



ALASKA

Alaska's tundra, forests, rivers, and coasts are not only world-renowned, they are the cornerstone of local livelihoods and healthy communities. Alaska has over three million lakes and more coastline than the rest of the U.S. combined. The state has diverse and charismatic wildlife including grizzly bears, polar bears, caribou, bald eagles, whales, walrus, and salmon. Alaska's wildlife and land have sustained Alaska Natives for thousands of years, and hunting, fishing, and gathering continue to be a way of life for native villages throughout the state.

But, Alaska's natural resources are at risk. Because of its arctic environment and extensive coastline, Alaska is experiencing warming at twice the rate of the rest of the country: thawing permafrost, shrinking glaciers, loss of sea ice, and increasing wildfires.¹ Only 1% of land in Alaska is privately owned, so private land conservation is not a major target of conservation funding in the state. However, support is needed for protecting critical resources, promoting effective wildlife management, increasing climate change resilience, and protecting the fisheries that feed the world.

Conservation supports the fish and wildlife populations that are critical to Alaska Native and rural communities.

- Rural Alaskans hunt, fish and gather 36.9 million pounds of wild foods each year.² For many Alaska Native communities, subsistence practices are not only important for providing food, but are crucial to their culture, identity and sense of self-determination.³ In economic terms, the value of subsistence foods in Alaska is nearly \$370 million per year.⁴
- 40% of Alaskans go hunting at least once per year.⁵ One million people (residents and non-residents) hunt, fish, and participate in other wildlife-based recreation annually in Alaska, generating \$3.4 billion in yearly spending, 27,000 jobs, and \$1.4 billion in income for workers.⁶

Healthy lands and waters sustain commercial fisheries and the livelihoods that depend on them. The seafood industry is the economic foundation of many rural Alaskan communities.⁷ Alaska is responsible for 60% of U.S. commercial fisheries production. The state's seafood industry directly employs 27,000 Alaskans and 60,000 workers nationwide, and its annual

economic output is nearly \$15 billion.⁸ The health of Alaska's fisheries is tightly linked to protection of riparian areas along migratory rivers and streams, which maintains high-quality habitat for fish.⁹

Conservation supports Alaska's booming tourism and outdoor recreation industries. Healthy lands, waters and wildlife are key to Alaska's quality of life—and drive job creation, consumer spending, and a growing outdoor industry.¹⁰

- 65% of Alaskans say that wildlife are very important to their quality of life, and a majority say it is an important part of why they live in Alaska.¹¹
- Over 80% of Alaskans participate in outdoor recreation.¹² Outdoor recreation overall supports 72,000 Alaska jobs and generates \$7.3 billion in statewide consumer spending, \$2.3 billion in wages and salaries, and \$337 million in state and local tax revenue.
- Alaska's national parks attract 2.8 million visitors annually who spend \$1.3 billion in local communities, generating 18,900 jobs, \$618 million in labor income, and \$1.9 billion in total economic output.¹³ Local public parks and recreation agencies generate \$332 million in economic activity each year and support over 2,400 Alaskan jobs.¹⁴

Access to healthy lands and waters promotes community health.

A huge amount of scientific research now links access to close-to-home nature with improved physical and mental health.¹⁵ For subsistence communities, the link is immediate and direct: access to healthy lands and waters, and the ability to fish, hunt, and gather subsistence foods, improves community health.¹⁶

The Land and Water Conservation Fund in Alaska

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has invested \$142 million in Alaska's parks and open spaces—from Tongass National Forest to Cedar Trails in the Metlakatla Indian Community.¹⁷ The LWCF's State Assistance Program has supported nearly 300 local projects, including community parks throughout Alaska.¹⁸

1. State of Alaska, Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Division of Community and Regional Affairs, "Climate Change in Alaska."; 2. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, "Subsistence in Alaska."; 3. Thornton, "Alaska Native Subsistence."; 4. Division of Subsistence, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, "Subsistence in Alaska: A Year 2014 Update."; 5. ECONorthwest, "The Economic Importance of Alaska's Wildlife in 2011."; 6. ECONorthwest.; 7. McDowell Group, "The Economic Value of Alaska's Seafood Industry"; "Alaska Seafood: Economic Benefit."; 8. McDowell Group, "The Economic Value of Alaska's Seafood Industry."; 9. LandScope, "Alaska Conservation Summary // LandScope America."; 10. Outdoor Industry Association, "Outdoor Industry Association: Alaska."; 11. ECONorthwest, "The Economic Importance of Alaska's Wildlife in 2011."; 12. Outdoor Industry Association, "Outdoor Industry Association: Alaska."; 13. National Park Service, "Visitor Spending Effects - Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending - Social Science (U.S. National Park Service)--Economic Contributions to State Economies."; 14. National Recreation and Park Association, "The Economic Impact of Local Parks | Research | National Recreation and Park Association."; 15. Kuo, "Nature-Deficit Disorder"; Twohig-Bennett and Jones, "The Health Benefits of the Great Outdoors."; 16. Johnson et al., "Dietary Intake of Alaska Native People in Two Regions and Implications for Health."; 17. LWCF Coalition, "Save LWCF: Alaska Spotlight."; 18. LWCF Coalition.