

SUBSISTENCE: Where it's permitted



HISTORICALLY CLOSED

Since the creation of the first national park in 1864, nearly all national parks have been closed to hunting. The intent of Congress has been to provide areas that will remain unimpaired in their natural state, where wildlife can exist undisturbed by modern developments and human taking.

Until the passage of the Alaska Lands Act, there were very few exceptions to this ban. When the National Park Service was preparing its recommendations to Congress for new parks in Alaska it recognized that park areas were important to the subsistence way of life, and that subsistence users are a natural part of the ecosystem serving as a primary consumer in the food chain.

ALASKA DIFFERENCE

As a result, the National Park Service recommended that subsistence hunting be allowed to continue in new national parks in Alaska and Congress adopted this recommendation for most of the areas, as long as aircraft is not used for access.

Subsistence hunting is still prohibited in the major three old

areas of the National Park System in Alaska, those in existence prior to the passage of the Alaska Lands Act. No hunting is permitted within the boundaries of the old Mt. McKinley National Park (now, Denali National Park), Katmai or Glacier Bay National Monuments (now, both are Parks).

In addition, no subsistence hunting is permitted in the Kenai Fjords National Park or the parklands added to Glacier Bay or Katmai. However, subsistence hunting is allowed in the following parks and monuments: Aniakchak, Cape Krusenstern, Gates of the Arctic, Kobuk Valley, Wrangell-St. Elias, Lake Clark and the additions to Denali.

"RESIDENT ZONES"

National Park Service regulations define subsistence users as any local rural resident who has his/her primary, permanent home within a "resident zone." A resident zone is defined as "the area within a national park or monument, and the communities and areas near a park or monument which contain significant concentrations of rural residents who... have customarily and traditionally engaged in

subsistence uses within a national park or monument." This means that only persons who are local residents of the area around a park or monument are eligible to subsistence hunt within its boundaries.

A person's residency can be demonstrated by such factors as the permanent address listed on tax returns, driver's license, voter registration, and hunting and fishing licenses issued by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. A permit is not required if a person lives within a resident zone. Resident zones are not permanent lines on maps; at any time, after public notice and a comment period, a community or area may be added or deleted from a resident zone.

If a local rural resident lives outside a resident zone, he/she may apply for a subsistence permit if he/she has customarily and traditionally engaged in subsistence uses within the park or monument.

"PRESERVES"

In addition to the new national parks, Congress also established ten new "national preserves" in Alaska, a National Park System classification. A

preserve is managed exactly like a park or monument, with one exception. The exception is that sport hunting is allowed. Alaskan preserves were created to permit sport hunting in popular areas, while protecting the habitat and natural values at the same time. Resident zones do not apply in preserves. Neither sport, nor subsistence hunters need a permit in national preserves, and both may use airplanes. The subsistence priority applies in these new national preserves.

The new national preserves are: Bering Land Bridge, Aniakchak, Gates of the Arctic, Lake Clark, Noatak, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley Rivers, Glacier Bay, Katmai and Denali. Many of the new Park System units include areas of park/monument lands and preserve lands.

OTHER PUBLIC LANDS

Subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering, as well as sport hunting, is allowed in national wildlife refuges, BLM areas, forests, and wild and scenic rivers, and any wilderness areas within this units. As in the Park System, subsistence uses are the priority consumptive

uses in these areas.

CLOSURES

Congress authorized Federal public land managers to temporarily close any area to subsistence uses of a particular fish stock or wildlife population under certain conditions. A closure can only be made after consultation with the State, and after public notice and hearing in the local area. Subsistence taking may be curtailed only after sport hunting has been stopped and the wildlife population is still in trouble.

All or just part of an area may be closed to subsistence hunting or fishing. Areas can be closed for reasons of public safety, administration, or to assure conservation of healthy levels of fish or wildlife. A temporary closure may only last as long as there is reasonable need.

If an emergency exists, an area may be closed to subsistence uses, without consultation or prior public notice. But an emergency closure may not last longer than 60 days and cannot be extended unless the normal public hearing process is followed.



Hooper Bay hunters walk back with their catch.

Rob Stapleton/Rural CAP photo

