

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER VALUES

JOHN RIVER | Alaska | Fall 2018

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE • U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT AND THE JOHN RIVER


The national wild and scenic rivers system was created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 USC 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, or recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, October 2, 1968

Rivers may be designated by Congress or, if certain requirements are met, the Secretary of the Interior. Each river is administered by either a federal or state agency. Designated segments need not include the entire river and may include tributaries. Rivers may be managed through a partnership with communities, special councils, and state governments.

The John River flows 136 miles from the 6,000-foot-high Endicott Mountains to its confluence with the Koyukuk River. The river's notably low valley and narrow corridor contribute to its unique character. In order to protect the John River's free-flowing characteristics, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs), the 52 miles within Gates of the Arctic National Park were designated a wild river in 1980 by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) under the provisions of the 1968 National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 96-487). Wild rivers are rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive, and waters unpolluted. These represent the vestiges of primitive America.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values 

Free-flowing Condition 

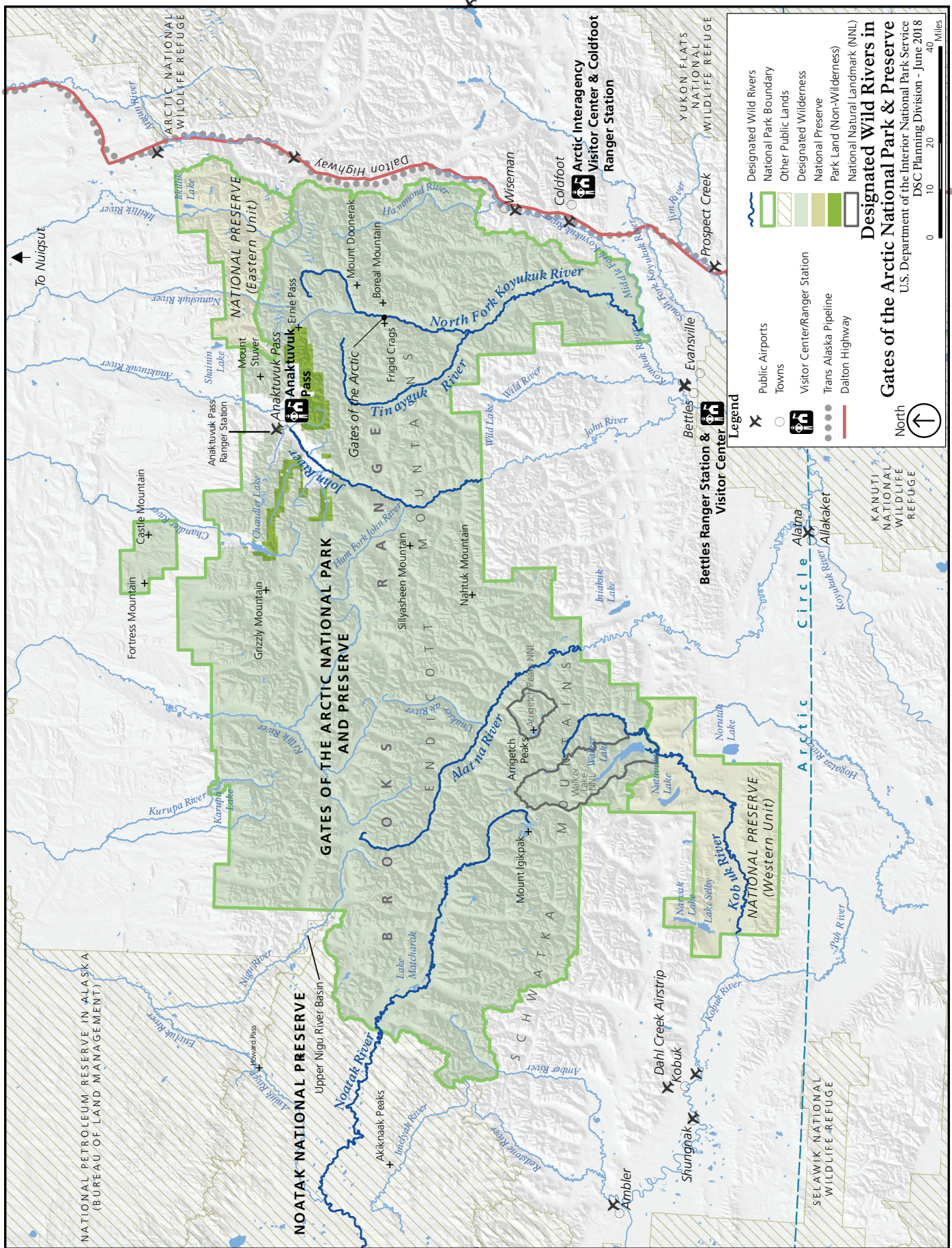
Water Quality 

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER VALUES

Each river in the national system is administered with the goal of protecting and enhancing the values that caused it to be designated. Outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing condition, and water quality form the three pillars of protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.







Designated Wild Rivers in Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve
 U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service
 DSC Planning Division - June 2018

Legend

- Designated Wild Rivers
- National Park Boundary
- Other Public Lands
- Designated Wilderness National Preserve
- Park Land (Non-Wilderness)
- National Natural Landmark (NNL)
- Public Airports
- Towns
- Visitor Center/Ranger Station
- Trans Alaska Pipeline
- Dalton Highway

North ↑

0 10 20 40 Miles

John Wild River Alaska

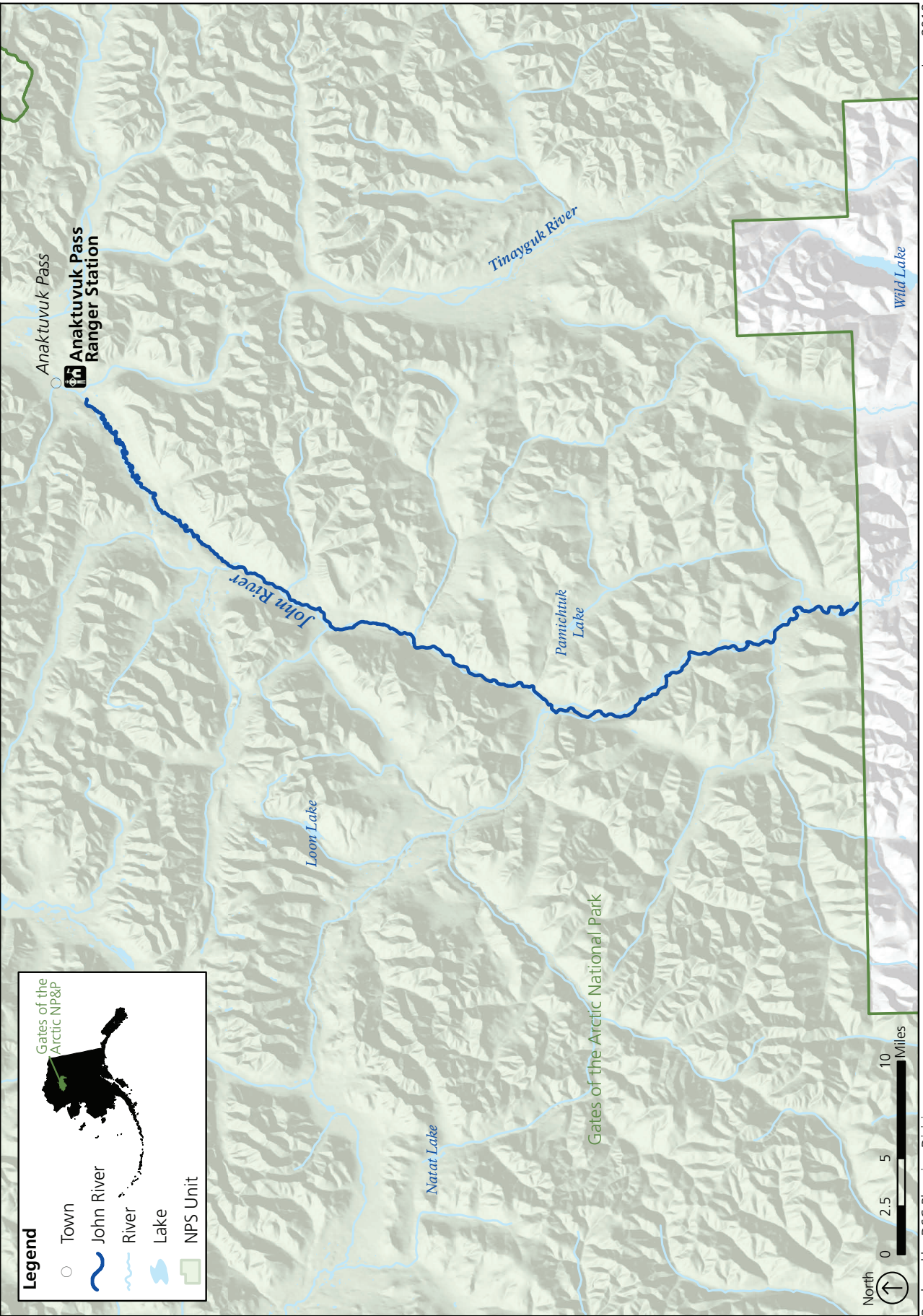
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Legend

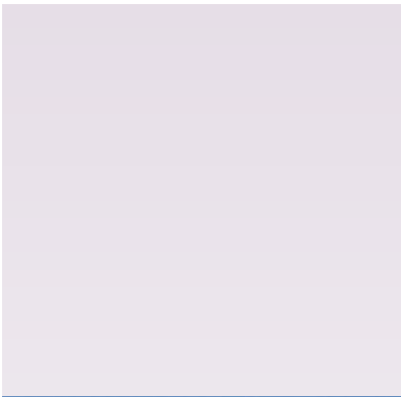
- Town
- John River
- River
- Lake
- NPS Unit

Gates of the Arctic NP&P



June 2018

Produced by DSC Planning Division





OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES

Outstandingly remarkable values are defined by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as the characteristics that make a river worthy of special protection. Thus, the foundation for wild and scenic river management is a clearly defined set of ORVs. The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council has issued criteria for identifying and defining these values. The criteria guidance states that:

An ORV must be river related or dependent. This means that a value must

- be located in the river or on its immediate shorelands (generally within 0.25 miles on either side of the river)
- contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem
- owe its location or existence to the presence of the river

An ORV must also be rare, unique, or exemplary at a comparative regional or national scale. Such a value would be one that is a conspicuous example from among a number of similar values that are themselves uncommon or extraordinary.

The Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council provides additional criteria for assessing each ORV category listed in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, noting that the criteria may be modified to make them more meaningful to a particular river. The council also notes that, while no specific national evaluation guidelines have been developed for the “other similar values” mentioned in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, agencies may assess additional river-related values including, but not limited to, hydrology, paleontology, and botany. Specific criteria for identifying ORVs are included below.

Table 1. Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria for the Wild Rivers in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
Scenic Values	Landscape elements visible from the river and its banks result in notable views that characterize rivers in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. The area and scale used for the comparison of scenic values is typically the physiographic province. Views of iconic features may also be considered and weighed.
Recreational Values	River-related recreational opportunities attract, or have the potential to attract, visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison or are unique, rare, or exemplary within the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, and boating.



Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
Geologic Values	<p>Examples of geologic features, processes, or phenomena are unique or rare within Alaska and/or nationally, either individually or in combination. The river corridor contains at least one example of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is unique or rare within the region of comparison. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, may represent a textbook example, and/or may represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, or other geologic structures).</p>
Fish Values	<p>Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of fish populations, habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.</p> <p>Populations</p> <p>The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."</p> <p>Habitat</p> <p>The river provides exceptionally high-quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of "outstandingly remarkable."</p>



Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
<p>Wildlife Values</p>	<p>The river corridor provides exceptionally high-quality and nearly continuous habitat for wildlife. Biological processes along the river corridor have exceptionally high integrity in that they are relatively intact and undisturbed throughout the entire length of the river corridor. Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations, habitat, or a combination of these conditions.</p> <p>Populations</p> <p>The river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique and/or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”</p> <p>Habitat</p> <p>The river corridor provides exceptionally high-quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance and/or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, intrinsically, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”</p>



Concept/ Category	Outstandingly Remarkable Value Criteria
Cultural and Historic Values	<p>Archeological Values</p> <p>The river corridor contains archeological sites and areas important to traditional cultures; these help perpetuate cultural and spiritual traditions among Native Alaskans. Several archeological sites and traditional cultural properties are listed (or are eligible for listing) in the National Register of Historic Places and have unique or rare characteristics, are regionally important for research, or tangibly link Alaska Natives to their heritage. Examples include burial grounds; petroglyphs; the oldest known human-use site in a region; and streams that support traditional agriculture, subsistence fishing, or spiritual ceremonies.</p> <p>Historic Values</p> <p>The river corridor contains at least one site or feature associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare or unique in the region. Historic structures, buildings, and landscapes are listed (or are eligible for listing) in the National Register of Historic Places, have either national or regional significance, and do not impede or divert the free flow of the river. In most cases, a historic site or feature is at least 50 years old.</p> <p>Prehistoric Values</p> <p>The river corridor contains at least one site where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Alaskans. A site must have unique or rare characteristics or exceptional human-interest value(s). A site may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory, may be rare and represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described, may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups, or may have been used by cultural groups for rare sacred purposes. Many such sites are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.</p>

Based on these criteria and a careful analysis of the designated reaches of the John River, the National Park Service (NPS) has determined that the scenic, wildlife, and cultural ORVs are present. A set of broad statements has been developed that articulates each ORV for the entire river designation.



Scenic Values

The dramatic John River corridor is one of the most scenic in the entire Brooks Range.

Features such as high relief, remarkable plant diversity, exposed rocks, cliffs, and rock outcroppings provide desirable and unique scenic qualities along the John River. Additionally, diverse ecosystems provide the user with ever-changing surroundings. Proximity from the river to adjacent mountains and the notably low valley provide outstanding views within the middle and upper portions of the river. Between the Hunt fork of the John River and the mainstem of the John River, a distinct mountain provides outstanding views of Gray Mountain, Boreal Mountain, and many other peaks that characterize the Brooks Range. From certain sloped areas, sweeping vistas provide exceptional views into the relatively scenic Pamichtuk Lake drainage. The John River drainage is uniquely narrow, about 1 mile wide, with mountain slopes directly bordering the corridor. During autumn, willows and cottonwoods present striking gold coloration. The section of river near the Sheep Creek confluence is exceptionally scenic and provides impressive views of Gunsight Mountain. Near the river's lower sections, impressive rock outcroppings can be viewed along with highly eroded banks.

Wildlife Values

The John River is one of the primary migration routes of three herds of caribou, the western Arctic, the Central Arctic, and the Teshekpuk.

Anaktuvuk Pass, part of the John River valley, is a primary migration route for three herds of caribou—the western Arctic, Central Arctic, and Teshekpuk herds. While many rivers in this region serve as migration corridors for one or more caribou herds, the unique qualities of the John and its valley make it a particularly attractive route for an unusual number of herds.



Cultural Values

The archeology of the John River corridor straddles both the Inupiat and Athapaskan spheres and the river has continued cultural significance into contemporary times.

Due in part to its role as a major route for caribou migration, the John River has long been an important focus of human activity, as demonstrated by a dense accumulation of regionally and nationally significant archeological sites and cultural properties. Although only cursorily inventoried for archeological resources, at least 96 historic and prehistoric archeological sites are known in the John River corridor within Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. The sites represent nearly all phases of human occupation known for the region and represent the Paleoindian, Paleoarctic, Northern Archaic, Arctic Small Tool, and Late Prehistoric Periods; these sites include villages, house remains, game-drive systems, blinds, caches, and numerous stone-tool scatters. The valley straddles both Inupiat and Athapaskan cultural spheres; as such, it has high value for anthropological and archeological studies of prehistoric cultural relations. Sites in and around Anaktuvuk Pass at the head of the John River valley represent an internationally significant archeological district that contains a long and continuous record of human habitation spanning at least 8,000 years and includes several key type sites for archeological cultures that have been defined for northern Alaska. Ethnohistoric sites in the area—and the ethnoarcheological research conducted at the sites—were the basis for major developments in American archeology; these sites continue to hold high research potential and represent continued cultural importance to the inhabitants of Anaktuvuk Pass. A major site complex at Publituk (Puvlatuq) Creek has been used for centuries by Nunamiut people and has high potential for recognition as a significant cultural landscape.





As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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