

Wood-Tikchik State Park

(<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/woodtik.htm>)

The largest state park in the nation, at 1.6 million acres, Wood-Tikchik State Park was created in 1978 for the purpose of protecting the area's fish and wildlife breeding and support systems and preserving continued subsistence and recreational activities. The management philosophy is one of non-development and maintenance of the area's wilderness character.

Park facilities are rustic and few, with great emphasis placed upon low impact camping and "pack it in, pack it out" practices.

Natural Environment

Named for its two separate systems of large, interconnected, clear water lakes, the park is characterized by its water based ecosystems. Bordered by the Nushagak lowlands on the east and the Wood River Mountains to the west, the lake systems span a variety of terrain and vegetative zones renowned for their diverse beauty.



Spired peaks, high alpine valleys, and deep v-shaped arms give the lakes' western reaches a spectacular fjord-like appearance. The eastern edges of the lakes look out upon islands, gravel beaches, and the expansive tundra of the Nushagak lowlands. The lakes, varying in length from 15 to 45 miles, are deep and temperate, with water temperatures ranging from 40°F to 60°F throughout the summer season.

The park lies in a biological transition zone between coniferous forest and tundra. In general, white spruce and mixed spruce-birch forest, as well as muskeg and willow-alder thickets exist up to approximately the 900-foot elevation. Above this are bare rock, heath tundra, and alpine meadow. At the lowest elevations, wet tundra and marshlands are common.

Climate

The climate varies from the humid, maritime influence of Bristol Bay in the south to the cooler, dryer continental influence of the interior to the north. The weather is generally cool and moist with daily July high/low temperatures averaging 65°F and 46°F, respectively. Precipitation is most prevalent in the summer, occurring about 27% of the time in August along the coast. Total precipitation averages 25 inches annually at Dillingham, with fairly large local variations experienced within the area.

Annual snowfall averages 60 to 70 inches at Dillingham and may reach more than 160 inches at Lake Nerka. Winds are usually moderate (0-30 mph), prevailing from the southeast/southwest in summer and from the north and east in winter.

Although the weather during the period from late May to early October permits outdoor recreational activities almost daily, flying, boating, and alpine activities are occasionally hampered or unsafe. Be prepared to delay your activities until conditions allow safe travel.

Fish and Wildlife

All five species of Pacific salmon - king, sockeye (red), pink, silver, and chum - spawn in the Wood River and Tikchik systems. Sockeyes are the most important commercially. Freshwater sport fish are generally prolific throughout the area. Rainbow trout, grayling, lake trout, arctic char, dolly varden, and northern pike abound. Whitefish are an important subsistence species in the Tikchik Lakes.



Moose, caribou, and brown bear can be seen throughout the park. Black bear populations are limited, generally, to the northern and eastern areas. Common small game and fur bearers include beaver, muskrat, otter, fox, wolverine, mink, and porcupine. Ground squirrels and marmots are abundant.

Birds nesting in the area include a wide variety of waterfowl, gulls, bald eagle, golden eagle, arctic tern, various loons, spotted and least sandpipers, semi-palmated plover, willow ptarmigan, and spruce grouse. Numerous transients pass through as well.

For information regarding fish and game bag and possession limits, seasons, and methods of take, please refer to the appropriate Alaska Department of Fish and Game regulation booklet. Target shooting is not permitted within the park.

Camping

The entire park is open to camping. However, several locations in the Upper Tikchik Lakes require a permit. Nishlik, Slate, Upnuk and Chikuminuk Lakes, in addition to Tikchik River float trips require a permit prior to camping or floating. Camping and river float trip permits are limited and require a \$100 fee. Please call the Dillingham Parks Office, Alekangik Ranger Station (907) 842-2641 for additional information and current permit availability. Permit applications are available [on-line](#) or by emailing the Dillingham State Parks office at: alison.eskelin@alaska.gov

State Park regulations require anyone engaged in commercial activities on park lands and waters to obtain a commercial use permit. Permit applications are available on line or at the Dillingham State Parks office.

Camping at a specific location in the park is limited to 10 consecutive days, after which the camp must be relocated a minimum of one mile distant from that location. Campfires are restricted to beaches, gravel bars, or State Park provided firepits.

Chikuminuk Lake is closed to the use of motorized watercraft, but is accessible by aircraft. All other lakes in the park are open to motorized boats.

Numerous privately-owned parcels exist throughout Wood-Tikchik State Park. Most are undeveloped, but are signed in some way. Please respect private property and do not trespass. If you have questions regarding private property, please contact the State Park office in Dillingham.

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Safety Considerations

The park offers a remote wilderness experience. Park visitor self-reliance and accident prevention practices are key ingredients to a successful and pleasurable trip. Some tips include:

- **File a trip plan.** Leave it with a friend, your air taxi, the Wood-Tikchik State Park office, or someone else reliable. Be sure to close it when your trip is complete.

- **Avoid the bears.** View bears from a distance. Keep a very clean camp. Do not bury trash; haul it out. Avoid camping in the vicinity of salmon spawning streams and other spawning areas when salmon are present. The bears will be there!

- **Protect your equipment.** Bears and porcupines love to disable rafts and skinned kayaks. Protect them. You're a long way from the road head.

- **Giardiasis.** The intestinal parasite *Giardia Lamblia* is prevalent in many lakes and streams in Alaska. Giardiasis may be contracted by drinking untreated water in areas of beaver and other water mammal activity. The symptoms are diarrhea and severe cramping, and may appear up to two weeks after exposure. Treat water by boiling, using chemical tablets or biological filter.



- **Beware of weather.** Wind on the open lakes can quickly create dangerous whitecap conditions. Always wear a personal flotation device and travel close to shore during transitional weather patterns. Immersion in cold water will result in exhaustion or unconsciousness within 30 to 60 minutes. Use effective rainwear and keep a lighter or waterproofed matches available.

- **Fires.** Open fires are permitted only on gravel beaches and bars. Use dead and down wood only. Extinguish fully and bury completely before leaving the site. The use of portable campstoves is permitted throughout the park and is encouraged. Live tree cutting is not permitted.

- **Insects.** Although not regarded a safety hazard, mosquitoes and biting flies can diminish an otherwise wonderful trip. Pack your favorite repellent.

● **Food and fuel.** Weather and other unforeseen variables can often extend a trip unexpectedly. Carry extra food and fuel, just in case.

Access

Daily commercial airline service is available from Anchorage to Dillingham. Air charter by float-equipped and amphibious aircraft into the park is available from Dillingham. The entire park is currently open to private aircraft landings.

Water access to the Wood River Lakes is from Dillingham via the Wood River or from the village of Aleknagik, 24 miles north of Dillingham by road. The Wood River Lakes are interconnected by shallow, swift moving rivers which generally require jet-equipped watercraft. Most parties fly in and boat out.



Access to the Tikchik Lakes is primarily by aircraft. Parties exit the Tikchik Lakes by air, or float and/or paddle, to any one of several native villages on the Nushagak River, where air charter is available for transport back to Dillingham. Extreme caution is recommended when approaching the upper Nuyakuk River rapids and falls, just below Tikchik Lake outlet. Portage is advised. The Allen River, which drains Chikuminuk Lake into Lake Chauekuktuli requires several portages around Class V+ rapids.

Accommodations and Services

Five commercial sportfishing lodges are located on private property within the boundaries of the park. These lodges operate on a reservation basis only, do not cater to drop-in visitation, and do not provide ancillary services to those other than guests. Additionally, several privately owned cabins are found throughout the park. **Please respect private property.**

For a complete list of commercial operators authorized to conduct business within the park, write to the address below.

Dillingham Ranger Station

Wood-Tikchik State Park

PO Box 1822

Dillingham, AK 99576

(907) 842-2641

Email: bill.berkhahn@alaska.gov