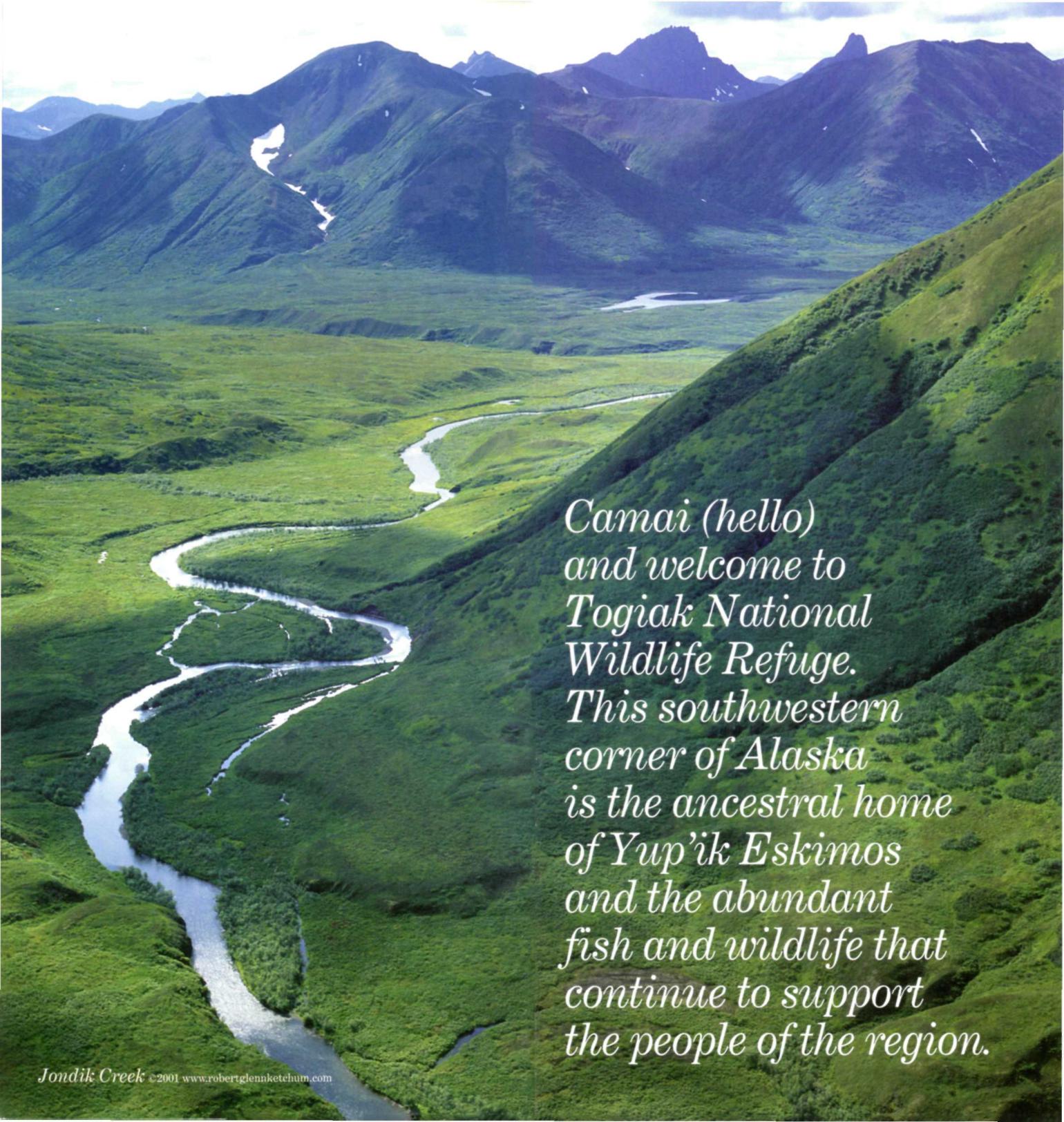


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Togiak

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a river meandering through a vibrant green valley. The river starts in the lower left and winds its way towards the center. The surrounding hills and mountains are covered in dense green vegetation. In the distance, several mountain peaks are visible, some with patches of snow or ice. The sky is a pale blue with light clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

*Camai (hello)
and welcome to
Togiak National
Wildlife Refuge.
This southwestern
corner of Alaska
is the ancestral home
of Yup'ik Eskimos
and the abundant
fish and wildlife that
continue to support
the people of the region.*



R. MacDonald/USFWS

Sportfishing opportunities attract anglers from around the world.

The Bering Sea of the North Pacific Ocean washes the shores of Togiak National Wildlife Refuge while clouds catch in the glacier-carved inland peaks. Great migrations of salmon fight their way upstream in the many rivers that flow from the mountains, providing a nutrient-rich link between ocean and land-based ecosystems.

Togiak Refuge covers 4.7 million acres, which is a land and water area about the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. Congress in 1980 designated the north half of the Refuge (2.3 million acres) as the Togiak Wilderness to preserve the pristine character of the land and the animals who make it their home.

Togiak Refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a national network of lands and waters administered for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.



This flying "Blue Goose" (a stylized Canada goose) was designed by renowned cartoonist and conservationist J.N. "Ding" Darling in 1935. It has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Circle of Life

Togiak Refuge is home to at least 283 species of wildlife, including 33 kinds of fish, 201 birds, 31 land mammals, 17 marine mammals, and 1 amphibian — the wood frog. Not everyone lives here all year, however.

Only the most hardy or those that can hibernate are found on the Refuge when snow blankets the land and temperatures fall to -30°F, making food scarce.

In April and May flocks of migratory birds arrive by the tens of thousands and hibernating wildlife awaken to search for new plant growth in the longer daylight hours.

As the rivers thaw, the first of more than a million salmon begin to migrate up Refuge rivers to spawn. Wildflowers bloom in a changing panorama of colors. New life is everywhere.

Animal activity soon shifts to intense feeding in preparation for migration to milder climates or for winter survival on the Refuge. As the days grow shorter, the tundra turns brilliant hues of reds, juicy berries are abundant, and frost finally silences the hordes of insects.

Young brown bear



J. Culbertson/USFWS



Underwater sockeye salmon

©Greg Syverson

Fish Enrich the Refuge

Togiak Refuge has more than 1,500 miles of streams and rivers and many deep, clear lakes providing abundant fish habitat.

Five species of Pacific salmon return from the ocean to the streams where they hatched within Togiak Refuge. Chinook arrive first, starting in April or May. Coho close the season with a last run in October. More than a million salmon spawn here each year.

Salmon in all forms — from eggs to spawned-out adults — provide important food for other life on the Refuge. Salmon enrich the ecosystem by bringing nutrients gained as they grew to adults in the ocean. These nutrients are released along the shore and into the freshwater when adult salmon die and decay after spawning. Other fishes, wildlife and plants along the river valleys benefit from the energy provided by the carcasses.



Spawned-out salmon



Top: Dolly Varden, Above: Arctic Char

Dolly Varden, a close relative of the brook trout, also move between saltwater and the freshwater streams of the Refuge where they spawn and spend the winter.

Many other kinds of fish spend their entire lives in Refuge waters, including rainbow trout, arctic char, arctic grayling, northern pike, lake trout, Alaska blackfish, sticklebacks and several kinds of whitefish.

Rainbow trout

©Greg Syverson



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Emperor geese

D. Menke/USFWS

Mecca for Birds

Birds flock to Togiak Refuge from four continents to nest and raise their young or to feed and rest while migrating. Some birds, such as the willow ptarmigan, bald eagle, northern hawk owl and common raven, stay all year.

More than a million birds that live on the ocean the rest of the year come ashore to breed on the Refuge's coastal cliffs. Seabirds fill the summer air with a chorus of growls and cries from murres, puffins, kittiwakes and others.

Nutrient-rich eelgrass beds in the Refuge's bays and estuaries attract a variety of waterfowl. A majority of the world's population of emperor geese and black brant stop here during migration. Two threatened species, Steller's and spectacled eiders, have been seen here.

Bald eagle



©Barton C. Whitecotton

Steller's eider



©Robert Suydam

Horned puffin



B. Seppi/BLM

©Don DesJardin



Savannah sparrow

USFWS



Willow ptarmigan

R. MacDonald/USFWS



Juvenile northern hawk-owl

Golden-crowned sparrows, arctic warblers and other songbirds fill the air with music, while sandhill cranes dance on the tundra.

At least 39 kinds of shorebirds use the Refuge. Eighteen of those nest here, including dunlins, western sandpipers, dowitchers and greater yellowlegs. Other flocks stop to feed during migration. Nushagak Bay is so important to the world's shorebirds that it was named as a link in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

A complete list of birds is available from the Refuge Headquarters or its website (*see back cover*).

Short-billed dowitcher



©Don DesJardin



A. Adernant/USFWS

Bull moose

Diversity of Mammals

Almost half of Alaska's 105 land and marine mammals can be seen — with some effort — on the Refuge because of the diversity of habitats from mountain ridges to ocean waters.

Caribou from two herds roam across the Refuge. Finding favorable habitats, moose dramatically increased on the Refuge in the 1990s.

Brown bears can be seen along streams at their favorite fishing holes when the salmon spawn. The rare and new-to-science Alaska shrew also lives here. Lucky visitors may catch a glimpse of a wolf, wolverine or lynx.

Animals cope with the Refuge's long winters in various ways. Beavers store food. Hoary marmots sleep through the winter. Lynx, snowshoe hares and caribou all have large feet or hooves that act like snowshoes to keep them from sinking in deep snow. Arctic foxes grow long, white coats.

For a full list of mammals and where they may be found, contact the Refuge Headquarters or visit its website.

T. Brooks/USFWS



Gray wolf

K. Morehouse/USFWS



Arctic fox



S. Matthews/USFWS

Harbor seal

Seventeen kinds of marine mammals swim along the Refuge's 600 miles of coastline and some come ashore (*haulout*) to rest.

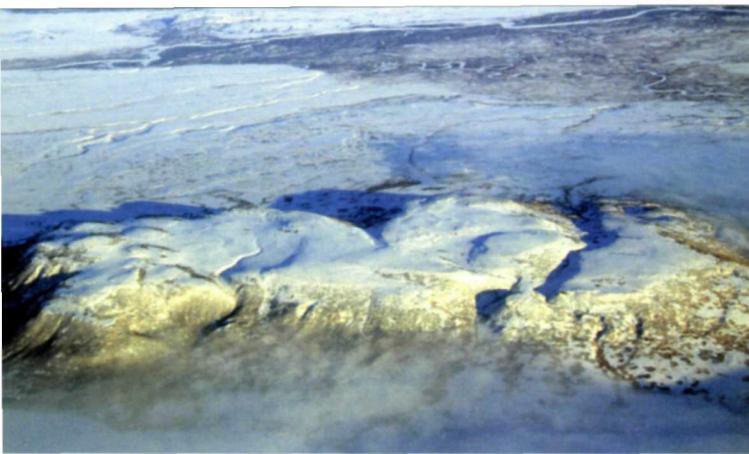
Steller sea lions come ashore on the Refuge in the largest gathering of this endangered species in Bristol Bay. Pacific walrus also find sanctuary here at their largest haulout on a National Wildlife Refuge. Harbor seals come ashore to give birth to their pups and to shed their fur for a new coat.

When gray whales migrate between tropical and arctic waters, their barnacled heads can be seen along the coast as they surface to breathe. Hungry orcas and beluga whales follow migrating fish toward Refuge rivers.

Steller sea lions



J. Bartonek/USFWS



Tuya

Fire and Ice

Volcanoes and glaciers shaped many Togiak Refuge landscapes. The two came together to create a rare “*tuya*,” a three-mile-long, 1,000-foot-high lava lump. Formed when a volcano erupted under glacial ice, this *tuya* is the only one known in Alaska.

Glaciers sculpted hanging valleys, cirques, and deep lakes in the scenic Wood River mountains. The Refuge has more than 500 lakes larger in size than 25 acres (22 football fields), some deeper than 400 feet.

More than 500 kinds of plants grow here in a variety of habitats that include fresh and saltwater wetlands, open water, meadows, mountains, tundra, and forests of spruce and cottonwood. The coastline varies from rugged, lichen-covered cliffs to sandy beaches.



Mountain lake



Arctic lupine



Common fireweed



Yellow pond lily

All photos this page USFWS

Weather

Moist and rainy conditions typically greet visitors, residents and wildlife alike in summer; although warm sunny weather does occur. Daytime temperatures generally range between 40° and 70°F.



A snowy creek

Snow covers the mountains by early October. In November, ice typically forms on lakes and rivers and remains until June. Winter daytime temperatures generally range from 40° to -20°F, sometimes falling as low as -40°F. Winds can make even mild temperatures feel much colder.

Plants and animals take advantage of microclimates created by the varied terrain to find favorable temperature, moisture and wind conditions.

Visitors to the Refuge may hope for the best weather; but should always prepare for the worst. It is not uncommon for a warm and sunny day suddenly to turn cold, windy and wet. Flights and travel plans must be flexible because weather can delay travel for days at a time.

Tundra close-up

©2001 www.robertglennketchum.com





Float plane

G. Collins/USFWS

Access to the Refuge

Togiak Refuge begins about 350 air miles southwest of Anchorage. Travelers come by air because, as elsewhere in *bush* Alaska, no roads connect the Refuge or the nearby communities with the rest of the state.

Commercial airlines fly daily to Dillingham, Bethel and King Salmon from Anchorage. Barges supply these communities during the summer, but there is no passenger service to southwest Alaska by water.

Primary access to Togiak Refuge itself is by chartered aircraft. Dillingham is the hub for many of the air taxis that have permits to operate within the Refuge, although some air taxis fly from Bethel and King Salmon.

Typically, air taxis will drop off passengers and gear and return at a designated time and place for pick up.



T. Gage and S. Goodglick/USFWS

Berry picking

Cultural Courtesies

Archaeological evidence suggests that areas within Togiak Refuge have been continuously occupied for at least 2,000 years.

Today, the local Native peoples are collectively known as Yup'ik Eskimos. Many continue the traditions of their ancestors by maintaining their cultural beliefs and following a subsistence hunting and gathering way of life.

Many places in Togiak Refuge are ancestral sites for hunting and gathering. One of the purposes of the Refuge is to continue to provide subsistence opportunities to local residents.

When traveling in the Refuge, please be sensitive to the needs and customs of the local people. Respect subsistence fish nets and camp sites. If you find any artifacts or archaeological sites, let them remain in place for others to enjoy. Removing artifacts is illegal.



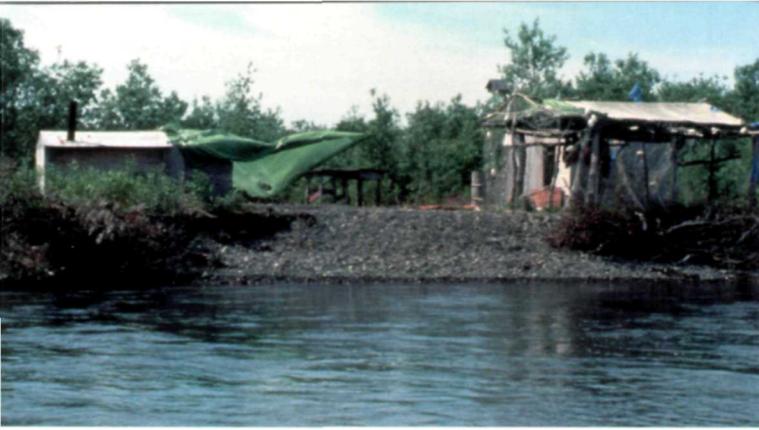
USFWS

Ice fishing

Salmon gillnetting

S. Ayers/USFWS





USFWS

Structures such as these indicate private lands

Private Lands Alert

Traveling in Togiak Refuge requires staying alert for land ownership changes. The Refuge contains large areas owned by Native corporations and private individuals.

Using detailed maps and observing your surroundings will help you while enjoying your visit.

Native corporations usually own much of the land near their villages. Individual Native allotments are often along waterways in areas historically used by the individual's family. If you plan to travel or camp on such lands, apply to the appropriate Native corporation for a land use permit. The Refuge can supply contact information.

Once on the Refuge, you may see signs posted on riverbanks indicating changes in land ownership. Native allotments might not be marked except by clearings, cabins or fish racks.

Wildland Recreation

Visitors from all over the world come to Togiak Refuge to experience wild and scenic Alaska.

Commercial guides with permits to use refuge lands offer fishing, hunting, and river float trips. Independent travelers can also organize their own trips.

Togiak Refuge boasts one of the largest contiguous wilderness areas in the National Wildlife Refuge System, second only to the wilderness area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska.

The Refuge adjoins other public lands. To the east is the nation's largest state park, Wood-Tikchik State Park. To the north lies the massive Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Together these lands cover more than 24 million acres, one of the largest protected areas in the world.

Valley overlook

USFWS





Anglers on a refuge river

©Fred Hirschmann

Floating the Rivers

In a place without roads, rivers remain the natural corridors for travel — for fish, wildlife, local residents and visitors. Fishing float trips down these rivers are the most popular recreational activity on the Refuge.

Air taxi pilots can fly your float party into a headwater lake and pick you up downstream on a gravel bar or in a village at a later date. Many travelers choose inflatable rafts, but some use kayaks or canoes.

The Kanektok, Goodnews and Togiak rivers are the longest on the Refuge and start in the wilderness area. They flow swiftly but generally without white water. Instead the challenges are overhanging trees or brush, high or low water levels, and braided channels.

State and Coast Guard boating regulations apply on Refuge rivers. Personal floatation devices must be available and should be worn because of cold water temperatures.

Fishing Lure

If fishing is your passion, wet your line while floating the rivers or stay at guide camps and lodges on or off the Refuge. The variety and quality of fishing lures anglers from around the world.

Catch-and-release is the rule for some areas of the Refuge to help conserve slow-growing sport fish populations. Fishing licenses and current regulations are available from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Offshore, one of the biggest commercial fisheries in Alaska harvests millions of dollars of salmon, halibut, and herring. Bristol Bay is home to the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery. These fisheries are essential to the economy of southwest Alaska, including the communities within and near Togiak Refuge.

M. Lisac/USFWS



Northern pike

M. Lisac/USFWS



Chinook salmon

M. Lisac/USFWS



Rainbow trout

Float trip

USFWS





Campsite by Kashaiaik Mountain

Hiking and Camping

All hiking and backpacking in the Refuge is off the beaten path. There are no campgrounds here and no trails other than those made by caribou and bears.

For the prepared adventurer, the challenges of the wilderness will be rewarding.

To be prepared, work with an air taxi service and Togiak Refuge staff to plan your trip. Study maps and familiarize yourself with land ownership patterns.

Hunting

Hunters can pursue a variety of large and small game on Togiak Refuge including moose, caribou, bears, waterfowl and ptarmigan. Not all hunts are open to non-residents.

Obtain the proper licenses and familiarize yourself with the regulations. Sport hunting is managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Subsistence hunting is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Subsistence Management.



Caribou

Back Country Basics

The remoteness of Togiak Refuge is both a challenge and a reward for travelers. The staff has tips that will help you plan for the safe and memorable trip of a lifetime.

Because of the remoteness, be prepared to handle any situation on your own. Bring emergency survival supplies. Carry and know how to use a map and compass or GPS.

Just as Alaskan bush pilots do, file a trip plan with your air taxi service or the Togiak Refuge office before you start out. Close your plan when you return.

In the wilderness area and elsewhere, practice "leave no trace" travel so that future visitors can enjoy the same wild vistas. Travel and camp on durable surfaces (gravel, rock, sand, or snow), dispose of waste properly, leave what you find, minimize campfire impacts, respect wildlife and be considerate of other travelers.

Wood River Mountains

©Fred Hirschmann

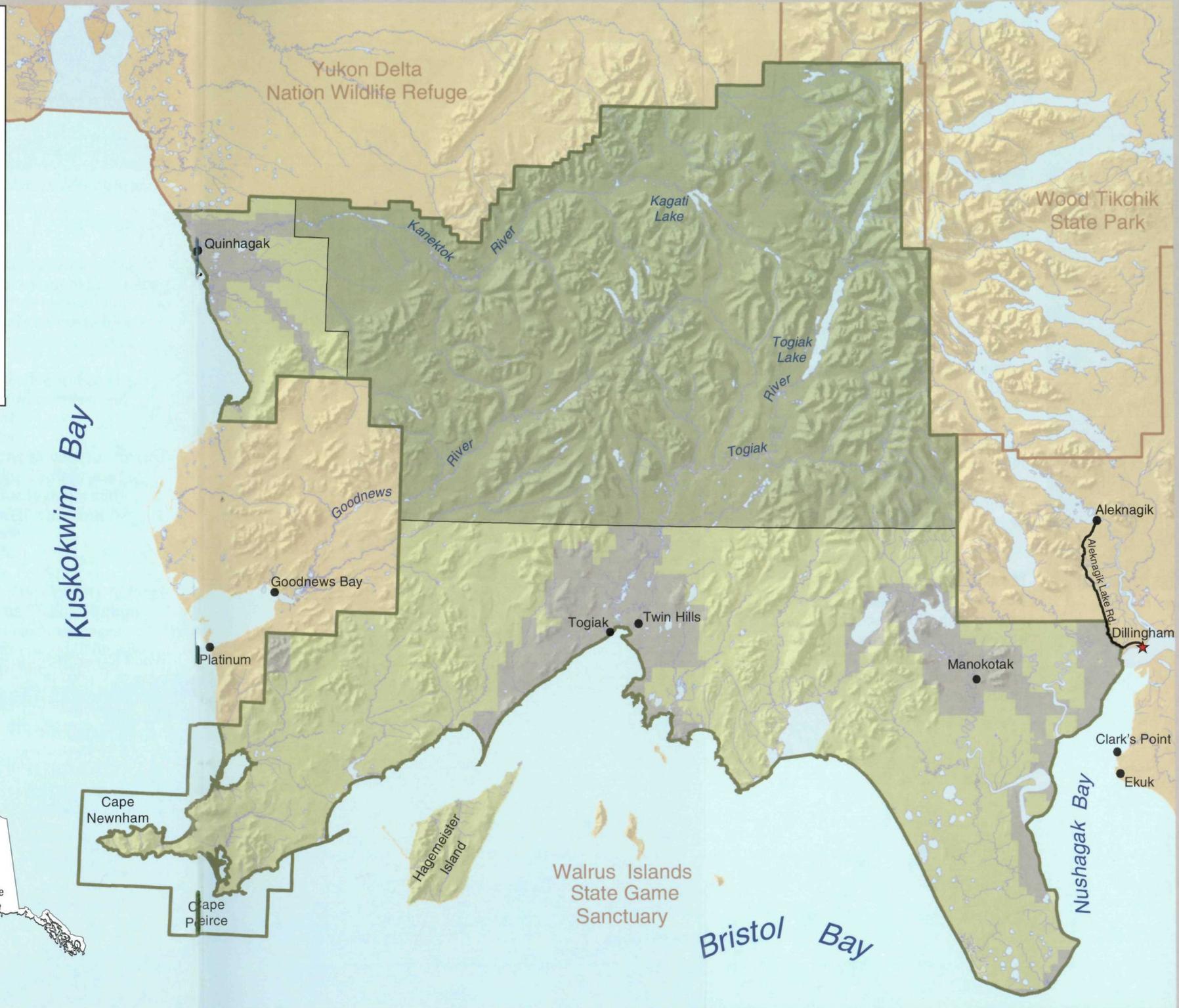
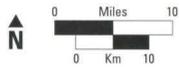


Togiak

National Wildlife Refuge

- Private Lands
- Refuge
- Togiak Wilderness Area
- Refuge Boundary
- Refuge Headquarters

Land status represents USFWS interpretation of BLM records.



USFWS



Bear tracks

This is brown bear country. Learn safe behavior around bears and travel alertly to avoid surprise encounters. You will help protect yourself and bears from dangerous situations by keeping a clean camp and storing your food properly.

Also be aware of microscopic dangers. *Giardiasis* and other water-borne intestinal diseases are present in Alaska, making it wise to filter or treat water prior to use.

Swarms of mosquitoes and other biting insects are more plentiful than can be eaten by the local wildlife, so bring insect repellent and a headnet or bug jacket.

More Information

For more detailed information on any topic in this brochure or for educational resources and news on current wildlife studies, please visit the Refuge website or contact our office .

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