



# **United States Department of the Interior NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve  
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<http://www.nps.gov/wrst>



## **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Coastal Activities Report for Southeast Regional Advisory Council**

### **1. Aerial Photos and Elevation Data Collection**

- This summer, NPS worked to collect aerial photographs and elevation data in mountainous portions of the coastal portions of Wrangell-St. Elias and Kenai Fjords National Parks.
- The goal was to identify potential landslide areas that might potentially cause tsunamis in the event of large events. NPS staff successfully gathered data from the Disenchantment Bay area in late July and the Icy Bay area in early September.
- NPS researchers will work with data over the winter to identify high-priority areas for further study.
- For more information, please contact Michael Loso (Michael\_loso@nps.gov).

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

- Shorebirds are being used as early-warning indicators of coastal ecosystem health.
- In May 2026, work continued to assess plastic pollution levels and potential impacts on coastal areas of the park.
- From May 9-18, 2026, shorebirds were captured and their tissues (feces, blood) collected to evaluate possible plastic contamination.
- A total of 11 shorebirds across three species were captured, and 196 fecal samples from six species were collected by observing discrete flocks of migrating birds.
- Samples are currently being processed by a collaborator at Auburn University to determine the presence, concentration, type, and size of plastics in the collected tissues.



**Figure 1.** A captured Dunlin (left), mist-netting shorebirds at night (middle), and collection of shorebird fecal samples for microplastic testing on the Yakutat and Malaspina Forelands, Wrangell-St. Elias.

- During summer 2026, we deployed small (1x1m<sup>2</sup>) tarps near 17 occupied eagle nests and set 24 bear hair samples along the Copper and Chitina Rivers and the Malaspina Forelands (Figure 3). A total of 151 hair samples were collected and are currently being processed to evaluate the use of various subsistence food sources.
- For more information, please contact Kyle Cutting ([kyle\\_cutting@nps.gov](mailto:kyle_cutting@nps.gov))



**Figure 2.** A bear hair sampling site on the Malaspina Forelands

### **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. 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.
- Park staff worked with YTT and NVE staff as well as Portland State University professor Doug Deur on coordinating a talking circle on landscape change, which occurred March 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> in Yakutat.
- This event brought together knowledge bearers from Cordova and Yakutat to discuss the coastline, fishing, and important places.



**Figure 3.** Elders from Yakutat and Cordova//**Figure 4.** Daryl James (left) and Jack Hopkins (right) discuss the coastline.

- Another talking circle is currently planned in Cordova from November 5<sup>th</sup> to November 8<sup>th</sup>. The project team is excited to replicate the meaningful conversations and deepen connections between the communities. Interviews of knowledge bearers are also planned for 2027.
- For more information, please reach out to Amber Cohen, Cultural Anthropologist, at (907) 822-7284 or [amber\\_cohen@nps.gov](mailto:amber_cohen@nps.gov).

#### 4. 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](mailto: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)
- Using unoccupied aircraft systems (UAS) to monitor harbor seals and iceberg habitat in Disenchantment and Icy Bays in coastal Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) (Jamie Womble, Southeast Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Network, [jamie\\_womble@nps.gov](mailto:jamie_womble@nps.gov))
- Where Glaciers Touch People's Lives: A Community-Led Risk Assessment of the Hubbard–Valerie Glacier System, Alaska (Jenny Suckale, Stanford University, [jsuckale@stanford.edu](mailto:jsuckale@stanford.edu))

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>.

## 5. NPS Southeast Alaska Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Network Update

**A)** From 11-18 June 2026, oceanographic surveys were conducted in Disenchantment, Yakutat, and Icy Bays in collaboration with the University of Alaska Fairbanks - College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences and Duke University to quantify physical (temperature, salinity) and biological oceanographic conditions in the fjord and nearshore regions to assess coastal resources. In addition to vessel-based surveys, an oceanographic mooring that collects high-resolution physical data and underwater sound was retrieved and re-deployed. Seabird and marine mammal surveys were conducted in conjunction with oceanographic surveys. This effort, which was initiated in 2022, represents the first synoptic physical and biological oceanographic surveys in tidewater glacier fjords in this remote region of the eastern Gulf of Alaska. For more information, please reach out to [Jamie\\_Womble@nps.gov](mailto:Jamie_Womble@nps.gov).

**B)** At the end of August 2026, the Southeast Alaska Network of the National Park Service installed weather stations at two locations in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Hubbard Overlook (60.035,-139.602, 2061 ft) and Samovar Hills (60.113,-140.483, 3458 ft). Both stations also include time lapse cameras to track movement of glaciers and icebergs. Data from the weather stations is transmitted in near-real-time to the GOES weather satellite and is available from a variety of sources, including:

- Hubbard Overlook <https://viewer.synopticdata.com/table/HBOA2/all/now>
- Samovar Hills - <https://viewer.synopticdata.com/table/SMHA2/all/now>
- NWS map: [Weather related hazards](#)
- For more information, contact Andy Bliss ([andrew\\_bliss@nps.gov](mailto:andrew_bliss@nps.gov)).