

Appendix I

Cultural History of the Yukon Flats Region

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.1 Previous Research 1

1.2 Overview of Regional Prehistory 1

1.3 Overview of Regional History 3

1.4 Overview of Ethnohistory 3

 1.4.1 Russian Period 6

 1.4.2 American Period 6

1.5 Mining History 7

1.6 References 12

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Mid-Nineteenth Century Gwich'in Bands 9

Figure 2 Distribution of Gwich'in Tribes, 1900-1935 10

Figure 3 Remnants of Trails 11

1.1 Previous Research

The earliest archaeological survey work in the Yukon Flats region was conducted along the Yukon River channel by boat in the first-half of the twentieth century (Rainey 1939; Hrdlička 1943, de Laguna 1947, Geist 1953, Guthrie 1996). Archaeological surveys conducted in the Yukon Flats region during the second half of the twentieth century included:

- Surveys for the Rampart Dam project in the 1960s by West et al. (1965).
- Surveys around Old John Lake in the foothills of the Brooks Range by Hall and McKennan (1973).
- Surveys at Chalkyitsik by Mobley (1982, 2005).
- Studies along the Porcupine River in the Yukon by Morlan (1973) and Le Blanc (1984).
- Studies of caribou fences in northeastern Alaska and Yukon, Canada (Roseneau 1973; Warbelow et al. 1975).
- Surveys in the Chandalar area (McKennan 1965).
- Surveys of the larger Doyon Region (Andrews 1977).
- Studies of the Sheenjek River and Christian River areas (Blazina-Joyce 1989).
- Surveys in the upper Beaver Creek drainage (Will 1986).
- Surveys along the Yukon River:
 - from the vicinity of Purgatory upstream to Fort Yukon;
 - the lower reaches of the Porcupine, Sheenjek, and Christian rivers; and
 - the upper and lower mouths of Birch Creek upstream to the vicinity of Birch Creek village (Slaughter 1984).
- Surveys along the Hodzana River by P-III Associates (Smith 1984).

In the 1970s, construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez, Alaska, spurred archaeological survey and excavations in the vicinity of the pipeline (Cook 1977). A proposed natural gas pipeline through Alaska and Canada (see Section 4.24.4.3 of the Final Environmental Impacts Statement [EIS], Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline) has been the subject of both literature reviews (Humphrey et al. 1975) as well as field surveys for cultural resources (Aigner 1978; 1979a, b, c; 1983).

1.2 Overview of Regional Prehistory

As few sites in the region have been dated using radiocarbon methods, sequences in the culture history must be inferred on a regional scale from comparisons of changing tool inventories and relative dating methods based on the positions of key artifacts in the stratigraphy of sites. There are few documented prehistoric (before recorded time) sites in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge; Alaska Department of Natural Resources Office of History and Archaeology 2006). The lack of documented prehistoric sites or cultural resources in the Yukon Flats region is due to several factors. The primary factor is the limited number of surveys conducted there as compared to other regions, which is partially due to the challenging topography and the difficulty

in excavating in wetlands and frozen soils. An additional factor may be the cultural practices of the prehistoric people living in the region. Researchers have commented on the paucity of artifacts and archaeological features in Interior Alaskan sites (Shinkwin 1977, Workman 1996). Some elders say that the reason for the paucity of artifacts is that “the people before them . . . were always on the move. They carried little and didn’t need a lot of material things to make a living because whatever they needed was already provided for by the land. . . . Also, to leave tangible things behind on the land was a sign of disrespect to the Earth” (Matthew et al. 1999). The lack of abundant material remains has partly contributed to the lack of interest in Interior archaeology by researchers.

During the late Wisconsin glaciation (approximately 25,000 to 10,000 years ago), Alaska and Siberia were joined as a single land mass called Beringia. Much of northern Alaska, including the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, was ice-free during this period. Continental glaciers occasionally filled the intermountain (Cordilleran) plateau to the south, and alpine glaciers carved valleys and protruded into the Yukon Flats from the Brooks Range to the north and the Alaska Range to the south, until climactic warming caused their retreat. The steppe-tundra landscape of the intermountain plateau was dominated by grasses with areas of birch and alder forest, making it a rich environment for late Pleistocene fauna including bison, horses, and mammoths. Humans hunted these animals, as indicated by sites outside the study area of American Paleo-Arctic tradition and Paleoindian tradition, or Nenana complex, which date to as early as 11,800 to 11,000 years ago.

Early sites in Interior Alaska are known from the Tanana and Nenana river drainages south of the Yukon Flats (Dixon 1993). The cultural affinity of these early sites continues to be the subject of archaeological investigations (West 1996). American Paleo-Arctic tradition sites include burins, microblades, wedge-shaped microblade cores, and bifaces (flat, triangular stone tools worked on both sides). Nenana complex sites were part of the Paleoindian tradition. Paleoindian archaeological sites, known for their fluted points, are documented on the North Slope of Alaska across the Continental Divide from the Yukon River drainage (Reanier 1995; Kunz et al. 2003) and in the Yukon Territory east of the Yukon Flats. Based on the early sites in areas surrounding the Yukon Flats area, the potential exists for locating early cultural sites along the Yukon and Porcupine rivers and in other parts of the Refuge. Bluffs, caves, and fluvial and lacustrine terraces and benches along the rivers and sloughs are landforms with good potential for well-preserved early sites, as well as more recent archaeological materials (Thorson and Dixon 1984).

The following prehistoric culture chronology of the northern boreal forests and forest edges largely corresponds to the modern distribution of western Athabascans. Northern Archaic tradition assemblages in interior Alaska date to approximately 6,000 to 6,500 years ago. Side-notched projectile points are the diagnostic artifacts of the tradition, and associated artifacts include end scrapers, bifacial knives, tchi-thos (boulder spall scrapers), side scrapers, and notched pebble axes. The Twelve Mile Bluff site, located downstream from Circle on the Yukon River, is the location where the only diagnostic Northern Archaic side-notched projectile point in the area was found.

The Tuktu/Palisades complex dates from 4,500 to 6,000 years ago. Campbell (1962) defined Tuktu on the basis of his work at Anaktuvuk Pass. The Palisades assemblages are similar to Tuktu, except for the absence of microblades in the Palisades assemblages. Palisades assemblages were first located at Cape Krusenstern and Onion Portage in northwestern Alaska. Sites throughout Alaska dating to about 5,000 years ago are associated with the Tuktu phase of the

Northern Archaic tradition (West et al. 1965). Prehistoric localities dated to Tuktuk age (4,500 to 6,000 years ago), as well as more recent Kavik complex sites and early historic period sites, have been found at Old John Lake in the foothills of the Brooks Range (Hall and McKennan 1973). Historic Gwich'in groups are likely descended from the Kavik peoples.

To the east of the Refuge in the Yukon Territory, the late prehistoric period of the northern Yukon and other areas of the western Subarctic are represented by sites along the Porcupine River such as the Rat Indian Creek site. This stratified Athabascan site contained two phases of occupation: the Old Chief Phase (900 B.C. to A.D. 700) and the Klo-kut phase dating from circa A.D. 700 until the arrival of Euro-American traders (Morlan 1973, Le Blanc 1984). Athabascan tradition sites include those ranging in age from A.D. 1000 to the period of historic contact with Euro-Americans in the nineteenth century. New cultural practices at Athabascan tradition sites include human cremation (Workman 1975 *in* Shinkwin 1979).

During work conducted in the early 1970s, researchers located and mapped the remains of late prehistoric and historic caribou fences in northeastern Alaska and the adjacent Yukon Territory (Roseneau 1973; Warbelow et al. 1975; Andrews 1977). These fences funneled caribou into semicircular surrounds during their spring and fall migrations through the foothills of the Alaska Range. The use and construction of these structures was described to McKennan during his ethnographic work in the region (McKennan 1965). Dating of these fences placed the earliest year of construction at A.D. 1789, with mean dates of construction falling between approximately A.D. 1830 and A.D. 1860 (Blazina-Joyce 1989).

There is a gap in the Alaskan archaeological record between the late prehistoric/early historic Athabascan components of the last 1,000 years and the most recent of the Northern Archaic tradition sites. This gap results from a number of possible causes, including limited field survey, inaccessible sites because of depth below loess, loss of sites from erosion, cultural proscriptions against behaviors that would create visible sites, and historical depopulation because of climate change or volcanism (Moodie et al. 1992; West and Donaldson 2002).

1.3 Overview of Regional History

The following section includes a description of Native culture groups living in or near the Refuge, a discussion of events that occurred in the area during the Russian and American periods, and a discussion of mining history in the region. A more detailed history of each community in the region can be found in the socioeconomic section of the EIS (see Section 3.5.5).

1.4 Overview of Ethnohistory

The communities and people of the mid-Yukon region share a long history of interaction. The settlement patterns and activities varied depending upon the season, geographic location, type of activity, and the social units involved. The size and composition of social units varied throughout the year. A few related individuals, families, or households dispersed across the landscape in semi-permanent winter settlements within each band's territory. Larger aggregated groups, such as summer fish camps, consisted of members of one or more bands and included a small number of related families living together, often cooperatively, pursuing trade or harvesting resources such as caribou and salmon. Some resources could best be harvested by larger cooperative groups, who could then process and divide the larger harvest allowed by efficiencies of scale. Smaller groups of hunters made trips from the more sedentary settlements to hunt caribou and

moose in winter, and women and children pursued small game, berries, and plants in the summer. During transition seasons in spring and fall, the larger groups dispersed, and single families or small groups hunted, trapped, and fished.

Athabascan Indians speaking the Gwich'in (formerly written Kutchin or Kutcha-Kutchin) language occupied a large portion of interior Alaska and the Yukon Territory in the late prehistoric and early historic periods. The Refuge is smaller than the area originally occupied by the Gwich'in. The seasonally utilized territory of the five Alaskan Gwich'in populations traditionally included some portions of the Refuge. **Figure 1** depicts approximate mid-nineteenth century locations of Gwich'in territories based on the work of Richard Slobodin (1981). Research on the historic boundaries of languages and tribes in the region is an ongoing issue for researchers, and there has been confusion about the names of peoples and languages (Raboff 2001). **Figure 2** depicts the approximate boundaries for Gwich'in tribes in the late historic period, approximately 1900-1935, based on other contemporary research (Osgood 1934, 1936; West 1959).

The Dihaii Gwich'in occupied the upland region between the middle fork of the Koyukuk and the Chandalar rivers south to the hills just north of present day Stevens Village and Beaver (**Figure 2**). No traditional settlements of the Dihaii are known and no modern Gwich'in villages are located within the former territory of the Dihaii. The population was forced to the east because of warfare with neighboring Iñupiat groups (Burch and Mishler 1995, Raboff 2001). A small number of refugees from this warfare resettled among the Netsi Gwich'in between 1875 and 1900 (McKenna 1965, Andrews 1977).

The Netsi Gwich'in (“residents of the north side”) lived in the region along the Chandalar River East Fork, the middle sections of the Christian, Sheenjek, and Coleen rivers, and the surrounding hills (**Figure 2**). They traditionally used seasonal camps and semi-permanent settlements, such as Arctic Village, Christian, Venetie, and Sheenjek in pursuit of fish and game. The Netsi Gwich'in traded with the Iñupiat on the Arctic coast. In 1863, Archdeacon McDonald of Fort Yukon observed that the Chandalar Gwich'in were important providers of caribou meat for the residents of Fort Yukon. Reverend Albert Tritt, a Netsi Gwich'in born in 1880, wrote that his people led a nomadic life, traveling to the Arctic coast, Rampart, Old Crow, the Coleen River and Fort Yukon in the 1880s and 1890s. With the advent of firearms in the early 1900s, family groups began to gather more permanently at several locations.

The Kutcha Gwich'in inhabited the east-central portion of the Yukon Flats from the lower limits of the Chandalar and Sheenjek rivers, and along the Yukon River southeasterly to the vicinity of Circle (**Figure 2**). Semi-permanent camps were located throughout the area even as the people began to live year-round at the Fort Yukon trading post starting in the mid-1800s when the Hudson Bay Company established itself in the region.

The Tranjik Gwich'in occupied settlements and camps along the Porcupine and Black rivers in Alaska, as well as in the hills and along the larger lakes of the region (**Figure 2**). Traditional semi-permanent camps in the early historic and historic period were located at Shuman House, Burnt Paw, Old Rampart, Bluefish Lake, Ohtig Lake, Salmon Village, and Chalkyitsik. Chalkyitsik is the only remaining permanent settlement in the traditional territory of the Tranjik Gwich'in (Nelson 1973).

The Dendu Gwich'in traditionally occupied the Yukon Flats south of the Yukon River as far as the Crazy, White, and Steese mountains (**Figure 2**). The area east and south of the modern village of Beaver was part of Dendu Gwich'in territory (Schneider 1976). Semi-permanent camps were focused in the area of Birch Creek, on larger lakes in the region, and at the lower mouth of Birch Creek. Before 1900, a community called Old Village existed downstream from the present Birch Creek community.

The Athabascan Indians of the mid-Yukon region, specifically the Gwich'in, began to participate in the fur trade in the first-half of the nineteenth century. Trading posts downstream of Gwich'in territory at Nulato on the Yukon River, where a Russian trading post was built in 1839, and Fort Yukon in the Yukon Flats, as well as traditional trade at the Tanana and Yukon river junctions encouraged some Gwich'in to operate extensive traplines during the winter. Trade goods exchanged for furs enabled the Gwich'in to acquire desirable items such as kettles and cooking implements, firearms and ammunition, metal tools, beads, and cloth. Whympers (1966) and Dall (1970) reported that the few bands of the Tennuth-Gwich'in, or Birch Indians, who may be the Birch Creek Gwich'in residing between the mouth of the Porcupine and the Tanana rivers (**Figure 2**; Slobodin 1981), had succumbed to scarlet fever. Dall (1970) recorded an abandoned Gwich'in settlement near the present location of Stevens Village. Whympers (1966) described the first Gwich'in village above the "Ramparts" as Chief Senitee's (Senati or Shanyaati), a legendary Gwich'in trading chief and shaman. In 1880, Petroff reported Senati's village near the mouth of the Tanana (de Laguna 1947). In 1883, the U.S. Army explorer Lieutenant Schwatka (1900) described Senati's village as being at the rapids on the north bank of the Yukon River. During the nineteenth century, the Koyukon-Gwich'in boundary was probably downriver from its present location, and in the vicinity of the "Ramparts" (de Laguna 1947, VanStone and Goddard 1981; Sumida 1988).

Knowledge of the exact locations and distributions of Interior Athabascan groups in the nineteenth century is complicated by historical factors. For example, few written records accurately or consistently identify individuals or groups. Interior Athabascan groups moved frequently throughout the century, in response to the new economic forces of the fur trade, population changes resulting from diseases, the attraction of life at settled communities around trading posts and stores, and the disruptions to wildlife resources caused by the gold seekers entering the region. The gold rush also provided economic opportunities not previously available to Natives. Athabascans were employed as guides or pilots on riverboats. Trapping income, the sale of firewood to steamboats, and the sale of market hunted meat and handicrafts were only some of the new opportunities (Raboff 2001).

During the late prehistoric and early historic period, a number of conflicts between Iñupiat and Athabascan people resulted in changes to their residential areas. For example, two Gwich'in bands were forced to move from the Brooks Range because of conflicts with Koyukon and Iñupiat groups, with the Gwich'in survivors retreating to the Yukon Flats following a significant battle at Anaktuvuk Pass in 1844. Koyukon groups moved into the vacated territory, as did Kobuk and Upper Colville River Iñupiat, forming a new border at Allakaket between Koyukon and Iñupiat and between the Stevens Village Koyukon and Beaver's multiethnic population (Japanese-American, Euro-Americans, Iñupiat, Koyukon and Gwich'in) along the Yukon River (Raboff 2001, Sumida 1989). Before the establishment of the village of Beaver in 1910, the influence of the Iñupiat was indirect, with conflict on the margins of territories as noted above as well as trade relations between the Iñupiat and Gwich'in.

1.4.1 Russian Period

Early Russian forays into the Yukon River region may have begun in the late-eighteenth century with expeditions overland from Lake Iliamna through the upper Kuskokwim River. By the early nineteenth century, the Russian American Company made efforts to access the new trade possibilities by building trading posts along the coast and at Nulato, a Koyukon village on the Yukon side of the Unalakleet portage. Russians and Creoles working for the Russian American Company began exploring the Yukon River from the mouth in the early nineteenth century and proceeded up river as far as the confluence with the Tanana River. Nuklukayet, at the confluence, was where trade between the Gwich'in, Tanana, Koyukon, and Iñupiat took place. Russian expansion along the Yukon River was limited to establishing a few trading posts, the community of Nulato, and seasonal ventures upriver.

While the Russians had territorial claims in Alaska from 1741 to the 1867, the Hudson Bay Company, was working at usurping Russia's monopoly on trade within Alaska and along its coast. From the Canadian side, the British explored the eastern part of the mid-Yukon region in the mid-nineteenth century. John Bell explored the Peel River in 1839, building Fort McPherson in 1840. He explored to the west in 1842, locating the Rat (or Bell) River, a tributary of the Porcupine River. In 1844, he continued down the Porcupine River to its junction with the Yukon River. The Hudson Bay Company was steadily establishing trading posts closer and closer to Russian territory along river drainages until 1847 when Alexander Hunter Murray of the Hudson Bay Company established Fort Yukon at the confluence of the Porcupine and Yukon rivers, despite his suspicions that it was in Russian, and not British, territory. The Hudson Bay Company operated at Fort Yukon from 1846 until 1869, when the post was moved out of American territory (Caulfield 1983).

1.4.2 American Period

Early American influences in the Yukon Flats region likely included changes in the number and type of trade goods available to the people of the interior region in the 1850s. These goods were traded through intermediaries from whaling ships along the Arctic coasts. In 1866, the Western Union Telegraph expedition began to explore and clear land along the Yukon River for a proposed telegraph cable to cross the Bering Straits. The project was never completed. The purchase of Alaska in 1867 changed the ownership of the trading posts from the Russian America Company to the Hutchinson, Kohl and Company, later known as the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC). The ACC moved quickly to monopolize the fur trade throughout Alaska. Other American fur and trading companies sought markets in the Yukon district because the Yukon Flats was, and continues to be, an important furbearer habitat. For a brief period, competing companies challenged the monopoly of Hutchinson, Kohl and Company/ACC, sometimes resulting in armed conflicts.

Following the 1867 sale of Alaska to the United States, the U.S. Army sent an expedition to Fort Yukon to determine the longitude of the Fort and evict the British to the Canadian side of the border. In 1883, ACC purchased the Western Fur and Trading Company and Parrott and Company, acquiring the steamer Yukon in the purchase (Mercier 1986). These acquisitions effectively ended competition on the Yukon River for furs, causing prices to collapse and making fur trapping less appealing to the residents of the area. Between 1880 and 1890, harvests dropped from 75,000 skins to 20,000 skins (VanStone 1979). Slow and steady fur trading was encouraged by the advent of steamboats in the 1880s, and whaling along the Beaufort Coast increased the

range of trade goods available to Interior people along traditional trade routes. Little change occurred in the Yukon River region until the 1897 discovery of gold in the Klondike created a mass movement of people into the interior of the Yukon Territory that spilled down the Yukon River (VanStone 1979). The Klondike Gold Rush necessitated establishing government services in the interior of Alaska (VanStone 1974, 1979).

1.5 Mining History

Throughout the last 30 years of the nineteenth century, individual prospectors and small groups of men explored for gold throughout the mid and upper Yukon River region. Prospectors found small amounts of gold at Pitka's Bar at the confluence of Harrison and Birch creeks as well as numerous tributaries. Prospectors filed claims at some locations, but most of these claims were prospected and then abandoned. A typical pattern for miners was to spend summers exploring and prospecting for gold and winters engaged in fur trapping or drift mining. In 1894, Manny Hill from Old Portage and Jack McQuesten from Fortymile established a store at Circle City (now known as Circle). U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) geologists Spurr, Goodrich, and Schrader investigated the Birch Creek country in 1896 (Spurr 1900). Most of the Birch Creek gold mining took place in the upper reaches of Birch Creek, upstream of the study area.

Despite the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897 and 1898, gold production continued in the Birch Creek district with approximately 200 miners working 60 to 80 claims in 1906 (Brooks 1907). Gold extraction techniques became increasingly mechanized and required greater capital investment than the earlier methods. Ditches were constructed for hydraulic mining operations on Mammoth Creek by 1908, and a hydraulic giant was operating on Eagle Creek by 1909. Gold mining companies bought up and consolidated blocks of mining claims. Dredges were freighted into the district in the winter over frozen creeks and trails. Bulldozers were introduced in the 1930s. During World War II, gold production was closed down as nonessential to the war effort. Since that time, mining activity has risen and fallen in response to gold prices and costs of operations under stricter environmental requirements.

The Yukon Flats region is bordered by mountainous regions where mineral exploration took place. The Wiseman and Coldfoot district, located northwest of the Yukon Flats and Livengood, Fairbanks, and Birch Creek districts to the south of the Yukon Flats, were the locations of gold exploration and development throughout the twentieth century. The Yukon Flats was more of a transportation corridor between these districts than the site of any sustained exploration or development. From 1909 to 1911, the Alaska Road Commission (ARC) built a winter trail and shelter cabins along the Chatanika to Beaver route. Beaver is located at the end of an ARC trail connecting the Yukon River with Caro, which served the gold fields on the Chandalar River. After the Chandalar gold rush ended, Beaver became a center for trade for fur trappers. North of Beaver, a wagon road and 17 shelter cabins continued to the Wiseman and Coldfoot district. The ARC later built shelter cabins along the trail that ran parallel to Beaver Creek itself (Alaska Board of Road Commissioners 1912). The 1926 ARC annual report depicted seven shelter cabins along the Chatanika to Beaver trail (Alaska Board of Road Commissioners 1926). The Beaver Creek river ice was rarely used as a trail because warm springs and overflow made the ice unstable (Alaska Board of Road Commissioners 1931). The Yukon River was used in summer and winter as a transportation route. Mid-twentieth century USGS maps depicted the approximate location of three portages between the Yukon River and Birch Creek, which roughly parallels the Yukon River upstream from Fort Yukon to Circle.

Prindle (1910) reported that the valley of Victoria Creek was the site of a gold stampede in 1905; however, not enough gold was found to maintain the gold rush. The valleys of Washington, Faith, Preacher, and Victoria creeks and their tributaries were noted as areas where most work had been done on gold-bearing gravels outside of the Fairbanks district. Mining cabins and relics from the twentieth century are located throughout upper Beaver Creek. Most are dilapidated, and the Bureau of Land Management (1988) did not consider any of the sites within the Beaver Creek Wild River to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as of the mid-1980s.

Land transportation affected gold mining economics and logistics, not only in the Birch Creek District, but also in the Livengood, Tolovana, and Beaver Creek districts to the west and the Coldfoot and Wiseman districts further north. Some routes followed Native trade trails, such as the route between Circle City (Circle) and the Tanana Valley, which eventually became the route of the Steese Highway (Ducker 1983). Other routes, such as the Fairbanks-Livengood Trail, developed as prospectors and miners sought the easiest and least time-consuming routes to the gold fields. Parker (2003) describes three overland routes that were used until the Elliott Highway was built in 1938 to replace the Olnes Trail. Roadhouses, where meals and shelter could be obtained, were operated a day's travel apart along the trail. Another route to Livengood required travelers to go by boat up the Tolovana River, and then proceed by a tramway to reach a wagon trail. Air transportation also played an increasing role throughout the twentieth century. The 1:1,000,000 scale USGS base map that West et al. (1965) used to depict their archaeology survey locations shows the remnants of the trails built earlier in the century (**Figure 3**; Alaska Department of Natural Resources Land Record Information System 2001). West et al. (1965) did not investigate any of these trails or sites, as they were limited by boat transportation to the Yukon River and its immediate environs.



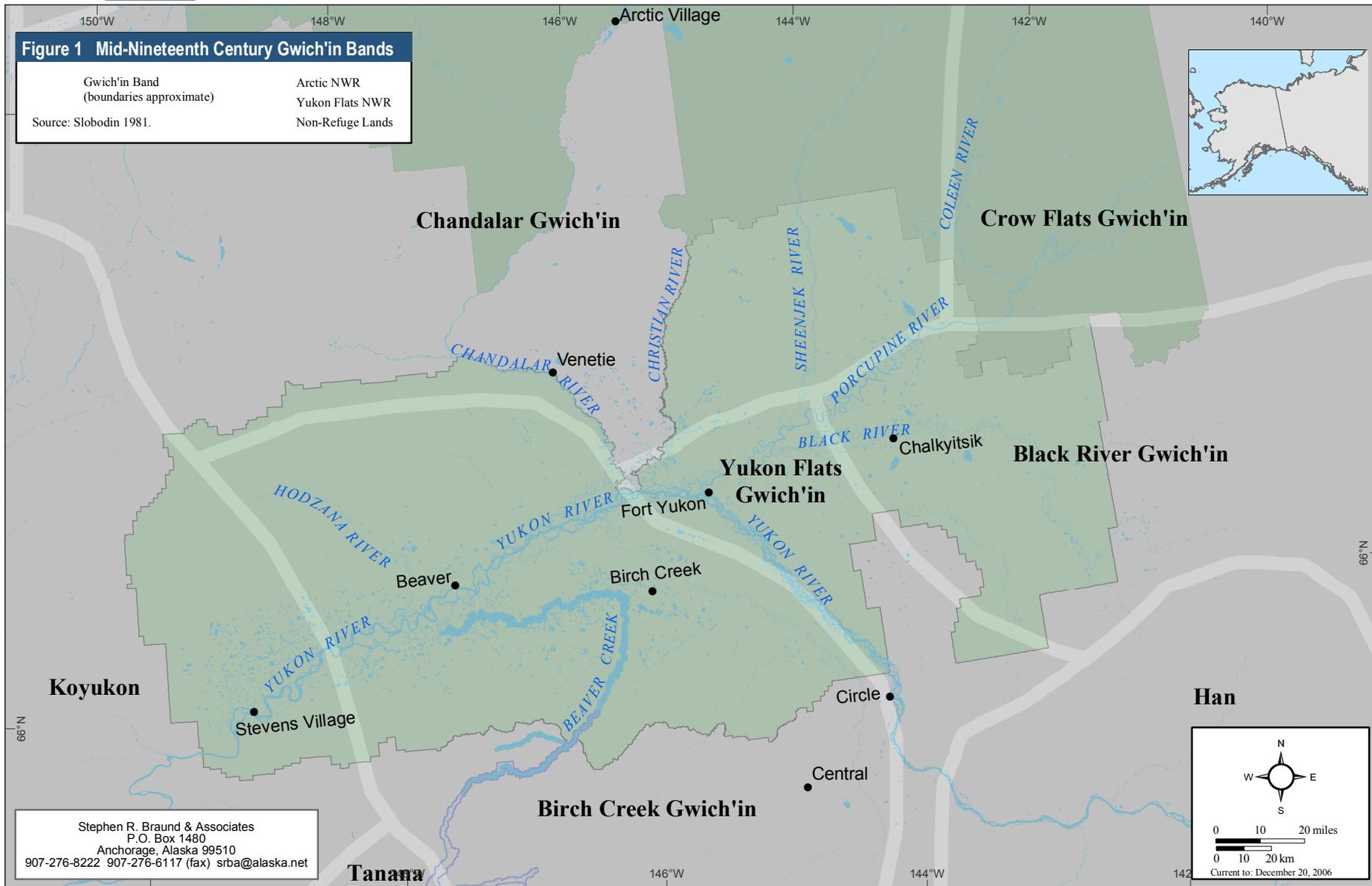
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Proposed Land Exchange and Acquisition EIS

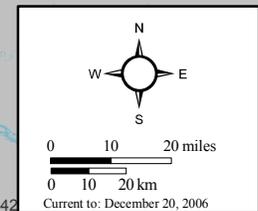
Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Alaska

Figure 1 Mid-Nineteenth Century Gwich'in Bands

Gwich'in Band (boundaries approximate)	Arctic NWR
	Yukon Flats NWR
Source: Slobodin 1981.	Non-Refuge Lands



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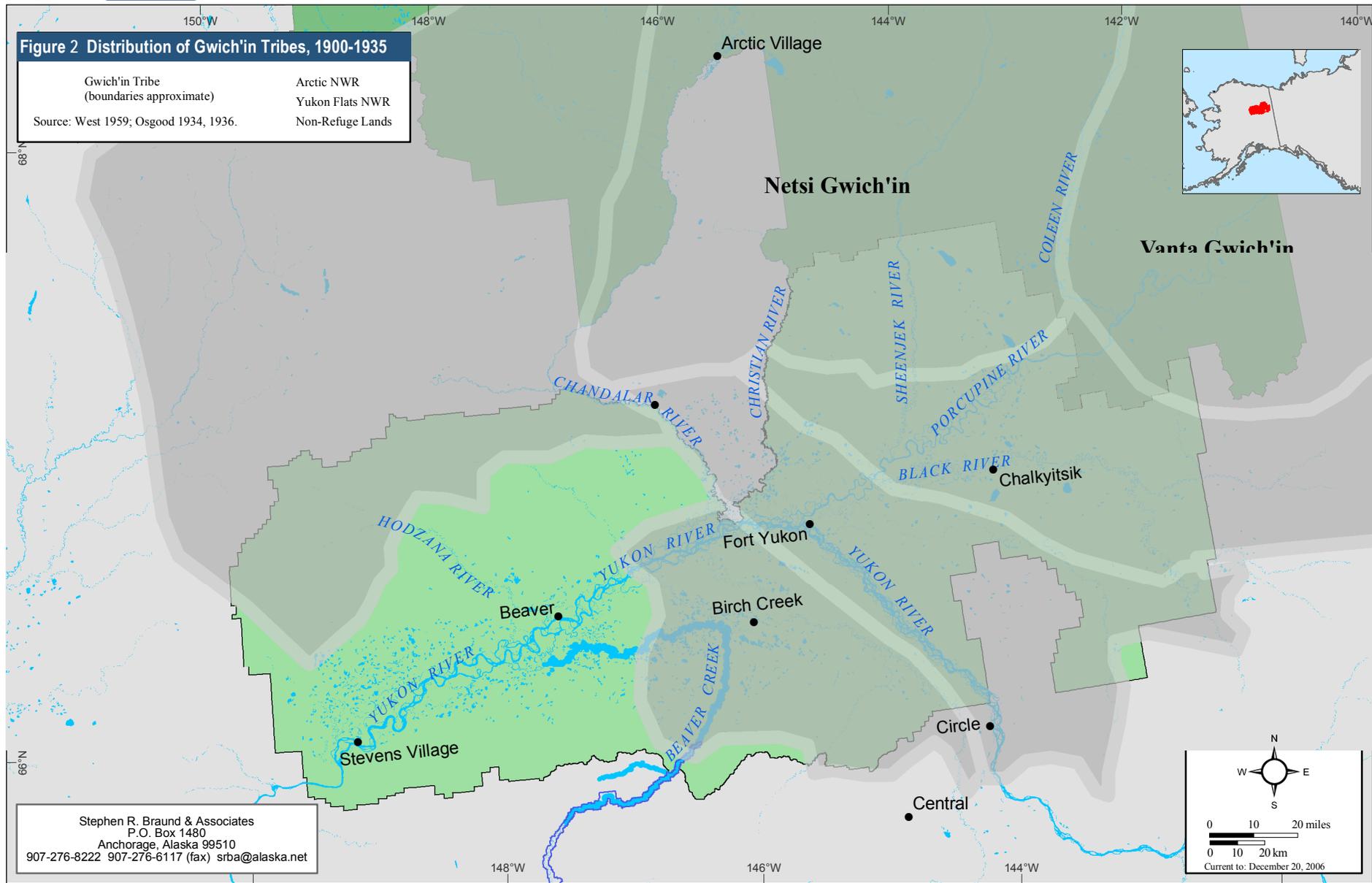
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Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Alaska

Proposed Land Exchange and Acquisition EIS

Figure 2 Distribution of Gwich'in Tribes, 1900-1935

Gwich'in Tribe (boundaries approximate)	Arctic NWR
	Yukon Flats NWR
Source: West 1959; Osgood 1934, 1936.	Non-Refuge Lands



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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

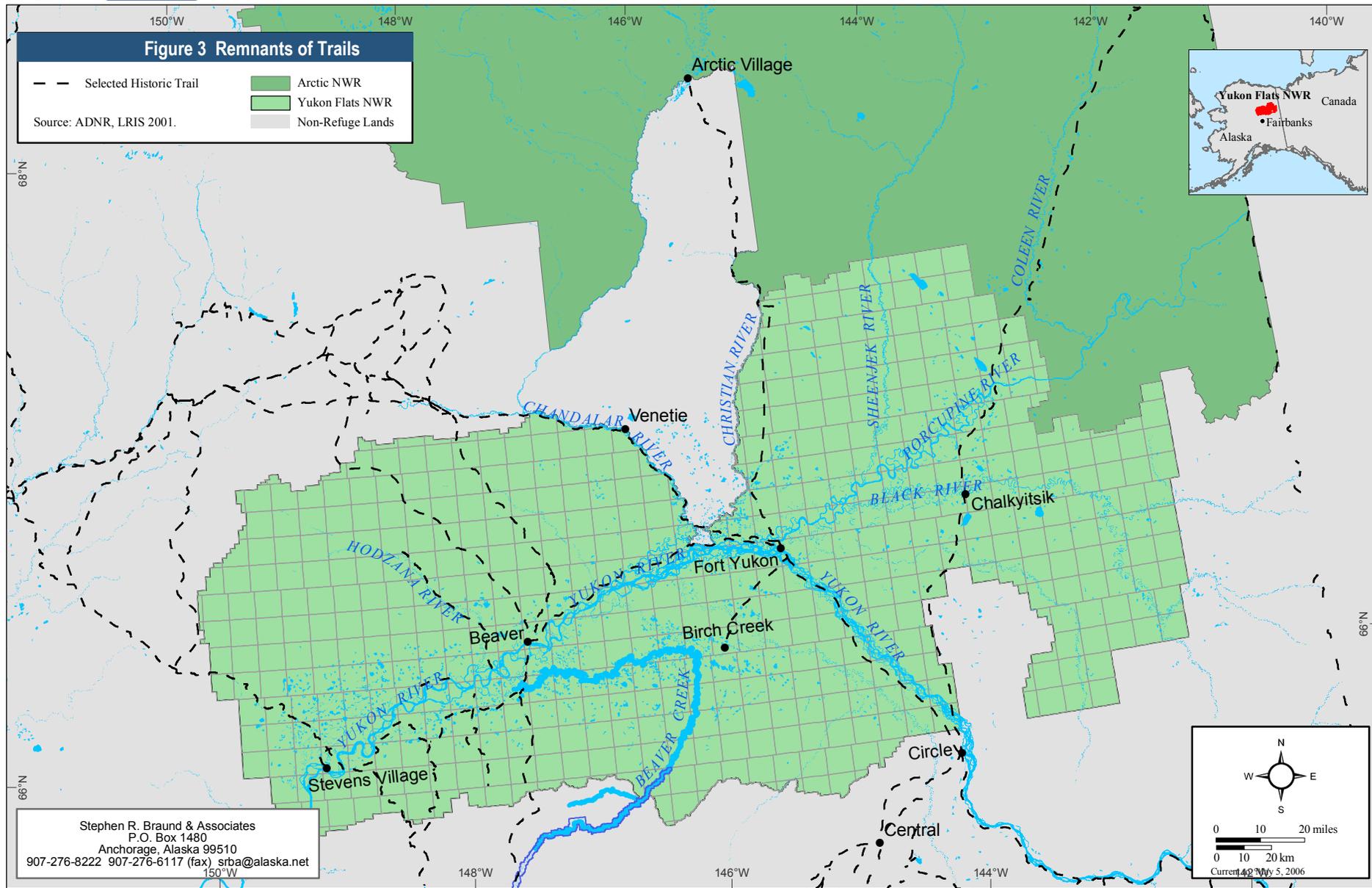
Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge Alaska

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Figure 3 Remnants of Trails

- Selected Historic Trail
- Arctic NWR
- Yukon Flats NWR
- Non-Refuge Lands

Source: ADNR, LRIS 2001.



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