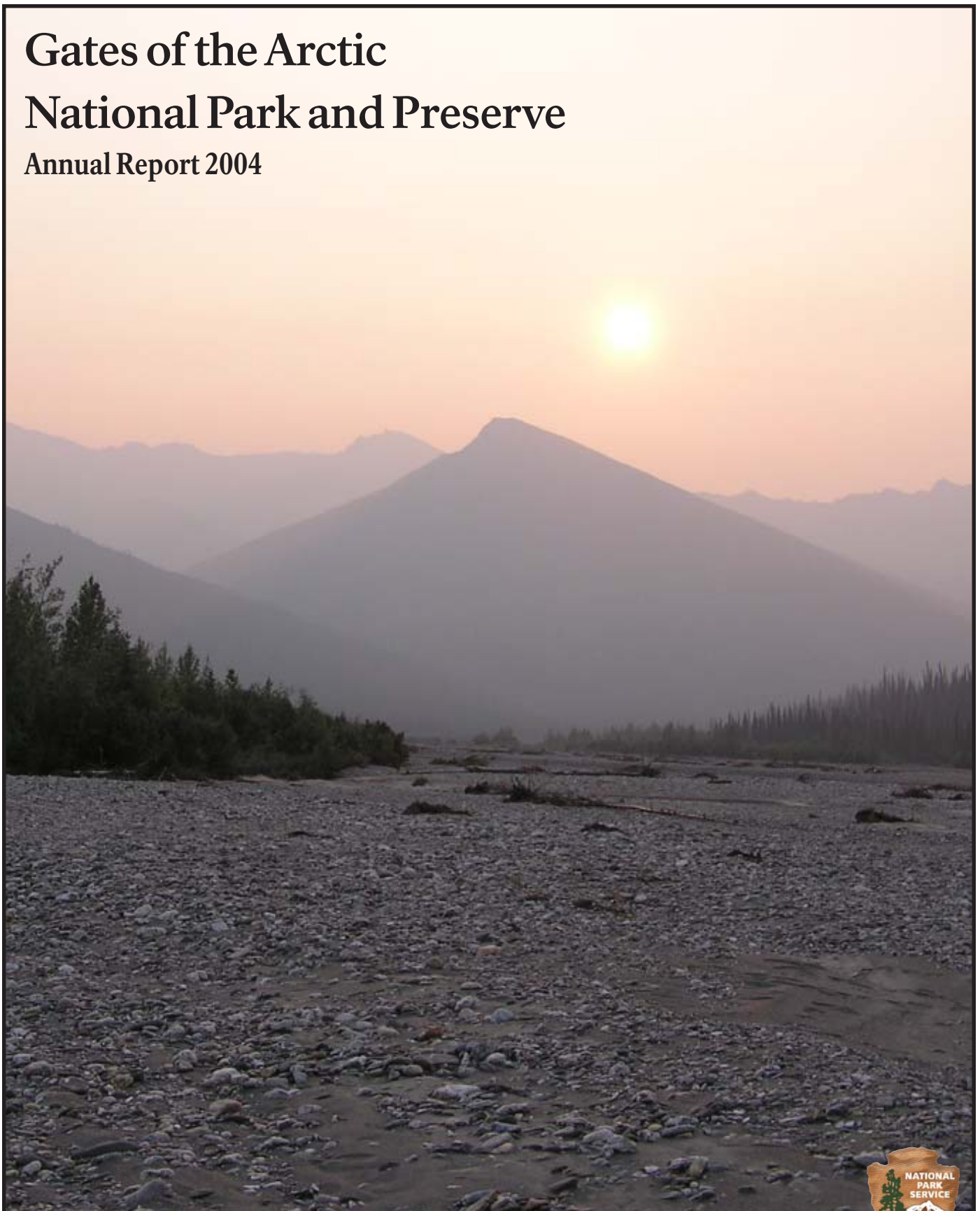


Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Annual Report 2004



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior





Walk Softly

*Earth receives
Foot and paw,
Hoof and claw
With equal grace.*

*But,
It is the way of
The wild,
Not to overstep
The bounds of hospitality.
This is a wild place.
Follow me
And leave no trace,
That wind, rain and snow
Cannot erase.*

M. L. Johnson, ©1996

Message from the Superintendent

The year 2004 was definitely a year of fires. On a very cold and windy January night thirty miles north of the Arctic Circle, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve's operational center in Bettles burned to the ground in a matter of hours. Our story on page 14 describes that harrowing night and the operational near-miracle that ensued to have a working ranger station open for visitors that summer.

The unusually hot and dry summer kindled early natural wildfires that lasted until heavy snows fell in late September. While fires inside the Park were relatively small, smoke from persistent fires south of the Park—especially around the community of Bettles—made flight operations and living conditions difficult for much of the summer. Our staff did a remarkable job working both together and with other agencies to help save Bettles from fire that burned dangerously close to the community. Despite these challenges, staff conducted their field operations and studies as they would in a typical summer, with extra attention to safety. The entire staff successfully completed the summer without injury to any staff or visitor.

The following pages summarize some highlights of 2004, from the grand opening of our new Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot, to continuation of numerous resource inventories, and development of new partnerships and cooperation in almost every aspect of our work. This year in particular has been a success because of the tremendous support we received from throughout the NPS organization, from our Fairbanks Office, the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage, all the way to Washington D.C. As you will see in this report, an incredible network of partnerships, including agencies, communities, private organizations, and individuals from around the globe, have helped enormously in achieving our goals. Thank you for your commitment to preserve Gates of the Arctic as a national treasure.

Dave Mills



This year marked the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. National Public Radio reporter Elizabeth Arnold and her sound crew recorded a special "National Geographic Radio Expedition" story on the anniversary, highlighting Gates of the Arctic National Park and its role in the national wilderness system.

Purpose and Significance

By establishing Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve in Alaska's Brooks Range, Congress reserved a vast and essentially untouched area of superlative natural beauty and exceptional scientific value – a maze of glaciated valleys and gaunt, rugged mountains covered with boreal forest and arctic tundra, cut by wild rivers and inhabited by far-ranging populations of caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, grizzly and black bears. Congress recognized that a special value of Gates of the Arctic is its wild, undeveloped character and the opportunities it affords for solitude, wilderness travel, and adventure. Gates of the Arctic encompasses several congressionally recognized elements including the national park, national preserve, wilderness, six wild rivers, and two national natural landmarks. The National Park Service is entrusted to manage this area to protect its physical resources and to maintain the intangible qualities of the wilderness and the opportunity it provides for people to learn and renew its values.



Purpose of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

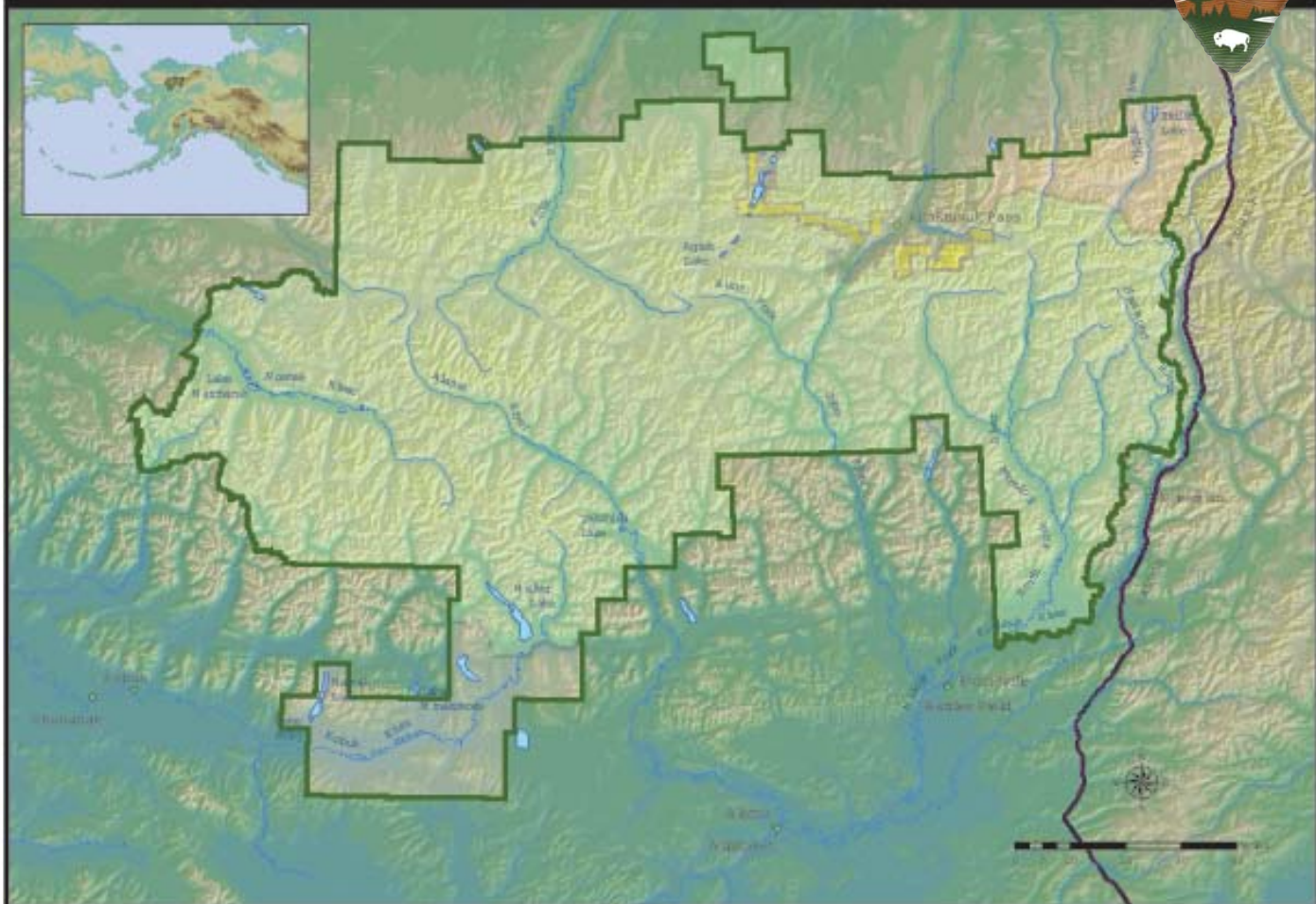
- ❖ Preserve the wild and undeveloped character and natural environmental integrity--including natural processes, habitat, and biodiversity--of the central Brooks Range;
- ❖ Provide opportunities for appropriate wilderness recreational activities and solitude; and
- ❖ Allow rural residents engaged in a subsistence way of life to continue to do so.

Significance of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

- ❖ Gates of the Arctic is the central component of a 40-million-acre contiguous, undeveloped protected area, one of the largest protected areas in an increasingly developed world.
- ❖ Due to its vastness and undeveloped character, Gates of the Arctic provides outstanding recreational wilderness opportunities.
- ❖ Gates of the Arctic protects the core of the traditional homelands of the Nunamiut peoples.
- ❖ The area inspired Bob Marshall, who coined the term “Gates of the Arctic,” and was one of the earliest proponents of arctic preservation and one of the founders of the American wilderness system.
- ❖ Gates of the Arctic exemplifies an intact, high latitude arctic ecosystem with its corresponding natural processes, flora, and fauna.

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve lies north of the Arctic Circle in the central Brooks Range of Alaska. Visitors to the Park typically access the area by air, and a few hike in from the Dalton Highway. Air charter operators based in Bettles fly visitors into the Park using float planes that land on many of the larger lakes and rivers.

Visitors to Gates of the Arctic are encouraged to check in at one of the Park's field offices in Bettles or Anaktuvuk Pass, or at the Visitors' Center in Coldfoot prior to their trip. Park Rangers offer orientations that brief visitors in safety issues and Leave No Trace camping techniques.

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by the National Park Service,
unless noted otherwise



This antler arrowhead from the Hungry Fox archeological site is one of many artifacts added to Gates of the Arctic's museum collections this year.

Cover photo: Sunset under a smokey sky at an archeology field camp in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

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Preserve Resources

Natural and cultural resources and associated values at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve are protected, restored and maintained in good condition and managed within their broader ecosystem and cultural context.

Long-term Goal: Archeological Sites. By September 30, 2005, 26 of the high risk sites will be monitored and condition determined.

Annual Goal: By September 30, 2004, five additional sites (19 total) will be monitored and condition determined.

GOAL EXCEEDED

Rescue Excavations at the Hungry Fox Archaeological Site

In response to severe threats from river erosion, archeologists conducted excavations at the Hungry Fox site on the Killik River in July. The site, occupied around 1600 A.D., appears to have been a substantial camp or small village. It is noteworthy for its excellent organic preservation and rich assortment of artifacts; archeologists recovered

artifacts such as ground slate ulus, stone and antler arrow points, pottery sherds, an amber bead, and a tremendous amount of animal bone. Initial analyses of the bone show that people fished for grayling and hunted a variety of large and small game such as ptarmigan, ground squirrel, sheep, caribou, and possibly moose. A full analysis of the animal bone will be written up as a Master's Thesis by Christine Jensen, a student from the University of Alaska-Anchorage.



Museum Collections

Nearly 10,000 new items were added to the park's collections this year. These include archival materials, plant collections from the Inventory and Monitoring program, and archaeological collections from recent field projects. Museum technicians Steve Lanford and Lily Morris photographed close to 2,000 objects last winter. The digital images were then linked to catalog records and will soon be publicly available through a searchable web catalog. The slate ulu and bone bead shown here are from the Hungry Fox site.



Anaktuvuk Pass Community Archeology

In July, Gates of the Arctic archeologists took part in a joint project led by Western Arctic National Parklands at the Tuktu-Naiyuk archaeological site, four miles north of Anaktuvuk Pass. Tuktu-Naiyuk was originally excavated in 1959 by Jack Campbell and residents of Anaktuvuk Pass (including Thomas Rulland and Robert Paneak). The site has been a keystone for archaeological research in the Brooks Range, but unanswered questions about its age and the layout of the site have prevented full realization of its information potential. This summer archeologists made a detailed map of the site, recovered new charcoal and animal bone samples for radiocarbon dating, identified ancient structures such as tent rings and fire hearths, and generated a collection of stone tools that will help to interpret how this site was used.

One highlight of the project was the participation of students from Anaktuvuk Pass. Billy Ahgook, Aminilla Hugo, Brandon Rummer, and Diane Sikvayugak learned about Brooks Range prehistory and archaeological methods during a fall workshop, and for the month of July lived at the field camp and participated in site excavations. Students from the village of Noatak, Millie Booth, Deron Smith, Maasak Penn, and Terrence Booshu from Point Hope (?) also participated in excavations as part of a Beringian Shared Heritage Program internship program coordinated through the NPS Alaska Regional Office.

Julie Esdale, a graduate student at Brown University and Western Arctic National Parklands archaeologist, will oversee the analysis of the new information from Tuktu-Naiyuk, which will be incorporated into her

dissertation. The participation of Anaktuvuk Pass students will continue this fall when Mrs. Esdale returns to the village to work with students analyzing artifacts and creating maps. Students will then work together to create a poster that summarizes results of the Tuktu-Naiyuk excavations for display in the Nunamiut School and the Simon Paneak Museum.



Aminilla Hugo, a student from Anaktuvuk Pass, screens sediment for small artifacts.

Cabin Survey

An interdisciplinary team consisting of FirePro and cultural resources staff conducted a survey of historic cabin sites in June. The results of the study will assist the Fire Management Program in protecting significant sites, which represent the region's rich history of mining, prospecting, hunting, guiding and trapping. The team consisted of a fuels specialist, historic architect, and two archeologists; they visited 59 cabin sites over the course of 18 days. The project was a logistical challenge as the sites were distributed across a rugged and remote area approximately 7500 square miles in size. Crews hiked, and traveled by fixed and rotor wing aircraft to access sites.



The Charles Yale cabin located on the Glacier River was one of the best preserved historic cabins encountered during the survey.

At each site, the team recorded information about architecture, artifacts, and the age and condition of the site. Fuels specialists documented the vegetation (fuels), access options, and water sources, and developed a tactical fire protection plan. Cabins were photographed and architectural drawings were created for many, ensuring that information about the cabins is preserved for posterity.

The project will come to completion in 2005 after each site is formally evaluated for its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places and the Fire Management Plan is adopted.



Nick Acker, a University of Alaska Fairbanks student intern from Allakaket documents artifacts at a cabin ruin on the North Fork.

The National Park Service contributes to knowledge about natural and cultural resources and associated values; management decisions about resources and visitors are based on adequate scholarly and scientific information.

Long-term Goal: Natural Resources. By September 30, 2005, 8 natural resource inventories identified in the Resource Management Plan are completed for Gates of the Arctic.

Annual Goal: By September 30, 2004, two additional resource inventories will be reported as data bases.

GOAL EXCEEDED

Riparian Bird Inventory Project

A coalition of six entities, known as the Park Flight Program, provided support for a riparian bird inventory within Gates of the Arctic. The inventory was designed to document bird species distribution, diversity, density, and habitat within the Park's major riparian corridors. In 2004, more than 600 points were surveyed within the study area, which included over 250 km along the Noatak, North Fork Koyukuk, John, and Kobuk river corridors. As part of the Park Flight Program, a biologist from Argentina assisted with the project, allowing for exchange of information about species whose ranges are just as far reaching.

Other than for an extensive shorebird inventory conducted in 2003, Gates of the Arctic was largely unsurveyed, leaving a gap in our knowledge of the breeding distribution and habitat requirements of many migrant and resident bird species. Many migratory species face widespread loss and alteration of habitats at important sites along their migration routes. Impacts of habitat loss may be first detectable through changes in patterns of bird abundance and distribution on the breeding grounds.

Information from these inventories will contribute to conservation efforts at many levels. At the park level, baseline data will be used in assessments of potential impacts to bird populations from human (e.g. increased visitation), and natural (e.g. flood, fire) disturbances. At the regional level, this data will be incorporated into the statewide bird monitoring program developed by Partners in Flight, which focuses on assessing trends in abundance and distribution. At the global level, data will be useful in assessing migratory species' health throughout their ranges.



An osprey soars over its nest along the Kobuk River in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Six partners supported the riparian bird inventory project.



Western Airborne Contaminants Assessment Project

The Western Airborne Contaminants Assessment Project (WACAP) was initiated to determine the risk to ecosystems and food webs in western national parks from the long-range transport of airborne contaminants. It is being designed and implemented by the National Park Service's Air Resources Division in cooperation with seven other national parks, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, the USDA Forest Service, Oregon State University, and University of Washington.

The final WACAP Research Plan was completed in May 2003, and is available at www2.nature.nps.gov/air/studies/air_toxics/wacap.htm. The five-year project, now moving into its fourth year, is currently in the field sampling and analysis stage. Project objectives are to:

- ❖ determine if contaminants are present in western national parks;
- ❖ if present, determine where contaminants are accumulating (geographically and by elevation);
- ❖ if present, determine which contaminants pose a potential ecological threat;
- ❖ determine which indicators appear to be the most useful to address contamination; and
- ❖ determine the sources for contaminants measured at the national park sites.

In 2004, WACAP took samples of a variety of ecosystem indicators to provide information about contaminant accumulation at Matcharak Lake in Gates of the Arctic and Burial Lake in Noatak National Preserve. These indicators include:

- ❖ snow, to measure direct atmospheric loading;
- ❖ fish, to measure food web impacts and bioaccumulation;
- ❖ water, to measure hydrophilic current use chemicals;
- ❖ lake sediment, to provide information about historic trends of contaminant loading to watersheds;
- ❖ lichens, to measure food web impacts and bioaccumulation;
- ❖ willow bark, to measure ecosystem exposure; and
- ❖ subsistence native foods, to measure a food source used by native peoples.

Walker Lake Soil Remediation

As a part of the shoreline restoration project at lower Walker Lake, we removed a retaining wall in 2003. A total of 2 cubic yards of contaminated soil was found and contained on site. This year, funds were secured for soil remediation. An open greenhouse type structure was built over the contained area, allowing aeration by wind and sun. Field staff from Bettles and Fairbanks raked the soils every two weeks, combined with a direct heat source to accelerate aeration. The remediated soil will be moved in 2005 to its original intended location as a part of the retaining wall removal project.



Abandoned Fuel

We responded to a report that 28 55-gallon barrels of fuel lay in a high mountain pass near Mettenpherg and Iniakuk River, outside the Park, south of Ernie Lake on State of Alaska lands. An inspection of the drums yielded about 1500 gallons of unlabeled fuel. The fuel is capped, and two slow leaking drums were moved to limit further leaking. NPS is working with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Natural Resources for removal of the drums.



Alatna River Cultural Resource Survey

Archeologists completed the second of a two year cultural resource inventory project on the Alatna River in the western portion of Gates of the Arctic in June and July. Over 50 archeological sites have now been found in this valley—up from just five sites known before the project. This new information will allow park staff to monitor site impacts, protect culturally significant places, and interpret the long history of human use of this major portion of the park.

One interesting find was a group of prehistoric sites—marked by scatters of stone tools and located at relatively high elevations—which are likely associated with sheep hunting. Obsidian found at many of the sites originates from a source near Hughes and demonstrates old travel or trade links from the Koyukuk River region.



Above, archeologist Jay Flaming, a graduate student at University of Alaska-Fairbanks, describes a cabin site on the Alatna. Above left, an illustration of a flaked stone projectile point. Its shape and technology are so far unrecognized in Alaska.



This is archeological survey in action—lots of walking, eyes glued to the ground, looking for the needle in the haystack.

Progress continues with Gates of the Arctic's Ethnographic Projects

Project Jukebox

Beginning in the early 1990's and in cooperation with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Oral History Program, NPS sponsored development of multimedia oral history databases that allow park planners, staff, local communities, and virtual visitors to hear and experience accounts of life in and around Alaska's premier parks and preserves. These "Jukebox" projects integrate oral recordings with maps, pictures, and text in an interactive computer program. In 2004, eight new interviews were conducted for inclusion in a revised Gates of the Arctic Jukebox. Materials from the Gates of the Arctic Jukebox have been converted to a web accessible format and are now posted on the website of the Oral History Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The web address is www.uaf.edu/library/jukebox.



Several new interviews were added to Gates of the Arctic's Project Jukebox. Users of the program click on a photo of the person of interest to hear the interview.

Kobuk Human-Land Relationships

The "Kobuk Human-Land Relationships Study" is a multi-year project being carried out jointly by NPS, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and the Shungnak village tribal government to document land use and settlement patterns on the upper Kobuk in the 20th century. Oral recordings, life histories, and genealogical data have been collected and are being analyzed to help refine our understanding not only of traditional Kobuk culture but also the enormous changes that have occurred there.

Jim Magdanz of ADF&G (Kotzebue) is the project's principal investigator. Among his most important findings was that while most census records and historical accounts show upper Kobuk River residents settling in Kobuk and Shungnak early in the 20th century, about a dozen families did not move to villages. "The life histories described a small, self-sufficient, semi-nomadic society living apart from the villages. Although they were dispersed in the area, the families seemed to have frequent contact with one another, and much less contact with families in the villages of Kobuk or Alatna." Other important information includes documentation of historic use of areas that are now part of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, including subsistence logging, hunting, and fishing. One respondent described what may be one of the earliest observations of moose in the Pah River area, dating from September, 1929. Magdanz is currently completing the final report on the project, which includes a special chapter on "user conflicts" on the upper Kobuk.

Book in Progress: *Arctic Snow and Ice*

Cultural Resource Specialist David Krupa is continuing work with long-time Brook's Range pilot, resident, and lodge owner "Bud" (Harmon) Helmericks to edit and print a short pilot's guide to flying (and surviving) in the Arctic. In this fascinating manuscript—entitled "Arctic Snow and Ice"—Helmericks shares his knowledge and experience through stories, technical information, and diagrams.



Photo by John Robson

Fire Management

Record Fire Season in Alaska, Near Miss in Bettles

Alaska experienced a record fire season in 2004, with 706 fires burning an area of over 6.7 million acres. In Gates of the Arctic, four fairly small fires burned completely within the Kobuk Preserve unit of the Park. A fifth, larger blaze burned 2,057 acres within the Kobuk unit (very close to one of the smaller fires). These were managed as wildland fires, meaning we did not actively suppress them in order to allow fire to play its natural role in the ecosystem.

The largest fire, named the Evansville fire, started just south of Bettles, and eventually burned 135,653 acres, 25 of those acres within the Park. This fire was actively fought to protect the communities of Bettles and Evansville. NPS staff played a large role in saving the communities by providing much needed logistical support to firefighters.



Four fires in the Kobuk Preserve unit ranged in size from 1 to 80 acres. A fifth, near the southern boundary of the Preserve, was 16,860 acres. The largest blaze burned 135,653 acres, narrowly missing the communities of Evansville and Bettles, thanks to the efforts of firefighters. In background photo, smoke plumes fill the sky as a fire fighting "scooper" airplane taxis onto the Bettles airstrip (photo by Tyler Klaes).



Provide for the Public Enjoyment and Visitor Experience

Visitors safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, accessibility, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities.

Long-term Goal: Visitor Satisfaction. By September 30, 2005, 95% of visitors to Gates of the Arctic are satisfied with appropriate park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

Annual Goal: By September 30, 2003, 92% of the visitors will be satisfied with the services of the park. This will be determined by survey results.

GOAL EXCEEDED

Bettles Ranger Station Rises from the Ashes

On January 27, 2004, the Bettles Ranger Station for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge burned to the ground. By the time the fire was discovered in the early morning hours, the 5600 square foot structure was already engulfed in flames. Despite 30-knot winds and sub-zero temperatures, there were no injuries and the ranger station was the only loss.

In order to serve the public, a temporary fix was needed quickly. By early April, funding had been acquired, and a log cabin kit had been purchased and delivered over the winter trail. Construction began in early May to build the 20' x 30' log kit for the new (temporary) Bettles Ranger Station. On June 29—just five months after the devastating fire—the 600 square foot log ranger station was open for business.

The makeshift station, despite its glitches, was a success. Orientations were given on a borrowed table in reconditioned chairs with maps put together by the Fairbanks staff. Before the

summer was over, Alaska Natural History Association had books and educational material for sale. Visitors seemed to realize the bind we were in and gave supportive comments.

The ranger station was used throughout the summer and was relocated by an Evansville Tribal Council work crew to a permanent site in early September where it continued to serve the public until the end of the season.



Long-term Goal: Visitor Safety. By September 30, 2005, the number of visitor accidents is no higher than the FY1992-FY1996 five-year annual average of 1.

Annual Goal: By September 30, 2003, Gates of the Arctic will have 1 or less visitor accidents.
GOAL ACHIEVED

The Dogs Are Back

It's been 18 years since the last dog team backcountry patrol in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and 23 years since the Denali dog teams patrolled outside Denali National Park and Preserve, so it was with great satisfaction that the Denali Dogs came to Gates for a backcountry patrol.

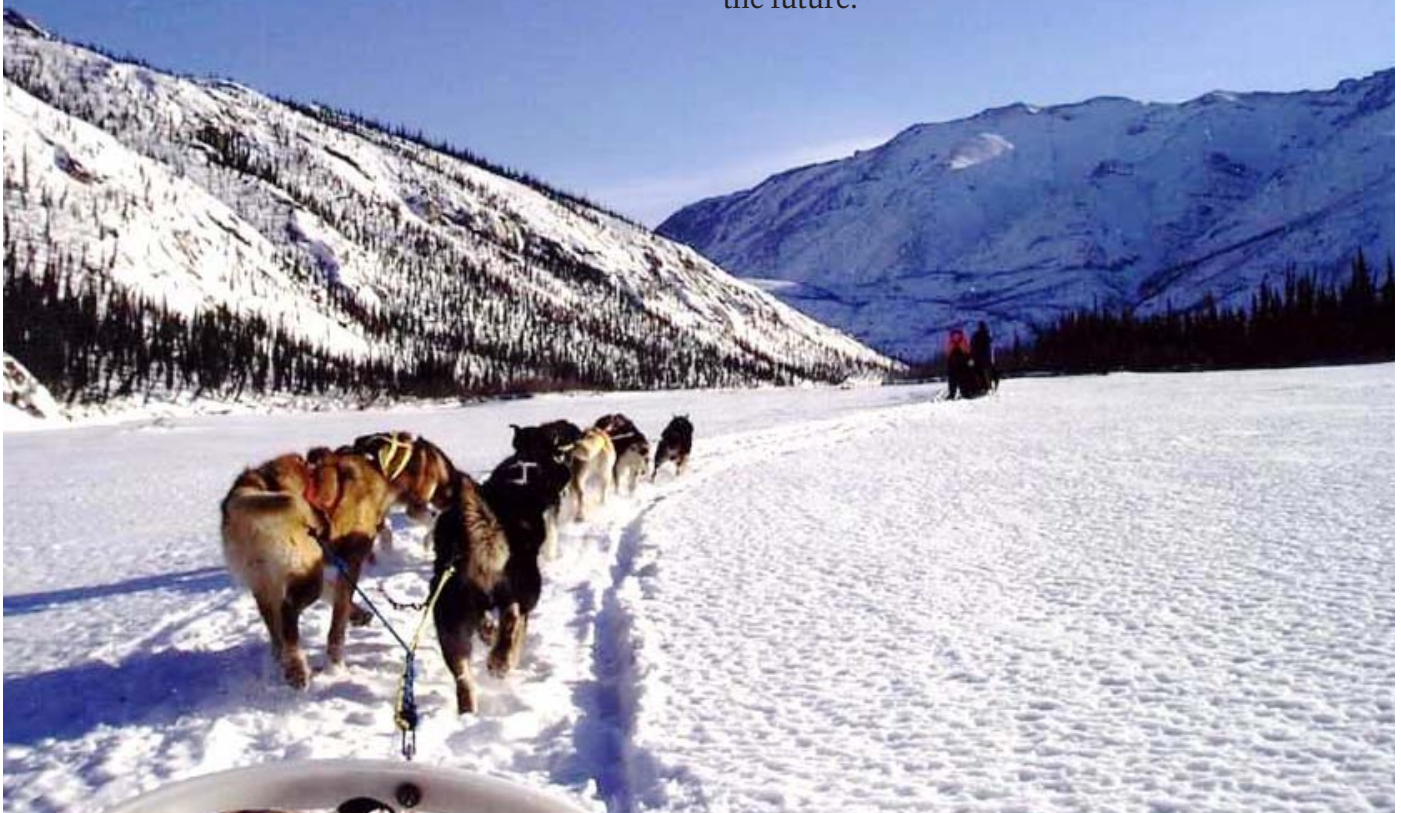
Denali Dog Kennel Manager Karen Fortier and Gates of the Arctic Chief of Operations Gary Youngblood put their talents together and arranged to use the Denali dog teams to revive an old Park tradition. During the early days of the Park, dog teams were used extensively by Gates of the Arctic staff, but the last dog team patrol was done by Ray Bane in 1986.

This year, Karen brought all 30 Denali dogs, four sleds, and two dog drivers, NPS VIPs Scott Sample

and Jonathan Young. They were joined by Gary and Gates of the Arctic's VIP Max Hanft and his 10-dog team. The five teams mushed from Bettles to Crevice Creek, picked up cameraman Ray Bribiesca and Gates of the Arctic's Outdoor Recreation Planner Don Pendergrast, and headed north up the John River into the Park.

The weather was typical of the Brooks Range, cold and windy, but the clear blue skies and spectacular scenery lifted everyone's spirits. Ray shot wonderful winter footage for the Park. Bill and Lil Fickus, owners of Crevice Creek, were pleased to see the NPS dog sled backcountry patrols again after so long.

While this year's patrol was a short four days, it brings back traditional dog team travel in Gates of the Arctic and rekindles hope to use dogs more in the future.



Field Operations Benefit Visitors and Resources Alike



Gates of the Arctic operations staff contacted this guided non-resident Dall's sheep hunter in the Iktillik Preserve. Park staff and volunteers traveled many miles in a successful effort to contact hunting guides and their clients, and Alaska resident Dall's sheep hunters in the Preserve.



In cooperation with a cultural resources project at the Hungry Fox archeological site, operations staff and volunteers removed over 600 pounds of trash and abandoned property from the Killik River. Empty 55 gallon barrels, Blazo cans, oil cans, shredded tents, and food containers were removed from the river corridor in an ongoing effort to enhance and protect the wilderness character of the Park.



A successful Alaska resident moose hunter shows off his trophy taken along the Kobuk River in Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. Residents, non-residents, and local subsistence users all use resources found in the Kobuk Preserve.



We also worked with NANA corporation representatives to enhance visiting hunters' awareness of private and NANA lands boundaries south of the Preserve to reduce unwanted trespassing and to minimize other user conflicts on the Kobuk River.

Joint Park Patrol of the Noatak River

In August, Chief Ranger Gary Youngblood and Julia Youngblood from Gates of the Arctic, joined Chief Ranger Lindy Russell and Park Ranger Kean Mihata from Western Arctic National Parklands for a patrol of the Noatak River. The trip combined a meeting between the two parks' Chief Rangers with an orientation river patrol, facilitating discussion of numerous common issues:

- ❖ possibility of poaching along common boundary;
- ❖ number of Dall's sheep visible from the river;
- ❖ need for joint patrols conducted during sheep hunting season;
- ❖ backcountry orientations and Leave No Trace information;
- ❖ how to get this information to visitors accessing Gates of the Arctic from Kotzebue;
- ❖ future aviation needs for both park areas; and
- ❖ staffing and retention concerns.

The group also checked for and cleaned up human impacts along the way. Heavy rains had caused the Noatak River to rise six feet above normal however, and camping impacts, if any, had been swept away by the flood along the upper reaches of the river, making it impossible to know if the Leave No Trace practices were followed. The take-out at Lake

Matcharak was difficult to spot from the river because the bank was eroded by high water. We walked the well-worn trail to the lake where three loons serenaded us, punctuating the sense of quiet and uniqueness of this land.

On entering Noatak Preserve, the land flattened and the river became braided. Lake Kavachurak's portage area, unlike Lake Matcharak, has a gravel bar for camping, and the durable surface is not as impacted. Still, we could see the remains of an earlier party—a fire pit and popcorn kernels! Here we could see the continuing need for orientations emphasizing Leave No Trace and working on a system to get this message to visitors accessing both areas from Kotzebue.

We encountered only two other parties. One commercial group of 10 plus guides, who were surprised but pleased to see rangers on the river, and a solo kayaker travelling to Kotzebue and climbing the highest peaks in both parks along the way. We heard nine airplanes during our patrol. If visitors were few, the animals were abundant: 60 caribou, 40-50 Dall sheep, a brown bear, a beaver, numerous wolf tracks and a variety of birds.



The chief rangers from Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and Western Arctic National Parklands floated the Noatak River in a joint patrol. The time together gave ample opportunity to discuss many common issues, including the need to contact visitors before entering park lands and orienting them on Leave No Trace practices.

Mission Goal: Park visitors and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of parks and their resources for this and future generations.

Long-term Goal: Visitor Understanding and Appreciation. By September 30, 2005, 86% of Gates of the Arctic visitors understand the significance of the Park and Preserve.

Annual Goal: By September 30, 2004, 82% of visitors understand the significance of the park and preserve (based on survey results).

GOAL EXCEEDED

Arctic Interagency Visitor Center Celebrates its Grand Opening

Smoke-filled skies may have prevented the Washington and Anchorage “Big Wigs” from attending the AIVC grand opening, but the long awaited celebration paid off for those who did attend. With a roof line that echoes the mountain backdrop, the new visitor center has a welcoming, comfortable interior, and engaging, informative exhibits. And as a staff member who remembers the old visitor center’s outhouse commented, “the women’s room has seven toilets that flush!”

The new Arctic Interagency Visitor Center is co-hosted by the Bureau of Land Management (the Dalton Highway Corridor), the Fish and Wildlife Service (Arctic, Kanuti, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuges), and the National Park Service

(Gates of the Arctic). Each agency contributes funding, personnel and support for the visitor center’s operation. The AIVC is in many ways the “front country” for visitors to the arctic. There they can benefit from staff’s personal knowledge, learn about the arctic from exhibits, plan their trips with good maps and information, attend evening programs, file trip plans, voluntarily register, and check out bear resistant food containers.

The opening celebration recognized the host of people that have been associated with the project over the years. In spite of the smoky skies, 75 people attended on a day that turned out to be pretty nice. The speeches were short but heart felt, the sun shone down on big smiles all around, there were hugs, slaps on the back, and some fine reminiscing among old friends. In short, the day was full of interagency cooperation at its finest.



Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve Superintendent Dave Mills awards personnel from several agencies who made the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center a reality. (Photo by Ed Bovy, BLM.)

Three (Artists) In The Far North

Three Alaskan writers inaugurated Gates of the Arctic's own version of the Artist-in-Residence program. Poet Carolyn Kremers (*Place of the Pretend People: Gifts from a Yup'ik Eskimo Village*), playwright Anne Hanley (*Shortridge, Ward's Welding*), and children's book author Debbie Miller (*Midnight Wilderness*) enjoyed a 14-day hike through the upper headwaters area of the North Fork Koyukuk and Itkillik Rivers.

Accompanied by Ranger Teri McMillan, the Park's first Artists-in-Residence began their trek at the "Gates of the Arctic," as named by Robert Marshall, hiking north over the continental divide and eventually east through Oolah Pass to the Dalton Highway. In exchange for this opportunity, the authors will write a piece (either individually or collectively) for the Park, present the goals and ideals of this project to the Eighth Annual World Wilderness Congress in Anchorage, October 2005, and assist in establishing the framework for continuing the

Artist-In-Residence program in Gates of the Arctic. No doubt, we will read about the trip for years to come, helping to make Gates of the Arctic accessible to many an armchair adventurer.



Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve initiated its Artist-In-Residence program in 2004. Children's book author Debbie Miller, Alaskan playwright Anne Hanley, and poet Carolyn Kremers will write about their experiences in the Park.

Thank you, Volunteers!



Volunteers like Rod Bullis made a tremendous contribution to the Hungry Fox archeology project, devoting over 900 hours of their time.

Educating Visitors: Land Use on the Kobuk

In consultation with local communities and organizations of the Upper Kobuk River, NPS is continuing development of a land use and visitor education brochure and map to ensure that park visitors who travel down the river corridor for hunting, fishing, or other recreational activities are aware of local concerns, protocols, and subsistence activities. This work aims to address concerns expressed through the Gates of the Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission about user conflicts along the popular Upper Kobuk River. This year, a draft place name and site map was developed for review by local residents.

Ensure Organizational Effectiveness

The National Park Service uses current management practices, systems, and technologies to accomplish its mission.

Marion Creek Goes Solar

In 2004, Marion Creek Ranger Station completed its conversion to renewable energy sources for summer use with the installation of an 1800 watt solar array. Eight solar panels feed the sun's energy into a 48-volt battery system, which stores energy that is metered out as necessary by a state-of-the-art inverter system to power the residence, ranger station and transient housing. On cloudy days, the inverter automatically starts the generators, which charge the batteries and then shut off. Eight additional panels will be installed in 2005.

For the system to work properly, the houses were retrofitted with energy efficient appliances such as on-demand hot water heaters. Savings were immediate. In 2004, Marion Creek consumed approxi-

mately 5,700 gallons of heating oil compared to 6,800 gallons in 2003--saving 1,100 gallons, or about \$2,200. At this rate, the system will pay for itself in five years while reducing Marion Creek's impact on the environment.

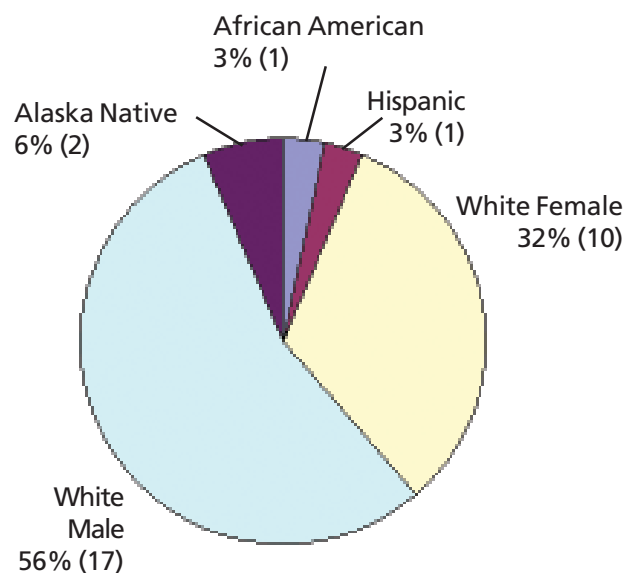


The new solar array sits atop the generator shed, providing power to the residences and ranger station throughout the summer months.



The Fairbanks staff includes administrative, resource management and fire pro staff who serve both Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. Our Operations staff (rangers, visitor use assistants and maintenance) are based in Bettles, Marion Creek and Anaktuvuk Pass.

Workforce Diversity of Permanent Employees



35 employees total

Financial Summary

Operating Budget Base Allocations (ONPS) Expenditure Highlights

\$632,000--Resource Preservation and Management
Cultural resource work included an archaeology site inventory on the Alatna river, excavation at the Hungry Fox site, and collaboration with Doyon Corporation for cabin inventory and assessment. Natural resource work included support to the Arctic Network, a park flight shorebird project, support to Alaska Department of Fish and Game for research of the western arctic caribou herd and central arctic caribou herd, and collaborative muskox work with Western Arctic Parklands.

\$752,000--Visitor Services

The safety record for the park was excellent again this year. Bear and hiking safety briefs as well as Leave No Trace talks were conducted for visitors coming through Bettles and Anaktuvuk Pass prior to entering the park. Although loss of the Bettles Ranger Station (having burned to the ground in January) did make the summer responsibilities

more challenging, visitor safety continued to be our first priority.

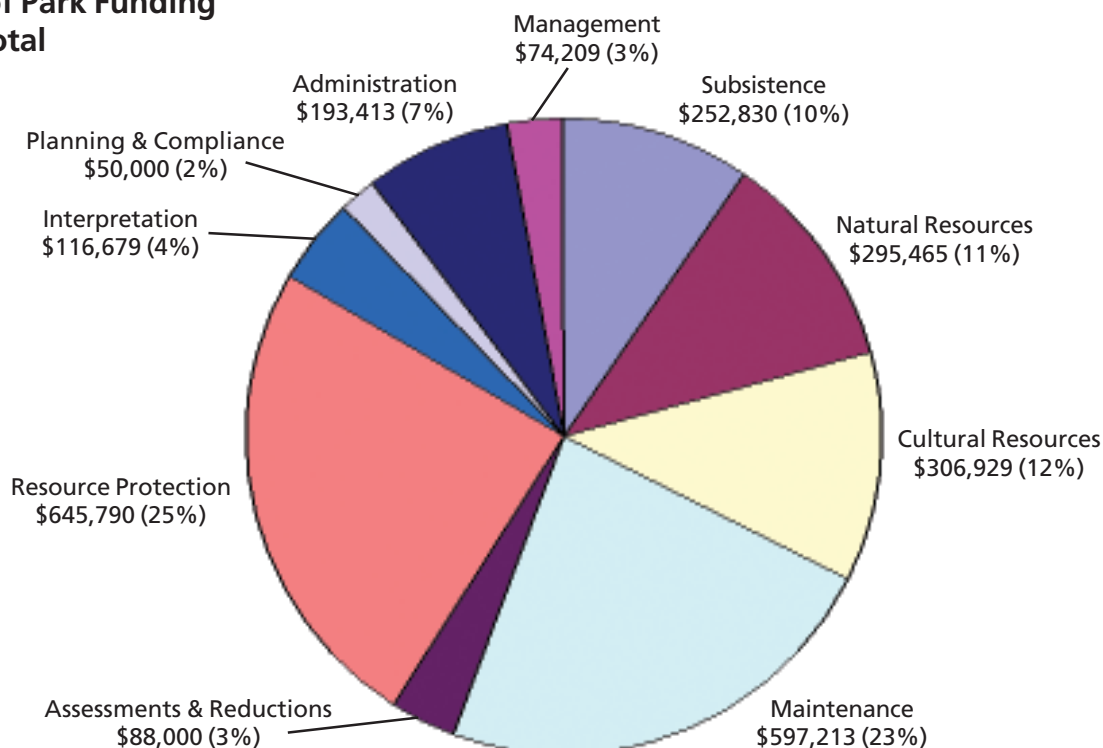
\$222,000--Facility Operations and Maintenance

Funds were used for routine maintenance and the cost of utilities. Maintenance priorities were significantly changed so that a replacement facility could be constructed for visitor orientations. Project funds supported the bulk of maintenance work this year, including housing insulation improvements and constructing the temporary log cabin ranger station.

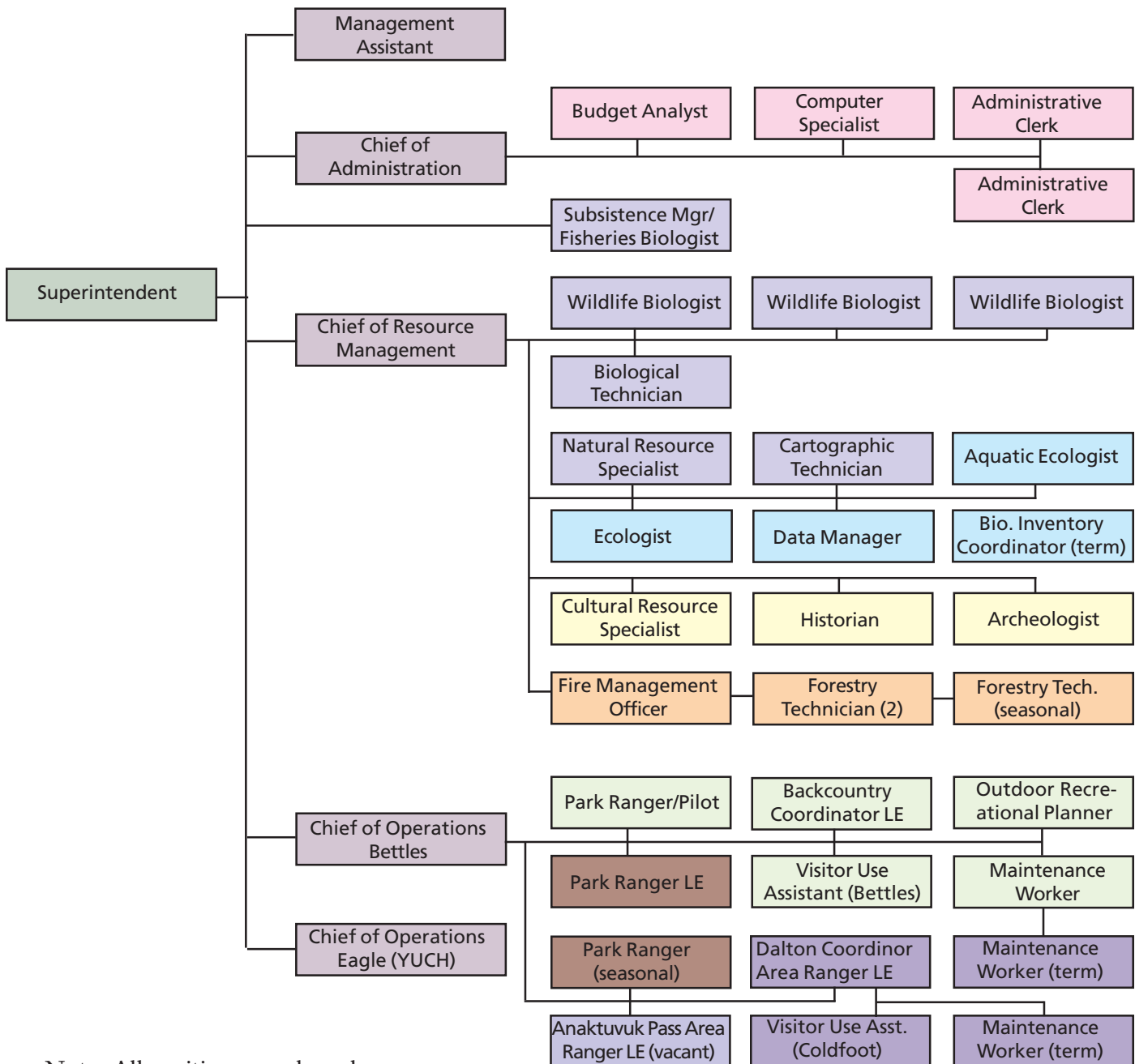
\$267,000--Management and Administration

Successfully avoiding any computer virus in our network of 3 NPS units in 6 locations is certainly a highlight. Changes were made in support of the DOI consolidation of the IT program. Much time was spent in installing a new phone system and computer network to the temporary Bettles office after the fire.

All Sources of Park Funding \$2,620,528 total



Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve Organization



Note: All positions are shared with Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve except those under the Chief of Operations in Bettles.



*The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people
so that all may experience our heritage.*



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