

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR MR. TSONGAS ON HIS KATMAI NATIONAL PARK AMENDMENT TO
SUBCOMMITTEE PRINT NO. 2

Amendment: Page 23, Lines 17 and 18, strike "three hundred and sixty thousand" and insert in lieu thereof "six hundred and ten thousand"

Mr. Chairman, the purpose of my amendment is to restore most of the boundary for the north addition to the Park originally recommended in H.R. 39 by Chairman Udall, Chairman Seiberling, myself and several of our colleagues. Despite the changes to that boundary made in the Subcommittee Print, I remain convinced that our original line is superior from the standpoint of complete watershed protection and the establishment of coherent land management boundaries. This is especially so in view of the emerging consensus that the proposed south addition to Katmai National Park should instead be established as a wildlife range; we should establish the best possible north boundary.

The North Katmai boundary in the Subcommittee Print basically reflects the Administration's line dividing the north addition to the Park from the proposed Iliamna National Wildlife Range. The difference between the Print and the Administration is that the Print takes in the Alagnak River watershed, while the Administration would give the Alagnak River "Wild River" status.

My proposed boundary agrees with the Print on the addition of the entire Alagnak watershed, but goes beyond both the Print and the Administration in taking in the Kukaklek Lake watershed.

Kukaklek Lake is one of the two sources of the Alagnak River, and it makes little sense from the standpoint of protecting interrelated natural values and establishing manageable park boundaries to leave out Kukaklek Lake, a vital component of the Kukaklek Lake-Nonvianuk Lake-Alagnak River system.

Here are some of the values of this system:

--It forms one of the major lake-river salmon spawning watersheds off Bristol Bay; it is also one of the world famous trophy trout areas of this region.

--Outstanding habitat, including denning, for the large and healthy population of Alaska brown bears of the Katmai area. The area also supports moose, wolves and other upland wildlife. The Alagnak River provides nesting habitat for waterfowl and osprey, a threatened species.

--Alpine tundra hiking in exceptionally scenic lake and mountain country.

--A clear, swift, easily floatable river featuring excellent fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities; generally regarded as one of the region's finest streams.

Our task is made easier by the fact that all of the Kukaklek Lake country is in solid federal ownership, one of the few such blocks of land remaining in the Bristol Bay region.

Originally, Mr. Chairman, we offered H.R. 39's Katmai expansion proposal with the intent to take in a complete ecosystem used by Katmai's Alaska brown bear and other species. Since then negotiations between the State of Alaska and the Administration have seriously compromised our original goal in favor of the State, as reflected in the Administration proposals. I do not think we should go along completely with the State/Administration understanding. Instead I urge that this Subcommittee improve upon what the Print and the Administration propose--all of which is fine as far as they go--by restoring most of our original north Katmai boundary. With the addition of the proposed Becharof National Wildlife Refuge adjoining the south side of Katmai, we can create a superlative federal reserve that accomplishes the overriding goal of ecosystem protection.