



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Western Arctic National Parklands
Kobuk Valley National Park | Cape Krusenstern National Monument |
Noatak National Preserve
171 3rd Ave.
Kotzebue, AK 99752



Fall Update 2024

Team Updates

We want to extend our thanks to our summer seasonal staff. Alfred “Jake” Sheldon and Paul Walton worked as painters for our Maintenance team. Devin Craggette joined us as our Maniilaq summer intern supporting the Subsistence Program. Josh Paul and Justine Schmidt returned in their roles as Arctic Stewards conducting backcountry patrols. And Audrey Paul returned as an Interpretive Ranger at the Northwest Arctic Heritage Center. Your great work and dedication provided crucial support for our missions, thank you!

Rachel Heckerman joined the team as our new Visual Information Specialist. She will work for us for half of the year. Rachel is remote duty-stationed in New Jersey and was able to spend three weeks in Kotzebue and Kobuk Valley National Park this summer.



NPS Photo/Annie Carlson: Tents set up in Noatak Preserve during wolf study

Jonathon Hinson started on with us as our new pilot. We have not had an NPS pilot based in Kotzebue for several years, and we are thrilled to increase our capacity to fly to communities and the parklands. Jonathon is currently able to fly a 206 between airports, and he will attend additional training this year to expand his skills.

Superintendent Ray McPadden’s Departure

After two years serving as the WEAR Superintendent, Ray McPadden bid us farewell in July. He accepted a position as the Superintendent of Mojave National Preserve in southern California. Ray’s accomplishments at WEAR include securing funding to replace old staff housing, developing co-stewardship agreements with tribal partners, overseeing the transition of park facilities to wind energy, and bringing high-speed internet to the workforce.

The job announcement to hire a new Superintendent closed on August 12. We are reviewing candidates and conducting interviews. We hope to have our new Superintendent starting later this fall. We will announce widely when the position has been filled.

Summary of Major Projects

Park staff were very busy this summer. Some of our projects include updating staff housing and Kotzebue facilities, painting buildings, starting the NAHC siding project, bringing local youth to Cape Krusenstern through the *Arctic Travelers* program, sharing newly digitized materials from 1960s Giddings work during a boat trip up the Kobuk River, completion of the Lower Noatak Bear



NPS Photo/Dana Sharp: youth enjoy tundra walk in Cape Krusenstern

Survey, continuing study of the wolf population in Noatak National Preserve, an Akilik River archeological survey, and the final year of the Noatak Placenames project.



NPS Photo/Emily Creek: Caribou Cross Noatak River

Reduction in the harvest limit of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd

The Federal Subsistence Board met April 2-5 to consider proposed changes to Federal subsistence hunting and trapping regulations. The individual caribou harvest limit was reduced across the range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (Game Management Units 21D remainder, 22, 23, 24B remainder, 24C, 24D, and the southwestern portion of Unit 26A) to 15 caribou per year, only one of which may be a cow.

Closure of Federal lands in Unit 23 to non-federally qualified hunters for caribou

The Federal Subsistence Board implemented a closure of Federal public lands in Unit 23 to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users from Aug. 1 - Oct. 31, unless the Western Arctic Caribou Herd population exceeds 200,000 caribou. For lands managed by the National Park Service, this closure applies to Noatak National Preserve. Species such as moose and brown bear are not included in the current closure.

Historically, caribou have been the big attraction for non-federally qualified hunters entering the Preserve. In 2022 and 2023, under the Wildlife Special Action 21-01A closure, there was minimal non-federally qualified hunting activity in the Preserve. We conducted patrols in the Preserve this year to evaluate visitor activity, including hunting.

IRA Co-Stewardship Funds

Under the Inflation Reduction Act, the NPS Alaska region has received major funding to support the project *Mitigate the Impacts of Climate Change and Improve Food Security for Subsistence Users Through Co-Stewardship Arrangements*. This year WEAR received \$250,000 to support Co-Stewardship initiatives in our region. We are entering into agreements with Maniilaq and the Native Village of Kotzebue. Funds will support the Maniilaq Hunter Support Program, the creation of a new seal oil rendering video, and the Qatqut trade fair. Additionally, funds will be available to all of the tribes in the Maniilaq Service Area to support culture camps and classes..



NPS Photo/Emily Creek: Regional Director visit to Sisualik

NPS Photo/Emily Creek Giddings Cabin in Kobuk Valley NP