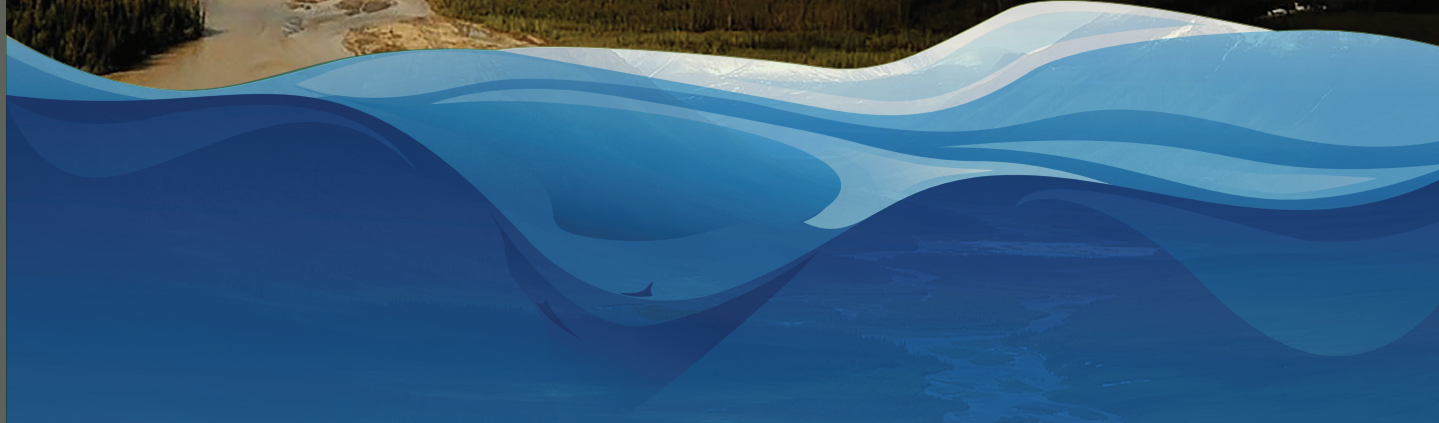


WILD AND SCENIC RIVER VALUES

NORTH FORK KOYUKUK RIVER | Alaska | Fall 2018

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE • U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT AND THE NORTH FORK KOYUKUK RIVER

The national wild and scenic rivers system was created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 USC 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, or recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, October 2, 1968

Rivers may be designated by Congress or, if certain requirements are met, the Secretary of the Interior. Each river is administered by either a federal or state agency. Designated segments need not include the entire river and may include tributaries. Rivers may be managed through a partnership with communities, special councils, and state governments.

From the south flank of the Arctic Continental Divide, the North Fork Koyukuk River flows about 100 miles south through the Endicott Mountains where it joins the Middle Fork Koyukuk River. This broad, glacially carved valley bisects the iconic Frigid Crags and Boreal Mountain, also known as the Gates of the Arctic. In order to protect the North Fork Koyukuk's free-flowing characteristics, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs), the 102 miles within Gates of the Arctic National Park were designated a wild river in 1980 by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) under the provisions of the 1968 National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 96-487). Wild rivers are rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive, and waters unpolluted. These represent the vestiges of primitive America.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values



Free-flowing Condition



Water Quality

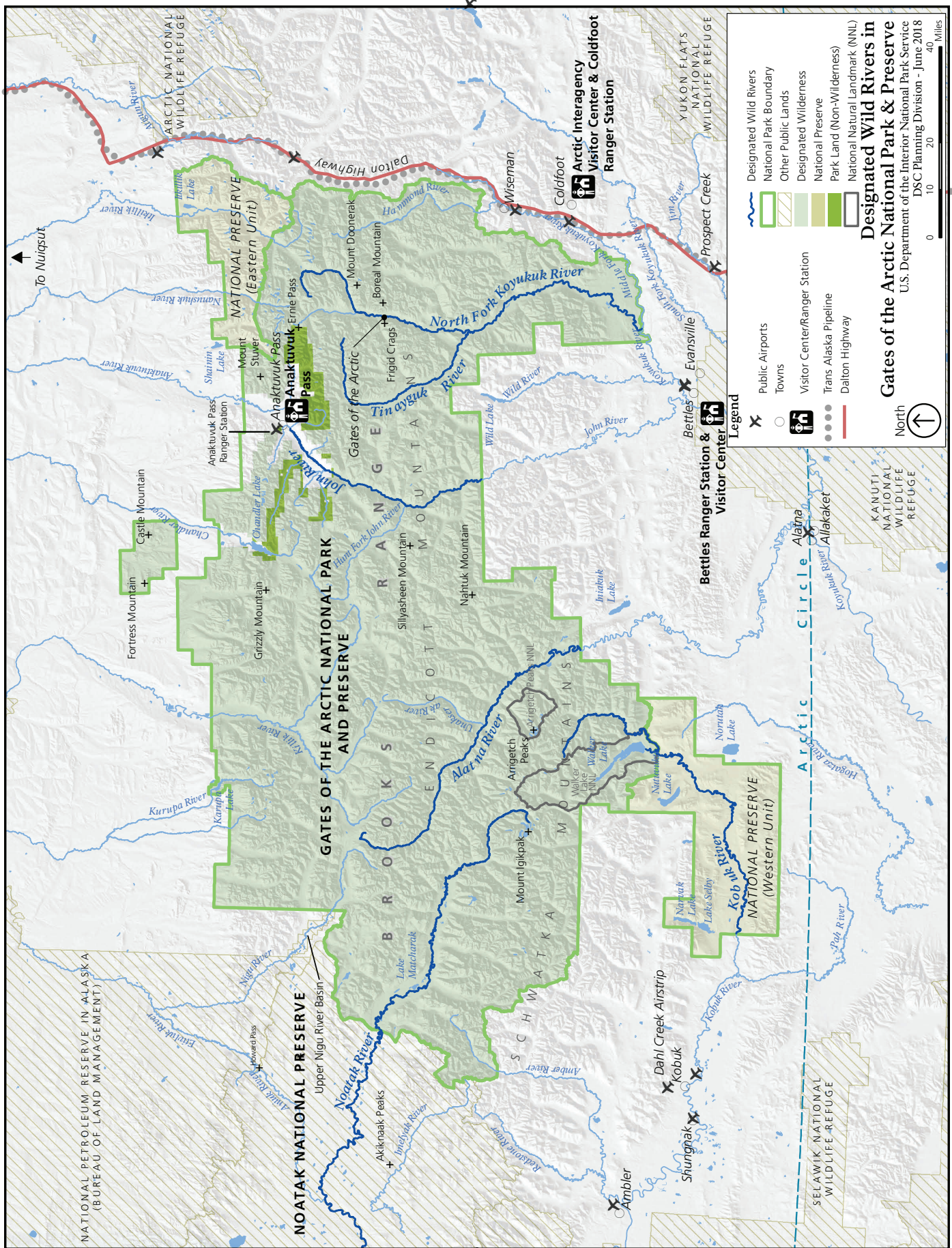


WILD AND SCENIC RIVER VALUES

Each river in the national system is administered with the goal of protecting and enhancing the values that caused it to be designated. Outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing condition, and water quality form the three pillars of protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.







Designated Wild Rivers in Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve
 U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service
 DSC Planning Division - June 2018

Legend

- Designated Wild Rivers (Blue line)
- National Park Boundary (Green outline)
- Other Public Lands (Yellow hatched)
- Designated Wilderness National Preserve (Light Green outline)
- Park Land (Non-Wilderness) (Dark Green outline)
- National Natural Landmark (NNL) (Dark Green outline)
- Public Airports (Airplane icon)
- Towns (Black 'X' icon)
- Visitor Center/Ranger Station (Visitor Center icon)
- Trans Alaska Pipeline (Red line)
- Dalton Highway (Red line with dots)

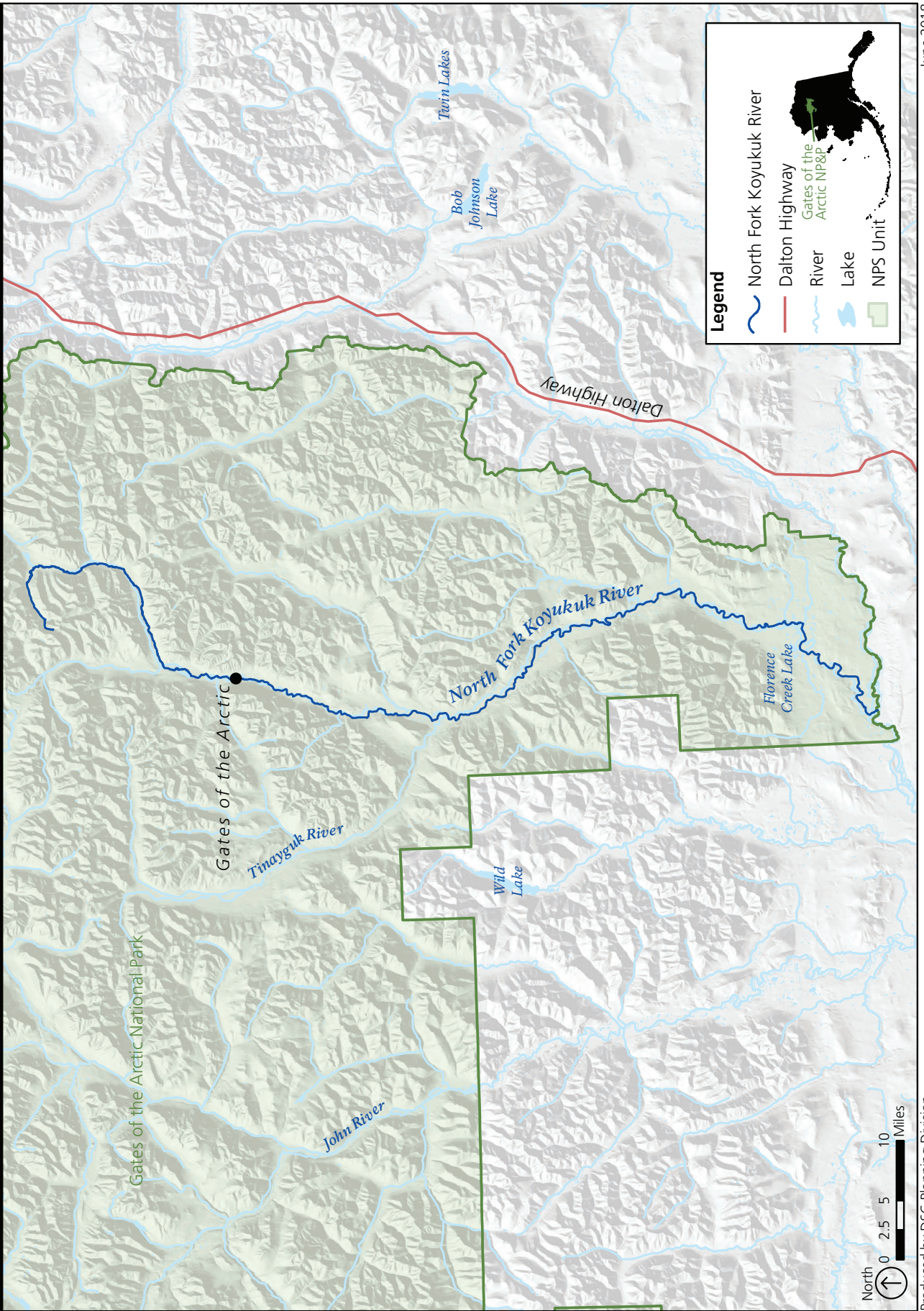
North ↑

0 10 20 40 Miles

North Fork Koyukuk Wild River

Alaska

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



June 2018

Produced by DSC Planning Division





OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES

Outstandingly remarkable values are defined by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as the characteristics that make a river worthy of special protection. Thus, the foundation for wild and scenic river management is a clearly defined set of ORVs. The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council has issued criteria for identifying and defining these values. The criteria guidance states that:

An ORV must be river related or dependent. This means that a value must

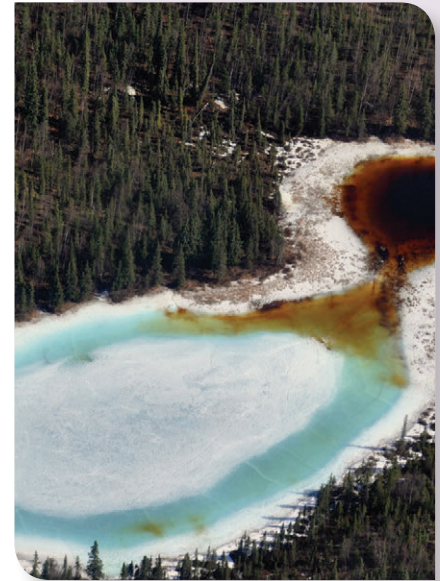
- be located in the river or on its immediate shorelands (generally within 0.25 miles on either side of the river)
- contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem
- owe its location or existence to the presence of the river

An ORV must also be rare, unique, or exemplary at a comparative regional or national scale. Such a value would be one that is a conspicuous example from among a number of similar values that are themselves uncommon or extraordinary.

The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council provides additional criteria for assessing each ORV category listed in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, noting that the criteria may be modified to make them more meaningful to a particular river. The council also notes that, while no specific national evaluation guidelines have been developed for the “other similar values” mentioned in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, agencies may assess additional river-related values including, but not limited to, hydrology, paleontology, and botany. Specific criteria for identifying ORVs are included below.

Table 1. Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria for the Wild Rivers in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
Scenic Values	Landscape elements visible from the river and its banks result in notable views that characterize rivers in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. The area and scale used for the comparison of scenic values is typically the physiographic province. Views of iconic features may also be considered and weighed.
Recreational Values	River-related recreational opportunities attract, or have the potential to attract, visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison or are unique, rare, or exemplary within the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, and boating.



Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
Geologic Values	<p>Examples of geologic features, processes, or phenomena are unique or rare within Alaska and/or nationally, either individually or in combination. The river corridor contains at least one example of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is unique or rare within the region of comparison. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, may represent a textbook example, and/or may represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, or other geologic structures).</p>
Fish Values	<p>Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of fish populations, habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.</p> <p>Populations</p> <p>The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."</p> <p>Habitat</p> <p>The river provides exceptionally high-quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."</p>



Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
<p>Wildlife Values</p>	<p>The river corridor provides exceptionally high-quality and nearly continuous habitat for wildlife. Biological processes along the river corridor have exceptionally high integrity in that they are relatively intact and undisturbed throughout the entire length of the river corridor. Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations, habitat, or a combination of these conditions.</p> <p>Populations</p> <p>The river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique and/or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”</p> <p>Habitat</p> <p>The river corridor provides exceptionally high-quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance and/or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”</p>



Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
Cultural and Historic Values	<p>Archeological Values</p> <p>The river corridor contains archeological sites and areas important to traditional cultures; these help perpetuate cultural and spiritual traditions among Native Alaskans. Several archeological sites and traditional cultural properties are listed (or are eligible for listing) in the National Register of Historic Places and have unique or rare characteristics, are regionally important for research, or tangibly link Alaska Natives to their heritage. Examples include burial grounds; petroglyphs; the oldest known human-use site in a region; and streams that support traditional agriculture, subsistence fishing, or spiritual ceremonies.</p> <p>Historic Values</p> <p>The river corridor contains at least one site or feature associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare or unique in the region. Historic structures, buildings, and landscapes are listed (or are eligible for listing) in the National Register of Historic Places, have either national or regional significance, and do not impede or divert the free flow of the river. In most cases, a historic site or feature is at least 50 years old.</p> <p>Prehistoric Values</p> <p>The river corridor contains at least one site where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Alaskans. A site must have unique or rare characteristics or exceptional human-interest value(s). A site may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory, may be rare and represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described, may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups, or may have been used by cultural groups for rare sacred purposes. Many such sites are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.</p>

Based on these criteria and a careful analysis of the designated reaches of the North Fork Koyukuk River, the National Park Service (NPS) has determined that the scenic, recreational, and cultural ORVs are present. A set of broad statements has been developed that articulates each ORV for the entire river designation.



Scenic Values

The North Fork Koyukuk River is immersed in some of the most spectacular scenery found in the central Brooks Range, including the iconic Gates of the Arctic.

Frigid Crags and Boreal Mountain form the Gates of the Arctic, the iconic passage to the Gates of the Arctic National Park, as described by Robert Marshall. Within the central Brooks Range, the Endicott Mountains' rugged peaks transition into large glacial valleys. Mount Doonerak, the highest mountain on the North Fork (at 7,610 feet), provides a significant contrast in size to adjacent peaks. Gray Mountain, Blackface Mountain, and Redstar Mountain exemplify the differences in coloration among the mountains in the area. The alpine regions of the North Fork present characteristically impressive views throughout this stretch of river.

Recreational Values

The North Fork Koyukuk River offers excellent floating conditions, but also has outstanding hiking opportunities, especially along the upper reaches of the watershed.

Excellent hiking opportunities and remarkable scenery have made this location a highly desirable wilderness backpacking area within the Brooks Range. Additionally, the limited number of users throughout the North Fork contributes to a wilderness-type experience. The North Fork also provides backpacking access to the Tinayguk River, which allows the visitor to travel between the John River and Wild River drainages. The combination of demanding whitewater in the upper river region and a gradient of vegetation changes—in addition to the river's clear water—provides an interesting and desirable rafting experience. Although the North Fork is well isolated from human infrastructure and has limited accessibility, the river provides the user with a direct connection to Bettles and its commercial air services.





Cultural Values – Historic

The North Fork Koyukuk River is the country Robert Marshall celebrated in his classic writings on Alaska and on the concept of wilderness.

The early inspiration for the creation of a vast northern national park can be traced back to a US Forest Service forester named Bob Marshall who arrived in Alaska in 1929 looking for what he called “blank spaces on maps.” When Marshall arrived along the North Fork of the Koyukuk River, he found what he was looking for—what he called the “wild sublimity” of a largely untouched mountain realm. His wilderness philosophy defined such wild places as essential not only for ecological health, but for human happiness. During the 1930s, Marshall returned to Alaska three more times to live in Wiseman and explore the rugged terrain of the Koyukuk watershed and beyond to the continental divide. He used northern forest research as a pretext for mountain climbing, mapping uncharted waterways, and mingling with the Alaska Native people and gold mining sourdoughs of the Koyukuk. In his 1933 book about daily life in the town of Wiseman (titled *Arctic Village*), Marshall advertised to the world that he had discovered a kind of Arctic utopia. Marshall was no less enthusiastic when describing the mountains, rivers, and valleys of the Brooks Range, particularly the stretch along the North Fork of the Koyukuk, where he named two adjacent peaks the Gates of the Arctic. Marshall’s writings, including *Alaska Wilderness* (1956) published after his death, inspired later wilderness enthusiasts to push for preservation of a vast section of the Brooks Range as Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

Cultural Values – Archeological

The North Fork preserves an exceptionally long and substantial record of human occupation.

Despite being only cursorily surveyed, the valley contains a high density of archeological sites. At least 86 historic and prehistoric archeological sites are known from the North Fork within Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, and the vast majority are immediately adjacent to the river’s course. One unique aspect of the North Fork is that portions of this valley were unglaciated at the end of the last ice age and the area was thus available to human occupation by the very earliest inhabitants of Beringia. The WIS-076 site exemplifies this phase of human occupation; it is one of the oldest known sites in the park and dates to approximately 11,000 years ago. Paleontological remains of extinct mammals found in the lower reaches of the valley are up to 33,000 years old, thus indicating the area has long been rich in subsistence resources. Following the early Paleoindian occupation were Northern Archaic, Denbigh, and Late Prehistoric occupations, all represented by archeological remains of camps, overlooks, and resource-procurement locations. The valley was also a major east-west intraregional travel corridor in prehistory, as demonstrated by the frequent occurrence along the North Fork of obsidian that derives from a major source on the Koyukuk’s main stem some 200 miles to the southwest. The North Fork seems to have represented one of the main paths of distribution for this significant prehistoric resource.



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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