

Brooks River Archeological District NHL

A Brief History

Katmai National Park and Preserve



The Place

The land of Katmai National Park and Preserve was formed by masses of moving glacial ice. An ancient Naknek Lake filled glacially-carved depressions covering present day Naknek, Grosvenor and Brooks lakes and eventually transitioned to today's lake system. Meanwhile, volcanic activity helped shape the Aleutian Range and periodically blanketed the land in layers of ash.

The People

People have lived here for nearly 4,500 years, moving through the landscape in seasonal rounds, tracking important resources such as migrating land and marine mammals, spawning salmon, ripening berries, and seasonal plants.

Different cultures made use of Brooks River at different time periods. Lifeways were adapted to conditions, which have changed significantly over time.

Northern Archaic and Kodiak Tradition

Norton Tradition

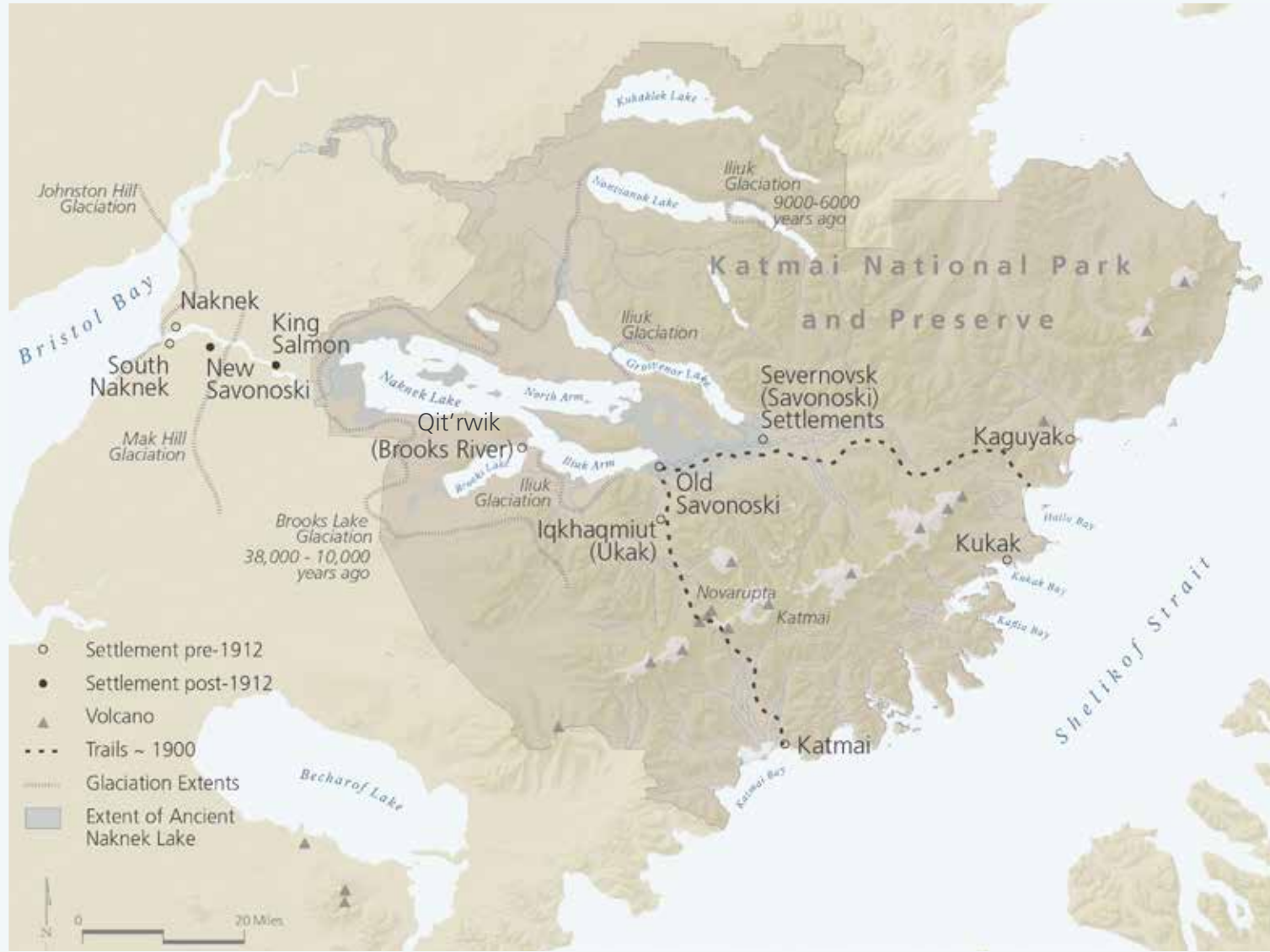
- Focus on hunting migratory game
- Temporary camps
- Utilization of site by at least two different cultural groups prior to 1900 BCE.
- A focus on fishing and hunting
- Chipped chert and slate tools
- Fiber-tempered ceramics
- Coastal resource trade
- Semi-subterranean houses with cold trap entries

Arctic Small Tools (ASTT) Tradition

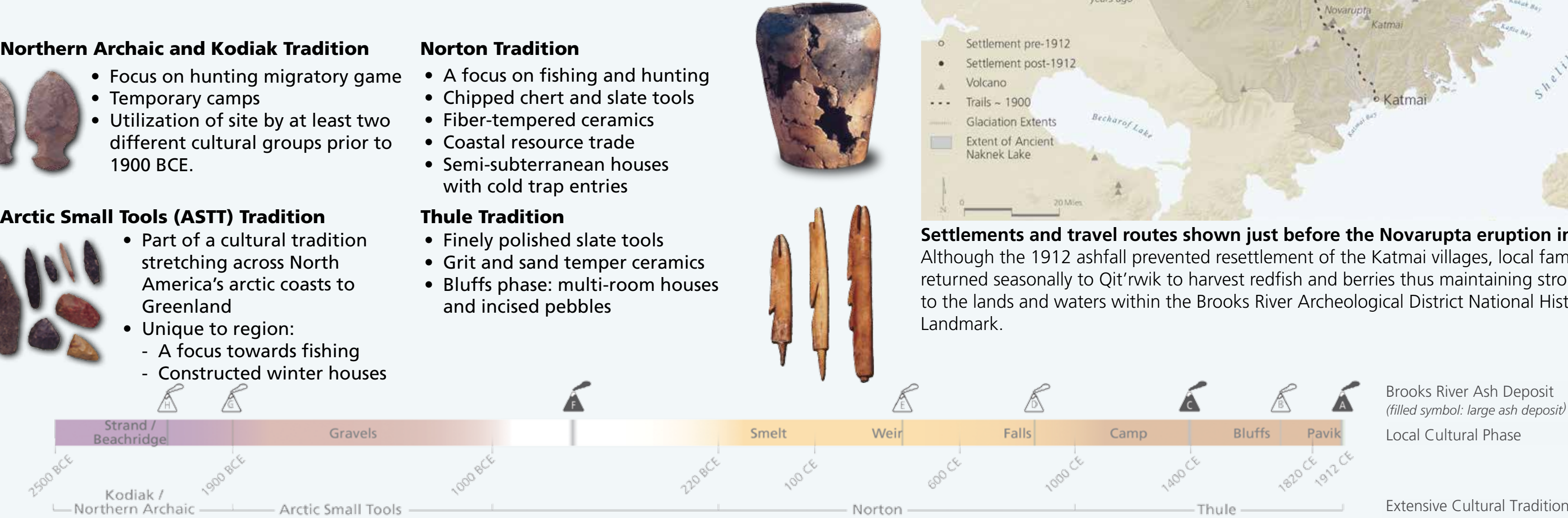
Thule Tradition

- Part of a cultural tradition stretching across North America's arctic coasts to Greenland
- Unique to region:
 - A focus towards fishing
 - Constructed winter houses
- Finely polished slate tools
- Grit and sand temper ceramics
- Bluffs phase: multi-room houses and incised pebbles

Regional Context, Historic Settlements, and Routes



Settlements and travel routes shown just before the Novarupta eruption in 1912. Although the 1912 ashfall prevented resettlement of the Katmai villages, local families returned seasonally to Oit'rwik to harvest redfish and berries thus maintaining strong ties to the lands and waters within the Brooks River Archeological District National Historical Landmark.



Brooks River Archeological District and NHL



Significance and Condition

The Brooks River Archeological District is significant because it has yielded or is likely to yield important data in the investigation of the 4500-year record of Sugpiaq-Alutiiq and Yup'ik populations and their ancestors.

Period of Significance: 2500 BCE to 1912 CE

Significance Level: National

Condition: Fair— Cumulative impacts from historic and modern infrastructure, non-compliant projects, failing utilities, visitor impacts, cut-bank erosion and other natural processes may further degrade site integrity in the absence of proactive management.

Character Defining Features

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Beach Ridges and River Terraces

Reveal past lake and river locations where traces of ancestral use are most often found.

An Orientation Towards the Water

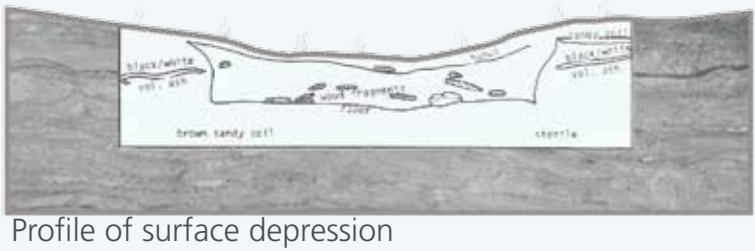
- **Fishing** - Brooks Falls was exposed when lake levels dropped and provided an obstacle for migrating fish along with an opportunity for humans to harvest them.
- **Hunting** - The narrows between Naknek Lake and Lake Brooks at about 2500 BCE create a short water crossing for migrating game and an advantageous location for hunting.

Changing Shorelines



TOPOGRAPHY

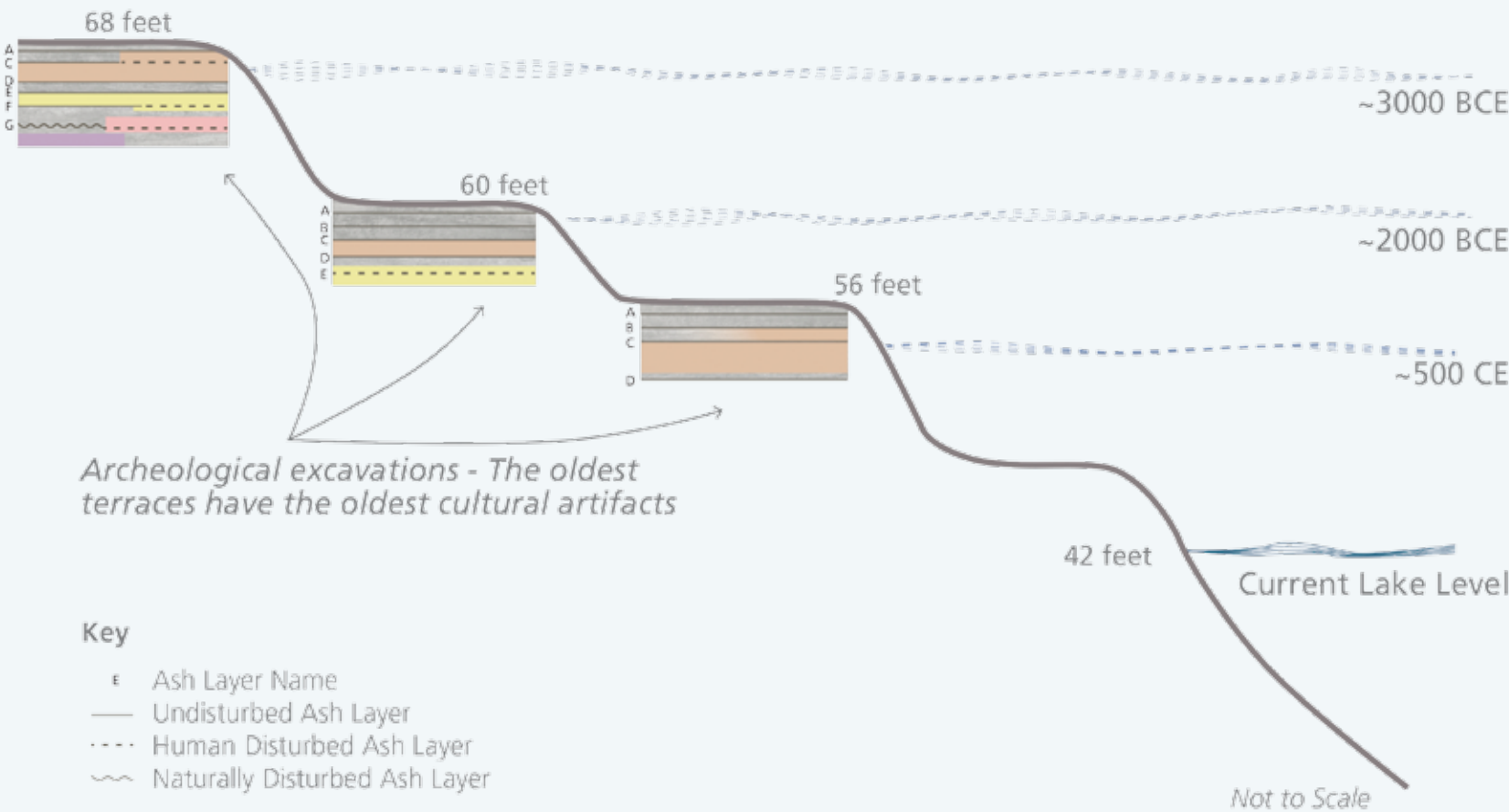
Over 900 **Surface Depressions** within the district (single-room and/or multi-room homes with external storage) represent human adaption in seasonal mobility, cultural innovation, and social structure over several millennia.



Information in the Landscape

The Brooks River Archeological District has already yielded important information about the region's prehistory, and much more information remains in the land.

- SITES**-Archeological work since 1953 has identified 22 sites.
- EXCAVATIONS**-Uncovered artifacts reveal information about the past.
- OCCUPATIONS**-Multiple periods of use are often identified at the same location.
- ASH LAYERS**-Relative positions of ash deposits provide a timeline in the soil.
- TESTING**-Carbon dating of organic remnants enable further refinements.



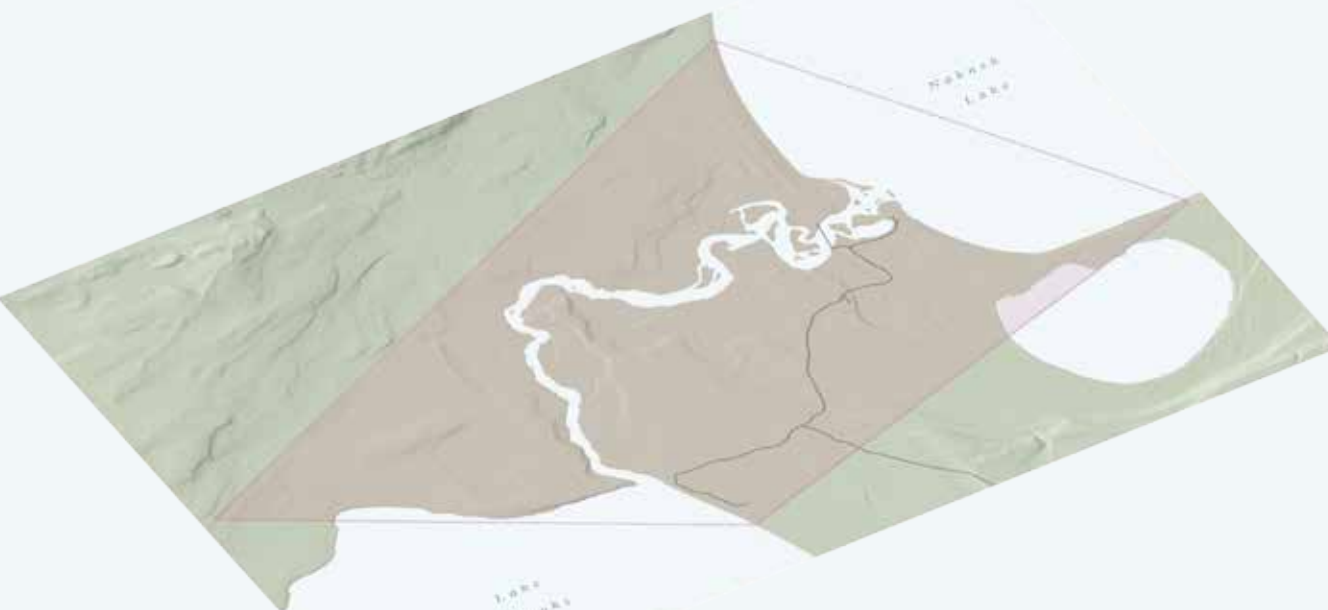
Historic-style semi-subterranean houses at Old Savonoski after 1912 eruption. Similar houses may have existed on Naknek Lake shoreline adjacent to Barge Landing. JD Sayre, 1918, National Geographic Expedition, National Geographic Society Katmai Expedition Photo.



Local Sugpiaq-Alutiiq families continued to use Oit'rwik for harvesting spiritually important subsistence resources like *redfish* (spawn-phase sockeye) after the establishment of Katmai National Park and Brooks Camp, 1940. NPS Photo by Victor Cahalane.



Example of cumulative impacts: Salvage archeology mitigating adverse effects of Lodge Kitchen expansion project, 1988. NPS Photo.



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