



News Release

For Immediate Release: December 8, 2025

ADF&G Seeks Public Input on Wheeled Airplane Landings and Permitting at McNeil River State Game Sanctuary

ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) is addressing operational challenges related to visitor access through a public survey. The department is considering whether the use of wheeled planes should be implemented at the McNeil River bear viewing program to increase public access. Additionally, ADF&G is considering practices to increase flexibility for permit winners such as allowing permit winners to change their time blocks after receiving a permit or whether to change time blocks to align with accessible tides.

Access for the bear-viewing program has historically been via float plane landings in the McNeil lagoon, adjacent to the McNeil camp. This method requires a high tide of at least 15 feet during daylight hours. During most years, there are multiple days with tides that are not conducive to float plane landings, making access difficult for permit holders during some allotted time periods.

In 2024, the department allowed limited wheeled plane landings on a trial basis to transport visitors when tides would not allow float plane access. Landing wheeled planes increased access for visitors, but sometimes disturbed and displaced bears. On occasion, planes were unable to land due to bears present on the landing area.

Stakeholders are invited to complete the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary Stakeholder Survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/38Z8JJJ> **The survey will be available from December 8 through January 23, 2026.** For more information about McNeil River State Game Sanctuary visit the ADF&G website: [McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge](#).

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