



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Floating the Selawik River

Selawik National Wildlife Refuge



The Selawik River originates at 600 feet near the low divide to the Koyukuk-Yukon River watershed. The upper half is designated a Wild River and flows through small mountain ranges and hills in a boreal forest setting. The lower portion meanders slowly through a vast wetlands complex dominated by tundra. The river empties into Selawik Lake not far below the village of Selawik. Depending on the time of year, you are likely to see moose, caribou, ptarmigan, waterfowl, and an occasional black bear. The river straddles the Arctic Circle and is normally ice-free from June through September.

Watercraft:	Canoes and kayaks are recommended. Rafts are not suitable due to strong up-stream winds.
Difficulty:	The entire river is Class I, with shallow gravel riffles, sweepers, and boulders in the upper third. Winds can be a factor, with velocities occasionally reaching 20-30 mph. The lower river is flatwater with little current, and has more motorboat traffic.
Trip Length:	Trip duration depends on how much time is spent actively floating each day. A trip of approximately 7 days can be planned if you arrange a float plane for both your drop-off and pick-up. Alternately, you can spend 14-16 days to travel from the headwaters to the village of Selawik. In any case, poor weather conditions can delay your pick-up, so be sure to plan accordingly. The best time to float is in June while water levels are at peak.
Access Points:	IN: Get dropped off by a float plane in the upper river, near the headwaters. Work with your air-taxi to select drop-off location. Expect to portage all your gear to the river after being dropped off on a small lake. OUT: Arrange float plane pick-up by your air taxi on the river, below the confluence with the Tagagawik River. <i>Or utilize scheduled commercial air service from Selawik village to Kotzebue.</i>
Topo Maps:	Shungnak B-2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and Selawik B-1, C-1, 2, 3.

For more information, contact the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge in Kotzebue, Alaska at (907) 442-3799 or email selawik@fws.gov.

NOTE: Privately owned Native allotments can be found throughout the Selawik Refuge. These are small, private parcels of land used by local people for subsistence and personal activities. Respect the rights of allotment owners and avoid camping and hiking in these locations, especially where tent frames, fish racks, orange survey tape, or other evidence of use is visible.