

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Campground Host Program

Job Responsibilities: Hosts help visitors in a variety of ways. They share Refuge wildlife, recreation, and regulatory information with visitors. They maintain campground facilities including cleaning restrooms, litter pick up, and facility maintenance. Hosts also sell firewood bundles, but do not have to handle campground fees. Hosts work a five-day workweek with days off on weekdays (usually Tues./Weds.). Often work day shifts are split with hosts working mornings and evenings when visitors are most frequently in the campgrounds. Host hospitality in refuge campgrounds leaves a positive memory for Refuge visitors.

Dates Needed: Mid-May to Labor Day each year.

Compensation: Each host receives \$15 per day seven days a week to cover subsistence needs (i.e. - a host couple receives \$210 per week). Mileage is paid for one round trip each week to Soldotna for supplies (48.5 cents per mile). The Refuge reimburses hosts for propane tank refills. The Refuge provides a free campsite for hosts in a designated location within either Hidden Lake or Upper Skilak Campgrounds.

Facilities Cared for by Hosts: A host couple is selected and assigned to one of the following campgrounds as vacancies occur.

Hidden Lake Campground - 43 pull-in campsites, 10 overflow self-contained campsites; 6 outhouses facilities with 14 toilets total; 2 picnic shelters; a boat launch; 5 hand water pumps; a campfire amphitheater; an information/camper registration kiosk, a dump station, and 3 garbage dumpsters. Campsite cost for visitors is \$10 per night for pull-in sites and overflow sites.

Upper Skilak Campground - 15 pull-in campsites; 10 walk-in tent sites; 3 outhouses with 8 toilets total; a picnic shelter; 2 hand water pumps; an information/camper registration kiosk, and 2 garbage dumpsters. Campsite cost for visitors is \$5 for walk-in tent sites and \$10 for pull-in sites.

What to Expect: Both Hidden Lake and Upper Skilak Campgrounds are located adjacent to Skilak Lake Rd., a 2-lane gravel road. This road forms a 19-mile loop off the Sterling Highway, a modern asphalt paved highway.

Soldotna is the largest town (population-4,000) nearest the two campground locations and provides large grocery stores and a variety of retail stores. It contains a hospital, fire station, police station, and state trooper headquarters. There are restaurants, laundry services, shower facilities, banks, a post office, churches, a library, and movie theaters.

The smaller communities of Cooper Landing (east of the Refuge) and Sterling (west of the Refuge en route to Soldotna) provide the following services - post office, gas station, towing, restaurants, motels, mini-marts, churches, laundry, and showers. Like many Alaskan campgrounds Hidden Lake and Upper Skilak campgrounds have no running water or electrical hookups. There are hand pumps for potable water. Potable water (pumped through a hose) can also be obtained in Cooper Landing, Sterling, and Soldotna.

Hidden Lake Campground has a dump station in the campground. Upper Skilak Campground does not have a dump station and hosts must drive 5 miles to the closest dump station on Skilak Lake Rd.

The nearest pay phones are located at the Russian River Ferry (30 minute drive) en route to Cooper Landing or in Sterling (40 minute drive) enroute to Soldotna. Having your own cell phone is desirable for personal communications.

Hosts are supported by field rangers, law enforcement officers, maintenance workers, and contracted dumpster and toilet pumping services. Hosts are assigned a hand-held communications radio and cell phone to use for Refuge business and communications. Hosts are supplied with all the necessary supplies and equipment to maintain their assigned campground.

Training: A visitor services ranger will provide training for host campground duties. A required seasonal orientation takes place in mid-May where hosts receive orientation to Refuge operations and a variety of safety training sessions including CPR and First Aid.

Climate: May through early September temperatures range from low 30's (nights) to mid-80's F (days). Upper Skilak generally has more rain and wind than Hidden Lake, but expect rainy weather off and on during summer months especially in late August and early September.

Bears: Both black and brown bears travel through Hidden Lake and Upper Skilak Campgrounds. Bear proof dumpsters are provided for garbage. Hosts and rangers must work continuously to educate visitors regarding clean camping practices to prevent curious bears from becoming problem bears.

Natural History: Hidden and Skilak Lakes were glacially carved. Dramatic mountains and cliffs surround these beautiful lakes. Both lakes experience high winds (usually in the late afternoon). White spruce and birch forests are the dominant vegetation with wild flowers at their peak in mid-June. Expect abundant mosquitoes especially in early June. Moose, eagles, red squirrels, snowshoe hares, ravens, loons, songbirds, and short tailed weasels are common campground visitors. Bears, coyotes, wolves, and lynx are seen over the course of the summer.

Our Expectations: We are looking for friendly, energetic couples that want to volunteer in Alaska and appreciate the importance of our public land heritage. Hosts need to be able to provide their own reliable motor home or truck/trailer combo for housing and transportation. Hosts need to provide their own generator or solar panels for electrical needs. Hosts are responsible for setting up their own postal service through General Delivery in Soldotna, Sterling, or Cooper Landing. A personal cell phone is recommended for private phone call needs. The Refuge supplies all other items needed for the position.

To apply for host positions, please contact Jetta Fonkert, Park Ranger, at:

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
P. O. Box 2139
Soldotna, AK 99669
(907) 262-7021; (907) 262-3599 (Fax)
E-Mail - Jetta_Minerva@fws.gov

For more information on Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, visit the refuge website at <http://kenai.fws.gov>