



Arrive Alive – a Tribal Transportation Safety Project funded through the Federal Highways Administration



The Reassurance of a Safe Marked Trail at Night

12-11-16 TTSP Report #2:*

“Building the Network”

Summary: Every year is different and the River is always teaching us. After several days of reconnaissance to figure out the best routes, actual trail and open water marking has begun.

With extended cold weather, lack of insulating snow and very rough ice conditions the need to establish a plowed ice road for all types of vehicles is becoming feasible and necessary.

On December 7th NVN sponsored a teleconference for all the Middle Kuskokwim Communities to coordinate the effort – weather and equipment permitting – before the Holiday Season.



Each year many variables affect how the River freezes and where trails & ice roads will be established – crews all along the River spend long days figuring it all out



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With barely 6 hours of daylight in mid-December some of the work gets done in the dark. Here the Kalskag trail crew is ending their day 18 miles from Home



Due to rough main River conditions and lack of snow a well-marked trail has been established between Kalskag and Aniak using an old channel of the Kuskokwim.

This “detour” is about 10 miles longer than the normal route



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Close up of an open water marker – BLUE is the region-wide accepted color for open water & thin ice marking



Close up of the swift deep open hole inside the markers: a person driving into this would never make it out



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Hundreds of willows are cut for open water marking



Middle Kuskokwim I-5:

Not very fast inter-community travel on this trail!

Early season trails are using sloughs and old channels as much as possible

But there are still long sections where the very rough main River is the only place to go.

This is why a plowed road needs to be established as soon as it is feasible to do so (once the ice is thick enough for heavy equipment)



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*Break time for crew & equipment:
Chain saw with marked bar cuts hundreds of test holes in the ice.
We are looking for 24" minimum for our plowing equipment*



Hard use in cold, rough conditions: equipment casualties often occur



Specialized Ice Drilling & Measuring Equipment acquired through the TTSP funding



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8 foot pole marked to guide the plow equipment. These poles show the operators that the ice has been checked and is safe for the weight of the equipment. With reflectors installed they also serve as road markers for travelers. Several hundred of these will be installed along Middle Kuskokwim ice road routes using the new ice drilling equipment.



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A fox and the full moon keep the trail crew company as they end their day and travel home

That's the update on the establishment of safe winter travel routes in the Middle Kuskokwim.

Our goal is to begin plowing the week of December 19th. Our next report will follow the completion of that work.

Happy Holidays & Safe Travels from the Napaimute-Kalskag TTSP Crew

Thank you.

***Please note that this report is for informational purposes only. It is not an advisory that it is safe to travel.**