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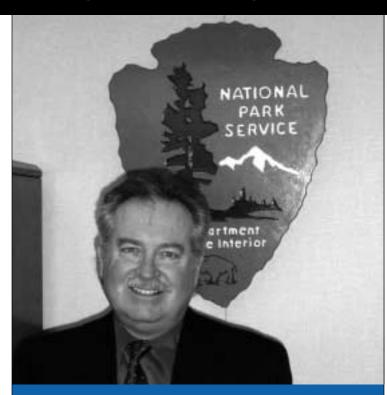




2002 Annual Report



Message from the Regional Director



NPS Alaska Regional Director Rob Arnberger

ver the past year, national parks across
America have taken on a new meaning to
many people. The great icons of the
American experience — the memorials of
Washington D.C., the Civil War battlefields that
were the cruicibles yielding a stronger nation, and
monuments to the people and events that are the
milestones of our society's development — are
largely managed by the National Park Service.
Parks which preserve a slice of undeveloped
America have also offered people necessary
solace in trying times.

What has also become clear over the past year, is that national parks cannot and do not stand alone in these efforts to recognize our collective past and provide places of recreation and re-creation for our citizens.

We in the National Park Service are increasingly joining with partners to accomplish our mission of preservation and public enjoyment, and helping others — land managers, community groups and others — accomplish their missions.

Several examples of these partnerships are highlighted in this year's annual report.

Now in its sixth year, the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area opened the doors to a visitor center in the 6o-year-old Aerology Building at Unalaska. The park, wholly owned by the Ounalashka Corporation, is a National Park Service affiliated area. Park Service staff has provided architectural and historical technical assistance, Congress and the corporation have provided significant funding, with the result that the "forgotten war" of the Aleutians will never be forgotten.

In communities around Alaska, the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program is teaming with local trail users and other groups to demonstrate new technology to improve trails through wetlands. They've also been active in responding to community requests for recreational planning assistance. Taking the lessons learned in parks and applying them in appropriate ways in communities across Alaska is an increasingly important role for the Service.

A third key partnership has been in the field of education. National parks, representing as they do the broadest sweep of American history and sciences, are natural classrooms. But many of these "classrooms," especially in Alaska, are a long distance from where today's students live. In partnership with several organizations, the Park Service is making significant advances in distance education, bringing the park experience to students through web-based curriculum, park ranger visits, cable television programs and other media projects. In addition, as you'll see in the pages that follow, we're making key improvements in parks to tell the stories that are so important to our national identity.

In all, this past year has been an exciting, progress-filled 12 months. I encourgage you to explore the pages that follow and to explore your national parks.

Affiliated Areas

his year marked a significant milestone for the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area. Its visitor center opened in June, the highlight of a six-year partnership between the National Park Service and the Ounalashka Corporation which owns the land and buildings.

Officially, the Aleutian park is an "affiliated area," receiving technical assistance, advice and qualifying for grants through the Park Service. In turn, the Corporation manages the private park in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the National Park System.

Remodeling of the 1943 Aerology Building was completed this year, and the visitor center now helps tell the story of the Aleutian Campaign and the Unangan/Aleut people. The opening of the building coincided with the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Dutch Harbor, one of the few episodes of the war occurring in American territory and a key element in Alaska history. No less important a story is the role of the Unangan/Aleut people in the war, and their treatment by the United States government. Exhibits and the park web site describe the relocation of many Unangan/Aleut to abandoned cannery and mine buildings in Southeast Alaska and the horrid conditions they encountered, as well as the destruction and neglect of their homes and churches. With the World War II generation quickly passing, care for the real places of history is increasingly a responsibility for future generations both within and outside the Park Service.

An earlier piece of Alaska's history -whaling in the Arctic -- is told in the state's other
affiliated area, the Inupiat Heritage Center in
Barrow, part of the larger New Bedford Whaling
National Historical Park in Massachusetts.
Between 1848 and 1914, American ships made
approximately 2,700 trips to the Arctic in search
of bowhead whales. Over the centuries, the

Inupiat built a lifestyle and developed a unique culture perpetuated on the traditional hunt for the bowhead. The park legislation ensures that the contribution of Alaska Natives to the history of whaling is preserved. This year the park released a visitor film that highlighted the unique relationship between the Yankee and Inupiat whalers. Collaborative exchanges include Arctic whaling captains returning to New Bedford to document family histories, further research into the people of color who remained in the north, education based websites, and staff exchanges.

Bishop Nikolai blesses the new exhibits during a special dedication of the Aluetian WWII Visitor Center.



orne, Ounalashka Corporation

Page 3

Wrangell-St. Elias Developments

merica's largest national park celebrated its 22nd birthday this year, and the highlight of the year was the August 4 official opening of its new visitor center and head quarters complex. The new facility, located just north of Copper Center along the Richardson Highway, has a commanding view of the Wrangell Mountains that form the the backbone of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and of the Copper River, which forms the 13.2 million acre park's western boundary.

A local firm, Ahtna Enterprises Corporation of Glennallen, a subsidiary of the Ahtna Regional Corporation, was the primary contractor on the facility which sits on a 230-acre site adjacent to the Richardson Highway south of Glennallen. In addition to presenting visitors with their first glimpse of the park, the site includes a piece of Copper River Valley history -- a segment of the century-old Valdez Trail traverses the site.

The primary buildings included in the \$7.6 million project are the visitor contact station, exhibits building, theater, and comfort station. The FY-2002 appropriations bill included \$700,000 for exhibits in the center which are being fabricated. The site also includes an amphitheater and picnic areas. The buildings include space for administrative facilities for park operations and staff. Visitor facilities will be operated during the summer, with the exception of the visitor contact station, which is to be operated year-around.

Another major attraction in the park is the historic copper mining town of Kennecott. The park is spending \$400,000 from a variety of sources. This year's work to stabilize buildings includes activity on the Old School, Recreation Hall, Machine Shop, Depot, General Managers Office, Leaching Plant, and Mill building. All of the seasonal employees on the project were hired locally.

Alaska Regional Director Rob Arnberger and National Park Service Director Fran Mainella (3rd and fourth from the left respectively) prepare to cut the ribbon and celebrate the opening of Wrangell-St. Elias's Visitor Center near Copper Center.



One of the most impressive and moving additions to the complex is the Totem Hall which displays original totem poles brought to Sitka between 1901 and 1905 by Alaska's Territorial Governor John G. Brady. The poles, in storage since the 1930's and '40s, are displayed vertically in an environmentally controlled room. They are set before a 30-foot high by 55-foot wide photographic mural of nearby Sugar Loaf Mountain. The hall also includes interpretive exhibits on Native wood carving tools and traditional form line art.

In addition, the \$3.7 million project provided an expanded auditorium, additional restroom space, greater accessibility to and throughout the building, and a reconfigured parking lot. In the new auditorium, the park will be screening a new 12-minute park video "The Voices of Sitka," which features many local residents.

The park visitor center is paired with the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center, which was was established in 1969 to impart the cultural values of Southeast Indian Alaska Native culture to students and visitors. The center provides a place for local Tlingits to teach themselves about their own culture, while also helping park visitors understand the Native people whose history is part of the park story. Although it is housed in the park visitor center, the cultural center is an independent, non-profit Native organization.



One of the most impressive and moving additions to the remodeled visitor center at Sitka National Historic Park is the Totem Hall. Established in 1910, Sitka is Alaska's oldest national park and commemorates the Battle of Sitka.

Education in Communities

nterested in the habits and habitats of golden eagles or peregrine falcons? Need to do a school report on World War II in the Aleutians? These are three of an increasing number of K-12 curriculum units and teacher resources now available on-line through the National Park Service.

Recommendations from the National Park System Advisory Board have pushed the NPS toward improving its delivery of educational information. The Park System has been compared to a university campus, an institution with vast amount of information to share about America's history, natural resources, social development and other topics. Park have always taught visitors in real places -- president's homes, alongside geysers and canyons, on battlefields and at memorials. Efforts to provide information off-site have been less successful, but increasingly necessary.

In Alaska, the effort to extend these educational resources is being helped through a partnership among General Communications Inc., the

Anchorage Scool District and the NPS. In a cost-sharing agreement, NPS education resources were added to GCI's SchoolAccess program that serves schools in Alaska and the Lower 48. New curriculum, lesson plans and other education products are being added this year and next. In another nationwide education project, peregrine falcon chicks in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve in northeastern Alaska will be on the air in classrooms around the country in December.

NPS biologists, with funding provided by the U.S. Air Force, developed small video and audio systems to assess the impacts of low-level military aircraft on nesting peregrine falcons. The findings, and information about the lives of falcons, will be part of an "electronic field trip" that's the result of a partnership between the NPS and the U.S. Department of Education, the Satellite Educational Resources Commission and One Planet Education.



Education is one of the top priorities for the National Park Service in Alaska. Here Martha Tomeo uses creative techniques for discussing animal adaptations with students.

he Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center is a research and education partnership established in 2001 with the goal of improving our understanding of the marine ecosystem connecting Alaska's national parks. The core partners are Kenai Fjords National Park and the private, non-profit research aquarium, the Alaska SeaLife Center, both based in Seward.

The past year has been one of rapid growth for the center as it became established as an institution and built connections among the growing number of partners. The center currently focuses on coastal and marine issues in four national park units: Aniakchak, Katmai, Kenai Fjords and Lake Clark, but will eventually reach all II of Alaska's coastal parks.

On the research front, the center supports work that is exploring reasons for the population declines among Stellar sea lions and harbor seals. This year's harbor seal work is based in Aialik Bay, along the park coast, while the sea lion work is concentrated in the Chiswell Islands, near the mouth of Resurrection Bay. In Seward, the learning center partnership has provided laboratory space for researchers working on genetics, marine mammals, birds, fish and invertebrates.

Additional research is focusing on black bear distribution and the distribution and productivity of black oystercatchers along the coast. A park ranger presents daily interpretive programs at the Sealife Center's bird habitat, home to three black oystercatchers, as part of this program.

Education projects this year include a sponsorship role in the National Ocean Sciences Bowl and the Student Ocean Conference, and programs which bring Alaska high school students to participate in studying the marine ecosystem. Outreach beyond Alaska's boundaries has occurred with Project MASTER (found at



Improving our understanding of marine ecosystems is one of our National Park Service priorities.

www.alaskasealife.org/master) a web-based satellite and radio telemetry research education program at the Alaska SeaLife Center and Kenai Fjords N.P. and funded by the Murdock Foundation and the center.

This year also saw the center co-sponsor a Smithsonian Institute archaeological research project in Kenai Fjords, a project which will result in an educational video and area lectures given by Alaskan Native students working as interns on the project. Older students are also benefiting from the partnership, as increasing numbers of students from the University of Alaska Anchorage biology and social science programs are using Kenai Fjords as part of their summer field courses. High school interns, sponsored by Homer's Pratt Museum, are also working on the project.



PS photo

Natural Resource Challenge





Why has a rare species of shrew appeared at Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park? Why are the normally nocturnal lanternfish found at Glacier Bay making daytime appearances?

hanks to a growing natural resources program in Alaska's national parks, funded in large part by the Natural Resources Challenge, the public may soon have answers to some of these puzzling questions. As resource management concerns such as global warming and increasing recreational use in national parks are discussed, the NPS inventory program plays an important role by collecting baseline data about the full range of resources found in national parks. This information is vital for long-term decision making.

At Glacier Bay, marine biologists have observed rarely documented behaviors in lanternfish. Lanternfish got their name because

their bodies contain so much oil they were used as a source of fuel in lanterns. Today they are still a rich food source for many marine mammals, birds and larger fish and thus an important part of the food chain. Until recently, scientists thought these fish were nocturnal, spending days in deep waters and coming to the surface at night to feed. Fieldwork found lanternfish at the surface in great numbers during the day, but only in active glacial fjords. Evidence suggests that lanternfish are able to come to the surface during the day in active fjords because the calving ice stirs up the water, making it cloudy enough to hide the lanternfish from predators. These surprise findings really come as no surprise; only a third of the 300 species thought to live in Glacier Bay's waters are adequately documented.

In the northwest parks, Cape Krusenstern
National Monument, Bering Land Bridge
National Preserve and Noatak National Preserve,
researchers have found 16 plant species considered
rare or critically imperiled, that were previously
unknown in these parks. One of these, Potentilla





fragiformis, a handsome five-petalled flower, was known only from Russia and has never before been documented in North America.

At Yukon-Charley Rivers and Wrangell-St. Elias, both in eastern Alaska, researchers from the University of Alaska found 10 shrews from the species that's aptly named "tiny shrew." Before the inventory at these parks began, only 12 specimens of this species had ever been found, all in central and southcentral Alaska. We are greatly expanding our understanding of this species' range and habitat requirements.

At Lake Clark, the NPS and US Geological Survey are in the middle of a five-year study of sockeye salmon biology, including genetic identification to tell Lake Clark salmon apart from other Bristol Bay sockeye salmon stocks. Researchers use radio-tagged salmon to map their migration routes and to check their spawning destinations against previously known spawning areas — information critical to making park management decisions which do not damage salmon habitat.

The Alaska region's natural resources program also operates on a scale far greater than that of individual species. For example, the National Park Service in collaboration with the US Forest Service, US Geological Survey and other contributors has completed the Unified Ecoregions of Alaska map. Thirty-two ecoregions were mapped using climate, topography, plants, and geology. This complex project drew on earlier mapping efforts, and employed new satellite data, long-term weather patterns and other sources. The next stage for this project has already begun - creating a full-color book taking the reader on an ecological tour of Alaska highlighting the ecoregions around the state and the plants, animals and natural features that define them.

Cultural Connections

or the sixth straight year, the National Park Service has joined with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development to host a Rural Development Seminar. This year's seminar was in Nome, headquarters for Western Arctic Parklands, and focused on community-based museums and tourism. Many of the students live in rural Alaska in predominantly Native communities, and are frequently current or future leaders in local corporations, villages and local government. Leigh Selig, deputy superintendent of BELA, co-hosted the meeting in cooperation with Professor Berta Wilson of the Nome campus of UAF.

The week-long seminar included faculty from the University, NPS cultural resource specialists from this and other regions, visiting business and education leaders from the Lower 48, and Alaskans involved in the day-to-day operation of museums, cultural centers and other tourism operations. Presentations included those by NPS staff from Anchorage and those working on the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail. Topics focused on how to tell local cultural stories to visitors, caring for collections of artifacts, exhibits, and burial sites, and operating museums and other facilities.

The seminar series, which receives more than \$30,000 in support annually from the NPS, continues in 2003. "The seminar series has been an important tool for the NPS to make available to the people who will be leaders in rural Alaska some of the experience and expertise we have in preserving buildings and landscapes, operating facilities, and meeting visitor needs," said Sande Anderson, NPS regional historian and coordinator for the seminar.

A more traditional cultural resources role has played out in Seward this year with documentation and research associated with the construction of a new visitor center for Kenai Fjords NP. The multi-agency center will be located in a historic section of Seward and be jointly occupied by the NPS and the US Forest Service.

The Alaska Support Office in Anchorage is working with the park to identify important cultural resources located in the zone of planned construction and minimize impacts to these resources.

Based on artifacts and other information, it's believed the site — now about a block from the waterfront — was a favored location among the original Native inhabitants of Resurrection Bay. The visitor center site may also be on or adjacent to the Russian artel, or fort and commercial complex, that was built about 250 years ago. No trace of the building has been found, but its location is surmised from original drawings and maps of the site. NPS geographers have compared the old drawings and the locations of high tides in the 18th century and correlated them to today's coastline.

In the late 19th century, the site was the homestead of the Lowells, the founding family of Seward, and until a half-century ago, home to the town's red light district which operated from about 1906 to 1954. The red light district was a sanctioned part of life in Seward, and a significant contributor to the town's economy, according to researcher Anna Bateman. The history of the women in the businesses, the frontier history of Seward and the earlier historical connections of the site will be described in the new visitor center, which is in the design stage.

King Island Dancer performing at the Rural Development Crab feed for faculty, Students, elders, and other guests at the Nome Senior Center.





be addines throughout the year, ending the summer of 2002 with no resolution of whether the state of Alaska would resume its management role on federal lands and waters, and with high interest among many user groups in seasonal management decisions.

Outside the political arena, however, significant work continued by federal subsistence managers, including the National Park Service, to implement the subsistence priority for local rural residents as required by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

The most active application of the subsistence priority managed by the NPS is the Copper River federal subsistence fishery. Each year, 1-2 million sockeye salmon return to the Copper and its tributaries, first moving through commercial fisheries in Prince William Sound and then up-river, much of the trip along the boundary of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Thousands of sport fishermen, hundreds of households qualifying as federal subsistence users and some 10,000 state subsistence dip net users all seek access to the same stocks of salmon, creating a complex management situation.

Largely at the request of the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission, significant regulatory changes were made this year by the Federal Subsistence Board, a multi-agency group of which the NPS is a member. The board sets subsistence rules and policy for federal hunting and fishing by qualified subsistence users.

When the federal government began the subsistence fisheries program across Alaska in 1999 — a result of several court decisions — the board first adopted existing state rules. This year, significant changes in the Copper River rules were made to provide a more flexible system for subsistence users and to allow salmon upstream for spawning for users farther up-river, while at the same time staying closely coordinated with the continuing state fisheries that exist on the river.

In addition to the Copper River issues, the NPS subsistence management activity through the years includes federal board decisions regarding subsistence hunting and fishing across the state, maintaining regular communication with subsistence users through advisory councils and in other forums, and conducting research to help inform managers and protect subsistence opportunities in the future.

Emerging Issues



The amounts of use and the types of uses that Alaskans and visitors participate in while using the backcountry of Alaska's national parks has evolved considerably since most park general management plans were written.

ational parks in Alaska are likely to stay in the news in 2003 as we work with the public in addressing several emerging issues. Public meetings, requests for information, work with partners, and the resolution of areas of contention are all part of the collaborative process of managing national parks. Several key topics are likely to be in the public eye over the next several months.

The amount of use and the types of uses that Alaskans and visitors participate in while using the backcountry of Alaska's national parks has evolved considerably since most park general management plans were written nearly 20 years ago. Alaska's population has grown and park visitation has tripled in cases. There are more and better snowmachines carrying winter park visitors to new destinations. More than 400 commercial operators now provide visitor services in parks. To consider the changes that have occurred and to help forecast park needs in the future, backcountry planning is under way at Denali and is starting at Gates of the Arctic, Glacier Bay and Wrangell-St. Elias. Public meetings and comment periods to seek ideas on issues to be addressed and reactions to draft plans will be common over the next two years.

Glacier Bay National Park is carrying out the congressionally directed program to phase out commercial fishing in a portion of the park, and to compensate fishermen, communities and others who suffered financial losses because of the closures. The park has processed applications for the \$23 million in available compensation. The issue will continue as one of significant concern to Southeast Alaska communities and businesses.

The development of partnerships will continue to expand in all parks. Some will be focused on research, such as those done through the NPS Beringia program, others will be visitor service related, such as those with cruise ship companies in Southeast Alaska, while others will be with communities in need of the expertise that the NPS has developed in fields such as historic architecture and trail construction.

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

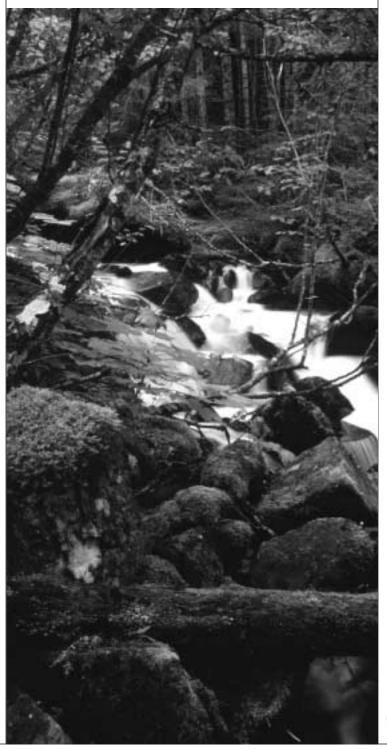
he "R" in RTCA stands for "rivers," and although trails projects vastly outnumber river conservation projects in Alaska, the region's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance program is currently working on two river projects of note.

One is the Chilkoot River Corridor
Conservation Plan. The program is working with a
group of Haines area residents and state of Alaska
officials to help develop consensus on the management of a mile of prime brown bear habitat along the
Chilkoot River, between Chilkoot Lake and Lutak
Inlet. Goals include preventing human-bear conflicts,
promoting visitor ethics, providing appropriate private
and commercial recreational access, and conserving
important Tlingit cultural resources. The study area
includes a state highway, state park campground, and
culture camp, and is a popular destination both
for commercial day trips and salmon anglers, who
share the area with brown bear sows and cubs
during salmon spawning periods.

NPS staff is assisting the project's local part-time staff to facilitate meetings, develop policy proposals, and identify funding sources. The NPS will also help produce the conservation plan, which, if adopted by the land owners and local government, will help protect the area's natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

The second river-related project is a management plan for Matanuska-Susitna Borough land along the lower 10 miles of the Deshka River. The Deshka is an important sport fishery that has seen damage to some riparian areas due to boats and floatplanes. The Borough operates a small campground at the confluence of the Deshka with the Susitna River, and permits seasonal use of river-front land at several sites upstream. RTCA staff

helped the Borough develop a user survey this summer, will assist with public workshops, and will help the Borough to develop management alternatives for both summer and winter use.



ignificant progress was made this year on several projects to better accommodate visitors to Alaska's national parks.

In Denali, a variety of improvements valued at more than \$25 million are under way in the park's entrance area as part of a three-year plan. Recent work has included:

- The Riley Creek Mercantile, operated by the park concessioner, opened in May. The store, located along the park entrance road, provides visitors with public showers, a recreational vehicle dump station, and a small food and camper convenience item section.
- Over the past winter, the old Denali hotel and auditorium were removed. A realigned park road is under construction and will run through the old hotel area, while 20,000 square feet of new visitor facilities including a new theater, exhibits, food court and a bookstore will be constructed on the site.
- As part of the entrance area work, the Alaska Railroad is building new passenger facilities.
 Bus parking and a passenger loading area are being built next to the depot.

The NPS is also a partner in a new Arctic Interagency Visitor Center being built in Coldfoot along the Dalton Highway in the heart of the Brooks Range. The National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Management will jointly operate the 6,500 square foot center, which will open in 2003. An older facility has proven inadequate for the numbers of visitors now traveling the road to the North Slope or using Coldfoot as a jumping off spot for adventures in the millions of acres of neighboring public lands. The primary contractor for the \$3.7 million project is Jay-Brant of Homer, Alaska.

Several other significant projects are on the horizon for the NPS in Alaska.

- A new \$7.8 million Kenai Fjords National Park visitor center project in Seward is being designed.
- The Eielson visitor center at Mile 66 of the Denali park road will be rebuilt, with architectural and engineering work beginning late this year.
- The Northwest Arctic Heritage and Cultural Center, a \$12 million project in Kotzebue being done in cooperation with the Corporation, is in the land acquisition and planning phase.
- Stabilization of the Kennicott store and adapting the building for use as a visitor contact station in Wrangell-St. Elias is expected to be an \$800,000 project. It is currently in the design phase.



Wrangell-St. Elias National Park will spend nearly a million dollars stabilizing the Kennecott store and adapting the building for use as a visitor center. In the early 1900s the Kennecott Mining Company transported copper from its mines near McCarthy by railroad along the Chitina and Copper rivers to ships at Cordova.

age 15

Fiscal Year 2001 Expense Report, Alaska Region

Construction		
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Denali camper store site work	\$639,819	
Glacier Bay utilities	\$2,496,920	
Glacier Bay visitor center site remediation	\$832,318	
Katmai Brooks Camp	\$32,029	
Sitka-Visitor Center	\$148,395	
Sitka-Rehabilitate Priest's Quarters/Old School	\$28,908	
Wrangell-St. Elias visitor center	\$536,023	\$4,714,412
Operations		
Personal services (salaries, benefits, etc.)	\$40,817,736	
Travel (within parks and Lower 48)	\$3,297,629	
Transportation (supplies and equipment)	\$1,436,162	
Rent, communications, utilities	\$1,265,995	
Printing and copying	\$170,679	
Services (aircraft rental, architecture		
and design, contracts)	\$13,075,777	
Supplies and materials	\$6,020,194	
Equipment (computers, vehicles, etc.)	\$2,285,956	
Land and structures	\$3,914,860	
Other (grants, insurance, claims, etc.)	\$4,437,039	\$ 76,722,027
	Total	\$ 81,436,439

Reaching Beyond Parks

The National Park Service funds projects of scientific and community importance in the Beringia Region of western Alaska. The work averages one to three years in length and includes Russian collaboration.

National Audubon Society: Important Bird Areas of the Bering Sea	\$30,000
The Northern Forum: Brown Bear Management Workshop	\$28,200
University of Alaska Museum: Beringian Collections Artifact Casting	\$39,962
World Wildlife Fund: Trunks Across the Sea	\$22,560
Richard Bland & Associates: Translation of three Dikov books	\$4,980
APU: Economic & Cultural Necessity of Subsistance	\$45,969
Eskimo Walrus Commission: Chukotka Harvest Monitoring	\$39,018
NPS: Archaeology in the Noatak Basin	\$5,000
Seward Sealife Center: Arctic Observations	\$27,600
Savoonga IRA: St. Lawrence/Chukotka Culture	\$50,000
Shishmaref IRA: Shishmaref/Uelen Exchange	\$16,800
University of Colorado: Cultural History of Beringia	\$47,954