



# Glacier Bay National Park

## Backcountry Management Plan

### Planning Update

The National Park Service (NPS) is midway through a planning process to update the *1989 Glacier Bay National Park Wilderness Visitor Use Management Plan*. Underway since August 2019, a planning team is working to update the management goals, objectives, and strategies specific to ~2.6 million-acres of designated Wilderness lands and waters in Glacier Bay National Park (*see map and legend below and refer to newsletter 1 for more context*).

This newsletter will:

- Share some themes heard from the public and stakeholders during outreach last spring (February 21 through May 5, 2020).
- Present context and describe what the plan seeks to achieve (*see management framework, page 2*).
- Request public feedback through January 30, 2021 on strategies to achieve the NPS planning vision and desired future conditions (*see how to comment, page 3*).

### What We Heard

Last spring, the NPS received thoughtful feedback from across the country, representing varied perspectives that highlight the significance and deeper meanings of the Glacier Bay backcountry for people, including:

- For the Tlingit, it is Homeland – a place that physically and spiritually sustains past, present, and future generations.
- For those seeking a profound wilderness experience, it is one of the most pristine and restorative places on the planet.



(above, backcountry tidewater glacier, waterfall, moss, and wildflowers).

- For those seeking adventure, its remoteness and challenge are valued parts of the experience—as are escaping crowds and public land overuse.
- For those seeking a range of outdoor recreation opportunities, the backcountry is a vast landscape for public use and enjoyment.

Many of you also expressed appreciation for the stringent protections currently in place to protect wilderness character, as set forth in the 1989 plan and current law and policy. You requested that we build on this success with more refined management frameworks to:

- Manage for changing resource conditions and visitor patterns in the dynamic landscape.
- Manage concentrated use to support quality experiences at signature attractions like tidewater glaciers.
- Prioritize protecting the wildest places and experiences, and at the same time enhance road-accessible hiking.

We also heard a request for the public to be able to review preliminary planning proposals before the NPS finalizes alternatives or releases decision documents. We have adjusted the planning process accordingly (*see updated planning process with timeline, page 3*).

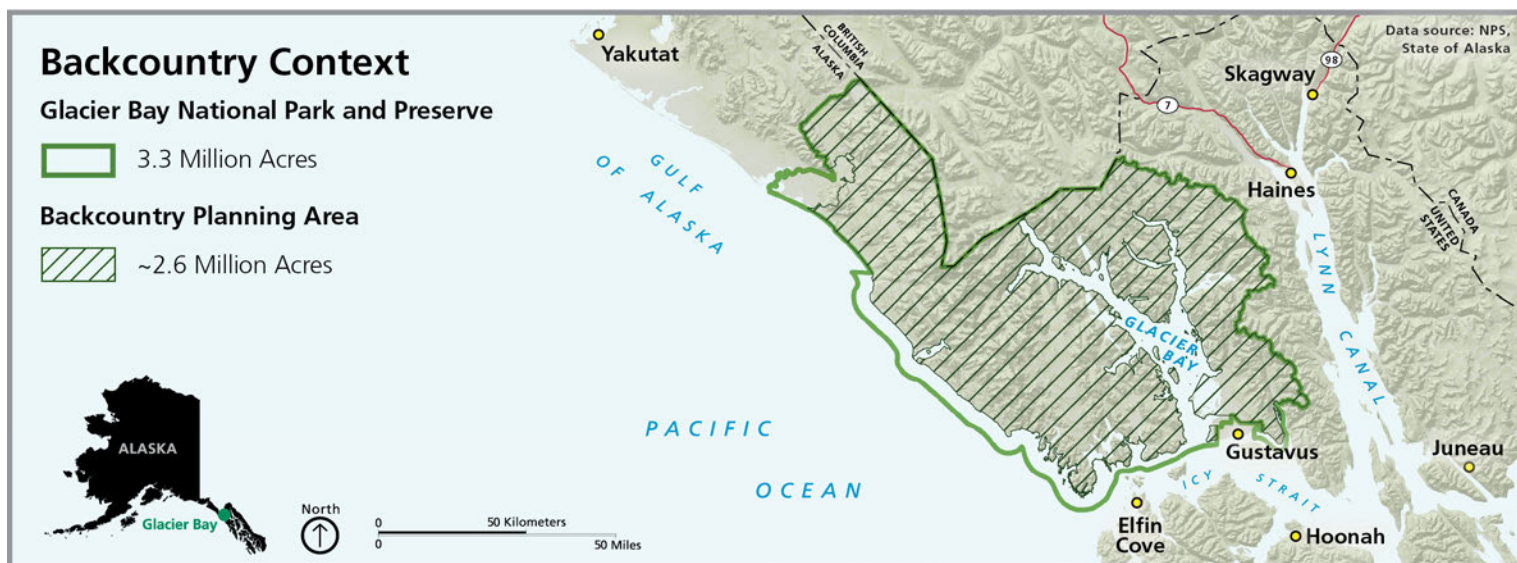




Photo courtesy of the Mills Family



NPS photo by Mary Beth Moss

(above, Huna Tlingit in their traditional homeland harvesting gull eggs). ***The Huna Tlingit evolved with and adapted to the changing Glacier Bay landscape—just as they, in turn, shape the natural resources and ecosystems. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve protects traditional lifeways and a living cultural landscape.***

## Management Framework

Consistent with policy and law, the updated plan will offer guidance and strategies specifically to:

- Manage the backcountry to support and sustain its enduring value as Tlingit Homeland.
- Fulfill park purposes and protect fundamental park resources and values.
- Meet all the requirements of the 1964 Wilderness Act to protect, enhance, and restore overall wilderness character—recognizing that few places across the U.S. National Wilderness Preservation System can match the wilderness character of the Glacier Bay backcountry today, where intact ecological systems are relatively unaffected by modern impacts, and people can find solitude, challenge, freedom, connection, and renewal in the greater community of Life.
- Assess the opportunities for and appropriateness of visitor activities in designated Wilderness as required under the Wilderness Act, including evaluating the extent that guided commercial visitor excursions are necessary.
- Manage visitor experiences at popular destinations consistent with park purposes and enabling legislation mandates, such as access to glacial environments.
- Balance strategies to best achieve both resource protection and visitor experience goals.

Before we proceed further, we want to share planning team progress including:

- A revised vision that describes the broadest outcomes the NPS hopes to achieve through this plan.
- Desired future conditions that articulate what the NPS is seeking to manage to over the life of the plan. As conditions change, these can also be considered performance measures to guide decision-making.

Presented next, these together describe “WHAT” the plan seeks to achieve (*see inset box, right*).

## Vision

*The backcountry of Glacier Bay National Park is an intact, dynamic wilderness—now and forever—where people immerse in, investigate, connect with, and steward an ecologically and culturally significant landscape.*

## Desired Future Conditions

Protect the enduring spiritual connection between future, living, and ancestral Tlingit in Glacier Bay Homeland in the backcountry.

Allow ecological processes to continue naturally, unless human manipulation restores natural process or conditions.

Provide a range of premium wilderness experiences where visitors spend time out of sight and sound of other people and have the freedom to experience risk, challenge, self-reliance, and spiritual connection with place.

Sustain the premium national park experience of being surrounded by, and deeply experiencing a wilderness landscape—even for park visitors who never set foot in the backcountry.

Preserve the park’s wilderness character and mitigate impacts from visitors and other sources.

Balance quality Wilderness experiences consistent with the Wilderness Act with Glacier Bay’s special enabling legislation to provide access to the glacier environment by normal means.

Encourage research and scientific discovery that allows Glacier Bay National Park to continue serving as a living laboratory.

Use research findings that acknowledge climate change and other anthropogenic factors to inform management decisions.

Provide opportunities for visitors to experience a marine wilderness area with a similar level of protection as terrestrial wilderness.

Provide for the public use and enjoyment of the backcountry as intended by the Wilderness Act, including essential services that support wilderness experiences.

Provide visitors and virtual visitors opportunities to learn about the natural, cultural, and wilderness resources of Glacier Bay National Park, including the connection between generations of Tlingit and the surrounding landscape; the opportunity for scientific discovery; and the dynamic glacial landscape.





NPS photo by Kiané Young

(above, tent in an alpine backcountry landscape, with Glacier Bay below and the scenic Fairweather mountain range in the distance).

## Please Tell Us . . .

For the next stage in the process on “HOW” the NPS can achieve this vision and desired conditions, we are requesting your input. What specific actions do you want the Glacier Bay backcountry planning team to consider?

## How to Comment

Between November 30, 2020 and January 30, 2021 you are invited to participate in the planning process as the second of several opportunities (*see specific details below and right*). Take this opportunity to help the team explore strategies related to how we can best achieve the planning vision and desired future conditions.

Also note that while the NPS appreciates your feedback on a range of management topics, at this time it is most helpful if your comments are specific to the backcountry (designated Wilderness lands and waters) and the scope of this plan (*see newsletter 1 for more context*).

There are a variety of ways you can comment:

- Submit comments electronically:

[go.nps.gov/GBwild](https://go.nps.gov/GBwild) (*short link URL*)  
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/>

- Email or mail us your comments:

[GLBA\\_public\\_comments@nps.gov](mailto:GLBA_public_comments@nps.gov)

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## Planning Process with Timeline

**Phase 1.** Preliminary Planning and Initial Public Input (*Complete*)

**Phase 2.** Explore Strategies and Management Alternatives (*We are here*)

- Public Review of Draft Backcountry Management Framework (*60-day review, November 30, 2020 - January 30, 2021*)
- Public Review of Draft Plan and Live Virtual Meeting (*60-day, TBD anticipated Summer 2021*)

**Phase 3.** Finalize Management Plan and Compliance Document

- Public Review of Revised Management Plan and Compliance Document (*30-day, TBD anticipated Spring 2022*)
- Final Plan and Decision (*TBD anticipated Fall 2022*)

For additional information please contact Sara Doyle, Outdoor Recreation Planner at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve by phone at (907) 697-2675, or by emailing [GLBA\\_public\\_comments@nps.gov](mailto:GLBA_public_comments@nps.gov).

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