



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NEWS

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Publishes Final Public Use Regulations for Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

Rule supports resource conservation and enhances public safety and visitor experience

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published a final rule that supports the conservation of one of the most visited and enjoyed refuges in Alaska, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Consistent with the Refuge's 2010 Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the final rule amends Refuge public use regulations to ensure natural resource conservation while maintaining high quality and safe experiences for visitors.

Updates include regulations that:

- Increase airplane access by expanding the area and time frames for airplane use;
- Enhance consistency with State boating regulations within the Kenai River Special Management Area by adopting motor horsepower, motor type and boat size restrictions for portions of the Kenai River within the Refuge;
- Protect the Kenai River banks by limiting camping along the Upper Kenai River to at least 100 yards away from the shorelines, with the exception of 10 designated sites;
- Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants by requiring the use of certified weed-free hay and feed for pack animals and sled dogs
- Reduce the risks of accidental wildfires by requiring campfires to be completely extinguished prior to leaving a campsite;
- Reduce the potential for human-bear conflicts in the area surrounding the confluence of the Kenai and Russian rivers by managing wildlife attractants, including food, refuse, and retained fish;
- Prohibit the discharge of firearms in areas of high public use along the Kenai and Russian rivers, with exceptions for waterfowl and small game hunting;



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- Codify the hunting restrictions and trapping closure for the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area established by the Refuge in 2013, consistent with the 2007 Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area Management Plan;
- Clarify that hunting over bait is prohibited on the Refuge, with an exception for hunting black bears over bait under terms of a Refuge special use permit.

“Thousands of visitors come to recreate and enjoy the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge’s stunning scenery, great fishing and abundant wildlife every summer,” said Refuge Manager Andy Loranger. “We want visitors to have a great experience and we want future generations to have the same opportunities to enjoy all that makes this place special. This update of the Refuge’s public use regulations will help us meet these goals.”

The regulations were published as a proposed rule and open for a 60-day public comment period last summer. The rule was modified in response to written public comments and testimony provided at a public hearing. A summary of comments and the Service’s responses can be found in the final rule.

The new regulations will become effective 30 days after publication. The final rule is available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/05/05/2016-10288/refuge-specific-regulations-public-use-kenai-national-wildlife-refuge>.

For more information about Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/kenai/>.

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