

## Visitor Center Film Narrative

The audience walks into the theater, and are confronted with the stunning view through the massive picture window. When they take their seats, the curtains close and the theater becomes completely dark. An image of pure white ice is projected onto the screen, which gradually grows brighter and brighter until it illuminates the entire space in blinding light. The screen stays white for a few moments, then starts becoming slightly blue, and it becomes clear that the camera is moving across a landscape.



The camera widens to reveal that we are in the middle of an aerial shot of Harding Ice Field, sweeping northward along the great vista toward Seward.



As the camera floats past Exit Glacier and the Chugach National Forest comes into view, these words fade onto the screen:

**“When we try to pick out anything by itself...”**

The camera enters the Chugach, and the icy blue of glaciation gives way to forests and lakes.

A bald eagle flies across the deep blue sky.

These words then fade on to complete the phrase:



**“...we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.  
–John Muir”**



The imagery stays on clear blue sky, then dissolves to a view upward into the same sky, looking up from the ground. Fireweed, blossoming after a forest fire, points upward alongside charred tree trunks.

Narration:

**“Change has defined the land for thousands of years.  
Forests burn and new life grows from their ashes...”**

The blue sky dissolves to blue water, and the tip of a kayak cuts through. The camera widens to reveal a kayaker in front of Holgate Glacier.

Dissolve to CU of glacier as it calves into the sea.



Narration:

**“...glaciers heave downward and crack into the sea...”**

The mists created by the calving glacier dissolve into imagery of devastation from the 1964 earthquake.

Narration:

**“...the earth shifts and waters rise...”**

Dissolve to still images of people who have lived in the area, progressing in time from 19th Century photos of Russians and Alutiiq, to dogsledders, mountain climbers, hunters—landing on footage of a fisherman hooking a salmon.



Narration:

“...and through the centuries, people have learned how to adapt to this environment, just as the wild animals have...”



Footage changes to a bear swatting away at a salmon run, Dall’s sheep climbing a mountain, and finally Dall’s porpoise in Aialik Bay.

The camera then pans along the water toward Seward.

Narration:

“Through bitter cold and tidal waves, through feasts and famines, people have stayed to live as part of the dynamic landscape—for one reason, and one reason alone...”



The camera lifts up past Seward to reveal an extraordinary view of the mountains at sunrise, with the moon setting over the summit. The shot stays here for a moment, then pulls back to reveal a hiker standing on the summit of a mountain, gazing at the view.

Hiker’s voice:

“Every time I come up here, all I can do is stand in awe. It’s another world. It’s indescribable.”

The shot then lifts higher to point down toward a head-on aerial view, showing how close people can come to the grandeur of the landscape. It continues to lift further and dissolves into a satellite photograph of the area.



Narration:

**“To understand the story of this land, you need to see that it’s in a constant state of change.”**

Computer animation combines satellite imagery with imagery of plate tectonics, showing how the plates are moving beneath the surface.

Narration:

**“As the North American plate moves against the Pacific plate, the surface of the land moves, too. All these movements are both gradual and instantaneous: they progress slowly over time, but at any instant can suddenly trigger earthquakes, avalanches, tsunamis.”**

The footage shows these catastrophic events, less as disasters but as frighteningly beautiful glimpses into the gigantic scale of the environment. A forest is engulfed in fire, an avalanche tumbles down a mountain face, a glacier calves into a fjord.



**Narration:**

**“It’s the very dynamism of the land, the ongoing cycle of change, that both destroys and creates life. Ocean movements and storms feed the glaciers, which feed the fjords, where rich nutrients allow the rich diversity of life to thrive.”**

Shots dissolve between marine life, harbor seals, puffins, and nunataks, to bears, moose, and forest life.



**Narration:**

**“And as unlikely as it might seem, this unique ecosystem both sustains, and can be sustained by, humans.”**



A native kayak cuts through the water with Three Hole Rock in the background. This dissolves to photographs of early British and Russian ships, then big oil tankers in the same area.

A series of photos follows, showing how people have lived off the land: natives whaling, early trappers and hunters, gold miners, fishing trawlers, the building of the Alaska Railroad.



Narration:

**“People have been drawn to this land for its resources on both a small and large scale, from fishing to mining. Mostly, it’s nature that sparks change; but sometimes it’s the other way around.”**

Footage from the Ghost Forests following the 1964 earthquake, followed by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.



Narration:

**“Often the harshest environments are the most fragile. Part of life here is understanding how our actions affect the environment, and what we can do to preserve and protect it.”**

Images of Seward dissolve from its time as an industrial town to a tourist destination, including imagery of the SeaLife Center. Seward's main street appears to be a healthy tourist destination. These shots then dissolve to imagery of the kinds of activities visitors can do from Seward: snowshoeing in the Kenai, hiking in the Chugach, fishing, standing in front of Exit Glacier.



**Narration:**

**The US Forest Service (Chugach National Forest), the National Park Service (Kenai Fjords National Park), The National Marine Fisheries Service and the City of Seward all work to insure that this national treasure is kept sacred, and that residents and visitors alike not only enjoy its wonders but take an active role in caring for them.**



The camera sweeps back into a moving aerial over the Chugach. The expanse appears endless. Standing on a peak looking out over the expanse is a geologist.

**Geologist on-camera:**

**"This place is a dream come true for anyone interested in geology—where else can you find so many unnamed peaks and undiscovered hillsides? This land is much more vast than anyone could experience in one lifetime. It operates on a monumental scale, growing over eons, moving over miles of land...it's a treasure trove just waiting to be explored."**



The shot pulls up and once again continues over the expanse of mountains and forest. These words fade on:

**“Keep close to nature’s heart...”**

The camera continues southward, back toward the Kenai Fjords National Park.

The next phrase fades on:

**“...and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain in the woods...”**

The shot comes back to the Harding Ice Field, sweeping again over the icy blue-white of the glacier. A pair of cross-country skis slices across the screen, reminding us once again of the connection between people and the environment.



The words continue:

**“...wash your spirit clean. –John Muir”**

The camera slows to a halt and the bright white of the ice field once again illuminates the entire room. The curtains over the picture windows open to reveal the stunning view outside.