



To Report a Missing or Overdue Person Call 911 or 907-545-HELP (4357)



*Miles of open water on the Kuskokwim River glimmer in the sunlight as it briefly breaks through the fog*

## 11.19.18 BSAR Aerial Survey

### *“Way Behind Schedule”*

#### **Summary:**

Today BSAR did an aerial survey of the Johnson and Kuskokwim Rivers up to Kalskag. ***The purpose of the flight was not to determine if it was safe to travel. With the extended warm weather everybody should already understand that it's not safe.***

There is very little ice that is well frozen. The purpose of today's flight was to document the late extended freeze up conditions that are becoming the “new normal” for our region and the effect it is having on our way of life. There are over 15,000 People living along our River. With the current unsafe travel conditions we are all almost 100% dependent on air travel to get where we need to go. But the warm moist weather and associated fog is effecting the reliability of air travel as well.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) tells us that the temperature of the Bering Sea is very warm. The effects of this was easy to see as we flew today—especially in the Lower River. Conditions improved slightly as we flew inland...but not much. The following pictures tell the story.



*The Swiss Cheese: this is how most of the ice in the Johnson River & Lower Kuskokwim looks*



*From 9 miles below Akiak upstream to Kalskag the ice is packed in rough with at least four areas where the River is wide open almost bank to bank—this picture is taken from 500' up in the air*



*The Atmautluak Trail has seen light traffic in recent days*



*We always have to watch out for these little blackfish creeks going in and out of the lakes—they can stay open even cold weather*



*The Johnson River has major open water all along its length*



*This is where the Johnson River meets the Kuskokwim*



***Napaskiak***



***River at Oscarville—Napaskiak***



***Old Airport Channel across from Bethel***



***Straight Slough***



***Bethel Bluffs***



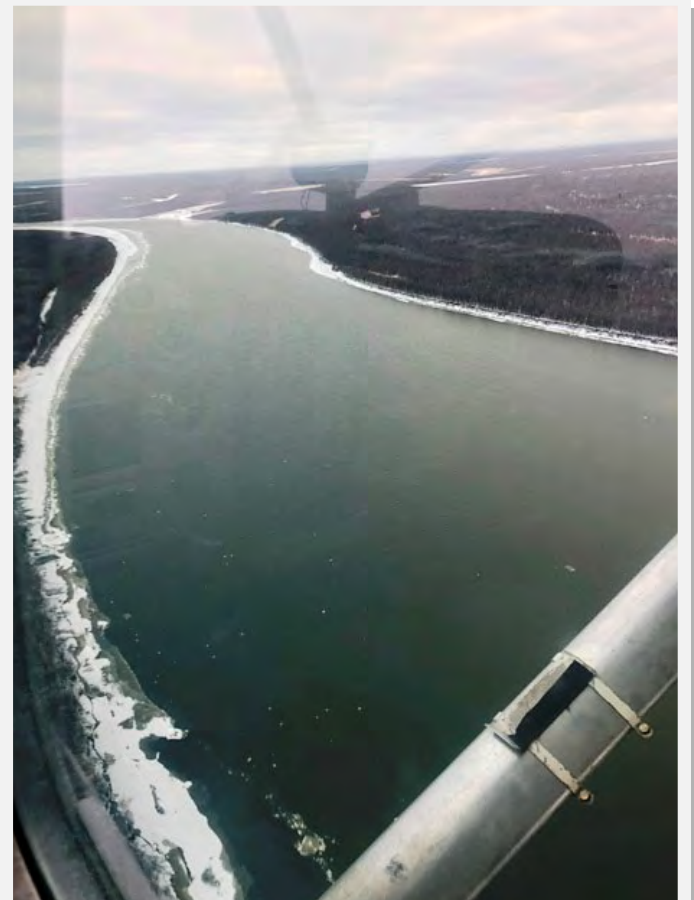
***Upper End of Church Slough***



*Kwethluk, Alaska*



*The Kwethluk-Akiachak Y*



*Wide Open Kuskokuak Slough just above Kwethluk*



*Akiachak: even this normally well frozen channel has numerous large open areas*





*Managers staying close to home on the little bit of good ice we have*



*Akiak Area: from the Upper End of Kuskokuak Slough on upstream there are long stretches of packed rough ice...*



*Undu's Island Area below Tuluksak*

*Looking Upstream*



*Bogus Creek Area*

***Huge Stretches of Open Water!***

*Edward Wise Area halfway between Tuluksak & Kalskag*



*Iftikum Evan Area*

*12 miles below Lower Kalskag*





*It's Not All Bad News: The Infamous Coffee's Bend (10 miles below Kalskag) that is wide open most years is packed in pretty good with only a few small open holes!*

**Closing:**

Its been a dangerous patchwork freeze up. The normal freeze up process of the Lower River freezing first and then the ice backing up behind it on up the River isn't fully working right leaving large areas that might take a long time to heal. At least in the Middle River there are the those long stretches of rough ice that are stronger. But we'll see—the ice was reported to be moving again at Aniak after being stopped for a few days.

The Lower River is even worse off with almost all of it thin ice and open water.

Right now we need a couple of weeks of cold weather with no snowfall and things could get better fast.

That's our report for this week.

Happy Thanksgiving & Be Safe from

Everyone at Bethel Search & Rescue!

***Not too late to mention: many of the bigger lakes in the Tundra still have large open areas***

