

Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plan

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Public involvement information • Summer 2015



Purpose of the plan

This Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plan is being developed to guide the preservation, management, and use of the largest designated wilderness in the National Wilderness Preservation System into the future. The purpose of this plan is to preserve the area's backcountry and wilderness character while allowing for exceptions provided under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA).

Need for the plan

Since the park and preserve were established in 1980 and the original General Management Plan completed in 1986, much has changed. The General Management Plan is now outdated and does not adequately address the protection and stewardship of backcountry and wilderness. There is a need to develop the plan to accomplish the following:

- Identify actions that will enable us to continue to provide an outstanding visitor experience in the face of increasing backcountry and wilderness use in some areas.
- Provide consistent guidance for dealing with difficult backcountry and wilderness issues such as cabin and airstrip management and appropriate levels of commercial use.

Scope of the plan

This plan will identify desired future conditions for the backcountry and wilderness, provide management actions that work towards desired conditions, identify management tools to address recreational and commercial uses, and provide for customary and traditional subsistence activities. This plan is not a wilderness eligibility assessment and will not evaluate additional lands to be recommended or designated as wilderness.

9.4 million acres of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve is managed as "wilderness" under the Wilderness Act of 1964 and as provided under ANILCA. As a congressionally designated wilderness area, the Wrangell-St. Elias Wilderness is managed to preserve its wilderness character and maintains some restrictions over what uses can, and cannot, occur there. Uses provided for under ANILCA include provisions relating to subsistence use, cabins and other structures, certain means of motorized access, among others. More information on the Wilderness Act and ANILCA can be found at: <http://nps.gov/wrst/>

Anticipated management challenges

The management framework of Wrangell-St. Elias is complex. As a result, this plan will address a number of issues with the goal of providing long-term guidance to preserve backcountry and wilderness resources and character while providing for uses allowed under ANILCA. A few of the management challenges that have already been identified and will be addressed within this plan are:

- Visitor use and impacts
- Motorized use (including snowmachines and off-road vehicles)
- Cabin management
- Airstrip management and maintenance
- Commercial use and services
- Cumulative effects of use

One of the purposes of public scoping is to identify additional issues and challenges the park can address in this plan. We invite you to share your thoughts about these issues or other topics that you feel should be considered as part of this planning effort.

Share your thoughts

Public scoping for the Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plan will extend through November 2015. This is an ideal time for you to share your thoughts, concerns, and vision for the future of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve's wilderness and backcountry areas. Your input will help guide the planning team in developing the Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plan, including the consideration of various alternatives for managing the park's backcountry and wilderness into the future. Additional opportunities for public input will be announced as the planning process progresses. We look forward to hearing from you.

Questions to consider

1. When you visit the Wrangell-St. Elias backcountry and wilderness, what activities and experiences are most important to you?
2. What factors have influenced your backcountry and wilderness experience here?
3. What issues in the Wrangell-St. Elias backcountry and wilderness are concerning to you, and what do you see as possible avenues to resolve them?
4. What do you value about this backcountry and wilderness?
5. Imagine you are visiting the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve backcountry and wilderness area 20 years from now. What conditions, experiences, visitor services, and facilities would you like to see?

How to comment

Comment online at:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=44299>

Mail comments to:

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve

ATTN: Bruce Rogers

P.O. Box 439

Copper Center, AK 99573

Call us at: (907) 822-7213 or (907) 822-7240