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Ice measurement from mid-channel at Bethel: 6" of good clear ice – just barely enough for safe travel

12.3.17 BSAR River Report:*

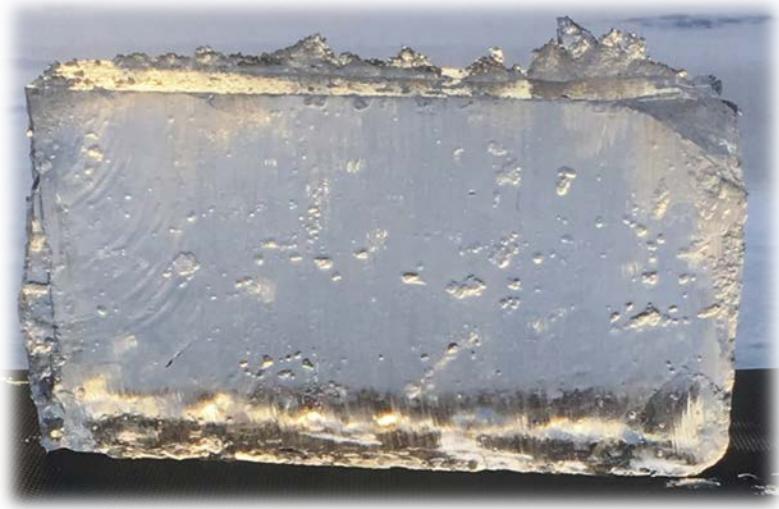
“Getting By On Less”

Summary:

It's early December and we have far less ice than we usually have at this time of the year. Yet People are traveling. They need to – for many different reasons – including the high expense of travel by air.

With the recent increase in traffic to and from Bethel over the weekend a small BSAR team did a survey of conditions on *established trails* to our neighboring communities. The area covered was from Bethel to Napaskiak, Kwethluk, and Akiachak.

This is what was observed.



Good Clear Ice: the safest, strongest kind of ice. This sample was taken in front of the Lomack Beach but was only 4" thick

Overall Ice Conditions:

Dozens of ice measurements were taken along the routes currently being used by travelers. These measurements show that there is a consistent 6" of good ice where People are driving snow machines and four wheelers. Areas away from the trail may be thinner though so stick to the heaviest used trails.

In the areas where it froze rough – like the area from Brown Slough to Straight Slough – the ice is quite a bit thicker. Measurements in these rough ice areas showed from 10" to 16" of ice. Sloughs are thicker as well.

From Akiachak upstream the River is pretty much all rough but not as rough as some years. It's a good thing the water got a chance to drop before it froze. There is some shell ice, but in most areas there are enough good beaches to drive on.



Rough River above Akiachak

Open Water:

The total number of open holes is unknown at this time but several were observed from a distance.

NO OPEN WATER IS MARKED AT THIS TIME

BSAR and other village SAR teams will be working on these as soon as we can get an aerial survey to locate them all.



Deadly Zone: Kuskokwuak Slough has numerous large open holes both below and above Kwethluk



Open Hole in Front of the Bethel Bluffs

Trails:

Bethel to Napaskiak: this trail uses Oscarville Slough all the way to Oscarville. There is a marked trail across the Kuskokwim from this village to Napaskiak. ***There is no River trail to Napakiak at this time.***

Bethel to Kwethluk: this trail uses Straight Slough then goes across the Kuskokwim going into the portage on the east side of the River coming out a couple of bends inside Church Slough. Coming out to the River at the Upper End of Church Slough the trail follows the west bank past Tupuknuk Slough then crosses over into the Akiachak Channel to use Max's portage coming out right across from the mouth of the Kwethluk River..

**DO NOT USE THE KUSKOKWUAK CHANNEL – THERE ARE NUMEROUS OPEN HOLES
BELOW KWETHLUK**

**FOLLOW THE MARKERS FROM THE WEST BANK ABOVE TUPUKNUK SLOUGH TO MAX'S
PORTAGE**

There is no trail above Kwethluk at this time



Oscarville – Napaskiak Trail Markers



Markers on Kwethluk Trail – from the west bank above Tupuknuk Slough over to Max's Portage

Bethel to Akiachak: this trail is all by back trail at this time. It **does not** use the section of the Kuskokwim from near the mouth of Tubungaluk to the mouth of the Gweek. Instead it is using the route further back from the River that comes out a couple of bends inside the Gweek. ***There is no established trail above Akiachak at this time. Travel to Akiak is by back trail.***

Tuluksak to Akiak – no established trail on the River. Numerous open holes. Travel is by back trail on the east side of the Kuskokwim.

Even the back trails have caution areas – especially those blackfish creeks and grassy areas.

Closing:

We are way behind schedule on where freeze up should be but we understand that People need to travel.

Be careful, stick to the well-used trails, and please, please don't drink and travel.

Thing will slowly get better and Kuskokwim Search and Rescue groups all along the River will be out working to keep travelers safe as the Holidays get closer.

That's the report.

Thank you and Safe Travels from BSAR.

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