



Wildlife, Harvest, and Access in National Parks and Preserves in Alaska

Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record

September 2026

The National Park Service (NPS) certifies it has considered the factors mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); that this Finding of No significant Impacts (FONSI) represents its good-faith effort to prioritize documentation of the most important considerations required by the statute within the congressionally mandated page limits; that this prioritization reflects the NPS's expert judgement; and that any considerations addressed briefly or left unaddressed were, in the NPS's judgement, comparatively not of a substantive nature that meaningfully informed the consideration of environmental effects and the resulting decision on how to proceed.

The NPS certifies that this FONSI represents a good-faith effort to fulfill NEPA's requirements within the congressional timeline; that such effort is substantially complete; that, in the NPS's expert opinion, it has thoroughly considered the factors mandated by NEPA; and that, in the NPS's judgment, the analysis contained therein is adequate to inform and reasonably explain its decision regarding the proposed federal action.

INTRODUCTION

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Park Service (NPS) prepared an Environmental Assessment titled “Wildlife, Harvest, and Access in National Parks and Preserves in Alaska” (EA) to examine alternative actions and environmental impacts associated with the proposed rulemaking “Alaska; Wildlife, Harvest, and Access” (RIN 1024-AE96). This rulemaking applies to all national parks where subsistence use is authorized and national preserves in Alaska (“Alaska park areas”). The NPS has prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Wildlife, Harvest, and Access in National Parks and Preserves in Alaska EA (NPS 2026).

The NPS proposes to rescind changes to NPS regulations made by the final rules titled “Alaska; Hunting and Trapping in National Preserves,” 80 FR 64325 (October 23, 2015) (“2015 Rule”); “Alaska; Subsistence Collections,” 82 FR 3626 (January 12, 2017) (“2017 Rule”); and “Alaska; Hunting and Trapping in National Preserves,” 89 FR 55059 (July 3, 2024) (“2024 Rule”) to reflect NPS interpretations of laws and policies in place prior to 2015 following passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA). Additional background is available in the EA (NPS 2026).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The need for the proposed action is that the NPS has determined that existing regulations are not compatible with current federal laws and policies on NPS lands in Alaska regarding the regulatory framework adopted to implement ANILCA.

The purpose of the proposed action is to:

- Comply with direction given in Executive Order (EO) 14153, Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential, signed by the President on January 20, 2025, and SO 3422, signed by the Secretary of the Interior on February 3, 2025. EO 14153 directed the Secretary to rescind the 2024 Rule and reinstate the 2020 Rule and all bureaus in the Department of the Interior (DOI) to ensure to the greatest extent possible that hunting and fishing opportunities on federal lands are consistent with similar opportunities on state lands. SO 3422 directed the NPS to take action to execute the direction in EO 14153. Compliance recognizes the complementary and distinct roles of the State of Alaska, the Federal Subsistence Management Program, and the NPS in managing public uses and resources in Alaska park areas.
- Respond to requests to restore NPS regulations promulgated after passage of ANILCA that were in place until 2015 and reflected long-standing interpretations of laws and policies, to address concerns that current procedures had resulted in certain restrictions to public use and access in Alaska park areas (such as closures to fishing access due to bear presence) and had prohibited certain methods of state-authorized wildlife harvest. From 2015 to 2020 and again from 2024 to 2025, Safari Club International, the Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation, the Alaska Professional Hunters Association, the Alaska Outdoor Council, various Tribal entities, and multiple other stakeholder groups raised concerns about provisions of the 2015 Rule, the 2017 Rule, and the 2024 Rule. In 2025, Safari Club International requested the DOI to rescind the 2024 Rule, and the

Alaska Outdoor Council submitted a Petition for Rulemaking to the DOI to restore the pre-2015 regulations by repealing the 2015 Rule, sections of the 2017 Rule, and the 2024 Rule.

SELECTED ACTION

The selected action will rescind amendments to NPS regulations made by the 2015, 2017, and 2024 Rules. Amendments address bear baiting; trapping definitions and authorities; live wildlife collection; subsistence collections definitions and authorities; and public safety closure and restriction authorities (collectively referred to as “closure authorities” and “closures”) and procedures. See Table 1 in the EA (NPS 2026) for a list of proposed actions and associated CFR text changes that were analyzed.

All State of Alaska laws concerning hunting, trapping, fishing, and collections that do not conflict with existing federal laws or regulations will continue to apply in Alaska park areas. The regulation changes will not alter the federal subsistence priority established by ANILCA. Federal Subsistence Management Program regulations and the rural preference for qualified users on federal public lands in ANILCA Title VIII are unchanged.

Amendments to the CFR that were determined to have no impacts were not analyzed in the EA (NPS 2026). Minor administrative changes, such as adding language to address changes in circumstances, like relocation of the Federal Subsistence Management Program into the Office of the Secretary; ministerial edits to conform to current Federal Register drafting standards; revisions to subsistence collections definitions expected to have no effects on practitioners; or edits required to ensure that revised text is consistent throughout the CFR are not considered. See Appendix B - Table of Administrative Changes in the EA (NPS 2026) for a list.

The selected action is responsive to comments received on the proposed rule (“Alaska; Hunting and Trapping in National Preserves,” 91 FR 11483 (March 10, 2026) during the public comment period; comments received during Tribal Consultation, a process underway throughout the life of the project; and comments received from the State of Alaska during consultation, a process underway throughout the life of the project. See Chapter 4 in the EA (NPS 2026) for additional details on consultation and coordination.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

A description of all potential environmental effects associated with the proposed action and with the no action alternative is included in the EA (NPS 2026), incorporated by reference herein. The statements and conclusions reached in this FONSI are based on documentation and analysis provided in the EA and associated decision file. Consistent with the DOI NEPA Handbook, Section 1.2(b) (DOI 2026), the NPS evaluated the significance of the selected action, identified as the proposed action in the EA, by analyzing the potentially affected environment and the degree of the effects of the proposed action. Significance is determined solely in relation to reasonably foreseeable adverse effects. The degree of effect is considered by evaluating both short and long-term effects, both beneficial effects and adverse effects, effects on public health and safety, economic effects, and effects on the quality of life of the American People.

The EA discloses the reasonably foreseeable effects of the proposed action, including the combined effects of the proposed action with those of past, ongoing, and anticipated future actions on the public safety, wildlife, federal subsistence use, and public use and experience in Alaska park areas. While other park resources may experience some effects, those effects are minimal and were determined not to warrant detailed analysis in the EA. Accordingly, these resources are not discussed further here, as the anticipated effects are so minor that they have no potential result in significant impacts. For a detailed description of the issues and impact topics considered but dismissed, see “Issues Dismissed from Further Analysis” in the EA (NPS 2026).

Mitigation, monitoring, and enforcement considerations and provisions, included per the DOI NEPA implementing procedures (DOI 2026), are discussed where applicable below. Design features are not included, as they are not applicable to this rulemaking.

Potentially Affected Environment

A more detailed description of the potentially affected environment per resource is included in the EA under the subheadings “Affected Environment” for each resource carried forward for analysis, including public safety, wildlife, federal subsistence use, and public use and experience. See also Table 2, Impacts Summary by Alternative, in the EA (NPS 2026).

Short and Long-term Beneficial and Adverse Effects

A more detailed description of the impacts per resource is included in the EA under the subheadings “Environmental Consequences” for both alternatives and each resource carried forward for analysis, including public safety, wildlife, federal subsistence use, and public use and experience; see also Table 2, Summary of Impacts by Alternative, in the EA (NPS 2026).

Public Safety

Actions other than those related to bear baiting are expected to have limited adverse effects on public safety. While rare, the selected action could result in public safety risks due to the potential for humans and bears to encounter each other at bear bait stations in national preserves. While these risks may not be high-probability events, the catastrophic nature of human injury or death from human-bear conflicts could result in localized severe adverse impacts on public safety. The rescission of existing public safety closure authorities and procedures may result in some temporary decrease in information distribution as the public adjusts to the new processes, as well as shortened closure or restriction periods, both leading to short-term and limited adverse impacts to public safety. However, decrease in information distribution is expected to be minimized after the public becomes familiar with new processes.

Combined with the proposed action, the effects of reasonably foreseeable trends and planned action would result in limited adverse impacts on public safety overall.

Monitoring: The NPS would continue to monitor visitor safety and retains full authority to close specific areas or restrict specific activities if a documented concern arises meeting the criteria in Section 13.50 and

Section 13.490, mitigating these potential impacts to public safety as a result of limiting the allowable length of temporary closures and restrictions without rulemaking.

Wildlife

By design, baiting of bears alters their behavior to increase their predictability and facilitate harvest. Therefore, the selected action would result in localized impacts to individual animals or family groups (e.g., direct mortality, and/or increased mortality risk due to loss of family or group members), resulting from the removal of current prohibitions on methods of take. Impacts to individual bears are likely to be greater in areas along and near access corridors. However, due to the low level of additional take anticipated as a result of removing the current prohibitions, biological population-level effects are not anticipated.

Impacts to individual raptors taken and their family groups may be acute and adverse under the selected action. Although being caught in a trap can stress a raptor, trapped birds rarely are injured physically (Bloom et al. 2023). While in falconer care, licensed falconers must adhere to State (5 Alaska Administrative Code [AAC] 92.037) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) (50 CFR 21.82 and 21.85) regulations regarding the continued humane and healthful care of raptors in captivity; use of raptors for hunting; and, rehabilitation of a raptor injured by the falconer's trapping efforts, if applicable, among other regulations. Unintentional take associated with take for falconry is possible.

In general, under the selected action, the NPS expects healthy populations of wildlife would continue to exist in a manner consistent with the range of natural variability with regard to abundance, diversity, and distribution.

Monitoring (Bears): The State manages take of wildlife under a “sustained yield” principle (Alaska Constitution, Article VIII, section 4) and has assured the NPS that in the event harvest were to increase beyond sustainable levels, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game would close seasons by emergency order if immediate action was necessary, and/or by recommending more conservative seasons, bag limits, and/or methods to the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) for future hunting seasons (State of Alaska 2014). Furthermore, as part of the proposed action, the NPS would continue to work with the BOG to ensure sustainable harvest and would retain authority to act on its own in the future, if necessary to protect NPS resources and values.

Monitoring and Mitigation (Raptors): Given the relatively limited acreage of NPS-managed national preserve land when compared to the broader landscape of Alaska, of the statewide estimate of 10.6 raptors per year, a very small portion of the average of 10.6 wild-caught raptors per year in Alaska would occur within national preserves. It is not expected that this level of anticipated take would result in population level effects on raptor species, though this characterization is qualitative and data-limited. State and FWS regulations would continue to apply to allow monitoring of take and populations, and these agencies would be expected to mitigate any impacts to these raptor populations, information and consulting with NPS as appropriate.

Federal Subsistence Use

In specific, localized areas, there could be localized decreases in the number of bears available for federal subsistence harvest over the long term. Slight increases in opportunities for subsistence harvest of brown bears could occur where harvest of bears over bait is allowed for sport hunters, and there could be an increase in nuisance bears at subsistence hunting and fishing camps due to conditioning of bears to human food.

Closure authorities and procedures are modified such that the superintendent is required to hold a notice and hearing for all emergency closures or restrictions related to the taking of fish and wildlife, emergency closures could not exceed a period longer than 30 days, and temporary closures may not exceed 12 months. These modifications do not affect regulatory actions taken by the Federal Subsistence Board to close or restrict non-subsistence taking of fish and wildlife or subsistence restrictions as authorized under Title 8 of ANILCA and in federal subsistence regulations.

Overall, the opportunities for subsistence use are expected to remain generally similar to the opportunities currently available.

Monitoring and Mitigation: The State would continue to monitor take and populations and would be expected to mitigate any impacts, informing and consulting with NPS as appropriate.

Monitoring and Enforcement: In rare cases, federally qualified subsistence users may be adversely impacted from the delayed ability of the park superintendent to enact emergency closures or restrictions related to the taking of fish and wildlife as needed to protect public safety, resources, listed species, and subsistence uses, such as deterring potential conflicts between federally qualified subsistence users and others. The NPS will monitor such situations to determine if a change in policy may be required.

Public Use and Experience

The selected action could result in the enhancement of some sport hunting opportunities in the preserves for bears and most likely for moose and caribou in the short-term. The avoidance of areas around bear baiting stations by a small number of other recreational visitors could result in a reduction in other public uses and experience of those areas, although there could also be visitors attracted to the bear bait stations to view bears. The allowance of live wildlife collection could result in some adverse impacts to those visitors interested in viewing raptor nests. The rescission of existing public safety closure authorities and procedures may result in some temporary decrease in information distribution as the public adjusts to the new processes.

Overall, these impacts to public use and experience are expected to be minimal, with very few visitors likely to see any change to their anticipated experience in national parks and preserves in Alaska.

Effects on Public Health and Safety

As required by the DOI NEPA Handbook (DOI 2026), the NPS assessed the significance of any effects on public health and safety. The selected action will not result in significant adverse effects on public health and safety. See the description of Public Safety in the EA (NPS 2026) and above in this FONSI for more detailed information.

Economic Effects

As required by the DOI NEPA Handbook (DOI 2026), the NPS assessed the significance of any economic effects. The selected action is not expected to result in significant economic effects at the local, regional, or national level. As the DOI NEPA Handbook advises, economic effects should be evaluated in terms of their degree and geographic relevance, with particular attention to local scale impacts. In this case, it was determined that this regulatory action will generate economic benefits for a small group of hunters and falconers and could result in a modest increase in revenues for hunting guides in national preserves. Further, the reduced regulatory burden and elimination of conflicting regulations under this rule is expected to reduce costs and complexity for hunting guides and other affected user groups. Other potential costs and benefits, including increased option values for hunters, costs associated with public safety risks, and any loss of passive use values, are anticipated to be small in magnitude. Finally, this rule does not involve any fees or other measures that would increase monetary costs to visitors, businesses, or communities.

Effects on the Quality of Life of the American People

As required by the DOI NEPA Handbook (DOI 2026), NPS assessed the significance of the proposed action's effects on the quality of life of the American People. As described in the EA (NPS 2026) and in the "Public Use and Experience" section of this document, the selected action will have some minimal impacts to public use and experience, resulting in both adverse and beneficial impacts. Overall, these impacts to public use and experience are expected to be minimal, with very few visitors likely to see any change to their anticipated experience in national preserves in Alaska.

The selected action will not restrict the public's ability to consume, purchase, or use products from public lands. It will also have no impact on public services, traditional land and water use practices, or the cultural heritage of Native American communities. Additionally, the selected action will not affect passive recreational use of ecosystems.

BASIS FOR THE DECISION

The proposed action (preferred alternative) was selected because:

- The selected action best meets the project's need to ensure existing regulations are compatible with current federal law, guidance, policy, and direction in Alaska park areas.
- The selected action best meets the project's purpose to comply with direction given in Executive Order (EO) 14153, Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential and Secretary's Order (SO) 3422. The selected action also best meets the project's purpose to respond to requests to restore NPS regulations promulgated after passage of ANILCA that were in place for decades until 2015 and reflected long-standing interpretations of laws and policies, to address concerns that that current procedures had resulted in restrictions to public use and access in Alaska park areas (such as closures to fishing access due to bear presence) and had prohibited certain methods of state-authorized wildlife harvest. The amendments to regulation are consistent with Executive Orders 14153 and 14192 and Secretary of the Interior's Orders 3422 and 3447.

The NPS also evaluated a no action alternative, under which the NPS would not rescind the 2015 Rule, 2017 Rule, or 2025 Rule. Under the no action alternative, there would be no changes to existing regulations concerning bear baiting on national preserves, trapping authorities and definitions on national preserves, live wildlife collection authorities on national preserves, and public closure procedures and authorities for Alaska park areas. This alternative was not selected because it does not meet the project purpose or need.

DECISION

I have reviewed the environmental assessment prepared for this project, which is incorporated by reference into this finding, the analysis of environmental impacts, and all associated compliance documentation. All identified effects are short-term, highly localized, and minimized through established mitigation measures. Based on this review, I have selected the proposed action for implementation. The Environmental Assessment demonstrates that the selected action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. Lastly, as the responsible official, I certify that the National Park Service has considered all relevant information raised during the National Environmental Policy Act process and that the process is closed (516 DM 1 Handbook Section 4.1). I therefore approve the selected action for implementation.

Approved:

**DONALD
STRIKER**

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DONALD STRIKER
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Donald Striker, Regional Director, Alaska

National Park Service, Interior Region 11

FONSI AND APPENDIX A REFERENCES

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- NPS. 1984a. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve General Management Plan.
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- NPS. 1986b. Bering Land Bridge National Preserve General Management Plan.
- NPS. 1986c. Denali National Park and Preserve General Management Plan.
- NPS. 1986d. Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve General Management Plan.
- NPS. 1986e. Katmai National Park and Preserve General Management Plan.
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- NPS. 1986g. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve General Management Plan.
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- NPS. 2014c. Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve General Management Plan Amendment / Wilderness Stewardship Plan / Environmental Assessment.
- NPS. 2014d. Lake Clark National Park and Preserve General Management Plan Amendment.

NPS. 2025. Guidance for Non-Impairment Determinations and the NPS NEPA Process. April 2025.

NPS. 2026. Wildlife, Harvest, and Access in National Parks and Preserves in Alaska Environmental Assessment. September 2026.

State of Alaska. 2014. State Comment Letter re: RIN 1024-AE21. November 26, 2014.

APPENDIX A: NON-IMPAIRMENT DETERMINATION

As described in National Park Service (NPS) 2006 Management Policies, Section 1.4.4, the National Park Service Organic Act (Organic Act) prohibits the impairment of park resources and values. Guidance for Non-Impairment Determinations and the NPS NEPA Process (April 2025) describes the process for completing non-impairment determinations for NPS actions requiring preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Impairment is defined in the April 2025 guidance as “an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values.” Professional judgement is defined in the NPS 2006 Management Policies as “a decision or opinion that is shaped by study and analysis and full consideration of all the relevant facts, and that takes into account the decision-maker's education, training, and experience; advice or insights offered by subject matter experts and others who have relevant knowledge and experience; good science and scholarship; and, whenever appropriate, the results of civic engagement and public involvement activities relating to the decision.”

The NPS has completed a non-impairment analysis for the impacts to Alaska park areas resulting from implementation of the rulemaking titled Wildlife, Harvest, and Access (RIN 1024-AE96) following the guidance, process, and definitions in the April 2025 guidance and the 2006 NPS Management Policies.

NPS non-impairment analysis, per the April 2025 guidance “does not include discussion of impacts to wilderness, visitor experience, socioeconomic, public health and safety, environmental justice, land use, park operations, etc., as these do not constitute impacts to park resources and values subject to the Organic Act no impairment standard. See Section 1.4.6 of Management Policies 2006.” Therefore, of the four resource issues analyzed in the EA, only wildlife is considered in this Non-Impairment Determination.

This determination has been prepared for the selected action, as described in the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). As a basis for evaluating the potential for impairment on the park’s resources, the NPS relied on the EA.

SELECTED ACTION

The selected action will rescind changes to NPS regulations made by the NPS 2015, 2017, and 2024 Rules. These rescissions would restore regulations reflecting NPS interpretations of laws and policies that were in place for decades following passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) until 2015. See Table 1 in the EA for a list of proposed actions and associated regulatory changes.

PURPOSE AND FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCES AND VALUES OF NATIONAL PARKS AND PRESERVES IN ALASKA

ANILCA Title II (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] 410hh to 410hh-5) area General Management Plans (GMPs) (NPS 1984a-b, NPS 1986a-h) and GMP amendments (NPS 2014b-d), and more recent area

Foundation Statements (NPS 2009a-e, NPS 2010a-b, NPS 2012, NPS 2014a) describe the purposes and public uses and values to be managed for and protected in each preserve area, as well as the Alagnak Wild River through a River Management Plan (NPS 1983). Preserves are to be managed like national parks, except the taking of wildlife for sport purposes and subsistence uses and trapping shall be allowed under applicable state and federal law and regulation. Subsistence take of wildlife is allowed in parks and monuments in Alaska where authorized in ANILCA Title II (16 U.S.C. 410hh to 410hh-5). Guided sport hunting concessions are offered in all preserves except Bering Land Bridge National Preserve.

WILDLIFE NON-IMPAIRMENT ANALYSIS

Under the selected action there is the potential for localized impacts to individual animals and family groups (e.g., direct mortality and increased mortality risk to animals due to loss of family or group members), and corresponding localized effects on predator-prey systems. However, meaningful impacts are not expected at the population level for predator or prey species.

By design, baiting of bears alters their behavior to increase their predictability and facilitate harvest. Therefore, the selected action would result in localized impacts to individual animals or family groups (e.g., direct mortality, and/or increased mortality risk due to loss of family or group members), resulting from the removal of current prohibitions on methods of take. Impacts to individual bears are likely to be greater in areas along and near access corridors. However, due to the low level of additional take anticipated as a result of removing the current prohibitions, biological population-level effects are not anticipated.

The state manages take of wildlife under a “sustained yield” principle (Alaska Constitution, Article VIII, section 4) and has assured the NPS that in the event harvest were to increase beyond sustainable levels, the ADFG would close seasons by emergency order if immediate action was necessary, and/or by recommending more conservative seasons, bag limits, and/or methods to the BOG for future hunting seasons (State of Alaska 2014). Furthermore, as part of the proposed action, the NPS would continue to work with the BOG to ensure sustainable harvest and would retain authority to act on its own in the future, if necessary to protect NPS resources and values.

Impacts to individual raptors taken and their family groups may be acute and adverse under the selected action. Although being caught in a trap can stress a raptor, trapped birds rarely are injured physically (Bloom et al. 2023). While in falconer care, licensed falconers must adhere to state (5 AAC 92.037) and FWS (50 CFR 21.82 and 21.85) regulations regarding the continued humane and healthful care of raptors in captivity; use of raptors for hunting; and, rehabilitation of a raptor injured by the falconer’s trapping efforts, if applicable, among other regulations. Unintentional take associated with take for falconry is possible.

Given the relatively limited acreage of NPS-managed national preserve land when compared to the broader landscape of Alaska, of the statewide estimate of 10.6 raptors per year, it’s assumed a very small portion of the average of 10.6 wild-caught raptors per year in Alaska would occur within national preserves. It is not expected that this level of anticipated take would result in population level effects on raptor species, though this characterization is qualitative and data-limited. State and FWS regulations would continue to apply to mitigate any impacts to these raptor populations.

Because populations of wildlife will likely continue to exist in a manner consistent with the range of natural variability in Alaska national preserves in a manner that can continue to be enjoyed by current and future generations, no impairment to wildlife will occur as a result of implementing the selected action. In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that such effects remain brief, reversible, and fully recoverable.

CONCLUSION

The NPS has determined that in the professional judgment of the NPS decision-maker, the action selected in this FONSI will not result in impairment to park resources or values. Based on the EA, subject matter expert input, the parks' foundation documents, and this analysis, the NPS finds that implementing the selected action does not prevent the NPS from fulfilling park purposes and will not result in impairment of resources or values of Alaska park areas.