



FIELDREPORT

Alaska Region | Winter 2018-2019



Killing Cubs in National Preserves?

Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has demanded the National Park Service (NPS) allow baiting and killing of brown bears, killing of black bear mothers and cubs, and killing of wolves and cubs in dens during denning season on national preserves in Alaska. During the recent comment period, the Park Service received over 180,000 comments, almost all of which opposed Zinke's proposal.

In one letter, 110 scientists and natural resource managers—which included 65 individuals with doctorates—urged NPS to abandon its proposed rollback of wildlife protections on the national preserve lands that make up more than 20 percent of the nation's national parkland acreage.

A portion of the letter, which included the endorsement of 17 former Alaska

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Top: Sunshine on Denali, North America's highest peak ©Irena Maresova | Dreamstime
Right: Denali visitors get the chance to see bears, wolves and Denali itself thanks to park infrastructure and protective laws. ©Jonathan Mauer | Dreamstime

PROGRESS ON PARK FUNDING!

The National Park Service's (NPS) backlog of overdue repairs has grown to \$11.6 billion. Half of the projects are transportation-related: roads, bridges, tunnels, trails and parking lots. The remaining half consist of needed—and, in some cases, critical—updates to visitor centers, water infrastructure systems, historic buildings, military infrastructure, docks and more.

The majority of our park infrastructure was built decades ago when the parks were first established. Two primary construction phases included the 1930s, with work done by the Civilian Conservation Corps, and then again fifty years ago during Mission 66, when Congress invested billions in park infrastructure. These facilities are feeling their age. In Alaska, we have over \$100 million in needed repairs, from the Denali Park road that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to the backcountry emergency cabins that protect northwest Alaska hunters caught in bad weather.

Now, Congress may be poised to act. The Senate's Restore Our Parks Act and House's Restore Our Public Lands Act would dedicate up to \$6.5 billion to NPS deferred maintenance. In recognition that national parks, in large part, drive Alaska tourism, Sen. Sullivan and Rep. Young are co-sponsors of the respective bills, and Sen. Murkowski has played an essential role supporting the

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effort as chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. This is very encouraging forward progress and offers hope for Alaska national park infrastructure, the visitors who rely on it for once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and the Alaska tourism economy that depends on those visitors.



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Alaska Corner by AK Regional Director Jim Adams

In 2016, the National Park Service (NPS) celebrated its 100th birthday with record visitation. NPCA, created three years after NPS by the founder of the Park Service in recognition of the need for an advocate for the parks, will celebrate its own centennial in 2019.

I believe the next 100 years of national parks will be awe-inspiring and will bring people together. We face some great opportunities and some great challenges as more people visit parks, as climate change alters park environments and, of course, as some politicians try to dilute the national park legacy we hope to leave our children.

In Alaska, we're tackling these challenges with fresh eyes. Literally. This fall, we welcomed two new members to the Alaska Regional Office team. Alex Johnson, our new program manager based in Anchorage, brings with him a wealth of enthusiasm, a love of Alaska, and a background in communications and conservation advocacy. Janelle Blakely, based out of our Seattle office, will be working with us as a major donor development officer to help fund some of our critical work. I'm really excited to have them join NPCA as we work with members and supporters like you to protect and enhance our country and Alaska's national parks for another 100 years.



PROJECT UPDATES

Sturgeon Lawsuit: The United States Supreme Court held oral arguments on the Sturgeon case in November. Although the case arose because someone sued to use a hovercraft in an Alaska national park, the implications of the decision are much further reaching and could ultimately set a precedent about who has authority over rivers and lakes in national park and on other federal lands. As a result, the National Park Service is fighting for the authority to prevent outright predator control and in-stream mining on rivers and lakes within national parks and preserves. The case may also end the subsistence fishing rights of rural Alaskans. A decision is expected in January or February.

Pebble Mine: The proposed Pebble Mine may impact the bears of Katmai National Park and would undoubtedly significantly impact Lake Clark National Park. An

ill-timed disaster at the mine could wipe out the salmon runs in Lake Clark altogether. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is currently considering Pebble's permit application. Unfortunately, acting under orders from the Trump administration, the Corps is racing through the process, spending far less time and conducting a far less rigorous review than it has on past mine applications.

The Ambler Mining District Road: The proposed "Ambler Road" would pass through Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and provide access for a mining district right in the middle of the wildest connected set of national parks in the country. The road is in the permitting process, and we expect to have the opportunity to comment on proposed routes in January or February. Please contact us if you would like to receive alerts and other opportunities to participate in any of these issues.

AN EVENTFUL SUMMER & FALL IN ALASKA



NPCA TURNS 100!
Mark your calendar—
May 19, 2019, marks
NPCA's 100th
birthday! We plan
to celebrate around
Alaska and the
country all year with
events and advocacy.

100 YEARS

We are proud of our ten decades as the only independent, nonpartisan organization advocating on behalf of America's national parks, and pledge to continue inspiring the next generation of park advocates, protecting our most beautiful places, and embracing the diverse voices of our country. Thank you for supporting NPCA and for your leadership helping protect the many treasured natural and historic sites in our National Park System. We'll be sure to keep you updated with event dates and opportunities to help us celebrate.



MIKAH MEYER – Mikah Meyer, founder of Travel Beyond Convention, spoke before a packed house last June as he recounted his mission “to share all 418 national parks with the world, be a new type of LGBT role model, and inspire others to live their dreams before it’s too late.” Co-hosted with the National Park Service, the event included photos and stories from Mikah’s travels to national parks and drew over 50 attendees. The next morning, he joined us as we participated in the Anchorage Pride Parade. Follow Mikah’s story at mikahmeyer.com.

©Jessica Weikert

SAVE A BEAR, EAT A DONUT – In early November, alongside Alaska Wildlife Alliance and Defenders of Wildlife, we hosted an event at Dipper Donuts in Anchorage to oppose extreme sport hunting practices in national preserves.

©Mandy Migura



MUSIC & ADVOCACY - SALMONFEST 2018 – NPCA hosted a booth alongside coalition partners at the three-day summer Salmonfest in Ninilchik. Check out some photos from the event online with the hashtag **#DonutBaitBearsNPS**.

©Chelsea Halverson



ALES & ADVOCACY – Last July, NPCA teamed up with Defenders of Wildlife to host an advocacy event “Letters, Donuts & Bears – Oh My!” at a local brewery. Nearly 40 people wrote personal comments opposing proposed extreme hunting methods on Alaska national preserves and helped spread the word that donuts are NOT for bears.

©Jessica Weiker



SUMMER INTERNS – This summer, two amazing interns joined our Anchorage office. Jessica Weikert (left) and Chelsea Halverson (right), who both grew up in Anchorage, hosted all of our summer events with a level of passion for conservation work that was truly inspiring. We know they will continue to do wonderful things for the future of our national parks!

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SUPPORT NPCA!

As NPCA approaches the end of 2018 and prepares to ring in 2019, please consider supporting our local and national park protection with a donation at www.npca.org/give. Thank you!



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Welcome to Alaska!

Please join us in welcoming the following new faces to the Alaska region of NPCA.

JANELLE BLAKELY, NORTHWEST DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR: I'm thrilled to join NPCA as the regional director of development for our Alaska, Northwest and Northern Rockies regions—connecting our most generous supporters with our work to protect national parks.

Before joining NPCA, I oversaw fundraising in the Northwest for NatureBridge, an organization that connects kids to national parks through science and exploration.



Janelle Blakely

I have more than a decade of experience with environmental nonprofits. I received my Masters of Nonprofit Leadership and Graduate Certificate in Fundraising Leadership from Seattle University.

As I settle in to my new role with NPCA, I'd love to hear from you. Do you have fundraising ideas or want to learn how you can make a greater impact for our parks? Please contact me: jblakely@npca.org or 206-348-5157.

ALEX JOHNSON, PROGRAM MANAGER
Greetings! I am pleased to join NPCA as the new Alaska program manager. I first fell in love with Alaska in 2006 as a summer canvasser for the Alaska Center. After getting the "Far North" bug, I spent many seasons leading conservation crews across the state. My greatest adventure to-date has been paddling a canoe the full length of the Yukon River, all 1,800 miles, with my husband, Pete.



Alex Johnson

Most recently, I was directing a grassroots conservation group in western Colorado, and I am now pleased to return north. I look forward to elevating diverse Alaskan voices from Sitka to Port Heiden, Kotzebue to Eagle, along with all of the great champions outside Alaska, to protect and enhance our national parks and preserves. You are welcome to contact me at ajohnson@npca.org or 907-891-2272.

Killing Cubs in National Preserves?

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Department of Fish and Game employees, including a former commissioner, states:

"Alaska is the largest area remaining in the United States where large carnivore habitats remain both extensive and relatively unaffected by anthropogenic influences. Management practices for large carnivores adopted by the [State of Alaska], however, are a reversion to historical practices that treat large

carnivores as lesser or undesirable species. Alaska is the best place remaining in the United States with the potential to maintain healthy and natural ecosystems with naturally-occurring abundances of predators and prey species. Accordingly, the NPS has a responsibility to manage these lands in the national interest and not in narrow local interests of maximizing yields of game meat for local harvest."

NPCA supports sport hunting in national preserves as an essential part of the Alaska

National Interest Lands Conservation Act. However, national preserves are very clearly to be managed like national parks for the enjoyment of future generations, not like game farms. Bears, wolves and other predators are important to park visitors and essential to park ecosystems, where they regulate prey populations that might otherwise overgraze and destroy habitat. Secretary Zinke's proposal is illegal, contrary to NPS regulations and guidance, and a really bad idea. Let's hope Secretary Zinke listens to what the public is telling him.

