



Community Newsletter

Spring 2023



Chosen Frozen educational program at 2 Mile Lake near Chitina. **NPS Photo**

Dear neighbors & community members,

This has been a busy year in which we increased outreach to local youth, engaged with community members on park planning efforts, and learned about the park's past to move forward on important initiatives. I'm inspired by the care and passion shown by staff, local communities, and business partners for the resource stewardship mission we all share.

As you know, our youth will be responsible for carrying on this mission in future years. We collaborate with numerous partners in and around the park to engage youth in learning about safety, outdoor leadership, ecology, traditional ecological knowledge, and more. This year, we've expanded our capacity to support these efforts, which has allowed us to give programs in Yakutat and Mentasta and provide Junior Ranger activities at local events like the Fireweed Festival. Our Youth Conservation Corps members seem to grow up in just one summer and it's fun to see them build confidence in their professional and personal skills.

As always, community members stepped up to assist with park planning and management initiatives. We celebrated Subsistence Resource Commission members, some who have served on the Commission for 20 or more years! Community members in Kennecott and McCarthy participated in reviewing the 2013 Kennecott Operations Plan. Community organizations and agencies provide programs like Earth Discovery Day and Chosen Frozen for local youth.

As a park team, we work with a document that outlines our values, called the Leader's Intent. The final paragraph of the document says, "This is our watch. We are entrusted as stewards of the resources and values of this special place, and we honor those who preceded us and those who will follow us as stewards. Though this is our duty, we share this privilege with our neighbors and our visitors. As public servants we are committed to a promise of public trust, to take care of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve." Thank you for all the ways you, as our neighbors and fellow community members, join us in these efforts. Warm regards, Ben.

Wintertime Travel, Access, and Changing Snow and Ice Conditions in Alaska's Copper River Basin

In the Copper River Basin, less reliable snow and ice conditions have been increasingly common in recent years and present challenges for wintertime subsistence activities such as trapping, hunting, and gathering firewood. A new National Park Service technical report, written by anthropologist Odin Miller from the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission through a co-stewardship funding agreement with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, explores these impacts. The report is based on interviews with local residents who have extensive knowledge and experience with wintertime activities in the Copper River Basin.



Copper River in February 2022, viewed from Simpson Hill near Glennallen. **Photo courtesy of Odin Miller.**



Open water on the Copper River near Copper Center in November 2021. **NPS/Cellarius**

Highlights from the report:

- In past decades, crossing rivers was less treacherous and could be done earlier in the fall and later in the spring. During midwinter, travel across or along rivers and streams mostly tended to be predictable.
- Over the course of several decades, people have observed large-scale changes in ice conditions. One of the most significant outcomes has been the difficulty this has created for trappers and others trying to access the east side of the Copper River during the winter months.
- Decreased snowpacks—especially during the early season—have increasingly presented an obstacle to wintertime access along the snowmachine trails used by trappers and others.
- Additionally, several interview respondents reported that increased shrub-growth had made it more difficult to travel across the winter landscape, requiring them to cut trails through the forest—something that never used to be necessary.

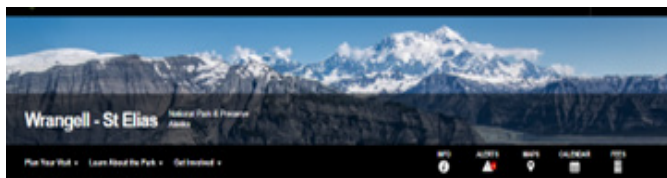
View the full technical report at: <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/687226>

Public Affairs

Are you interested in knowing what's going on in the park? Follow us on our social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and You Tube. Social media posts vary from safety messages to Cultural Heritage Highlights. The Wrangell-St. Elias website also has up-to-date information about hunting, fishing, trip planning, ORV use, research in the park, and more!

Local audiences can also take advantage of the opportunity to join the "Locals Listserv" by requesting a subscription by email at wrst_public_affairs@nps.gov. Put "Locals Listserv" in the subject line and include your name, email address, and if you have an organizational or business affiliation. Using GovDelivery, the Listserv receives news releases, research project descriptions, and biannual park newsletters (like this one!). Members can unsubscribe at any time. There are currently over 400 Listserv members.

Recent Research in the Park and Cultural Heritage Highlights pages on the Wrangell-St. Elias website:



Research In The Park

Fresh Eyes on Ice: Connecting arctic communities through a revitalized and modernized ice observation network.

Christopher Arp, Water and Environmental Research Center, Institute of Northern Engineering, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2023

The Fresh Eyes on Ice network spans the state of Alaska. In Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, satellite-based ice observation equipment will provide near-real-time data to the public, scientists, and park managers, available at www.fresheyesonice.org. A camera will record daily images of the Copper River from a bluff near Park Headquarters. A string of thermometers in a remote lake near the Chulitna River will provide daily information on snow and ice thickness.



Copper River in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park

Winter is the most rapidly changing season in the Arctic, causing widespread responses in freshwater ice – an understudied component of the cryosphere. Freshwater ice dynamics (i.e., formation, growth, and melt) not only integrate winter climate conditions, but also impact energy balance, permafrost, hydrology, greenhouse gas emissions, and human travel and subsistence. Long-term observations document dramatic changes in ice thickness and breakup timing in lakes and rivers of northern latitudes. Fresh Eyes on Ice, a new freshwater ice observation network, is revitalizing existing datasets and expanding observations in space and time using modern satellite, aerial, and in situ sensing techniques integrated with community-based monitoring. Together these ice observations provide a valuable and integrated record of winter climate change that is relevant at local, regional, and global scales.

For more info, contact Mark Miller, Team Lead for Resource Stewardship and Science at Wrangell-St. Elias NPP, Mark_a_miller@nps.gov or visit the website [Fresh Eyes on Ice University of Alaska Fairbanks](http://www.fresheyesonice.org) (<http://fresheyesonice.org>).



Cultural Heritage Highlights

Copper End Blade and Barbed Antler Projectile Point

CPH 1880 AD

Accession # WRST-05213 Catalog # WRST 15669

These artifacts are part of a composite projectile point recovered from a permafrost snow field. Composite projectile points were used by Dené people to hunt big game. These specific tools were likely used to hunt caribou on ice patches located high in the Wrangell Mountains. Ice patch is a common term used to describe a perennial snow field. Ice patches tend to form on leeward, north-facing slopes and are great places for caribou to be during the summer months as the cool snow provides relief from heat and insects. Ice patches provided predictable hunting locations for indigenous populations in Alaska and the Canadian Yukon and have a hunting history dating back 9,400 years. As these ice patches melt, artifacts emerge, providing archeologists with evidence of past hunting technology.



Native copper is widely distributed throughout Alaska and the Yukon Territory with most sources being concentrated in the Wrangell and St. Elias Mountains. Several different indigenous groups in south central Alaska and the southwestern Yukon used native copper, including the Athina, Upper Tanana, Chugach, Eyak, Tlingit, Tutshone, and Dené/Ina. While many people used native copper technology, the Lower Athina controlled access to many of the copper sources and developed extensive trade networks with neighboring groups. Records indicate that copper was used in the region since at least 1,000 AD, with recent research suggesting that the oldest evidence of copper use may be from the Wrangell and St. Elias Mountains.

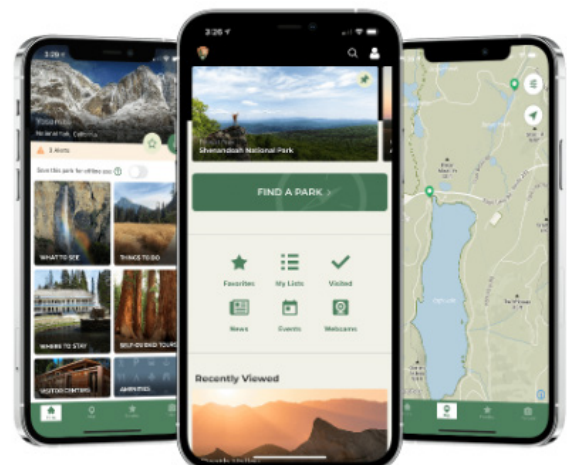
To learn more about the highlighted artifacts and the use of copper, read the articles:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/090/copperendblades.htm>

<https://journal.equinoxpub.com/JGA/article/view/18726>

The new National Park Service (NPS) mobile app (go.nps.gov/app) is available for visitors to national parks across the country. Created by park rangers with visitors in mind, the NPS App gives the public up-to-date information about all 424 national parks (including Wrangell-St. Elias) in one easy-to-use app. Visitors can download the NPS App in the iOS App Store and Google Play Store to plan a trip, find interactive maps, download maps and tours ahead of time and find things to do and places to visit.

For more information, contact Carrie Wittmer, Public Affairs Officer, 907-822-7255, carrie_wittmer@nps.gov



Interpretation and Education Visitor Services 2023



Park staff welcome visitors to the main visitor center in Copper Center.
NPS/Wittmer

Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center in Copper Center opens May 12th; last day Sept. 17th, daily 9-5; Theater and Exhibit Hall open, ranger services, and Alaska Geographic sales.

Kennecott Visitor Services begin May 26th; last day Sept. 8th; daily 9-11:30, 1:30-4:30; ranger services and Alaska Geographic sales.

Slana Ranger Station opens May 26th; last day September 23rd; daily 9-5; ranger services and Alaska Geographic sales.

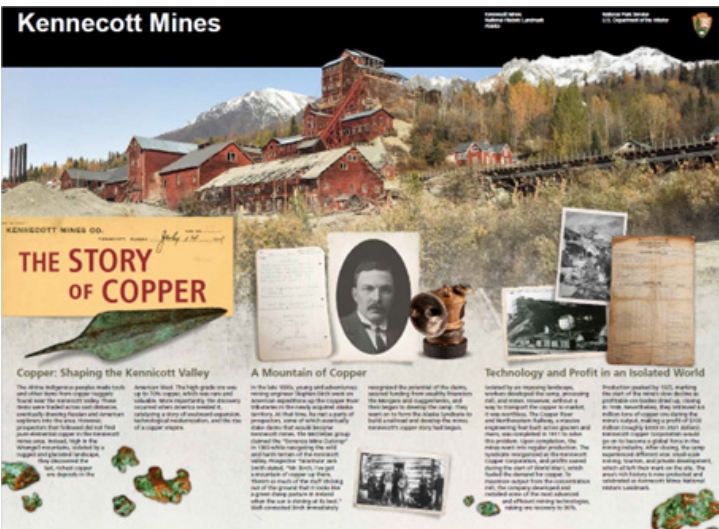
Chitina Ranger Station opens May 26th; last day September 4th; daily 9-5; ranger services and Alaska Geographic sales.



Ahtna Youth Interns Welcome Visitors to the Ahtna Cultural Center

This project, funded through federal Indian Youth Service Corps program and carried out in partnership with Ahtna, Incorporated, was a success in 2022 and is back in 2023. Interns work at the Ahtna Cultural Center, attend NPS trainings, and participate in cultural events such as culture camps.

2022 Ahtna Youth Interns, Damien Shank and Ryan George, with Program Coordinator, Edward Greybear, in front the Ahtna Cultural Center.
NPS Photo



Coming soon: Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark brochure

Final edits of the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark brochure are in the works. Brochures will be available at visitor contact stations this summer.

Draft copy of the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark brochure.

Youth Conservation Corps 2023

Seven youths between the ages of 15-18 will be participating in Wrangell's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program for 11 weeks this summer. YCC participants work on building and grounds maintenance projects and help at special events.



The 2022 YCC crew, Ahtna Youth Interns, and leaders at a fishwheel in Copper Center. **NPS/Cellarius**



Children in Yakutat attending a ranger program. **NPS Photo**

Other Youth Programs This Year

Local youth also participated in Winter Fun Day in December and Chosen Frozen activities in March. Junior Ranger tables will be available at local summer events, including the Yakutat Tern Festival in June. Park staff will assist partner organizations with programs like Earth Discovery Day, Copper River Stewardship Program, and the Youth Environmental Summit this summer. New this year – classes from remote communities can meet with a ranger virtually.



Local youth cross country skiing during Winter Fun Day in Copper Center. **NPS Photo**



Ranger Diane Ellsworth at the Chosen Frozen educational program teaching youth about ice fishing safety at 2 Mile Lake. **NPS Photo**

Meet our New Staff in Interpretation and Education



Carson Tortorige joined Wrangell-St. Elias for a 6-month position working on a regional youth program Gap Analysis project. In the photo at 2 Mile Lake near Chitina, he is teaching youth at the Chosen Frozen educational program about ice fishing safety, frozen lake ice depth, and ice rescue survival tips.

Chelsea Hernandez will be working temporarily this summer May-August as the North District Interpreter. She is very excited to meet the team and experience the wonders of Alaska. She is currently serving as Supervisory Interpretive Ranger at Haleakala National Park and has been in this role for 3 years. Prior to that she was at ROMO - Rocky Mountain National Park from 2008-2020, working in both the east and west districts of the park. She started with the NPS at ROMO, and is very excited to get back to the mountains. She is from St. Paul, Minnesota and went to college at the University of Wisconsin Madison where she studied Biological Aspects of Conservation and Environmental Studies. She is looking forward to learning more about WRST, it's wilderness, it's history, and the many stories to share with visitors. She is following the humpback whales (Kohola) and golden plovers (Kolea) up to Alaska, and is excited to learn from and work alongside all of you! Take good care...malama pono!



Marjie is the permanent Supervisory Park Ranger for the Slana Ranger Station. Marjie joins us from the US Fish & Wildlife Service Fish Hatchery in Leavenworth, WA, where she trained and mentored volunteers; ran visitor services at three fish hatcheries; conducted education programs; and coordinated major events (including a Salmon Festival!). Prior to her work with USFWS, she worked at C&O Canal National Historical Park in Maryland and for the Peace Corps in Indonesia.

Photos courtesy of employees

Wrangell-St. Elias Volunteers

Pioneers of Alaska returns to Wrangell-St. Elias again this summer to assist with clearing an airstrip and cleaning and brushing the Kennecott Cemetery. Several volunteers will be returning to Kennecott this summer to assist with visitor services.

For more information, contact Carrie Wittmer, Public Affairs Officer and Team Lead for Interpretation and Education, 907-822-7255, carrie_wittmer@nps.gov



Gravel pad installed by Pioneers of Alaska volunteers in 2022 at the Kennecott Cemetery. **NPS/Osborne**

Honoring the Service of Subsistence Resource Commission Members

The Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) provides an important venue for local subsistence users to have input into the management of subsistence resources in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The commission has nine members at any given time, with three members appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, three members appointed by the Governor of Alaska, and three members appointed by Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

Member Name	Community	Years served
Don Horrell	Tazlina	37
Suzanne McCarthy	Gakona	26
Gloria Stickwan	Tazlina	22
Sue Entsminger	Mentasta Pass	16
Dan Stevens	Chitina	14
Kaleb Rowland	McCarthy	5
Mike Christenson	Silver Lake	4
Mike Cronk	Tok	2
Daryl James	Yakutat	<1

Since it was first established in 1982, a total of thirty-nine residents of park-affiliated communities from Yakutat in the south to Dot Lake and Northway in the north have served on the Commission. In this newsletter, we would like to honor the dedication of the current SRC members.

Members of the SRC, members of the public and NPS staff at an SRC meeting in the visitor center in Copper Center. **NPS Photo**



Lands and Planning

1. Park Planning and Land Management Internship Program

We are excited to announce the last year of an Internship Program in partnership with the National Park Service and Prince William Sound College (PWSC)! Internships are designed to expose students to careers in natural resource management and park planning. This year the lands and planning division will be hiring one intern to help with various office duties.

2. Nabesna Road Strategic Transportation Study

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), the Federal Highway Administration and Alaska Department of Transportation have entered into a project agreement to take a comprehensive look at access on and along the Nabesna Road. The study will re-visit the 2011 Nabesna Off Road Vehicle Management Plan and examine maintenance needs for the road and local trails. Additionally, we will be investigating potential gravel resources for maintenance and construction needs.

3. Gulkana To Copper River Access Study

In partnership with Ahtna Inc., State of Alaska, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Bureau of Land Management, Wrangell-St. Elias has entered into an agreement to evaluate public access easement options to the Copper River near Glennallen. Specifically, we will be looking at the 17(b) easements EIN 23 and EIN 23a that are located to the north of the Gulkana airport. Study elements include examination of potential routes and construction techniques for the access road and a one-acre parking area and boat launch. The deliverable from this agreement will be a final report from Federal Highways that will be used for Ahtna, Inc. to apply for design and construction funding. There will be a public open house meeting the week of July 10th, 2023 at the Glennallen School. Options for virtual engagement may be available as well. For more information contact: Morgan Sobek, Park Planner, 907-822-7213, morgan_sobek@nps.gov

4. Abandoned Mine Lands Hazardous Site Reconnaissance

WRST will be visiting structures associated with mines to evaluate hazards and conditions. Sites may be accessed via helicopter.

5. Awareness of Private lands within park boundary

The Lands and Planning team would like to remind everyone of the complex land status pattern that exists within the park boundary. There are over 757,000 acres of non-NPS lands scattered throughout the landscape. Please be aware of and respect private property. If you are unsure where boundaries exist, consult our online interactive planning map which displays land status: [Hunting, Fishing, and Back-country Planning Map](#) (nps.maps.arcgis.com). Users can create maps and upload to a smart phone in apps such as *avenza* to display where they are located in relation to private land boundaries.

6. Issuance of Right-of-way Certificates of Access

The Lands and Planning division continues to work with private landowners to evaluate access over NPS lands to private inholdings as mandated through ANILCA 1110(b).

For more info contact: Joshua Scott, Chief of Lands and Planning, 907-822-7243, joshua_scott@nps.gov

Visitor and Resource Protection

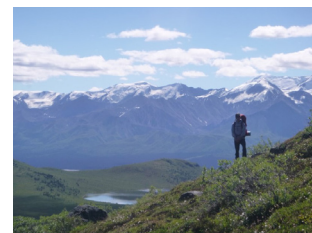
Visitor and Resource Protection rangers provide emergency medical response, search and rescue, public use management, and law enforcement services. We emphasize education of regulations and their enforcement, while also relaying information about practices that protect visitor safety and public resources.



Helicopter above Nabesna Glacier. **NPS Photo**

Wrangell-St. Elias relies on volunteer support for some emergency service functions such as search and rescue and emergency medical services. A special thank you to all the community members that have volunteered time and energy to help us accomplish our visitor and resource protection roles. There are multiple EMS and SAR trainings planned for this summer and we highly encourage our volunteer community to join us. You are valuable partners in the work we do -- thank you!

Backcountry ranger on patrol. **NPS Photo**



In addition to our normal operations, the Visitor and Resource Protection team is working on the following projects in 2023: In the South District, we will continue to have some presence in the Yakutat area and will continue placing an emphasis on enhancing our backcountry presence in general. As usual, volunteers will be stationed at the Bremner Historic Mining District. The Kennecott District staff will be patrolling not only in the Kennicott Valley but also will be assisting throughout the park with backcountry cleanup projects and patrols. There will also be a repeater installed at the McCarthy Airport office to help with radio communications going up the Root and Kennicott Glacier Valleys. In the North District, we will be patrolling trails, helping visitors along the Nabesna Road, and later in the season, conducting hunting patrols.



VRP Rangers at Chisana with Alaska Wildlife Trooper. **NPS Photo**

Parkwide, our rangers will be conducting patrols and collecting data on backcountry resource conditions. They will also be conducting preventative search and rescue activities by talking with visitors about ways to stay safe in the backcountry and assisting visitors with backcountry trip planning. As always, to report an emergency or violation on NPS managed land call ARCC - Alaska Regional Communication Center at 907-683-2276. This number reaches our 24/7 NPS dispatch. Please only call them to report an emergency or violation.

We are excited for another summer season and hope to see you out in the park!

Kennecott Updates

The Kennecott Operations Plan (KOP) is the primary planning document for management of the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark. The plan directs us, once every five years, to initiate a review and seek full community input in advance of adopting any revisions. Management issues have arisen in Kennecott that should be included and addressed in an updated management plan. We began the public engagement process for the review and revision in 2018 and we plan to continue seeking public comments. We will be engaging with the community on several topics addressed within the KOP, including but not limited to: visitor use patterns, motorized access, the Architectural Control Committee, and parking. Stay tuned for public meeting announcements that will be scheduled during 2023.

For more info contact: Joshua Scott, Chief of Lands and Planning, 907-822-7243, joshua_scott@nps.gov or Brenna McGown, AK Region Outdoor Recreation Planner, 907-251-0116, brenna_mcgown@nps.gov



Iceberg Lake at sunset. NPS/Elvie Underwood

Haiku Challenge

Sun shines on my face
Not so cold as yesterday
Spring is on its way!
-Matt Smith

My backpack is packed:
food, bear can/spray, bug dope, tent.
I'm ready to go!
-Carrie Wittmer

Inspirational.
Wilderness is at its best.
Spiritually.
-Mike Townsend

Northern lights last night
Imagination whiplash
Sent my heart flying
-Diane Ellsworth

Chosen Frozen Time

Once again we meet,
Middle school students and more.
Subsistence here in.
Chitina wind tunnel,
Chapped lips, cheeks and hands.
Still they lean into the ice.
For some, it's the first Rainbow
they have tried to catch,
Rainbows under ice.
"Fish on!" teacher yells.
Cheers and squeals from
all around.
Chosen Frozen time...
-Diane Ellsworth

