



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



Into the Rough: Middle Kuskokwim Ice Road Plowing Begins at Dawn on December 20th.

Mad Max, Napaimute's 52 Year Old Plow Truck Breaks the Trail

12-22-16 TTSP Report #3:*

“Breaking Trail & Breaking Down”

Summary: Middle Kuskokwim Ice Road and Trail Crews have done a lot of good hard work over the past few weeks assessing ice thickness and plotting the safest courses for this winter’s inter-community transportation routes. As planned Kalskag area ice road plowing began at dawn on December 20th and carried into the 21st - the shortest day of the year.

Unfortunately rough conditions and old equipment combined to cause a major breakdown 25 miles into the plow. Parts have been ordered and the work will resume as soon as they arrive and the repairs can be made – probably not until after Christmas.

We are sorry to disappoint all the People that were hoping to travel to see family and friends during the Holiday.



Mad Max is 52 years old this month



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Much Additional Preparation Goes Into the Actual Plowing Work: vehicles, miscellaneous equipment, and markers have to be readied. The 10-man crew tries to anticipate problems that may arise based on past experiences, and bring along tools & supplies to address these potential difficulties. But every year there are new surprises....



35,000 Pounds by Dawn's Early Light: plow truck with gravel in bed for traction dragging two steel flats heads out on the Kuskokwim River.

The pickup truck follows behind carrying fuel, tools, and other supplies to support the plow truck. The driver is also monitoring the condition of the ice behind the plow. On this first plow of the year a snow machine stays out in front of the plow at all times double checking previous ice measurements



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Lead Road Marker Truck: following behind the plow team comes the road marking crew. The lead truck drops a marker every 1/10th of a mile. Two-man teams behind leap frog each other drilling the markers into the ice. Like the snow machine trail markers shown in earlier reports, these birch tree ice road markers were cut and marked with reflectors installed by the George Morgan Sr.

High School Students in Kalskag.



Manufactured Pole Markers are Still Used As Well:

This tripod is at the famous Coffee's Bend. An open hole can be seen steaming in the left background. This hole has already been well marked by our crew.



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Lunch on Ice: L-R Nick Levi, William Alexie, Nickolai Savage, Adam Kameroff, Oscar Samuelson, Garret Urovak, Andrew Kameroff, Jr.

Not pictured: Tim Alexie, Stanley Morgan, Mike Evan, Jr.



Low December Sun Angle: the crew gets to see many nice scenes as they slowly work their way down the River.



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An Especially Rough Stretch:

Late in the day on December 20th Mad Max has been working hard all day, is getting tired, and starting to have mechanical problems.



Well into the darkness we decide to give him a rest. We leave him parked and return to Kalskag for the night.



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The Shortest Day of the Year: with a good night's rest and a beautiful day dawning, the crew was in high spirits for finishing Upriver Route 1

We didn't know that it was going to be a short plow.



10:25 AM – Temperature Minus 10: A good crew continues their work to establish safe ice roads for Kuskokwim travelers in the growing light.



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Uh Oh! :

Just a few hundred feet into the new day Mad Max makes a bad sound and quits in the middle of the roughest stretch of ice we've encountered so far.



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Figuring It Out:
The crew gets right to work pulling the motor apart to find out what's wrong



Fixable - Just Not Today
Harmonic balancer went out tearing a hole in the timing gear cover

Parts have been ordered and are on their way. Big thanks to Gary's Truck Sales in Anchorage, Tuluksak IRA and the Native Village of Lower Kalskag for their support of our work to establish a safe ice road for the Middle Kuskokwim...

...to be continued.

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.