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## Visitor Services Project Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Report Summary

- This report describes part of the results of a visitor study at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve during July 12-18, 1995. A total of 531 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 444 questionnaires for an 84% response rate.
- This report profiles Wrangell-St. Elias visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit; this report and the appendix include a summary of visitors' comments.
- Fifty-five percent of the visitors were in family groups; 20% were in groups of friends. Forty-nine percent of Wrangell-St. Elias visitors were in groups of two. Most visitors (56%) were aged 26-55.
- Among Wrangell-St. Elias visitors, 11% were international visitors. Forty percent of those visitors were from Germany. United States visitors were from Alaska (31%), California (7%), Florida (5%) and 43 other states.
- Almost two-thirds of Wrangell-St. Elias visitors (61%) stayed more than one day. On this visit, the most common activities were scenic driving (82%), viewing wildlife (57%), walking around Kennicott (51%) and day hiking (49%).
- Prior to their visit, over three-fourths of the visitors (77%) were aware of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The *Milepost* (45%) was the most used source of information about the park.
- The most visited sites were McCarthy (58%), Kennicott (53%), and the park visitor center (52%). Over one-third of the visitors went to the park visitor center first (35%).
- Half (50%) of the visitors day hiked during their visit to the park. Fourteen percent of the visitors took an overnight backpack trip in the park. Many stayed 2 to 3 nights in the backcountry, 27% stayed 6 or more nights and 27% stayed one night. Twenty-two percent used a plane to access the backcountry.
- The most commonly used forms of transportation to get to the park were private vehicles (53%), rental cars (28%) and RVs (20%). Forty percent of the visitors came from Palmer/ Mat-Su Valley to reach Wrangell-St. Elias; 23% came from Valdez.
- The reasons that brought visitors to the park were to view glaciers/ scenery (68%), view wildlife (59%), visit McCarthy/ Kennicott (55%), and recreation (46%).
- The most used visitor services and facilities were the park brochure/ map, restrooms/ outhouses, and assistance from employees. According to visitors, the most important services were restrooms/ outhouses, trails, guided tours and the national park visitor center. The best quality services were hotels/ motels/ lodges/ bed and breakfasts and assistance from employees.
- Future visitor center services that visitors would most prefer were exhibits (72%), a park movie (64%), trails (62%) and interpretive programs (53%).
- The average visitor group expenditure in the park area during this visit was \$241. The average per capita expenditure was \$84.
- Many of the visitors (76%) rated the overall quality of park services as "good" or "very good." Visitors made many additional comments.

<p>For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact: Dr. Gary E. Machlis, Sociology Project Leader, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit, College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, Moscow, Idaho 83844-1133 or call (208) 885-7129.</p>
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