



Foundation Document Overview

Kobuk Valley National Park

Alaska



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of KOBUK VALLEY NATIONAL PARK is to maintain the environmental integrity of boreal forest, montane, and riverine ecosystems. The park protects and interprets diverse resources including arctic sand dunes, archeological sites, and subsistence resources.



Significance and Fundamental Resources and Values

Significance statements express why Kobuk Valley 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.

Arctic Ecosystems: Kobuk Valley National Park preserves the environmental integrity and interprets the ecosystems of the Kobuk River watershed.

- Sand Dunes
- Plant Communities
- Rivers
- Wildlife
- Air
- Education

Cultural Resources: Kobuk Valley National Park preserves, studies and interprets, in cooperation with Alaska Natives, evidence reflecting a continuum of cultural use and adaptation within arctic-interior Alaska, spanning thousands of years.

- National Historic Landmark
- Archeological Sites
- Historic Resources
- Ethnography
- Museum Collections
- Fossils
- Scientific Study
- Education and Outreach

Fundamental Resources and Values

Wilderness Character: Kobuk Valley National Park includes 1.7 million acres of public land, all of which is eligible or designated wilderness.

- Designated Wilderness
- Wilderness Experience
- Salmon River
- Vastness
- Natural Soundscapes
- Education

Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat: Kobuk Valley National Park protects habitat for and populations of birds, fish, and other wildlife typical to both arctic and boreal forest ecosystems in northwest Alaska.

- Fish and Wildlife
- Plant Communities
- Research and Monitoring
- Education and Outreach



Caribou Migration: The unfettered movement of Western Arctic Caribou Herd through Kobuk Valley depends on the undeveloped character, vastness and natural resources of Kobuk Valley National Park.

- Western Arctic Caribou Herd
- Caribou Migration
- Interagency Working Group
- Education

Subsistence: Kobuk Valley National Park protects natural resources that provide the opportunity for local rural Alaska residents to engage in customary and traditional subsistence uses.

- Healthy Aquatic Systems
- Subsistence Resources
- Migration Routes
- Cultural Knowledge
- Education



Description

Kobuk Valley National Park was established on December 2, 1980, under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) to maintain the environmental integrity of the natural features of the Kobuk River Valley, including the Kobuk, Salmon, and other rivers, the boreal forest, and the Great Kobuk Sand Dunes, in an undeveloped state, to protect and interpret, in cooperation with Alaskan Natives, archaeological sites associated with Native cultures; to protect migration routes for the Arctic caribou herd; to protect habitat for, and population of, fish and wildlife including but not limited to caribou, moose, black and grizzly bears, wolves and waterfowl and to protect the viability of subsistence resources.

Kobuk Valley National Park is approximately 1.7 million acres and encompasses a nearly enclosed mountain basin on the middle section of the Kobuk River in northwest Alaska. Trees approach their northern limit in the park, where forest and tundra meet, creating a mosaic of forest and open tundra. Thousands of caribou funnel through mountain passes and cross the Kobuk River on their spring

and fall migrations. Salmon and arctic char migrate to spawning grounds within the park. These and other seasonally abundant plant and animal resources have made the middle section of the Kobuk River favorable for human habitation and use. Native people have hunted, fished, and lived along the Kobuk River for at least 12,500 years, and the subsistence use of resources of the Kobuk Valley continues into the present. This vast natural landscape is home to the Inupiat Eskimo people who currently live along the Kobuk, upstream and downstream from Kobuk Valley National Park.

There are no developed facilities in Kobuk Valley National Park, but 1,795,280 acres of remote backcountry provides a lot of room for outdoor adventures. In summer, boating, camping, hiking, backpacking, flightseeing, wildlife watching, photography and fishing opportunities abound. For people with Arctic winter survival skills and personal equipment, snow machining, skiing and dog mushing are also possible.

Permits are not required for independent travelers. Community programs are available throughout the year at the Northwest Arctic Heritage Center. Topics include natural and cultural history of the park, local research, workshops, and children's activities. Popular activities include backpacking in the Baird Mountains, floating the Kobuk River, and hiking and camping in the Great Kobuk Sand Dunes.

Caribou, sand dunes, the Kobuk River, and Onion Portage are just some of the facets of Kobuk Valley National Park. Half a million caribou migrate through, their tracks crisscrossing sculpted dunes. The Kobuk River is an ancient and current path for people and wildlife. For 9000 years, people came to Onion Portage to harvest caribou as they swam the river. Even today, that rich tradition continues. Kobuk Valley National Park is very remote. There are no roads to provide access, so planes take care of most transportation needs. Commercial airlines provide service from Anchorage to Kotzebue, or from Fairbanks to Bettles. Once in Kotzebue or Bettles, you must fly to the park with authorized air taxis.

