

## Interpretation, Education, and Public Affairs Report

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### **Visitor Services & Education – More people at programs and more contacts at special events in the local community!**

The Visitor Center in Copper Center, Kennecott Visitor Center, and the Slana Ranger Station were open daily this year. The Chitina Ranger Station was open 2 days per week, staffing permitting, but did not have a store outlet. There were 50,000 visitor contacts this year, still slightly below 2019 (52,251) numbers. The Division of Interpretation, Education, and Public Affairs brought in external funding in 2024 to provide quality customer service to visitors and deliver meaningful programs for youth and local stakeholders. Proceeds from the AK Geo store sales supported ranger-led programs, supplies for local outreach events, the official park newspaper K'elt'eani, and training and development for staff. This coming October there will be Interpretation and education staff send down to an Indigenous Knowledge Workshop with the support from AK Geo Funds.



Ranger-led program offering on the Boreal Forest Trail at Copper Center Visitor Center. Photo Credit: NPS

Through the summer 7,400 people attended a formal ranger-led program and were provided as a service to connect more deeply with the resources of the park. Ranger-led talks, nature walks, and evening programs were offered in Kennecott as well as in the Visitor Center in Copper Center. At the Visitor Center in Copper Center and Slana Ranger Station, staff also administered 235 federal subsistence hunting and 292 fishing permits.

Education staff had many opportunities to present at special events and community outreaches. Through events like the Environmental Fair, Gulkana Airport Day, Kenny Lake Book Camp, Copper River Native Association Day Camp, Junior Anglers Programs, school visits and field trips there were more than 2,900 contacts made with park communities. This spring there were also 2 trips to Yakutat for ranger staff to present at the Oceans Week and the Tern Festival events.



Gulkana Airport Days Outreach Program 2024. Photo Credit: NPS



Ranger helping guest at Backcountry Information Station. Photo Credit: NPS

### Grant Funds Supported Special Projects

The National Park Foundation supported the implementation of a recycling program, which has been picked up as a Centennial Cost for future funding and implementation. Other funds from PMIS projects helped with the development of a Backcountry Information Station; updating of interpretive exhibits; and creation of accessible audio versions of park exhibits. Funding from a salmon genetics research project also increases educational opportunities to talk about the local salmon fishery.

### Ahtna Youth Interns Participated in Cultural Education

Four Ahtna youth interns provided tours and cultural information to visitors at the Ahtna Cultural Center. Additionally, they participated in several cultural programs including a Gulkana culture camp, and an ethnobotany and salmon class for high school and college credit. This year also focused on Ahtna Archeology with back country camping.



M Starr Knighten, Illeana Debler, Nola Debler (AYI), Tracy Parent, Braden John, Jonathan Duke, Cynthis Beshaw (AYIS), Alvin Albert (AYI), James Segerquist (AYI) and Sydney Leonard. Phot Credit: S. Knighten

### **Youth Conservation Corps Completed Park Projects**

Seven youth between the ages of 16-18 participated in Wrangell's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program. Along with the Ahtna Youth Interns, they learned about outdoor leadership with local partner Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment. They also gained trail building skills with their primary work on the visitor use cabins off the Nabesna Road and clearing and maintaining the Jumbo Mine trail in the Kennecott National Historic Landmark. Five of the 7 YCC members were from the local community, with the addition of one member from Anchorage and the other from Georgia.



YCCs and Ahtna Youth Interns and learning outdoor leadership skills. Photo Credit: NPS

### **Local and Diverse Hires Dominate the Interpretation and Education Division**



The 2024 North District All Employee Picture. Photo Credit: NPS

Twenty members of the Interpretation and Education team's seasonal employees, interns, and youth conservation corps staff this summer are considered youth workers. Nine of the 20 are from the local area and 8 are Alaska Natives. This includes an 11-month digital media intern. Local staff provided visitors with first-hand knowledge of the area and have unique perspectives and insights to the subsistence way of life. Local hires build essential professional skills with the NPS that set them up for future careers in the Copper River Basin. In

fact, 5 WRST seasonal employees working for Administration, Maintenance, and Interpretation were Youth Conservation Corps members in previous years, Local hire evidence that youth programs are serving as career ladders for local youth.

### **Getting the Word out about WRST – Locally and Globally**

The I&E Team maintained social media platforms, the WRST website, and the NPS App in addition to sending 45 targeted emails to local stakeholder. We wrote and distributed 21 news releases; and granted interview and information requests from TV, newspaper, and radio outlets.

### **Job & Internship Opportunities Coming in 2024 - 2025**

- October – USAJobs ([www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov)) announcements come out for Park Ranger and Park Guide seasonal positions.
- January – Local hire announcements come out for Park Ranger and Park Guide seasonal positions.
- January – Announcements for Student Conservation Association interns come out.
- March – Announcements for Ahtna Youth Interns and Youth Conservation Corps (<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/management/ycc.htm>) come out.

### **Get Up-to-date Information about WRST**

Join the “Locals Listserv!” Request a subscription by emailing [wrst\\_public\\_affairs@nps.gov](mailto:wrst_public_affairs@nps.gov) and putting “Locals Listserv” in the subject line. Members receive timely news releases, Cultural Heritage Highlights, Research in the Park information, and Community Newsletters. Members can unsubscribe at any time.

Interested in knowing what’s going on in the park? Follow us on our digital media platforms:

**Park Website:** [www.nps.gov/wrst](http://www.nps.gov/wrst)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/WrangellStEliasNPP](https://facebook.com/WrangellStEliasNPP)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/WrangellStENPS](https://twitter.com/WrangellStENPS)

**Instagram:** [instagram.com/wrangellstenps](https://instagram.com/wrangellstenps)

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