

# KENAI RIVER

## SUPPLEMENT to the Alaska Boater's Handbook



Third Edition, 2013



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## LIFE JACKETS SAVE LIVES AND FAMILIES



The Alaska Boating Safety Program cooperates with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, and other partners to produce educational programs and publications that promote safe and enjoyable boating, including this 2013 edition of the Kenai River Supplement to the Alaska Boater's Handbook.

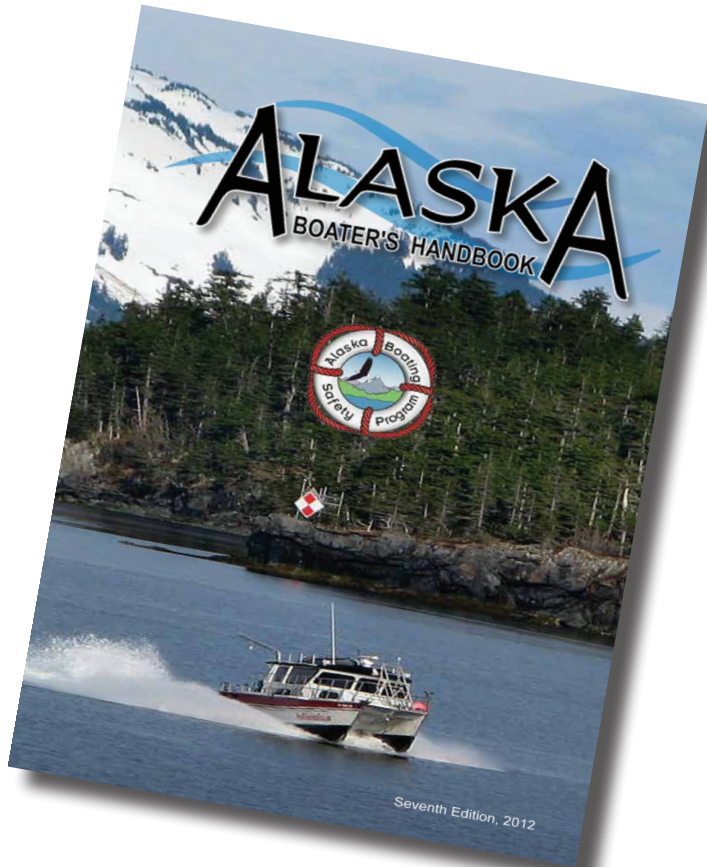


*A Guide to Safe and  
Enjoyable Boating on the  
Kenai River*



Please note that this is a supplement to the *Alaska Boater's Handbook*, which contains detailed information on boating in Alaska. The *Alaska Boater's Handbook* includes in-depth information on topics such as agencies, preparation, river sections, regulations, responsible boating, emergencies, contacts, resources and much more.

To view the Alaska Boater's Handbook visit [www.alaskaboatingsafety.org](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org). To obtain a hard copy of the *Alaska Boater's Handbook*, please contact the Department of Natural Resources Public Information Center at (907) 269-8400 or [dnr.pic@alaska.gov](mailto:dnr.pic@alaska.gov).







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of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**Department of Natural Resources**

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Dear Kenai River boaters,

The Kenai River is a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts. Whether they are seeking contests with fighting fish, the thrills of a kayak ride on wild water or rugged natural beauty to lift heart and soul, they are drawn by the Kenai River. As many as 2,000 recreational boaters might launch from its banks on a sunny summer day. And sadly, history shows that a few won't return.

Answering the lure of the Kenai has its risks, especially for the inexperienced or unprepared boater. Varying water volume, braided channels, rock gardens, rapids, fish sonar sites and other boaters sharing the resource present challenges that can change by the day – even the hour.

This supplement to the Alaska Boater's Handbook provides local information that is intended to keep recreational boating on the Kenai enjoyable and safe. Even experienced boaters should find it useful. The best skippers recognize that knowledge, preparation and prudent behavior are common elements of a good day on the water. That's why they're the best skippers.

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation offers the Kenai River supplement as a guide to safe and pleasant boating on this incredible waterway. The Department also reminds boaters that five out of six boating fatalities in Alaska result from a sudden capsize or fall overboard into frigid water, so PLEASE, WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET when in an open boat or on an open boat deck. Life jackets save lives . . . and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Ellis".

Ben Ellis

Director, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

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## INTRODUCTION

The Kenai River has world-wide name recognition. Anglers from all over the globe flock to the river each summer in hopes of landing a trophy salmon, rainbow trout, or Dolly Varden.

Hosting nearly a fifth of all sport fishing in the state, the Kenai River is Alaska's most popular sport fishery. The Kenai River boasts major runs of four Pacific salmon species—king, red, silver, and pink—in addition to trophy-sized rainbow trout and Dolly Varden. In all, thirty-four different species of fish use portions of the Kenai River.

The Kenai River is best known for its world-class fishing for king (Chinook) salmon. They are the largest North Pacific salmon, often weighing from 50 to over 85 pounds. The world record king salmon was caught in the Kenai River and weighed 97 lbs. 4 oz.!

The Kenai River provides a variety of habitats enabling the area to support large concentrations of bald eagles, many species of migratory waterfowl, moose, caribou, wolves, bears, and other wildlife. The area offers prime opportunities for fishing, boating, camping and wildlife observation.

On the following pages are descriptions of some of the places and features Kenai River boaters should know about.

In 1984 the Alaska legislature recognized the importance of the Kenai River to all Alaskans and established the Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA).

The KRSMA is managed by Alaska State Parks and consists of more than 105 linear miles of river and lakes, including Kenai Lake, Skilak Lake, and the Kenai River from river mile 82 downstream to four miles above the river's mouth at Cook Inlet. Adjacent to these waters are sixteen Alaska State Park sub-units, land owned by cities, the borough, the federal government, and private lands.



## Communities Along The Kenai River

There are four communities along the river (all are road accessible) beginning with Cooper Landing at the outlet of Kenai Lake and ending with the city of Kenai at the mouth of the river.

### Cooper Landing

Cooper Landing is located at the west end of Kenai Lake, approximately 100 miles south of Anchorage and approximately 50 miles east of Soldotna.

Cooper Landing was named after prospector Joseph Cooper who discovered gold there in 1884.



Photo submitted by Mona Painter

In 1938, road conditions and weather permitting, one could drive from Seward to Cooper Landing. In 1948 the road to Kenai opened after the bridge over the Moose River was completed. Finally, in the fall of 1951, the road to Anchorage opened.

Before the road was built in its present location, the main mode of travel was by boat. Alaska State Parks maintains a day use area and boat launch just below the Kenai Lake bridge.

### Sterling

Sterling is located at the confluence of the Moose River and Kenai River, approximately 138 miles southwest of Anchorage and 12 miles east of Soldotna. In 1954 the name of the town was formalized when the post office was opened and now is home to over 4800 residents. The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (Alaska State Parks) maintains two facilities in the Sterling area: Izaak Walton Recreation Site, located at the confluence of the Moose and Kenai Rivers, has a campground and boat launch facility. Bings Landing State Recreation Site is located off the Sterling Highway at approximately mile 80.5 off the Bings Landing Road and has a campground, day use area and a boat launch facility.



Near Sterling



## Funny River

The community of Funny River is approximately 10 miles east of Soldotna and includes a wide area surrounding Funny River Road. Homesteading and farming expanded to the Funny River area during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Funny River Road originated as a bulldozed trail from Soldotna to the homesteads and was upgraded to a gravel-surfaced road in the mid-1960s and then paved in 1999. The area is bordered on the south by the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, on the north by the Kenai River and on the east by the confluence of the Kenai and Killey Rivers. The Funny River Campground, managed by Alaska State Parks, is located at approximately mile 11 Funny River Road at the confluence of the Kenai and Funny Rivers. The Kenai River, Funny River, and Brown's Lake provide numerous recreational opportunities for both residents and seasonal visitors.



## Soldotna

Soldotna is 150 miles southwest of Anchorage at the junction of the Sterling and Kenai Spur Highways. It is approximately 10 miles inland from Cook Inlet and borders the Kenai River. Some of the first homesteaders in Soldotna were World War II veterans and is now home to over 4000 residents.



The city of Soldotna maintains five facilities along the Kenai River. Centennial Campground, located at approximately river mile 20.5, is downstream from the Soldotna Bridge off of Kalifornsky Beach Road. It has a campground, day use parking area, stairways and boardwalks along the river, a handicap accessible fishing platform, and a boat launch. The Classic Walkway at the Soldotna Visitor Center is located on the southern side of the Soldotna Bridge. Soldotna Park, located about river mile 22, has stairways and boardwalks along the river for fishing. Swiftwater Campground, at river mile 23, off of East Redoubt Avenue has a campground, stairways, and boardwalks along the river, and a boat launch. Rotary Park, at approximately river mile 23.5, is accessed from Funny River Road. It has a day use parking area, stairways and boardwalks along the river.

## Kenai

The City of Kenai is located on the western coast of the Kenai Peninsula, where the Kenai River meets Cook Inlet. It is approximately 160 miles southwest of Anchorage via the Seward and Sterling Highways.

Kenai was settled in 1791 by Russian fur traders and is now home to over 7500 residents. The city of Kenai maintains two facilities along the Kenai River: the Kenai City Dock and Cunningham Park. The Kenai City Dock, near the mouth of the river off of Bridge Access Road, includes a launch ramp, three 7-ton cranes, fresh water, fuel, and other services. Cunningham Park, at approximately river mile 6.5, can be accessed by Beaver Loop Road and includes a day use parking area, access to the Kenai River and a restroom.



The Kenai Chamber of Commerce cabin.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

### Chugach National Forest

Chugach National Forest lies upstream (east) from the confluence of the Russian River with the Kenai River. A concessionaire operates and maintains a number of campgrounds for public use through a permit from the US Forest Service. These campgrounds include Russian River, Cooper Creek, Quartz Creek, Trail River, Ptarmigan Creek and Primrose. Also available to the public through the Chugach National Forest are numerous trails, public use cabins and endless opportunities for wildlife viewing. Contact the Seward Ranger District directly for more information on opportunities within the Chugach National Forest. See Contacts page 71.

### Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

The refuge is comprised of nearly two million acres stretching from the Harding Ice Field in the Kenai Mountains to the coastal estuary of Chickaloon Bay. The refuge's primary purpose is to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity. The refuge hosts over one million visitors each year that come to fish, hike, camp, hunt, boat and view wildlife and scenery. Numerous campgrounds, hiking trails and public use cabins are available to refuge visitors.

Refuge portions of the Kenai River extend from the confluence with the Russian River downstream through Skilak Lake and to several miles below the lake. Another section of the river in the refuge is found just upstream of Soldotna in an area known as Moose Range Meadows.



In addition to state regulations that may apply in these areas, special refuge regulations also apply:

- Closures within 100 yards of outcrop bird nesting islands on Skilak Lake to public entry from March 15 to September 30.
- All commercial use of the refuge, including sport fish guiding and scenic rafting, require a Refuge special use permit.

Contact the refuge office directly for more information See Contacts page 71.

## The Donald E. Gilman River Center

The Donald E. Gilman River Center (River Center) in Soldotna is a multi-agency permitting, information and education center. Five agencies are working cooperatively to protect the rivers of the Kenai Peninsula, its watersheds, and its fish and wildlife. Agencies at the River Center include Alaska State Parks, the Kenai Peninsula Borough Habitat Protection Administrators, Floodplain Administrators and Coastal Zone Manager, and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Office of Habitat Management and Permitting, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The River Center is an excellent source of information on stream bank protection and restoration, flood insurance information, wetland delineation, fish habitat, river guiding, and construction along salmon-bearing rivers. The Donald E. Gilman Resource Library houses a large collection of materials related to natural resource management and the natural and human history of the Kenai Peninsula. The library is open to the public. Contact the River Center directly for more information. See Contacts page 71.



Steve Hillebrand

## Kenai Peninsula Borough

Three offices of the Kenai Peninsula Borough work through the Kenai River Center.

Resource planners administer the Borough's "Habitat Protection Area" regulations. These regulations are designed to proactively protect a valuable public resource: salmon spawning and rearing habitat. The



regulations apply to 24 salmon streams across the Kenai Peninsula.

The borough floodplain administrator works with landowners and developers whose property is in a mapped floodplain or other flood prone area. The floodplain administrator can help make the determination as to where in the floodplain the property is located and what restrictions may apply to buildings and other developments on the property.

The borough's Coastal Management Program was adopted by the Borough Assembly in June 1990. The program allows the borough to provide input and guidance to state and federal agencies involved in managing land and coastal resources within the borough. The program also assists the borough in making resource management decisions, and provides funding and authority to local governments to participate in land management activities and policy making decisions within their borders.

## Alaska State Parks

Alaska State Parks at the Kenai River Center issues permits for the building of structures (i.e., roads, buildings, bank restoration, floating docks, walkways etc.), in the KRSMA and the Alaska State Park units on the Kenai Peninsula.

The permitting staff also issues non-competitive park use permits for commercial activities in Alaska State Park units. Water taxis, flight seeing tours, fishing guides, white water rafting, kayak tours, back country hiking, and boat rentals are just a few of the businesses that operate in Alaska State Parks on the Kenai Peninsula.





## PREPARATION

Along with knowledge and skillful boat handling, thorough preparation is what distinguishes the best skippers and paddlers from other boaters. This is especially true when boating on the Kenai River. Boaters must be as self-sufficient as possible. Adequate preparation may help resolve or prevent many common boating problems, and boaters will be better prepared to assist others in trouble. The first step is education.

### Boating Courses and Other Instruction

Take boating classes relevant to the type of boating being pursued and continue to build knowledge and skills.

Those new to boating should look for boating courses approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA). Experienced boaters should also consider taking a boating course occasionally as a refresher, because boating laws and technologies change and current courses contain updated information. All boaters should understand state and federal boating laws, the International Navigation Rules, know first aid and CPR, and know how to signal for help using a variety of methods.



River paddling requires specific knowledge and skill and should not be undertaken until the paddler has had adequate instruction and practice. Both dry land and in-water instruction (in protected areas) are highly recommended. A capsized boat is serious business in the Kenai River. Besides learning efficient paddling techniques, one should obtain and maintain essential skills in swift water swimming, rescue, and re-boarding a capsized boat in moving water. Next, practice in protected areas to build skill and confidence before heading out onto the Kenai River.

### Pre-departure Checklist

A pre-departure checklist should incorporate all federal and state requirements, as well as any additional equipment and procedures specific to the type of boat, its intended use, and the current conditions.

Keep in mind, while some items need only be checked at the start of each season or periodically, others should be checked before each trip. If transporting a boat to the Kenai River via the road system, the best time to do a pre-departure check is before leaving home. Boat and equipment problems are better discovered in the driveway than at the launch ramp. Boaters are encouraged to develop their own pre-departure checklist that is specific to their type of boat and its intended use. To obtain a pre-departure checklist visit [www.alaskaboatingsafety.org/publications](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org/publications) or [www.pledgetolive.org](http://www.pledgetolive.org). Additional items to consider on a pre-departure checklist:

- Tide tables
- Manual bailing devices (even if the boat has an electric pump system)
- First aid kit
- Wool or synthetic clothing (in layers)
- Warm hat and gloves
- Full rain gear, with rain hat or hood
- Change of clothes in a waterproof bag
- Insect repellent and head net
- AM/FM radio for weather forecasts (if not carrying a marine VHF radio)
- Hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen
- Food and water
- Camera
- Sound producing device attached to life jacket such as a whistle
- Non-slip footwear such as sneakers or rubber boots
- Auxiliary propulsion (engine, oars, paddles)



Remember to check the local weather immediately before departure as conditions can change. File a float plan and stick to it. Visit [pledgetolive.org](http://pledgetolive.org) for NOAA marine weather updates, to file a float plan and review a pre-departure checklist. Brief your passengers. Everyone should know the trip plan (including the possibility of a late return) and the location of and how to use all equipment. Make sure everyone in the party has proper clothing and is prepared for wet, cold weather.

## Respect Cold Water

Five out of six boating fatalities involve a vessel capsize or fall overboard resulting in a cold water immersion drowning. Cold water can be deadly especially if not wearing a life jacket. See Surviving Cold Water page 60.

Even good swimmers may be quickly incapacitated and unable to keep their airway clear in Alaska's cold water. ALWAYS wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket. Alaska State law says; children under 13 on the deck of a boat or in an open boat must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket.

## Carriage Requirements

All boaters must comply with both state and federal equipment and registration requirements. The Alaska Requirements Summary table summarizes the state carriage requirements. See Requirements Summary on next page.

Boats must display proper navigation lights if operated on the Kenai River between sunset and sunrise, or during restricted visibility. Most power boats are required to have green and red directional lights as well as a white "all around" or "masthead" light. Installed lights are the best. Hand-held spotlights, flashlights and lanterns could affect night vision and temporarily blind the operator of the oncoming vessel.

## Carry Communication and Signaling Devices

Carry communication and signaling devices suitable for the area **ON YOUR PERSON.**

A cellular phone in a waterproof case is appropriate in some areas, but be aware reception throughout the river is not dependable.



# ALASKA REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY

Requirements	Boats under 16 feet	Boats 16 feet to less than 26 feet	Boats 26 feet to less than 40 feet	Boats 40 feet to less than 65 feet
<b>Personal Flotation Devices (PFD)</b>	One USCG-approved Type I, II, III or V PFD for each person on board. Must be in serviceable condition. Persons under 13 must wear a PFD when in an open boat, on the deck of a boat or when waterskiing.			
<b>Throwable Devices (Type IV)</b>	Recommended but not mandatory.	Except for canoes and kayaks, one USCG-approved Type IV (seat cushion or throw ring) device must be carried.		
<b>Sound Producing Devices</b>	Boats less than 39.4 feet (12 meters) in length must be able to make an efficient sound signal (such as that made with a whistle or horn) to signal intentions and to signal position in periods of reduced visibility.			Boats 39.4 feet (12 meters) or more in length must carry on board a whistle or horn.
<b>Visual Distress Signals</b>	USCG-approved night signals required between sunset and sunrise.	USCG-approved visual distress signals for both day and night time use must be carried. Exception: boats and open sailboats not equipped with mechanical propulsion and under 26 feet in length are <u>not</u> required to carry day signals. <i>Note: Pyrotechnic devices, if used to meet this requirement, must be current, serviceable and readily accessible. At the minimum, a total of three day/night combination devices or three day and three night devices must be carried.</i>		
<b>Fire Extinguishers</b>	At least one USCG-approved B-I required for boats with inboard engines, living spaces, permanent fuel tanks or enclosed storage areas or hull voids not sealed or filled with flotation material.		At least two B-I or one B-II USCG-approved fire extinguishers.	At least three B-I or one B-II and one B-II USCG-approved fire extinguishers.
<b>Navigation Lights</b>	Display required between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility. International configuration required (varies with length and mode of operation). See the International Navigation Rules.			
<b>Backfire Flame Arrestors</b>	One USCG-approved backfire control device on each carburetor of all inboard gasoline engines.			
<b>Ventilation</b>	Boats with permanently installed engines, closed compartments or permanent fuel tanks must have efficient natural or mechanical ventilation.			
<b>Registration</b>	Undocumented boats equipped with mechanical propulsion (gas, diesel or steam engines, and electric motors) and any undocumented vessel used in sport fishing charter activities must be registered with the Division of Motor Vehicles. Certificate of Number must be carried onboard. Registration numbers and validation decals must be properly displayed on hull of boat.			

REV 11.5.12



A marine VHF radio may be a better choice of communication. Besides use in an emergency, a marine VHF radio can be used day-to-day to update float plans, communicate with other boaters, or check on the weather. Some marine VHF radios feature a Global Positioning System. (GPS) GPS enables a boater to communicate their exact latitude and longitude, in an emergency this is very helpful information to improve rescue efforts.

A satellite phone enables two way communication without the spotty reception of a cellular phone. Store in a waterproof case on your person for optimal effectiveness.

Signaling devices such as a whistle, mirror or pencil flares carried on your person enables a victim to hail help in an emergency and speed rescue time.

Emergency Locator Beacons (ELB) such as a personal locator beacon, SPOT device, or other emergency electronics alert search and rescue in an emergency. Be aware, each ELB operates differently. Spending time researching the pros and cons of each device may make a difference during an emergency. See Emergency Locator Beacons page 69.

## Powerboats

Shallow draft, low-sided, flat bottom boats are intended for small inland lakes and rivers, but not for large open lakes like Kenai and Skilak. They may perform poorly in rough water conditions. Conversely, boats with deep V-hulls designed for open water do not perform well in shallow lakes and rivers. Match the boat design to the intended use, there are a lot of options out there! Research options, work with the boat dealer, and if possible, test drive boats under similar conditions before purchasing.

The most common powerboating problems are mechanical or fuel related. Doing a thorough pre-departure check before each trip and practicing preventive maintenance per owner manuals, is cheap insurance against unpleasant and potentially dangerous situations on the water.

Brief passengers on how to start, stop, and steer the boat. Operators and passengers should review instructions on how to safely operate the boat.

In addition to the recommended items for all boaters, every powerboat should have on board:

- One anchor and line attached to the boat
- Tools and spare parts including spark plugs, spare propeller and a prop nut kit (or jet impeller)

- Fuel—enough for the trip plus a healthy reserve in case of deteriorating conditions, disorientation, or if it becomes necessary to loan fuel to or tow another boater. Keep in mind that the return trip, especially if against the current or wind, or in choppy conditions, may require considerably more fuel than the outbound trip. **Think 1/3 out, 1/3 back, and at least 1/3 spare.**
- A water/fuel separator filter installed between the fuel tank(s) and the engine is highly recommended when boating on all waters of Alaska.
- Depth finder

Powerboaters should also consider carrying a GPS receiver. These devices indicate current position, and if properly programmed, show the way to important features.

## Paddlers

Paddlers should be strong swimmers and be in good physical condition. Choose boats designed for rough river currents. Kayaks, canoes, and rafts with a very low center of gravity and covered decks, which are highly stable, are ideal.



In addition to legal requirements and the other items recommended for all boaters, paddlers should also carry:

- Paddle float
- Paddle leash
- Towing strap
- Plenty of visual distress signals (including a signal mirror)
- Spare paddle

Paddlers should choose clothes in consideration of both the air and water temperatures. Summer temperatures in Alaska average between 40-70 degrees. Wear clothing in layers and choose synthetic fabrics such as fleece, polypropylene, and nylon. Cotton clothing is inappropriate for paddling. Consider wearing a wet suit, dry suit, or a paddling jacket as an outer layer. All persons should be dressed for the possibility of capsizing, and that means wearing a life jacket. They should be fit tested and put on before departure.

Proper trip planning is essential. Boats should be selected for each person based on their experience and ability. Weather conditions and potential hazards on the waterway should be researched. Select trip routes suited for the least experienced/skilled participant. Group gear should be double-checked. The weather forecast should be checked, and then rechecked, just before departure. All persons should know the route, location of pullouts, float plan, location of group gear, communications plan, and all hand, paddle, and whistle signals. Everyone should be prepared for an extended trip due to changing weather.

## Personal Watercraft

Safely and responsibly operated personal watercraft (PWC) can be a great way to enjoy Kenai Lake. Start with the right gear. Choose synthetic long underwear, neoprene boots, neoprene or water-ski gloves, safety helmet, goggles, dry suit or 2-3 millimeter wet suit, and a snug fitting U.S. Coast Guard approved non-inflatable impact-rated life jacket.



Review the owner's manual. It provides important information such as load capacity and main and reserve fuel system operations.

PWCs are considered to be powerboats under state and federal law, and operators must meet the same boat registration and equipment requirements as other powerboats, which includes carrying a B-I fire extinguisher. Make sure to incorporate these requirements into the pre-departure check.

PWC operators frequently end up being tossed into the water. The wrist lanyard, connected to the shut off switch, activates if the rider falls off the boat, preventing the boat from continuing on without them. The cutoff cable should be confirmed functional and the wrist lanyard attached to the rider before departure. PWC operators should be well practiced in re-boarding. Personal watercraft are restricted or prohibited in some areas. Check the Kenai River Special Management Area regulations on page 16 or check with local land managers for more information.

For more information on pre-departure preparation, please see the *Alaska Boater's Handbook* or visit the State Office of Boating Safety web page at [www.alaskaboatingsafety.org](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org) or [www.pledgetolive.org](http://www.pledgetolive.org).





## KENAI RIVER SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA REGULATIONS

Following are summaries of regulations that apply within KRSMA. While regulations can change, these were in effect as of 2012. For up-to-date regulations contact Alaska State Park's Kenai office at (907) 262-5581.

- **Passenger Limits** - No more than six persons are allowed on board a powerboat on the river, including the operator. During the month of July, guided vessels may not have more than five persons on board, including the operator.
- **Tying Up** - No one may tie up a boat to state land, easements, or right-of-ways for more than 24 consecutive hours.
- **Anchoring** - No one may anchor a boat on the Kenai River that obstructs primary traffic or the drift fishing channel.
- **Anchored Buoys** - A person may momentarily leave an anchored buoy unattended while pursuing a hooked fish as long as the person returns to the anchored buoy within 20 minutes.
- **Horsepower Restrictions** - No one may operate a boat in the KRSMA with an outboard, or combination of outboards, having a total propshaft rating greater than 50 HP. Adding a jet drive to any boat does not change its equivalent propshaft HP rating. These HP restrictions do not apply to Kenai and Skilak lakes, or the river between RM 80.7 and Kenai Lake.
- **Horsepower Markings** - No one may operate a boat on the Kenai River unless the original horsepower of the motor is clearly labeled by the manufacturer's cowling decal appropriate to the rated propshaft horsepower.
- **Boat motor use** - A person may not operate a boat in the KRSMA by the use of a motor unless the motor is a four-stroke or a direct fuel injection two stroke.
- **Boat Specifications** - A person may not operate a motorized boat in the Kenai River Special Management Area that exceeds 21 feet in overall length and 106 inches in overall width.
- **Drift Areas, Motor Use Prohibited** - Operating a boat by use of a motor is prohibited year-round on the Kenai River from



Skilak Lake upstream to river mile 80.7 near Cooper Landing. From March 15 to June 14, operating a boat by use of a motor on the Kenai River is also prohibited from river mile 47 (three miles below the outlet of Skilak Lake) upstream to the outlet of Skilak Lake. On the waters of the KRSMA, a person may not launch or operate an airboat, hovercraft, hydroplane, or a personal watercraft except as described under the following headings: **Personal Watercraft** and **Aircraft**.

- **Use of Weapons** - The use and discharge of a weapon for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping is allowed in the KRSMA only on Skilak Lake and Kenai Lake. A person may use and discharge a shotgun below Skilak Lake for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping from September 1 to April 30 annually. Within the KRSMA, discharge of a firearm within ½ mile of a developed facility or dwelling is prohibited, except that a person may discharge a shotgun using shot no larger than size T, 0.2 inches in diameter at a distance of no less than one-quarter mile from a developed facility or dwelling. Target shooting and “plinking” are prohibited in the entire KRSMA and on adjacent public lands. See the Alaska Fish and Game regulations for hunting information.
- **Personal Watercraft** - A person may operate a personal watercraft only on Kenai Lake on the portion of the lake that is north of a line running from the Primrose Campground boat launch to a prominent marker on the east shore of Kenai Lake, and east of a line running from the Chugach Electric Association powerhouse to a marker on the south side of Porcupine Island, and north to the United States Forest Service campground on the north side of Porcupine Island. A person may not operate a personal watercraft within 300 feet of shore at speeds greater than five miles per hour or in a manner that creates a wake. Personal watercraft may only be operated between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

## NO WAKE AREAS

A person may not operate a boat or aircraft at a speed greater than five miles per hour in the following no wake areas:

- Between the Kenai Lake Bridge and river mile 80.7 in Cooper Landing.
- Within the Moose River between the Sterling Highway Bridge and the confluence with the Kenai River.

- The north channel of the Kenai River from river mile 11 downstream through lower Beaver Creek to its confluence with the main channel of the Kenai River at approximately river mile 10.
- Within the channel north of the island located between river mile 15.2 and river mile 14.7, which includes the upstream and downstream entrances to Castaway Cove.

## **WATER SKIING**

Except for Kenai Lake, no person may water ski on the waters of the KRSMA.

## **AIRCRAFT**

The use of aircraft is allowed in the KRSMA, with the following exceptions:

- Aircraft landings are prohibited on Alaska State Park land within the Kenai River Special Management Area.
- Practice landings are allowed only on Kenai and Skilak Lakes.
- The waters of the Kenai River, between the Warren Ames Bridge at river mile 5 and the Soldotna Bridge at river mile 21, are closed to the use of aircraft during the months of June and July.

## **CAMPING**

A person may not camp within the KRSMA within the following upland units: Big Eddy, Ciechanski, Cooper Landing Boat Launch, Eagle Rock, Funny River adjacent to river miles 29.6 to 30.1, Honeymoon Cove, Kenai Keys, Kenai River Flats, Nilnunqa, Pipeline Crossing, Slikok Creek, The Pillars, or other areas in which camping is designated as prohibited, or on an island.

## **Other Guidelines**

- Litter spoils the area for others and for wildlife. Carry out everything you bring into the park, including food scraps, packaging, and cigarette butts.
- Put fish entrails into the river or carry them out. Do not leave them on the riverbank.
- Riverbanks closed to fishing access have been established along many areas of the river to protect sensitive riparian

vegetation. Please respect these closures as they provide the critical habitat necessary for the sustainability of fish and wildlife populations.

- Latrines have been constructed at several locations along the river. These public facilities are for everyone's use and are located at numerous convenient locations along the river. Help protect the land and water quality by learning where they are located and plan shore breaks accordingly locations are listed on page 50.
- Pets must be on a leash and under control at all times in developed campgrounds and day-use areas. Do not allow dogs to run loose or chase wildlife. Owners should clean up after their pets.
- Fires are permitted only in the fire rings provided or in metal-bottomed fire pans with sides. Use only dead and downed wood and carry ashes, charred wood, charcoal, and debris out of the park. Do not leave fires unattended.
- Building a structure, cutting vegetation, or disturbing the riverbank within 50 feet of the ordinary high water mark requires state, federal, or borough permits. Contact the Kenai River Center before beginning work. This includes privately owned property along the river.
- Except for snowmachines on Kenai and Skilak lakes, motorized off-road vehicles are prohibited.

## COMMERCIAL GUIDE SERVICES

Kenai River guides must have an Alaska State Parks commercial use permit and meet safety and insurance requirements. It is illegal for anyone other than a permitted guide to solicit or accept any payment or compensation for guiding, except for shared trip expenses for food and fuel. When using a guide service, be sure the vessel displays current Kenai River Guide decals and a large 3-digit guide number. The guide number can be used to report incidents involving a guide to the Division of Parks. A list of permitted Kenai River guides is available at the Donald E. Gilman River Center 907-714-2470 in Soldotna.





## UNDERWAY

Knowledge, skill and vigilance are required to operate a boat safely on the Kenai River. Everyone should wear personal flotation devices (PFDs) when boating. Children under the age of thirteen are required by law to have a life jacket on at all times in an open boat or on an open deck.

Please learn and follow the International Navigation “rules of the road” for your safety and others. For example: when passing or meeting other boats head-on boaters should stay to the starboard side of the channel—this may help prevent collisions as well as limit confusion on the water. Non-motorized boats and boats traveling downstream have less maneuverability. Powerboaters should give-way to non-motorized boats.

Thick morning fog is common on the Kenai River in August and September. When visibility is restricted, go slow and bear to the starboard side. Lights also must be displayed under any restricted visibility situation.

If the operator is not comfortable running the river in the dark or during periods of restricted visibility, they should wait until daylight or until the conditions improve.

Maintain a proper lookout. Boaters should always look over their shoulders when entering a drift, entering the river traffic, and before making any sudden turns. Having a passenger help keep watch behind the boat is a great idea.

**Never** mix alcohol and boating. Good judgment is a boater’s most important tool. Alcohol slows a person’s reaction time, affects balance and impairs vision.

Do not exceed the load capacity of the vessel. Consult the boat’s capacity plate.

## Sportsmen and Small Boat Stability

To many anglers and hunters, a boat is simply a means to an end; they don’t consider themselves “boaters.” Based on the record, they should reconsider. Statistics show the average sportsman who dies on the water, is a 30-50 year old male, in a small open boat, on relatively calm water and on a clear sunny weekend day. Again, most that died were not wearing a PFD and died by drowning.

Small boats can be tippy and unstable. Capsizing and falling overboard accounts for five of every six boating fatalities in Alaska. These are directly related to the stability of small boats. People using small boats must have a greater awareness of the boat's limitations and have the skill and knowledge to cope with these limits. The following behaviors should be avoided in small boats.



### Standing in a Small Boat

Standing in a small boat raises the center of gravity, often to the point that the boat capsizes. Standing to land a fish, changing position in the boat, or relieving oneself over the side is not worth the risk. Maintain three points of contact to ensure proper stability and minimize the chance for falling overboard.

### Improper Seating

Boaters should avoid sitting on the gunwales, seat backs, or in raised pedestal seats while underway. Due to the raised center of gravity, a wave or a sudden turn may cause the person to fall overboard and may cause capsizing.

### Stern Anchoring

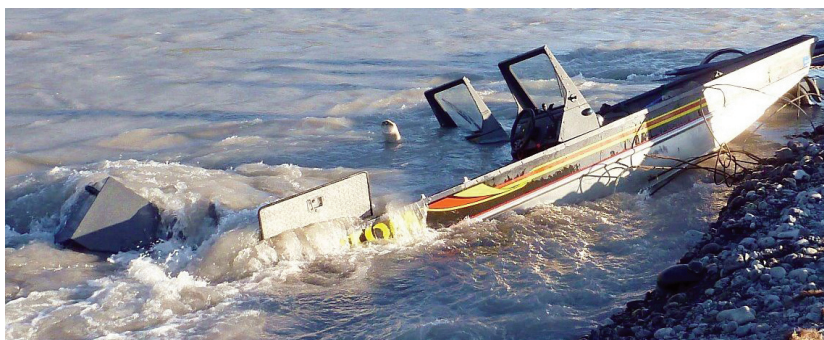
Anchoring a small boat by the stern has caused many boats to swamp. The transom of a powerboat is normally squared off and has less freeboard than the bow. In a current, the stern can be pulled under by the force of the water and by wave action. The added weight of a motor, fuel tank, or other gear in the stern increases the problem.

## Powerboating - Underway

Powerboating on Alaska's Kenai River is both an exhilarating recreational activity and important means of access. River boating puts us in special places that might otherwise be out of reach. However, the power of moving water is relentless. Exercising good judgment and applying the

right mix of skill, ability, and caution are never more important than when powerboating on rivers.

- River hazards include sweepers, log jams, sand and gravel bars, submerged objects, animals, wind, sunlight and other restricted visibility problems, and of course, other boaters.
- Knowledge of the river is essential. Always research and then scout new areas. Learn from the locals!
- If new to river boating, practice skills in safe areas first. River boaters should be skilled in turning with and against current, launching, landing and beaching, anchoring, basic troubleshooting and repairs, and reading the water.
- Generally it is best to keep in the deeper water, usually close to the outside edge/cut bank, while keeping as far to the starboard side as possible to allow room for a boat coming from the other direction.
- Be particularly vigilant in narrow channels. Slow to the minimum speed needed when rounding tight river bends and blind corners.
- Learn the locations of popular bank fishing spots and be considerate of bank anglers in the water.
- When launching, always warm up the engine before pushing away from the bank. Launch with respect to the current. Then make sure the boat is in-line with the current before running up the engine RPM. When beaching, try to find places where the boat can be placed facing the current. Otherwise, look for a slow channel or calm backwater pool. ALWAYS secure the boat to the shore.



- When passing, make sure other boat operators see you and understand your intentions.
- When underway, the engine cut-off cable should be attached to the operator. This is especially important for solo operators.
- Control speed. Don't run at full throttle, but keep just enough speed to keep the hull "on step." This is called "cruising speed." It is easier on the engine, and greatly improves fuel economy and operator reaction time. Slow down when passing other boats on the river, especially paddle craft. In congested fishing areas, come off from step and idle through if possible. Approach other boats, docks, bank fisherman, and launching areas slowly and carefully.

- Maintain a clear, unobstructed forward view at all times. Constantly scan the water back and forth for hazards. Avoid tunnel vision. Anchor lines, deadheads, and rocks just below



- the surface are often difficult to spot. Keep looking around, because there is always something to miss. Most boating collisions are caused by inattention.
- Operators should stay well within the limits of their skill levels to allow for worsening conditions, and respect the capabilities of the boat.
- Develop proficiency with basic boater's knots (bowline, figure eight, cleat hitch, anchor bend).
- Control wake when operating near moored boats or structures (docks, floating homes, and launch ramps). Keeping wake to a minimum helps reduce bank erosion and silting of salmon spawning beds. Flat bottom boats are the best choice for the river because they can get on "step" faster and create less wake. Turn the bow of the boat into the wake of passing vessels whenever possible.
- Exercise caution when maneuvering around small or slow moving boats, drift boats, and anchored boats.

## Anchoring and Mooring

To anchor a boat, first select the appropriate type and size of anchor and the appropriate diameter and length of rode (anchor line and chain). Consider the size of the boat, the bottom type, the water conditions, and the depth of the water (from the bow to the bottom). The length of the rode should be five to 10 times longer than the depth of the water, depending on the weather conditions, the current and the size of the boat.

- Prepare the anchor and rode in advance and firmly attach the anchor line to a secure point at the bow.
- Bring the bow into the wind or current.
- When in areas with no current, put the engine in neutral, and wait for the boat to stop moving forward.
- Lower (do not throw) the anchor over the bow.
- Back up slowly to straighten the anchor line and “set” the anchor.
- Raise the drive unit of the outboard out of the water to prevent fouling the anchor line.
- Never leave an anchored boat unattended. Tides, current, wind, and wave conditions may change, causing an anchor to foul or drag.

## Paddling

Participation in paddle sports is one of the fastest growing recreational activities in the United States, with kayaking ranking as number one. Alas, as these numbers grow so do the number of accidents. In Alaska, paddling fatalities account for between 25% and 60% of all boating deaths each year. Statistics show that 75% of the paddlers who died in boating accidents were not wearing a life jacket. As many as 20% were alcohol related. Surprisingly, operator inexperience accounts for only one in four paddling fatalities; about 30% of paddling fatalities involve paddlers that had more than 100 hours of experience.

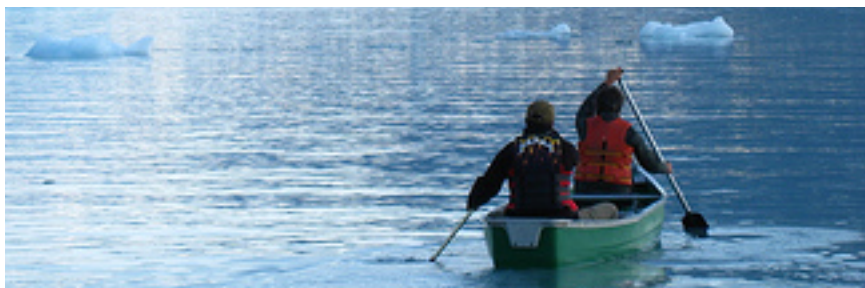
Paddling a kayak, canoe, raft, or drift boat on Alaska’s cold water takes specific skills and equipment. All paddlers should take boating safety courses and read books or guides specific to their sport. Look for courses that are offered by instructors certified by the American Canoe Association and/or an Alaskan paddling organization. The following safety tips will help ensure a safe and enjoyable adventure:



- A paddler without a life jacket is a sign of inexperience. Wear properly fitted life jackets designed for paddling. Choose a style that has superior buoyancy, thermal protection, high visibility, and a snug fit without impeding mobility either in or out of the water.
- The American Canoe Association recommends that all paddlers be proficient in keeping a boat balanced under a variety of conditions, proper boarding (both entries and exits), maintaining a straight course, turning a boat in any direction quickly, and performing self-rescues and assists.
- Avoid paddling alone! There is safety in numbers.
- Load the boat properly. Keep the weight centered both from side to side and bow to stern. The lower and closer the load in the boat is to the boat's centerline, generally the more stable the boat will be, assuming there is adequate freeboard. Stay within the limits of the boat's capacity rating on the capacity plate if one is present.
- When retrieving something from the water, reach with a paddle, or guide the boat close to the object so it can be retrieved from the water without leaning over the gunwale.

## Canoeing

Capsized canoes account for the majority of paddling fatalities. All canoeists should be well practiced in boarding, launching, basic paddle strokes, and be able to right, re-enter, and bail a swamped canoe. Avoid standing up or moving about in the boat. If a person must move in a canoe, they should keep their body as low as possible, and maintain three points of contact at all times. For example, move one foot at a time, with the other foot firmly planted and both hands gripping the boat's gunwales during each step. A partner can assist by holding the boat steady to the shore or with the proper paddle stroke to add stability. Everyone should keep his or her shoulders inside the gunwales at all times. Use great care when loading.



## Swift Water Paddling

- Learn the international scale of difficulty for swift water.
- Learn and practice the universal river signals. Make sure other party members know them too.
- Match skill and experience to the difficulty of the river. Before a trip, carefully review maps and determine the current and anticipated water levels, and evacuation routes.
- Always scout swift water from the shore first. Alaska's rivers each have unique personalities, and these personalities can change quickly with even small changes in water levels. Other swift water hazards include waterfalls, rocks, strainers (sweepers), hydraulics or "holes," and challenging rapids. If in doubt about hazards, walk around them. Sturdy, non-slip footwear and a life jacket should always be worn while scouting.
- Learn and be proficient in first aid and basic swift water rescue techniques. Carry throw-bags and other appropriate rescue gear.
- If the boat is not designed with closed decks and bulkheads to displace water, install devices such as float bags. This is especially important for open canoes.
- Special clothing such as a helmet, paddling jacket, wet suit, or dry suit is highly recommended when paddling in cold or swift water.
- Be alert on rivers used by powerboaters. LISTEN carefully, keep to the starboard side (especially around river bends), and be prepared to handle boat wakes.
- Keep the boat under control at all times. Boaters should be able to stop or reach shore at will.
- The best way to approach the shore in moving water is to point the bow up stream and either position the boat parallel to the shore or ground the boat at a slight angle.

## KENAI RIVER SECTIONS

The Kenai River is a dynamic and ever-changing waterway and the descriptions below are accurate as of the printing of this supplement. These descriptions and maps should not take the place of careful preparation and scouting. Consult with area agencies for up-to-date conditions.

### UPPER RIVER

#### KENAI LAKE

Kenai Lake is a large, glacially fed lake of approximately 14,500 acres located at the headwaters of the Kenai River. The lake elevation is 436 feet and is 22 miles in length. Most of the shoreline is undeveloped, with the greatest beach development occurring at the inlets of the Snow River and Quartz Creek, and near the lake outlet into the Kenai River at River Mile (RM) 82.

Most of the land adjacent to Kenai Lake is within the Chugach National Forest. There is also state, municipal, and private land along the lake shore.



## Public Access

There are four U.S. Forest Service campgrounds located on Kenai Lake:

- Primrose Campground is located on the southern most tip of the lake off the Seward Highway.
- Ptarmigan Creek and Trail River Campgrounds are located on the northwestern shore off the Seward Highway.
- Quartz Creek Campground is located on the north shore of Kenai Lake, just east of Cooper Landing off the Sterling Highway.

Three picnic areas are located on Kenai Lake that are only accessible by boat:

- Porcupine Island is about halfway between the lake outlet and inlet.
- Ship Creek is located on the southern shore, approximately four miles east of Porcupine Island.
- Meadow Creek is located on the southern shore, just east of Ship Creek.

## Hazards

High winds can whip Kenai Lake into frothy whitecaps within minutes. Please be aware that the water temperature of the lake is below 40 degrees almost year round. Use caution when boating on the lake, remember to check the weather, leave a float plan, and always wear a life jacket. Consider staying on shore when it is windy. If paddling, always stay close to shore.









## KENAI LAKE—SKILAK LAKE (RM 82 TO RM 65)

The Upper Kenai River is a **drift-only** section of the Kenai River Special Management Area. The confluence of the Russian River and Kenai River is one of the most congested areas on the river system. During



fishing season it is important to be alert in this area as there are likely to be a multitude of people fishing along the shore line. The Russian River Ferry also transports people across the river at River Mile 73.5. It is critical to watch for overhanging trees, rocks, gravel bars, and any other hazards which could pose a threat to a vessel on the Kenai River.

Inexperienced boaters should stay to the main channel when boating on the Upper Kenai River. Side channels on the upper river can become increasingly swift and narrow and many have overhanging trees, sweepers, or strainers that could potentially flip a vessel. It is critical to scout these areas prior to embarking down a side channel or stay in the main channel if unsure of the conditions. There is also limited to no cell phone coverage between Jim's Landing and Skilak Lake. Some river guides carry satellite phones for emergencies, but be aware of the limited ability to call for help in this area.

The Upper Kenai River, along with its tributaries, provides important spawning and rearing habitat for king, silver and sockeye salmon, and resident species such as rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.

The Upper Kenai River is often ice-free during the winter and provides important habitat for wildlife. Approximately 200 bald eagles stay over the winter months and feed along the upper river between October and April.

The Russian River is the most heavily fished tributary in the Kenai River drainage. The Sterling Highway parallels this stretch of the river, allowing easy access for bank fishermen. There are several popular bank fishing areas along this segment. Drift boat activity for this section is increasing, especially for sightseeing.

### **Public Access**

- **RM 82**—Cooper Landing State Recreation Site and Boat Launch
- **RM 79**—Cooper Creek Campground
- **HWY M 52.5**—Russian River Campground (Sterling Highway)
- **RM 73.5**—Sportsman Landing and Russian River Ferry
- **RM 69.5**—Jim's Landing

### **Hazards**

This section of the river is relatively fast, with many blind corners and sharp bends. Boaters should use special caution in the Kenai River Canyon area below Jim's Landing where Class II and III rapids exist. Throughout Skilak Lake, strong winds can develop from the adjacent glacier without warning, making the lake unsafe for smaller craft. Drift and paddle boat only, means no motors at any time. The 17.3 miles between Kenai Lake and Skilak Lake are classified as Class II and III whitewater. Other hazards on this section of river include:

- **RM 76**—Schooners Bend, Class III rapids
- **RM 73.5** Russian River Ferry
- **RM 69-67**—Kenai River Canyon, Class III/IV rapids. The last take-out before the canyon is Jim's Landing (RM 69.5). It is highly recommended that only very experienced boaters continue on through the canyon. The next take-out is located at the Upper Skilak Lake Campground and Boat Launch, which is approximately another nine miles past the canyon on the north shore.
- This river section is very cold; please remember to always wear a life jacket.



## SKILAK LAKE (BETWEEN RM 50 AND RM 65)

Located at the mid-point of the Kenai River is 25,000-acre Skilak Lake. Most of the water draining into the lake comes from the Upper Kenai River and Skilak River. Both rivers are silt laden from glacial runoff. The water and limited level of light penetration reduce biological productivity of the lake. However, high oxygen content and relatively constant water temperatures create an essential environment for wintering and spawning resident fish populations and for many water birds. Skilak Lake is a major sockeye salmon rearing area. Skilak Lake supports a moderate amount of boat traffic for fishing, hunting, hiking and access to private lands. Fishing is the most popular recreational activity on Skilak Lake. The heaviest occurs at the outlet and inlet of Skilak Lake and where Hidden Creek and Kenai River empty into the lake.

The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge manages Skilak Lake and the surrounding lands. All lands south of the lake are congressionally designated wilderness. There are several privately owned lots on the south shore. Caribou Island is also privately owned.

### Public Access

There are five campgrounds located on Skilak Lake accessible via Skilak Lake Road. They are:

- Lower Skilak Lake Campground and Boat Launch
- Upper Skilak Lake Campground and Boat Launch
- Hidden Lake Campground and Boat Launch
- Lower Ohmer Campground
- Engineer Lake Campground

The campgrounds accessible via the Sterling Highway are:

- Jean Lake Campground
- Petersen Lake Campground
- Kelly Lake Campground

## Hazards

Skilak Lake, like Kenai Lake, is prone to high winds and large white-caps. It is best to stay on shore in these conditions. If traveling in these conditions, stay very close to shore. Skilak Lake is very cold. Everyone should wear a life jacket.



Skilak Lake





## MIDDLE RIVER

### SKILAK LAKE—NAPTOWNE RAPIDS (RM 50 TO RM 39)

The river from the Upper Killey River to Skilak Lake is within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Most of the land below the Upper Killey River to Naptowne Rapids is private.

The outlet of Skilak Lake to the Upper Killey River is highly stable because of the presence of large gravel dunes created by a pre-1950's flood surge. From the Upper Skilak Lake at Hidden Creek Killey River (RM 45.7) to Naptowne Rapids (RM 39.4) bank erosion rates are more typical of glacial streams—as much as five feet per year.



Since Skilak Lake serves as a sediment trap, most of the sediment occurring below the lake is a result of bank erosion and sediment transport from the Killey River drainage. Extensive wetlands are found bordering the Kenai River in this section, particularly between Upper Killey and Skilak Lake.



**Naptowne Rapids**

This section of the Kenai River contains important habitat for spawning and rearing salmon. Several species are targeted by recreational anglers in this area, including king, coho, and sockeye salmon, rainbow trout, and Dolly Varden.

## Public Access

While there are numerous privately-owned boat launches along this area of the Kenai River, there is only one campground and public boat launch operated by Alaska State Parks. **RM 39.5**—Bings Landing State Recreation Site and Boat Launch

## Hazards

Naptowne Rapids (RM 39.4) is rated Class III/IV whitewater and is located directly downstream from Bings Landing. Boaters need to use extreme caution when launching from this site. Powerboaters should make sure that the boat motor is operating properly and allow it time to warm up. Everyone should wear a life jacket.

Great caution should be taken when traveling between Skilak Lake and Naptowne Rapids. There are many rocks and gravel bars in this reach of the river and it is recommended to travel slowly if unsure of the main channel. There are two areas to be especially aware of while traveling between Skilak Lake and the Naptowne Rapids—the area approximately one mile below Skilak Lake, known as the Washboards or the Dunes at River Mile 49, and the area known as Super Hole at River Mile 47. If the water level is below ordinary high, it is likely there will only be



one channel available for travel in both locations. The water is generally moving slowly in both regions and the many gravel bars will be difficult to see. If unsure of the best path, wait and follow another boater with more experience or travel slowly.





## NAPTOWNE RAPIDS—SOLDOTNA BRIDGE (RM 39 TO RM 21)

The lands adjacent to the Kenai River in this section are primarily private. A Native corporation and the US Fish and Wildlife Service also manage land in this area.

### Public Access

- **RM 23**—Swiftwater Park Campground and Boat Launch (managed by the City of Soldotna)
- **RM 30.5**—Funny River State Recreation Site and Campground
- **RM 31**—Morgan's Landing State Recreation Area, Campground and Alaska State Parks Kenai Area Headquarters
- **RM 36.4**—Izaak Walton State Recreation Site, Campground and Boat Launch

### Hazards

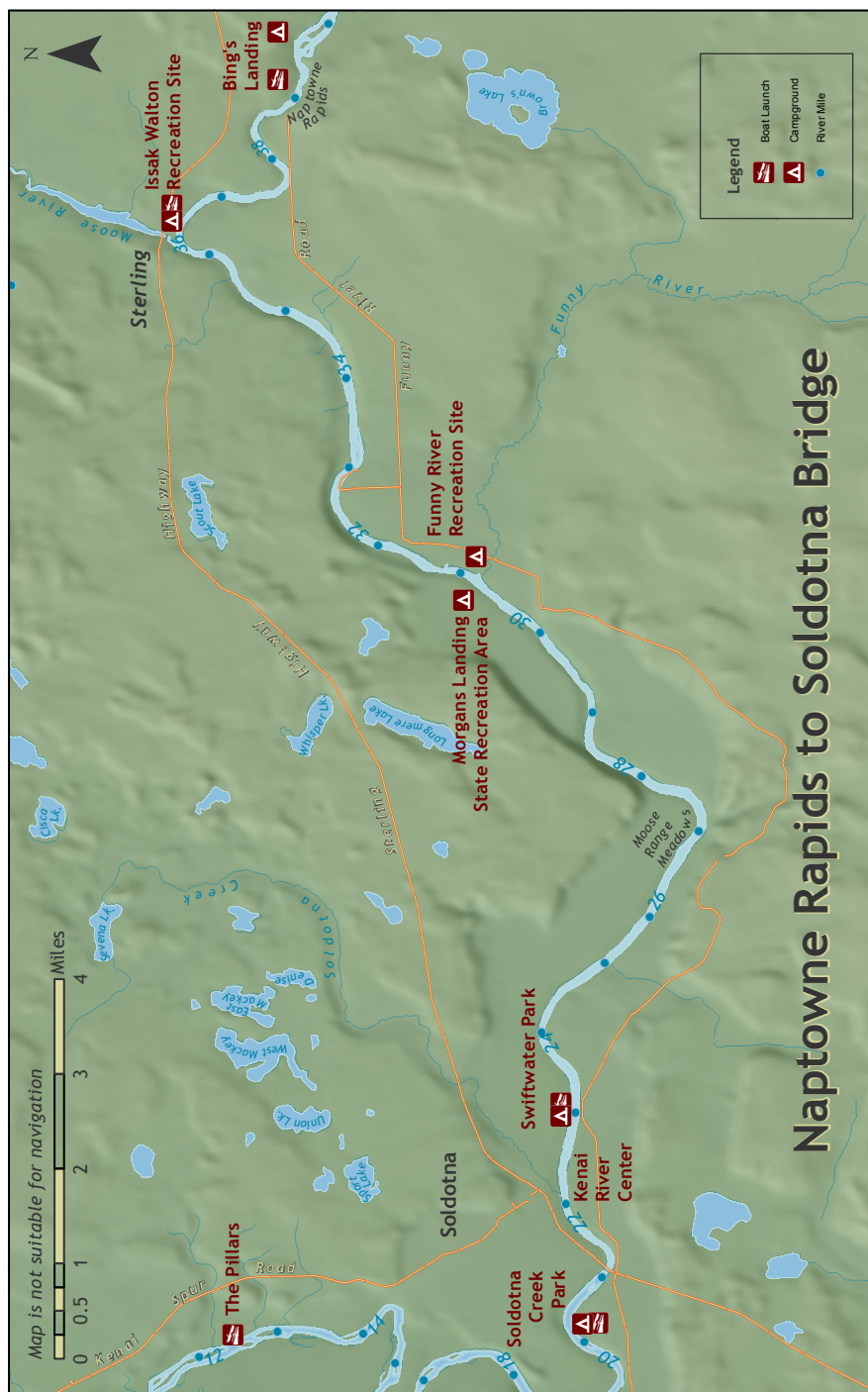
This section of the river can be very busy, especially during the months of July and August when salmon runs are high. Always be attentive and courteous.

There are numerous rocks and gravel bars in the Kenai River between Slikok Creek and Funny River (River Mile 19-30). Many rocks in this reach are partially submerged and may be difficult to see. There are a few particularly difficult sections to navigate. Pay close attention when traveling between Slikok Creek and the Soldotna Bridge (River Mile 19.5 to 21), between Swiftwater Park and Moose Range Meadows (River Mile 23 to 26), and between Bear Creek and Funny River (River Mile 29 to 30).



Always wear a life jacket





## Naptowne Rapids to Soldotna Bridge

As the water level drops in the late summer and fall months, rocks and gravel bars become potential hazards. Boaters should be aware of their surroundings at all times while traveling on the Kenai River.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game also operates four fish wheels along the Kenai River during the summer months. There are two fish wheels located at River Mile 28 and two at River Mile 19 near the sockeye salmon sonar site.. The fish wheels are located on the shoreline and it is best to stay mid-channel while traveling near them. All four fish wheels have dock systems for use by Fish and Game personnel only. These fish wheels are used for sockeye salmon apportionment and coho salmon population estimates. Please stay mid-channel and avoid all fish and game equipment while operating on the Kenai River.



## LOWER RIVER

It is important to note that the lower reach of the Kenai River is tidally influenced upstream to approximately River Mile 13, near Honeymoon Cove. Be aware of gravel bars, mud flats, and rocks, which in some cases, are only visible at low tide. When it is high tide in Cook Inlet, the water in the river will back up for approximately 12 miles.

The lower Kenai River is often congested with boat traffic. Please follow the “rules of the road” when operating on this section of the river and consider giving way to all non-motorized boats. All boats, motorized or not, traveling downstream are less maneuverable and should have priority. In some areas the main channels on the lower Kenai River are narrow and should be navigated with caution, especially when in heavy boat traffic.

Big Eddy Jetty, located at River Mile 14, can be congested with boat traffic as well as bank anglers. It is recommended to slow down while navigating this ninety degree corner.

Also, use great caution while operating a vessel at the confluence of Beaver Creek and the Kenai River at River Mile 10. During June and July this area can be overcrowded with fishing boats and difficult to navigate. Slow down and proceed with caution. Downstream of Beaver Creek the river is often crowded making it difficult to find the main channel. Please be courteous to other boaters while operating on the Lower Kenai River.




## SOLDOTNA BRIDGE—EAGLE ROCK (RM 21 TO RM 11.5)

This section of the lower Kenai River provides valuable spawning and rearing habitat for all species of salmon, especially for a significant portion of the second run of king, sockeye, and pink salmon. Of all the king, pink, and silver salmon taken out of the Kenai River, most are generally caught in this section. Bank fishing is popular in several locations. Boat fishing is generally heavy throughout the entire section with the exception of an area just below the Centennial Boat Launch (RM 20) to the Soldotna Bridge, where boat fishing is closed during king salmon season.

It should be noted that naturally eroding banks contribute to the biological template of a river by removing material from one area and depositing it in another. However, the natural tendency to erode is accelerated by human activities through boat wakes and bank trampling.

A large proportion of land in this section is privately owned. Land uses range from intensive private recreation development, private residences, and underdeveloped units of the Alaska State Park system. Private campgrounds, recreational vehicle campgrounds, and second homes are especially numerous in this area.

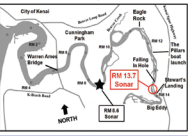


# New Sonar Project


## KENAI RIVER MILE 13.7

**WARNING**  
 SUBMERGED SONAR  
 STAY  
 OFFSHORE  
 OF BUOYS

**A sonar project will be operated at RM 13.7 between Stewart's Landing and Falling in Hole.**

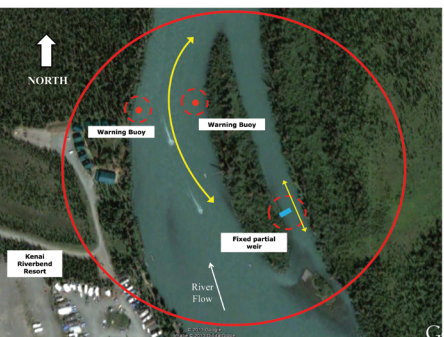


**Submerged sonar equipment will entangle your fishing gear and may damage boating equipment.**



Sonar transducer prior to placement on the river bottom.

**Stay offshore of warning buoys located near the banks. Be cautious navigating past the partial weir located in the minor channel.**









## Public Access

- **RM 20.4**—Centennial Park Campground and Boat Launch
- **RM 19**—Slikok Creek State Recreation Area
- **RM 16**—Big Eddy State Recreation Area
- **RM 15.3**—Ciechanski State Recreation Site
- **RM 12.5**—The Pillars State Boat Launch

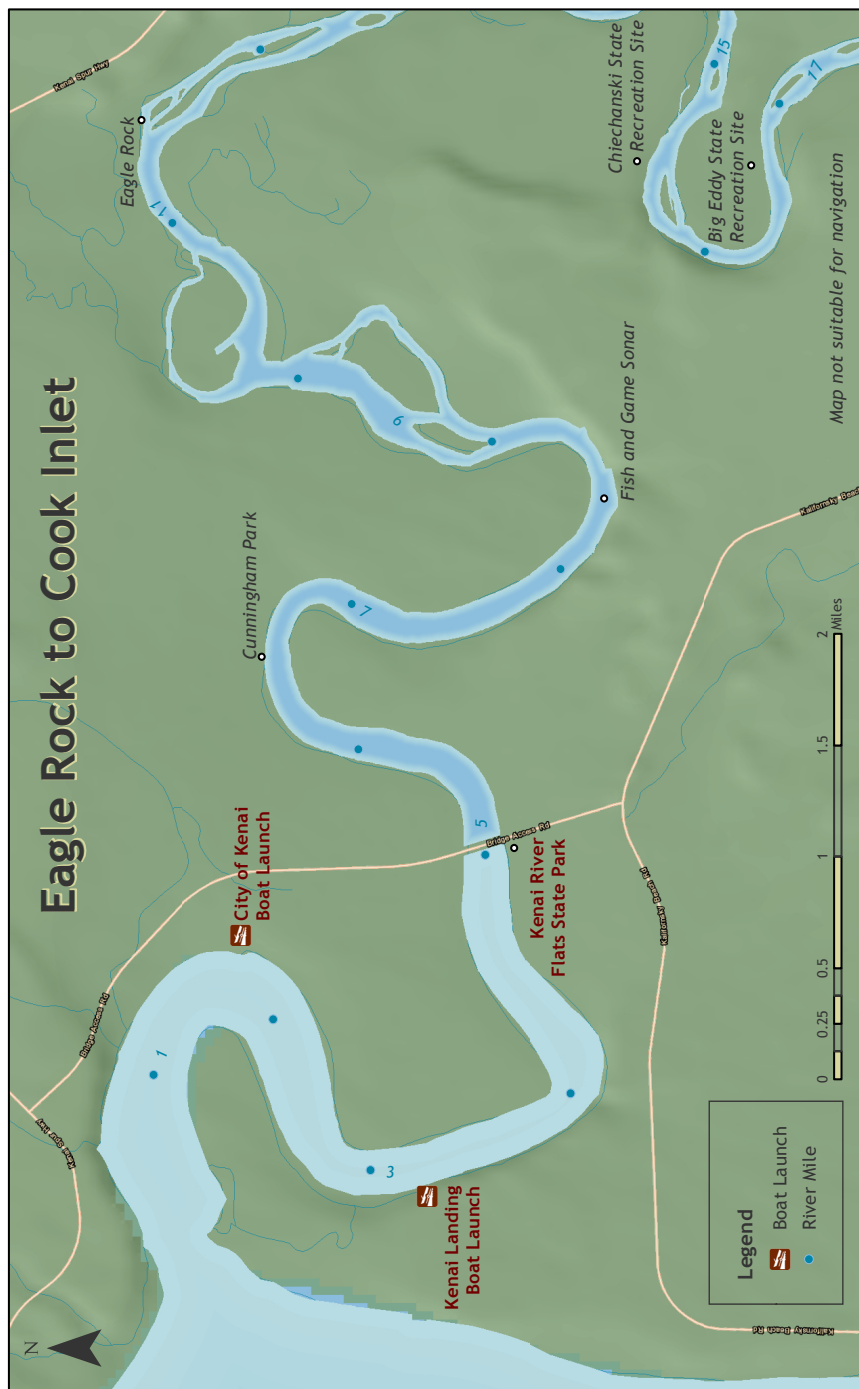
## Hazards

This section of the river can be very busy. While Eagle Rock (RM 11.5) does not pose much of a hazard due to its enormous size, keep an eye out for it when the tide is especially high and much of the rock is submerged. Be aware of a new sonar project at RM 13.7. See Fish Sonar Sites page 47.

### EAGLE ROCK—COOK INLET (RM 11.5 TO RM 0)

This entire section of the Kenai River is tidally influenced; these estuarine conditions are very noticeable from Mud Island (RM 9) to Cook Inlet. These lower nine miles are meandering, with the river channel free to migrate. The reach between Mud Island and Eagle Rock is sinuous and highly prone to erosion. The tidal marshes and associated wetlands adjacent to the river in this area are extensive and biologically productive. They provide a major migration and resting area for many waterfowl and other water birds. Most of the riverbank in this area is





publicly owned by the City of Kenai and the State of Alaska. The upper part of this reach of the river has one of the highest concentrations of sport fishing during the king, red, and silver salmon season. Dip-netters and bank fisherman access the fishing areas adjacent to the Warren Ames Bridge.

## Public Access

The Bridge Access Road and accompanying Warren Ames Bridge are principal means of access between the City of Kenai and the Sterling Highway. This access is used for bird and wildlife viewing and photographing. Be advised the City of Kenai boat launch is closed two hours on either side of low tide. The boat launch is inoperable during low tide.


- **RM 5**—Bridge Access Road and Warren Ames Bridge
- **RM 2**—City of Kenai Boat Launch

## Hazards


It is simply amazing how many boats and shore anglers can fit into such a short section of river, especially during the personal use fishery in July. Be extra attentive during this time.

## FISH SONAR SITES

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game operates fish sonar sites on the river. Side scanning sonar has been used to assess Kenai River red (sockeye) salmon runs since the late 1960's and king (Chinook) salmon



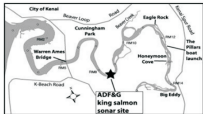
# Warning Boaters




Be cautious near the Kenai River king salmon sonar site!

Protect you and your gear while allowing ADF&G to collect quality data used in managing Kenai River recreational and commercial salmon fisheries!

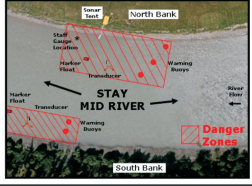
**The Kenai River king salmon sonar site is located at river-mile 8.6 (1.5 miles downstream of Beaver Creek).**



**Submerged sonar equipment will entangle your fishing gear, giant king salmon, or boat propeller.**

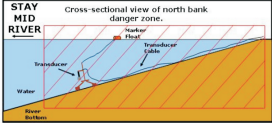


**Aerial view of sonar site.**




**STAY MID RIVER**

**Cross-sectional view of north bank danger zone.**



**A gillnet test fishery operates at the sonar site.**



**Please yield to and respect the ADF&G netting crew.**

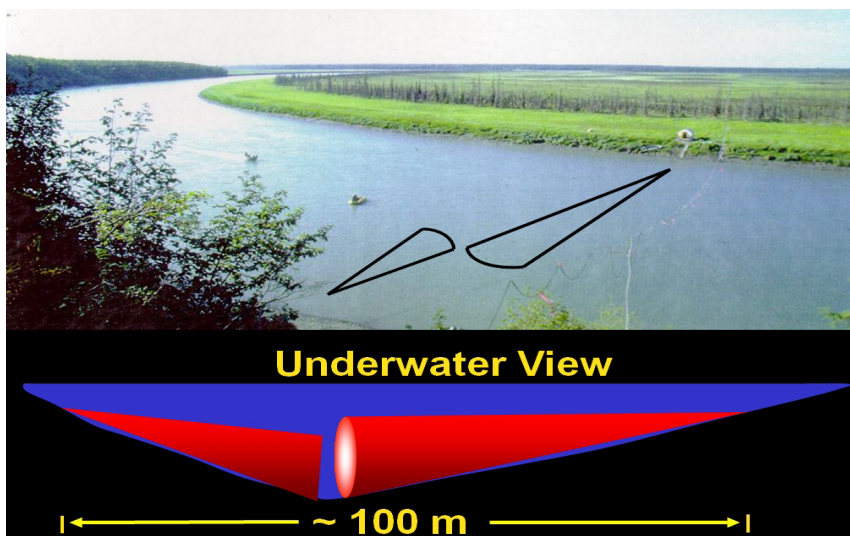
PLEASE  
YIELD TO  
ADF&G  
RESEARCH  
BOAT

WARNING  
SUBMERGED  
SONAR AHEAD  
STAY  
MID RIVER

Fish Sonar Site RM 8.6

runs since 1987. Kenai River fishery management plans rely heavily on estimates from this equipment to make critical management decisions, such as opening or closing seasons, restricting bait and tackle, or to setting harvest limits. The proper operation of this expensive and highly sensitive equipment is crucial.

Sonar transducers are mounted underwater near each bank and project toward the center of the river. Buoys identify the location of the sonar and help deflect boaters offshore of the gear.



When boating, please obey the warning signs in the immediate area of these sites, and try to stay mid-river. Submerged equipment and buoy lines can easily entangle fishing gear, hooked fish, and engine drive units. Besides a damaged propeller or lost fish and tackle, disturbance to sonar equipment may result in costly repairs and loss of critical data. Anglers should immediately cut their lines if they become entangled with sonar equipment. Boaters may also see ADF&G research vessels or equipment such as weirs or traps anywhere along the river. Please maintain sufficient distance from these research projects to avoid entanglement and damage. Boaters may also be approached by researchers during “creel surveys” to take measurements and scale samples and gather statistics. The Department thanks boaters in advance for their participation and cooperation in helping manage an outstanding Alaskan fishery.



Fish Sonar Site RM 8.6



## PUBLIC DAY USE FACILITIES

City of Kenai Boat Launch  
 Kenai River Flats Recreation Site  
 Cunningham Park  
 The Pillars State Boat Launch  
 Ciechanski State Recreation Site  
 Big Eddy State Recreation Area  
 Slikok Creek State Recreation Area  
 Centennial Park  
 Swiftwater Park  
 Funny River Campground  
 Morgan's Landing Campground  
 Izaak Walton Campground  
 Bings Landing Campground  
 Lower Skilak Campground  
 Upper Skilak Campground  
 Jim's Landing  
 Russian River Ferry  
 Sportsman's Landing  
 Cooper Landing State Recreation Site  
 Quartz Creek Campground  
 Trail Lake Campground  
 Ptarmigan Creek Campground  
 Primrose Campground

## Campgrounds (by River Mile)

Centennial Park Campground (20.5)  
 Swiftwater Campground (23)  
 Funny River Campground (30.5)  
 Morgan's Landing Campground (31)  
 Izaak Walton Campground (36.5)  
 Bings Landing Campground (39.5)  
 Lower Skilak Campground  
 Upper Skilak Campground  
 Russian River Campground (75)  
 Cooper Creek Campground (79)  
 Quartz Creek Campground  
 Trail River Campground  
 Ptarmigan Creek Campground  
 Primrose Campground

## RESPONSIBLE BOATING

### Kenai River Courtesy

Please respect the rights of the many private land-owners along the Kenai River. Do not trespass, dock, bank fish, picnic, or camp without written permission.

The river is for everyone's enjoyment. There is no such thing as a personal fishing hole. Courtesy and common sense make everyone's experience more enjoyable.

- Different fishing methods are popular in different river reaches. Please do not go against the fishing trend. Drift fishing through backtrollers, backbouncing, or backtrolling in the middle of an occupied drift is not only discourteous, it can be dangerous and can cause confusion, tangled or cut lines, hot tempers, and accidents.
- Do not be a river hog! Let others enjoy the experience by not staying in one hole or area more than a couple of hours. Share the river!
- A net in the air is a warning to others that someone in that boat has a fish on. Pull in lines and steer the boat out of the way. Give plenty of room and slow down when passing a boat with a net displayed. Be alert!
- If your fishing line becomes entangled with someone else's line that has a salmon on, cut your line immediately. The line with the fish on has the "right-of-way." Practice carrying an extra rod that is already rigged up.



- Kenai River Guides are not allowed to verbally or physically harass, assault, or abuse clients, employees, outfitters, other guides and their clients, or members of the general public. This includes aggressive and disruptive behavior. Contact Alaska State Parks to report a guide's unprofessional behavior (see Contacts section at back of handbook).

## Environmental Ethics

For all its rugged beauty, the Kenai River is a delicate habitat. Even unintentional acts can pollute the water, mar the land or disturb fish and wildlife. Stress can cause unwanted interruptions to wildlife's essential activities, which can include reproductive failure. Responsible boaters should always be aware of ways to avoid harming the land, water, or wildlife of the Kenai River.

### Don't Pollute

- Powerboats should use oil absorbent pads in the bilge and consider an oil-sensitive pump switch to keep oil from going into the water. Even a small amount of oil on the feathers of a seabird is detrimental.
- Take care when fueling. Keep oil absorbent pads handy to clean up any fuel spills.
- Federal law prohibits dumping sewage from holding tanks into the water. Garbage, including food scraps, can choke seabirds and attract predators to the nesting areas of shore birds. Bring all garbage back to town for proper disposal in dumpsters.
- Collect all discarded fishing line. It can entangle and kill birds and other marine animals.
- Don't dump anything overboard!

### Tread Lightly

- Camp only in areas designated by Federal, State and Borough regulations.
- Use developed trails when possible. Avoid walking on muskeg and other sensitive soils so live trees and plants are not damaged.
- Use a gas stove for cooking instead of a fire. If a fire is necessary, build it only on bare gravel or rock, use only dead wood, and erase all traces of the fire afterward.

- “Naturalize” campsites after use by dispersing any natural materials used, brushing over tracks, etc.
- Wash at least 200 feet away from water sources. Use biodegradable soap.
- Leave all plants, rocks, antlers, fossils, and all cultural artifacts in place.
- Dispose of fish waste in deep fast moving water.
- Keep food in airtight (preferably bear-proof) containers, and never cook, eat, or store food in a tent or sleeping area.

## WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

Wild animals are easily disturbed. Animals have been forced away from feeding grounds, deprived of rest, and some have actually been struck by speeding boats. Following are some guidelines that will make wildlife viewing enjoyable, yet limit the impact on the animals:

- Observe all wildlife from a considerate distance with binoculars or spotting scope. If a person's presence causes a change in behavior, they are too close.
- Don't chase or corner animals to get a photo.
- Never feed wildlife.
- Keep pets under physical control at all times.
- Respect and avoid nests, dens, and resting places.
- Never handle, touch, or approach young birds or animals. Most likely they are not abandoned but only left in place while the mother seeks food.
- Nesting bald eagles (May through August) are sensitive to noise and may abandon an active nest if disturbed.
- Nesting shorebirds may withdraw from nests if humans come near, leaving eggs or chicks vulnerable to weather and predators. Shorebirds are often shy or inconspicuous, and people may be unaware of the presence of nesting territories. Squawking overhead or feigned “broken wing” behavior often indicates a concealed nest is nearby.

## Marine Mammal Protection Act

This protection act prohibits harassment of all marine mammals and defines harassment to include any disturbance or disruption of behavior including breeding, migrating, and feeding. Anything a person does that causes a marine mammal to enter the water, flee, change its position on the beach, or even alter its breathing rhythm can be considered a disturbance. If animals show signs of disturbance, immediately but quietly leave the area.

With seals and sea lions, signs of disturbance could include behavior such as herd movement toward or into the water, increased vocalization, simultaneous head-raising, or increased interaction with other animals. Even if no obvious disturbance is detected, approach marine mammals in the water no closer than 100 yards. Limit the time spent observing any particular animal(s) to one-half hour. Avoid excessive speed, or abrupt changes in speed or course when around animals in the water.



## Kenai River Habitat

The Kenai River is the most heavily fished river in Alaska. There are 4,000 to 6,000 people fishing daily along the banks of the Kenai River during the peak of the sockeye salmon run. The river supports two runs of sockeye, two of chinook, two of coho salmon, and is home to thirty-three different species of fish. Clean water, abundant food resources, low water velocity, vegetated banks and other habitat conditions are important to the survival of this fishery. Eighty percent of the Kenai River's juvenile salmon live within six feet of the riverbank. The riverbank's overhanging vegetation slows water velocities, provides cover, and traps food for the juvenile salmon. Heavy bank fishing, foot traffic pressure, and boat wakes have destroyed miles of salmon rearing habitat. The loss of riverbank vegetation means less rearing habitat is available for juvenile salmon and the overall productivity of the Kenai River is diminished. It is hard to find streams that are developed, like the lower Kenai River, that continue to produce salmon.

## Woody Debris

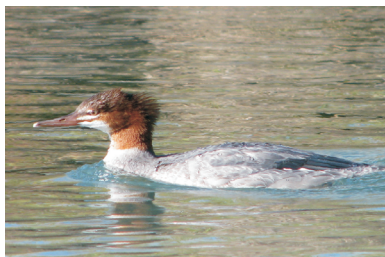
Large woody debris can consist of fallen trees, old stumps, root wads, and piles of branches along the edges and channel of streams and rivers. Woody debris helps to stabilize stream banks and provides vital habitat for salmon and other creatures. To keep our rivers healthy and improve the survival of native salmon, river and habitat managers are



maintaining and increasing the amounts of large woody debris in rivers and streams. Boaters and other recreational users of rivers should always be alert for large woody debris and other river hazards.

When boating on the Kenai River, please consider the fragile nature of the riverbank vegetation and its importance to juvenile salmon and observe the following rules:

- Consider water conditions and safety first, but when bank fishing stand in the river whenever it is possible.
- Use boardwalks, stairways, and floating docks for access where they are provided.
- Always use a developed launch site when launching and retrieving the boat.
- Avoid crushing and damaging bank vegetation when beaching the boat.
- Lowering speeds and traveling mid-channel will minimize damage from boat wakes.
- Stay on improved or established trails.
- Stay away from the river's edge whenever walking up and downstream.
- Enter and exit the river in one place.
- Do not cut brush or trees along the river's edge.
- Respect private property!



Seasonal riverbank closures are in effect to lessen angler impact on habitats along the banks of the river. In these areas fishing is only allowed from a boat located more than ten feet from the waterline and not connected to the shore in any way. In closed areas fishing from the riverbank or in the water within ten feet of the Kenai River waterline is strictly prohibited. A list of the Kenai River seasonal riverbank closures can be found in the Alaska Sport Fishing Regulations Summary for Southcentral Alaska.

## Travel Smart

In any outdoor activity like boating, fishing, camping, wildlife viewing, hiking, or berry picking, one can encounter bears. Oftentimes there are posted signs near trailheads, boat launches, or in campgrounds alerting visitors to recent bear activity.

- Be aware of surroundings by always keeping eyes and ears open. Check the surrounding area for fresh bear signs. If bear signs are detected, consider moving to a different location.
- Make plenty of noise when traveling to avoid surprising a bear.
- Avoid traveling alone.
- Dogs can be trouble in bear country—it is best to leave them at home or on a leash.

## Fishing

When landing a fish, don't let it flop around in the boat or on the bank. The sound may attract the attention of nearby bears.

- If the fish will be harvested, kill it immediately and bleed it into the water. Bleeding into the water quickly clears the blood from the fish and reduces the chance that blood will get onto stream bank vegetation or on clothing.
- When cleaning the catch, toss the entrails into deep, fast moving water, or put into a designated cleaning station.
- If approached by a bear while fishing, pull in the line and give the bear plenty of room. If a fish is on the line, give it slack, or cut the line and move away.
- Do not let the bear have an easy meal.

## Camping

Follow the principles of “leave no trace” so others can experience a pleasant outdoor setting as well.

- Never leave food out when not in use—store food in a secure location such as a bear-proof container. Coolers are not bear-proof.
- Use bear-proof garbage cans or dumpsters for trash.
- Keep a clean and odor-free camp.

## Backcountry Camping

Choose campsites carefully. Do not camp near trails, salmon streams, an animal carcass, or garbage.

- Camp in a tent in an open quiet area where it is easier to see and hear nearby wildlife, and where they can see and hear you.
- Cook at least 100 feet downwind from camp.
- Do not cook smelly foods, sleep in clothes with food odors, or bring anything with food odors into your tent.
- Store food, cookware, toothpaste, lotions, soaps, clothes with food odors, and trash away from camp.
- If there are trees, cache food out of a bear's reach. If there are no trees, hang food off of a rock face or a bridge, or store it out of sight off the trail and downwind of camp. Scatter any strained dishwater on the ground away from camp.
- Pack out all trash. Buried garbage is an easy meal for a bear.

## Bear Safety

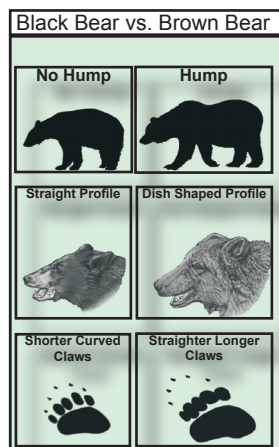
Nothing will guarantee safety in bear country, but knowledge of bears and proper behavior will greatly reduce the risk. They can be avoided or the encounter can be made safer by following these safety tips.

### Close Encounters

Both black and brown/grizzly bears inhabit areas around the Kenai Peninsula. To tell the difference between the two, look to see whether or not the bear has a shoulder hump, next look at the shape of their face and the size of their ears.

If a bear is far away or doesn't see you, turn around and go back, or circle far around. Don't disturb it.

If a bear is surprised or crowded, it may approach defensively. Let it know you are human by speaking in a low voice. If the bear stops its approach, move away slowly. If it starts towards you again, stop and stand your ground. If it charges and contact is made, play dead. Curl up in a ball with your hands laced



behind your neck. The fetal position protects your vital organs. Lie still and be silent. Surprised bears usually stop attacking once you are no longer a threat (i.e. “dead”).

- If a bear approaches in a non-defensive manner (a bear that is human-habituated, food-conditioned, curious, or predatory) be loud and human. Move away but if the bear follows, stop and act aggressively. Throw rocks, yell, and stomp your feet. The more persistent the bear is, the more aggressive you should act. If the bear does attack, fight with everything you’ve got.
- Please remember that the majority of charges are “bluff charges.” It is very important that you do not run. Running may trigger an instinctive reaction to pursue and bears can quickly reach speeds of up to 40 mph. Stand your ground. Wave your arms and speak in a loud low voice. Many times charging bears have come within a few feet of a person and then veered off at the last second.



## Protection

Most people who recreate in Alaska’s wilderness don’t carry a weapon. They know that the best defense is common sense. If there is a need for additional protection, consider carrying pepper spray, a bear deterrent made from the juice of red-hot peppers. This incapacitating spray teaches bears a lesson without permanently maiming them. Be familiar with the characteristics of the specific brand and its warnings.

Guns are allowed for protection in Alaska State Parks. Select a gun that will stop a bear and practice firing it at a rifle range. Any bear shot in self-defense must be salvaged and turned over to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

## Releasing Fish

Snagging or attempting to snag any fish is illegal in all fresh waters of Alaska. To snag a fish is to hook the fish anywhere other than in its mouth. The fish must be released immediately and if done correctly the fish will suffer very little permanent injury and will spawn successfully.

Here are some suggestions on releasing that will reduce harm to the fish.

- Land the fish quickly. Playing the fish to exhaustion takes the energy away that it needs for spawning.
- Do not remove the fish from the water, even to take photographs.
- Keep your hands away from the gills. Putting your hands under the gill plate could injure the fragile gill arches and could cause death.
- Handle the fish gently. Grasp the fish around its body when removing the hook. A pair of long-nosed pliers or a hemostat works best for backing the hook out.
- If the fish is hooked deeply, cut the line as close as possible to the hook. Do this only if removing the hook will cause more damage than leaving it in. Use steel hooks that will quickly rust out; avoid using stainless steel hooks.
- Gently support the fish in the water with its head pointed upstream until it swims away on its own.





## EMERGENCIES

### Surviving Cold Water

Cold water immersion plays a significant role in the majority of Alaska's boating fatalities. Generally accepted by researchers to be water temperatures below 68 degrees Fahrenheit, cold water is virtually all water in Alaska.

#### The Effects of Cold Water Immersion

Most of Alaska's boating fatalities involve cold water immersion that, according to research, kills in several ways:

##### 1. INITIAL REACTION—"COLD SHOCK RESPONSE"

- Within the first three minutes
- Uncontrollable gasping and hyperventilation
- Effect passes after a few minutes
- If not wearing a life jacket, a higher risk of drowning



Without a life jacket, it is very difficult to keep the airway clear during the **cold shock response** stage, which could result in drowning.

##### 2. SHORT TERM IMMERSION—"SWIM FAILURE"

- Within the first 30 minutes
- Arms and legs begin to lose sensation and function
- If not wearing a life jacket, a higher risk of drowning



Without a life jacket, it is very difficult to keep the head above the surface of the water during the **"Swim Failure"** stage, which could result in drowning.

##### 3. LONG TERM IMMERSION—"IMMERSION HYPOTHERMIA"

- After 30 minutes (or more)
- Gradual drop in body core temperature eventually causing unconsciousness
- Wearing a life jacket may increase survival time

## Causes of Cold Water Immersion

The following are the leading causes of cold water immersion:

**Swamping and/or capsizing** – due to overloading, poorly secured or shifting loads, improper boat handling in rough water, loss of power or steerage, anchoring from the stern, wrapping an anchor, mooring, or pot line around a drive unit, or taking a wave over the transom during a sudden stop.

**Falls overboard** – most commonly due to slipping, a loss of balance while standing or moving around the boat, striking another boat or object, sudden grounding, or when reaching for objects overboard.

**Swimming to retrieve a drifting boat** - a loose boat drifting away produces an almost irresistible impulse to intentionally leave a place of safety to swim for it. Don't.

## Prepare for Cold Water Immersion

Most immersion events happen quickly and unexpectedly. So, while prevention is best it is also important to be prepared. Taking these simple steps will help ensure the best possible outcome:

- Always wear a life jacket when in an open boat or on an open boat deck. Trying to put your PFD on in cold water is extremely difficult (if not impossible) and costs precious time and energy.
- Carry some communication and signaling devices **ON YOUR PERSON**. A personal locator beacon, a small hand held VHF radio, EPIRB, a cell phone in a waterproof bag or case, a whistle, and some visual distress signals may save the day. Today's devices are smaller, lighter, and easy to carry.
- Unless the boat is designed so that a person in the water can easily get back into the boat unassisted, equip the boat with a reboarding ladder, rope ladder, foot sling, or a swim platform.
- Practice- re-boarding your boat, donning survival suits, signaling, transmitting MAYDAYs, recovering a person overboard, and other cold-water survival techniques described in this section. Drills are fun and build skill and confidence.

## Surviving Cold Water Immersion, the 1-10-1 Principle

Surviving cold water immersion depends on adequate flotation to prevent drowning, and timely self-rescue or rescue by others. Wearing a life jacket, the ability to swim, a controlled entry into the water, surface conditions, length of time in the water, associated injuries or medical conditions, and alcohol use can all influence the outcome.

1-10-1 is an easy way to remember what to do in the event of a sudden cold water immersion. Note: the information below does not apply to all persons in all cases.

### 1 Minute

The initial reaction “cold shock response” phase usually passes within the first three minutes. Focus on getting breathing under control until gasping and hyperventilation subsides. Understanding that this stage will soon pass may help prevent panic.

### 10 Minutes

Once breathing is under control, most people have at least 10 minutes (or more) to take the actions necessary for self rescue or obtaining rescue. Don't waste time and energy removing shoes or clothing. Even small amounts of air trapped in clothing will provide some buoyancy and thermal protection. Perform the most important functions first:

1. If not already worn, attempt to don life jackets or survival suits, and then assist others in doing so.
2. Account for any other members of the party. Check around and under the boat.
3. Activate emergency locator beacon, transmit a MAYDAY on Marine VHF radio channel 16, or call 911 or \*CG on a cellular phone. When in range of others, use visual and sound distress signals.
4. Water transfers heat much faster than air of the same temperature. Get all persons as much out of the water as is possible. For example, if the boat is not overturned, use the boat's re-boarding devices and appropriate and practiced techniques to get back in. If overturned, climb on top of the hull. If separated from the boat use any other available objects to get as much of your body out of the water as possible.
5. Make a plan.

## The Swim/Don't Swim Decision

Staying with or near a floating boat may be the best choice, especially if the event was witnessed or emergency communication was successful. Even if capsized or swamped, a boat may offer supplemental flotation and is far easier for potential rescuers to spot than is a person in the water. Swimming in cold water can reduce in-water survival time, and the average person will lose more heat faster by swimming than by remaining still. Distances can be deceiving when on the water and safety can look closer than it really is.

Situational factors should often be considered when making the swim/don't swim decision:

- Whether or not a PFD is worn
- Whether or not a place of safety is close (less than 800 yards away or 45 minutes swimming time based on fitness level and swimming ability, and wearing a life jacket)



- The likelihood of rescue by others (the event was witnessed or others are aware of the emergency via an EPIRB, PLB, SPOT, MAYDAY or other communication)
- Able to get in or on top of the boat or other object to get out of the water
- Would be leaving a place of relative safety to swim
- Whether in calm or moving water (i.e. a river)
- Physical ability and medical condition of the party members

## Swimming in open water:

Use a modified backstroke, using forearms and lower legs. Keep upper arms and elbows close to the sides of chest, upper legs close together and knees slightly bent. Move slowly and conserve energy.

If there is more than one person and they are in the “huddle” position (see below) one person may be able to propel the entire group, taking turns.

## Swimming in rivers or other moving water:

- Point feet downstream, knees bent slightly and feet up to avoid foot entrapment
- Maintain body at a 45-degree angle to the current, with head pointing to the bank of choice. The force of the current on the upstream side of your body will help to “ferry” you toward that bank.
- Use a modified backstroke. Use your feet, arms and legs to fend off rocks and other objects.
- If necessary be prepared to quickly flip onto your stomach and into a head-first position to scramble over “strainers” or other obstacles to keep from becoming pinned against them by the current.

## 1 HOUR

Even in very cold water people may have thirty minutes (or more) before body core temperature begins to drop. The priority may now become slowing the rate of heat loss to extend useful consciousness and survival time.

Keep movement to a minimum. Protect areas of high heat loss (such as the head, neck, armpits, groin and the sides of the torso) as much as possible. The “Heat Escape Lessening Position” (H.E.L.P.) may be useful, *but is only possible if wearing a personal flotation device*. Hold the inner side of your arms tightly against the sides of your chest and grasp the shoulders of your PFD. Press your thighs together, cross your feet at the ankles and raise your knees as close



*A tight huddle protects high heat loss areas*



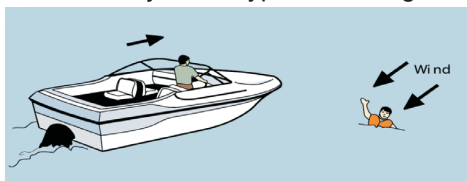
to your chest as possible while still maintaining position in the water.

Small groups can form a tight “huddle” by intertwining arms so that bodies work together to protect high heat loss areas. Small children and injured or unconscious persons can be placed in the center of the huddle, to be supported by the group. Persons in a group should tie themselves together to keep from becoming separated.

Be prepared to activate visual and sound distress signals when potential rescuers are in range.

### Person Overboard Response

1. Everyone don life jackets (if they aren't worn already).
2. Keep eyes on the victim at all times. If possible, assign a person on the boat to serve as the lookout.
3. Throw a life jacket, Type IV life ring or seat cushion or any other



*Approach a victim in the water from downwind and/or down current*

4. floating object toward the victim. Any additional objects in the water with the person will also make them easier to see.
4. Approach the person from downwind or downstream. To avoid the risk of striking the victim with the boat, when close enough reach for the person with an oar, paddle, or other item and pull them to the boat. Or, use a Type IV throw ring or cushion with a line attached and pull the person to the boat.
5. Don't go into the water for the victim except as a last resort.
6. Direct passengers as necessary to assist and/or to balance the boat, then assist the person in getting out of the water. If pulling a victim in over the stern, all engines should be stopped.
7. Treat the victim to your level of training.

### Treating Immersion Hypothermia

The goals for treating immersion hypothermia patients are:

**Gentle handling** - Cold heart muscle and vasculature of severely hypothermic patients are vulnerable to physical exertion, jarring, or moving from a horizontal to vertical position too quickly.

**Providing basic life support** - as necessary.

**Preventing further heat loss** - Remove wet clothing, dry victims off and put them in dry clothes and a sleeping bag or blankets and vapor barrier. Shivering is good.

**Securing transport** - to medical care for moderately to severely hypothermic patients.

### Cold Water Near-Drowning

A person found unconscious in cold water, even if they appear dead, may still have a chance for survival. If the victim was known to be submerged for an hour or less (or if the time of submersion is unknown), providing basic life support to your level of training and obtaining medical help quickly could save a life. Emergency medical responders are taught “a cold water immersion victim isn’t dead until they are warm and dead.”

## Emergency Communications

### Distress Signals

International Navigation Rules 32-37 (Part D) apply to signals, including distress signals. The internationally recognized signals indicate that a boat is in distress and requires assistance.

If flares or other pyrotechnic devices are used, please keep in mind that it doesn’t do any good to use them if there is no one around to see them. Use them judiciously!

Other signal methods may also be used in an emergency, but keep in mind:

- With visual signals, **CONTRAST** with the background is key.
- Straight lines and geometric shapes are uncommon in nature, making them stand out when seen.
- Fires and gunshots are not unusual in rural settings. When used as signals, they should be in groups of three in order to draw sufficient attention.
- Using a sound and a visual signal together may be more effective than one single method.

## Emergency Radio Procedures

There are three types of emergency radio messages:

**SECURITE**—to notify others of bad weather or other hazards (pronounced say-cure-eh-tay).

**PAN-PAN**—to notify others of a very urgent situation regarding vessel or personal safety (pronounced pon-pon).

**MAYDAY**—to notify others when experiencing an immediate threat to life or vessel.

Transmitting a MAYDAY:

If you get a response, be prepared to give the following information:

### Vessel description:

length: \_\_\_\_\_ propulsion type: \_\_\_\_\_

color: \_\_\_\_\_ registration #: \_\_\_\_\_

### On-scene weather:

wind speed: \_\_\_\_\_ wind direction: \_\_\_\_\_

sea height: \_\_\_\_\_ swell direction: \_\_\_\_\_

visibility: \_\_\_\_\_ ceiling: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency radio & survival equipment

onboard: \_\_\_\_\_

Radio frequencies available: \_\_\_\_\_

Operator's name and phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's name and phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home port: \_\_\_\_\_

## EMERGENCY RADIO CALL PROCEDURES

1. MAKE SURE RADIO IS ON
2. SELECT CHANNEL 16
3. PRESS & HOLD TRANSMIT BUTTON
4. CLEARLY SAY: **MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY**
5. ALSO GIVE:
  - **VESSEL NAME & DESCRIPTION**
  - **POSITION/LOCATION**
  - **NATURE OF EMERGENCY**
  - **NUMBER OF PEOPLE ON BOARD**
6. RELEASE TRANSMIT BUTTON
7. WAIT 10 SECONDS — IF NO RESPONSE, REPEAT



VHF-FM



**CONFIRM ALL PERSONS WEARING LIFE JACKETS!**

[www.alaskaboatingsafety.org](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org)

### Emergency Cellular Procedures

Where there is cell phone coverage, it is possible to call the U.S. Coast Guard directly by dialing \*CG (\*24). Alaska is the only state where \*CG is still operational, however the call must be placed from an Alaskan cellular phone provider.

1. First give your phone number in case you are disconnected.
2. Give your name and a boat description.
3. Give your position/location.
4. Explain the nature of your problem.
5. Give the number of people on board.
6. REPEAT your cell phone number before ending your call.
7. Keep as calm as possible and speak slowly and clearly so you can be understood.



### Single Side Band (SSB)

The U.S. Coast Guard can be reached by HF/SSB radio on 4125 MHz.

## Emergency Locator Beacons

Emergency locator beacons are highly effective tracking transmitters which aid in the detection and location of boats, aircraft, and people in distress. When activated, these radio beacons interface on the 406MHz frequency with COSPAS-SARSAT, an international satellite-based search and rescue alert detection and information distribution system.

There are two main types of beacons that are appropriate for boating in Alaska:

- Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) are installed on vessels. There are two categories: Category 1 beacons automatically deploy and activate when in contact with the water, but can also be manually deployed and activated or manually activated while in its bracket. Category 2 beacons manually deploy, but automatically activate when out of the bracket and in contact with water.
- Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) work much the same way as EPIRBs, but are carried by a person and must be manually deployed and activated by the user. When selecting a PLB for boating, consider models that are waterproof, will float and are small enough that you will always carry it on your person when on the boat.

When selecting a locator beacon, consider ease of activation under a variety of conditions and the length of time the unit will operate following activation.

It is important that the EPIRB or PLB be registered (and the information updated every two years) so that rescuers can access the vessel's or PLB owner's emergency contact information. Registration is available online at [www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov](http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov).

## Digital Selective Calling

In addition to sending a distress call, or MAYDAY, boaters should also consider activating the red Digital Selective Calling (DSC) emergency button on their Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI)-equipped and registered radio to “alert all stations.”

- A distinctive red “DISTRESS” button is located on the face of a DSC radio.
- Manufacturers are required to install DSC on any marine VHF radio model developed after June 1999 (except handheld models).



- DSC radios automatically send (once pushed) a DISTRESS alert to those in the immediate area who are also equipped with a DSC radio, without having to use the usual voice calling/distress channels.
- DSC radios automatically and silently maintain a listening watch on the appropriate DSC channel (VHF 70, or 2187.5 kHz).
- The benefits of DSC are greatly enhanced when the radio is connected to the boat's global positioning system (GPS) unit.

To be able to use the DISTRESS alert function, boaters must first obtain a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number. This nine-digit number electronically identifies a specific boat and must be programmed into the radio. MMSI numbers may be obtained, at no charge, from [www.boatus.com/mmsi/](http://www.boatus.com/mmsi/).

The United States Coast Guard's Rescue 21 Digital Selective Calling Emergency Contact System is not yet operational in Alaska, however, those in the immediate area with DSC can receive the distress signal for relay purposes. For more information on when Rescue 21 will be operational, contact the U.S. Coast Guard.

### **Other Sources of Assistance**

Coast Guard Marine Safety Anchorage: (907) 271-6700

Pollution Reporting: (800) 424-8802

Coast Guard Auxiliary: VHF Ch. 16 and CB Ch. 9

**For information on other common boating emergencies (capsizing, falls overboard, fire, grounding, carbon monoxide, etc.) please obtain a copy or view online a copy of the Alaska Boater's Handbook at [www.alaskaboatingsafety.org](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org).**

## CONTACTS

### **City of Soldotna**

Soldotna Parks and Recreation  
 Soldotna Sports Center  
 177 North Birch Street  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
 (907) 262-9107  
[www.ci.soldotna.ak.us](http://www.ci.soldotna.ak.us)

### **City of Kenai**

Kenai Parks and Recreation  
 410 North Willow St.  
 Kenai, AK 99611  
 (907) 283-7535  
[www.ci.kenai.ak.us](http://www.ci.kenai.ak.us)

### **Donald E. Gilman River Center**

514 Funny River Rd.  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
 (907) 260-4882  
[www.borough.kenai.ak.us/kenairivercenter](http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us/kenairivercenter)

### **Kenai Peninsula Borough**

144 North Binkley St.  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
 (907) 262-4441  
[www.borough.kenai.ak.us](http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us)

### **Alaska State Parks, Kenai Peninsula Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation**

PO Box 1247  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
 (907) 262-5581  
[www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/index.htm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/index.htm)

### **Chugach National Forest Seward Ranger District**

PO Box 390  
 Seward, AK 99664  
 (907) 224-3374  
[www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach)

**US Army Corps of Engineers**

Kenai Field Office  
 805 Frontage Road, Suite 200C  
 Kenai, Alaska 99611-7755  
 (907) 283-3519  
[www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg](http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg)

**AK Department of Fish and Game**

P.O. Box 25526  
 Juneau, Alaska 99802-5526  
 (907) 465-4100  
[www.adfg.state.ak.us](http://www.adfg.state.ak.us)

**AK Department of Environmental Conservation****Kenai Peninsula Office)****Red Diamond Center**

43335 Kalifornsky Beach Rd, Suite 11  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
 (907) 262-5210  
[www.dec.state.ak.us](http://www.dec.state.ak.us)

**AK Office of Project Management and Permitting  
(formerly Division of Governmental Coordination)**

550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1430  
 Anchorage, AK 99501  
 (907) 269-8629  
[www.dnr.state.ak.us/opmp](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/opmp)

**Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office**

43655 Kalifornsky Beach Road  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
 (907) 262-9863  
[www.alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/fieldoffice/kenai/index.htm](http://www.alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/fieldoffice/kenai/index.htm)

**Kenai National Wildlife Refuge**

2139 Ski Hill Road  
 P.O. Box 2139  
 Soldotna, AK 99669  
 (907) 262-7021  
[www.kenai.fws.gov/index.htm](http://www.kenai.fws.gov/index.htm)

**Natural Resources Conservation Service—Alaska**

110 Trading Bay Dr STE 160

Kenai, AK 99611-7787

(907) 283-8732

[www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov)**Kenai Watershed Forum**

P.O. Box 2937

Soldotna, AK 99669

(907) 260-5449

[www.kenaiwatershed.org](http://www.kenaiwatershed.org)**Caring for the Kenai**

P.O. Box 385

Soldotna, AK 99669

(907) 262-4949

[www.caringforthekenai.com](http://www.caringforthekenai.com)**Alaska Office of Boating Safety**550 W 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1380

Anchorage, AK 99501

(907) 269-8706

[www.alaskaboatingsafety.org](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org)**Moose Pass Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau**

P.O. BOX 147

Moose Pass, AK 99631

[www.moosepassalaska.com](http://www.moosepassalaska.com)**Soldotna Chamber of Commerce**

&amp; Visitor Information Center

44790 Sterling Hwy.

Soldotna, AK 99669

907-262-9814

[www.visitsoldotna.com](http://www.visitsoldotna.com)**Kenai Chamber of Commerce**

402 Overland St.

Kenai, Alaska 99611

907-283-1991

[www.kenaichamber.org](http://www.kenaichamber.org)

**Funny River Chamber of Commerce**

35850 Pioneer Rd.  
Soldotna, AK 99669-8724  
(907) 262 0879

**Cooper Landing Chamber Of Commerce & Visitors Bureau**

PO BOX 809  
Mile 47.5 Sterling Hwy  
Cooper Landing, AK 99572-0809  
(907) 595-8888  
[www.cooperlandingchamber.com](http://www.cooperlandingchamber.com)





## RESOURCES

### BOATING EDUCATION WEBSITES

#### **Alaska Boating Safety Program**

[www.alaskaboatingsafety.org](http://www.alaskaboatingsafety.org)

#### **Alaska Marine Safety Education Association**

[www.amsea.org](http://www.amsea.org)

#### **Knik Canoers & Kayakers**

[www.kck.org](http://www.kck.org)

#### **Alaska Kayak School**

[www.alaskakayakschool.com](http://www.alaskakayakschool.com)

#### **American Canoe Association**

[www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org)

#### **United States Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety**

[www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org)

#### **National Association of State Boating Law Administrators**

[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)

#### **National Safe Boating Council**

[www.safeboatingcouncil.org](http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org)

#### **National Water Safety Congress**

[www.watersafetycongress.org](http://www.watersafetycongress.org)

## KENAI RIVER WEBSITES

### **Kenai river center**

[www.borough.kenai.ak.us/KenaiRiverCenter](http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us/KenaiRiverCenter)

The Donald H. Gilman Resource Library, located at the Kenai river center, houses a collection of technical and scientific materials related to management and conservation of natural resources. Topics include watershed and wetland ecology, floodplain management, geology, hydrology, water quality, coastal management, fisheries, streambank restoration and more. We also have books and materials about the natural and cultural history of the Kenai Peninsula.

### **Kenai Watershed Forum**

[www.kenaiwatershed.org](http://www.kenaiwatershed.org)

### **Caring For the Kenai**

[www.caringforthekenai.com](http://www.caringforthekenai.com)

### **Sport Fishing Regulations for Southcentral Alaska**

[www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/regulations/scregs.cfm](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/regulations/scregs.cfm)

### **Kenai River Special Management Area**

[www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/units/kenairiv.htm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/units/kenairiv.htm)

### **Kenai River Sportfishing Association**

[www.kenairiversportfishing.com](http://www.kenairiversportfishing.com)

### **Kenai River Professional Guide Association**

[www.krpga.org](http://www.krpga.org)

### **Kenai Convention and Visitors Bureau**

[www.visitkenai.com](http://www.visitkenai.com)

### **Sport Fish Sonar Program**

[www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Region2/sonar/kenaisonar.cfm](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Region2/sonar/kenaisonar.cfm)

### **Kenai River Guide Academy**

[www.krga.org](http://www.krga.org)

## WEATHER, WATER & TIDES WEBSITES

### **Pledge To Live:**

[www.pledgetolive.com](http://www.pledgetolive.com)

### **National Weather Service, marine weather:**

[pafc.arh.noaa.gov/marfcst.php](http://pafc.arh.noaa.gov/marfcst.php)

### **National Weather Service, river forecast center**

[aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/](http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/)

### **United States Geological Survey, streamflow data**

[waterdata.usgs.gov/ak/nwis/current/?type=flow](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ak/nwis/current/?type=flow)

### **Tide Table websites**

[www.pledgetolive.com](http://www.pledgetolive.com)

[www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating/tides.htm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating/tides.htm)

[www.freetidetables.com](http://www.freetidetables.com)

## MORE BOATING WEBSITES

### **Alaska Boat Registration, Department of Motor Vehicles**

[www.state.ak.us/dmv/reg/boat.htm](http://www.state.ak.us/dmv/reg/boat.htm)

## BOOKS

### **Chugach National Forest: Legacy of Land, Sea and Sky**

By Andromeda Romano-Lax

### **Kenai Trails**

By Alaska Natural History Association

### **Kenai River (River Journal Volume 2)**

By Anthony J. Route

### **Fishing Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, A Complete Angler's Guide**

By Dave Atcheson

### **Alaska's Kenai Peninsula: A Traveler's Guide**

By Andromeda Romano-Lax

## **Fishing Alaska's Kenai River**

By Gunnar Pedersen

## **Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Wildlife Viewing Trail Guide**

Edited by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Written by Doug O'Harra, Katherine Hocker, Kristan Hutchison and other ADF&G staff

## **Kenai Canoe Trails**

By Daniel L. Quick

## **The Kenai Peninsula (Alaska Geographic Magazine)**

Edited by Penny Rennick

## **Walk About Guide to Alaska, No. 1: Kenai & Turnagain Arm**

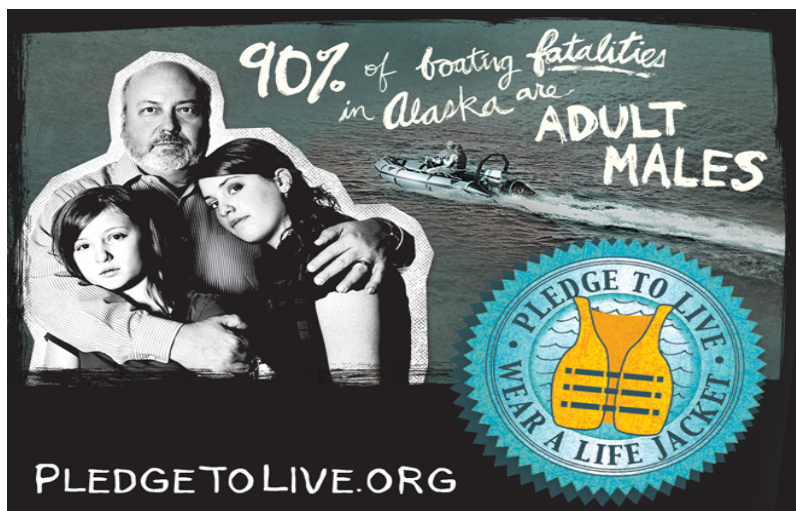
By Shawn Lyons

## **Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Tour Guidebook**

By Tsunami Factor

## **50 Hikes in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula**

By Taz Tally



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