

Conservation Effort Protects Coastal Habitat to Expand Kachemak Bay State Park

KACHEMAK BAY, Alaska — The Conservation Fund and Alaska Department of Parks and Outdoor Recreation have successfully protected the final private land on Nuka Island, a remote and mountainous island along Alaska’s Gulf Coast, to expand Kachemak Bay State Park. The acquisition incorporates nearly 24 acres to strengthen public coastal access and wildlife habitat along Nuka Passage for generations to come.

The newly protected property, known as Herring Pete’s Cove, lies on the west side of Nuka Island just south of Kenai Fjords National Park. The surrounding landscape supports a wide range of wildlife, including seabird colonies, seals, sea otters, whales, black bears, wolves, moose, mountain goats, mink, fox, and salmon.

The site includes critical coastal and upland habitat, with two salmon-bearing streams that support spawning and rearing pink salmon, helping ensure the long-term health of local ecosystems.

“Nuka Island is a rare place on the Kenai Peninsula where visitors can still experience Alaska on its own terms — remote, wild, and pristine,” said Chris Litte, Alaska field representative at The Conservation Fund. “Protecting Nuka Island means providing safe harbors for boaters, expanding access to incredible recreation, and protecting spawning grounds and nurseries for fish and wildlife. It marks a meaningful step forward for the integrity of Kachemak Bay State Park and for long-term conservation in Alaska.”

“Kachemak Bay State Parks has many must-see gems that require some effort to get to, and we are thrilled to add this historic inholding to that list,” said Ricky Gease, Director of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation at the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. “We take great pride in providing unique outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state, and prioritizing conservation of these areas that provide a rich historic window into world-class cultural resources we all share.”

Nuka Island and its surrounding waters serve as a key corridor for boaters traveling between Seward and Homer, offering sheltered passage and safe anchorage in nearby coves. These protected waters provide opportunities for multi-day exploration, fishing, kayaking, and wildlife viewing in one of Alaska’s most remote marine environments.

The latest acquisition builds on The Conservation Fund’s previous conservation efforts with the park, bringing total protected lands to 52 acres over the past three years. Earlier

projects include shoreline and access protections that have helped expand public recreation opportunities and safeguard sensitive coastal habitat. That total includes 23 acres on southwestern Nuka Island protected in 2024 and 5 acres of beach access along the park's popular Saddle Trail protected in 2023.

The newly conserved property was acquired from the University of Alaska and transferred to the Alaska Department of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Proceeds from the sale will support student scholarships through the university.

“The University of Alaska Land Management team is always happy to partner on projects that support both local communities and our UA Scholars Program. We are grateful for our partnership with The Conservation Fund and the ability to work together to support recreation,” said Adrienne Stolpe, chief lands officer at the University of Alaska.

The Conservation Fund and the Alaska Department of Parks and Outdoor Recreation plan to continue their work to conserve Kachemak Bay State Park into the future.

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About The Conservation Fund

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