

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Campsite Monitoring at Kenai Fjords: Protocol Development and Analysis

Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Discipline: Interdisciplinary
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Utah State University
Effective Dates: 3/1/2008 - 3/1/2010
Funding Amount: \$12,586 (FY08-\$8,955; FY09- \$3631)

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Investigator: Christopher Monz, Ph.D, Department of Environment and Society, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-4105; (435) 797-2544; chris.monz@usu.edu

Project Abstract: Kenai Fjords National Park includes approximately 400 miles of remote coastline accessible only by boat or floatplane. The availability of suitable landing beaches and camping areas is limited by the steep fjord topography, thus overnight use is concentrated at known sites. Managing dispersed backcountry camping in coastal areas of national parks in Alaska is an ever-present challenge. Increases in both motorized (motor boats and float plane) and non-motorized (sea kayak) uses underscore the need for accurate and retrievable visitor site monitoring data. Inventories and assessments of human impacts at coastal backcountry campsites in KEFJ were conducted periodically between 1988 and 2003. A variety of protocols have been used over the years making it difficult to compare data between years and assess overall trends in backcountry camping and associated resource impacts. Past protocols have been challenging for Rangers and Resource Management staff to implement in the field resulting in inconsistent collection and limited usefulness of the data.

This proposed project would address the important issue of resource impact as a consequence of dispersed camping in KEFJ. The NPS will work with Dr. Christopher Monz from Utah State University (USU) to improve the coastal campsite monitoring program by developing new and more effective protocols, analyzing campsite data to examine trends in resource condition, exploring innovative techniques for campsite assessment, and conducting an intensive training session for park field crews. The project would assist KEFJ in maintaining an active program of monitoring by developing new and more effective field assessment protocols. The overall goal of the proposed study would be to provide a revised protocol and sampling design for continued monitoring and to conduct a summary analysis of trends in campsite condition from existing data. While KEFJ has maintained an active program of campsite monitoring for some time, the park needs more accurate and efficient assessment protocols, a specific sampling plan and a data assessment procedure.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: December 2009

1. A project report to be co-authored by Chris Monz (USU) and Meg Hahr (KEFJ) at the completion of the project (December 2009). This report will include a final protocol and an analysis of applicable data for campsite monitoring in KEFJ.
2. Custom data dictionary (in a Trimble GPS compatible format) for field data collection and a software application for campsite area calculation
3. GIS layers of all data collected for inclusion in the KEFJ ESRI geodatabase.

Keywords: Campsite monitoring, human impacts, protocol and sampling design, Kenai Fjords National Park, Utah State University