



User's Guide to Sport Hunting, Trapping and Fishing

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, the largest park in the country, was established to maintain the natural scenic beauty of the diverse geologic-, glacial-, and riparian-dominated landscapes; to protect the attendant wildlife populations and their habitats; to ensure continued access for a wide range of wilderness-based recreation; and to provide continued opportunities for subsistence use.



Wrangell Mountains and the Copper River/NPS

Wrangell-St. Elias is home to many fish and wildlife species and contains one of the largest concentrations of Dall sheep in North America – healthy populations of sheep are found along rocky ridges and mountainsides. Moose are often seen near willow bogs and lakes. Other species of large mammals include mountain goats, caribou, wolves, and two small herds of introduced bison. Black bears and brown bears (grizzlies) are found throughout the park and preserve, and small mammals include lynx, wolverine, beaver, marten, fox, porcupine, coyotes, marmots, river otters, ground squirrels, pikas, and voles.

The United States Congress established Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve along with other conservation units in Alaska in 1980 when it passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, commonly known as ANILCA. In addition to subsistence harvests by local rural residents, it provided the opportunity for hunting and trapping in the national preserve and fishing in both the national park and the national preserve under State of Alaska regulations.

Alaska national preserves offer an opportunity to hunt in some of the wildest places in our country. The National Park Service (NPS) supports the opportunity to hunt by protecting wildlife and their habitats. All harvest activities must be consistent with federal laws and NPS regulations intended to maintain natural ecological processes and naturally functioning ecosystems. In some cases, this means that people hunting and trapping in the preserve and fishing in park and preserve must follow NPS regulations as well as those established by the State of Alaska.

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Introduction & Land Status

This guide has been developed to provide important information for people interested in harvesting fish and wildlife in Wrangell-St. Elias under State of Alaska regulations. It focuses on things that hunters, trappers, and fishers need to know about harvesting resources in the park and preserve that might be different from other locations. NPS regulations may restrict activities that are otherwise allowed under State of Alaska regulations. In such cases, the NPS regulations apply. Topics addressed include land status; eligibility and requirements for use of a sport hunting guide; license, salvage, and sealing requirements; trapping; fishing; food storage requirements and other bear safety recommendations; backcountry safety; and respecting private property. Answers to frequently asked questions and who to contact for more information are also provided.

All park visitors, including hunters, trappers and fishers, are responsible for knowing and complying with NPS regulations, such as food storage requirements and any applicable harvest regulations. This guide should be used in coordination with the public regulation booklet produced by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), which has the most up-to-date regulations and hunt-specific information.



Beach landing on Malaspina Forelands with Hubbard Glacier in the distance/NPS

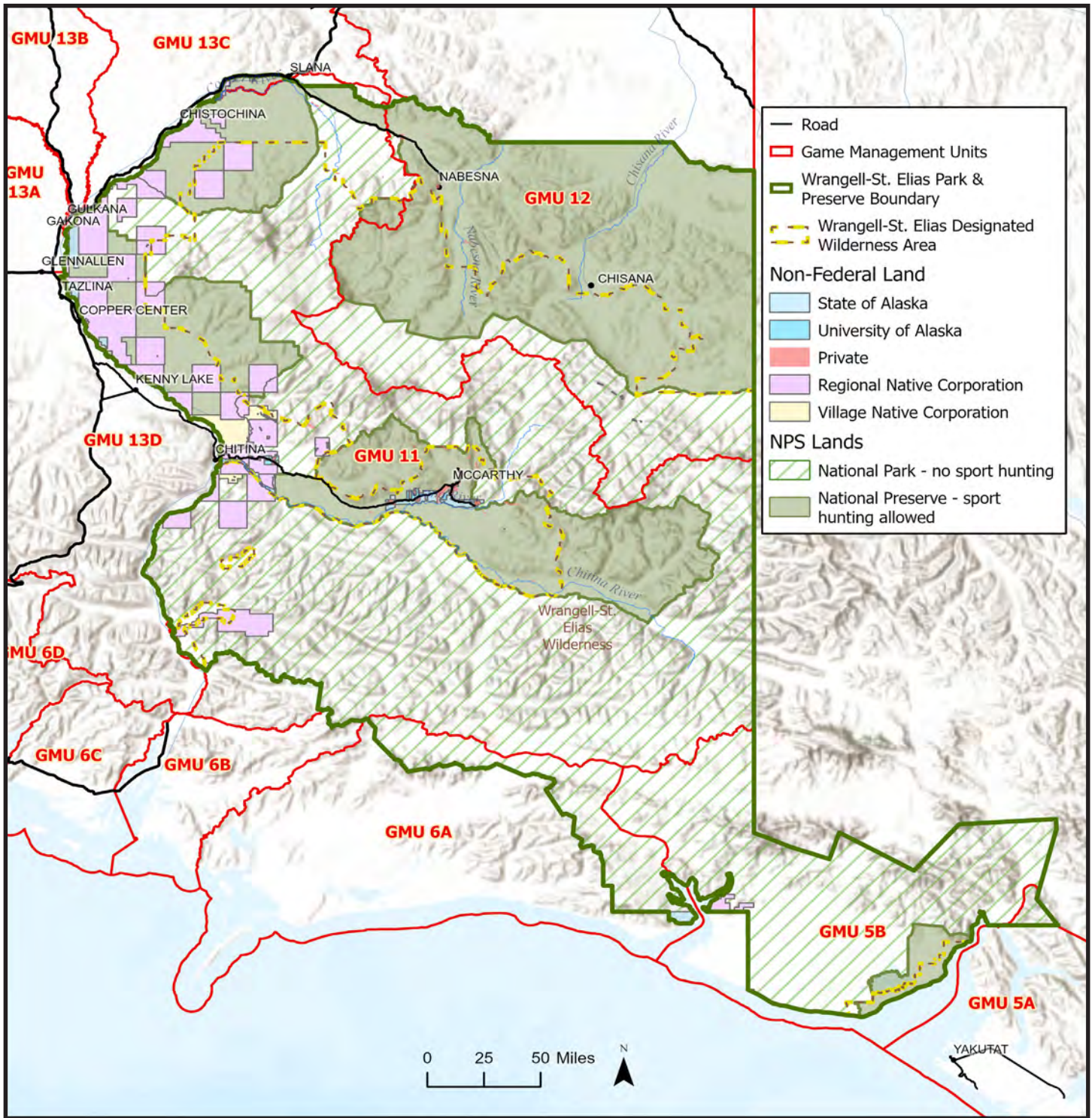
If you are new to Wrangell-St. Elias, make sure to read the material on backcountry safety. The life that is saved could be your own.

Note that different rules may apply to local rural residents harvesting resources under federal subsistence regulations. It is important to be aware of which rules apply to you before hunting, trapping and fishing in Wrangell-St. Elias.

Land Status: National Park versus National Preserve

Some lands in Wrangell-St. Elias are designated as national park, while others are designated as national preserve. The park map on page 3 shows the location of park and preserve lands along with the location of non-federal lands within Wrangell-St. Elias. Additional maps for popular hunting areas are provided on pages 10 and 11. Hunting and trapping under State of Alaska regulations established by the Alaska Board of Game are only authorized in the national preserve. Both Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve are open to fishing under State of Alaska regulations established by the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

To generate and download customized georeferenced PDF maps, please visit: <https://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/maps.htm>. Third party applications (apps) for smartphones also provide land status information and can be a helpful resource. Many of these apps are designed for hunting. Not all mobile applications have land status information for Alaska and it is the responsibility of users to ensure the app is up to date and is providing correct information.



About the Map

- Note that land status may change and that the maps in this guide may not provide sufficient detail for you to locate non-federal lands or access easements on the ground. Contact the park or the landowner (for Alaska Native Corporation lands) for further information about land status.
- The maps in this guide only show land status within the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. For information about the location of other public lands in the area open to hunting, trapping and fishing, contact the appropriate land management agencies – the State of Alaska, the Bureau of Land Management, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the USDA Forest Service.



Hunting

Hunters are responsible for knowing and complying with current State of Alaska hunting regulations and must carry licenses, harvest tickets, and tags while hunting. Become familiar with food storage rules and Leave No Trace practices and follow them while camping in the national preserve. Please do your part to minimize human impacts in the preserve. Always know the land status of where you are and be sure you are hunting legally. Federal and state law prohibits interfering with another hunter's pursuit of game.

All hunters 18 years of age or older must have a valid State of Alaska license to hunt in the preserve. All hunting must be done in accordance with Alaska laws and regulations. Bag and possession limits vary by species and by area. Always check current hunting regulations, which are available at park visitor centers, at Alaska Department of Fish and Game offices and their website: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov>. Some aspects of the regulations, such as seasons and harvest limits, are organized by geographic areas called Game Management Units or GMUs. Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve includes lands within GMUs 5, 11, 12, and 13.

Different hunting seasons and regulations apply depending on residency status, location, and species hunted, including whether you are required to hunt with a licensed guide. Generally, a resident is someone who has lived in Alaska for the last continuous year. Nonresident hunters may have lived in the state for less than a year, have a non-primary residence in the state, or be visiting from another state or country. Nonresidents hunting brown bear, Dall sheep, or mountain goats must be accompanied by a registered guide or assistant guide who is employed by a registered guide under Alaska Statute 08.54 or by a family member (within second degree kindred) over 19 years of age who has an Alaska hunting license. Foreigners who do not reside in the United States must be accompanied by a guide licensed in Alaska to hunt any big game animal.

Be sure to read the State of Alaska hunting regulations and federal regulations carefully to correctly identify your residency status and the regulations that apply to you. For residency definitions, visit the website: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntlicense.residency>.

Know What to Salvage

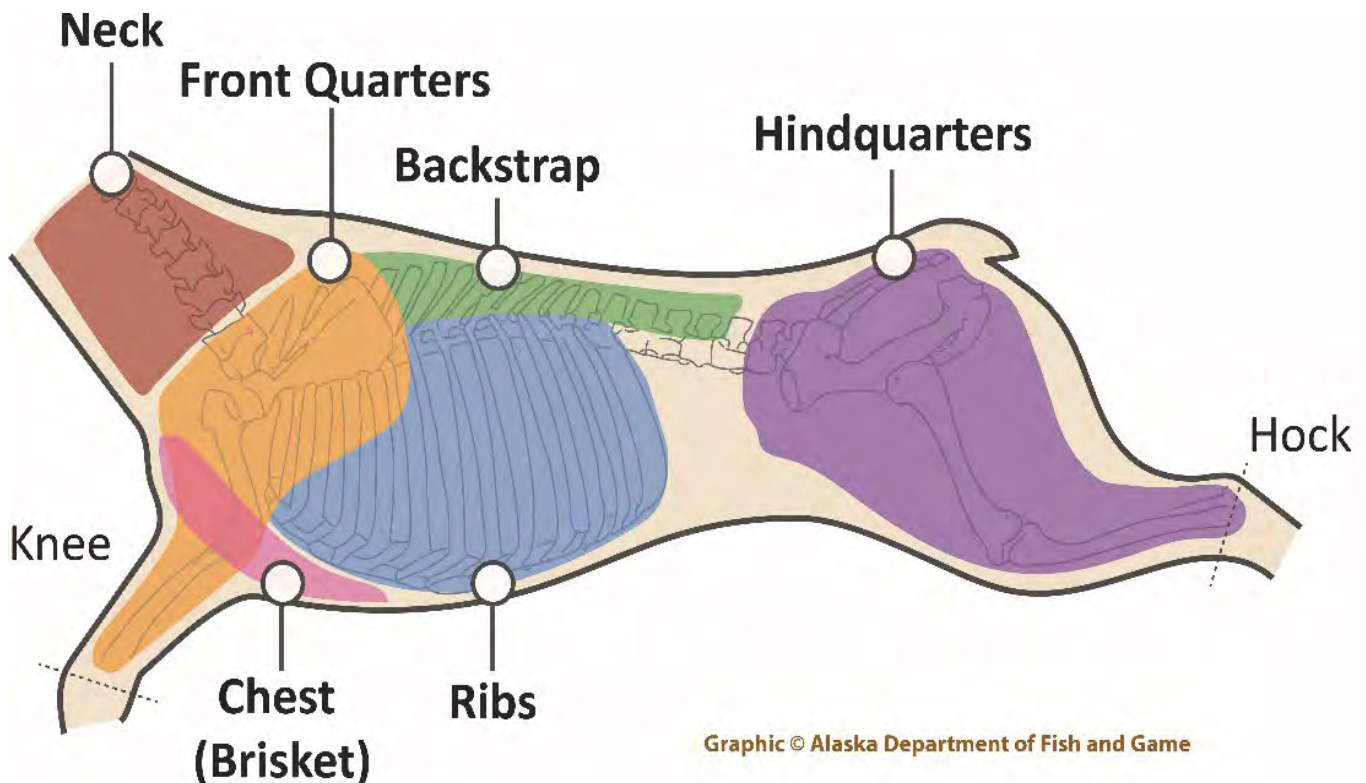
After an animal has been harvested, it is the hunter's responsibility to salvage the meat and any other parts required by regulation. You must salvage all the edible meat for all big game animals except brown/grizzly bear, wolf, wolverine, and in certain circumstances black bear. Under State of Alaska regulations, the horns, hide, or antlers may be taken out of the field only after the meat is packed out or with the final load of meat.

These salvage requirements reflect the high value Alaskans place on game meat, ethical hunting and respectful treatment of animals. It is unlawful in Alaska to waste meat, in addition to being a poor hunting practice. Failure to salvage edible meat is a serious offense and penalties are severe.

General salvage requirements in effect at time of printing this guide are presented below. However, be sure to check the current regulations book for any additional salvage requirements for your hunt or changes to the general requirements.

Salvage for most big game: If you shoot a moose, caribou, sheep, mountain goat, or bison, you must salvage the following:

- All the neck meat,
- All the chest meat (brisket),
- All the meat of the ribs,
- Front quarters to the knee,
- Hindquarters to the hock, and
- All the meat along the backbone (backstrap and tenderloins).



Some areas require that meat be left on the bone until it is removed from the field. If meat is removed from the bone, make sure to trim closely to remove all the edible meat. You are not required to salvage the meat of the head, guts, bones, sinew, and meat left on the bones after close trimming, or meat that has been damaged and made inedible by the bullet or arrow. These portions of the animal may be left in the field because they are not included in the definition of edible meat that must be salvaged.

Salvage for brown/grizzly bears: You must salvage the entire hide (with claws attached) and skull of a brown/grizzly bear unless it was taken in (and not removed from) one of the subsistence hunt areas under a state subsistence registration permit.

Salvage for black bears:

- Meat: In all areas of the state during Jan 1-May 31, edible meat must be salvaged and removed from the field. This meat may not be used for pet food or bait.
- Skull AND Hide or Skull AND Meat: In Unit 5, the skull must be salvaged and removed from the field year round for sealing; during June 1-Dec 31, either the hide with claws attached (for sealing) or the meat must also be salvaged and removed from the field.
- Hide or Meat: In Units 11-13, during June 1-Dec 31, either the hide (with claws attached) or the meat must be salvaged and removed from the field.

When the salvage of bear meat is required, you must salvage the meat of the front quarters and hindquarters and meat along the backbone (backstraps). When the salvage of brown bear meat is required under a subsistence permit, you must also salvage all of the meat of the neck, brisket and ribs. The meat is required to be salvaged first, and bear hides and skulls (when required to be salvaged) may be transported simultaneously with the last load of meat.

Salvage for small game: You must salvage either the hide or meat of beaver, pika, and ground squirrel. For small game birds, the breast meat must be salvaged, except for geese, cranes, and swans; for these you must salvage the meat of the breast, back, legs, thighs, wings.

Salvage for furbearers and fur animals: You must salvage the hide of a wolf, wolverine, coyote, fox, or lynx.

Antler or horn salvage: Antlers or horns may not be removed from the kill site until all of the edible meat has been salvaged; they may accompany the last load of meat. In hunts with antler or horn restrictions, antlers or horns must be salvaged and may not be altered unless required by permit conditions. Antlers must remain naturally attached to the unbroken/uncut skull plate if the required number of brow tines aren't present.

Evidence of sex: If you kill a big game animal (other than a sheep) where the bag limit is restricted to one sex, you must keep enough of the sex organs (penis, scrotum, testicles, udder, teats, vaginal orifice) naturally attached to part of a hind quarter to show the sex of the animal, until the animal is processed for human consumption. Antlers are not proof of sex, except for deer when the antlers are naturally attached to the entire carcass with or without the viscera. Horns are evidence of sex for Dall sheep, and they must be kept with sheep meat until it is processed for human consumption. Horns may be transported simultaneously with the final load of meat. Hides of brown bears taken in all units in the preserve, and of black bears taken in Unit 5 must have the penis sheath or vaginal orifice naturally attached during transport or until sealed. During June 1-Dec 31, meat of black bears in Unit 5 must have evidence of sex attached to the hind quarter until the skull is sealed, unless the hide is sealed.

Sealing of Hides or Skulls

If you harvest a bear, beaver, lynx, marten, otter, sheep, wolf, or wolverine you may need to have it sealed. Sealing means having an authorized representative of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game place a seal on an animal hide, skull, or both. These requirements apply to animals harvested under both hunting and trapping regulations. Sealing requirements vary by species and area, so check the information relative to your particular harvest to see if there are sealing requirements.

Guided Sport Hunting

Hunters who are not Alaska residents must be accompanied by a registered guide or assistant guide employed by a registered guide as follows under Alaska Statute 16.05.407:

- Nonresident: guide required for brown/grizzly bear, sheep or goat.
- Nonresident alien (citizen of a foreign country who is not a U.S. resident): guide required for brown/grizzly bear, black bear, bison, caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, muskox, sheep, wolf or wolverine.

Hunters may also choose to employ a registered guide to enhance their hunting experience through the local knowledge and expertise of the guide, even if one is not required.

In Wrangell-St. Elias, hunting guides are managed through concessions contracts to provide sport hunting services in each of fifteen guide areas in the preserve. For information about hunting guides who are authorized to operate in Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve, visit the NPS Alaska Region website: <https://www.nps.gov/locations/alaska/services-wrangell-st-elias.htm>.

Trapping

Trapping furbearers and fur animals under State of Alaska regulations is only allowed in the preserve. You must have a state trapping license. All trapping must be done in accordance with Alaska State laws and regulations, including seasons, harvest limits, and salvage and sealing requirements. Always check current trapping regulations, which are available at ADF&G offices and on the department's website: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov>. Trappers are encouraged to read and follow the Trapper Code of Ethics, which is available on the back of the State of Alaska trapping regulations booklet.

NPS regulations define a trap as "a snare, trap, mesh, or other implement designed to entrap animals other than fish." For this reason, free-ranging furbearers may not be taken with a firearm or bow and arrow on NPS lands, including the preserve, under a trapping license. However, some free-ranging furbearers may be taken with a firearm under a hunting license if there are applicable hunting seasons and harvest limits for the species and area. A firearm may also be used to dispatch a furbearer that is caught in a trap.

Please trap in ways to minimize conflicts between trapping and other users. Avoid situations, for example, where you might catch a domestic dog or cat, such as near homes or trails frequently used by skiers, skijorers, or mushers. At the end of the season, please remove all litter from the trapline, including broken boxes and trap pan covers.



Furs at a local store/NPS

Frequently Asked Questions – Hunting

What do I do if I make a mistake? For example, shoot a sub-legal ram or bull, or shoot the wrong sex? If you find yourself in this situation, contact the Alaska Regional Communication Center at (907) 683-9555, your nearest Ranger Station, the Alaska State Troopers or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to “self-report” your mistake. Failure to do so could result in greater penalties. Also, please note that salvage requirements still apply, and the hunter must turn over the animal to the state.

How do bag limits work for hunting? A bag limit is usually the maximum number of animals of any one game species a person may take in the state during a regulatory year. A bag limit applies to a regulatory year (July 1–June 30) unless otherwise specified, and includes animals taken for any purpose, including subsistence. Bag limits from different areas or types of hunts cannot be added together. When there is a hunting season and a trapping season for the same species, the bag limit under hunting regulations is separate from the bag limit for trapping.

- For small game, there may be daily bag limits, rather than annual limits. In hunts with daily bag limits, there may also be possession limits.
- For migratory game birds, “possession limit” means the maximum number of lawfully taken migratory game birds of a single species or designated aggregate of species that may be possessed by any one person in any specified geographic area for which a possession limit is prescribed.
- For resident game birds, “possession limit” means whole birds or the edible meat of game birds, excluding those that are canned, frozen, smoked, dried or otherwise processed for human consumption after a 15-day period.

I am an Alaska resident and have a state subsistence permit. Can I use that permit to hunt in the national park? No. Only local rural residents hunting under federal subsistence regulations can hunt in the national park. You can, however, hunt in the national preserve under your state subsistence permit.

Can a sport hunter fly into the national park and then walk into national preserve to hunt? While taking wildlife is prohibited in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park by other than federally qualified local rural residents, generally individuals may land in the area designed as “park” in order to hunt in the national preserve. It is important to know that the term “taking” – with respect to wildlife harvest – includes a range of activities in addition to actual harvest. Under federal regulations, it means “to pursue, hunt, shoot, trap, net, capture, collect, kill, harm, or attempt to engage in any such conduct.” Additionally, persons transporting wildlife through park areas must identify themselves and the location where the wildlife was taken when requested by NPS law enforcement personnel. Hunters should also be aware that the rules may also differ if a hunter is employing the services of a big game hunting guide.

Can a hunter use a drone to spot game? No. State of Alaska regulations prohibit the use of any device that has been airborne, controlled remotely, or communicates wirelessly, and used to spot or locate game with the use of a camera or video device. Additionally, the use of drones from NPS lands is generally prohibited for any purpose.

Is hunting allowed in designated wilderness? Yes. Wilderness designation does not affect whether a person can hunt, but it may affect allowed means of motorized access (see Access below).

Please Be Aware of and Respect Private Property

Approximately 1 million of the 13 million acres of land within the boundaries of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve are non-federal lands belonging to Alaska Native Corporations, other private owners, the University of Alaska, or the State of Alaska. Significant amounts of the non-federal lands are located along the McCarthy Road and the east bank of the Copper River (maps on pages 10 and 11).

Hunters, trappers, and fishers are responsible for being aware of and respecting the ownership status of lands where they are engaged in harvest activities. Crossing private lands, other than legally reserved public access easements, without the permission of the landowner, as well as camping or hunting on such lands without permission is trespassing.

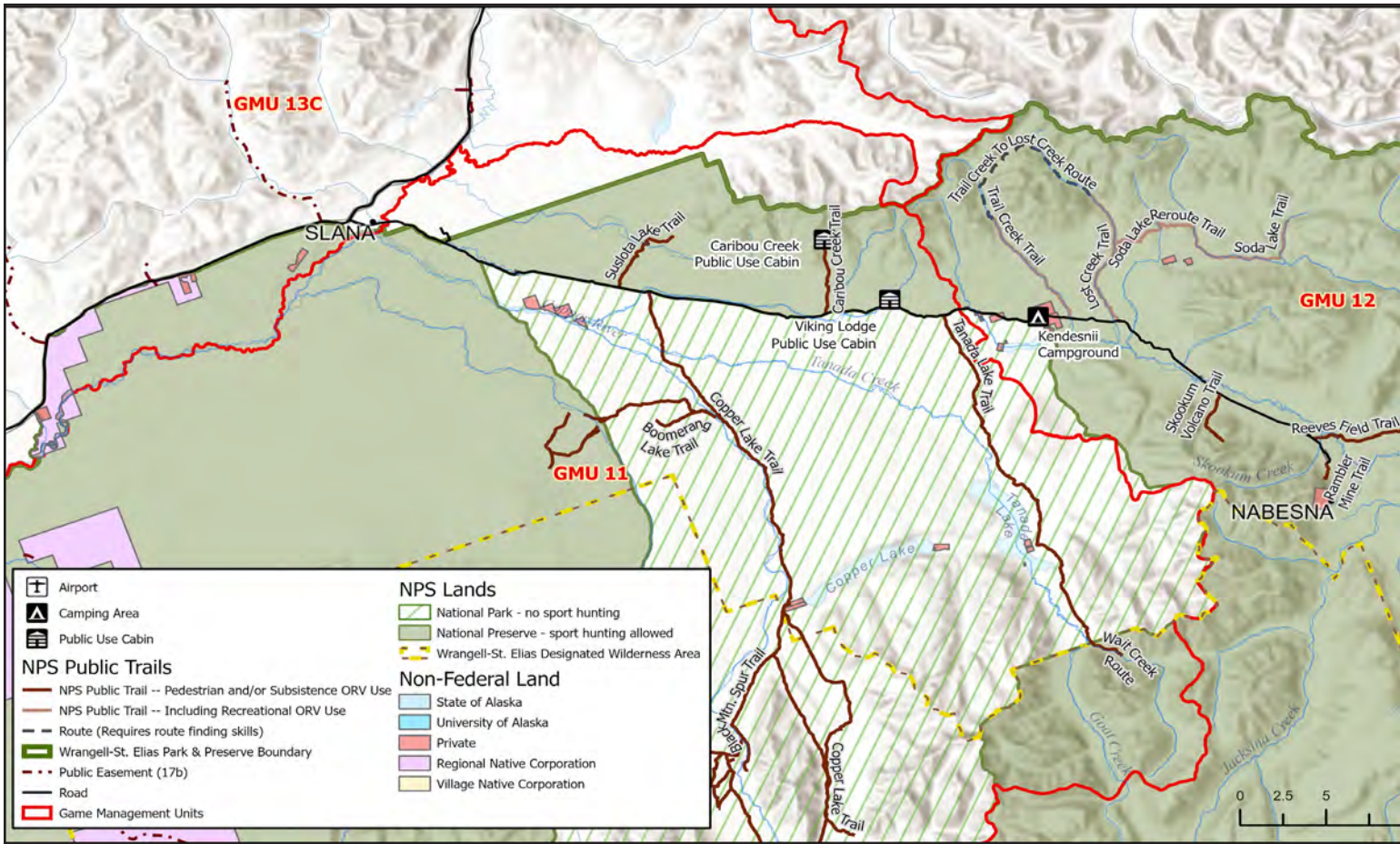
Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) 17(b) easements cross lands belonging to Alaska Native Corporations in order to provide access to public lands and waters. Other uses within the 17(b) easements, including hunting, trapping, fishing and camping require permission and possibly a permit from the landowner. And in some cases, these activities are prohibited. Easement locations are approximate, and there may or may not be trails on the ground.

Contact the park or the landowner for further information about land status within the park and preserve boundaries. For information about Native Corporation lands, contact the Lands Department at Ahtna, Inc. at (907) 822-3476 and the Chitina Native Corporation at (907) 823-2223. Interactive maps of Ahtna lands can be viewed at: <http://ahtna-inc.com/lands/>.



Reeve's Field Trailhead near the end of Nabesna Road/NPS

Navigating the Nabesna & McCarthy Roads



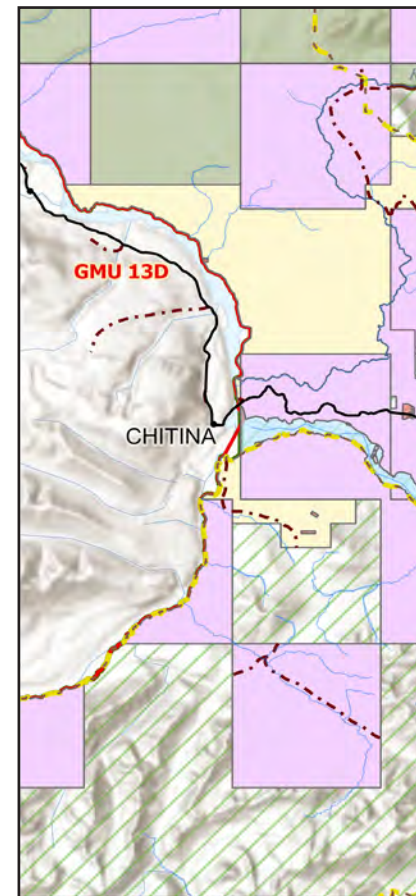
McCarthy Road →

- Mile 14.5** Access road on the north to backcountry trails. Please respect private property by staying on the road.
- Mile 15.8** Park on both sides of road for next 4 miles.
- Mile 19.8** Park on north side of road. Preserve on south side of road.
- Mile 25.5** Preserve on both sides of road.
- Mile 43.9** Road crosses Lakina River.
- Mile 60.0** Road ends at the Kennicott River. Footbridge for access across the river is pedestrian only, no motorized vehicles are permitted.

Notes:

- Mileposts are based on existing road markers. Mileage may vary slightly from vehicle to vehicle. Look for signs marking land status changes on both park roads.
- There is land adjacent to the Nabesna and McCarthy Roads which is private property, owned by individuals or the University of Alaska or the State of Alaska. Please respect the rights of private property owners.
- Caribou Creek, Viking Lodge and Nugget Creek public use cabins require reservations up to six months in advance by emailing wrst_info@nps.gov. For more information:

<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/backcountry-cabins.htm>

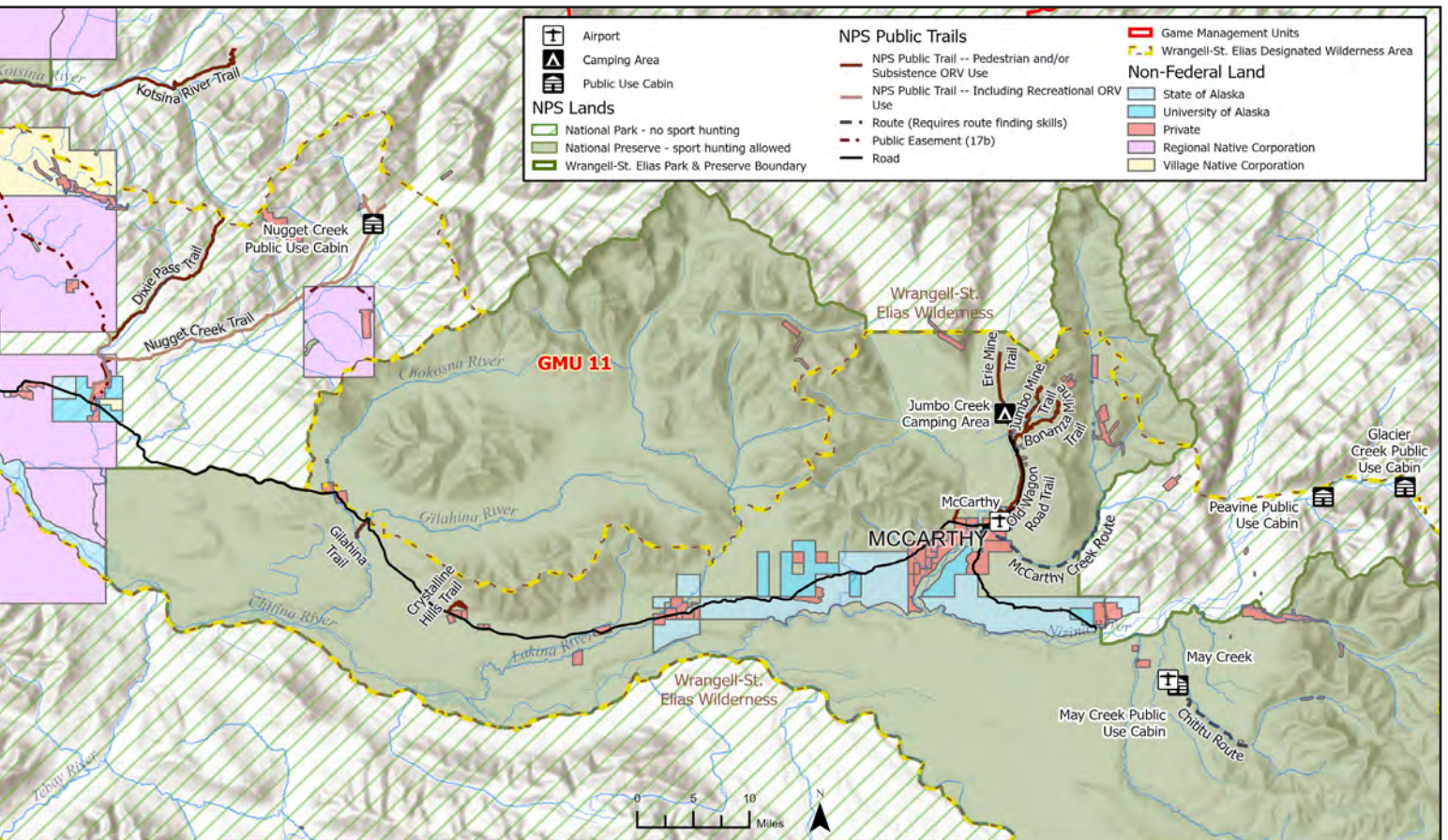




← **Nabesna Road**

- Mile 0.2** Access road for Slana Ranger Station on south side of road. Stop here for road conditions, maps and ORV permits.
- Mile 1.7** Slana River bridge. Game Management Unit 11 boundary.
- Mile 2.5** National Preserve boundary. The south side of the road forms the northern boundary of the Preserve for the next 1.3 miles.
- Mile 3.8** Land on both sides of the road is Preserve.
- Mile 5.4** National Park boundary. The south side of the road is Park and the north side of the road is Preserve.
- Mile 25.0** Game Management Unit 11-12 boundary. Also boundary between the Copper River and the Tanana/Yukon River drainages.
- Mile 27.8** Kendesnii Campground
- Mile 28.7** Preserve on both sides of the road.
- Mile 41.8** The state maintained portion of the Nabesna Road ends at private property. Respect their private property and please do not park on the airstrip.

Note: Trail Creek (Mile 29.8), Lost Creek (Mile 31.2), and Boyden Creek (Mile 34.3) may be flowing across the road. During spring run off or following prolonged rain, high-clearance and/or four-wheel drive may be necessary. Carefully evaluate all creeks before crossing.



Fishing

Wrangell-St. Elias is home to a tremendous array of fish resources. With hundreds of miles of streams draining into two of Alaska's major river systems along with numerous lakes, the park contains a diverse range of fish species as well as many abundant populations. The primary fish species harvested in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve are salmon, burbot, lake trout, whitefish, and Arctic grayling.

Wrangell-St. Elias includes waters of three different sport fish regions: the Southcentral Region, the Interior Region, and the Southeast Region. The road accessible waters of the park and preserve are located in the Upper Copper/Upper Susitna Management Area and in the Upper Tanana River Management Area; both are in the Interior Region. Additional waters in more remote locations are found in the Yakutat Management Area of the Southeast Region and in waters near the US/Canadian border of the Yukon Management Area of the Interior Region.

Fishing is allowed under State of Alaska regulations in both the national park and the national preserve. Copies of the regulations are available on the ADF&G website (<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishregulations.sport>) and at ADF&G offices and may be available at the Copper Center Visitor Center and Slana Ranger Station. A State of Alaska sport fishing license is required for all resident anglers 18 years of age and older and all nonresident anglers 16 years of age and older.

Additionally, the following NPS regulations also apply when sport fishing on NPS-managed waters within the park and preserve:

- Sport fishing on waters within Wrangell-St. Elias is only allowed using a closely attended hook and line. Unattended set lines are prohibited.
- Chumming (placing fish eggs or parts, food, or other substances in the water to attract fish) is prohibited.
- The use of any live fish, non-preserved fish eggs or roe, amphibians, or any non-native fish parts as bait is prohibited.

If NPS and state regulations differ, the NPS regulations apply.

Please take precautions to avoid the spread of invasive aquatic species when fishing in Wrangell-St. Elias. When moving between water bodies, rinse and remove any plant debris, mud and sediment from gear, boats, and boat trailers, floatplane floats and rudders. Completely dry gear between systems or trips. If drying is not possible, freeze, wash with hot water (130 degrees F or higher) or decontaminate. State regulations prohibit the use of felt soled wading footwear when sport fishing in fresh water.



Fishing for freshwater fish off the Nabesna Road/NPS



Arctic Grayling/NPS

Frequently Asked Questions – Fishing

Are there any places I can't fish? All lakes and streams within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve are open to fishing, unless they are on private property. Note that not all lakes and streams have fish populations. Please contact a visitor center and ask a ranger for advice on specific locations.

Can someone fly into the national park in order to sport fish? Yes. Fixed-wing aircraft may be used to fly into the national park for sport fishing.

How do bag or harvest limits work for fishing? For fishing, a bag limit may be a daily limit, which means the maximum legal take per person per day, in the area in which the person is fishing, even though part or all of the fish are immediately preserved; a fish when landed and killed becomes a part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking it. Daily bag limits are often accompanied by possession limits, which are the maximum number of unpreserved fish a person may have in possession. Preserved fish means fish prepared in such a manner, and in an existing state of preservation, as to be fit for human consumption after a 15-day period, and does not include unfrozen fish temporarily stored in coolers that contain ice, dry ice, or fish that are lightly salted. In some situations, the bag limit may be an annual limit.

What kind of salmon are in the park? All five species of Pacific salmon that are native to Alaska are found within the park: king (Chinook) salmon, silver (coho) salmon, red (sockeye) salmon are found in the bulk of the park. Pink (humpy) salmon, and chum (dog) salmon can be found in the Yakutat area. Kokanee salmon are found in Copper Lake.

What are Kokanee salmon? Kokanee salmon are red (sockeye) salmon that complete their entire life cycle in fresh water. Pacific salmon normally spawn and hatch in fresh water, go to the ocean for 1-5 years, and return to fresh water to complete their life cycle.

Where can I catch salmon? There are not very many good opportunities to sport fish for salmon in the road accessible areas within the park. The Copper River tends to be too silty to catch salmon with a rod and reel. The best places to sport fish for Chinook salmon (kings) and sockeye salmon (reds) are outside the park, in the nearby Klutina and Gulkana Rivers. The best place to catch coho salmon (silvers) and pink salmon (humpbacks or humpies) is outside of the park in Valdez.

Where can I catch rainbow trout? Van, Sculpin, Strelna, and Pippin Lakes are stocked with rainbow trout. Wild stocks of rainbow trout are found in the Hanagita and Tebay Lakes. There are also steelhead trout in the Hanagita Lake system.

What are steelhead trout? Steelhead trout are a strain of rainbow trout that goes to the ocean to rear, much like salmon. However, they don't die after they spawn.

What are those worms in some of the fish? Are those worms dangerous? Poisonous? Can we get worms in our system from eating the fish? Worms found in local fish are likely a species of round or tape worm. When cooked properly, there is a low likelihood of worms found in fish causing health issues in people. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code states that fish eaten raw should be frozen at -4 degrees Fahrenheit for a minimum of seven days, or for 15 hours at a temperature of -31 degrees F in order to kill all parasites.

Off-road Vehicles

Recreational off-road vehicles (ORVs) may be used only on designated trails listed on an ORV permit. Recreational ORV users (including sport hunters) are required to obtain ORV permits at the Slana Ranger Station or the Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center.

Specific regulations apply to ORV use in the Nabesna District, which is a designated area in the northern portion of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve that includes all trails open to recreational ORV use except for Nugget Creek. The following types of vehicles are prohibited off-road for subsistence and recreational uses in the Nabesna District:

- Nodwells or other tracked rigs greater than 5.5 feet in width or 4,000 pounds curb weight;
- Street-legal highway vehicles;
- Custom 4x4 jeeps, SUVs, or trucks designed for off-road use;
- Original or modified “deuce and a half” cargo trucks;
- Dozers, skid-steer loaders, excavators, or other construction equipment;
- Motorcycles or dirt bikes;
- Log skidders.

Wheeled vehicles (including all-terrain/off-road vehicles, utility vehicles, and Argos) must weigh less than 1,500 pounds curb weight, not including trailers. Curb weight refers to the weight of the vehicle without accessories, passengers, cargo, or fluids.

Airplanes

Fixed-wing airplanes may be used to access the national preserve for the taking of fish and wildlife and to access the national park for taking fish under State of Alaska regulations. Permits for the use of airplanes are not required. However, taking ungulates, bear, wolves, wolverine, or other furbearers with a firearm or other weapon before 3 AM following the day in which airborne travel occurred is prohibited, except for flights in regularly scheduled commercial aircraft between regularly maintained public airports. The use of helicopters to access the park or preserve for the purpose of taking fish or wildlife is prohibited.

Because of Alaska’s large size and limited road system, most nonresidents and many resident hunters hire some sort of transporter to get them to their hunting areas. Flying in is also a popular way to access some of the more remote lakes for fishing. Information about air taxis and transporters who are authorized to transport visitors in Wrangell-St. Elias can be found on the following webpage:

<https://www.nps.gov/locations/alaska/services-wrangell-st-elias.htm>.



Super cub on a park airstrip/NPS

There are three improved airstrips within Wrangell-St. Elias, at McCarthy, May Creek and Chisana. Public airport facilities are also located near the park at Chitina, Gulkana, Tok and Yakutat. Pilots may also land on beaches, gravel bars, and unimproved landing sites within the park and preserve, at their own risk. However, new airstrips may not be developed, and existing airstrips may not be expanded. Also note that airplanes should not be parked in such a way that use of a landing area by others is impeded.

Snowmachines, Motorboats and Nonmotorized Means of Surface Transportation

Motorboats and nonmotorized means of surface transportation, such as dog teams, may be used to access both the park and the preserve for any purpose, including hunting, fishing and trapping. Snowmachines may be used for traditional activities, including hunting, trapping, and fishing, and for travel to and from villages and homesites when there is adequate snow cover (at least 6 to 12 inches of snow).

For both motorized and nonmotorized watercraft, Personal Flotation Devices (PFD) are required. You must have at least one PFD onboard for each individual, children under 13 must always be wearing their PFD while underway, and boats 16 feet or over in length must also have a throwable PFD onboard.

The use or possession of domestic goats or sheep, including as pack animals, is prohibited. Use or possession of llamas, alpacas, or any other domestic animal of the Camelidae or Bovidae family within NPS-administered areas as pack animals is allowed in accordance with written authorization from the superintendent. Authorized pack or saddle animals may graze in NPS areas without a permit for less than 14 days per calendar year provided that the grazing is in conjunction with their use as a pack or saddle animal and any feed brought into the park conforms to the Alaska Weed Free Forage Certification.

Frequently Asked Questions – Access

Is the Kotsina Trail open to recreational ORV use? Yes. The first 20 miles of the Kotsina Trail are a 17(b) easement across Alaska Native Corporation lands. The easement is open to recreational ORV use up to the national park/wilderness boundary, with no permit required, but beyond that point the trail is only open to ORV access for subsistence purposes. This is because recreational ORV use and sport hunting are not allowed on the NPS-owned lands accessed by the Kotsina easement. The trail is subject to washouts and may not be passable to the end of the easement. Accessing preserve lands from the end of the easement requires crossing the Kotsina River, which is extremely dangerous and frequently infeasible. Travel at your own risk.

What is the difference between an air taxi and a transporter?

Transporters are licensed/certified by the Federal Aviation Administration, regulated by the Big Game Commercial Services Board, and must also have a commercial use authorization in order to conduct business in Wrangell-St. Elias. A transporter may advertise services specifically for hunters. They may provide transportation services and accommodations to big game hunters in the field at a permanent lodge, house, or cabin owned by the transporter (generally on an inholding within the national preserve) or on a boat with permanent living quarters located on salt water. A transporter may not provide big game hunting services without holding the appropriate license.

Air taxis are generally certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and must have a commercial use authorization to conduct business in Wrangell-St. Elias. They can transport hunters as an incidental part of their business operations, flying hunters to a destination of their choice for a “do it yourself” hunt. They cannot advertise services specific to hunters or charge higher than their usual rates for transporting hunters, their equipment, and harvested game.



ORV on a designated trail/NPS

Food Storage Rules

Throughout the park, all food (except legally taken game) and beverages, food and beverage containers, garbage, harvested fish, and equipment used to cook or store food must be stored in a bear resistant food container (BRFC) or secured:

- Within a hard-sided building;
- Within lockable and hard-sided section of a vehicle, vessel, or aircraft; or
- By caching a minimum of 100 feet from camp and suspending at least 10 feet above the ground and 4 feet horizontally from a post, tree trunk or other object on a line or branch that will not support a bear's weight.

These rules apply to everyone, including hunters, trappers, and fishers.

Bear resistant food containers may be available for loan free of charge from the Copper Center Visitor Center, the Kennecott Visitor Center, and the Slana Ranger Station. For information about approved bear resistant food containers, contact the park or visit the park website at:

<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/bear-resistant-food-containers.htm>.

This provision does not apply to:

- Clean dishes and cooking equipment that are free of food odors;
- Food that is being transported, consumed or prepared for consumption;
- The use of bait for trapping and hunting under the provisions of state and federal law; and
- Food carried by persons climbing or traveling above the firm line on snow-covered terrain.

The intent of these regulations is to prevent bears and other wildlife from obtaining and becoming conditioned to food and garbage, thus protecting wildlife and park visitors alike.



Bear and cubs/NPS

Staying Safe in Bear Country

Black and brown/grizzly bears may be present in many areas within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. While hunting or fishing, you may engage in activities such as moving stealthily, blending in with your surroundings, and handling, transporting and storing meat or fish that will increase your risk for a bear encounter. Hunters and fishers should be proactive to prevent bear encounters and attacks.

Prepare for Possible Bear Encounters

- **Learn about bear behavior** before your trip.
- **Be alert and aware of any bear activity in the harvest area**, such as fresh tracks or scat.
- **Carry bear spray, a firearm, or both at all times**, and know how to use it.

Handle Game Carefully after Harvest

- **Field dress** – Promptly field dress a game animal after the kill. If possible, avoid opening the gut cavity until after you have salvaged all other edible meat.
- **Be alert** – Bears may be drawn to the kill site. Move the meat away from brushy areas as soon as you can. Try to pack all the meat out in one load. If this is not feasible, place the remaining meat in game bags and hang from a tree, or cache them in an open area at least 100 yards from the kill site.
- **Leave the gut pile and excess bones or carcass for bears** – Bears usually go for the entrails first. If you make multiple trips to retrieve game, move edible meat and salvaged portions away from the gut pile, to an area with good visibility.
- **Mark the area** – Use flagging tape to mark the entrails and the meat cache and the likely approaches to it. Flagging also gets the attention of other hunters who happen onto the kill site. Remove flagging on your last trip out.
- **Make noise** – When you are packing out game meat and have finished hunting for the day, make noise to announce your presence to any bear in the area.
- **Avoid leaving a blood trail back to your camp** – Pack, do not drag, all the legally required salvaged meat and parts to the area where you will hang and store your meat.
- **If you come back to your cache and a bear has claimed your meat** – Do not try to drive the bear away. The meat is likely soiled and trying to scare off a feeding bear may provoke an attack. Alaska State regulations prohibit killing a bear to retrieve hunter-killed game.
- **Remember your bag limit** – If a bear takes your game meat, you are not entitled to take another animal to replace the one you “lost.” Bag limits apply even if a bear takes your game meat.

Tips When Bringing Game Meat into Camp

- **Cache your meat** – Keep your meat out of reach of bears or cache it away from your camp with a clear line of sight between the camp and cache.
- **Protect your camp** – Portable electric fences are an inexpensive method of protecting your meat.
- **Treat clothes soaked with blood or guts the same as any other attractant** – Do not put them in your tent or wear them to bed. Leave soiled clothes with the meat cache.
- **Deter bears in camp** – If a bear comes towards your camp, make loud noises, yell at the bear, bang pots and pans together to try driving the bear away. Assertively defend your camp. Stand in a group if possible and maintain your position. Your goal is to have the bear leave your camp.

Additional information about bear safety is available on the following webpages:

- <https://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/be-bear-aware.htm>
- <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livingwithbears.anglersafety>
- <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hunting.bearsafety>

Backcountry Safety

The landscape of Wrangell-St. Elias is constantly changing. Glaciers recede, landslides re-arrange mountainsides, and rivers flood. Outside resources, such as guidebooks, are a great starting place to plan your trip, but don't assume these resources are correct. Guidebooks, blog posts, and maps that are just a few years old may no longer reflect what is actually on the ground. Always pay careful attention when navigating a route and never unquestioningly follow maps, GPS devices or advice.

Conditions can change rapidly in the mountains. Be prepared for varying weather and trail conditions. You may find missing foot bridges, uneven trail surfaces, unstable slopes, falling trees, rutted trails, damaged water bars and steps, standing water, difficult water crossings, and missing directional signs. Most of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve is designated wilderness or remote, where self-reliance and adventure are expected. Visitors should be prepared to take responsibility for their own actions; search and rescue may be delayed. Be prepared to stay overnight, possibly for multiple extra days, even if you are a day user.

Backcountry Accountability and Emergency Contacts

Leave your route and expected time of return with a friend or family member, along with directions for what to do if you do not return at the expected time. A backcountry itinerary – which includes important information in case of an emergency – may be filed at park visitor centers and ranger stations. However, a search will not be initiated until a specific request from a friend or family member is made. If you are flying in or out of a remote airstrip, your pilot will be your main communication link to safety. Be sure to discuss “what if” scenarios with your pilot before you are dropped off.

*To report a life and safety emergency in the park, call 907-683-2276.
DO NOT call this emergency number for park information or questions.*



Backcountry trip essentials/NPS



River crossings can be dangerous. There are multiple methods to safely cross a river as a group. Visitors are encouraged to seek training on how to safely ford rivers./NPS

Communications

Satellite phones and texting devices are the only way to communicate from much of the backcountry of Wrangell-St. Elias. We recommend bringing a satellite communication device, as it can help you make and maintain contact with family, friends, and if needed, emergency responders. Don't let a satellite communication device give you a false sense of security though! In an emergency, help will not be immediate and will depend on many factors. You are still responsible for your own safety.

River Crossings

Drowning is the number one cause of accidental death within Wrangell-St. Elias. Most backcountry routes in Wrangell-St. Elias require numerous creek and river crossings. Make sure you are aware of all crossings on your route. Be prepared to turn around if the river appears too high or too swift to cross safely. Many rivers are impassable, even for experts. Small, unnamed creeks can become raging torrents under certain conditions. You can take training on river crossing techniques, and there are many resources online about how to safely cross rivers. Things to remember:

- Cross at the widest and/or most braided area. This is usually where the water is shallowest. A long, shallow crossing is preferable over a short, deep one.
- Unbuckle your backpack. If you slip and fall into the current, you need to jettison your pack so it does not fill with water and drag you down.
- Cross early in the day. Water levels of glacial rivers are lowest right after the coldest temperatures of the day, which is usually during the night.

Always err on the side of caution when it comes to rivers!

For more information: <https://www.nps.gov/wrst/playourvisit/backcountry-safety.htm>

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve

<https://www.nps.gov/WRST>

Off Road Vehicle (ORV) Users Guide

<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/upload/WRST-ORV-Guide-508-compliant.pdf>

NPS Regulations

<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/management/lawsandpolicies.htm>

Superintendent's Compendium

<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/management/compendium.htm>

Email: wrst_info@nps.gov

Park Headquarters and Visitor Center

P.O. Box 439 / Mile 106.8 Richardson Highway
Copper Center, AK 99573

Administrative Offices (year-round):
(907) 822-5234

Visitor Center (mid-May to mid-September):
(907) 822-7250

Slana Ranger Station

P.O. Box 885 / Mile 0.2 Nabesna Road
Slana, AK 99586

(June through September):
(907) 822-7401

Kennecott Visitor Center

For general Kennecott and McCarthy area information. (907) 205-7106 (Memorial Day to Labor Day). For hunting questions, please call Park Headquarters.



Park Headquarters Visitor Center in Copper Center/NPS

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/>

Glennallen

P.O. Box 47 / Mile 186.3 Glenn Highway
Glennallen, AK 99588-0047

Hunting, Trapping, and Wildlife-related
Information: (907) 822-3461

Sport Fishing Information: (907) 822-3309

Tok

P.O. Box 355 / Mile 1314 Alaska Highway,
¼ Mile on Center Street

Tok, AK 99780-0355
(907) 883-2971

Yakutat

P.O. Box 49 / 1 Fish and Game Plaza
Yakutat, AK 99689-0049

(907) 784-3255



Slana Ranger Station, Nabesna Road/NPS



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