

Research and Management Priorities

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission

Adopted on September 26, 2025

Food security is our highest priority, and the following research questions and management objectives have been developed to facilitate food security for communities associated with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. The Nelchina caribou herd, moose, Dall sheep, mountain goats, Copper River sockeye salmon and Chinook salmon, game birds, and whitefish and other non-salmon species are important food resources that drive the development of these priorities. We encourage park management to think outside of the box in addressing food security for local communities.

Priority Research Questions to Inform Food Security Management:

- Evaluate and understand the drivers of population dynamics of the important food resources listed above, including but not limited to predation.
- Study impacts of eagle predation on harvested species (for example, sheep lambs, caribou calves, and salmon).
- Study the prevalence and impacts of disease (e.g., *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* – *M.ovi*) on sheep populations.
- Study effects of environmental change on subsistence resources and uses, for example:
 - The interaction between changes in environmental factors such as, but not limited to, snow cover, precipitation and flooding events, and permafrost on animal migration patterns and human access for hunting and gathering;
 - Changing river conditions (e.g., debris, high water levels, seasonal temperature changes, and riverbank morphology) and impacts to fish wheel use, fishing success, and catch-per-unit-effort; and
 - Resource damage from transportation methods of non-local users (i.e., from ATVs).

Management Priorities:

- Increase opportunities for educational outreach (including using various forms of media) on topics such as traditional processing methods, respect, access, and land status, among others.
- Increase people's awareness of available resources, such as the full range of edible plants and how to use the whole animal.
- Increase educational outreach regarding harvest opportunities for wolf, bear, and coyote populations through venues such as trapping classes/workshops.
- Collaborate with partners on hunter education workshops (i.e., "Hunter Success").
- Promote safety of subsistence users, especially on rivers.
- Provide local communities with subsistence firewood harvest opportunities as part of hazard fuel reduction efforts near communities.
- Manage fires to benefit wildlife, for example:
 - Prescribed burns to benefit wildlife habitat, and
 - Considering wildlife habitat benefits in wildfire management decisions, i.e., let it burn when feasible.