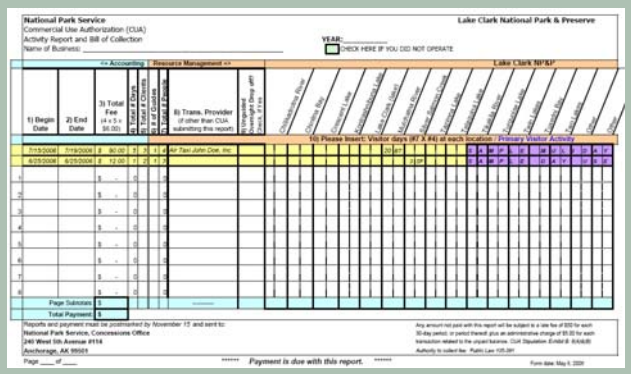
Visitor Use

Vital Signs Monitoring- Southwest Alaska Network

Importance / Issues

For many years the Southwest Alaska parks, especially on the Alaska Peninsula, saw relatively little visitation compared to other parks in Alaska and contiguous United States. Lower visitation rates resulted primarily from the higher cost and more difficult access to these parks. However, as visitor numbers to Alaska grow and access improves, there is an increasing demand for wildlife viewing, fishing, natural history and adventure opportunities in the SWAN parks. Visitor access is facilitated by virtue of being only a short plan or boat trip from Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula. Kenai Fjords NP has a growing number of visitors accessing the park by road, charter vessels, kayaks, and guided trips. The parks need to be able to track these visitors and anticipate growth to manage both visitors and their potential impacts to the ecosystems.

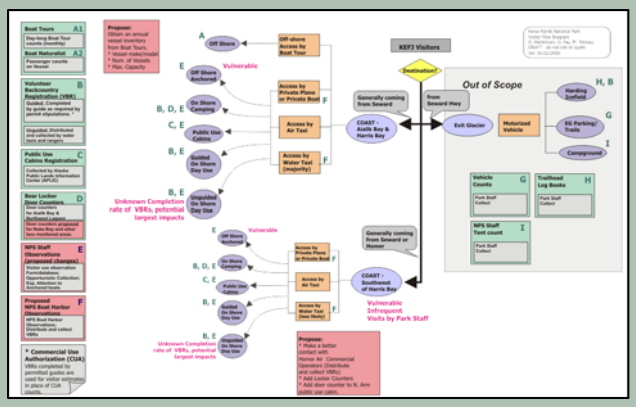


Commercial operator reporting forms now include locations. This example is for Lake Clark NP&P.

Status and Trends

The majority of visitor use information will come from commercial operators reporting, backcountry permits (KEFJ only), and from NPS staff. How the CUAs report information has be significantly modified to provide both the necessary accounting information as well as locations and activities for natural resource management. Information collected from NPS staff has been revised for consistency across parks.

Visitors at Brooks Camp, Katmai National Park and Preserve.



Information flow diagram of visitors for Kenai Fjords National Park.

Current and Future Monitoring

In 2006, 29 NPS staff and 35 commercial operators (CUA) were interviewed. These interviews served as a basis for developing a visitor use field data log form and protocols for each of the parks. The commercial operator interviews were used to revise the CUA annual reporting form for LACL, KATM, ALAG, and ANIA. Interviews with park staff lead to the development of information flow diagrams of visitors for each park. These diagrams can be used by park staff to understand the importance of data collection as well as understand the vulnerable areas where counts may not currently be collected.

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