

Traditional Activities in the Exit Glacier Area of Kenai Fjords National Park

Rachel Mason¹, Karen Brewster², Don Callaway³, Douglas Deur⁴ and Shannon Kovac⁵

¹National Park Service, Anchorage Alaska; ²University of Alaska, Fairbanks; ³National Park Service (retired); ⁴Portland State University; ⁵Kenai Fjords NP



Zimmerman hunting party on the Harding Icefield. G. Zimmerman photograph, KEFJ-00225.

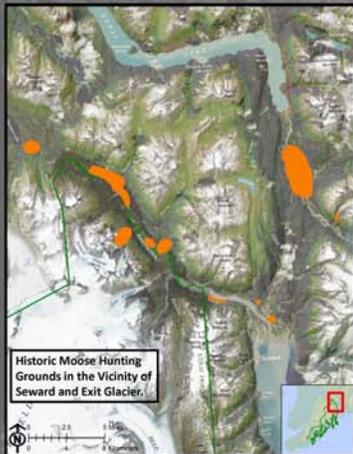
But then we made these trailers, these sleds out of old brass cavalry kits, and we'd stack all our gear on -- on the trailers, and then we had a rope, and two guys would pull and two guys would push. So you had to go 2 miles across the ice field. Well, 2 to 3 miles to go across the line because you couldn't take a motorized vehicle in there.
Gary Zimmerman



Doug McRae at Placer Creek Cabin in the Resurrection River Valley 1972. D. McRae photograph, KEFJ-00225.

Yeah, I was there a lot ... mainly because of airplanes. A friend of mine, he had a little J3, a 90-horse J3, and we trapped up there a lot.

Doug McRae



Historic Moose Hunting Grounds in the Vicinity of Seward and Exit Glacier.

Example of map illustrating areas once used for moose hunting. Maps, images and recorded interviews will be posted on UAF's online Project Jukebox in 2013.

We -- my mom and I picked blueberries up at Exit Glacier area. We also snared rabbits in that area. We had a little rabbit line.

Maranda Nelson



Herman Leirer Road, an eight mile stretch of paved highway, parallels the Resurrection River providing the only established land route into Kenai Fjords National Park. The Harding Icefield, Exit Glacier, and Resurrection River Valley provide park visitors with the opportunity to enjoy a multitude of recreational activities including skiing, snow machining, dog sledding, biking, hiking and camping.

Prior to the road's construction in the 1960s and 70s, such convenient access was not always possible. Primary sources indicate the Resurrection River Valley and Exit Glacier area were used continuously throughout the 20th century by Seward residents, but this finding begs the question... "How and why was this remote area accessed?"

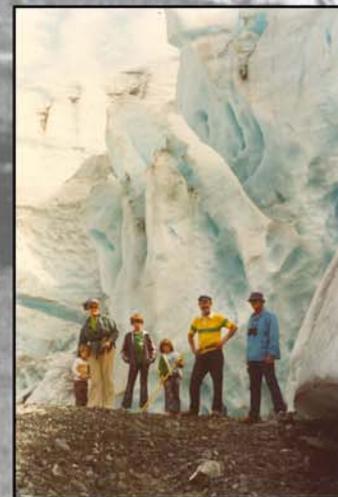
In an attempt to identify what pre-park activities occurred in the Exit Glacier area, the park has embarked on a project that serves a two-fold purpose: 1) to preserve local and park history through oral interviews, and 2) to identify what constitutes traditional activities in and around Seward. Recent oral histories reveal the Harding Icefield and Exit Glacier area have hosted a rich variety of use related to hunting, gathering and recreation. Ongoing research will provide interpretive insight into these 20th century activities and describe uses that may be defined as traditional. We present a selection of quotations and images illustrating these early activities in the Harding Icefield and Exit Glacier area.



Dan Seavey and team on the Exit Glacier Trail training for the first Iditarod Race, 1972. W. Huss photograph KEFJ-00225.

The only thing that's probably been constant throughout all the years are sled dogs. Yeah ... I have been -- been many, many, many hours up -- up Resurrection with dogs.

Dan Seavey



L-R: Steven Huss, Mary Huss, Richard Simpson, Warren Huss and Fred House at Exit Glacier in 1978. W. Huss photograph, KEFJ-00225.



1968 Harding Icefield traverse. Dave Spencer photograph, KEFJ-00225.

He wasn't that great of a photographer, but he, for some reason on this trip, his artistic eye came out and there are some really wonderful shots. Page Spencer

Mason, Brewster and Callaway have completed a total of eighteen oral histories. Beginning in 2012 Doug Deur of Portland State University will research, analyze and write a final report using the oral histories. The oral histories and secondary historical data will provide an interpretive insight into the history of Seward, and will describe the participant's activities in and around Seward with a special emphasis on the Exit Glacier area.

The interviews, photographs, and maps will be made available to the public through Project Jukebox, a University of Alaska Fairbanks online oral history project. <http://jukebox.uaf.edu/>.

For more information contact: Shannon Kovac KEFJ Cultural Resource Manager 907-422-0541.



Harding Icefield snowmachine camp in 1970. Arland Zimmerman in center. Photograph courtesy of Seward Community Library Association.

And then in '70, we went back up there. Of course, I was a kid, like, fifth grade, and my dad ran the cabin part. And so as a fifth grader going to the Harding Ice Field with 16 snowmobiles sitting there and all the free gas and candy bars you can eat, this was a good thing.
Gary Zimmerman