

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

2026 Fall Update

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Subsistence Resource Commission

Background

The Gates of the Arctic National Park Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) provides local subsistence users an opportunity to inform the management of subsistence resources in Gates of the Arctic and the surrounding area, Northwest Arctic – Game Management Unit 23, Western Interior – Units 24A, 24B, 24C, North Slope – Units 26A and 26B. Since the establishment of the Federal Subsistence Program in 1990, the SRC has made recommendations on fish and wildlife proposals directly to Regional Advisory Councils and the Federal Subsistence Board.

Membership

In total there are 9 members on the SRC. Regional Advisory Councils appoint three members to the SRC. These members provide an important link between the SRC and the Federal Subsistence Program. The Regional Advisory Councils that address issues in Gates of the Arctic include the Northwest Arctic RAC, the Western Interior RAC, and the North Slope RAC. In addition to the RAC appointments, three members of the SRC are appointed by the Governor of Alaska and three members are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.

For more information, please contact Marcy Okada marcy_okada@nps.gov

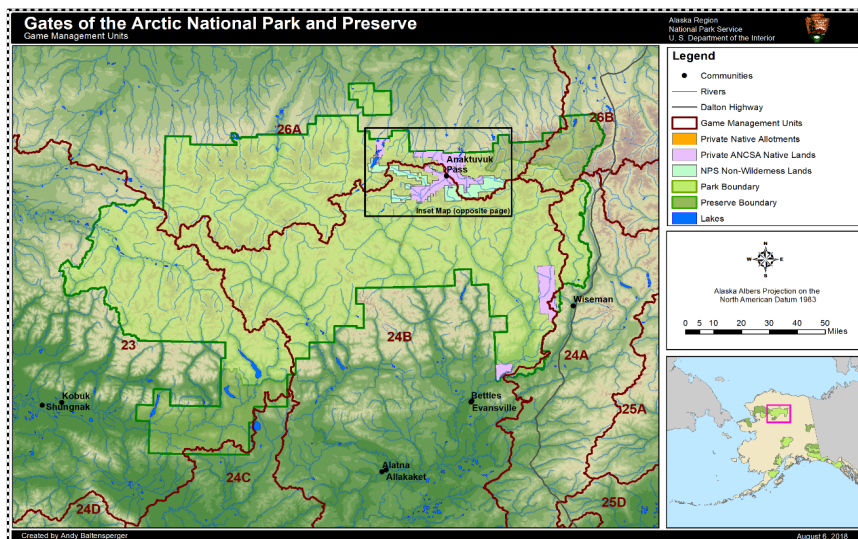


Figure 1. A map of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve (green outline) and game management units (outlined in red). The black dots represent resident zone communities. Ambler, Hughes, and Nuiqsut are resident zone communities beyond the scale of this map.

Previous Meeting

The Gates of the Arctic National Park Subsistence Resource Commission met on April 15-16, 2026 in-person in Fairbanks and via Teams. The SRC had a full agenda and voted to submit comment letters on the following: the Secretarial Review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, the NPS Proposed Wildlife Rule on Alaska Hunting and Trapping in National Preserves, federal wildlife proposals 26-66 to 26-69, and Western Arctic Caribou Herd wildlife special actions 26-01 to 26-03. Lastly, the SRC submitted a wildlife special action for an antlered winter moose hunt in Unit 24A from December 15 to April 15 for the 2026 to 2028 federal cycle. The next SRC meeting is scheduled for November 2026 in Fairbanks, where discussion will continue on the Ambler Mining Access Road, the status of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, Dall's sheep management, and research projects in partnership with affiliated communities.

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Western Arctic Caribou

Migration Timeline Spring to Fall

Mid-April – The cycle begins again. Many, but not all caribou have begun to head towards the calving grounds in the Utukok Uplands. Of note, a record 60 new GPS collars were deployed this spring and are visible. As like fall, a large number of collared animals are heading through Cape Krusenstern National Monument.

May – Spring migration is in full swing. Collared caribou are basically surrounding the calving grounds and heading towards it from all directions, with one collared caribou who is already there.

June – Most cow caribou are in the core calving area, but the ones that wintered far to the north or east are a bit behind in arriving.

July – With cool, wet weather that led to reduced insect harassment, the herd did not form a large aggregation this July and the photocensus was not completed.

August - After a weather event (heavy rain then snow) in the central and eastern Brooks Range, most of the collared caribou in the east have moved back west.

****Currently, the Western Arctic Herd cow harvest is closed.**

Caribou Use of the Proposed Arctic Mine & Surrounding Area, 2010-2024

Use of the area around the proposed Arctic Mine in the Ambler Mining District and the proposed Ambler Mining Access Road by GPS-collared, adult female Western Arctic Herd caribou was documented from 2010 to 2024.

The winter season exhibited the greatest use, followed by fall and then spring. Use was quite variable by year and season, ranging from 0-81% of the collared caribou using the area around the proposed mine in any given season. Proportion of

time spent near the proposed mine was also quite variable. Caribou spent the greatest proportion of time near the proposed mine in winter, with averages reaching as high as 100% of this season in one year. Fall had the next greatest proportion of time used with averages reaching 56% of the season near the proposed mine. Spring averages reached 29% of the season near the proposed mine. In some years, the percent of time spent near the proposed mine was <1%.

Caribou migrations are quite variable with use of winter ranges exhibiting the greatest variability. Caribou use of the area around the proposed Arctic Mine reflects this variability.

[Joly, K.](#), and M.D. Cameron. 2026. Western Arctic Herd Caribou Use of the Proposed Arctic Mine Footprint and Surrounding Area, 2010-2024. Science Report NPS/SR – 2026/455. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.
<https://doi.org/10.36967/2318566>



Figure 2. A mixed group of caribou in Kobuk Valley National Park (NPS/Kyle Joly).

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Moose Monitoring – Kobuk and Koyukuk Rivers

A new project to study moose in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and Kobuk Valley National Park began this spring. Basing out of Dahl Creek and Bettles with both helicopters and supercubs, 70 female moose were captured and given GPS collars. Informational flyers were shared with nearby communities and an important mitigation of the project was for capture operations to avoid areas of active subsistence use.

Now that moose are collared, there will be follow-up airplane flights to count moose calves and assess calf survival during specific times of the year. We completed 2 flights this spring to count how many calves were born to collared mothers. Our next flight will be in October/November to measure summer survival of calves, then again in April next year to measure overwinter survival.

The main goals of this new study are to better understand moose movements, distribution, habitat use, and diet throughout the year, their reproductive success, how long adults and calves survive, and possible contaminants and diseases.

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Figure 3. A collared moose in the woods (NPS/Kyle Joly).

Figure 4. Map of the Kobuk Valley (red) and Gates of the Arctic (yellow) moose study areas.

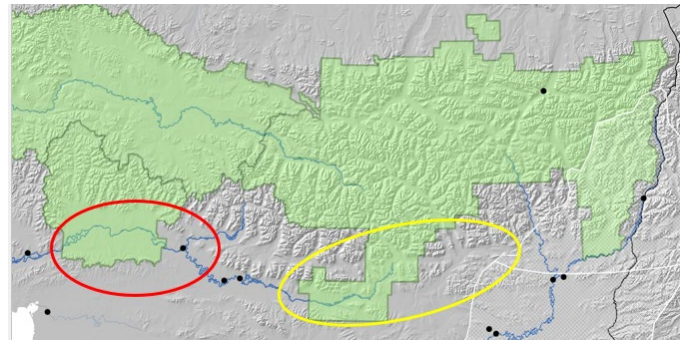


Figure 5. Counting moose (NPS/Kyle Joly).



Dall's Sheep

2026 Survey Summary

Background

The National Park Service conducted an aerial survey for Dall's sheep from June 27 to July 6, 2026 in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Three aircraft based out of Galbraith Lake surveyed two areas in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve (GAAR) - Itkillik Preserve (pink) and the southeast portion of the Park (blue) (Figure 4). Areas around Anaktuvuk Pass (yellow) were not surveyed due to bad weather. The survey used a standardized distance sampling protocol. Accurate Dall's sheep abundance and demographic data are critical for management of Dall's sheep populations and their harvest.



Figure 6. A Dall's sheep (NPS/Jared Hughey).

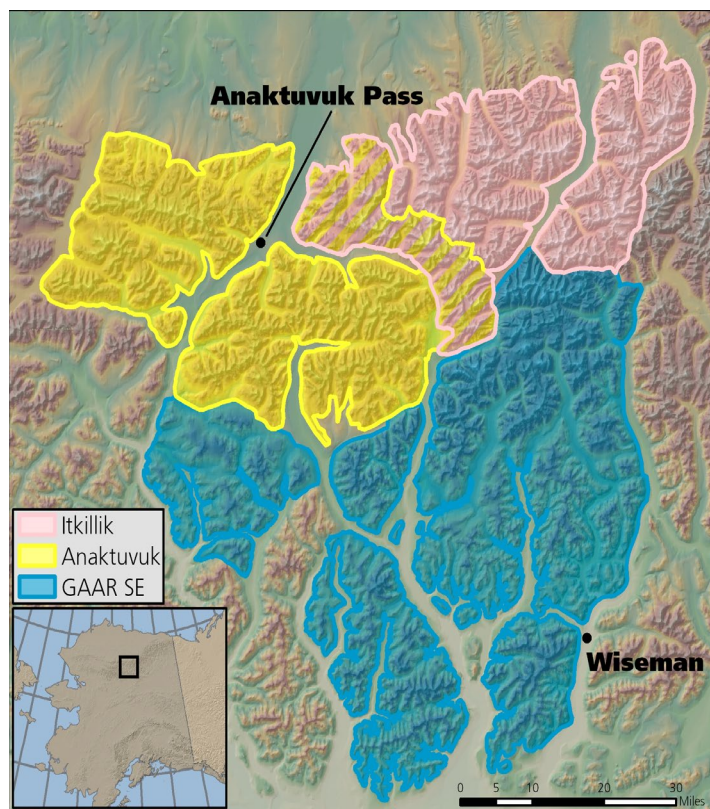


Figure 7. Map of Gates of the Arctic Park and Preserve Dall's sheep survey areas.

For More Information

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<https://www.nps.gov/im/arcn/dallsheep.htm>
