



Community Newsletter



Fall colors looking out from the Copper Center Visitor Center. PHOTO CREDIT: NPS/WITTMER

Giving Thanks for 2021

Dear neighbors and community members:

As Thanksgiving approaches, I want to take the opportunity to thank community members, Wrangell-St. Elias staff, and park partners for engaging in our shared stewardship mission. As you read through the newsletter, you'll find information on how visitors were welcomed to the park and preserve; local youth had opportunities to learn about the Copper River Basin; and scientific research built awareness of changing park resources this year. You'll also find information on employment opportunities, projects, and initiatives coming in 2022.

We don't accomplish this work alone. Local businesses and park partners welcome visitors and provide food, lodging, and recreation opportunities. Local organizations like the Wrangell Mountains Center, Prince William Sound College, Wrangell Institute for Science and the Environment (WISE), and Ahtna Inc. collaborate with the park to educate school children and hold special events that highlight arts and science related to park resources. Scientists from University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC), and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) collaborate on park research projects.

There's a lot going on! In order to keep community members up to date on timely park news, we've created the Locals Listserv. Anyone can request subscription to the listserv by emailing wrst_public_affairs@nps.gov and putting "Locals Listserv" in the subject line. Members can unsubscribe at any time. There are currently 400 Listserv members!

We hope you and yours stay well and enjoy the upcoming holidays!

Warm regards, Ben.

Visitor Services

We welcomed 28,000 visitors at Slana, Copper Center, Chitina, and Kennecott this year even though we were working under Covid-adapted operations. There were window services in Slana, Chitina, and Copper Center and an outside ranger information station in Kennecott. Kennecott buildings and the theater and exhibit hall at the Headquarters Visitor Center were open with occupancy limits and mask requirements.



Park Ranger Katie Moser staffing the outside information station in Kennecott. PHOTO CREDIT: NPS/WITTMER

Youth Programs

Over 800 school children, teachers, and chaperones participated in curriculum-based programs such as Earth Discovery Day, Chosen Frozen, and family fishing events. These events were provided in collaboration with WISE, the Bureau of Land Management, ADF&G and other location youth organizations. In fact, in order to increase coordination and collaboration on youth programs, Prince William Sound College is facilitating a Youth Partnership Forum. The Forum meets to explore youth program initiatives in and around the Copper River Basin. This summer season, 4 Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) high schoolers and one Student Conservation Association college student spent 10 weeks working and learning in and around Wrangell-St. Elias. Work consisted of brushing trails and campsites; taking an Ahtna language and culture class; exploring National Park Service careers; and learning First Aid, CPR, and Outdoor Leadership.



YCC learning about subsistence fishing. PHOTO CREDIT: NPS/TOWNSEND

For more information about visitor services and youth programs, contact Team Lead for Interpretation and Education, Carrie Wittmer at carrie_wittmer@nps.gov

New Hunting and Fishing Resources Coming in 2022

Two projects underway provide additional information for people who harvest fish and wildlife in Wrangell-St. Elias. Both products are planned to be available for use in 2022.

One is an online mapping tool that will allow subsistence users and park visitors to create georeferenced PDF (Portable Document Format) maps of areas of interest within Wrangell-St. Elias. These maps are designed for use on a GPS-enabled mobile device, such as a smart phone, and can be displayed on any PDF reader. When viewed in an installed mobile map application, each map is designed so that your location can be displayed on-screen in real time. The maps will show things such as land status (park, preserve, wilderness, non-NPS lands), roads, trails, game management unit boundaries, and hunt area boundaries.

The second is the *Users Guide to Hunting, Trapping and Fishing in Wrangell-St. Elias*. This booklet will 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, fishers and trappers need to know about harvesting resources in the park and preserve that might be different from other locations. 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; back-country safety; and respecting private property. It will be available both in print and on the park's website.

Resource Stewardship and Science Projects - Continuing and New

The project, *Quantify Changing Environmental Conditions to Inform Decisions about Allowed Means of Winter Access to Subsistence Resources*, studies temporal and spatial patterns of river freeze-up, winter ice conditions, and break-up using remote sensing data and evaluates the implications of changing environmental conditions for winter subsistence access in the park. This project is being completed through a cooperative agreement with UAF. Four time-lapse cameras were installed in September 2020 and collected daily images of the Copper River during winter 2020-2021. The Copper River images from that project can be viewed at:

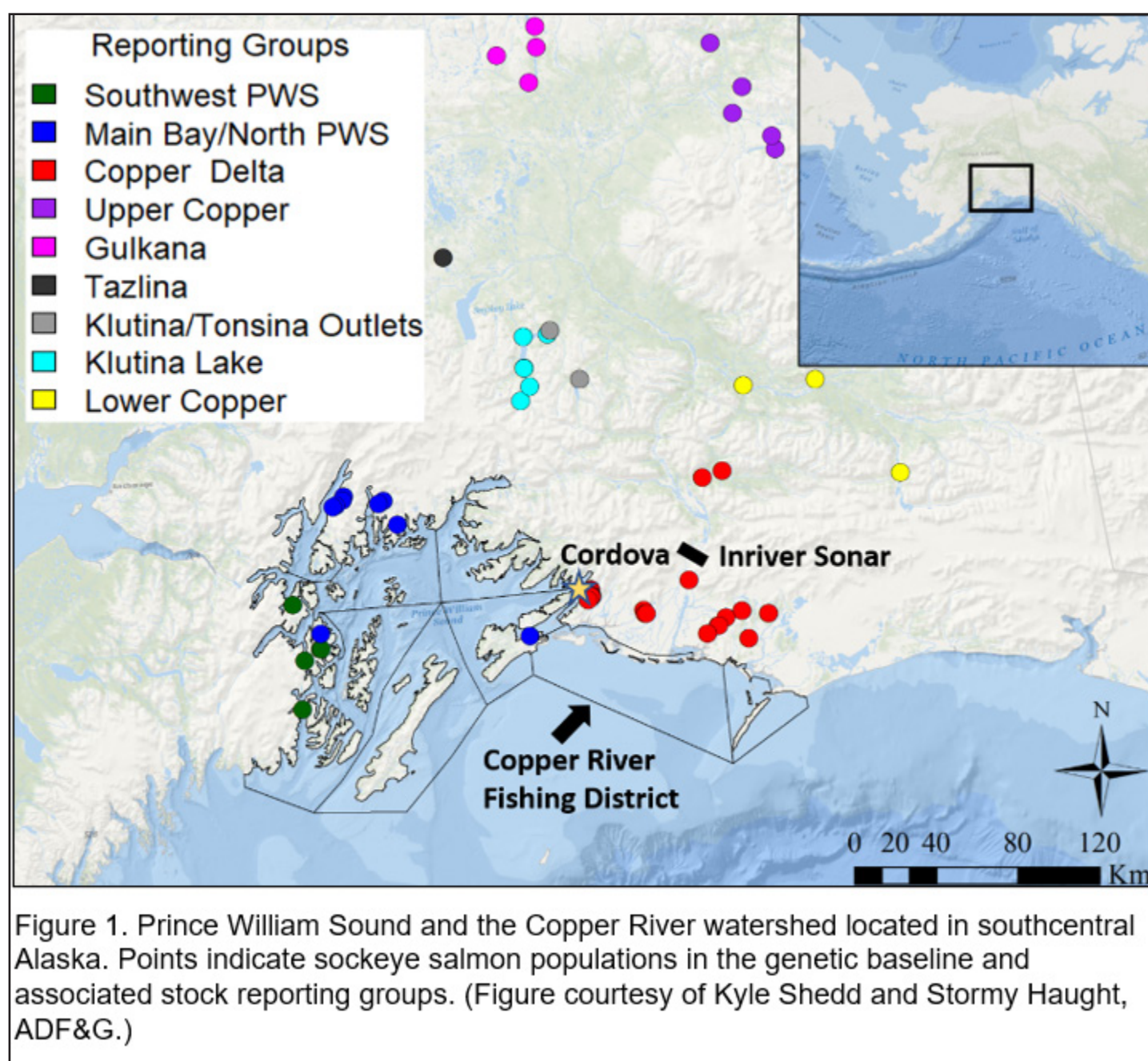
<http://fresheyesonice.org/realtime-data/river-ice-camera/#a1506>

A time-lapse video produced using images from the camera for the winter of 2020-21 can be viewed on the Fresh Eyes on Ice You Tube channel: <https://youtu.be/z71axPjol-c>



The *Ahtna Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA)* will produce a report documenting Ahtna Athabascan connections to Wrangell-St. Elias. An EOA is a baseline cultural anthropological study that aims to document traditional associations between distinct cultural communities and landscapes, places or resources. This EOA consists of an annotated inventory of ethnographic and related materials relevant to the Ahtna Athabascans; a narrative synopsis of our current understanding of these materials, with a focus on connections to Wrangell-St. Elias; and an analysis of data gaps and additional research needs. This project is being carried out through a cooperative agreement with AITRC.

The goals of the 3-year (2022-2024) *Apply Genetic Analysis of Copper River Sockeye Salmon Stocks to Inform In-Season Decision Making* are to (1) evaluate the use of in-season genetic analysis as a tool for estimating the stock composition of sockeye salmon harvests in Copper River fisheries, and (2) inform real-time fisheries management decisions designed to ensure long-term health and sustainability of Copper River salmon stocks and associated fisheries. In-season stock composition information will aid fishery managers in minimizing the risk of fishery management decisions to small and/or sensitive stocks while maximizing sustainable harvest of abundant stocks. Collaborators include the ADF&G Gene Conservation Laboratory, Division of Commercial Fisheries, and Division of Sport Fish; and Wrangell-St. Elias. AITRC will contribute to project implementation by assisting ADF&G with the collection of samples from fisheries in the Chitina and Glennallen subdistricts. In addition to the research and management components, this project includes an interpretive component involving educational outreach to local communities and subsistence users about the collaborative application of scientific information to inform management decision making.



Describing and Modeling Factors Affecting Migratory Success of Copper River Sockeye Salmon (2022-2023) aims to develop a better understanding of how environmental changes in the Gulf of Alaska and the Copper River watershed may impact spawning migration success by sockeye salmon under future ecological scenarios. Researchers will integrate prior and ongoing radio-telemetry data on Copper River sockeye spawning migration with several long-term ADF&G data sets to develop forecasting models for sockeye that will incorporate new information from a recently available hydrological model developed by the U.S. Geological Survey. Collaborators include Prince William Sound Science Center, UAF, ADF&G, the Native Village of Eyak, and Wrangell-St. Elias.

The NPS continues to plan for implementation of cleanup activities at the Nabesna Mine Site and the Kennecott Mines and Mill Town Site pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). In conjunction with these planning efforts, in May 2021 Wrangell-St. Elias established web pages for the Nabesna and Kennecott projects. Each web page provides links to a Community Involvement Plan, the project Administrative Record, and other project-related information.

- Nabesna Mine Site Environmental Investigation Project
<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/management/nabesna-mine-site-environmental-investigation-project.htm>
- Kennecott Mines and Mill Town Site Environmental Investigation Project
<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/management/kennecott-mines-and-mill-town-site-environmental-investigation-project.htm>

More information on park research can be found at Research in the Park Webpage
<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/research-in-the-park.htm>

For more information, contact Mark Miller, Team Lead for Resource Stewardship and Science at mark_e_miller@nps.gov

Employment Opportunities

Position announcements for summer 2022 seasonal jobs start posting in November at <https://www.usajobs.gov>

Most local hire announcements come out in January and Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) announcements come out in March. Current job opportunities are posted at <https://www.nps.gov/wrst/getinvolved/employment.htm>

“Because your circumstances require cooperation, we’re inherently wired for community-building. It happens naturally here.”

-Jeremy Pataky, Publisher’s Afterword in Tom Kizzia’s new book, *Cold Mountain Path*.

