

Important information for visitors to the

KANEKTOK,

GOODNEWS, &

TOGIAK RIVERS,

& the

TOGIAK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



This brochure was produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For further information, please write:

Togiak National Wildlife Refuge

P.O. Box 270
Dillingham, AK 99576
(907)842-1063

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Sport Fisheries or Commercial Fisheries
P.O. Box 230
Dillingham, AK 99576
(907) 842-2427 or 842-5227

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Commercial Fisheries
P.O. Box 90
Bethel, AK 99652

Dillingham Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 348
Dillingham, AK 99576

Bethel Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 329
Bethel, AK 99559

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

South Central Regional Office
P.O. Box 107005
Anchorage, AK 99510-7005

Bristol Bay Native Association

Natural Resource Program
P.O. Box 310
Dillingham, AK 99576

Association of Village Council Presidents

Natural Resource Program
P.O. Box 219
Bethel, AK 99559

Welcome

The rivers of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge attract visitors from around the world. People come especially to catch the five species of salmon, rainbow trout, Arctic grayling, Dolly Varden, lake trout, white fish, burbot, and northern pike that are found in the refuge's lakes, streams, and rivers.

Public use of the Togiak Refuge rivers has increased rapidly since 1980. The purpose of this brochure is to provide you with suggestions to make your visit safe, enjoyable and compatible with the purposes of the refuge.

As mandated by Congress, the purposes of the refuge are to protect the diverse fish and wildlife resources, provide for subsistence use by local residents, and protect the quality and quantity of the water resources.

The entire length of the Togiak and Kanektok Rivers and most of the Goodnews River are within the boundaries of the 4.2 million acre Togiak National Wildlife Refuge established in 1980. The headwaters and upper portions of all three rivers are within the designated Togiak Wilderness Area. There are also private lands within the refuge. Ownership of most of the private land was established by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971. The State of Alaska owns the stream bed and water column of the major waterways, including the non-vegetated shorelands and gravel bars up to the ordinary high water line (usually considered to be where substantial vegetation begins). To avoid trespass problems, please refer to the map on the back of this brochure.

Subsistence Use on Togiak Refuge Rivers by Local Residents

The land within the Togiak Refuge has been continuously occupied by Alaska Natives for at least 2,000 years. These people have traditionally depended on fish, wildlife, and marine resources for survival. Years ago hunters and their families spent winters at villages near the mouths of the rivers and moved up river during the summer and fall months. Around the turn of the century, there were approximately 1,800 people living in seven villages along the Togiak River between Togiak Lake and Bristol Bay. Today the combined population of Togiak and Twin Hills villages is approximately 850 people. On the Kuskokwim Bay side of the Refuge approximately 500 people live in Quinhagak, 250 live in Goodnews Bay, and 50 live in Platinum.

Traditional seasonal subsistence movements and patterns are practiced today. As you travel the rivers, be aware that while these lands and rivers appear to be wild and undeveloped, they may be culturally significant to people in the region. Each physical characteristic of the landscape, whether it be a bend in the river, a bluff, or a hill, may have some historic importance. Through family and kinship ties, the cultural significance of these rivers is maintained.

While local residents now enjoy some benefits of a cash economy, most local people continue to be economically and culturally dependent on fish and wildlife resources. As you travel the rivers, you may notice dried fish hanging from racks and people using nets to catch fish. As with most coastal areas, fish are the mainstay of the subsistence way of life.

Please Respect Local Residents' Subsistence Culture

It is important that visitors understand the significance of a subsistence lifestyle to local people. Rapid increase in visitor use can be disruptive to traditional patterns. Crowding people for fishing sites is discourteous, and visitors are encouraged to be respectful of local people who may be using traditional fishing sites. Special regulations actually prohibit sport fishing within 300 feet of a legally operating subsistence set gillnet. If you are considerate, people will be friendly and may be more inclined to share their experiences with you.

Some common recreational practices may be unfamiliar or even offensive to local customs. "Catch and release" fishing is a popular method for visitors; however, to some Native cultures this practice is viewed as disrespectful and wasteful of the resource. Many village elders believe that the misuse of, or "playing" with, fish will affect the future availability of the resource and, therefore, the survival of their people. It is recommended that visitors take extra care to practice proper catch and release fishing to minimize mortality. Occasional reports of bright/fresh fish found dead in the water or the practice of releasing fish on gravel bars and "kicking fish" back into the water have contributed to the distrust of catch and release as a productive management philosophy along the rivers of rural Alaska. A catch and release fishing brochure is available through the Refuge Office in Dillingham which will provide you with important tips to successful catch and release fishing.

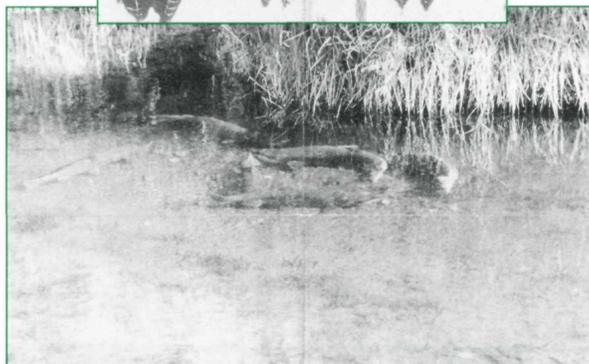
Visitor Use and Access

Sport fishing is the primary recreational activity occurring on rivers within the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. Other popular activities include river rafting, sightseeing, camping, wildlife observation and photography.

Most sport anglers use one of nearly thirty commercial guides permitted to operate within the Refuge. Guided recreational opportunities include river rafting, river base camps with daily motorboat access, and daily fly-out fishing from a lodge located outside the Refuge. Most unguided visitors charter an aircraft to one of the many headwater lakes to begin a float trip lasting from four to ten days. Others may fly to the airstrip located at each village and access the river by walking or renting a boat.

Commercial air service is available from Anchorage to Dillingham or Bethel. Chartering a wheel, float or amphibious aircraft to the specific Refuge site you wish to fish is easily done from either community. Private aircraft, motorboats and rafts are permitted throughout the refuge, but helicopters are not permitted for recreational purposes within the refuge.

Most food, basic supplies, commercial lodging and emergency services can be found in Dillingham and Bethel. Each village has at least one grocery store, but food stocks are generally limited. Specialty items are best purchased before you leave home.



Camping and River Recreation

Camping and fishing are permitted on public lands throughout the refuge. There are no designated campsites so you are free to choose a site to meet your own needs as long as it is not on private land. Camping on Togiak Refuge lands or adjacent State-owned lands is limited to three days at one location. At the outlet of Kagati Lake, camping is limited to one day to provide equal access for float parties and anglers. Camping on State-owned lands may be permitted for more than three days by contacting the Alaska Department of Natural Resources at the address provided on the back cover of this brochure.

Campsites on sand or gravel bars provide well drained and durable sites, usually with fewer mosquitoes. Full-scale floods are unusual; however, water levels can rise rapidly if it is raining heavily either where you are or upriver. Water levels are usually high throughout the months of June, late August and September and less predictable the rest of the year. Choose your campsite with these factors in mind. A good idea is to mark the water's edge when you first stop and check it again for changes before retiring for the night.

Gravel bars also make the best place for campfires. Leave the area clean. Remove any unburnable items such as melted foil, plastic, and aluminum cans from the fire spot, scatter the ashes and remaining wood, and return rocks to a natural location with the black side down.

All human waste should be buried at least eighteen inches deep and located away from surface waters. Toilet paper should be burned or carried out, not buried. All members of your party should carry matches or a lighter.

Foxes and bears have a great sense of smell and will generally dig up anything that you try to bury. Litter and large craters filled with garbage left behind by campers not only detract from the beauty of these wilderness waterways, but are illegal.

Good equipment is essential for floating Refuge rivers. Inflatable rafts equipped with rowing frames are recommended. Canoes, kayaks and paddle rafts are also adequate for the experienced user. Although there is no whitewater on the Kanektok, Goodnews and Togiak Rivers, river channels can be braided, and sweepers (overhanging and submerged trees) can pose serious hazards — stay alert. All rivers are icy cold, and life jackets are recommended. Each boat should also carry a throw rope in case someone falls out or the boat needs to be pulled ashore by someone on the bank.

Resource and Public Use Management

Fish are a vital component of the Togiak Refuge ecosystem. Fish also support the local culture and economies of the people of Southwestern Alaska. For the last 100 years these resources have also become important commercially and are the basis for the region's cash economy. More recently (within the last 30 years), sport fishing has increased pressure on the fishery resources. The State of Alaska is responsible for the management and regulation of the commercial, sport and subsistence fisheries occurring within the Refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for management of public lands and public use occurring within the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge Headquarters are located in Dillingham.

Each river system is managed for the five species of salmon. Numbers of returning spawners (escapement) are controlled to produce the maximum number of fish for the various users. You may encounter biologists conducting research programs which monitor the health and strength of fish populations. Several programs have been established to monitor the escapement of salmon and insure that adequate numbers of each species reach the spawning grounds. Fish in excess of the necessary return are available for harvest by subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries.

Resident fish species are managed to maintain natural population structure and diversity. For most resident fish populations, primarily rainbow trout and grayling, this means managing them under a trophy fish population philosophy.

You may be contacted by Refuge River Rangers stationed on the Kanektok, Goodnews and Togiak Rivers. Purposes of the River Ranger program include: contacting visitors, collecting public use information and informing visitors of various refuge regulations. Throughout the season, River Rangers will also collect angler and fisheries information to aid in responsible resource management. Occasionally, more intensive angler creel surveys are conducted on river areas most heavily fished to assess angler effort, catch and harvest, and demographics. Your cooperation with these efforts is greatly appreciated.

Sport Fishing Licenses and Special Regulations

A State sport fishing license is required annually (each calendar year) and must be in the possession of all persons 16 years of age or older while sport fishing. All State of Alaska fishing regulations apply to Togiak Refuge. Any commercial use of the Refuge requires a Special Use Permit from the refuge office in Dillingham.

Several Refuge drainages have special regulations adopted to maintain or improve high quality sport fisheries. These regulations can change annually. Currently, the Wilderness portions of the Kanektok and Goodnews Rivers are restricted to fishing with single-hook artificial lures only. Consult the current Alaska Sport Fishing Regulation Summary or contact the Togiak Refuge office for updated information concerning the area you plan to fish.

Thank You

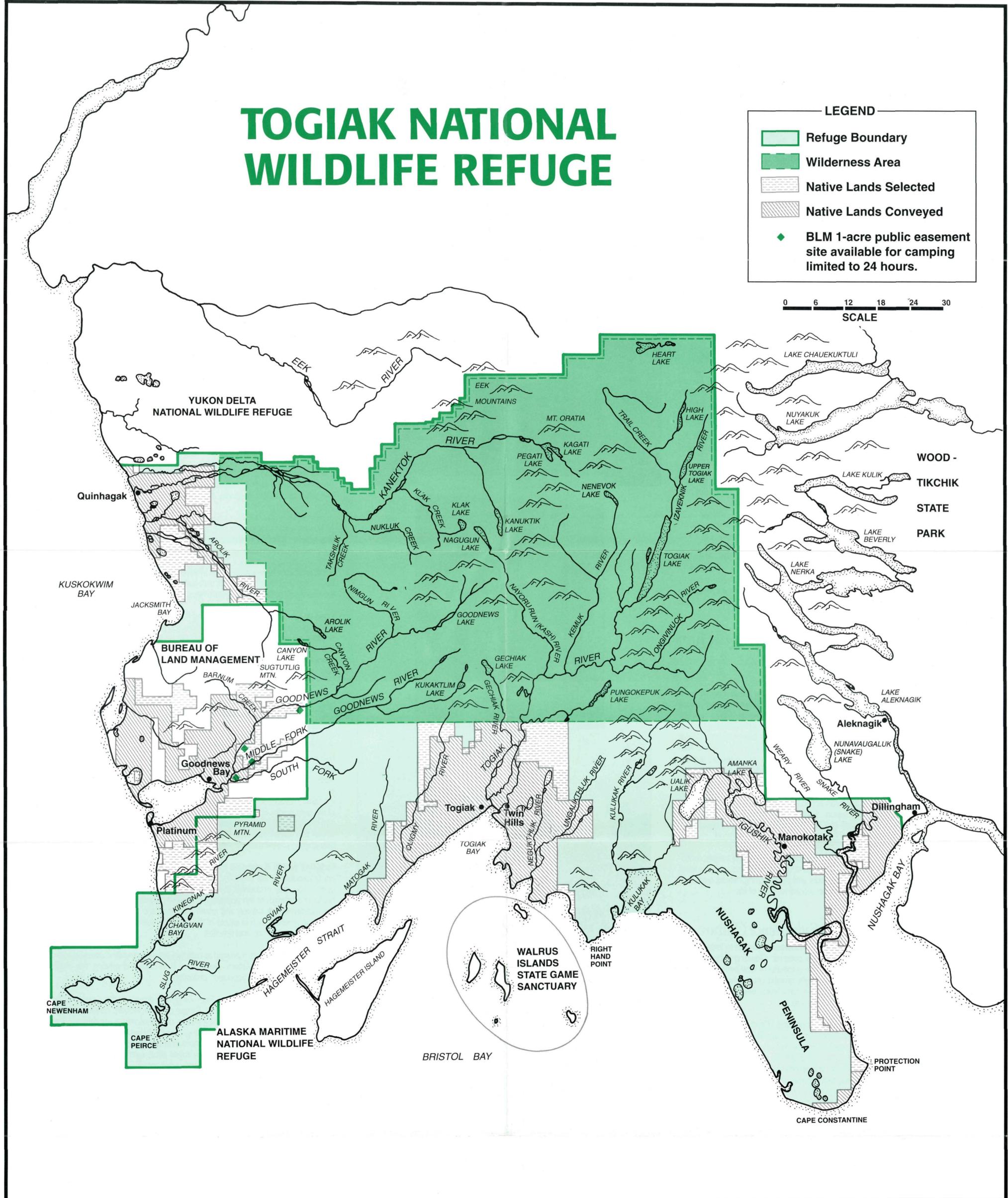
For visiting the Kanektok, Goodnews & Togiak Rivers
and the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge



TOGIAK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

LEGEND

-  Refuge Boundary
-  Wilderness Area
-  Native Lands Selected
-  Native Lands Conveyed
-  BLM 1-acre public easement site available for camping limited to 24 hours.



PLEASE AVOID TRESPASS ON PRIVATE LANDS

Land ownership patterns on the Refuge are complicated. Hiking and other recreational activities are permitted on public (refuge and state) lands; however, numerous small parcels of privately owned lands or allotments are scattered along the banks of major waterways. These allotments are generally not posted and may not be obvious. You may notice signs of old camps, mounds or other artifacts; any disturbances of these sites is a violation of federal law.

As you leave the Togiak Wilderness Area, you will notice a sign asking you to avoid trespass on private lands. Downstream of the Wilderness Area, most of the uplands above ordinary high water are owned by local village corporations. Trespass on these lands is prohibited. The exposed non-vegetated, sand and gravel bars, however, are publicly owned by the State of Alaska. Therefore, if you limit camp locations to sand and gravel bars, you will not be trespassing on private lands. Read the section above concerning Camping and River Recreation for more information on camp sites and length of stay limitations.

Permission to use privately owned lands is required from the appropriate local village corporation at the address below:

1. Choggiung Limited, P.O. Box 330, Dillingham, AK 99576
2. Manokotak Native Limited, Manokotak, AK 99628
3. Togiak Native Limited, P.O. Box 169, Togiak, AK 99678
4. Twin Hills Native Corporation, Twin Hills, AK 99576
5. Kuitsaruk Native Corporation, Goodnews Bay, AK 99589
6. Arviq Native Corporation, Platinum, AK 99651
7. Qanirtuug, Inc., General Delivery, Quinhagak, AK 99655

FOR A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE TRIP, REMEMBER

- * Respect the cultural heritage and subsistence activities of local residents.
- * Avoid trespass on private lands.
- * Respect the rights of others to enjoy the beauty and resources of the refuge and pack out trash for proper disposal.
- * Camp on exposed sand and gravel bars.
- * Make sure you have safe equipment and are prepared for cold, windy and wet weather.
- * Leave only footprints on gravel bars; if you pack it in, pack it out; if you see trash others have left, please pack it out as well.
- * Bury human wastes away from surface waters, burn toilet paper.
- * Know how to properly catch and release fish to ensure their survival, prevent unnecessary fish mortality, and to avoid offending others. It is up to you to responsibly promote the catch and release practice.