



Foundation Document Overview

Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

Alaska



Contact Information

For more information about the *Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve Foundation Document*, contact: KATM_Visitor_Information@nps.gov or 907-246-3305 or write to:
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Purpose



The purpose of ANIAKCHAK NATIONAL MONUMENT AND PRESERVE is to protect, study, and interpret the dynamic geology, ecology, and human use of Aniakchak Caldera and the surrounding landscape.



Significance

Significance statements express why Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

Geology: Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve protects the site of one of the world's largest volcanic eruptions and provides opportunities to study and interpret the dynamic volcanic landscape and other geological processes.

- **Aniakchak Caldera**
- **Fossils/Paleontology**
- **Surprise Lake**
- **Education**
- **Science**

Ecological Succession: Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve provides for the study of natural ecological succession in an area that has been repeatedly impacted by volcanic eruptions and catastrophic flooding, including the Aniakchak River, from the caldera to the ocean.

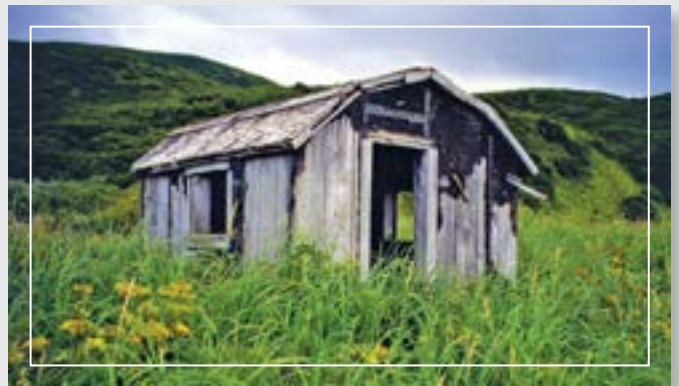
- **Native Fish**
- **Wildlife**
- **Vegetation Communities**
- **Research and Monitoring**
- **Education**

Human Use: Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve provides an opportunity to understand the history of human interaction with the natural resources of a dynamic volcanic landscape.

- **Archeological Resources**
- **Historic Resources**
- **Cultural Landscapes**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Subsistence**

Visitor Experience: Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve and Aniakchak Wild River challenges the visitor to enter and experience the awe-inspiring caldera, free-flowing river, and other remote and dynamic landscapes.

- **Wildness/Remoteness**
- **The Caldera**
- **Aniakchak Wild River**



Description

Midway down the wild, remote, and mostly roadless Alaska Peninsula lies one of the nation's most fascinating but least visited volcanic features. Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve encompasses approximately 600,000 acres and is a vibrant reminder of Alaska's location in the volcanically active "Ring of Fire." About 3,400 years ago, a 7,000-foot volcano collapsed during a massive eruption. A 6-mile-wide, 2,500-foot-deep caldera was left in the eruption's wake. Subsequent eruptions, including the last one in 1931, have created cinder cones, lava flows, and explosion pits that dot the caldera floor. In addition to the Aniakchak Caldera, the park boundary also contains other important resources. To the east, rugged bays and inlets of the Pacific coast and offshore islands provide habitat for sea mammals and sea birds. Boundaries of the area also include a vast sweep of treeless tundra and lowland ecosystem characteristic of the lower Alaska Peninsula.

In creating Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve in 1980, Congress recognized the unique geological significance of the caldera and also acknowledged the outstanding wildlife and recreational values of the Aniakchak River by designating

it a wild river within the national wild and scenic rivers system. Nestled inside the caldera is Surprise Lake, a remnant of a much larger lake that catastrophically drained in a massive flood. Warm springs and melting snow feed Surprise Lake, which in turn gives rise to the Aniakchak River. The river exits the caldera through "The Gates" and moves swiftly through this narrow, rocky gorge in the caldera wall before slowing to meander toward Aniakchak Bay and the Pacific Ocean on its 27-mile southeastward course.

Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve lies approximately 450 miles southwest of Anchorage and 150 miles southwest of King Salmon on the Alaska Peninsula. Most people access Aniakchak via chartered airplanes departing from King Salmon and other nearby towns and villages. Boats can also reach the Pacific coast of the monument and preserve. A few adventurous groups have also hiked into Aniakchak Caldera via a cross-country route from Port Heiden. The national monument and preserve contains no marked trails, campgrounds, or services. Park headquarters is in King Salmon.

