



Foundation Document Overview

Kenai Fjords National Park

Alaska



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of KENAI FJORDS NATIONAL PARK is to preserve the scenic and environmental integrity of an interconnected icefield, glacier, and coastal fjord ecosystem.



Significance and Fundamental Resources and Values

Significance statements express why Kenai Fjords National Park 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 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.

Icefields and Glaciers: Kenai Fjords National Park protects the Harding Icefield and its outflowing glaciers, where the maritime climate and mountainous topography result in the formation and persistence of glacier ice.

- Icefields
- Climate Processes
- Exit Glacier
- Science & Education

Fjords: Kenai Fjords National Park protects wild and scenic fjords that open to the Gulf of Alaska where rich currents meet glacial outwash to sustain an abundance of marine life.

- Marine Ecosystems
- Forest Ecosystems
- Wildness
- Shared Stewardship
- Scenery



Fundamental Resources and Values

Geologic Processes: Kenai Fjords National Park protects an outstanding example of a subsiding coastal mountain range with steep-sided fjords, drowned cirques, and jagged islands.

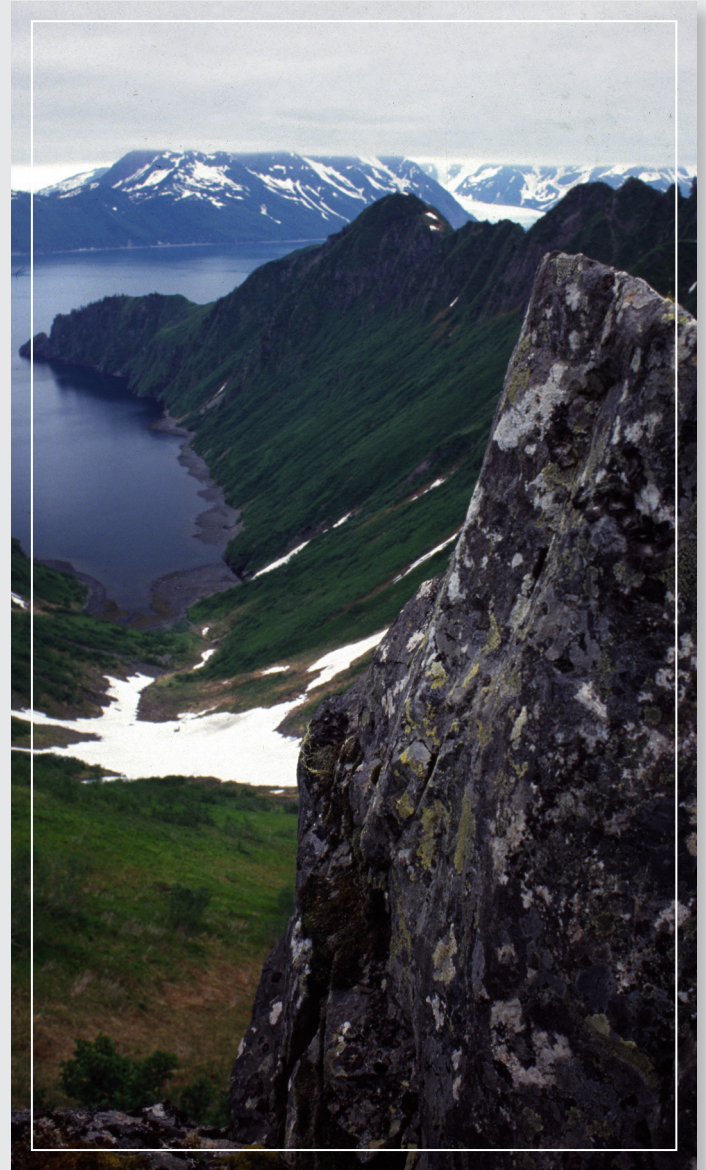
- Physical Record
- Geologic Study
- Interpretation/Education

Wildlife: Kenai Fjords National Park protects a rich diversity of terrestrial and marine life in their natural state.

- Terrestrial Wildlife
- Marine Mammals
- Birds
- Wildlife Viewing
- Scientific Research and Monitoring
- Partnerships/Interagency Cooperation

Human Experience: Kenai Fjords National Park provides opportunities to experience, understand, and appreciate the scenic and wild values of the Harding Icefields, its outflowing glaciers, coastal fjords, and wildlife and to comprehend environmental change in a human context.

- Archeological and Historic Resources
- Native Values
- Collections
- Research
- Partnerships
- Access
- Recreational Opportunities
- Interpretation/Education



Description

The Kenai Fjords National Park was established on December 2, 1980, under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) to preserve in perpetuity unique fjord and rainforest ecosystems, the vast Harding Icefield, rich and varied marine and terrestrial wildlife, and historical and archeological reminders of the native peoples of the Alaska coast. In addition, Kenai Fjords National Park also provides for visitor enjoyment and access to the coastal fjords, Exit Glacier, and the Harding Icefield in a manner that maintains them unimpaired for future generations.

Sweeping from rocky coastline to glacier-crowned peaks, Kenai Fjords National Park is located on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, 128 miles southwest of Anchorage. The park is accessible by car, bus, train, boat, and plane. Kenai Fjords is approximately 601,839 acres including 545 miles of coastline, rugged and glaciated mountains, numerous glaciers, fjords, and bays, and abundant terrestrial and marine wildlife.

Kenai Fjords National Park encompasses a coastal mountain system on the southeastern side of the Kenai Peninsula. A 300-square-mile, nearly flat icefield overlies all but the tops of the central portion of the Kenai Mountains. The Harding Icefield, Kenai Fjords crowning feature and largest icefield contained completely within the United States is almost a mile above the Gulf of Alaska. Nearly 40 glaciers radiate out from the icefield in all directions. To the southeast they descend to a fjord system. Mountain ridges extend out into the Gulf of Alaska; their seaward ends have been depressed by tectonic forces so that only mountain tops remain above sea level. Glaciers carve the valleys between these jagged ridges, and fjords are created when ocean waters replace receding glaciers. Wildlife thrives in frigid waters and lush forests around this vast expanse of ice. Native Alutiiq relied on these resources to nurture a life entwined with the sea. Today, shrinking glaciers bear witness to the effects of our changing climate.

Kenai Fjords National Park has something for everyone. Whether you take atour or kayak in a remote fjord, you will be surrounded by pristine scenery and abundant wildlife. A hike to the top

of the Harding Icefield Trail or scenic overflight gives you a window to past ice ages. At Exit Glacier you can stroll the trails, take a ranger-led walk, and get close enough to hear the creaks and groans of an active glacier as it slowly sculpts the landscape. Although much of the park is rugged wilderness, there are ways to explore for all interests and abilities. Boat tours depart Seward's small boat harbor daily in the summer months. Several companies provide a variety of tour options, schedules, and amenities. Full-day tours that venture out to the park's tidewater glaciers are available as well as half-day tours that stay in the more protected waters of Resurrection Bay while giving you a taste of the park's wildlife and scenery.

The park's headquarters and information center are located in the town of Seward, Alaska. The Exit Glacier area is accessible by road, approximately 12 miles from Seward. Additional access to the park is by small plane or by one of the many commercial tour and charter boats that ply the coast along Kenai Fjords. Most of these boats operate out of Seward.

