



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 September 2025

1. Tower Installed at Hubbard Overlook

The National Park Service recently installed a 30' tower at "Hubbard Overlook" (what we call the ridgeline between Turner and Hubbard Glaciers) in anticipation of equipping the tower with weather and camera components in the coming year. The tower was sturdily built to (hopefully) withstand winter snows and winds at that elevation, and once completed with all the sensors and cameras will provide hourly weather data and hourly photographs of Hubbard Glacier and Disenchantment Bay. The weather will be publicly available on a real-time basis, while the photographs will likely be downloaded twice per year and thereafter made available to the public. The goals of the installation are to monitor changing climatic conditions in the fiord, monitor iceberg production and use (if any) by harbor seals, and monitor ship traffic. A similar installation is planned at the Samovar Hills for summer 2026. We will notify the community when the weather data is up and publicly available. Contact Michael Loso, geologist, 907-529-9372, <michael_loso@nps.gov>

2. Esker Stream Public Use Cabin Rehabilitation

Esker Stream public use cabin, located near Yakutat, is available for use via recreation.gov for a fee of \$25 per night. In order to provide the best services to visitors, park staff worked on improving both the structure and the surrounding environment. Maintenance at the Esker Stream public use cabin included vegetation clearing around the structure, trail improvements to the beach landing site, general cabin repairs and cleaning, documentation, and trash removal.



Figure 1. Esker Stream Cabin

3. Coastal Wolf and Shorebird Survey along Malaspina Forelands, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve

In May 2025, field efforts were conducted along the Malaspina Forelands of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve to support ongoing wildlife and habitat monitoring. From May 3–14, activities focused on three primary objectives: assessing microplastic impacts on shorebirds, documenting wolf presence and diet, and performing maintenance on the Esker Stream public use cabin.

As part of the microplastics study, 32 individual shorebirds representing six species were captured along the Yakutat Forelands. Blood and fecal samples were collected for laboratory analysis. An additional 105 fecal samples from five shorebird species were collected on the Malaspina Forelands.

All samples were submitted to a contaminants laboratory for microplastic analysis; results are pending.



Figure 2. Wildlife Biologist Kyle Cutting collects substate samples for microplastics in the lower tidal zone in the Grandwash Reach of the Malaspina Forelands.

Wolf presence was minimal during the survey period. Only one set of old tracks was observed over 51.3 km of walking surveys. This limited sign may be attributed to reduced movement during the denning season. Future surveys conducted outside of this period may yield more data. Looking ahead to the 2026 field season, expanded microplastics sampling is planned to coincide with spring shorebird migration. Additional wildlife surveys and cabin maintenance activities are also scheduled. For more information, please reach out to Kyle Cutting, wildlife biologist, at kyle_cutting@nps.gov.

4. 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. Throughout 2025, park staff have been meeting with staff from the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe (YTT) and Native Village of Eyak (NVE) to plan a project that will gather information to complete an Ethnographic Landscape Study. This baseline document will help park management assess coastal resources at risk of being lost due to glacial melt. Starting in 2026, park staff will work with YTT and NVE staff as well as Portland State University professor Doug Deur on coordinating talking circles focused on landscape change. We also anticipate working with Thomas Thornton, University of Alaska Southeast, for additional assistance in the preparation for an Ethnographic Landscape Study. 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. 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> .
- 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>.