

WAYPOINTS



News and stories from Alaska's public lands



Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve, Headwaters of the John River, Photo Credit: NPS/Peter Winfrey

From Denali to the Kenai: Alaska Geographic's Summer of Engagement

Alaska's peak summer season has transformed our organization into a field-deployed force for conservation education. While the central office sits unusually quiet, our team is out across the state—educators leading programs in remote wilderness, Regional Operations Managers strengthening partnerships at interpretive retail sites, and leadership connecting directly with agency partners in parks, refuges, and conservation lands.

We're also breaking ground on a new housing project just south of [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)—a critical investment in our field capacity. In remote Alaska, reliable seasonal housing isn't just a convenience; it's a necessity for attracting and retaining the staff who make our mission possible during the most demanding months of the year.

This summer's programs show the impact of immersive, hands-on learning. In Denali, over 30 local kids explored the park through backcountry navigation,

beetle ecology, and invasive species removal with NPS Education Rangers and Alaska Geographic Science Educators. They didn't just visit—they took part in caring for their public lands.

Farther south, nine teens joined the Yaghanen Swan Lakes Expedition, paddling and portaging 16 rugged miles through the [Kenai National Wildlife Refuge](#). Along the way, they cleared trails, practiced wilderness skills, and built deep connections with each other and the land—experiences that will shape how they view public lands for years to come.

Meanwhile, our web store continues expanding its offerings, featuring commemorative tokens from 19 sites across Alaska. New additions include [Lake Clark](#), [Kodiak](#), and [Gates of the Arctic](#). These aren't just souvenirs—they're keepsakes that carry the story of place and help fund the mission of conservation education.

With Gratitude,

Andy Hall
Executive Director

RECENT AID TO PARTNER

Your support in the form of in-store purchases, donations, and membership allows us to give back to our public land partners. Read on to learn more about recent projects funded by Alaska Geographic.

3D Printing Creates Accessible Artifact Replicas for Experts and General Public



Kuskwogmiut Yup'ik adze tool, circa 1885, photo credit: National Museum of the American Indian

This month, our Aid-to-Partner funds provided Denali NP&P with a 3D Printer. Liz Gonzalez Negrete, the Compliance Archeologist, explains their plan below!

"The printer that we ordered was the Bambu Lab X1C 3D Printer with two AMS units so that we can print in up to eight colors simultaneously.

The first project that we will be undertaking is scanning two artifacts from two different projects. We will be scanning an obsidian knife and an adze. This will allow us not to only have a 3D scan we can manipulate, rotate, share much more easily but can also print. When we print these artifacts, we can then do a bit of experimental archeology. For the knife and the adze we are missing the handles. They were likely organic materials that deteriorated over time. However, can begin to posit and recreate what handles looked like for each of these, respectively. Once a handle can be 3D modeled, we plan to print it using the X1C.

3D printing is such a powerful tool that the possibilities are endless. For example, with the generous support from Alaska Geographic, we not only purchased the machine, but the filaments we are printing with; This included "Wood Filaments". These filaments will be used to print said handles for the artifact replicas. 3D printing allows us to also pause prints to add some form of aggregate material to the interior of the print (i.e. sand) to make the weights accurate as well. So the replicas will not only look nearly identical to the artifact, but feel similar as well. We can then make these replicas available for interpretive programs, for cultural sensitivity trainings, etc. This also makes artifacts more accessible. Children and individuals who are differently abled can hold these replicas and not risk damaging them if they are dropped, for example.

Ultimately, not only will we be able to meet our internal goals of preservation and interpretation, but we will be able to make archeology more engaging and

accessible. Some institutions make their 3D scans available to the public so they can view them or even print their own artifacts when they are thousands of miles away. The first four minutes of this YouTube video by Objex Unlimited (see below for the video!) can give you a better idea of what we are working with."

-Liz Gonzalez Negrete, Compliance Archaeologist of Denali National Park & Preserve



Denali Day Camp Fosters Hands-on Learning

What's better than exploring the outdoors with first through eighth graders? Doing it within Denali National Park & Preserve! Especially when it's in collaboration with the National Park Service Education team and with the support of their fantastic park scientists.

Denali Day Camp brought local community kids outside and into the park throughout June. During the nine three-hour sessions, NPS Education Rangers and Alaska Geographic Science Educators taught backcountry navigation skills and examined spruce bark beetles' effects on the ecosystem. They practiced invasive plant management while pulling dandelions.

Over the course of the month, the camps reached over 30 kids, providing



the opportunity for fun, hands-on science, and a deeper connection to their public lands.



Canoe Believe it?

Nine Teens Tackle 16 Miles of Paddling and Portaging Through the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge



Earlier this summer, eight teens and one student leader participated in the Yaghanen Swan Lakes Expedition, an engaging and challenging adventure through the heart of the [Kenai National Wildlife Refuge](#). Over several days, they paddled 11 miles, portaged 6 miles, and cleared over 3 miles of portage trails. Along the way, they fished, camped, practiced T-rescues, and built community and connection on the stunning [Swan Lake Canoe System](#).

This trip was made possible through our partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which helped sponsor the expedition and joined us in the field. A highlight of the trip was meeting a USFWS beaver biologist, who shared her current research project with the group, sparking great conversations and curiosity about wildlife science and land stewardship. We were also fortunate to be joined by Volunteer Trail Leader Christa Kennedy, who led students in hands-

on trail work and shared her extensive knowledge of the refuge, its canoe routes, and portage systems.

We used *Canoeing Yaghanen* by Dave Atcheson to plan and navigate our route—an essential guidebook for traveling through the Swan Lake and Swanson River Canoe Systems, and one we referenced often throughout the trip.

More than anything, this expedition gave students the space to reflect on their role in the outdoors and the significance of safeguarding public lands. One participant summed it up beautifully:

“Public lands allow me to experience things I otherwise wouldn’t experience—hiking, camping, portaging, et cetera—which allows me to connect with nature and really connect with people. For all of the reasons stated, public lands play an important part in people’s lives and are integral for the well-being of the public.”

We’re very thankful to our partners at USFWS for their support, and to these young leaders for showing up with open minds, strong spirits, and a willingness to work hard, learn, and grow.



Want to learn more about what this course was like?

Click the link below!

[Teen Courses](#)

New Alaska State Park Swag for Sale on Our Webstore!



Stay shaded and hydrated in style with our new limited-edition aurora-themed hat and water bottle. The very popular Alaska State Parks 50th anniversary poster inspired the hat's design. Find your favorite spots in the Chugach Front Range water bottle, where the peaks are handily identified.

When you purchase either of these items, a portion of the proceeds goes to supporting Alaska State Parks!

These vibrant essentials won't last long—grab yours while supplies last!

[Alaska State Parks Merch Here!](#)

Calling All Coin Enthusiasts: New Collectable Tokens!

The Alaska Geographic Webstore has expanded our token collection. We now feature 19 sites, including new tokens for Yukon Charley Rivers National Preserve, Innoko National Wildlife Refuge, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, Kobuk Valley National Park, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, and Kodiak National Wildlife

Refuge.

You can find all our tokens at the link below (or at the visitor center stores for that site!). While you're there, consider checking out other items like magnets, pins, stickers, shirts, and mugs in our Discover Alaska collection. These designs capture the spirit of the place, are exclusive to AK Geo, and are the officially approved logos for each public land site shown.



[Check Out the Tokens Here!](#)

Alaska Geographic works in support of our agency partners:





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