



United States Department of the Interior NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve
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Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: Coastal Activities Updates for the Southeast Regional Advisory Council October 2024

1. Interpretation and Education Update

In 2024, Wrangell-St. Elias Education and Interpretation staff led activities for two Yakutat youth events – Oceans Week at the Yakutat School and the Tern Festival. This year, Youth Program Partner, Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment, was funded by a National Park Service (NPS) project to support the Tern Festival. Time was spent with local youth exploring nature, cleaning up beaches, making art and learning about aerodynamics of birds. It was a great way to connect to the community of Yakutat. For more information, contact Russell Scribner, at russell_scribner@nps.gov or (907) 308-1021.



Youth from Yakutat exploring during Oceans Week. Photo Credit: NPS/Scribner

2. Sit' Tlein Research

Scientists from National Park Service, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Arizona, and University of Montana are wrapping up their three-year project studying recent and ongoing changes in the dynamics of Sit' Tlein, recently known as Malaspina Glacier. Based on field data collected so far, preliminary results and model outputs appear to confirm the project hypothesis that Sit' Tlein (“big glacier” in Tlingit) is on the cusp of a major retreat. Most fieldwork is now complete for this project, and all equipment has been removed. Several scientific papers are underway and will share these results over the coming year. One major publication, a new report that maps and describes the evolving surficial geology and proglacial lakes at Sit' Tlein, has already gone to press and is publicly available at <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/changing-sit-tlein.htm>. For information contact Michael Loso, Geologist, michael_loso@nps.gov or (907) 529-9372, or Martin Truffer, University of Alaska Fairbanks Professor, mtruffer2@alaska.edu or (907) 474-5359.

3. Coastal Ethnographic and Cultural Landscape Project: Documenting Eyak and Yakutat Tlingit Cultural Legacies

Building on Frederica de Laguna's 1972 *Under Mount Saint Elias* and the recommendations from the 2015 *Yakutat Tlingit Ethnographic Overview and Assessment*, the park has secured funding for a project to document the places and resources that connect Eyak and Yakutat Tlingit peoples to the Wrangell-St. Elias coastline – a culturally and spiritually significant environment and landscape. In fall 2023, park staff met with Yakutat Tlingit Tribe staff to discuss the project logistics. Beginning in fall 2024, a team of cultural anthropologists plus an archeologist will work closely with Eyak and Tlingit knowledge holders to gather information to complete an Ethnographic Landscape Study to be used as baseline documentation for park management for coastal resources at risk of being lost due to climate warming and glacial melt. In addition to NPS staff, we anticipate working with Doug Deur, Portland State University, and possibly Thomas Thornton, University of Alaska Southeast and National Academy of Sciences. The project will collaborate extensively with the Native Village of Eyak and the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, involving site visits, interviews, and opportunities for knowledge transfer between elders and youth. For more information, please contact Barbara Cellarius, Cultural Anthropologist, at (907) 822-7236 or barbara_cellarius@nps.gov, or Amber Cohen, Cultural Anthropologist, at (907) 822-7284 or amber_cohen@nps.gov.

5. Coastal Wolf and Other Wildlife Surveys along Malaspina Forelands

In early September, NPS staff had planned on collecting wolf scats to evaluate marine diet use along a remote portion of the coast near the Esker Stream and Grand Wash areas of the Malaspina Foreland area. Natural resource staff from Wrangell-St. Elias and NPS-Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center are interested in evaluating wolf diets along the Malaspina Glacier coastline. This work is in part of a larger project exploring wolf diets across multiple national park units that contain coastal areas including Katmai, Lake Clark, and Glacier Bay National Parks. Unfortunately, due to weather and unplanned illness with the field crew, surveys were postponed until 2025. Next field season, wolf surveys and wolf scat samples will be collected for genetic analyses to determine the type of species (wolves vs. coyotes), along with primary dietary sources. Genetic analyses will determine dietary sources such as the species of prey consumed including marine mammal (e.g., seal), ungulate (e.g., moose), small mammal, freshwater fish, and marine fish (e.g., salmon). Collected samples will be sent to Oregon State University for genetic

For information on the wildlife biology program at Wrangell-St. Elias, please contact Kyle Cutting (kyle_cutting@nps.gov). For information on the coastal wolf diet study, please contact Kelsey Griffin (Kelsey_griffin@nps.gov).

6. Research in the Park

Each year, approximately 20 to 30 research projects take place in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Ongoing or planned projects in the Yakutat area include the following:

- Alaska Earthquake Center: Accessing and Maintaining Existing Seismic Stations (2023-2027) (Michael West, University of Alaska Fairbanks, mewest@alaska.edu). For more information, see AEC's website: <https://earthquake.alaska.edu> .
- Aleutian Tern Population Assessment and Conservation Surveys in southcentral Alaska (2023-2025) (Robert Kaler, US Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Coupled hydrologic and glacier dynamic instabilities during Turner Glacier's surges (2021-2026) (Ellyn M. Enderlin, Boise State University)

Additional information about research in the park can be found on the park website:

<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/research-in-the-park.htm>.