



April 2024



A Note from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve boasts 123 miles of shoreline along Cook Inlet extending from Chinitna (Tsanitnu) and Tuxedni (Tuk'ezitnu) Bays. Located west of the Kenai Peninsula, the Lake Clark coast is famous for spectacular scenery, lush salt marshes, and, of course, amazing bear viewing in Chinitna Bay (Tsanitnu) and Silver Salmon Creek.

The National Park Service is developing a coastal management plan to guide the long-term management of the Lake Clark coastline. This newsletter provides information on this plan and invites you to participate in the planning process by sharing your views. Your ideas will help us shape the future of these remarkable areas. I appreciate your interest in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Susanne Fleek-Green
Superintendent
Lake Clark National Park and Preserve

Park Purpose

The purpose of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve is to protect a region of dynamic geologic and ecological processes that create scenic mountain landscapes, unaltered watersheds supporting Bristol Bay red salmon, and habitats for wilderness-dependent populations of fish and wildlife, vital to 10,000 years of human history.

Project Purpose

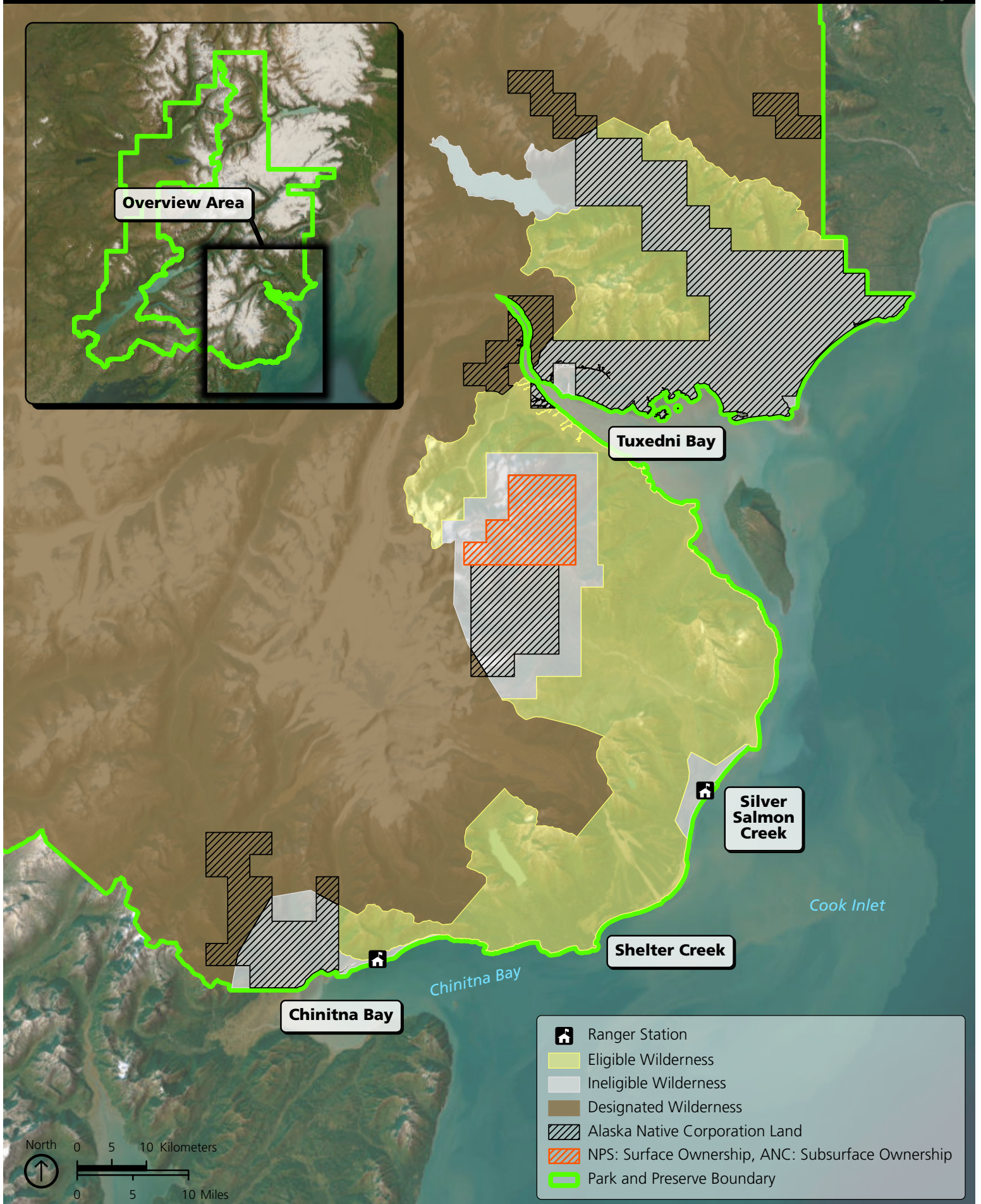
The purpose of the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve coastal management plan is to improve visitor experiences at key coastal sites while protecting resources and responding to changing conditions.

Overview

Coastal Management Plan

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve
Alaska

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The NPS planning team has identified the following five key issues facing the Lake Clark coastline. These issues are expected to continue and are likely to intensify into the future if no action is taken. Proactive management guidance is needed to ensure that resources are protected and opportunities for a high-quality visitor experience are provided.

1. Large increase in number of coastal visitors

There has been a substantial increase in seasonal visitation to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Visitation to Chinitna Bay (Tsanitnu) has increased nearly tenfold over the last 15 years from 724 to 7,197 visitors annually from June to September. At Silver Salmon Creek, the number of annual visitors has tripled from 2,173 to 6,365. The increase in visitation is the primary cause of the next four issues listed below.

2. Potential for human–bear conflicts and impacts to brown bears

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve staff have observed visitors not adhering to best bear-viewing practices. Such behavior presents visitor safety concerns and disrupts bear behavior, affecting their use of preferred habitats and food sources. The park continues to seek ways to reduce bear–human interactions through education, training, and enforcement of safety protocols.

3. Inadequate visitor facilities and amenities

Existing visitor facilities along Lake Clark National Park and Preserve’s coastline are no longer adequate for current and anticipated visitation experienced at bear-viewing locations. There are currently limited public facilities (i.e., pit toilet, etc.) at Silver Salmon Creek and Chinitna Bay (Tsanitnu) to meet basic visitor needs. As visitation has increased, the lack of basic amenities in these areas has led to a significant amount of waste being left on park lands.

4. Limited aviation guidelines

Most visitors arrive at the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve coast by plane. The park currently lacks requirements for aircraft to maintain a certain altitude above sensitive coastal areas. Having these requirements in place would help increase visitor safety and protect bears. In addition, the park does not have a set of aviation-specific stipulations, including radio frequency requirements for operators. The park is interested in exploring the feasibility of adding these and other requirements to increase oversight over aviation-related safety.

5. Limited NPS presence on the coast

Only a small number of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve’s most popular bear-viewing sites, notably Silver Salmon Creek and Chinitna Bay (Tsanitnu), have NPS ranger presence. Even at these locations, staff may not always be on duty. The limited NPS presence makes it difficult to educate visitors, enforce commercial use–related and other stipulations, accurately track visitation statistics, and proactively manage for visitor safety.



Potential Solutions

The planning team has identified potential solutions that would address the purpose of the plan as well as the key issues described above. The following potential solutions are presented by the issue the action would address. These solutions are initial ideas, and the National Park Service is interested in your feedback! Please note that the environmental and financial feasibility of these initial solutions needs further evaluation.

Issue	Potential Solutions
Large increase in number of coastal visitors	<p>Across the coastal areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create best practices for camping. • Work with commercial use authorization (CUA) operators to identify solutions for reducing the number of groups in view at one time. • Manage visitation to protect the resource and enhance safety through changes to commercial operation permitting. • Define the number of commercial planes and boats allowed at areas that experience higher visitor use. • Monitor cultural resource sites for visitor impacts at key locations. <p>Silver Salmon Creek:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporarily close areas to allow for revegetation.
Potential for human–bear conflicts and impacts to brown bears	<p>Across the coastal areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve consistency of best bear-viewing practices on state and federal lands. • Work with commercial operators to improve bear-viewing practices. • Designate additional bear-viewing areas. • Establish a distance requirement between visitors and wildlife. <p>Silver Salmon Creek:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build bear-viewing or fishing platforms. • Close the salt sedge meadow to protect habitat and reduce bear disturbance.
Inadequate visitor facilities and amenities	<p>Across the coastal areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer accessible opportunities where possible. <p>Chinitna Bay (Tsanitnu):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address human waste concerns by adding another outhouse. • Consider opportunities for a visitor contact area. <p>Silver Salmon Creek:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and maintain trails. • Improve creek crossings. • Address human waste concerns by adding an outhouse. • Add a visitor service kiosk and bear fence area for picnicking and camping.
Limited aviation guidelines	<p>Across the coastal areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage use of the aircraft tracking system and aviation reporting. • Consider developing airstrips to support certain coastal access. • Facilitate conversations with pilots about best practices at specific sites.

Issue	Potential Solutions
<p>Limited NPS presence on the coast</p>	<p>Across the coastal areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine facilities on the coast and determine what improvements or additions may be needed to facilitate increased staffing. • Acquire boundary surveys at specific sites and put in signage to delineate boundaries. • Provide information for staff, CUA operators, and the public about protection of sensitive sites and resources. • Pursue co-stewardship agreements with Tribes to determine which sites are ethnographically significant and mitigate impacts. • Increase use of Indigenous place names. • Explore opportunities for partnerships with adjacent landowners. • Partner with Alaska Marine Exchange to monitor emergent vessel-based visitation.





How Can I Provide Input?

Between April 2 and May 2, 2024, you will have a variety of opportunities to provide your input:

- **Submit comments on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website:** <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/LACLcoast>. Once on the website, select “Open for Comment” to provide your thoughts and ideas.
- While all comments are welcome and appreciated, addressing the following questions will best contribute to helping shape the future of the park:
 - » What do you most value about your experiences at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve?
 - » What are your thoughts on the issues identified by the National Park Service?
 - » What do you think about the draft potential solutions presented in this newsletter?
 - » Do you have any additional ideas to suggest to the planning team?
- **Attend one of the virtual public meetings on Thursday, April 18, 2024.** Detailed information about these public meetings can be found on the project website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/LACLcoast>

Next Steps

Planning Activity	Timeline
Host public listening sessions and request feedback during the public engagement period	April 2024
Develop proposed actions and preliminary management options	August 2024
Draft coastal management plan and associated compliance	Spring 2025
Request public review of the draft coastal management plan and associated compliance	Summer 2025
Incorporate public feedback and revise the coastal management plan	Fall 2025
Finalize the plan and associated compliance; begin implementation	Winter 2025–2026

