bridge over the Chisana river, or sometimes we put from the Alaska highway at Desper Creek or Scottie Creek and go down to the Chisana and then upstream.
  - 2) Where do you travel to? We go upstream to get to sheep hunting areas along the river.
  - 3) Where do you take out at? List names of roads, trails, etc. We tie-up the boat anywhere along the river where we spot sheep or accessible hunting areas.
  - 4) Are there more access points that you are familiar with but have not used?
  - 4) If there are obstructions, is it possible to portage?
- D. What type of craft do you use when you are on the waterbody?.
- 1) What is the size of the craft used?
  - 2) What type of propulsion is used on the craft?
  - 3) What is the weight of the craft?
 

Less than 100 lbs	100-400 lbs	400-800	800-1000+ lbs.
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  - 4) What is the estimated weight of the gear and people transported?
 

Less than 100 lbs.	100-400 lbs	400-800	800-1000+ lbs.
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  - 5) What is the largest size craft you have seen on this waterbody? Based on your experience, what is the largest craft this waterbody could support?
- E. Have you observed other people on the waterbody? In what types of crafts? What activities?
- 1) Do you know of anyone who is paid to take people out in a boat on the waterbody as a guide?
  - 2) Do you know of anyone that has used this waterbody but not actually seen them on the waterbody?
- F. Please list any other contacts that would provide first hand accounts of use on this waterbody.