
McNeil River State Game Sanctuary 2025–2026 Stakeholder Survey Results

Division of Wildlife Conservation
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PREPARED BY:

Division of Wildlife Conservation

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Survey responses.

1. What is your relationship with McNeil River State Game Sanctuary? (Select all that apply)

Answered = 741, Skipped = 0

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
87.6%	649	Previous or prospective visitor
52.0%	385	General interest in McNeil River and/or bear conservation
1.5%	11	Commercial guide
1.6%	12	Commercial transporter
0.5%	4	Non-profit entity
6.2%	46	Other

Written responses to other (Question 1)
• Retired ADFG bear biologist and former manager
• Commercial Operator
• Visitor, scouts
• Former guide
• Alaska resident
• Have done research on visitor volume of bear viewing in Alaska
• Promote ecotourism and protecting Alaska's Brown bear
• Alaskan citizen
• Stakeholder
• Spent 8 days doing volunteer trail work at McNeil.
• ADF&G employee who conducts fisheries work in Kamishak Bay
• Supporting wildlife advocacy and non-consumptive use
• previous guide and administrator
• I have conducted risk management for the McNeil refuge and have been there several times.
• Want to Visit but very difficult to get a permit
• For decades we unsuccessfully applied for a permit through the lottery
• educator, academic
• 30+- year interest in McNeil River, 30-year Resident of AK
• HUGE fan of the bears! 🐻
• Former McNeil River staff
• Pilot
• Advocate on behalf of McNeil's bears and the sanctuary itself
• bear conservationist
• Past manager
• Private pilot
• Wildlife biologist
• Resident of Alaska
• volunteer over 20 days
• Photographer guide in AK for decades, previous NPS/USFWS ranger

Written responses to other (Question 1)
• Just a concerned hunter and outdoorsman.
• ADFG employee
• We put our names in but did not get visiting permit so went to the more public viewing area
• Tourism business owner
• Lottery winne
• financial donator via AK Conservation Foundation.
• Former operator of heavy aircraft.
• I was able to come as a volunteer - a supporter of Friededw of McNeil River.
• Alaskan who loves the bears!
• Author
• Drawn twice
• 4x visitor
• Wannabe visitor who has been unlucky in a few permit lotteries.
• I used to work at McNeil as a wildlife technician for ADFG
• Retired ecologist
• Fish and Game Employee
• ADFG employee

2. Have you been to McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and/or Refuge?

Answered = 740, Skipped = 1

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
59.9%	443	Yes
40.1%	297	No

3. If Yes, what areas have you visited? (Select all that apply)

Answered = 453, Skipped = 288

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
94.7%	429	McNeil River camp and department guided bear viewing program
10.6%	48	Kamishak River
8.4%	38	Chenik Lake/Creek
7.1%	32	Other

Written responses to other (Question 3)
• But I've landed there and guided in the area
• Alaska National Guard
• Douglas Rivers, Paint River, Amakdedori Creek; everywhere in Kamishak Bay
• Mikfik Lake
• See above.
• Brooks Camp/Naknek area
• I was at the Nat Hab camp, so whatever part of the Sanctuary that was

Written responses to other (Question 3)
• Round Island
• Lake Clark
• McFikk creek
• Float plane pilot dropping off clients
• I've been there seven times
• Paint River
• The coastline within the sanctuary and also walking the coastline to Chenik River
• and McVik River
• Paint River
• We have visited Brooks Camp & Brooks Falls
• Brooks Katmai NP
• I live out this way
• All
• Had a permit for 2025 but couldn't go in. Commercial operators are price gouging people. I also wasn't allowed to bring my own plane.
• Halo Bay, Silver Salman, Kanak.
• Mikfik river
• Flew over 2 days in a row on a wheeled plane with hopes of landing for our permitted time
• Horseshoe cove
• Surrounding areas near Kamishak & throughout LC/Katmai
• Several remote locations via float plane
• McNeil River
• As a volunteer
• Mikfik creek
• Mikfik Creek, Lagoon, McNeil Cove
• Applied but never gotten a permit

4. Do you intend on visiting in the future?

Answered = 734, Skipped = 7

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
92.2%	677	Yes
7.8%	57	No

5. If Yes, what areas do you plan to visit? (Select all that apply)

Answered = 683, Skipped = 58

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
96.6%	660	McNeil River camp and department guided bear viewing program
23.1%	158	Kamishak River
21.8%	149	Chenik Lake/Creek
2.9%	20	Other

Written responses to other (Question 5)
• might consider other areas
• Douglas Rivers
• Whatever area wheel plane access is permitted
• Depends on what happens.
• Unit 9
• TBD
• Maybe others
• Any and all
• Brooks Katmai NP, Silver Salmon - Katmai NP
• the entire coastline of the area via boat
• Off airport strips
• not sure yet but working on more bear adventures
• All
• Looking for steelhead
• Mikfick creek
• Not sure yet.
• LC & Katmai coastal bays/inland bear spots -- Moraine, Hallo, etc.
• Unsure
• In my dreams. I would love to return but am probably getting too old.
• NA

6. If you've previously taken part in the ADF&G McNeil River guided bear viewing program, what was your mode of transportation?

Answered = 619, Skipped = 122

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
68.3%	423	Float plane
1.8%	11	Wheeled plane
0.8%	5	Boat
29.1%	180	NA

7. How many times have you submitted a lottery application for a McNeil River bear viewing permit?

Answered = 709, Skipped = 32

Written responses (Question 7)
• 3
• 2
• 5
• 0
• many
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 3
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 1
• I was there as a AK Dept. of Fish and Game employee
• 4
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 3
• None
• 0
• 0
• Zero
• 2
• 1
• 4
• 8-10
• 4
• Once
• 3
• 0
• Twice
• 4
• 0

Written responses (Question 7)
• 1
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 5
• One
• Five
• 0
• 3
• several
• Never
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 0
• None
• 5
• 5 - every year I've been an AK resident
• 0
• 5
• 0
• 3
• 1
• 3-4
• 2
• 3-4
• 4
• 5
• several
• once
• 3
• 2 times
• Nine
• 8-12
• Several but exact number unknown.
• 0
• not yet

Written responses (Question 7)

- 19
- 0
- 3
- zero
- 4
- 2
- 5?
- 10
- 2
- 0
- 16
- 1
- 3
- 1
- 0
- twice
- 0
- 1
- 4
- 3
- 25+
- 4
- several
- None
- 20
- 4
- About 40
- I don't recall
- 0
- 2
- 2
- 4
- 4
- 5
- 1
- Zero
- 6
- 1
- approximately sixteen
- 2
- 7

Written responses (Question 7)

- 1
- 3
- about ten
- 0
- 5
- 1
- 3
- None yet
- 0
- 1
- One
- 3
- 1
- 8
- 6
- 25+
- twice
- 1
- 0
- 2
- 7
- approximately 20
- 1
- 3
- 0
- 8
- 3
- 4
- 1
- 5
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 3
- 2
- 2
- 2
- 5
- 1
- 5

Written responses (Question 7)
• 15
• 12
• 7-10
• 12
• Four times
• 5
• 0
• 4
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 8?
• Three
• 3
• Three
• Once
• 8
• 20+
• 0
• 4
• 1
• 4
• 4
• 5
• 5
• 20
• 2
• Once
• 2
• 3
• 15+
• 10
• I believe three - none after 2002 as it usually conflicts with my work schedule.
• 2
• 0
• ten times I believe -won a standby permit three decades ago -- not lucky since- want to take my wife--at 74 running out of time!
• 0
• 10
• 20+
• 4

Written responses (Question 7)
• 2
• 6
• 4
• 2
• 1
• 4
• 3 submissions for scientific permit
• 1
• 5 times
• 0
• 0
• 8
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 3
• 4-5
• 0
• 0
• 2 times
• 1
• 4
• 6
• 8
• lots
• 1
• 2
• 3
• 2
• 6
• 10
• 3
• 0
• 1
• 5
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 15
• 1

Written responses (Question 7)

- 4 or 5?
- Once
- 1
- 3
- 2
- 3
- 3
- Once
- 4
- 0
- 5
- 1
- Three times.
- Maybe 20 or more
- 2
- 0
- 6
- 16
- Once
- 1
- 4
- 0
- 1
- three times
- 0
- 5
- 2X
- 2
- 0
- 2
- 3
- 10
- More than a half-dozen times.
- 4 or 5
- 3
- 2
- 2
- 6
- 2
- 15
- Four times

Written responses (Question 7)
• 4
• 1
• 2
• 5-10
• 5
• 6-7
• 4
• Once
• Once
• 1
• Maybe 15?
• 13
• Many!
• 10
• 1
• 9 times
• 7
• 5
• 1
• 7
• 2
• 10
• 4
• 4
• 4
• 3
• 10 to 15
• None
• 3
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 5
• 0
• 1
• 1
• Zero
• 1

Written responses (Question 7)
• 0
• 0
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 0
• many
• 5
• 2
• 2
• 0
• 0
• twice
• 0
• 5
• 0
• I never submitted an application. I came with a friend who won a permit.
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3
• 12
• 0
• twice
• 0
• ~5
• 0
• Once
• 1
• 3
• 4 years
• 1
• 0
• 3
• 3
• 1

Written responses (Question 7)

- 15
- 6
- 1
- 6 or 7
- 1
- 2
- 1
- 8
- 4
- 20
- Not sure.
- 0
- Eight
- 0
- 2
- 0
- Once
- 0
- Twice
- about ten times
- 3
- 3
- 13
- 3
- 3
- 2
- 4
- 5
- 2
- 4
- 1
- several times
- 5
- 2
- 3
- 2
- 10 plus
- 8
- 2
- 1
- 10

Written responses (Question 7)

- 3
- 0
- Three times
- 2
- 1
- Once
- 8
- 3
- 12
- 6-8
- 8
- One time
- 6
- 1
- Estimate 6 times
- 4 or 5 times
- 1
- Once
- 5
- 1
- 5
- Over a dozen
- 4
- 1
- 3
- 1
- 10
- 5
- 1
- 8
- 3
- 3
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 5
- 2
- 14
- 3 times
- 2
- 2

Written responses (Question 7)
• 5 or 6 times
• 1
• 5-6
• Twenty
• 2
• Three
• Three
• 1
• 10
• Four
• 3
• 4
• Once
• Once
• 1
• 4
• 6
• 6
• Twice
• 7
• 3
• Six or more
• 3
• 5-7
• 1
• 4
• 6
• One
• 5
• 1
• 3
• 1
• about 10
• 4
• 15+
• 3
• 10
• 1
• 3
• 5
• 4

Written responses (Question 7)

- None
- 20
- 1
- 10+ times
- 5
- 1
- 2
- twice
- Two
- at least 5
- 4
- 10
- 8 years I think
- Once
- 0
- 3
- 0
- Once
- Once
- 3
- 1
- 8 or more times
- 15+
- 0
- Once
- 1
- 3
- 5
- 2 times
- 1
- 15
- 2
- One
- many times over the years
- 3
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 0
- 2
- 27

Written responses (Question 7)
• 1
• 2
• 4
• 6
• 1
• 4
• 2
• 1
• 12
• 3
• 4
• 7
• 1
• 1
• 100
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 5-6
• 2
• Once
• 4
• 3
• 5
• 7
• 5
• Twice
• 4
• 3
• 10
• 1
• 4
• 4
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 3
• Once
• about 29 (always applied for 3 people)

Written responses (Question 7)
• 8-10
• 1
• 7
• 3
• twice
• 2
• 10
• 4
• 7
• 4
• 5 times
• Lost count!
• 1
• 10
• 2
• 2
• 10-12?
• 15
• 1
• 4
• 1
• 1
• 3-4
• 4-6
• 01
• 2
• 6
• 1
• 1
• I submitted lottery applications for many years
• 1
• 2
• 8
• 3
• 3
• 3
• 2
• 3
• 4
• 1
• 4

Written responses (Question 7)
• 3 - 4
• 1
• 3
• 3
• 1
• 2
• 8
• 2
• 15
• 7
• 3 years
• 2
• 1
• 15
• 5
• At least 20 times
• 3
• 0
• 4
• 4
• 25
• 4
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 3
• 4
• 3
• 2
• 3
• 6
• 3
• 1
• 5 times
• 3 or 4
• 1
• Probably 6 or more
• 4
• 3
• 1
• 4

Written responses (Question 7)

- 2
- 1
- 6
- 1
- 5
- 15
- 3
- 1
- 6
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 3
- once
- 3
- Once
- 1
- 1
- 2
- Once
- 10
- 1
- 4
- 3
- 1
- 4
- 1
- 3
- 12 times
- 7 or 8
- 2
- 10
- 0
- 3?
- 4 or 5
- Every eligible year since 2012
- Once
- 5-10
- 5
- 4-5
- 2

Written responses (Question 7)
• 5
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 6
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• None
• 0
• 3-4
• 1
• 0

8. How many times have you won a permit?

Answered = 704, Skipped = 37

Written responses (Question 8)
• 0
• 1
• 2
• 0
• many. I've been there on regular permits, stand-by permits, sci/ed permits
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 1
• NA
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 2

Written responses (Question 8)
• 1
• 0
• 0
• Zeros
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• Once
• 0
• 0
• Twice
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• One
• Zero
• 0
• 1
• none
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• None
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3

Written responses (Question 8)
• 1
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 1
• twice
• once
• 1
• 2
• Eight
• 6
• One
• 0
• 0
• 13
• 0
• 2
• zero
• 2
• 1
• 2
• 1
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 2
• 1 time
• 1
• 1
• At least 10
• Maybe 7
• 0

Written responses (Question 8)
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 3
• 1
• Zero
• approximately 15 (?)
• 0
• six
• 0
• 5
• 1
• 1
• one
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• One
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 1
• 0
• once
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 6
• 2
• 2
• 1
• 1

Written responses (Question 8)
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 4 or 5
• 6
• One time
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 4
• Twice
• 0
• Twice
• Actually did not win a permit. Obtained a permit when all were not claimed.
• 5
• 2
• 0
• 1
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 6
• 0
• Zero

Written responses (Question 8)
• 1
• 1
• 6
• 1
• 2 - for 1989 & 2002
• 0
• 0
• twice -- standby permits- used one but the second time - five years ago the tides would not allow a float plane trip
• 0
• 2
• 2
• 2
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 1
• Selected once for scientific permit
• 0
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 1 time
• 1 alt
• 1
• 4
• 1
• twice
• 0
• 1

Written responses (Question 8)
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 5
• 1
• 2
• 2
• Once
• 1
• 2
• 1
• 0
• 1
• once once
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• One time.
• 8
• 1
• 0
• 5
• 1
• Once
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• one time
• 0
• 1
• 0

Written responses (Question 8)
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 3
• At least a half-dozen times (including science & education permit, twice)
• once
• 2
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 2
• 1
• Twice
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 3
• 4
• Once
• Once
• 1
• 1
• 6
• 1
• 0
• 1
• Once but I have visited two additional times on backup permits
• 3
• 2
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 2
• 1
• 0
• 1

Written responses (Question 8)
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 1
• None
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 6
• 4
• 0n/a
• 0
• 0
• 0
• one
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• once

Written responses (Question 8)
• 0
• 0
• 0
• Once
• 1
• 0
• 2
• Sci ed permit
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 4
• 0
• Once and also the Heritage Raffle
• 0
• 0
• 0
• Onceonce
• 0
• Zero
• I won two times
• 1
• 1
• 10
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 1

Written responses (Question 8)
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• five
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 2
• 1
• Once
• 1
• 0
• 8
• 2
• 1
• One time
• 2
• 0
• twice
• 4
• 1
• Once
• 1
• 1
• 0
• Never
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1

Written responses (Question 8)
• 4
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 1 time
• 2
• 1
• Twice
• 0
• 1
• Twice
• 0
• One
• Two
• 1
• 0
• Three
• 2
• 1
• Once
• None
• 0
• 1
• 2
• 2
• Twice
• 1
• 1
• Twice
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 2
• 2
• One
• 1

Written responses (Question 8)
• 0 - Was invited to be a substitute later
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 4
• 6
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• None
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 1
• 1
• 0
• once
• One
• once
• 1
• 2
• 1
• Once
• 0
• 1
• 0
• Once
• Once
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 0
• None, but received one last minute
• 1
• 0
• 0
• Never

Written responses (Question 8)

- 0
- 3
- 0
- One
- one time
- 1
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 2
- 0
- 1
- 3
- 1
- 0
- 5
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 4
- 0
- once
- 3
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 0
- Once
- 1

Written responses (Question 8)

• 2
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• None
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• once
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 6
• 2
• 2 times
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 6
• 6
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 3
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 1
• 1

Written responses (Question 8)

• Never. I went as a volunteer "Friends of McNeil River"

• 1

• 1

• 2

• 0

• 1

• 2

• 0

• 0

• 1

• 1

• 2

• 1

• 1

• 2

• 1

• 1

• 1

• 1

• One time

• 1

• 2

• 0

• 0

• 1

• 2

• 1

• 1

• 1

• 0

• 2

• 1

• 2

• 3

• 1

• 1

• 1

• 1

• 0

• 0

• 0

Written responses (Question 8)
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1 time
• 2
• 1
• once
• 2
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 1 Standby only
• 5
• 1
• 1
• 2 times - one time as an alternate and did not choose to go
• 1
• not yet
• 0
• Once
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• Twice
• 0
• 3
• 6 times
• 5

Written responses (Question 8)
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1 alternate permit
• Twice
• Once
• 2
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• None
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0

9. How many times have you used a permit?
 Answered = 675, Skipped = 66

Written responses (Question 9)
• 1
• 1
• 0
• can't recall, been going for 40 years
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1

Written responses (Question 9)
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 1
• once
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• Zero
• 1
• 0
• 1
• Na
• 0
• Once
• 0
• 0
• Twice
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• None
• 0
• 1
• went with friend who won
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0

Written responses (Question 9)

- None
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 3
- 1
- 2
- 0
- 2
- 1
- 1
- twice
- once
- 1
- 1 time
- Seven
- 6
- One
- 0
- 0
- 15
- 0
- 2
- zero
- 2
- 1
- 2
- 1
- 2
- 0
- 2
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 3

Written responses (Question 9)
• 2
• 1 time
• None
• 1
• 1
• Every permit
• Every time
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 3
• 1
• Zero - part of a film crew over a few days that may have had a permit
• 5
• N/A
• five
• 0
• 4
• 1
• 1
• one
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• One
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 1
• once
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0

Written responses (Question 9)

- 2
- 0
- 5
- 2
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 2
- 1
- 4 or 5
- 6
- One time
- 1
- 0
- 2
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 4
- Twice
- 0
- Twice
- Once
- 4
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 2
- 1

Written responses (Question 9)
• 3
• 0
• 5
• 0
• Zero
• 1
• 1
• 6
• 1
• Twice
• NA
• 0
• once
• 0
• 2
• 2
• 2
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1
• Once
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3 in addition I was a volunteer x2 in the early 90's
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0 times
• 1
• 2 (one use was because permit winner and alternates could not utilize their permit)
• 3
• 1

Written responses (Question 9)

- twice
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 3
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 3
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 5
- 1
- 2
- 2
- Once
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 0
- One time.
- 7
- 1
- 1
- 5
- 1
- Once
- 1
- 1
- 0
- NA
- one time
- 0
- 1

Written responses (Question 9)
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 2
• A half-dozen times or so
• once
• 2
• 1
• NA
• 1
• 2
• 1
• Twice
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 3
• 4
• Once
• Once
• 1
• 1
• 5
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 3 times
• 3
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 0
• 2
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1

Written responses (Question 9)
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• None
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 6
• 4
• n/a
• 0
• 0
• 0
• ZERO
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 0
• ZERO
• 0

Written responses (Question 9)

- 0
- Once
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 4
- 0
- Once
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 0
- N/a
- Two times
- 0
- 1
- 10
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 0

Written responses (Question 9)

- 0
- 0
- five
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 2
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 0
- Once
- 0
- n/a
- 6
- 2
- 1
- One time
- 2
- 0
- twice
- 3
- 1
- Once
- 1
- 0
- 0
- Never/A
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 4
- 2
- 0
- 2
- 1

Written responses (Question 9)
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 1 time
• 1
• 1
• Twice
• 0
• 1
• Once
• Zero
• Two
• 1
• 0
• Three
• 2
• 1
• Zero
• None
• 0
• 1
• 2
• 2
• Twice
• 1
• 1
• Twice
• 2
• 1
• 2
• 2
• One
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 0
• 4
• 6
• 1
• 0

Written responses (Question 9)
• 0
• 1
• 0
• N/a
• 0
• 1
• Once. The other two times I could not make it in due to weather. Ice going by boat and once going by float plane.
• 1
• 1
• 0
• once
• Zero
• once
• 1
• 2
• 0
• Once
• 0
• 1
• 0
• Once
• Once
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 0
• None
• 1
• NA
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3
• 0
• None
• one time
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1

Written responses (Question 9)
• 0
• 1
• 1
• NA
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 1
• 3
• 0
• 0
• 4
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 2
• 0
• once
• 2
• 0
• 2
• Once
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 0
• 1
• 0
• Went to Katmai peninsula to view bears instead
• 2

Written responses (Question 9)

- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- once
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 5
- 2
- 2 times
- 1
- 1
- NA
- 0
- 5
- 6
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 2
- 0
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 1
- Never
- 1
- 0
- 2
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 1
- 2
- 1

Written responses (Question 9)

- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 1
- Zero
- 1
- 2
- 0
- 0
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 2
- 2
- 1
- 1
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 0
- 1
- Once
- 1
- 1
- not used
- N/A
- 2
- 1
- 2
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 0

Written responses (Question 9)
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 4
• 1
• 0
• once
• 1
• applied last month for next year for the first time
• 0
• Once
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 1
• 1
• 0
• 1
• 1
• Twice
• 0
• 2
• 6 times
• 5
• 1
• 0
• 0
• None
• 0
• Twice
• Once
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 2
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 3

Written responses (Question 9)
• 0
• 0
• 0
• 0
• Zero
• 0
• 0
• Once- went as a ADFG employee, did not enter lottery

10. If you've won a permit but did not visit the sanctuary, what was the reason? (select all that apply)

Answered = 510, Skipped = 231

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
3.3%	17	Expense
2.2%	11	Weather or other transportation mechanical issue
3.3%	17	Lack of transporter availability
9.4%	48	Schedule conflict or other personal issue
78.4%	400	NA
7.8%	40	Other

Written responses to other (Question 10)
• Float plane unable to land due to tides
• mechanical failure of transporter
• Illness
• Covid restrictions in 2020
• Bbb
• Medical
• low tides - the plane could not land- maybe I should have checked boats?
• Tides did not allow for reasonably timed arrival/ departure requiring 10 days at the sanctuary which made our visit unfeasible for us.
• medical - surgery
• NA
• Covid
• I could not land my wheel plane. That would make it more accessible to Alaskans
• Unable to use my own plane.
• Not allowed access with my own plane
• Injured in bike accident and could not fly
• To many people
• the permit window that we won was during low tide
• Covid,and then personal injury
• Ranger wouldn't allow us to land!

Written responses to other (Question 10)
• I thought the permit let me bring my spouse. It didn't, so I didn't use it.
• Tide issues/timing
• Last minute lottery winner change, leaving only days to make it happen
• Tides too low for an extended period of time for a reliable pickup.
• Husband decided he didn't want to go.
• Covid
• Inability to substitute another name for someone who couldn't make it, and unable to substitute in for last-minute availability
• No float planes were able to provide access due to the high tides during our permit period
• Family sickness. However, the schedule with high tides was a challenge in planning before we cancelled.
• no clear understanding of what I got with Standby and not wanting to spend the 4 days in camp.
• Covid year 2020
• Not being allowed to fly my own plane.
• Covid.
• If we had ever won a permit, we would have made it happen
• It was a backup permit with no guarantee-- I chose to wait to get a full permit
• I didn't realize my husband needed a separate permit and didn't want to go without him.
• Tides during permit window
• Won "alternate" permit when somebody wasn't able to use theirs, but had already made other plans by the time I was notified
• we were unable to use our permit because tide was not ameanable.
• Too expensive to go without being sure of leaving campground
• poor timing along with poor tide availability

11. Have you ever witnessed a wheeled plane landing at McNeil River (as either a pilot, passenger, or from the ground)?

Answered = 720, Skipped = 21

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
5.7%	41	Yes
94.3%	679	No

12. If yes, what were your impressions?

Answered = 68, Skipped = 673

Written responses (Question 12)
• Do not allow wheeled planes to land in M.R. Bear sanctuary. Period!!
• I've landed at other bear viewing sites on wheeled planes and seen how beach substrate, conditions, orientation etc affect such access
• Yes, my visit was in 2024 and the wheeled landing seemed to cause more disturbance to the bears than the floatplanes. Some bears are fine with disturbance and others may not come back because of it thereby they won't have access to the abundant resource

Written responses (Question 12)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would not like it. I was a bear tech at Lake Clark National Park and the number of wheeled planes was went from just a few to seeing upwards of 30 a day.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noisy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I landed on wheel plane in 2003 and 2005. With some permit windows, float planes are not an option. I think allowing wheeled plan landings are acceptable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was in 2024 and was surprised to see one landing to pick up a group. I am not sure if bears were displaced on that landing but that had recently been in the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A super cub twisted its tail wheel and had to be repaired onsite. Many females with first-year cubs sleep and graze on the spit and in the lagoon or beach next to spit. They flee from wheeled plane landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was extremely detrimental to the bears and environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It looked like an unsafe landing on the gravel, wobbly and short “runway”. I would not fly in on a wheeled plane.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Witnessed thousands of wheeled plane landings and scouting approaches at Hallo Bay and Chinitna
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbing, irritating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was too intrusive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have accessed McNeil by both float and wheeled planes. There are pluses & minuses with my wheeled plane experience. The plus was the ability to access the camp when tides were not favorable. The minus is what you have stated in your observations, and that is I observed bears near camp at low tide moved from the area due to the wheeled plane landing. I we want to note that I also saw bears appear indifferent to the wheeled plane landing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked like you better have a talented and experienced pilot. The scary ride was returning to Homer—the plane had to be held in place by number of guys while we board the plane due to the high winds and sea conditions—the pilot flew back around the outside of the sound and at low altitude—I was never so glad as when the plane landed in Homer. I thought I had made a bad decision to get on that plane that morning—but it all worked out. The ocean was calm going over—but on this ride back there were white caps and strong winds—it was an adventure I will never forget. But part of the entire experience. I wonder if it is possible to come and go by boat at reasonable tide levels? I think it is what 100 miles? That could be a trial a well I suppose- Iwould think if you had a designated landing area cleared—and maybe kept it lit with solar LED lights along the landing area—the bears would learn to simply avoid that area – making it easier to land without scaring bears off at the time of landing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have seen 2. They were both louder than I thought they would be given the echos off the cliffs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wheel plane landings I witnessed in 2024 were dangerous for the passengers onboard and more dangerous for the people and bears on the ground. There is no safe wheel plane landing area at McNeil that will not disrupt the bears and their habitat.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Na
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We flew out of McNeil on a wheeled plane due to our float plane not being available. It landed on the inside of the lagoon spit. Super short beach for landing and takeoff but our pilot seemed unfazed and it was obviously adequate. Did not see any bears in the immediate vicinity. The flight back to Homer was especially scenic as the pilot had to hug the land as long as possible.

Written responses (Question 12)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thankfully no I didn't see a wheeled plane land as bears actively use that area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did not see one but I understand there were several attempts the summer I visited (2024) and the planes had to turn back to Homer because there were sows with cubs on the spit. So, planes didn't land, and bears got spooked by planes flying low. A lose/lose. Why even consider it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But planes circled falls overhead in violation of altitude closure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern due to the presence of bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems a bit more dangerous than float landing due to limited landing areas, debris on beach and potential for bears in landing area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aircraft landed on the ocean side of the spit. My sense was that the aircraft discouraged the movement of bears along the beach front.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the 59mongst59 of the bears and direction of the landing and takeoff there may be more disturbance. I was on the first flight to land passengers on the spit. Block I 7/9-7/12 2024. Went the plane landed the first time I saw no disturbance of bears but that was not my main focus as we were landing north to south and it was a little exciting. However, when the plane came to take us back to Homer, it landed west to east flying over more area with bears. The plane flew directly over a sow with cubs within 50 yards of the spit. The bears ran off about 40 yards then stopped and resumed grazing. The bears on the mud flat digging for clams showed no indication they even noticed the plane. When we took off west to east the sow and cubs were approximately 40- 50 yards from the plane at about our 5 o'clock position. I was lucky enough to ride in the copilots seat and was able to watch the bears. When the engines reved and we started moving the bears show no visible signs they were bothered which I found interesting. By the time we lifted off they had not moved and the bears in the mud flats didn't seem bothered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While I have not witnessed a wheeled landing, I personally think that this is dangerous on many levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It looked safer than landing in the ocean
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at McNeil directly but safe landings are not an issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is Alaska and we are lucky to have so many great airstrips.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have video footage of displaced 2 displaced bears, who incidentally were not on the spit but in the hills behind camp. My impression is that the wheeled plane landings are disruptive and occur in an area with frequent presence of bears making landings complicated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer float to not interrupt the bears or the beach but pilot did a great job leaving little footprint
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It landed in the spit and spilled fuel from the fuel vents in the beach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wouldn't ever want to see that
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a bit of a disaster. They tried to land several times over a couple of days but there were always sows and cubs on the spit. I think it was likely as frustrating for the people trying to get in as it was for us to watch! And it wasn't fun to see terrified bears running from the sound of a plane.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It felt incongruent with the unique experience that McNeil River offers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheel landings are performed in all Alaska coastal areas throughout the summer with little or no detriment to bears. I saw no impact to the bears at McNeil from wheeled operations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A super cub was able to easily able to operate from outside the cove – https://pbase.com/jhinson_04096/image/114179773
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a plane might conceivably land, there was an almost continuous presence of bears, particularly sows with cubs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

Written responses (Question 12)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a pa-18 supercub landed and visited with the ADFG guides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I happened to be on the first wheeled plane to land at McNeil with permitted visitors. All staff and pilot were very cautious and conscientious of being sure the landing was safe and the bears were not disturbed. Everyone was quick and efficient to minimize and possible disruptions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less dominant bears are disturbed by the planes. I have observed bears reactions to airplanes in Greater Yellowstone, Glacier and throughout Alaska. Less dominant and the more vulnerable a bear is the more they react. Plus it takes away from the human experience to have a plane circling and landing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have only landed there on floats but I have made over 10,000 beach landings, I've assessed the beach at McNeil and feel it could be done safely.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were people from before I arrived stuck there NorthWest clients. I had to wait 2 extra days because of tides. They got permission, landed once and still had to leave 2 behind from previous group. It was necessary because of situation. Should not be a regular thing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I was at McNeil the Superintendent for Katmai NP flew in with his Lead Ranger using the NPS wheeled plane. They arrived and departed no problem. I have landed on the beaches on the West side of Cook Inlet with my father who is a private pilot. We fly over to take part in razor clam harvesting and have landed when bears are present on beaches. We have circled and waited for them to leave or gone to other beaches. Or once we've landed they come back and keep digging up clams.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We flew in to Katmai on wheeled plane but to tarmac. Planes landing by water there seemed OK but I would Not have wanted the bears that wandered everywhere to be disturbed nor displaced by sand landings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It seemed risky for several reasons. Firstly, the landing seemed more dangerous to the people involved. Then the float plane was. Secondly, difficult to predict when bears will be in the area or not, which makes it difficult to know if the people will be able to land or if bears will be disrupted by the activity. More often than not, I feel it will result in disruption to bear activity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm a professional pilot with a lot of experience flying in Alaska. I'm not sure why this is even an issue. Also, legally you can't stop planes from landing according to the Alaska state constitution and Sec. 16.20.160. McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. The tidelands ARE NOT part of the McNeil sanctuary as defined, and neither are the beaches.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO NOT ALLOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have visited Silver Salmon Lodge, at Lake Clark National Park. We flew in and did both a water landing and ground landing. The only comparison I have. Both can be done safely with a good crew assisting and depending on the landscape.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only experienced wheeled plane. When we left it took 2 passes to land. Seemed slightly disruptive to mother/cubs on the flats. I don't know if it is better, worse or same as a float plane.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to run a lodge near McNeil. Before the current lottery system, I've been to McNeil on standby dozens of times. I am also a pilot and have landed at McNeil many times in my own plane, both on wheels and floats. Landing on wheels is a terrible idea for many, many reasons. Principle 60mongst those reasons are huge disruption of bears and the fact that bears,curious by nature, gravitate toward planes parked on the beach, even for a very short time. The other reasons against wheel landings are the prevailing winds are in direct crosswind to a sloping beach. The likelihood of an airplane landing or takeoff accident is very high for beach landings due to these often strong crosswinds....

Written responses (Question 12)
• N/A
• NA
• Well organized. Our pilot was in communication with staff on the ground. We did a fly-by to confirm we were not landing with bears present. We had a plan if bears were in the area.

13. The department should maximize access opportunities for McNeil River bear viewing permit winners.

Answered = 736, Skipped = 5

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
15.6%	115	Strongly agree
16.2%	119	Agree
17.1%	126	Neutral
24.1%	177	Disagree
27.0%	199	Strongly disagree

14. The department should maximize protection of bears within the sanctuary.

Answered = 739, Skipped = 2

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
76.9%	568	Strongly agree
14.8%	109	Agree
5.3%	39	Neutral
1.6%	12	Disagree
1.5%	11	Strongly disagree

15. Wheeled plane landings should be allowed for visitor access to the bear-viewing program, even if they displace bears from the camp area at McNeil River.

Answered = 740, Skipped = 1

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
7.3%	54	Strongly agree
6.0%	44	Agree
8.1%	60	Neutral
12.4%	92	Disagree
66.2%	490	Strongly disagree

16. The department should limit access to McNeil River camp to only float plane landings for permitted bear viewers.

Answered = 739, Skipped = 2

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
50.7%	375	Strongly agree
17.9%	132	Agree

11.8%	87	Neutral
13.4%	99	Disagree
6.2%	46	Strongly disagree

17. The department should limit wheeled plane landings on the beach at the McNeil River camp to certain times of day or during certain part of the season when bears are less likely to be present to minimize disturbance to bears.

Answered = 713, Skipped = 28

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
26.4%	188	Strongly agree
26.1%	186	Agree
17.3%	123	Neutral
9.1%	65	Disagree
21.2%	151	Strongly disagree

18. The department should offer flexibility in the administration of permits by allowing permit winners to change time blocks.

Answered = 735, Skipped = 6

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
15.8%	116	Strongly agree
36.7%	270	Agree
26.4%	194	Neutral
12.0%	88	Disagree
9.1%	67	Strongly disagree

19. The department should offer flexibility in the administration of permits by setting time blocks around accessible tides.

Answered = 731, Skipped = 10

Percent	Number	Answer Choices
28.0%	205	Strongly agree
43.1%	315	Agree
19.8%	145	Neutral
4.9%	36	Disagree
4.1%	30	Strongly disagree

20. Please provide any comments regarding the potential use of wheeled plane landings to access the McNeil River camp for the bear viewing program.

Answered = 515, Skipped = 226

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't think it should be allowed. Do not period them to landed on land, water only!!

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't think they should be used at all, and the question about timing forces a tacit endorsement of wheeled plane use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not believe wheeled plane landings are a perfect solution, but I don't believe they shouldn't be considered either. I know wheeled landings are commonly used in other places but there are also differences along the coast in the types, substrates, and orientations of beaches etc. that might impact such landings that also need consideration. But there are people who know more about that than I do. Wheeled plane landings must be considered in the context of otherwise keeping McNeil functioning the way it is – with visitation limits, state employee staffing and rustic camping, e.g. The cumulative impacts of multiple small changes must be kept in mind whenever changes are considered. If the program is essentially kept the same but some small numbers of flights landing on the beach, I think that could be an option to explore. But I would, as well, consider other options for better float plane access at the same time, such as things I've heard about going via Iliamna, but that I'm not familiar with.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think it's a bad idea and could be harmful to the bears. If people want a guarantee they can go to Brooks. McNeil is special because it's difficult, smaller and intimate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends who have visited MRC say they can't imagine wheeled plane landings in an area frequented by bears including sows with cubs; it would not be putting bears' welfare first. If I am lucky enough to come to MRC I would not want to potentially disrupt the routine of the residents, the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bear viewing program has always been based on set parameters that are followed consistently. Having wheeled planes could potentially upset those parameters and open the area up to far more people. Can't we leave one area of Alaska wild and limit the number of visitors? Is it always about income and status?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't think question 17 was worded well. I don't believe there should be any wheel plane landings at all in the sanctuary. Keep the planes on the water to protect the bears and the experience. Some of the best viewing I had at McNeil was moms with cubs and young bears playing, nursing, and sleeping on the beach and spit in front of camp, and a lot of bears came right in front of camp to eat the vegetation and dig for clams. Wheel plane landings would ruin this for the bears and the visitors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No plane landings on any areas that may disturb, displace or disrupt the habitat should be allowed. This sanctuary isn't a tourist attraction that can be compromised for visitors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled planes are dangerous for family groups and subadult bears on the spit and beach and will disrupt the bear viewing from camp. Please don't allow this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled planes would present a dangerous situation for bears, especially cubs as well as people and aircraft.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mother bear and 2 cubs walked on the beach multiple times during our stay. She wasn't afraid because we were silent and didn't move so she strolled by with cubs even though we were very close to her. We were not a threat. In my opinion, it would be dangerous to have wheeled planes landing on that beach where the bears travel to and from feeding areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am strongly against allowing wheeled plane access.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I've been to McNeil River Sanctuary before for a learning experience as I managed Pack Creek Brown Bear Viewing Area on Admiralty Island in Southeast for ADF&G. I landed by floatplane. Since the number of permitted visitors is limited I don't see why you are considering allowing wheeled planes to land when there are enough float planes to accommodate visitors. Landing wheeled planes on a tidal beach where sows and cubs predominate risks displacing them and is not compatible with the purpose of the sanctuary which states that bears and their habitat protection are the number one priority.

Written responses (Question 20)

- I believe the bears should be protected - this should be the primary consideration. If wheeled landings are going to affect the bears, they should not be allowed.
- I understand that limiting access to McNeil River can be frustrating for some members of the public, especially those who are not selected in the lottery. However, effective wildlife management has long been centered on managing people as much as wildlife, and the current approach appears to be a key reason McNeil has retained its reputation as a truly special place. Although I have not yet had the opportunity to visit McNeil River, the remoteness and rustic character of the sanctuary are consistently described as central to the experience. That sense of isolation and immersion in a wild landscape is precisely what makes McNeil unique, and it is something many Alaskans hope to experience when they are selected through the lottery. I have visited Brooks Falls on National Park Service land, and while the bear viewing there is remarkable, the constant aircraft activity and high visitor numbers noticeably changed the experience. It felt less like being in Alaska's wild and more like visiting a highly managed wildlife attraction. Based on that experience, I am concerned that expanding access for wheeled aircraft at McNeil could lead to similar impacts over time.
Our household in Wasilla is opposed to expanding general access via wheeled aircraft for this reason. If wheeled planes are allowed at all, they should be highly regulated and limited to ensure the permit purpose is upheld: providing the public with an opportunity to view and photograph bears while minimizing impacts to bears, other wildlife, and their habitats.
Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your continued stewardship of this unique sanctuary.
- I'm not in favor of wheeled plane landings. Float plane landings have worked fine for decades. Bears use the beach and wheeled planes will disrupt that. The bears come first!
- Question 17 didn't seem well formed. I was attempting to answer I didn't believe wheeled planes should land at any time.
- Human use and access should be secondary to protection of bears and other wildlife and the habitat in this unique sanctuary. Limited human use and access is WHY this place is so special. Wheel plane landings are in direct violation of the purpose of the sanctuary. Wheel planes must not be allowed.
- The purpose of the sanctuary is to protect the bears and their habitat. Wheel plane landing are dangerous for bears and people both in planes and on the ground, and they would diminish the experience for visitors in camp.
- If wheeled plane landings have been shown to disrupt bear populations then they should not be used unless they can be limited to times that they can be shown that they have limited or no effect on the bears
- There are so few areas of the world where nature is still the priority. If people want wheeled access to bear viewing there are (way too) many private guide businesses willing to disrupt the areas bears for human enjoyment already. The bears of Hallo Bay and the surrounding peninsula are plagued by planes & humans. And now hunting is allowed in the area? Let's just let the bears have ONE space that is safe but even still being invaded. Nature for natures sake is valuable in its own right and not just for human enjoyment. Wheeled planes aren't necessary. This isn't a business it's a sanctuary. Focus on protection & management please. Not tourist convenience.
- Either become more permissive about time blocks, which can greatly impact the number of campers at a given time or allow wheeled landings.
- I am concerned about wheel access disturbing bears as well as causing issues for pilots.
- This is a very bad idea, and an obvious one that should not be considered further. Bears at McNeil and surrounding areas are subjected to considerable disturbance already. There is no defensible reason to add to this simply for the convenience of a few humans. The State's mandate for McNeil is clear and should be followed, if not strengthened in favor of the bears. Don't let McNeil become another Brooks Camp.

Written responses (Question 20)

- As a brown bear hunting guide landing on a super cub in bear dense habitat doesn't seem to bother them, sure we can displace them from the landing strip, but if there is something there they like, they will be back to the area before too long.
- No wheel plane access landings should be allowed! Float plane access is very reasonable in this very natural environment. During my stay, some other permit holders did not visit the falls each day, but the bears were visible and abundant each day. One day of not accessing the camp will not spoil this unique, quality adventure. After walking the beaches around the camp, and thoroughly enjoying the opportunities provided by Fish & Game camp hosts, I do not believe that without significant beach landing modifications wheeled plane landings would be very safe. This would destroy the natural quality of any visit. It would disrupt the quality natural environment each visitor is there to enjoy. Runway strip type landings and takeoffs could eliminate and possibly destroy much of the natural area used by the bears and other wildlife, scaring them away and leaving the wildlife with lasting images and memories of not to return to the area. Float plane access has worked wonderfully and is managed extremely well. There is no reason for allowing additional man-made intrusions into this magnificent natural area we are so very fortunate to be able to enjoy with the existing rules and regulations so wonderfully administered by the Fish & Game staffs.
- Do NOT do what the State has done with the Chilkoot River Corridor. They keep letting more people uncontrolled into it. The bears suffer as a result. Part of the neatness in going to McNeil is a flight on a float plane. Wheeled access is obviously some greed for money by bringing in more people. There is a limit to the capacity of the area to handle people. It is obvious you have not done it for this. Just ruin it with more people. You probably have made up your mind to do it. SO, make sure there are officials at the platform and on the trails to control the people. This is not happening in Haines like it was in the past. The area is ruined now and McNeil will be ruined by over human population.
- Bear protection supersedes human entertainment
- There are bears on the beach so often that it is not efficient to use wheeled planes. I think stressing the bears with trying to land wheeled planes will change the dynamic of the bears behavior towards people. Leave it as is. It's a special place and worth any inconvenience people have to put up with in getting there.
- I would not like it. I was a bear tech at Lake Clark National Park, and the number of wheeled planes went from just a few to seeing upwards of 30 a day, and the bear disturbance was visually significant because they would always do flyovers on the meadow and spook the bears for potentially hours.
- Please don't choose tourists over bears. Viewing opportunities are wonderful, but only if they can be safely done for both humans and bears. Additional people and commotion could compromise both.
- wheeled planes should have full access to the park
- That would be great and increase access
- Stay with float plane use only.
- NO. NO. NO. PROTECTION FOR THE BEARS IS UTMOST IMPORTANCE!! People can stay away!!!!
- I believe it would allow permit holders who drew to use their permit when no float plane transportation was available.
- Nope nope and nope again
- The spit and beach where ADFG proposes wheeled landings are prime habitat for bears, particularly sows and newborn cubs. Wheel plane landings would represent a significant change to McNeil's management and would contravene the governing statute, as they would displace bears and damage essential habitat. McNeil River Sanctuary is not a "tourist destination". We have

Written responses (Question 20)	
	already seen what happens with too many visitors at Katmai the increase in people interfere and displace bears from prime fishing spots.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please don't allow.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that permit flexibility is a must do to limited access. However I believe the number of planes allowed is important living in Marshall Alaska I learned plane noise stress out bears. Often bolting Question? Response time if a plane crashes? Insant bear bait.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please do not allow wheeled plane landings to displace bears..the crazy magic of McNeil depends on the complete harmony with the bears, and allowing them to constantly be hazed to make room for a plane to land would definitely have a negative impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep wheeled planes out! Allow float planes in but the guide company flying those people in it needs to be Alaskan companies and the guides need to be Alaskan residence. The award of the Alaskan guide companies should be via lottery system or give me the kids are they getting into shit from Mom ent
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The refuge is there to protect the bears. Allowing wheeled planes to land on the beach will impact the bears' ability to safely walk the beach as they move about foraging for clams. McNeil River refuge's history speaks for itself with no human or bear injuries while providing a truly world class viewing experience. Please don't destroy a good thing by allowing beach landings. A little inconvenience to humans to wait for high tide to land is a small price to pay for bear safety.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow wheeled landings but with common sense. I need more info on what happened with the trial year to know how to better answer these questions. How disturbed were the bears and for how long. Without that data, it's hard to answer these questions but, in general, it seems like wheeled landings would be OK.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil is a special sanctuary area and should stay that way. There are plenty of other places in the state where folks can do wheeled landings and view wildlife.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've been fortunate to be able to conduct fishery research projects in Kamishak Bay, including the McNeil Sanctuary and Refuge, for decades and have been to McNeil River several dozen times for work. McNeil River is a unique place with a well-deserved reputation for being the premier bear viewing operation in Alaska, if not the world. While issues regarding floatplane access are real, especially given the westward migration of the spit, any actions to accommodate viewer access should first ensure they don't negatively impact the bears. Putting bears first is what made McNeil River the premier place to view bears and it shouldn't be compromised now, after 5+ decades of success. While I have not witnessed a wheeled plan landing at McNeil, I have spent enough time there to know it's unrealistic to expect to be able to consistently land planes on the beach near camp without displacing bears. The current situation derives in part from there no longer being an air charter operator with an Otter on floats available to bring visitors in. Smaller floatplanes cannot always accommodate all the permit holders and their gear. If another Otter operator starts up in Homer, most of this problem goes away. Small tides are not new- it's a problem that has been worked around for 50+ years. I suggest focusing more on the administrative side to address this issue until another Otter operator becomes available or more consistent boat transport becomes a viable option.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should not impact bears in their natural habitat
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 13 asks if the Dept. should maximize visitation opportunities. At what expense? it seems that bears and humans coexist under the current operating rules. What would be the tradeoffs? If wheeled landing are allowed to disrupt bear behavior, what are the longer term effects of these disturbances upon bear behavior? Wheeled Landing should not occur if they will impact normal bear behavior. Possibly landings could occur at another location nearby, not at the beach or spit. Shuttling of passengers from landing area to camp would likely be necessary, maybe by boat or EV. Question 17 suggests limiting times of landings when it is less likely to disturb bears. I don't believe this is a workable

Written responses (Question 20)

solution. If a pilot is paid to fly viewers to camp, he is going to land and keep his paying passengers happy and his yelp reviews positive. Passengers will be very unhappy if they pay a lot of money to get to Homer from wherever in the US, spend a night in Homer, buy food and then be turned back on a sunny day because the pilot happens to have an appreciation for the rules. Upon returning to Homer they do not have a place to stay as they planned on being at Camp. If the Dept can be more flexible in allowing for switching of time blocks that probably helps. Not sure I'm smart enough to understand how it might work.

It makes sense to try to structure permits around high tides to minimize the the amount of lost days at camp and the impact of a large number of people hanging out at camp. Again, I'm not sure how this works but believe it has merits in term of getting viewers to camp with minimal impact to bears and if thought out would not overburden staff and camp facilities.

Good Luck.

The Bears have priority. They are the the asset that creates the draw.

- During my McNeil visit, some of the best viewing we had was on the beach and spit in front of the camp. If planes start landing in this area, it will not only put the family groups and young bears that frequent this area in danger, but it will also diminish viewing opportunities from camp by scaring bears away from the area. This is not only a bad idea, it is also in violation of the primary and secondary goals of the sanctuary (which are to protect the animals and their habitat and run a viewing program that does not threaten the animals and their habitat). Wheel planes cannot be allowed. This place is special BECAUSE access is limited.
- Wheeled plane landing are dangerous for the cubs and young bears that spend time on the spit and beach in front of the camp. Wheeled plane landing are in violation of the Sanctuary's mandate to protect the bears and their habitat. Please do not allow this.
- If wheel plane landings on the beach disrupt or endanger bears and damage the habitat, this is in direct conflict with the purpose of the sanctuary. Wheel landings should not be allowed at McNeil Sanctuary.
- McNeil River SGS is for the bears and other wildlife. Access should not be given to wheel planes. Family groups and young bears are regularly in the beach area and would be at risk with wheel plane landings
- The sanctuary's purpose is to protect the bears and their habitat. Do not allow wheel plane landings.
- It will be abused by commercial guides and rogue visitors
- I don't think allowing wheeled planes at the camp is a wise decision. When we flew in, the float plane pilot was talking about how the sound of the planes disturbs the bears and he is mindful to fly around them, keep the plane higher, etc. if at all possible. This is a sanctuary so keeping bears first I think should be the highest priority. What makes it so special is the way you access it via float plane at high tide, the small group of people allowed there at one time... I think it should stay this way. Please don't ruin it by allowing more noisy planes to land in such a beautiful place. Keep the health and safety of the bears as the first priority.
- Wheeled landings will impact brown bear activity in violation of statute with the potential of displacement and physical injury to bears and the risk of accidents to visitors or the inconvenience of returning to their origin, i.e. Homer, because bears were occupying the landing area. The incentive for allowing wheel landings has for years been the effort of one Homer-based transporter seeking to dominate that market and increase revenue rather than protecting the welfare of bears as required by statute. McNeil is not Disneyland. Visitors need to understand it is for the bears and not compliance with the needs and desires of visitors and transporters. Bears come first.
- Wheeled plane landings should be an option. Do not see long term effects to the bears. People are in camp and bears are visible on beach and occasionally enter camp. Don't see wheeled landing that much of in issue.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Except for medical emergencies or some bizarre logistical necessity, I see no real need for allowing wheeled plane landings at McNeil River camp. Permit holders just need to schedule their arrivals/departures around the tides. Charter aviation entities know how to do this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilots and occupants should not be regulated on park access, but fee's and regulations should be imposed on the landing of aircraft within the vicinity of bears and people doing bear viewing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane landings are a lose/lose proposition for bears and for humans. To arrive by float plane is a new, delightful experience for many of us. It slows us down, makes us aware of the tides and is minimally invasive for the bears and the land.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the primary objective of McNeil has always been the protection of the bears and that should not change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plane access is the only way to access Alaska residents most areas of the State. Wheel planes on low tides and float planes on high tides. Planes have very little and very momentary impact on animals. Allowing access by residents via float plane or wheel plane should be of little difference or consequence. I support wheel plane access, as well as float plane access to this area and the entire state.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane landings should only be allowed in the event of an emergency.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am opposed to wheeled landings and disruption of habitat and bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about boat access? What about landing planes on Amakdedori and boating people over?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I worked on the Katmai coast for many years. Wheeled planes can be quite disruptive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been to McNeil around 8 times. The primary purpose of the refuge is to protect the bears and habitat, which is a world class experience. If wheeled landing are going to negatively impact the bears, which it will, wheeled landings should not be allowed except for extreme emergencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens the door to more negative commercialization and erosion of the very successful program in place for so many years. Give an inch and they take a mile always is true. The state needs to stop thinking McNeil is a profit center and accept that it is a responsibility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entire point of the Sanctuary is to protect the bears and their environment and allow them to exist without disturbances. This proposal goes against all of the above just for the sake of convenience for humans. Not a valid reason for exposing bears to possible danger.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing wheeled landings on the beach is a direct conflict with the primary purpose of the sanctuary, and must be banned. Besides, it is dangerous for the bears as well as people in the planes and in the camp.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's to protect the bears in the habitat not to allow wheel plane landings will be in direct conflict with the goal of McNeil river
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protection of the bears and habitat should be the #1 priority of the sanctuary. Allowing wheeled plane landings is in direct conflict with this goal and should not be allowed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it would be a big mistake to allow any wheeled plane landing at the McNeil river.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They merely add to the difficulty of limiting human access and preserving this extremely valuable and rare wildlife ecosystem.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No wheeled plane landings! The area is important cub rearing habitat.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bears come first. The viewing is managed around what is best for the bears so planes should not disrupt them as well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing wheel plane landings at McNeil is in direct conflict with the primary purpose of the sanctuary, which is to protect the bears, other wildlife, and the habitat. Do not allow wheel planes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled landings cause undue stress on the wildlife and staff at McNeil River. The administration shouldn't allow further trials of wheeled landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled planes will likely result in increased noise, disturbance and displacement of bears and negatively affect bear viewer's experience. Wheeled planes could arrive at McNeil, but due to the

Written responses (Question 20)

presence of bears on or near the landing area, the plane may not be allowed to land there and will need to return to its base location. The end result being no added access. Repeat attempts by the same aircraft would further add to the disturbance. Float planes, however, do not encounter this problem. Landing a wheeled plane on the beach is inheritance more dangerous/risky than landing a float plane on the lagoon. Wheeled aircraft beach accidents will additional aircraft or boat support to remove and or repair damaged aircraft, resulting in additional disturbance to McNeil area bears and bear viewers.

- It is difficult to determine what the long term consequences of a bear "disturbance" might be. Would it be great enough to keep some bears from coming to the falls and getting enough to eat. Would it be something that the bears could learn to live with so that their behavior does not change.

- Please DO NOT allow wheeled plane landings. It has been shown this displaces bears and their food source.

- My one visit to McNeil River was August 2019 in order to participate in the guided bear viewing program. This visit remains one of the most inspiring and memorable experiences of my life. I waited 20 years to win a permit and it was well worth the wait. The protection of the bears and their habitat must always be the top management priority. Protection must always hold sway over access. The current management regimen is good for the bears and good for the visitors. Visiting this place so wonderful and unique is like going back in time to another era. Protections should not be diminished in any way.

When we applied and won the permit back in 2019 the tides (yellow areas on the calendar if I recall correctly) where access was questionable were marked on the time slots. Everybody knew what they were getting into, and didn't hear any complaints.

I wonder where ADF&G will define the threshold that requires a pilot to turn back because of bears on the runway, or in close proximity to the runway, or close to the runway, or kind of close to the runway... where would you draw the line? There would be a lot of pressure for the pilot not to disappoint the guests by turning back. And there are those on the ground, some of whom would have commitments and be anxious to get out. The odds are that the bears are going to be disturbed. It is somewhat outlandish to picture a pilot to buzzing a bear to clear the runway, but I suppose it could happen.

Please leave management goals, policy, and procedures as they are. Abandon the wheeled plane access. Keep it float plane only.

- The current program for float plane access only is working well. Adding wheeled planes not only has potential to disturb individual bears but it could also affect the behavior of the McNeil bears as a whole, reducing the viewing opportunities in the long run. Viewing bears is why so many people vie for permits repeatedly and are willing to pay whatever price to have that unique experience. Don't kill the golden goose that is laying golden eggs for the State treasury.

- Against landing due adverse effects on the bears

- The bears come first and wheeled landings should not permitted.

- Please put the bears first, before access by humans

- From my experience, it seems the additional disruption from wheeled aircraft is minimal. The float planes certainly disrupted the wildlife when I was there!

- Its nothing without the bears. Do your job and protect the bears.

- First, did not answer question 17 because I do not think wheeled plane landing should be permitted. I STRONGLY believe that the primary purpose of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary is the permanent protection of brown bears and their habitat. Human use is secondary. All humans and

Written responses (Question 20)
<p>access methods MUST remain compatible with this mandate. I strongly oppose wheeled landings at McNeil River Camp.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we landed in a float plane, there were several bears on the nearby land. It would not have been possible to land with a wheeled plane. The purpose of the sanctuary is to maintain a delicate balance between bears and viewers. Disrupting this is not necessary, and will cause very real harm to both the bears, and this longstanding program that has been successfully managed in this way since 1969. Please reconsider this; we don't need wheeled planes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm a year round Homer resident who has worked in the bear viewing industry on and off since 2007. In just a few short years from 2007 on the increase in wheeled plane traffic to places like Hallo Bay, Chinitna, and now Cape Douglas, has ruined the quality of bear viewing experience. Specifically operations like K-Bay Air. There should be some places in Alaska sheltered from the relentless onslaught of cattle-car tourism, aggressive or oblivious guides, and circling planes scouting for bears 100 feet overhead. All of this has had a negative impact on the bears themselves but also the visitor experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With some flexibility in permit administration, there should be a way to prevent people from getting shut out that doesn't involve what appears to be a significant risk of bear disturbance (both at the time of landing, and more importantly by causing them to avoid that area long term)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re question 17; I do not believe that limiting wheeled plane landings would provide adequate safeguards to protect the Sanctuary's primary mission of protecting the bears from disturbance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bears should not be effected by wheeled aircraft.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it negatively impacts bears - don't do it! Bears are the reason for McNeil sanctuary - protecting them should be top priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • think it's a really bad idea. anything that makes them more aware of human presence is bad. minimize, minimize. by the way, broader education of the country re McNeil and its mission would be good.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bears first.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane landings displace the bears. This is not supportive of the sanctuary and the protection of the bears in this unique area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the difficulty of the tide in being able to land with float planes, I think wheeled planes should be allowed in certain circumstances, such as during blocks of time where float plane access is tricky due to tides.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All efforts should be made to protect the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I disagree with use of wheeled planes. The spit is a crucial bear area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have seen wheeled landings elsewhere in the surrounding area along with float planes and it seemed some bears were quite disturbed while others were not. Personally, I'd prefer a float plane so minimize any chance of disruption.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have not researched this situation. From the information provided, I would concur that fewer (if any) wheeled planes should be used as transportation for McNeil River.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not think that this would help. The key is that visitors have to admit that they are in the wilderness and not in a wellness oasis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly oppose the use of wheeled planes. The bears should be the primary consideration and if the wheeled planes cause even a slight disruption to the bears they should not be allowed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bears should take priority. Humans have other places they can go and see bears; the bears have limited places to live. Save the bears first; enable human access second, even third in priority. I am also concerned that over time the impact of bears being scared by the planes will change the interaction between humans and bears at McNeil, causing bears to be more fearful of humans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the refuge and wheeled plane landings are incompatible

Written responses (Question 20)

- The program that is in place works well. Permanent protection of brown bears and their habitat was the initial purpose of the sanctuary. It needs to remain so.
 - Wheeled planes displace or disturb bears. Protection of the bears and their habitat should be the number one management priority. Access is secondary to protection. Seeing the bears at McNeil River was one of the most inspirational and memorable experiences of my life. It was worth the wait. Nothing should be done to diminish this experience for others. Wheeled planes are inconsistent with a protection priority. Wheeled planes also raise the question of what to do if the plane comes in ready to land and there is a bear on the runway, or very close to the runway, or close to the runway, or kind of close to the runway. Where is the line whether or not to turn back? What do you say to the client? You don't want to disappoint the clients. There is going to be significant pressure to land, even if you have to buzz the bear(s) to scare it off the runway.
 - This is the bears' home and they should have first consideration.
 - Don't mess with success, keep things as they are as it has been very successful.
 - it sounds like they did a test, and 5 out of 8 times it failed or was harmful/aggravating to the bears. defeats the purpose of the park
 - Not if it will disturb the bears.
 - Bears come first. They have so few places left. The wheeled planes are disruptive.
 - I feel strongly that the priority is and must be the protection of the bear, first and foremost. Viewing is secondary and should remain limited and restricted by the needs of the bears. No more wheeled plane landings, please. It must remain for a limited and not increased for the long term protection of the bears - thank you.
 - I think the welfare of the bears should be the prime consideration.
 - All efforts should be made to protect the bear population and minimize disruption of the bears' movement.
 - Strongly oppose any type of access that disturbs the animals. Place bears as the number one priority. Follow the original plan.
 - McNeil is a special place, and I believe only 1 of 2 sanctuaries run by the state where animal killing isn't allowed. Let the bears be bears - wheeled planed aren't needed. The bears come first at McNeil, not the people.
 - Bears are disturbed by planes. This is not rocket science
 - I have always wanted to go to McNeil River. I am a bear advocate and if wheeled planes cause bear confusion, anxiety or displacement from their natural wandering. I wholeheartedly disapprove of their use in this special place.
 - Nothing should be done that could be detrimental to the wildlife in the refuge.
 - Wheeled plane landings would be a disaster. The state needs to protect the brown bear populations statewide and it has failed miserably. We already cater to Bristol Bay Corp for state spending sponsored bear slaughters without any information it will increase caribou. Now you want to cater to tourists at McNeil?!? What are you thinking?
You tested 8 potential landings. Only 8. And they were a miserable failure! So now you want to consider doing it anyway even though it clearly disturbs the bears? That's insane. Katmai is now ruined with too many people, so those same people want to open up McNeil to ruin it next. If you give an inch, they will take a mile. Next, people will ask for day trips there.
 - Bear safety and displacement is more important than visitor access. Wheeled landings should be used in emergencies. The wheeled planes had too high of a failure/displacement rate to be considered. They should only be used when float planes cannot be used.
- I've been at McNeil when tide was too low to access. It is fine as long as you know you will be there extra days. It would make more sense to build the blocks around tides if it is going to severely

Written responses (Question 20)
<p>impact several blocks. Maybe we just need more of a warning that the following blocks will be impacted by tides?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't let wheeled planes interfere with the Sanctuary and Refuge objectives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane landings should absolutely NOT be added.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not opposed to wheeled landings if they can be done with no threat or disruption to the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane landings will only put yet more pressure on the bears. There are few places left where bears can congregate. By encroaching on the bears, it will diminish the bear's ability to obtain enough calories to survive the winter or cause them to out-migrate to nearby areas that allow hunting. This park is unique in the world - it should be bears first, humans second. There is plenty of available park access for us, but there are very few set-aside areas left for the bears.... By allowing wheeled plane landings, it will diminish the very resource the park is seeking to protect. Please don't allow wheeled plane landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blabla
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All considerations should keep the bears safety and disturbance at a minimum. No wheeled aircraft!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm a believer in if it's not broken, don't fix it. Wheeled plane access would turn McNeil River into a playground for rich people, not bear people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My fear is that wheeled plane landings will negatively impact the local brown bears and their natural habitat. If float planes can be used, I would prefer that.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having been to the Sanctuary multiple times and knowing what a unique experience it is, I would hate to see anything happen to disrupt bear activity and behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO wheeled plane access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of permits, I believe permits should be used for the time block assigned. I also don't think blocks should be set around accessible tides, as my extended time due to the low tide was a bonus (I've also had my time cut short due to tides/weather).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not for it!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above all, the bears should be allowed to live their life. Human activities should be focused and/or limited to assuring bear safety and habitat preservation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have visited McNeil once, but we were there for five days due to weather. During that timeframe, there were always bears around the camp area. I can't imagine wheeled acft coming in without disturbing bears in some manner. The bears need to be priority #1.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane landings will cause immense harm to the bear habitat and surroundings dues to noise, maintenance services, fuel issues etc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airplanes are loud and scary. Keep them away from the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think at McNeil River the bears and their welfare must come first. Maintaining the current use of float planes (and no wheeled planes) has worked best for the bears and visitors as well.
<p>Knowing ahead of time the tide schedule for expected float plane landings would be helpful to permit winners in their trip planning. This could easily be provided for to permit winners at the same time they receive their permits.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put the bears fist!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a boat service that could help transport visitors -- might also help visitors that are not comfortable with flying on a small float plane. Some flat bottomed boats can navigate very shallow water conditions-- which could decrease the tide periods that restrict access.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled planes have no place in the bear sanctuary since the sole reason for the sanctuary is preservation of undisturbed habitat as much as possible. If planes were allowed, it would undoubtedly result in degradation of the very resource the preserve is designed to protect!

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled planes should not be allowed unless the landing does not interfere, in any way, with the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have traveled in 22 different countries and all 50 states. I had great experiences in a lot of places. None of those come close to having a wild Grizzly lie down 100 feet from me and chow down on a salmon I watched him take out of the stream. To introduce more people or wheeled planes would have an impact on the way of life of those bears. I would love to revisit McNeil, but I would be okay if I never got drawn,, knowing that only a limited number of people are getting the opportunity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As they would undoubtedly interfere with the bears, they shouldn't be considered. The State of Alaska frequently promotes opportunity at the cost of the resources they are supposed to be protecting. Don't screw up McNeil. Better administration of matching available dates with people who really want to go (namely me) would be a much better step.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As long as it's regulated and doesn't cause any harm to the bears and other wildlife I think it's a great idea.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We land wheel planes continuously along the beaches of Silver Salmon Creek, in dense bear habitat, and it causes minimal if any disturbance to the local bear population, but bears need time to acclimate, so starting with a low number and building slowly to a manageable level of air traffic should be win-win for all
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the trial runs with a failure of 5 of 8 attempts allowing more wheeled plane access is good for neither bears OR visitors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly disagree that there should be any wheeled plane landings. I feel that if they were allowed that over time there would be more and more landings allowed each day and the opportunity for that to expand to hundreds of day visitors to easy to approve. The pristine nature of the McNeil river sanctuary would be destroyed. Just look at what has happened at Katmai National Park. Yes. more people get to see bears but at what cost to the experience and the bears trying to survive in Alaska's wilderness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You cant call yourself a sanctuary if you displace bears for the sake of the viewers. Wheeled plane landings would obviously have this negative effect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the sanctuary us to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) provide permanent protection for brown bears and other fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, so that these resources may be preserved for scientific, aesthetic, and educational purposes; (2) manage human use and activities in a way that is compatible with (1) of this subsection and to maintain and enhance the unique bear viewing opportunities within the sanctuary.” <p>Wheel plane landings are not compatible with the primary purpose of the sanctuary.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of the bears should be paramount. Public use should be limited to those activities, including access, that do not disturb the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheel plane landings at McNeil are dangerous for people in the planes and on the ground. Wheel plane landings pose a threat to the bears, other wildlife, and their habitat. Wheel plane landings at McNeil and are in direct violation of the primary purpose of the sanctuary which is to protect the bears and their habitat. There are plenty of other bear viewing locations with easy access. Please do not allow wheel plane landings at McNeil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law says to prioritize the bears. The 2024 trial disturbed the bears. What more do you need? You are breaking the law.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since is it practically impossible to land a wheeled plane at McNeil River without impacting bears, it should not be allowed. Even if carriers were to agree to abort landings when bears would be impacted, there would be huge pressure to land anyway.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't know all the complexities of this decision, but any changes should aim to minimize disturbance to bears rather than to make access easier for people or increase visitation. This area is all about protecting the bears, and that should be the umbrella under which all decisions are made.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not a fan of wheeled plane landings even if that means it is less likely i will ever get an opportunity to go back
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain use of float planes as the primary access method. When tides/darkness do not permit float plane access, wheeled planes should be allowed. This would limit wheel plane access to only those permit blocks that need the supplemental access support, and additional restrictions such as time of day etc. could be implemented to minimize bear disturbance. If possible a livecam could be used at the beach access to allow pilots/staff to see the bear situation on the beach and potentially limit disturbance or inability to land (knowing that bears can move in and out within minutes and the situation can rapidly change...). In addition, use of wheel planes could increase the number of air services that are willing to transport permittees to McNeil. When I tried to find seats for my permit (that I ended up not using due to tides/timing), many float plane operators had limited options for McNeil permittees. Maintaining enough operators to transport permittees may be challenging either way as many air services have gone to their own day trip bear viewing operations and don't want to schedule for McNeil permits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would not agree on anything that would displace or change Bears natural activity. Their life is already too tough.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Something needs to change with balancing the competing priorities between protecting the area/wildlife, running an efficient permit process, and improving the experience for permit winners. I think limited wheeled landings will help.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled landings would make the travel more affordable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled landings should be limited to certain days/week and certain times/selected days.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting the bears and preserving the wild places in which they live is of paramount importance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think that the use of wheeled plane landings should be restricted to the greatest extent possible to help maintain a sanctuary . Too many bear have been eliminated by roaming outside of their protected boundaries already. Shame on those who put profit before science and animal rights.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow private aircraft (Wheels and floats)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I believe wheeled planes should not be allowed if they disturb bears; it undermines the purpose of the sanctuary and impacts the pleasure of going out to McNeil to see the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I strongly oppose the use of wheeled planes at McNeil. The beach and spit where the planes would land are heavily utilized by bears and there is no way that it would not displace and negatively impact their behavior. The way the viewing program currently operates is designed to minimize human impact on bears as much as possible. It should remain that way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The status quo is widely embraced and non-controversial. Err on the side of deference to wildness, not to drive-by commerce at the expense of the attraction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a wheel plane operator located in Homer, we are very interested in applying for a permit to land on the beach at McNeil River.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The more wheeled landings by planes the better for Mcneil River Camp. The number of visitors is too low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question 17 is flawed and will alter answers based on how it is read. In the eventuality that wheeled landings are allowed, they should limit the impact on the bears. Any impact on the bears is wrong and it would be better not to have viewing if this were to occur.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of wheeled planes could allow access for permit holders in the event tides are too low. Two questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Not sure how flexible the flight companies could be? If they are not able to switch readily between float and wheeled planes, the question of allowing wheeled planes could be moot.

Written responses (Question 20)	
	2. Not sure how bears would adjust in the long-term to wheeled vs. float planes? And not sure how the presence of wheeled vs. float planes would be much different for the bears.
•	I know from experience that at least one pilot expressed frustration over the lack of wheeled plane access, and I can understand the frustration (especially from permit holders!), but I think it's really important to protect the wildlife experience. I can see a compromise of implementing certain guardrails to enhance bear protection for wheeled landings.
•	I believe the sanctuary belongs to the bears. It's their home and it's theirs to roam wherever and whenever they want. Nothing more should be inserted into it. I learned so much during my time there. It's a privilege to walk amidst them and become one with them and their lifestyle. Let it be as it is ~ the Bear Sanctuary; the most amazing place in Alaska! Peaceful, Serene...
•	I object to wheeled landings on the beach or spit. It will disrupt bears and that is too much. Moms and cubs frequent the beach and spit. Adding wheel planes will push them towards other bears, causing unnecessary stress. That hurts bears' success and survival
•	The spit and beach is a nursery and a safe place for sows with cubs. They have good visibility and can move out of a bears path if needed. We saw mothers nursing, bears walking the length of the spit on daily rounds, eating sedge and clamming. It is well used bear habitat. Landing wheel planes on it would certainly run the bears off, disrupting their routines and changing their behavior. It could endanger the sows and cubs, taking away a safe zone they seem to enjoy, as do the bear watchers.
•	The McNeil river sanctuary has established a coexistence of humans and bears over decades adhering to strict rules and putting the bears first. Adding wheel landing planes to the spit will change that dynamic.
	1st. The proposed spit to land on and the associated traffic patterns required in order to land there will require planes to fly over areas that planes have not been associated with by the bears. This will most definitely is change a behavior from the existing interactions .
	2nd the spit an ever moving land mass that is also uneven and full of drift trees that creat landing hazards. The risk of a plane crash increases significantly. Also who will be maintained the landing strip? This is time and effort and activity that takes away from the mission of the sanctuary and increased activity that will cause the bears to change behavior.
	3rd visitor access to mcniel is not the primary purpose of the sanctuary. There is no need to increase access options as current ones suffice.
•	Wheeled planes directly impact bear use of beach areas and has the potential to alter existing bear behavior patterns. This could potentially impact viewers safety. Aggressive plane landings (buzz beach to clear bears) will be hard to regulate. Float planes do not represent similar risks. More planes = harder to manage pilot behavior.
•	The purpose of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary is to provide permanent protection for bears. Human access is desirable but absolutely secondary. The loss of quality habitat is often an incremental process, with each small step seeming to be innocuous. It is far better to avoid taking any such steps, so that bears and future generations of humans can continue to benefit from a maximally healthy environment.
•	Not needed. Once allowed, it will be a nightmare to stop.
•	Please do not permit McNeil River to become like Brooks Falls in Katmai NP. I have seen women in white pants and high heels leave a hotel lobby in Anchorage and step off on the beach in Katmai. McNeil is wild and should remain so. By allowing wheeled planes you are encouraging volume and multiple guides and pilots, all of which will ruin what McNeil is supposed to be. Never forget that McNeil is for the bears and we enter on their terms even if we experience some inconvenience.

Written responses (Question 20)
Let this uniquely Alaskan experience remain so. Do not make it a concession or it will be gone forever never to return.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't disturb the bears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled aircraft should only be allowed to land at McNeil River Camp for emergency purposes. McNeil River bear viewing permit holders should only be allowed to access the McNeil River camp by floatplane.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly oppose due to possible disturbance to bears, the whole reason we want to visit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not sure about the the wording of question 17 and whether to strongly agree or strongly disagree. "The department should limit wheeled plane landings..." infers wheeled plane landings would be allowed but on a limited basis. As I read the question it is asking whether float plane access should be "limited" or "unlimited" versus not allowed at all. I am choosing to respond "strongly disagree" to not allow float plane landings at all. If I am misreading the intent of the question and my choice is "limited" vs "unlimited" I would strongly agree with "limited."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floatplanes work best on Tide dependent travel as the bears retreat from the high water line. Wheeled plane access will fuck it all up.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that allowing this practice you run the risk of adding a large disturbance to bears and other wildlife on the sanctuary. The point of this area is to protect the bears and wildlife first and provide educational viewing second. By allowing this practice you contradict the main point of the sanctuary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am against wheeled planes at McNeil. It's a magical place, let's keep it that way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am strongly against wheeled planes landing on the spit or beach or uplands. I have visited 5 times. I know that tides are an issue for landing in the lagoon or outside, but visitors know that and can plan around it. Sometimes I've chosen a block that allowed me to arrive early or stay late. Protection of bears should be top priority. Mothers and cubs especially make use of the spit, beach, and clamming areas. NO to wheeled plane landings!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absolutely DO NOT ALLOW wheeled plane landings at any time for the bear viewing program! That spit is critical habitat for sows with cubs, and for young bears. I witnessed firsthand, and have heard from many others over decades, that sows and cubs spend much of their time on the spit and surrounding grasslands for feeding and nursing cubs. Also, at low tide, the sows with cubs as well as younger bears venture out into the mudflats to clam. They rely on this habitat for food and security from the big bears fishing on the river. As well, they provide an amazing viewing for campers. I spent one day at camp rather than hike to the falls, and there were sows with cubs on that spit all day long. It was the best bear viewing of the whole trip. I plan on returning to McNeil, as soon as I get picked for the lottery again! And I hope and pray that the spit remains the sanctuary for bears that it is now. Wheeled planes are a bad idea, and are absolutely unnecessary. Visitors have been getting to/from McNeil for 50 years without wheeled plane access. Don't fix what isn't broken.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly oppose any wheeled plane landings in the area. Especially on the beach. I have witnessed bears on the beach as my float plane was landing. I have also seen mothers nursing their cubs on the beach. Converting a bear nursery into a landing strip would disturb the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't understand the reasoning for allowing wheeled planes when float planes work just fine.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the bears not the outfitters.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial all available alternatives over wheeled plane landings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is absolutely no reason to change the float plane only status to get to McNeil River bear viewing. It has worked great for over 50 years. This is a classic case of government trying to fix something that isn't broken. Leave it alone. Do not tamper with this world-class Alaska experience. Wheeled planes will only diminish the experience as bears and their habitat are impacted. PLEASE leave it alone!

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will plane access on the beach where Sal's have their cubs should never happen there's too much disturbance of bears that has potential for negative effects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please do not ruin this magical place by displacing bears (often with cubs) from the beach. I have visited 4 times (only once winning lottery for cabin, other times day trip from Naknek). The system is working now - for the bears most importantly - but also for the visitors. NO NEED TO "FIX" WHAT IS NOT BROKEN - LEAVE THE BEARS IN THEIR CURRENT RELATIVE 'PEACE'.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow in-place law!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F&G should not consider wheeled plane landings in the area. I've been twice and the floatplanes are perfectly fine and priority should be given to protecting the bears as statutes set out to do. Leave it alone.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It might sound good for people, but why do people have to have access to everything for their benefit? Good grief. I hope you don't cave
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach landing on wheels should only be allowed on the dates when you know the timing and level of the tides are a problem. But allowing it then would simplify access, assuming wheel plane operators are available to book on those dates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly oppose wheeled lands on the beach along the lagoon because of likely negative impacts on the bears. I strongly support the notion that at McNeil, "the bears come first," long a guiding philosophy for the state's management of McNeil sanctuary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane access is inconsistent with the primary purpose of the Sanctuary, and must not be permitted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary purpose of the McNeil River Sanctuary is to protect the bears. Except in the case of a dire emergency, wheeled landings should not be allowed. They disturb and endanger bear, but more than that they would degrade this incredible world class experience. A visit to McNeil is an amazing, life-changing experience in part because of the quiet and the challenges of its access. Do not allow wheeled plane landings except for dire emergencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If allowed, wheeled landings should be limited to areas away from camp and only allowed during tides which prevent float plane landings and when bears are not in the immediate area. Wheeled landings, if allowed, should be greatly limited and restricted. They should not occur when there are bears in the landing area. And should not occur on the beach in front of or near camp where a bear might be pushed into or through camp or the viewing group which may be viewing bears in nearby areas. Additionally, allowing beach landings requires the beach landing zone to be cleared of debris thereby placing additional work and liability on staff and the department. This should not be done.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting Bears should be the only mission for McNeil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not in favor of wheeled plane access to the McNeil River Sanctuary. Air traffic should be limited to those times when tides permit floatplane access.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think wheeled planes should only be used when bears are not present and only for bringing in necessary supplies or equipment that is difficult to bring in on a float plane for the maintenance of the camp not for bear viewers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree that wheeled planes should not disturb the bears. It also feels like allowing wheeled planes becomes a slippery slope of other requests for access. This survey, however, does not discuss other options; feels like either wheeled or no wheeled. What about offering boat landings for those visitors during the challenging tides? What about landing a plane farther away outside of the McNeil River Bear Viewing Area to accommodate bear habitat and provide an ATV for guests? I realize that presents other issues, such as maintaining fuel on site, but electric ATVs powered by solar power could be one option. In all honesty, I felt like the water landing was a unique experience for this location. It made it feel even that much more remote and rustic, a rare thing in travel these days.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of course, beach landings should be allowed in emergency situations. In my opinion, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" applies here. The system has worked well for 50 years as far as I understand.

Written responses (Question 20)

When we visited last June, I learned that getting an available air-service provider is a problem. Probably because bear viewing has become so popular. If we hadn't happen to jump right away on joining a charter soon after lottery results were released, we might have missed the boat so to speak on getting air service.

Also, I don't know if there is any difference in beach landings vs float plane access from a safety viewpoint, since I'm not a pilot. However, float plane landings seem more safe to me.

- This area is pristine and does not need more commercial aircraft landing. It is possible to visit now, no changes need to be made.
- Wheeled landings should be permitted only in the event of emergency evacuations of people who need urgent medical care at a hospital.
- I almost did not make it to McNeil camp because the operator I had booked, cancelled my flight due to delays in getting a spare part, grounding the aircraft for my time slot. The alternatives were financially out of the question. If it would not have been for my friend who lives in AK and has a float plane dropping me off there would have been an empty tent spot. Jimmy having an empty seat for the trip back was sheer damned luck. It is absolutely a specialized skill set and those folks in Homer and area are true aviators. I am a pilot myself so I understand, but I am not sure if I would be okay flying across that large body of water with only a life raft and not floats attached. I flew with a helicopter across the channel from Calais to Dover many years ago and that was nerve wracking. This is not just an aircraft issue but also an economical one. Weather is always a major factor not just the tide. Tours offered now in other areas "viewing" bears from the air is a competing business compared to the 10 people to be flown to McNeil every so often and probably small potatoes. I wonder if there could be an incentive for those operators to combine despite being competitors and maybe the occasional empty seat could transport something useful for the camp and an extra fund could be set up for people to donate into. I sure appreciate that there are more AK residents winning the lottery since they pay the taxes for some of it. I don't want this to be solely a rich people's attraction. I did not realize that this place was for wildlife photographer a paradise and probably tax deductible. For me it was life changing to walk where the bears walk, to hear them snort, chuff, roar, to see them hunt, sleep, mate, play, especially the cubs were adorable and learn about flora and fauna, learn about the bear and human interface at close proximity. The visceral aspects of this experience is indescribable. The fresh air, the sauna, the wading thru the water, being pulled out under the armpits when stuck in the mud. It teaches respect for those men that guided us, it humbles us of our own limitations (sure appreciate the plastic grates) and I don't know how many times I had goosebumps watching a brown bear amble by and once directly looking into Gaucho's eyes. Unforgettable.
This needs a different, more creative solution. Maybe have a volunteer team to tackle some of the logistics problems in case of a hiccup whereas ordinary business operators struggle. Even though there is nothing ordinary about those air carriers out there imho. Ordinary folks have no idea what it takes to make this happen. I certainly did not. And it is not suited for everyone.
- Wheeled plane landings would greatly impact bears in vicinity of the spit. As a refuge it is a unique resource that provides an exceptionally unique experience. Preserve that - float planes only.
- Have planes land away from the lagoon, more towards the coast to not disturb the bears
- I am against any use of wheeled aircraft! The bears do not need to be disturbed. The landscape also should not be disturbed.
- Question 17 is loaded in favor of wheeled plane landings. There should be none.
- I think wheeled landings should only be allowed during times when the tides do not allow for float plane landings of emergency situations.
- I think the proof that ADFG has managed this program well in the past is evident in the viewing opportunities and safety records. I think it would be a mistake of global proportions to make changes that impact Bear behavior.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That would certainly increase access, but not a good idea because of disturbing sows with cubs and juveniles that tend to occupy the spit. I don't know that timing arrivals can mitigate bears being on the spit when planes arrive. No easy solution but bear habitat preservation should be a very high priority, as it is in all the other operations of the Sanctuary. Careful consideration to keeping McNeil unique.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A unique and special place and experience. Don't spoil it with more aircraft and people. I'd hate to see the bears disturbed any more than they already are by humans and planes circling and landing on the beach.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow access for wheel planes to allow better access for permit holders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree with the development of any landing strip, road, or development in the area. The beauty is in the absence of these things. As well, more agitation to bears reduces the remarkable safety record. Under no circumstances should this be changed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think wheeled plane landings could help with costs and with tide issues for permit winners. Therefore I would like them to be considered. With that said, I believe that bears should come first and be the priority at the McNeil River Sanctuary. I am hopeful that a thoughtful solution can be developed that provides a balanced approach that adds some flexibility for bear viewers but still prioritizes bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having been to McNeil 3 times - we were able to work with float plane operators to accommodate tide challenges and meet our time block allocation. The spit and beach near the McNeil facilities frequently has bears clamming, eating sedge or walking through which is a KEY part of the public experience that would be negatively affected if wheeled plane landings were allowed. This program is so unique and special - don't allow for wheeled plane landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I operate a bear viewing tour company in lake clark national park and i access the area by boat, but i see the planes landing on beach all the time, the bears seem to adjust and do not seem disrupted by the wheeled plane landings, the bears at McNeil just have not seen that before and are reacting to something new . they will adjust and adapt just like they have for the float planes and also to wheeled planes at other locations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not support wheeled plane landings. There are too many bears on the sand spit, sometimes with very young cubs that would be affected by noise proximity of the planes. The unique part of McNeil is the protection of wild bears in their natural habitat. More plane landings, especially on land, would negatively impact this in my opinion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's all about viewing the bears so I would be against any access that would change their behavior and reduce viewing opportunities or keep them from food sources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly oppose any changes that could affect or impact the bears and their behaviors. Visits should remain limited to float planes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a float plane or boat only access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landings should not impact bear behavior.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I hope the department is flexible to wheel landing. The bears are already habituated to people and planes. It gives those of us with wheels to access the area also.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaches are used frequently by bears around McNeil Camp. Pilots, whose incentives are to maximize profit not visitor experience, will ultimately disturb bears as they land. This will increase conflict between camp managers and pilots and will diminish the experience of visitors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil's success is rooted in a long-standing principle and that is that the sanctuary exists first and foremost for bears. Limiting access and minimizing human disturbance has protected natural bear behavior and reduced the risk of bear-human conflict for decades. Allowing wheeled landings would represent a significant departure from this proven management approach. Wheeled landings not only increases safety risks both to humans and bears, it sets a precedent that risks eroding the integrity of the sanctuary's core purpose. Management decisions should continue to reflect the core value that McNeil, and the bears who depend on it, come first.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane access should continue in order to provide additional transportation options.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't do it as it's far too disruptive, intrusive and far too important to protect the bears habitat!!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a really bad idea. Stop this nonsense over a buck
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility is good! Anything that is bad for the bears is not. Let us change slots, but don't open to more planes that will mess things up.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think float planes should be used for landing at McNeil camp to avoid impacting the behavior of the bears. Wheeled planes could be allowed in emergency situations only.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be open to the public like Brook Falls. Maybe limit the number of commercial operations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheel planes should be allowed to beach land or setup an airstrip nearby.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am for allowing wheeled planes, it is done in Hallo Bay in a similar setting and does not affect bears too much. There is always gonna be some risk though so maybe July and August are better months due to lower bear activity near the camp.
<p>Allowing wheeled planes will not address the main issue with transportation, unfortunately. Except for Jimmy noone was offering real seat fares last year and it is difficult for people who don't know each other to coordinate chartering the plane.</p> <p>I am not sure what can be done to resolve that, I understand all the operators, the season is short and they don't want to risk underselling the flights with seat fares if they can get booked for charters. Don't know if it is feasible for the state to charter the plane and sell seat fares to visitors, maybe?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beach by the camp is one of the few areas that visitors to McNeil can explore is they aren't part of the guided hikes (e.g., standby or declined hike one day). If planes are coming in that will further limit options for these people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • please do not disrupt the bears eating for the coming winter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be open and accessible, wheeled plane access makes it more accessible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no impact to the bears or viewing with the use of wheeled planes.
<p>Local transportation is price gouging everyone</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please open up more opportunities to access McNeil River camp via wheeled and float planes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of wheeled plane landings can be managed in a way that does not disturb the bears with the right operators/guides that prioritize the natural behavior of the bears at McNeil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing wheeled planes to land at McNeil as long as it does, doesn't disturb the Bears too much seems like a good idea.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So many lifelong, born and raised Alaskans don't explore the beauty of the state due to lack of access. Please make this area more accessible to the residents to consume the beauty of the state.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bears do just fine with planes around
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brooks falls is a great example of how allowing access can be safe, good for everyone and fair. The permit program only allows some people to access public lands and that isn't right.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It shouldn't require paying a guide or outfitter to enjoy Alaska. If a local Alaska wants to fly out to McNeil, he/she should be allowed to. The amount of private traffic in high use areas like McNeil River or Moraine Creek is less than 2%. So requiring permits for private pilots is only favorable to guides and commercial bear viewing trips. It basically turns these natural wonders into pay to play areas. Because the outfitters get the majority of permits. And even if you're lucky enough to get a permit as a private pilot, you have to be extremely lucky that weather conditions allow the flight.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting disturbance of bears should be prioritized. However there is wheel plane use in many other areas that promote bear viewing and bears quickly become habituated to the sound of fixed

Written responses (Question 20)
<p>wing aircraft coming and going provided they are not being hazed or harassed. Perhaps only allowing wheel plane use when the tides are not suitable for float operations in the lagoon.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I thought if the waters are navigatable water one can land below the high tide mark? This was challenged recently with a case out of Fairbanks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be nice for alaskans to be able to visit the area with their private planes without having to win a lottery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled planes would have minimal impact on the area. Additionally, mooring bouys should be provided for float plane tie off
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planes landing in 1 or 2 designated areas will realistically have minimal impact on bears and other wildlife. Planes will only be 1 or 2 designated areas, and bears can go anywhere they like. Opening more access is a win for everyone.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am a 51 year Alaskan Resident having lived and worked for DPS in King Salmon for a time. I'm a Retired AK State Trooper and FWP Officer. I was surprised and initially disappointed locating an air taxi (Charter) to fly over for our permit dates. After nearly a dozen calls finally I was successful at the loss of a day. Why? But it's been 20 years since I spent any time in the area and the day trip-Katmai bear business was in it's infancy when I left but no longer. To begin with, for an operator to make any money in our short summer the days of using 185s & 206s particularly on wheels is over. Even in Bristol Bay few lodges use them anymore. So you're talking Beavers, Caravans perhaps even turbo Otters. You are talking a gravel runway and a lot of noise. In the process of building it and maintaining it which will take a few seasons to construct (you'll be barging equipment and material from Homer) you'll be disrupting decades of bear behaviors. Once the flights begin in earnest it'll only aggravate it even further. No float operators will charter there anymore and quickly wheeled planes will rule. Under Murkowski there was once the suggestion the sanctuary be privatized and that bone headed plan would have been the kiss of death for McNeil's bears. A semi wilderness petting zoo for a price - much like the Kenai operators are doing today and definitely it's already the fate of Brooks Camp in Katmai. Think about how & why McNeil was established in the first place. I was a hunter a very long time, Dall sheep and brown bear. There are hundreds of places for hunters to pursue a brown bear on the AK Peninsula surely there can be ONE protected spot for the bears. Finally may I suggest you choose (and not a low bid) 2 reputable charter operators to handle all permit holder trips into McNeil Camp. That's guaranteed, predictable income for the operators and not making it a challenge for the visitor. I've chartered dozens of hunting & fishing trips in my life here and I know what's required and how to do it. Still I was frustrated and spent hours trying to charter. Imagine the frustrations of out-of-staters, or foreign guests, even Alaska Residents who are not familiar with the ins & outs of dealing with an air taxi? I've had more than my fair share of "Ah Ha" moments living here 50 years, climbing that hill to the upper pad was certainly one of my best. Please, no wheels, no runway. Don't screw this up.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't change the bear environment. Its what has been working so well for so long.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The McNeil River program is unique. I worry that allowing wheeled plane landings could be the first step in expanding the number of potential visitors to the detriment of the experience for bears and visitors. We do not need another Brooks camp nor a lodge at McNeil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McNeil is managed for the protection of bears, and it is this ethic of not disturbing bears that allows people to have the opportunity. McNeil is not managed primarily for the convenience of people. I am strongly opposed to allow regular wheeled plane access when it is known to cause disturbance of bears and occurs in an area with high use by bears. Unexpected bears could cause safety issues for people, and landings are known to disturb bears- the reason people come to McNeil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The infrastructure, facilities, and trails at McNeil are rustic and minimal, and they seem to be the right amount. I would hate to see wheeled planes along the coast or additional infrastructure to support access. I believe wheeled planes would compromise the essence of what makes this place

Written responses (Question 20)
<p>special, the fact that bears are completely unaffected by people in the area, and the unique values that led to its designation as a National Natural Landmark. You currently have the right balance of accommodating a range of visitors and providing a unique and appropriate visitor experience. I would rather see access enhanced by offering more flexible blocks/dates.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would love to take my family over there in our airplane, but we do not have floats and that is one reason why we have never put in for the bear viewing. My immediate and extended family would put in for the lottery, but we do not have the money to charter everyone out. Wheel aircraft access would make viewing possible for us.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think it's another access opportunity for pilots & the public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The flight operators should be vetted and permitted for access. Those who are unsafe to guests and bears should be prohibited.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number 1 priority should be the bears and minimal disturbance to their habitat. I think float planes should be used th majority of time to minimize impact on the wildlife. In the case of an emergency a wheeled plane would be acceptable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not change current access. Wheeled plane can be used when no other option available as was the case for use when the float plane scheduled to pick us up couldn't leave Katmai due to bear napping on the path and to get us out in time, wheeled plane was only option
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> #17 is ambiguously written. I don't think there should be any wheeled planes on the beach, whether it's limited or not. I have to say I would disagree with allowing wheeled planes. The lagoon is available at high tides, and when we went there in 1995, people could also float plane in on the ocean side, without regard for tides. They're landing was smooth, and we all helped with their gear. Do not make a landing strip, that will ruin the environment, the atmosphere, the ambiance. Do not disturb the bears, this is their place, and this is why it was awesome to go there! Quite frankly, it is a very special place because there is minimal impact by humans. And quite frankly, going in by floatplane is adventurous unto itself.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To cross the inlet wheel airplanes have to be at least 10,000 ft to allow gliding in case of engine loss. That fact will preclude flying legally to McNeil for the majority of blocks. For many trips, the ceiling is much lower than that and there is no way a wheel plane could make it legally. However, operators will of course push those limits.
<p>Wheel planes when they are parked on an incline Beach have the propensity to leak fuel out of their fuel vents. We saw this happen last summer with northwinds airplane.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. No. No. no wheeled planes should be allowed at all.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Question 18. There should be no wheeled plane landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly against. Bears should never be displaced because of humans wanting to visit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm not sure that wheeled landing would be any more disruptive than a water landing. Bears might have to move, but I don't think would have any permanent adverse effect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If it disturbs or changes the behavior of the bears, wheeled plane landings should not be allowed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a slippery slope to Brooks Falls. Once wheeled really start coming it will only be a matter of time until it looks like Brooks. McNeill is such a special place. Everything should be done to preserve it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave the bears be. Bear viewing in our state has become a big unregulated mess. Keep access more controlled, so that the bears still rule. Lots of luck trying to control wheeled aircraft. With no official control over there, the planes will be coming and going. Who is to stop them? The camp ranger has enough to do.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am opposed to wheeled plane landings and think being more thoughtful about timing permits with accessible tides should solve the issue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seems pretty reasonable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larry Aumiller would say, "It works for the bears the way it is" I agree that it is a great setup that is in place. Please do not change it. There have been no bear attacks, that is a perfect record. Why risk disrespecting the bears? Both times I was privileged to visit McNeil, I observed bears on the spit multiple times. That is not the place for a runway.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sanctuary was set up to protect the land and the animals within it. That is what the state should continue to do. Disruption of the bears, to the land, or any other wildlife there by humans other than already establish should be avoided at all cost to preserve the largest congregation of brown bears in the world. Do not allow wheeled plane landings. Wheeled plane landing cause disruption to the bears, and is therefore harassment and should not be tolerated where the bears play, forage and sleep. Wheeled plane landings jeopardize their natural behavior and the viewing opportunities already provided from camp. Even while hiking and observing bears outside of camp while at the sanctuary is done so not to disrupt the bears from their natural behavior; wheeled plane landings would for sure have unavoidable disruptions and negative consequences on the behavior of the bears in their home which is unacceptable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibly only allow wheeled planes on certain dates where the tides aren't high enough to land float planes (but not every day all season).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolutely not. This is a bad idea that will ruin the area. The disruption to Wildlife, whether Bears are in the area or not will happen. Foxes, Raptors and other birds will be affected. Wildlife is more important than revenue!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bears are the most important part of this program and any displacement or disturbance from wheeled plane landings should be avoided. Float planes have worked for years and should continue to be the mode of transportation for permit holders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No! This is one of the few places where wildlife is not displaced because of human inquisitive. Don't change the program or allow wheeled flights unless an emergency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once again Nature has to step back for Humans and their comfort. Bears are home, we are just privileged visitons!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't like the idea of doing anything that would upset the existing relationship between humans and bears. There are lots of commercial places that people can go to see bears but the McNeill River Sanctuary is the only place that you can view bears that are more or less living without human interference.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We had our trip slightly cut short due to the tides- I'm not opposed to wheeled plane access, but I am opposed to anything that negatively impacts the bears feeding at McNeil. Perhaps more flexibility in the timing blocks is the right way forward.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added additional and disturbing human contact will decrease opportunities for viewing bears in their natural habitat. Please don't turn McNeil into a zoo. There is already one in Anchorage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The protection of bears and their habitat must take precedence over the demands and wishes of visitors and operators.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question 17 was difficult to answer because I do not agree with wheeled planes but if they must be used then absolutely they should minimize disturbances to bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think it's a good idea to have an alternate way to get there. Sometimes the weather doesn't work out for float planes. Having to time around the tides can be difficult also.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please allow the bears to remain undisturbed as much as possible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about possible accidents with bears running in front of landing planes out of brush line or from tide flats to the brush. Also about bears sleeping on beach.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not wish to see any additional ways to access McNeil River. I have seen how increased access has affected places like Brooks Camp, and hope McNeil does not take that path.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it would be nice to increase visitor access and be less tied to the tides, but I think it is more important to protect safety of the bears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department has observations of bears using the location that could be designated as the wheeled landing area. I would like to see a table containing the use data based on times of the year- is there a time during the viewing window there is a significant reduction in use- whether seasonally or time during the day. This should be considered if allowing landings. Further you could correspond any patterns from this data to the low tide times each season to allow landings IF there was notable overlap.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel no way in hell. You've got an unique 1 of a kind environment at McNeil. Don't turn it into Yellowstone because you can never go back. I've been on the ground with Drew Hamilton, Larry Aumiller, & Tom Griffin & other AF&G guides on my 2022 visit. Many teachable moments with the best guides on the planet. Poured a lot of my disposable income into keeping Bristol Bay as it is from development. As a professional wildlife photographer, I have talked to folks for hundreds of hours about the McNeil experience. Lets not changes the way it's always successfully operated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the bears are not disturbed than some wheeled planes should be allowed to allow permit winners to use it. If float planes can only access at limited times due to tide there should be a way to still get in. Either the permit blocks need to follow the tides to allow full use. Or, wheeled aircraft need to be allowed to fill in. We know from years of plane landings at Hallo and Chinita Bays that bears can get used to them after exposure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would encourage the Department to strongly consider the potential repercussions to bears if this were to go into effect as once wheeled planes are allowed there is very little chance that opportunity will be taken away, even if it is determined the impacts on bears are dramatic. Perhaps allowing a very limited number of wheeled planes first to properly and comprehensively address the potential impacts on bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We lost two of our four days to a large storm that prevented access to McNeil. The two days we had were glorious. Protecting the bears is the most important thing to me.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the permit winner's time block doesn't have any high tides then they should be offered a wheeled plane
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm not a bear expert but after seeing the bears in Halo Bay I can't imagine that making an effort to get bears to leave the landing area would harm them in any way. If the decision is made to not do that it's fine with me, HOWEVER, the permit holder should be made aware that there is a good chance they won't be able to land!!!! Otherwise only offer permits when float planes can land and don't waste people's money on plane trips 2 days in a row to get turned away.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled planes require runways. Runways require space and maintenance. Maintenance requires machinery. Machinery makes noise. Noise disturbs bears. <p>McNeil River State Game Sanctuary was created for and should remain a special place/space for the bears. Please do not disturb!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The whole point is to see the bears - as naturally as possible. Yes that means getting people to the camp, but not at the expense of seeing them. So some wheeled plane access seems ok, but not unrestricted so it drives off bears. Maybe only allow during limited hours on dates when the tides suck?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled planes are good because it increases the likelihood of getting there, while float planes are at the mercy of tides. If controlled by specified times for landing, I think wheeled planes should be an option.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tides have impacted 2 trips, more flex would be excellent

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing should negatively impact the bears of McNeil River! The bears, & their well being, are the first & foremost concern over any access or mgmt considerations!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil is an extremely unique environment, one where nature takes precedence over human priorities. It should be preserved that way. Any changes that might have any sort of negative impact on the bears must be avoided.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You manage a unique place in the United States that actually protects wildlife and their way of life. I don't believe allowing wheeled planes does anything for the bears, but bends your guidelines to fit a human population that believes they are the most important beings on the planet. Sometimes for the better of the ecosystem, we should not ask what is best for the human but should stand our ground and offer protection for the wildlife that makes McNeil River a spectacular place to visit. In a day in age where humans ask: why can't I take an escalator the bottom of the Grand Canyon, or why isn't it about me, I would find it deeply gratifying if a place such as McNeil River State Game Sanctuary would stand their ground and protect the wildlife that lives in this special place. Everywhere I turn now, ecosystems and their inhabitants are under duress. Please manage this special sanctuary of brown bears and their habitats for future generations to be able to enjoy and let the bears roam this great land without the fear or impact of wheeled airplanes. Even though I have yet to visit this special place, it is gratifying to know it exists. Thank you for all you do.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That would be a nice option for visitors to take a wheeled plane. Unfortunately, if it displaces the bears I am not in favor of it. Wildlife has enough challenges.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not believe that wheeled landing of aircraft @ McNeil River help the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the novelty and exclusivity of the experience is the calculated risk of getting to / out of McNeil. Some of the coolest viewings we had were right by camp and one of the best photos from our group was shot on the beach during a camp day. I would discourage anything that would disrupt the experience of "living among" the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe only allow when tides are an issue so they are limited. I did not realize when we applied how much the tide could make or break going at all.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that by allowing wheeled access on a limited basis will not effect the over all activities of the bears in the area while opening up more opportunities for people to enjoy the area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If people want convenience Brooks Falls is right there and folks can fly in and out in one day. Why change an amazing place that has worked for decades. I don't object to change but I do believe if it's not broken don't fix it. Part of the charm of McNeil is the small groups and low stress vibe. Adding planes and more people is not the way to go. We got stuck there a few extra days and probably if there was a wheeled plane we could have gotten out on time. But I would still say that this was the right thing for the camp and the experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Float plane access provided adequate access to the camp. Wheeled planes would cause more traffic. Look all Forest Service Bear viewins Area-all are nearly boat or float plane—Margaret Bay, Anan, Pack Creek. Not a one is wheeled access, and all are on salt water.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've been in Alaska working as an ecologist for 35 years and been around a lot of bears. It was truly amazing to be at McNeil and see bears that have been given the opportunity to co-exist with humans through a predicable and as minimally disturbing environment as possible. Wheeled landings are a regime shift in this proven successful approach for a unique bear viewing experience. If people want guaranteed easy access they can go to Brooks Falls. This is a high quality experience that is available to anyone willing to pay for a flight and take the time for the lottery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my opinion and experience, the very best parts of Alaska are the most inaccessible and least visited - and therefore most natural. It is my understanding that wheeled plane landings will have some impact on bear behavior - every interaction does. How could it not? I'm sure you are aware of the bear study that showed a physiological response to drones. While there may be limitations and mitigating factors in the study, the larger point is that planes flying over or nearer to places where

Written responses (Question 20)	
	bears travel or inhabit is likely to have some impact on them that should not be dismissed or discounted.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am surprised this is even a question. I am unaware of a legal basis for excluding wheel plane landings below high tide line on any beach.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From observations at Brooks Camp beach the bears adapt to the planes to the point they sleep on the beach while planes rev their engines. Don't know how long adaptation takes, but they seem to adapt quickly to changes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheel planes at low tide have minimal impact. I had to delay arrival by 1 day because of low max-tides. A wheel plane landing would have offered more options.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State of Alaska has done a wonderful job of prioritizing bears at the McNeil River area and should continue to do so. There are already other areas to view bears that are more easily accessible on other public lands. McNeil River is a special place and bears should continue to be protected and be the priority over human visitors. That is what makes this place special! Thank you for protecting the bears!
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bears are the draw, and conservation is the purpose of a refuge and sanctuary. If you displace the bears (and impact the other, less grandly visible flora and fauna), you go against the entire raison d'être for the land, the program, and arguably the purpose of the ADFG. The environmental impact is not worth the mere possibility of a slight increase in convenience for a handful of visitors.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled landings should not be allowed at McNeil River. One of the best things about visiting McNeil is watching bears on the spit and beach in front of camp. Allowing wheeled landings will degrade this viewing opportunity and negatively affect the bears in the area. Also, bears on the landing area will frequently be a problem causing issues with visitors trying to get there in a wheeled plane.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think # 17 would be ok if it could be done.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yes, block times could/should be made with tide consideration. may leave and few days without human visitors which may not be a bad thing. not sure what the past problem/concerns have been and if this is a solution looking for a "problem". yes, after the bears start using the river/falls and not the flats some wheel landing could be accommodated for group switch out with minimal disruption and harassment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd have flown myself in if wheeled landings were permitted. Pls to find a way to to balance wheeled landings or boat access and not disturbing bears.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled planes should not be permitted in the sanctuary.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The noise and damage of landscape and the additional disruption for the wildlife should always be considered. I feel that adding ground landing plus water landing is too much activity.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have photos and first hand experience with the first wheeled planed landing for permit holders. It worked well in a pinch with the really low tide block. I certainly appreciated the efforts from McNeil staff and Adam from f&g I believe his name is to allow a wheeled plane landing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If these wheeled planes are bothering the bears and the wildlife, then the area is no longer a sanctuary, but rather a zoo or an amusement park.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like the idea of less expensive and more reliable flights but I don't know the risks/potential damage that might be involved. So for hte most part I am neutral.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep wheeled aircraft OUT. It will harm bears and bear viewing.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think limiting access is in the best interest of the bears and the sanctuary. This program has been running with high success for DECADES. Do not change it.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil is a place that minimizes impact by visitors, unlike Brooks Falls. Please keep McNeil that way.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please keep disruption minimal for the bears sanctuary.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) I'm for whatever is best for the bears, even if that limits my ability to visit. 2) All planes face the possibility of having to turn back due to bad weather; the additional problem of wheeled planes having to turn back because of bears on the beach makes wheeled planes less attractive to me (in addition to whatever problems they cause for the bears).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor flexibility is a worthy goal. Protecting bears is very important, although occasional inconveniencing them at the beach is probably acceptable. Increasing access options may allow competition among providers with salutary effects on cost. Wheeled access should take into account quiet hours for the camp area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel this would disturb this Grizzly habitat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the number of bears that I saw roaming on the beach, landing planes on the beach would certainly negatively impact the bears which is the opposite of what McNeil is about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McNeil is such a special place. I have been 2xs, and at my age.... I was VERY lucky to have a once in a lifetime experience 2xs. McNeil is what it is because of the way it is set up. Arriving by float plane with the tide is just a part of it all, carrying camping gear up the spit. I only see wheeled planes disturbing the bears natural routines. The noise even for those camping would be disruptive, what next?, larger planes, glamping? Keep McNeil remote, which is what has made it a special place for 50 years. I was there for the 50 year anniversary even was on the plane with Larry Aumiller and was lucky enough to have him on hikes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works well now with float planes so why change it? Plus wheeled landings means more landings and who wants the noise and more commings and goings?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would only favor wheeled landings if they did not disturb the bears. If there is a specific time where there is only a slight chance of bear activity that might work. My preference would be to give the permit winners more flexibility with their allotted time frames.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bears come first, I want to make sure there is sufficient evidence that a wheeled plane would not have any more impacts to bears than a float plane. Whether more trials are necessary, or a reversible decision is allowed if wheeled planes begin having an impact on bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No wheel planes. Wheel planes have screwed up and over-populated all other viewing sites along the coast from Halo and north. No wheel planes, period.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral on all answers above because they are not concrete choices. Maximizing access could mean allowing 1000 planes to land...Maximizing protection of bears could mean closing McNeil to people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not mess up the best bear viewing opportunity in the world! The tides do make things difficult and some flexibility with access should be considered but not at the expense of the bears and/or the overall viewer experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The entire purpose of visiting McNeil is bear viewing. If wheeled planes are displacing bears, that's an issue. My group lost the entire first day of our viewing block due to weather constraints. Sure, it was a little disappointing at the time, but it's Alaska! You have to be flexible. At the end of the day, we all had a superior bear viewing experience with the time we had.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bears are first priority--I have not been to McNeill yet, but would like access to be allowed via float or wheeled plane IF it can be arranged so as to be as minimally invasive as possible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McNeil River is a State Game Sanctuary with an impeccable track record of visitor and personnel safety, viewing etiquette, and is a model of brown bear conservation and management. Allowing additional methods of access, at the expense of displacing the species the Sanctuary is built to protect, seems contrary to what the term sanctuary should mean. McNeil is a long-standing model of how bears should be properly viewed in their natural settings and is spoke of as the gold standard among bear managers and bear biologists at internationally recognized bear conferences. It is stated clearly in the management plan that airstrips are not allowed in the sanctuary and refuge. If you open the doors to allowing wheeled plane access on land or the beach in a limited or full status, what prevents people from accessing the sanctuary after ADF&G staff have left for the

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season? I suspect an unknown amount of disturbance goes undocumented. I see this as opening Pandora's box and it sets a precedent that sanctuaries are no longer held to higher standards and can be used as a tool for additional access methods not only in McNeil but other protected areas in the state. Access to the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary is by boat access only as float planes caused too much disturbance historically for walrus. The beauty of McNeil is the intimate, controlled viewing of brown bears in their natural setting. This is not the experience you get anywhere else in the world. Katmai has sold its soul to tourism...let's keep McNeil River State Game SANCTUARY the way it is.

- I would think the tides would also affect the wheeled plane landings, so that should be a consideration and perhaps tied to those permit time periods that would allow float plane landings. I think that if only float planes are allowed, permits should not be offered during times that float planes cannot land.
- First of all, the landing opportunities at McNeil are limited at best. If one bear is displaced during a landing, or worse, injured due to the landing, it's unacceptable. And wheeled planes do not solve the issue of economics. While it might open the area to additional operators, it will still be expensive. It might make more sense for ADF&G to contract directly with a charter carrier in advance to provide the operator a guaranteed rate or minimum total to ensure availability of operators who can fly to McNeil. Leaving it to the permit holders to figure it out is easier on ADF&G, I recognize, but operators are going to go where the money is. Having to deadhead back from McNeil, or fly over at less than full weight, costs the operators money. So, they don't do it. If Jimmy Christensen stops flying to McNeil, the program is in peril overall, regardless of how many other operators there are. He's the only one remaining that does seat fares, and unless there's a more sure system of chartering an entire plane for a group, I worry about the viability of the entire McNeil program. But disturbing the bears with wheeled landings is not the solution to that problem.
- McNeil River is one of the only places on earth where one can view bears in their natural habitat. Let's keep it pristine for future generations to enjoy.
- The priority should remain the protection of the bears with McNeil River as a sanctuary.
- Let Mc Neil River Bear population "Wild and Free" . It 's not Disney land. No more Brooks falls show anywhere !
- McNeil River before bear viewing thing became big was really unexplored region of the state due to low accessibility. It should remain guarded in the respect that commercial interest shouldn't dictate thru greed the need for expanded viewing opportunities or length of a tourist season.
- Next those that can afford it will be chartering their own planes and wanting to land
- I do not believe wheeled plane landings are a good idea nor are they necessary. There are other places people can go. Halo Bay is an example of a high volume of takeoffs/landings and a lot of air traffic
- My husband and I have won the lottery three times. Once we made it during the low tide slot. Twice we could not make it because of weather. Once was float planes not being able to land because of weather at McNeil. The other time we had a boat out of Homer that was taking us over but the sea did not permit it. It is a lot of work to get ready for McNeil. I believe a wheeled plane would have a greater ability for people to make it to McNeil. I also don't believe that this will displace bears. We live in KODIAK and travel all up and down the Katmai coast. Take for instance Hallo Bay or Brooks Falls. Most of the wheel of planes that come to Hallo Bay are from Homer. It has not changed any of the bears activity. Because it would only be planes coming in at certain times I don't see how it would change any better activity. I do believe a greater number of people would be able to actually arrive and have a wonderful time at McNeil if wheeled planes were allowed. We live in KODIAK. Last year we paid for McNeil, but never made it in so I am definitely for allowing wheeled planes.

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- I am a guide and photographer who leads bear photography treks all over Alaska. I use wheeled and float planes, depending on the location. Where the bears are somewhat habituated to people, I haven't found wheeled planes to present a problem, especially since the places I go are not high-traffic (people/planes) areas. I am all for minimizing human impact on the bears. With only 10 permits a day and specific time blocks, that's not a lot of traffic. If it was up to me, I would recommend using float planes for time blocks with sufficiently high tides and wheeled planes only on the dates that lack the tides. My experience with McNeil is that my time block did not have high enough tides on my entry date, so I contacted whoever is in charge and asked if I could go in a day early (when the tides were high enough) and I was permitted to do so as long as I stayed in camp. That worked well. Lining up time blocks with tides makes good sense to me. People try forever to get a permit, and it's disappointing to find your 4-day permit is really only usable for 2-3 days.
- Need to keep wheeled plane landings to a bear minimum (pun intended). I'd prefer it stayed as float plane access only.
- Please do not allow for an airstrip. Float planes suffice. Manage the humans not the bears!
- We had been scheduled to go prior to cancelling because of our son's sickness. However, we were cut a day short in planning because of high tides. Made it very hard to plan trip.
- After strongly agreeing to just have float planes land it was difficult to answer #17 about limiting wheeled planes. I guess by answering "agree" I'm saying that if they get voted in, I'd rather they are limited.
- I would prefer to keep it the way it is, that for me is part of the draw. The tides, the weather the bears.
- Mixed feelings. I know the lagoon is changing so over the next decade or so, it may get even harder to get float planes in and out. But wheel planes have a higher impact, and I strongly believe that the utmost priority for McNeil should be protecting the bears with the visitor experience coming in a much distant second.
- **PROTECT THE BEARS ARE THE TOP PRIORITY**
- Float plane traffic disturbs the bears as well, and many times you don't have the option to just wait while on floats (rapidly changing water conditions,etc) over the years I've found it easier to wait out a bear while on wheels than on floats.
- If in the short time that wheeled aircraft were allowed to land for the trial period it was recognized that bears were disturbed, then there is an issue. While in camp I experienced many bears in the mudflats, sedges and surrounding areas. Wolves commonly came Very near camp. Too much lost and not enough gained by having wheeled aircraft landings permitted.
- The Bears at McNeil are spectacular and their protection should be paramount over access. Wheeled Landings would massive disrupt the area and would have a very negative effect on the Bears.
- If wheeled plane landings are approved, then i foresee the wheeled plane landings to take place during low tides. This coincides when bears use the beach for clamming . These include elderly bears, sub adults and moms with cubs thereby displacing them from their food source. There is unlikely to have any security police to enforce any policy.
- McNeil is a special place, if wheeled planes are disturbing or disrupting normal bear or other wildlife activity then don't allow wheeled aircraft.
- Be strategic about location, and times of use, but this would help with tidal issues and help more visitors and charters to be able to get in and out of McNeil.
- All efforts should be made to avoid disturbing the bears
- The priority should be on the preservation of the habitat of the brown bears and their subsistence. As inconvenient as it may be for visitors, it is our responsibility to be flexible while being grateful for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity we're being given. As a visitor, I experienced delays with the float plane due to tide but understood the "risk" going into the opportunity.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planes and wildlife can, and have, co-existed for many years in Alaska. Wheeled planes can be used to access McNeil River without detrimental effects to the bears, it just takes some good prudence and common-sense guidelines to be established.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The highest priority is the protection of bears. Yes, it can be difficult to get there. But if you make it easy to get there through wheeled landings, and scare away the bears by doing so, then there is nothing there to go see. Don't allow wheeled landings. Try scheduling around tides instead.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a "run way in the grass" or are they landing on the beach? Could it be possible to set aside a grass area that is fenced off to keep the bears out for wheeled planes to land? Just wondering if something like that would work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tide issue prevents operators from accessing the Sanctuary during certain days and times. The administration of the site would be improved by allowing access for delivering and removal of persons and property if a uniform time was in place. The impact to the bears is minimal and actually allows for a better management of the Sanctuary. In recent experiences it has become more difficult to find operators willing to fly people in because of the timing and requirement of landing in the lagoon.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My main concern is the well-being of the bears and doing whatever minimizes human impact on/to them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safety and well-being of the bears needs to ALWAYS be the #1 priority over human access and convenience. This is their home and territory. It is a tremendous privilege for us to be able to visit at all. Anything less than prioritizing the bears is a failure by humanity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bears come first. It's a privilege to view. I like flexibility on time slots, but disturbing Bears by wheeled landings is unacceptable. Also, if you start it, it will grow.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety safety safety for passenger transport. Wheeled airplane landings give more flexibility for avoiding bad weather. Tide landings force pilots to fly at a certain time with no flexibility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McNeil River is a really special place. I understand bears get displaced from wheeled plane landings in Alaska all the time, and that's okay, but there are other places people can do that. The tolerant coexistence between bears and people at McNeil River due to the decades of methodical work by the department of fish and game is one of the most amazing things I've witnessed as a wildlife photographer. This location should be kept special. If wheeled planes can be landed without scaring off bears and hurting this coexistence, I think it would be good to have another option to make use of an awarded permit. Not being able to go even though you won a permit would be a real bummer. I think I like the compromise of allowing wheeled planes but only in limited seasons and times of day so as to not disturb the bears patterns.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled plane landings should be discouraged or extremely limited to protect bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect the bears as a priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the whole purpose of people going to the sanctuary is to view bears, why would we want to increase any activity that would harm or displace them?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't mess with the bears. Float planes are fine.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Float planes only. Under no circumstances should you disturb the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Alaskan should have an opportunity to visit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority to AK residents sucks! Losing days because of flight availability as well. If you spend \$3,000 in flights, you should get 4 days on the ground. The 10 person limit was exceeded on my trip and at 1 time, there were 3 groups in camp due to weather and multiple groups went out with friends of the parks staff and staff. Matters not if you all sit in the same place at the falls.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We live and die by the tides so allowing lottery winners to change their time would help but please don't add wheeled planes. You have answered this question by saying wheeled planes have displaced bears. You can't go back if allowing more wheeled planes is a mistake

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the use of wheeled planes displaces bears, or disturbs them in the natural habitat, the proposed strongly contradicts the idea of a “sanctuary.” Other wildlife, such as seals and foxes should also be taken into consideration. The McNeil River camp should be protected, not commercialized through easier access.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm strongly against this it undermines the primary purpose of McNeil which is bear conservation. The commercial interests of a particular operator should not take precedence over this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The experience should be limited by the use of the lottery and any transportation changes that adversely impact the bears should be disallowed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think we should prioritize bears. If that means it's less accessible to humans via wheeled planes, I am fine with that.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am not a fan and I have to leave the decision making to the staff who see the effects of wheeled landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Float planes are sufficient for the bear viewing program - part of the experience. I do not support increased traffic in previously unused areas as that will disturb the bears and detract from permit winners' experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why change what has worked for over 50 years and disrupts the wildlife you go to visit. Look how bad Brooks falls gets.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there anywhere else to land? Have some sort of transportation (quad or atv) to camp?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making it easier to access the camp will only result in more people on site which will degrade the experience. What makes the McNeil River Camp experience special is the small groups of people that participate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't mess With the bears' habitat!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Float plane across the inlet is more safe. Lower minimums and engin failure on floats is better. <p>It seems like a good idea to take a float plane across the ocean.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The greatest value of the McNeil River program is precisely its exclusivity and remoteness. The journey—moving through different modes of transport and reaching such an inaccessible place—is an essential part of the experience. Making access easier with wheeled plane landings could diminish that sense of entering a truly wild environment. What makes McNeil so extraordinary is the opportunity to witness wildlife in its most natural state, in a landscape that remains as untouched and preserved as possible. Even though the bears are accustomed to seeing people, the remoteness allows visitors to feel as if they are stepping into an entirely different world—the world of the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McNeil is a Bear Snactuary is it not? Seems like thte general health of the bear population should be a priority. Part of the charm of McNeil is that it is not easy to get to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly prefer float plane access as it ensures minimal bear interference. As a previous visitor, float plane access has been a sufficient method of transport.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It offers more options as the weather and tide make trips already complicated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only to be used if it can be safely managed to minimally impact the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would provide more opportunities for people to make their viewing dates if they have more times to land. Perhaps the cost to fly to McNeil would come down with more competition? I doubt it but it would be nice. If the permit numbers for visitors remain the same a couple more flights a day may not make a difference to the McNeil River experience. I would highly encourage a probationary period for wheeled plane landing while a sound disturbance study is done to see if bears and other species are disturbed by the additional landings. I believe a study was done on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge regarding snowmachine noise disturbance in wilderness areas. I'm not sure what the paper was titled but John Morton was one of the authors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't allow it.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My trip to McNeil was cut short because of the tides. It was still very much a worthwhile trip but due to the expense of traveling to McNeil, I would have liked to spend the full allotted time I paid for.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil was established for bears. It is my opinion that disruption which affects the movement or habits of these bears should not be allowed. There are many areas within Alaska where bear viewing can be easily accessed. McNeil should focus strictly on bears and their habitats. Not on human inter action or needs. Please Please remember the purpose of McNeil River Sanctuary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not sure how much the wheeled planes cost but float plane was costly. We had a hard time finding one when we went. Everyone told us no and the only reason we received a yes was because he felt sorry for us with all the no responses. Another option would be great but not at the expense of disrupting a sanctuary that has been doing the same thing over the years. It works because it has been consistant. This place is a treasure. Maybe boat/ferry could be an option?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheel plane for private general aviation only.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would defeat the goal of protecting the bears, creating potential for long term negative effects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that if regulated properly no significant harm will be done
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can't imagine the permitted bear viewing program to be run any better than it has been historically. Except to protect more land around the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no way to answer 17 since I said only float planes in 16, but if wheeled planes are allowed, it should be strictly controled and limited.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing that disturbs or displaces bears should be allowed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend continuing the use of float planes as the primary mode of transportation. Consider allowing wheeled plane landing ONLY during those low tide days that are not conducive for float planes to land. I would hate to see McNeil River camp overly commercialized or crowded like Katmai.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think landing of wheeled planes would negatively change the experience of visitors and disturb the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Is it good for the bears?" should be the filter. Wheeled plane landings seem like the answer is no. Beyond that, I am concerned that wheeled planes would increase the likelihood of invasive plants being introduced to the sanctuary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled planes should not have access. It would displace bears. There is no time when bears and other animals are less likely to be at the beach except winter. The beach is very sloped and usually covered with debris making landing a wheeled plane dangerous.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bear viewing experience is phenomenal and as a visitor, I would want to minimize disturbance on the bears. I would be concerned if wheeled landings disturbed displaced or changed bear behavior near the camp
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been to McNeil twice, both times sows with cubs use the tidal area for feeding and clamming with cubs to stay away from dangerous boars, Having wheeled planes would disturb the safety of sows and cubs and other bear groups. This is a sanctuary for bears, ;they have had almost 50 years acclimatizing to human presence. Our disturbing their safety for human monetary gains is unacceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting to a small number of flights per day as well - no more than 6 per day at times of day when bears are less active.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The park is for the bears and humans can be there sometimes, and only if it doesn't disturb them. Please don't allow wheeled planes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access is only available during certain hours due to the unique large Alaska tides. If you restrict it by times, you are once again cutting off access for people to visit. Also, you are forcing Alaskans to use private commerce for a state lottery program. When I applied for the lottery, I was under the impression that I could use my own aircraft (I have both a float and wheel plane). Being forced to use a business that ADFG selects is unconstitutional, especially when the specific regulations do

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not restrict that. Also, I was told that I COULD NOT use my personal float plane because I could not keep it there during my visit. There is land outside of the state park about 2 miles west with good beaches, but I didn't want to hike my gear in 2 miles and be that far away from my aircraft in an area saturated with bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO WHEEL PLANES (this from a pilot) NEED 3-5 mile buffer zone around McNeil for no bear hunting. Like it or not, guides hunting right on park boundaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that this is potentially too disturbing for the bears. This sanctuary exists for their protection. That should not be jeopardized for human convenience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fence it in?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm all about the bears. Plus humans value what is harder to get--keep it limited!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to manage an aviation airlift in Bristol Bay with DC-6 aircraft on a beach at Egegik. The aircraft can not land with a bear in the beach, there is no way to know what the bear will do. If given the idea they have the right of way, I believe many pilots will “buzz” the bears to get them to move. A lot of this activity may encourage the bears to leave the area which defeats the purpose of the program to see the bears.
<p>I'd like to see some access for wheeled aircraft but I think you need to be very specific about what is allowed and it should be enforced with cameras and follow-up. Even though I was a private pilot and part owner of an aviation cargo business and have experience working aircraft on a beach, I don't recommend letting just anyone out there. A lot of things can and will go wrong. It's tricky flying. In the other hand, I'd like to see more access to the area if possible without alienating the bears.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love what you guys do there! Bears first over people!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane landings should not be permitted if there is a risk of disrupting bear use of the beach.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil River is a world-class wildlife viewing experience, on par with the Serengeti, or the Galapagos islands. Please, please, please... protect this extremely rare eden for generations to come.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was an amazing experience. The people that work there have created an incredible relationship between bears and humans. This is a bear sanctuary first, allowing wheeled aircraft would change the sanctuary the bears have known for the last 40+ years.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not think it should be allowed. Arriving by float plane is part of what makes the experience unique
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We love McNeil, the bears, and the guides.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No wheeled planes. Prioritize the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If landing wheeled planes sometimes disturbs and displaces bears, it should not be employed. Any means to access the camp should have no impact on bear activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This beautiful sanctuary is for the BEARS, not tourists! We should respect their environment and abide by the current rules that have protected these bears for years.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been “inconvenienced” by poor tides on one of my trips, and accepted that as a reality to deal with. Probably the best solution is to structure the permit blocks/access days in and out to coincide with acceptable tides. I knew ahead of time that tides would make access tricky and I accepted that fact.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why not land wheeled planes on the beach area(s), in areas not currently hosting bears and then walking to the designated camping area?

Written responses (Question 20)

- I am not sure about wheeled plane access. I think that avoiding interaction with the bears must take priority.
- This is bear country with human visitors. I am specifically against any land-based expansion of the human camp. Seeing bears IN camp is a startling but low-risk and incredible privilege, I assume unique in the world to the few acres of McNeil camp (for the given level of risk). Further, I've had a 4-night June permit reduced to 2 nights due to weather and I'd rather have that than add a land-based landing strip.
If a budget gap is a reason for expanding access, I would rather the permit or application pricing be raised for this high quality experience.
- Wheeled plane landings on the spit would need to be on the bay side, not the lagoon side, which may result in further erosion. When the high tide is lower than 15 ft, the low tide may provide enough space for a landing further out in the bay. Landing in the bay may displace mothers teaching cubs to clam. There is also the significant risk of departing from Homer, hoping to land and not being able to, leading to increased costs faced by charter pilots and ultimately by the visitors. In the case of limiting float plane landings for permitted bear viewers, the limitation of access method takes a secondary priority to the restriction of landings for the program. Please do not allow float planes for purposes other than access for the permitted visitors. While accessibility should be considered, any development or further encroachment should be thoughtfully considered. I believe the additional method of transportation does not successfully address the issue, and it further complicates the burden of transportation faced by visitors, who may or may not know the tides and would not know if they could land until circling above camp. It also seems as though some of the charters would rather prioritize other customers, rather than visitors of McNeil River.
- If this disturbs the bears then no. Why change what has been working?
- McNeil River sanctuary is unique in the world and needs to be protected. Since it has been confirmed already that wheeled plane landings disturb and scare bears, it is a very bad idea that will undoubtedly undermine the long term future of the sanctuary.
- I would give us more options to get there
- I do not support wheeled plane landings.
- It appears you are juggling providing access with disrupting the bears habitat. I think the animals care and rights should come first, even if it means not everyone can access the site.
- The guidance of rangers, conservationists, and scientists should be taken above the preferences of visitors and citizens.
- Protect the bears
- The bears have enough pressures on them, let's give them a break and keep this excellent program the way it is and has been.
- Probably allowing for too many more visitors and aircraft noise on the landing strip potentially having an animal collision.
- Due to the tides and limited float plane opportunities, it is often very hard for visitors to get to McNeil.

However I think beach landings would displace bears clamming or traveling to/from the sedge meadows. Like Beth Rosenberg said, "if it's good for the bears, we do it. If its not good for the bears, we don't."

Due to this, I feel float planes are the least invasive and best option.

Maybe we can hold off issuing permits during the low tides and extend the viewing season into August or start it late May.

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Perhaps we can also explore boat charters in some capacity. I feel a boat is better able to assess bear activity onshore than a wheeled plane
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly against any wheel landings by permit holders/air taxi operators for the reasons addressed above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beaches are owned by the residents of Alaska, they should be allowed to use them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The language of McNeil’s purpose - primary purpose of protecting brown bears and wildlife resources while providing for compatible public uses - should answer this question. Bear safety/comfort should be paramount.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be allowed as little as possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We already encroach upon the bears enough. We don’t need additional people, planes and annoyed bears on small paths.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No to wheeled planes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil River camp needs to focus on protecting the bears from disturbance and limit accessibility to float plan landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled plane access presents significant safety concerns for both humans and bears from potential bear strikes. Regular wheeled plane access would disturb bears and potentially cause them to leave an area established as a sanctuary for congregating bears. Disturbing this behavior goes against the intent of the establishment of this sanctuary and is not a compatible use of the sanctuary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing wheeled-plane landings at the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary would introduce significant risks to both bears and their habitat. Increased aircraft noise and ground activity during critical feeding periods could disrupt bear foraging behavior, displace subordinate bears, and alter long-established movement patterns that are central to the sanctuary’s extraordinary bear density and viewing quality. Because no suitable hardened landing surface exists, wheeled-plane operations would likely damage sensitive coastal and tidal-flat habitats through soil compaction, rutting, vegetation disturbance, and the creation of unintended travel corridors that affect how bears move across the landscape. Additional human presence around aircraft also increases the likelihood of unstructured encounters, elevating stress on wildlife and posing safety risks to both people and bears. Over time, even modest increases in disturbance could accumulate, undermining the sanctuary’s long-standing management principle of minimizing human impact to protect the bears and the unique ecosystem that supports them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No wheeled planes. Not that hard to hire float plane
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidal issues and the availability of a float plane resulted in my partner and I losing one day of viewing. I understand that could not have been resolved and accepted the loss of one day ahead of my arrival.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled planes would lower the cost of access and open it up to more people... which would benefit all parties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will likely increase visitors which, sooner or later, will be detrimental to the bears and viewing opportunities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mission of the department is to maximize the resources for all users of the reason. It sounds as though displacing bears acts against this in the sense that it is removing bears from an area of bear viewing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation without access likely limits future engagement. With out a knowledge of the extinct of impact to the bears this is an extremely hard survey to answer. What are the realized impacts of the wheeled landings. That is a must know
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The #1 priority should be protecting the bears. Bear viewing is an incredible opportunity but should not be done at the expense/negative impact of the bears in their protected environment.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As bears shift to McNeal River through the season, wheeled planes may be a feasible option. Early in the season, when bears might be occupying the flats in front of the camp, it would not be a good idea.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other bear viewing areas such as Silver Salmon Lodge almost exclusively use wheeled landings with a protected park area. I would work with Lake Clark NP to see if they have ever determined any negative effects from wheeled use, and if not, then allow them at McNeil. Wheeled landings also would offer permit holders a cheaper flight alternative as they are cheaper to operate than float planes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If this in any way further disturbs the bears it should not be allowed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximize scheduling opportunity to visit...also would allow more competition for access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheel plane landings disturb bears. Therefore they shouldn't be allowed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "beach" seemed pretty steep at anytime other than very low tide...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrible idea. So noisy and disruptive to bears and visitors alike!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Didn't need them the last 40 years. They don't need them now.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider additional fencing around the field
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from my visit to McNeil, I believe wheeled planes will disrupt and change the habits of the bears. I believe we should work around the tides and use wheeled planes when they are least disruptive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wheeled plane landings will significantly disrupt the McNeil atmosphere and current basis for it's existence. It is a bear preserve and research environment that allows visitors. Allowing landing strip access to tourist planes will turn McNeil into a tourist operation that allows research to take place. Do not mess the place up because rich people and air service operators want to exploit the place for increases revenues. And try your best to not fall victim to the same people claiming they will help generate increased revenues for McNeil research through increased monies/donations coming from increased tourism. I want to go there because it is protected by strict access controls and allows very limited non-research access. Protect what you have by doing the things that have been done for years. Limit access, make it exclusive, impose strict rules around the lottery and the camp when tourists are there, and don't bend to pressure from money and influence. If you increase access to McNeil by opening up an airport there you will mess up a world-class experience for the people that work there and the lucky ones that get a chance to experience it firsthand. <p>Read "In Wild Trust" by Jeff Fair who lives up in Palmer AK. It's a great documentary about McNeil. Allowing more tourism there will cause it to become something it was never intended to be...a tourism operation.</p> <p>I'll get there one day when lottery luck comes my way.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have never visited. I put in for challenging time blocks and figured I would just camp and stay in camp for the additional nights if I win. Not ideal, but I could use the time to read and disconnect from phone etc....
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I strongly disagree with allowing wheeled planes into Mcneil river area especially if they displace the Bears in any way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I could not make my time because of the tides and would be a two week time between drop off and pick up due to tides. I cannot take that amount of time off for work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mneil prouds itself on being bear-first, people second, and decisions moving forward should continue to put the bears first, even if that means limited access to the area and continuing to rely on float planes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow wheeled planes only when float planes cannot access due to tide height
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although I am a small plane (wheeled) owner and pilot, I don't approve of wheeled plane access.

Written responses (Question 20)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be a disaster for the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've been to McNeil since 1992 and once had to be flown out by helicopter for the inability to get float plane in. People who love bears and McNeil won't stand for buzzing of bears. Be real!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil River is a special place, where bears come first. Adding the use of wheeled planes would create more disturbance and allow more accessibility. Small groups create a better experience for bears as well as people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While I believe it's a true privilege to have access to viewing these magnificent creatures, I do NOT believe in displacing or disturbing the wildlife or environment in order to do so. This is not our land, it doesn't belong to any of us, and the fact that people think it does is ludicrous. This land is wild, and because it's wild, it should be left with a minimal human footprint. If this means ticket holders are unable to access this area at certain times then so be it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm all for more access. Been trying for 10 years and never come close.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled landings would have to take place in and around the spit. Having worked at McNeil, I have seen bears use the spit regularly to play, nurse, forage, and sleep. Allowing wheeled landings would alter the natural behavior of these bears. The bears on and around the spit are visible to visitors in camp, and are an excellent viewing opportunity that should not be jeopardized by wheeled landings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My initial thought is, no but if one can be certain of no impacts to the environment or wildlife, its worth exploring.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it the way it is. Wheeled landings should not be used (except in emergencies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was an amazing experience and we would not have been able to visit if the wheeled access had not been granted. The bears were not at the falls yet, so we hiked all over the sanctuary. We saw many bears grazing, clamming, fishing in the streams.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheeled planes should be limited to times when float planes are not able to land, then efforts should be made to minimize disturbance of bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please do not allow wheeled planes or increased access to this sanctuary. Let's make decisions that place the bears first, not human spectators. I'll keep applying to go myself, but will always place the bears first, regardless if I make it there or not.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having more awareness and champions of McNeil game sanctuary is a good thing in my opinion. Human & bear safety would be my primary concern. I would not want to substantially increase the volume planes coming in and out, as that would negatively impact wilderness experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary purpose of the McNeil River Game Sanctuary should be to act as a wildlife sanctuary, not as a wildlife viewing park. If wheeled planes disturb bears then that doesn't seem compatible with the primary purpose of protecting the bears from human development and activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not disturb the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its just a plane, the bears will not be affected. Just land the planes and the bears will learn to move or not go in that area. Or fence off the runway if need be. They are only bears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airplanes displace or disturb bears all the time with no real lasting effects, even wheel-planes as long as the pilots adhere to proper protocols. My only worry is the added risk of aircraft accidents on unimproved landing areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bears are habituated to float planes. Adding wheeled planes and disturbing bears is contrary to the ideals behind McNeil River Sanctuary. If wheel planes are approved (bad idea) then they should be restricted to times or seasons when bears are not known to be in the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe floatplanes minimize impacts to bears, which is the whole purpose of the McNeil program. Look at other areas where wheel planes currently operate to look at negative impacts!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's long overdue. It's time to build an airstrip.

Written responses (Question 20)

- Wheeled planes are unlikely to disturb bears, and if so, maybe for only a limited time. Allowing the use of wheeled planes will allow greater flexibility to get to McNeil for those who get a permit and should be permissible

21. Please provide any comments regarding the permit administration for the McNeil River bear viewing program.

Answered= 365, Skipped = 376

Written responses (Question 21)

- If allowing wheeled planes is just a matter of getting more people there/making more money...just up the fees. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity that I think those who win the permits would be willing to pay. I would.
- Excellent program. Protect this excellent habitat/area for the bears and folks who value them
- I am open to exploring some flexibility with things like the timing of the permit periods (if other restrictions in numbers of permits, e.g., are kept in place) and believe a bit of flexibility can be good. I think the work on reselling permits has been a positive effort, e.g. But I am concerned about too many changes or changes that will impact the current McNeil experience.
- The permit system has worked as is and should not be changed. This is what has kept McNeil as special as it is.
- I haven't applied for a permit for a long time as I often forget about it. I also know of many who have applied for years and never get it. I'm fortunate enough to have seen many brown bears in the wild in the state so until I get a permit, I'll enjoy others photos
- I would have appreciated if the department took the time to align the viewing blocks with tides that work for safe float plane landings. As it was, I missed a day of viewing because of bad tides. If I was able to return (I cannot due to a medical condition) I think it would be best to have permit times set to match the tides. Some folks could have longer visits and others could have shorter visits, and everyone could have a better chance of getting into the sanctuary when their permit allows them to go out with a guide.
- Question #17 is not fair question. It should allow for the option to say not to allow wheel plane landings at all. Instead, change the permit time locks to match accessible tides, and otherwise leave the program alone.
- Coordinate permits with the tides.
- Excellent program. Works very well. Easy to book a float plane at a reasonable cost. Please don't ruin the sanctuary and endanger the campers who are sleeping in tents close to the beach. The bears walked right by our tents at night on the path and we felt safe because we weren't intruding on their environment and their feeding patterns unlike Brooks Camp which needs an electric fence. Human activity on their beach shouldn't be increased by wheeled aircraft. It is not necessary. The current program works so well.
- No changes needed.
- I have found the administration fine. I think the challenges of getting and being there (including time slots and tides) are part of what make this adventure so special. Let's keep it that way!!!
- See 20.
- Why don't you just change the permit blocks to align with the tides?
- The permit blocks should be scheduled to coincide with safe tides for landing float planes.
- Hey! It was super disappointing to win the permit just to be declined due to the tides- we initially were told that we would get preference for the second lottery (for open slots) but then later told that wasn't allowed. I think the smartest thing to do would be to time the permit slots with the tides so that on average people would be able to arrive and leave on the allotted start and stop days..

Written responses (Question 21)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The humans always have the advantage. I'm for the bears. Would be lovely to see some conservation minded person on the ABFG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our visit was shorted a day, this is likely due to tides, but we weren't told it was because of that. We were told it was because the operator wanted to do only one trip for pick ups and drop offs. Increasing available transporters, gives people greater flexibility to experience McNeil. Yet, this could also increase the airplane traffic in general, as more planes will likely have at leg of their trip empty.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In my opinion. input on wheeled landings in McNeil is misleading and asks questions that are inconsistent with management regulations. I have seen no scientific data and observations about the disturbance to bears by ADF&G or any other entity. This survey appears to present the issue as a matter of personal preference. My understanding is that the proposed wheeled landings come into conflict with the Alaska law that established the Sanctuary many years ago. Currently there are fewer bears and more people. It is ridiculous to ease access and change the rules with no apparent data or supporting facts. This appears to be another project like predator control of the Mulchatna caribou herd with no supporting data or historical common sense.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McNeil is a global treasure and should be regarded as such. The State's track record for bears and other carnivores is horrific with this lone exception. ADFG should try doing the right, and legal, thing for a change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The worst part of Alaska is that the best of it is locked up in parks and other restricted lands the public can't access easily.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I knew before and when entering the lottery of the chances I took. With unknowns like weather, tides, and other possibilities of disturbances and disruptions happening, but I realize that's part of and included in the adventure. Fish & Game staff provide a great seat into this exceptional natural sanctuary experience, and are excellent hosts not only to the visitors, but excellent caretakers to the area's wildlife as well. They work the program extremely well, are very professional in their manner and provide the public with lifetime memorable experiences. Please allow them to continue to provide this very natural experience to those who are fortunate enough to be able to experience it - without negative encroachments by wheeled airplanes into the bears natural living and rearing areas. Thank you.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep it as simple/streamlined as possible for staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank you!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> heavy handed administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was given a permit for being the Wildlife educator of the year many years ago when Larry A. was Director out there. Wonderful 4 days! Let's keep McNeil River wild and hard to access. Let's not turn it into another Brooks Camp/Falls.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I believe that if a permit holder could not secure transportation because none was available, and they received a refund, they should not be disqualified from applying the following year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department is caving in to Dunleavy administration corruption. Airplanes an indication of wealth destroy peaceful interaction with wildlife.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is ADFG duty to manage the sanctuary in accordance with the statute establishing it. Specifically, ADFG is required to place the "permanent protection" of brown bears and habitat over other uses and to manage all "human use and activities" in a way that is strictly compatible with protecting brown bears, other wildlife, and their habitat. Bear viewing and the visitor program must remain subordinate to "permanent protection" of bears. My answer to #17 is not at all. If there are changes to be made the public should be properly notified and allowed the correct legal time to respond. A survey should not be a substitution.

Written responses (Question 21)

- Leave it as it is because it works. More visitors is not the answer.
- Safety, can it be done safely? Weather can kill quickly
- The guides that are hired to fly people out there they should be Alaskan companies and the guides should be Alaskan residents that live here, the guide companies that are chosen to fly that should be done on a lottery system
- You don't make it easy. Even when you get a permit, it's not easy to figure out what to do.
- I hope I win one. Flexibility would be nice
- I like the idea of providing some flexibility for permittee's to move their permit to another block with an opening if they're unable to get to McNeil during their block due to tides or floatplane availability. I'd also support simply blocking out the low tide periods, knowing that planes can't get in our out, unless the wx allows landing on the east side of the spit (something you can never count on). The water taxi option that was trialed last year should also be explored further. There are several vessels in Homer that can easily accommodate 10 visitors and all their gear, with no load limit like the floatplanes have. There appears to be one operator with 2 catamaran vessels willing to make this run. I suspect others would quickly join in, as long as they had enough passengers to make the trip economical for them. That being said, a 100-mile crossing of Lower Cook Inlet can be really hard on boats and their passengers when it's rough (and it often is), even for a catamaran. So that will also be an issue at times, just as it is for floatplanes that shouldn't fly in some conditions. The McNeil web page and application should clearly describe these "Alaska challenges" so folks know what they're getting into. If someone wins a permit and flies all the way to Homer from wherever they live and the wx keeps them from being able to get across to McNeil, they should be awarded another permit the following year to make up for that disappointment. It seems like there's lots of room on the Admin side to make changes that aid permit winner access without resorting to one (wheeled planes) that displaces bears at McNeil River. If the program is determined to provide wheeled plane access to McNeil, a beach farther away from camp (towards McNeil Head), should be considered (to avoid negative interactions around Camp) and permit winners should be advised that they will need to hump their gear a longer distance to camp. Another option might be to build a small strip on the bench behind camp, if staff deem that an area less likely to displace bears than a beach landing.
- We know tides far enough in advance to set the viewing permit blocks to coincide with tides accessible to safe floatplane landings. Scrap the four day blocks, an create blocks of variable numbers of days that will allow safe landings on the water. This will allow shorter blocks for some who want them, and longer blocks for others like me who want to stay more than four days.
- You must be able to get the tide information ahead of setting permit block dates and then choose permit blocks that match safe tides. This would allow for a mix of smaller and larger blocks (instead of the standard 4 day block) which will appeal to me and many others.
- Why not change the permit blocks to align with tides that allow float plane landings?
- I would have appreciated if my time blocks has been aligned with tides that allow float plane landings. I missed out on viewing because the blocks were on poor tide days. Changing the blocks to match tides that work is the way forward
- Change the permit blocks to match flyable tides
- ADF&G has successfully applied the highest standards in managing McNeil. No need to lower yourself to those more interested in the money than a quality experience.
- I have no problem with the permit process or the administration and thought it all worked well.
- Permit administration for the 2025 season was mishandled resulting in a record number unsold/unused permits. To avoid mail delays in the purchase of awarded permits, require all applicants to pay for the lottery and awarded permits through a "MyAlaska" account. One business day after the original purchase deadline, unsold permits should be made available immediately, by email or text, to unsuccessful applicants for the same specific under-subscribed block. Five days

Written responses (Question 21)

later, permits still unsold should be made available to ALL unsuccessful lottery entrants , on a first-come first-served basis, regardless of the block applied for. The lottery application should include an additional option to be placed on such a waiting list for all unsold permits for either the original blocks applied for or for all blocks that are undersold. When an application on any waiting list is contacted by email/text they would have five days to purchase the permit or be disqualified from any waiting list. Then an offer would made to the next application on the waiting list, with the same five day deadline. When any available unsold permit falls within five days of the start of its time block, it should be made available to anyone on an "on-call" list of Alaska residents who have requested that status and, if contacted, must immediately purchase the permit. In this resale process, if a permit from a waiting list is selected but the number of persons on that permit would exceed the limit of visitors in that block, that selection would be bypassed just as in the original lottery.

In addition, any permit winners should be allowed to be transported to McNeil up to the number of days before and/or after their permit period to accommodate tides and still provide a full four-day visit for that permit block. Such visitors should be limited to the camp area, similar but secondary to actual Camp Standby permit winners already on site, until their permit period applies. Permit winners should not be required, in advance, to depart McNeil on the last day of their permit merely to accommodate the scheduling and convenience off the transporter bringing in permittees for the next block.

Regardless, all lottery applicants should be forewarned that weather and tides could significantly affect the number of days they will have available at McNeil. Travel to remote areas of Alaska like McNeil has always been a crap shoot for many reasons yet for decades McNeil visitors and transporters have coped with it. The bears should not be put at risk to accommodate visitor and transporter convenience or profitability. At McNeil, bears come first.

- McNeil River is a wonderful opportunity for bear viewing. The program is administered well. Appreciate what the department is doing.
- The current permit administration system is working just fine.
- ADFG offers 4 choices for our permit application dates and that is excellent. Twice, I was given the chances to go to McNeil when someone who had won a permit decided not to go. I was very grateful and had wonderful visits!
- There should be a higher resident opportunity for permits.
- I have found the administration of the program is excellent. From my vantage point, I dont see that it needs to change.
- I am fine with how the permit system has worked in the past. It seems like managers could figure out if it is best to have people shift around and how this could impact the program.
- The department should rebuild the camp up on hill above where the current camp resides.
- See above
- More transparency and allow more out of state allocation
- It works just fine. Don't try to fix what isn't broken.
- Setting time blocks around accessible tides seems to be the only reasonable way to proceed.
- Changing the available blocks to allow planes to be able to match the tides would be the best solution
- The permit blocks should be changed to match the tides.
- The best solution is to change the viewing blocks to match accessible tides.
- At McNeil River THE BEARS COME FIRST! I'm completely fine with rolling the dice regarding permit blocks, weather and tides as long as THE BEARS COME FIRST.
- a. Possibly awarding the permits earlier - January or February - to allow winners, and air-taxi and boat operators, more time to plan for/secure float transportation to McNeil. Perhaps if the operators new well in advance what the needs are and had contact information of the permit

Written responses (Question 21)

winners, they could contact the permit winners and book their aircraft for the McNeil flights. That might help their planning for the number/availability of aircraft they'll need and their business.

b. DO NOT increase the number of people per Block. The camp cook cabin is at full capacity with 8 -10 people as it is now.

c. The current method of access has worked for many years. The tides haven't changed their frequency, highs or lows over the years. Daylight and weather has been and will always be a factor. Modifying the administrative process to put more people on the ground at McNeil will NOT work to the benefit of the bears that use the McNeil game sanctuary. There are many other areas where people can go to view bears outside the sanctuary.

- I have no comments on the permit administration program, other than I thought it was very well done. With respect to the on-site staff, I was very impressed with their competence and attention to detail. The orientation was well presented. Staff was very knowledgeable, helpful, and cheerful the entire time.
- More and more places around the world are having to set up strict permit processes as people learn about these special places and are willing to wait for a permit and pay whatever it costs. A better strategy would be to increase the permit cost alot for out of state visitors while keeping the permit numbers at a current level that protects the bears' annual return and feeding behavior. The state would get increased revenue from out of state visitors that could support this State of Alaska wildlife refuge. I paid \$800 for a half day permit to observe gorillas in the wild. I am far from wealthy, I drive a 2012 car - I just always wanted to do this and I saved and waited until I could go and pay the permit fee. I know the permit fee went to pay the rangers and support the park gorillas. People will wait 20 plus years to get a Grand Canyon float permit. Do not increase the permit numbers - the sanctuary is there to protect bears; visitation is indeed important for income and for people to experience the unique wildlife setting, but visitation is only important secondarily - the bears must return and feed naturally for there to be visitation in the future.
- I have travelled to McNeil first in the early 80s into the 2020s. I treasured every minute I was there. The bears have always come first and my understanding is that the ground landings will be disruptive to bears. I am opposed to them.
- Declined permits should be available through re-sale. What the heck happened in 2025 that no permits were available for re-sale?
- My visit was 20 years ago, but back then dealing with the state was a nightmare! I don't exaggerate, it reminded me of traveling in the third world! Everyone from the government employees to the pilots just wanted my money, no one seemed to interested in the actual experience us poor citizens had. Nothing was online yet, and half the info mailed to me was wrong.
- Maybe allow permitted visitors to transfer their permit to another person, especially if they were unable to visit due to unforeseen circumstances.
- The McNeil River bear viewing program is well run in its current state. Please do not disrupt any aspect of the bear's life for wheeled plane access. The bears are terrified of humans and you will harm the program by landing large mechanical planes on their land, which has been undisturbed for generations of bears. Please, do not move forward with this. This program is an incredible success for wildlife and, importantly, the State of Alaska, and should not be changed.
- In my experience, the permit administration was fair and efficient (two of my visits were a result of ADF&G contacting me after I lost on the initial drawing but pthers cancelled).
- The maximum amount of visitors should menacing at present levels. A waiting list of people who entered the lottery but were not selected should be allowed to fill any open slots.

Written responses (Question 21)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think it's great as is. If you look up the information and do the research it's easy to select timeframes that work with tides and eventually get awarded a permit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not sure I understand questions 18 and 19. I like flexibility so long as it doesn't harm the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blocks of time should take into account those dates which are likely going to be more difficult to access McNeil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bears should not be disturbed, first of all, but if that comes at the cost of more restricted access then greater flexibility should be allowed to those with permits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I enjoyed McNeil River immensely as the focus was on no disruption of bear activity and limiting human activity. Even though permits are limited I would much rather wait until next time than have to be constantly aware of disruptive people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep it as simple as possible, as it always was. Don't raise the amount of visitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am sad that my travel friend and I were never successful in winning a bear viewing permit. We have subsequently visited other areas of Alaska to view bears but would still love to someday be able to visit McNeil River!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think limiting the number of people that visit McNeil is appropriate. The bears survival and comfort take precedence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It functions very well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No need to set time blocks around tides. Admin works with you to let you come in early or late depending on the tides. They are very flexible. Let what works, work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was there in 2019. ADF&G staff was very knowledgeable and helpful, the introductory orientation was complete and well presented, the rules were explained and everybody complied. It was a wonderful experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think the possibility of an extended stay because of low tides is great. I spent 7 and 9 days there. That is amazing! Please keep it that way for the real bear enthusiasts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it'd be nice if there were cheaper ways to access it, but it doesn't sound like wheeled planes are the ticket. what about boats, only at high tide - that's how they get some gear in there. i think the permit process is good and fair. i'd like to be able to go more, but feel lucky to have been a couple times
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great program. Hope to go again.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have tried to get a permit three times so far and have always failed...and you know what? I am ok with that. Because I understand that access is and should remain limited. I will keep trying but I would never want my eagerness to see the bears to disrupt their lives or cause them harm.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please do not waiver from your original purpose which is the protection of the bears. Please do not be overly accomodating and flexible as this will lead to disruptions and problems for the bears. Bears first always. Please, please Do not increase flexibility for human access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process is fine. The Alaska resident preference is a little annoying - should just be a lottery with varying costs (like fishing licenses).
<p>The dumb part about all of this is the incredible demand for people to visit McNeil. Instead of screwing up McNeil, how about creating another bear sanctuary (or 2 or 3) on state land since there is so much demand. I know that would mean killing less bears and the F&G Board doesn't understand that concept, but it makes the most sense. Please join the 21st century where you don't have to kill things to enjoy them. There is huge demand to simply let nature be and enjoy it as is</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do something good for bears, like keeping them safe from hunters! Who eats bears in Alaska anyway!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be some flexibility allowed. What that actually looks like I honestly don't know. The number of people there at one time in my opinion is critical. I believe in protecting and preserving the ecosystem and magic of this special place.

Written responses (Question 21)

- As much as I'd like to, I haven't applied for a permit to view the bears due to my age (68) and I'm not keen on camping anymore. Having said that, if I was younger, I'd be all over this. At the same time, it's more important to protect the bears than to bring people in so they can brag about their pictures on social media.
- You can shorten the 4-day pass to allow a few more people with permits, but don't give an inch when it comes to wheeled landings or more people in handfults. Katmai rangers claim bears ignore floatplanes but look at how popularity has utterly ruined Brooks.
With all sarcasm intended, I suggest you hire a New Yorker, someone who visited 1 time, so they're now an expert on Alaska, to represent McNeil & run a cutesy bear contest. Then allow unlimited day trippers, who don't know a damn thing about bears or Alaska, to traipse through the fields and the river & see how that turns out!
- You're doing the best you can. It's a great program and I would only wish that permit holders could trade with other permit holders if something changes three months later.
- It's been over 30 years since my last trip to McNeil Also made one trip to Karluk. The McNeil trips were highlights of my 20 trips to AK, and I felt fortunate to be a lucky lottery winner twice. I'd apply again, but my 95 year old body would not get me to Mikvik creek.
- Permit administration is excellent as is.
- The permit system seems to work well. I am glad you allow applicants who did not get picked to have an opportunity to get unclaimed permits.
- Restructuring time bear viewing time slots according to tides sounds like a much better idea. That would be my first choice when looking for maximizing visitation.
- It would be nice if it the permit selection could be Alaskan-resident first, when selecting permits. Since there are a limited number of park visitors allowed at the camp, and since McNeil is a state park, why shouldn't the lottery be Alaskan-first?
- Blabla
- Again, if it's not broken, don't fix it. The existing system is not broken.
- Thank you for all you do! I'm sure it's not easy. Having visited a number of times I do think the current format works well. I hope to visit again in the future to this special place!
- The answer to Question 17 should be "Don't allow wheeled planes."
- I would like to be able to swap my permit slot with other lottery winners as long as it is administered by AF&G
- What about helicopters-- ? THEY can land either on water or land-- require very little landing area and can easily find a spot to land where bears are not present-- even a small fenced landing pad behind your hot water bath house -- would take very little room-- and do a lot less damage to beach or the land.
I would think a helicopter would be the best choice of all for transport with minimal land requirement- versatile with floats for water or land-- a small fenced area would impact the bears very little -- and bears would learn to stay away from this small pad just as they do the viewing pad at the falls.

Do bears hang out on the viewing pad area when people are not present? They may learn to simply stay away from that pad and would also do the same for a small pad for helicopter landings, Helicopters might be more expensive of course than a fixed wing plane? You have a difficult task balancing this important habit with allowing people to visit safely and ecologically--

Here is a crazy idea! Build a new building on site to replace the current one with a roof that is strong enough to accommodate a helicopter -- this would put the landings above the bears habitat and would not take additional space beyond the dining room structure - could even be built two stories to provide viewing over the bay easily and put the helicopter landing even higher above the

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bears. Planes need a long runway to land and take off and bears could wander into this landing strip causing dangerous situations for the bears and the passengers on the plane.

But a designated landing pad - elevated above the tundra -- or on top of the building would make a lot of sense-I bet if you started a funding program to build a new structure for eating and landing helicopters you could raise the needed money.

- Very fair in my opinion
- When issuing permits the access should be allowed to have a window of 2 days. This would allow for a possible landing at a later time or date so as not to interfere with the bears
- The staff of McNeil has created a special place where bears and humans have learned to respect each other. That relationship didn't happen overnight. The staff does a fantastic job of ensuring the safety of the bears and the humans. Introducing more people or wheeled airplanes would have an impact on life as a bear on McNeil River
- Would just like to win a permit and come back one more time before I cross the bridge.
personal information redacted
- Would like to see Alaskans in a favored position to receive permits
- The system needs to be built around the tides.
- As a lottery program I think it runs fine.
- The visitor time blocks should be scheduled to correspond to tides that allow float plane landings rather than following a strict four days schedule that doesn't work for floatplanes during low tides
- Change the permit blocks to coincide with tides that work for float planes
- I support more flexibility in allowing permit holders to take advantage of their permit. Winning the lottery is difficult enough. this should not result in quota increases at any time (limit of 10)
- The permit blocks should be changed to coincide with tides that will allow floatplane landings. This will also allow flexibility for visitors to select shorter and/or longer permit blocks that meet their desires instead of forcing everyone into a four-day block. Permit fees could then be assessed on a daily rate with longer block visitors paying more and shorter block visitors paying less.
- This survey is disingenuous. Any answer to question 17 can be construed to mean support of wheeled plane landings. I strongly oppose any change that would disturb the bears. Stop the trial. Protect the bears from money sucking scum like the governor's friend who wants to land wheeled planes in the sanctuary!
- Please remember that McNeil River Sanctuary, when it was established was first and foremost for the protection of the bears the statues establishing it make very clear that human visitation could only occur if it had NO EFFECT on the bears. There are other access options that should be explored before changing the law to allow easier access.

I did not answer question 17 because any answer could be construed as a tacit agreement that wheeled landings should be allowed - they should not!
- McNeil River bear viewing is an excellent program, but it should be managed in the bear's best interest. Limiting the number of visitors and controlling access is the most critical link to maintaining this world-renowned conservation effort and keeping it a once-in-a-lifetime experience for visitors.
- It doesn't seem that allowing permit holders to move to another block after being drawn will solve much. Better to make permit blocks that make sense to start with. However, if ADFG decides to limit access to float planes only, then the permit blocks should be scheduled around tides that allow reasonable access to/from camp and prevent having two sets of permittees and standbys in camp at the same time for multiple days due to tide/timing access limitations. This is a difficult one, however, because it could impact the number of permits issued and therefore the revenue for the McNeil program could be reduced. As you are well aware, maintaining public support for the

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	sanctuary is crucial to its future, and visitors turn into automatic supporters. You have a tough balancing act on your hands and thank you for allowing public input into your decision making.
•	I dont know too much about the permit administration but I've been visiting Brooks and wondering about implementing same booking system for Mc Neil to enhance flexibility in case of noshow. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to answer your Survey even though Ive never been there, but looking forward.
•	What will make a bigger difference, though, would be also sponsoring / including the flight in the permit winner plan/process. This would ensure the availability of pilots and planes, which is often (it sounded like in my experience) a shortage of those because they are booked by private tourists well in advance of the permits being awarded. That puts permit winners at a significant disadvantage. I was heartbroken that we would not be able to figure out a way to get there. It was extremely frustrating trying to figure out logistical details. I was told repeatedly by local pilots/flight service people that the transportation process for the lottery was in need of significant revision. You would simply need to increase the cost of the permit / booking to include the individual's costs for the flight. The state books / pre-pays for the flight, then is reimbursed when permit winners book. This would also ensure that strict landings/hours are maintained because the state would have a role in scheduling these flights as well.
•	The bear program is absolutely amazing and is such a wonderful Fish&Game program.
•	It works well the way it's been administered.
•	Open it up, what are you waiting for?
•	The permit administration has always been done well. Getting flights this past year was difficult, but was probably more of a function of limited transporters. I didn't mind staying longer due to the high tides. Thanks for all you do in the sanctuary!
•	We came from out of state and I would guess most out of state permit holders would have less flexibility to switch to another time block if float plane access was limited due to low tides. It might be good to limit viewing permits to times of proper tides to allow float plane access if wheeled access was not an alternative.
•	I like the idea of creating blocks for tidal preference, allowing some permit changes, and learning bear habits of when they tend to be near the landing zone in order to minimize interruption
•	If it's not broke, don't fix it...
•	Bears come first. It's in the law and what I support as an Alaskan. Don't make changes that adversely impact bears, such as wheeled landings
•	I thought the whole process was good, it has improved over the years. It can be challenging with the dates coordinated with tides and how long you can/want to stay out there. It's Alaska. It should not be an easy, brainless, revolving door of internet fools. It should require a little research, coordination, planning, and previous outdoor experience. You have to want to go, not just pay and punch the ticket. I think the current permitting administration is just right.
•	No changes are necessary to the permit admin process. McNeil is not a tourist destination, it is a research and bear preserve with visitor access if possible. If people want to see bears as a tourist, go to Brooks falls.
	Mcniel is remote Alaska, sometimes weather and conditions impact travel. That's life.
	Any increase in admin work for visitors is time and money spent that is taken away from the core purpose of the reserve and research
•	It is a lottery. The land and place can only handle so many people without significant disruption. The lottery keeps it special. The people that go there respect this system and are willing to abide by the rules. We should not be in the business of making it a business and bringing tourists to a place where they do not belong. Already Katmai, Hallo Bay, Pack Creek, etc. are like zoos and

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barely resemble bears in the wild. This experience is unique and exclusive but available to those who persist. We need wild places without commercialization. How many guides and businesses are already salivating with the prospect of packing their schedules? Simply a poor idea
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The McNeil River bear viewing program should not be changed in anyway. The current systems allows for outstanding bear viewing opportunities while taking into consideration minimal disturbance to the bears. The program has worked successfully for a long time. Don't change it!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great program! It works because the rules for the lottery and the information provided about accessible tides are clearly shown. I wonder how ADFG would manage the suggested option of allowing permit winners to switch time blocks and then manage who would take the vacated time block?
<p>McNeil Manager was very helpful and ADFG bear staff were well trained and incredibly knowledgeable.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be some logic to not awarding permits if you cannot access by float plane at an appropriate tide. This is not an issue about the convenience of human access. This is an issue about preservation of the Ursine environment for which the humans currently serve as custodians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that adding flexibility for tide schedule would be helpful. I think if people are allowed to change blocks it should only be to blocks that have openings and no one on standby.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit process is straightforward. I was fortunate to go when my husband won a spot in the lottery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has always worked smoothly for me.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are ways to adjust permits so that float planes can get in/out more easily in a way that does not cause more disturbance to the bears, then that should be considered. But NO wheeled landings!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it's not broken, don't change it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up the great work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for flexibility, even if it means allowing a few more people to be present at facilities. People are slightly less of a disturbance to bears than wheeled planes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I received a permit years ago and had no issues. I have not participated recently.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The permit system is fine as is - please do not make any change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep as is or the existing program will disappear.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't understand question 17. I oppose wheeled landings at McNeil and am not sure why you want them at any time. I have never had trouble with how the permits have been managed. It's a well run program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned focusing on more people coming in will adversely affect the bears. Is there anyway to include air travel with permits?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it pretty much the same. Be sure to keep tight oversight of administrator's ability to dole out permits for "special" people. I have seen that abused.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I guess I don't understand the statements about flexibility involving permitted time blocks. I would need to know more about how the administration of time blocks would be managed to allow permit winners to change time blocks or the idea of "setting time blocks around accessible tides." Most importantly, I would emphasize that the period of time blocks--four days of viewing--remain the same, with some flexibility for the arrival and departure of visitors to accommodate the tides.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current permit program should be maintained as-is.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select time blocks to coincide with usable tides for lottery offerings. Maintain this incredible experience as it exists so the bears are not impacted. More access is not good for the bears, for research, or for the quality of the experience. Visitors need the guidance of the experienced bear experts working for ADF&G. The program has been run safely for bears and people with the carefully guided visits that are allowed. Do not allow this to become an overused place where

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anyone can land and go off on their own. The research would be compromised, the bears would not benefit, and the quality of the experience would not be the world-class visit it is now. I think ADF&G has hit the sweet spot on number of visitors, but just needs to tweak the timing of the allotted time slots so all appropriate tides work for flatlane landings.

- The program already allows for some minor adjustments to arrival and departure dates to allow permitted visitors to arrive and depart for their viewing session. They may arrive earlier or stay later to adjust for bad tide days. Allowing them to change dates will add a large amount of work to staff issuing permits and resale permits. The process of resale permits already takes staff time right down to when viewing periods start in order to maximize sales of permits. Allowing permittees to change their permit dates will further complicate this resulting in fewer permits sold and utilized. Additionally, there will be an endless line of permittees changing dates for a multitude of reasons. I can see sliding a permittee into an unused spot in another period if they won a permit in a bad tide period as we have done on occasion in the past (very limited). But to open it to unlimited changes for any reason would be disastrous. It would be a snowballing effect that staff could not possibly keep up with.
- I would like to see some more flexibility in the permit program given the challenges of weather and its effects on access.
- I do not think people should be able to change their viewing time unless there are cancellations and waitlist emptied first.
- For all of these years that the program has been in place, it seems like it has worked for people. Maybe I just haven't seen the other side of the conversation and any complaints that have been submitted over the years. It is an extremely difficult permit to obtain, and has become more difficult with the simplicity of applying for the permit, awareness about the program and interest in wildlife photography. I feel lucky to have experienced this location once. I'd love to go again but haven't had the luck of the draw. I can understand the frustration of finally getting a permit and then not being allowed to land. I suppose it also goes for not being allowed to leave the area, which also is not addressed in this survey. Another option that could be done for permit administration is to allow slightly larger groups during the windows when landings are possible and then limit the permits to only blocks of time when the landings are possible. That would give bears blocks of time with limited to no visitors to offset the increased visitation at other times, which is still extremely minimal compared to other areas along the Bear Coast.
- Because air service providers are booking up earlier each year, I believe it would be helpful if ADF&G would move the lottery up to an earlier date to give lottery winners a better chance of being able to make arrangements with an air service provider, before they get completely booked. Releasing the lottery results in January would probably be very helpful.
- Please don't change the process. It is accessible and does not need to be made so convenient/commercial that it alters the experience. More is not better! If someone needs a different bear viewing experience, they can go to Katmai!
- Continue the program as it is now. It is probably the best brown bear viewing opportunity in the world. Do not turn it into a good thing overdone.
- I am perfectly satisfied with the permit administration as I encountered it. It is easy and Adam was super responsive as well as the folks out at McNeil helping me out. Pulling this off with that "low key" feel is incredibly hard. I have worked in Aviation as an engineer for 30 years. My hat is off to you all. Thank you.
- Permits should be able to be reasonably planned and adjusted with regard to tides. Implement this instead of wheeled landings.
- I love ❤️ McNeil
- I do not see any reason to change permit administration.
- Any change of time block for any reason (tides) will require more administration. Changing time blocks should be a first step before allowing wheeled plane landings.

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- I do not have any comments on the administration of the permits but I want to add other comments on the survey to give you some perspective on why I answered questions the way I did. I did not like questions 13 and 14. Maximizing either situation is not that informative for rational decisionmaking. For instance, if I chose strongly agree then does that mean you would remove the camp? Heck when you chase bears out of camp by horns or rocks in buckets are you not displacing bears? The question is how much disturbance is acceptable. Question 15 is another one that provides no practical answer. How far is considered the camp area? And what is defined as the camp area? You all do a great job, don't go too extreme on either end. Thank you for your hard work.
- Bears come first. While the program administration may seem difficult it is also what keeps it special. I don't think it needs to change at all. Perhaps there can be allowances for certain situations such as allowing for changing dates if ADFG has to cancel a permit for administrative or staffing reasons. If it is a personal preference for the permit winner, I don't think it is necessary to complicate the process by allowing for date changes.
- In 2025 a friend won a slot for guided viewing but she couldn't find a seat in a plane other than a charter that was way out of her price range. It's a shame that enough 135 operators are not available to meet demand. I fortunately have a float plane and lots of experience so was able to fly her in. The weather was unusually spectacular so the flight was easy, and she had the time of her life! We always use the tide table to determine blocks that could leave us stranded there or have to come in early for a few free bonus days. Obviously there's no easy solution. It would be good if there was a landing sight away from camp with few bears and then boat to camp. Augustine Island? (I know that's probably not practical.)
- The opportunity to switch viewing dates might become an administrative nightmare. It would be nice though when conflicts arise. *** I am glad the number of people allowed at the Sanctuary at a time is limited. Keep the Sanctuary as unspoiled and special as possible.
- It's perfect just the way it is. Please continue to prioritize Alaskan residents.
- Thank you for considering this possible approach and for being flexible and progressive. I appreciate the chance to comment.
- Agree that the time blocks could be modified or allow as has been in the past where you can arrive/leave beyond your permitted time block knowing you don't have access to the river etc. for bear viewing.
- Not sure what solutions are for the permitting but the more flexibility and access that can be offered is a plus. Not sure if boats are allowed to access the beach area, but I could easily transport people from the boat launch in anchor point to McNeil, many people are afraid to fly in small bush planes
- I think the permit process is good and should not be modified.
- Is 4 days usually necessary to get good bear viewing? If not, permit times could be reduced to offer more permits.
- I don't see an issue regarding the tides and time blocks being shifted, but I'm not familiar enough to give a better opinion.
- Some flexibility could be accommodated but still within visitor numbers or to make changes within a certain timeframe.
- Thank you all for being open to another point of view. Let the wheels roll at McNeil!
- McNeil's access and permitting system, while not perfect, has worked for decades, protecting bears and allowing carefully managed access. Current challenges with access or permitting do not necessarily indicate a need to change the program itself, but may reflect issues with implementation or management. Rather than restructuring or expanding, efforts should focus on improving and adequately resourcing current management instead of altering a system that has upheld the sanctuary's core mission.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need to cut the number of permits and limit them to Alaska residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be open to the public not needing a permit to view bears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be over the counter for residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing flexibility is always good.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration was ok.. Not helpful in use of own plane.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexibility with time of permit usage would be appreciated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having flexibility for permit times sounds interesting but it seems like it would be a mess to try to schedule and keep it limited to 10 people. I think it would be good to make the people come at certain times. If they're applying they should make space in their schedule to come when they are scheduled to come.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be no permit requirement. Just like brooks falls, visitors should be allowed access to these public lands. Restricting access is wrong and should be illegal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits should regulate the commercial traffic, at this point nearly all the traffic is commercial anyway. The amount of private traffic is only a couple percent, and usually limited to days where the weather lines up to be flyable and home/work life allows for a long flight. Regulating the small amount of private traffic creates undo burdens on Alaskan citizens while paving the way for Alaskas back yard to be a commercial pay to play area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this an incredible program that offers an amazing opportunity for people to observe wild bears. As I've said before, this is what we get when the state said "no" 50 years ago to un/minimally managed human access to this gathering of bears. If people want to land on the beach and have pretty much unrestricted bear interactions, there are several other opportunities. Specifically in Lake Clark NP just up the coast.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ok communication but not helpful with the use of our own aircraft
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well managed. And I know a little bit about how the State of Alaska can louse things up.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the public prior to application the scaracy of flights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience offered at McNeil is amazing. The quality of that experience is dependent on keeping the human population limited. Let's cherish offering the lucky lottery winner an experience worth the wait. More is not better in this instance. In McNeil you have program that is acknowledged worldwide for its excellence. Over the years you have enabled bears and people to interact safely, providing both with a better understanding of each other.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the staff do an outstanding job of managing a complex situation with Alaska logistics. The unique environment and access add to the wilderness experience and are worth preserving as a one of a kind opportunity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am grateful to have gotten to visit the site, and I hope it remains a place where bears are prioritized above visitor convenience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not think that it should be so restricted. The bears have already adapted to people and are similar to the moose and black bears of Anchorage. Let more visitors in.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please keep it as strict as possible. No need to be flexible as it is understood what the rules are when one applies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would not want to have the flexibility that made my experience overcrowded. 10 people and 10 people only!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is generally handled well. However, there has been a couple Summers when the extreme tides have interrupted blocks completely either. Disallowing people to go in and get out in a timely manner, or making them stay in extended time which many people cannot do because of vacation times. Instead of wheel planes, I think it would be a better option to find a water taxi with the appropriate equipment to do that. It would also lower costs for getting supplies in and out of camp.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a good system.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be accessible to change time blocks and tides, but no other changes, especially anything that harms the bears in any way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We lost our permit due to weather at tremendous cost. It would be nice if you could increase your drawing odds the next year or be given cancellations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just keep it as it is. We have all adapted to it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off airport landings are risky, anything the department can do to minimize risk is a good thing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The system Larry Aumiller set up and put into play has worked flawlessly for over 40 years. I love that sand bar/spit as a natural habitat and wheeled aircraft has the potential to scar the landscape more than it is already. Leave it the way it is. The bears are first priority. This is their house, not ours. Do not allow the spit to be turned into a runway. Thank you
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If people value the unique and special experience that McNeil River State Game Sanctuary provides, they're willing to work around the tides to respect the bears, other wildlife and sanctuary. This has been done traditionally since it's establishment and operation by the Alaska Department of Fish Game, and should continue on into the future with the goal of preserving this land and it's wildlife inhabitants for future generations (of wildlife, and managed viewing opportunities) not for trying to make things easier for travel.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel that you should offer standby permit holders the option to change to a full permit before the secondary drawing. I'm sure they would gladly pay the extra fee and they already are paying the same transportation costs to get to McNeil River. I do not support people that draw a full permit being allowed to change their time slot.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you put in for a permit block, you are doing that by your own choice. To put in for a less desirable block, win it, then change to another should not be allowed. If you don't want the block you put in for, then don't pick that one. If personal circumstances come up that change your situation, that is on you. Other permit holders should not ever be bumped. Only if it is agreed between holders to change.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When we received our permit, we had to postpone the trip by one day due to insufficient tides. It didn't hamper the great experience we had at McNeil. I think everyone can work around the tides.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's a great program that focuses on the wellbeing of the wildlife and habitat. Don't change it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too many alaskan winners :) We are waiting our turn!!! :)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The permitting process works well for maintaining the unique nature of McNeil River.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do what is best for the bears living in peace - the way it should be (and viewed).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have already visited Alaska's natural landscapes several times in my private capacity and would also like to visit the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. But only if I feel that this will not have any negative consequences for the bears and the sanctuary. If landing aeroplanes on land causes problems, then it must be prohibited. Anything else would be irresponsible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank you to the McNeil program manager for the difficult work he is doing to balance bear protection and the public interest- a challenging task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very happy with how the program has been managed for the past 45 years and the high quality of the ADF&G employees.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think it would be good to provide a bit more flexibility for permit holders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I've found the permit process to be easy to navigate but many permit winners in my group had to drop out. Increased flexibility and back up dates would be nice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once permits have been offered each season, set flexibility in enter/exit dates of camp for only those blocks effected by the tides should be considered for those who were awarded permits, this would allow them a better opportunity to secure a traditional transportation method and retain their lottery win.

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- Keep it as it's always been. It works.
- No comment. Thankful to have won and had the privilege of visiting.
- none
- No wheeled planes allowed except for bonfide emergency. Can't believe the opportunity using passenger boats hasn't been implemented or even discussed as an alternative. With the high price of float planes, surely boats capable of hauling 10 permittees & their equipment could be a viable alternative.
- As long as the number of permits remain the same, I do not see any reason why those who receive the permits should not be allowed to exchange them for different, available, time blocks. It is the limit that must be preserved.
- That would be helpful to work around the tides with the time blocks. Not sure if this is the case but it appears in 2026 the tides are affecting the time blocks more than other years.
- I've been pleased with the process.
- When I was selecting an airline, nobody was available for several days after our trip because of the tides, lighting, and general schedule of the airlines. Due to the flight time restrictions for pilots there was only one airline willing to do a later than normal pick up the day after my viewing permit (otherwise my block would have been there for another 5 days). I know it may not be the most lucrative trip for the sea planes but this type of cooperation (it was Emerald, btw) would create ease for permit holders to get there. Their willingness made the trip possible for a few of the permit holders. The difficulty also weeds out many of the people who are less committed. I had collected the permit holder information from Adam and reached out to coordinate a charter. There was a couple that blew us off until they realized that not cooperating was creating an issue with being able to make it to McNeil. Ultimately then never made it but I have a feeling that the push away from collaboration was a red flag - also aligning the people who cared and were willing to do what they could to create the success of our block. Ultimately it was an incredible trip and I can't wait to go back! I will be applying again.
- I wish half were for Alaska residents and more were allowed to outside Alaska. We managed 2 from out of state at a challenging tide block. We were told 2 from out of state is very unlikely.
- You are doing a great job. Don't change it. We are back country, global adventurers, and this is still one of the best experiences we ever had.
- We got a low tide slot that was not ideal for flights. We just took the extra days and had an awesome experience, got to see the bears a bit more, relaxed a bit more, and came back more rejuvenated. Please don't take this opportunity away - it is truly unique and special.
- I won a permit through a cancellation. This created challenges for permit administration; I could not adapt on short notice or adjust permit names due to the late timing. The lack of flexibility in permit administration was the ultimate issue in not utilizing the permit - so additional administrative flexibility with common sense in mind would be appropriate.
- I want to say "if it isn't broke, don't fix it," but apparently the system isn't working all that well at the moment. Keeping a place untarnished and natural while providing greater access so people are educated and then value the place has always been the tension in national and state parks. Development brings more people which raises awareness, but also changes the character of a place. You are engaged in an important conversation about how best to manage access. Having not had the privilege of visiting yet, I suspect my recommendations will not be very insightful. Is it possible to land some longer distance away from where bears congregate and then transport by water to the McNeil camp?

I spent a week on the Ivishak last fall on a caribou hunt. Wheeled planes (and airboats on that river) make a LOT of noise. You can hear them a long way away for a long time before they arrive. It definitely changes the experience for people, and I'm certain for the animals.

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I would like to hear your thoughts about what might be done to increase the number and availability of transporters in general (aside from wheeled landings near the camp). I understand that flight-seeing tours that feature bears are more lucrative than transport flights, which is part of the problem with access.

PS. I know this is an anonymous survey, but please pick me for a viewing date next summer!!!

- Rigidly adhering to a transportation program requiring float plane operations when the float accessibility is highly restricted brings extra stress and hazard to remote site operations.
- My first visit to McNeil was in 1992 to photograph bear behavior and habitat. I haven't applied in recent years because first time permittees, the majority, rightfully want to get to the Falls. I would opt to stay with interesting behavior along the trail like first year cubs, and bears belly-flopping for reds in Mikfik.
- The permitting process with few people visiting make McNeil special. Don't increase the number of visitors per season. Don't make it a Brooks Falls experience.
- Since it is difficult and expensive to get to the McNeil River bear viewing area, it would be helpful if permits/and visits were more flexible and that times for visits should be scheduled around the tides where float plans can access the site.
- If you want to increase accessibility, look to your permit system, not your planes.
- N/A
- I do think that maybe permits should revolve around the tides so people would know well in advance for the most part. Going by float plane is part of the adventure. I don't think I would use a wheeled plane if given the option.
- The Department has access to excellent wildlife biologists who can make recommendations that should be favorably considered. It should also consider other means of access. For instance, wheeled landings away from the bears would be easily managed. If a boat were available to carry gear from the landing site to the camp, visitors could hike to camp.
- what would the flexibility look like? put your name on a list saying you cant make the trip and look for someone to switch? pretty hard to do i would think with most folks making arrangements as soon as the permit awards are made. i know these opportunities are hard to get but F&G shouldn't be in the tour management business. do not let permit winners hand down the permit to friends or family to utilize. i see potential for abuse with this potential option. this seems like you may be thinking about increasing the comings and goings of visitors and increasing air traffic. hope not. part of the experience and allure of mcnail is the fact that you are there for your time period and do not see traffic
- It needs to continue to be fair.
- Seeing the bears was the greatest non-family experience of my life. Thank you for that. Showing some flexibility in the dates makes sense since many of us may never have the opportunity to attend again.
- Keep it strict and tight. This is not a tourist trap. Keep it a unique experience
- As a visitor who was impacted by low tides, I would have appreciated some more flexibility in the travel dates.
Since tides are known long in advance, it should not be too difficult to arrange visiting permits such that very low tides are avoided.
- 1) Allowing winners to change permit blocks seems to create significant administrative hurdles for the Department; I suppose an online system (such as Recreation.gov, for example) could be set up to manage that, but presumably that means additional expense for the Department. 2) I would advocate something more along the lines of this: a) eliminate standby permits, thereby freeing up

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some camping space, and b) be more flexible about allowing Guided permit winners to arrive early/leave late based on tides.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 17 is a trick question, I don't think wheeled plane landings should not be allowed at any time of day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep permitting the way it is. You choose date blocks, so should accept what you get.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went there 40 years ago and then again three years ago. One of the best true Alaska experiences around. Suggestion: start charging more for the permits, like \$500. People can afford it. Get rid of all military/veteran preferences or don't offer them in the future if you don't already offer them. Burns my butt that some high school graduate from Chicken Neck Alabama who spent four years driving a truck for the army gets a preference. Senior permit holders such as myself (78 when I went) should get no break on costs but jeeze why make us walk three miles through mud flats when ADFG has a boat there?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm met a couple of co-permit holders who had made multiple trips. They had figured out the system and the fact that permit winners could not always get flights in. They had emailed to be put on waitlist and therefore were repeat visitors. I strongly disapprove of that And would prefer that the permit winners be given more flexibility to actually use their permit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be tweaked in years when the tides are a problem.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build a landing strip (if possible) with fence to keep bears out and eliminate worry about beach landings/timing. Re: changing time blocks, if moderated by computer to auto-confirm open dates, can't think of a downside...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been pleased with how the permit administration has worked.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issues with the way things are run on my end. Keep up the good work!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lottery winner should be able to substitute accompanying visitors to fill the # of slots they applied for. My dad was unable to accompany my mom, who won her lottery, but she was not allowed to invite someone else to go with her, so she let her ticket go. That's really unfortunate.
<p>Thank you for trying to care for the bears while accommodating people to visit their sacred space.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think allowing people flexibility in what time block they get awarded versus can choose if that doesn't work for their schedule defeats the purpose of a lottery access. I understand that things come up with time, access, weather, however I envision this will be an administrative burden to the department in trying to "accommodate" visitors changing schedules. What prevents people from winning a shoulder season time block then wanting to change to peak season time block? How will the department handle these requests. I guess I would need more information about the process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We received a permit last year for one of the time periods that float planes could not land and it was very disappointing that we were not able to use our permit. We ended up being able to take a day trip to Lake Clark National Park with a wheeled plane landing on the beach and gratefully saw many bears. :)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If ADF&G had a more certain transportation arrangement through a state-contracted carrier, I think the flexibility of permitting for tidal shifts would be more easily handled. I think the four days is perfect, and I don't mind personally being stranded because of tides. But that's not an option for many people. Having a single state-contracted operator who could bring all permit holders in one flight and take out all permit holders on the return would simplify things, even if that meant reducing the number of people on each permit slot. It would also reduce the number of planes landing in the bay/lagoon, which would benefit the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to go back to allowing lottery participants who did not win to buy unused permits from winners who are unable to use them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility in changing dates would be helpful. Maybe we could get there some day!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe it's been working okay but maybe at times been allowing too much access

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little of this survey addresses the impact of wheeled planes landing on the visitor experience. Esthetically planes landing on the area detracts from what is truly unique and central to the visitor McNeil experience. Leave it as it is.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be theoretically great to have more flexibility about changing time blocks but it might be burdensome for ADFG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See answer to #20, which addresses both as they are related. <p>As for switching time blocks, I'm not sure how this would even work if McNeil is limited to 10 visitors a day and all permits are taken. I'd rather not see 15 people out there on one day and 5 the next.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam D. has been great.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great program. Keep it the way it is. Manage the humans not the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are last minute openings, notice should be sent out to allow those with flexible schedules to try to make the trip.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it would be too difficult to manage changing the permit time blocks, but it would be interesting to hear how it might be done. I also understand the angst of possibly missing the trip due to bad weather after winning the lottery. Perhaps more boats is the answer?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally a list of winners and they can could potentially change about their permit time as long as it doesn't impact the experience for the permit winners. Meaning. if you have four spots per, you won't end up with more than the current allotment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can see some increased flexibility as valuable, but wouldn't this just cause a rush for the peak weeks as winners all try to get the best times? I guess I'd be curious to know how this might be run.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enjoyed the exclusivity of McNeil camp. If I had wanted unlimited people around I would have gone to Katmai National/Brooks Falls. McNeil is a chance to experience magic with Ursus arctos.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of the bears should be the priority and only minor if any flexibility should be introduced.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15+ years of applying and I have never been drawn. Is there any way for someone to build points with continuous entry? One would think in 15 years I would eventually get drawn.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I received a permit last minute, but was unable together a flight - very unfortunate. Allowing flexibility in time slots would help, but also adding in last minute cancellation fees unless someone is willing to take your slot would be helpful too.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it might seem to make sense to allow flexibility with permits, such as transferring them to someone else under extenuating circumstances if the lottery winner cannot use them, this opens up the system to misuse/abuse and I would hate to see the process lose its integrity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application fee of \$30 is excessive. It should be \$10 or less, and no charge for Alaska resident veterans (I am not a veteran).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility is good; stuff happens. Be as flexible as you reasonably can be.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing for trading of spots has no effect on the Sanctuary. SFG does a great job in administering access. I just wish I could go more often!!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier on visiting other than McNeil sanctuary, I was not familiar with other visit opportunities, so I could not answer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it would be great to allow a bit more flexibility due to bad weather and such. As long as the tour groups stay under 10 people, and camp is not overrun with people. If there is space available for someone to switch to a different time block due to bad weather or tides, I think it would be great to be able to switch and still get to go!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting bears should be the utmost priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I love the program and appreciate the state sponsoring it and allowing people to take part in it. Thank you for caring and asking for input on this sensitive topic.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wish it was easier to win— but I am not an Alaska resident and it is entirely appropriate to give priority to Alaskans..
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was told I had a 4% chance of drawing a July permit and AK residence got 70 percent of the permits. Not a fan of that. Everyone there except for me and a Chinese guy were repeat visitors. All from Alaska.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love this program even though I have never been there. This is the gold standard we all use for best viewing/guiding thank you for all you do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A little more flexibility in terms of passing on the permit if you cannot travel yourself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit standby permits to allow winners additional flexibility. If a permit holder is displaced due to tide issues, offer a permit for the following year, during the same block.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning viewing blocks to tides makes sense. However, I'm not sure how allowing change of time blocks would work in practice. It's important visitor numbers in each group are not increased.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The permit flexibility should have transportation availability be a consideration to maximize the opportunity for lottery winners to visit. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this survey.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think that it's great to add more flexibility in permits, but if it means that there could be more people there at any given time which would disturb the bears, then I would be against it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel the permitting system is fine the way it is.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People will all want to go at peak time and complain when it is over run. There is nothing wrong with the lottery and since it is long days tides are fine and known ahead of times.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think its good the way it is. Not a large concentration of people at one time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While challenging, it feels like a privilege to win a permit. If you make it easy, it will open the preserve up to people who won't care as much about the bears/will dilute the experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permits are difficult to obtain but that's not a bad thing. Nothing worth having comes easy. part of the experience is mixing with a limited number of people not only at the viewing spot but at the camp and cook shack.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's a big deal to go. Make the date. Go when you when you win. They have a skiff for high tides. <p>You need to brief people better. Make a video of the crossing, the hike, gear required like good waders and boots. Hiking poles.</p> <p>Then people can decide if they can do it.</p> <p>For consideration of permit date alterations. I would request a methods and means exception. If the person qualifies as needing an easy trip set up a few slots for easy tides.</p> <p>If you can't do it, don't go. I advise not catering to photographers griping also. Not to say that they do or that that's the reason for this survey.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lottery system works well, but if I knew I had a better chance of going more often, I would apply more frequently. Maybe I was just lucky to get a permit on my second try. I wish there were an additional way to obtain permits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open an online platform, where winners could trade their permit times
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowing switch of time blocks would be best way to increase access. Mcneil rivers bears should be protected.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waiting lists would be helpful. Many empty spots every time I go there
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think residents should have priority over non-residents and especially over foreign visitors. This is operated by ADF&G, not the federal government, so it should benefit locals. Don't close it to non-residents or foreigners but greatly reduce the percentage of permits let out to those groups. I've been told it's a "random" selection process but I know people who've been multiple times (like

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more than 5), and others who put in for it multiple times and never drawn one. I don't know the legal precedent but that should never happen. Thank you. It's a great program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the permit process works great. The administrators are very responsive to answer questions. • I would hate to change the bear behavior by over visitation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits based on tides seems reasonable. Can it be done to allow consistent access to permit holders? If McNeil permit holders need to change or shuffle dates is Fish and Fame set up to handle this? I think there should be a grace period where refunds may be possible if the original permit holder can not attend, but juggling of slots may be a difficult task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility within a permit date range would be nice. It's Alaska, weather is so unpredictable. it is costly, especially so if not able to go the intended amount of time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The present nature of the process serves to limit visitors achieving optimum care of the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please consider private/resident interests along with commercial operators. Thank you
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can't imagine the permitted bear viewing program to be run any better than it has been historically. Except to protect more land around the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The permit information and application has the relevant information about tides. The viewer can take that into account when applying, and can manage their days in camp when making their travel plans. We stayed 2 extra days since the tides were too low, which is allowed. One day we traveled along the beach away from the viewing areas. The other we were allowed to go to the viewing area when permitted folks chose not to go. Even if we had had to just remain in camp, the extra days would have been extraordinary. Whether the permittee reduces or increases their days in camp, it is an extraordinary experience, and the system doesn't need to be changed to accommodate people who want to schedule exactly. This is Alaska after all, and weather as well as tides can always force travel changes. The health and safety of the bears and their habitat must continue to be the criteria for managing visitors. There are plenty of other places to see bears in Alaska. Don't ruin McNeil River!!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't see any need to alter the current permit system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can see people getting a permit then jockeying themselves to get into a "better" slots. The current system works. Leave well enough alone.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sure, making it easier for people to utilize their permit (through flexible dates, rainchecks, etc) seems like a good idea. But absolutely keep sticking with the lottery system, limits on group size, and other management choices that keep human presence to a minimum, please.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McNeil is worth it. It doesn't need to be made easier. If it is important to go to McNeil and folks realize what a special privilege it is, they need to make the time and effort to go even if it surrounds arriving early or staying longer due to tides.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would be in favor of allowing for changes in blocks if it was an equitable trade - for example if it kept each group similarly sized. Part of the experience is in the small group setting. In terms of adjusting blocks for tides, I would be in favor if it keeps each block the same number of days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More and more people are trying to get permits. The rangers do an exceptional job. Having a little more flexibility to keep spots filled is not a bad idea.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By allowing people to land wheel planes, you open up access for Alaskans to enjoy our state. Out of state people will still use local Alaskan businesses, but locals will be able to finally land their own aircraft in. Also, sometimes landings are not possible during the permitted days due to tides (which are forecasted well in advance), so if you do decide to *not legally* restrict it to only float planes, don't have days in the lottery where landings can't happen due to tides or the tide being in the middle of the night.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know how you would allow for people to change time blocks if limits on how many can go at one time. Some of us like to get 'stuck' out there (with the tides)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm for whatever is most convenient for the organizers and guides who run the sanctuary.

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- It is extremely important to protect the bears using the McNeil area. Personally, I believe that the current system defining how photographers get to the area have been working and see no reason to change it.
- Logistically, wheeled planes make sense. I've been to Silver Salmon Creek lodge up the coast. The experience paled in comparison to McNeil SGR. There were lines of planes on the beach. Please do not let McNeil turn into a similar free for all. Landings should be limited to permit holders. I had a friend who couldn't go this year because of tides. I think there should be consistent (as Alaska allows) access, but limited and with respect to the place... truly one of a kind.
- No change
- It took us years to win a permit; it was worth the wait. The permit process minimizes the impact on bears. Why change an amazing experience to increase the number of permits?
- Anecdotally, I have noticed some permit holders have won the lottery almost every year they have applied (the most being 3x). But I have also noticed some permit holders had been applying for up to 10 year, and they have only won a permit once. I would like to consider giving applicants who have consistently applied but have not won a better chance of winning a permit. To allow more opportunity for applicants, I'd consider limiting applying to every 3-5 years and allow for flexible block changes.
- While it broke my heart never to win the lottery, I feel the experience of going as a volunteer at the beginning of the season in 2010 was one of the best things I have done in my life. If wheeled landings are allowed, how long before lodges and other resort options would turn one of the most wonderful wild life experiences into a commercial Coney Island?
- If access to McNeil has been significantly negatively impacted by the accessibility of the tides, then trying to schedule among the tides seems like a good idea. It would seem to simply be tweaking an accepted transportation solution. I suppose there may some visit length inequities that would need to be acknowledged.
- Hold the line and resist making changes for the convenience of bear viewers at the expense of the resource they're there to enjoy. Bears should always come first, always. This is a special place for a reason.
- n/a
- Timing them around the tides is ideal.
- I don't know much about this but it sounds like it COULD be something to be gamed, which I see as a negative. Specifically, I see people applying for "low quality block" access in early June then trying to switch from there and bailing on their June date if they can't. Switching must come with a cost to prevent this - if there's not, maybe I'll try to game it that way. I have succeeded gaining both my permits as an alternate, so I like that part of the process and would not like to see it changed. Outside of all that, I don't have strong thoughts here.
- Permit administration should account for transportation inaccessibility, so the guided bear viewing can continue its mission. When creating the time blocks and when applying for the time blocks, tides should be considered. Even when the high tide is enough for a landing, the time of day can impact the number of opportunities a visitor gets to go out with the guides. Ideally, the blocks would be scheduled so there is a longer block during the inaccessible period (perhaps with a disclosure on length of stay and higher permit fee). These longer blocks would be desirable for a certain subset of applicants, and I believe the majority would self-select out before being contacted about winning a slot with a real risk of an extended stay. This could also be the period when the media permit holders have an unobstructed opportunity to converse with the guides and capture shots without disturbing other visitors. Allowing permit lottery winners the ability to trade blocks would also alleviate some of this by allowing those who can accept the risks of a longer stay to switch with those who cannot. Transferability should not allow for any private benefit to a permit holder beyond allowing for access. The program may monetize the transfer to offset administration costs and support the program, and both permit holders should be disincentivized from switch (as

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switching would cause further issues during the application, drawing, and administrative processes).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most who apply know it's remote and may be hard to get to. The focus should be on the bears. • Flexibility to change dates based on tides and other factors sounds great on the surface but also would seem to benefit people most who have the most open of schedules. • The current permit system in place with float planes access is in my opinion the best solution, as it limits access to reasonable levels. Thank you. • You would ruin the experience if you allowed more access to this special place in the form of wheeled planes. • I would really love to be able to go take photos of the bears, but I need 1- 2 years advance notice, because of our schedules, planning and budgeting. • While I have only won a single permit over the last 20+ years, I am very appreciative of what this program has done for the bears of McNeil River. While I would really, really enjoy getting to go again, I feel that the permit programs is well designed and nothing needs to be changed to accommodate human visitors. • Keep the program as it is. It's hard enough and expensive so I'll maybe never get to go but the live camera channels are appreciated. • I like the idea of visitors being able to modify or change their viewing dates • permit blocks could be adjusted around suitable tides to ease the previous challenges low tides present to allow safe floatplane access only • I think the permitting process has always been fair. • Permit times should be limited to accessible tides. • The permit administration system for the McNeil River bear viewing program is generally effective, but improvements could enhance transparency and visitor preparedness while still protecting the sanctuary's sensitive wildlife. The lottery remains a fair method for allocating limited access, but publishing clearer historical draw statistics and permit allocation details would help applicants better understand their chances. Communication to successful permit holders could be strengthened through more timely and detailed digital materials covering logistics, safety, and camp expectations, which would reduce avoidable issues once visitors arrive. Maintaining strict permit caps is critical for minimizing disturbance to bears, and any change to capacity should be guided by biological monitoring rather than demand. • Hope I win soon! Keep process the same. It's fair • I hope the fact that I got a permit, but couldn't go because of the tide, would never happen to anyone. That sucked. Permits shouldn't be available if there's no way to get there. I hope I will have preferred status in the future (cant this coming year). • I feel fortunate and very grateful to have won a permit on the first occasion I entered a drawing, and it might be a long shot to return, but I will continue trying as the experience was well worth it. • Allow for permitting time changes. Make a max allowable on the camp at a time if over crowding is a fear • Trying to administer permits around most accessible tides would be amazing. However, it may not be very practical. Unless the team is willing to expand the season and have some "dead" days in between permit blocks. • Perhaps allow a permit holder who has a health issue pop up to either move their permit, or not penalize them with 2 years of not being able to reapply for a future permit. Last year I had a heart procedure and was not allowed to travel for 90 days afterwards. Had no idea of this when I applied for and paid for my permit. Not only did I not get to use the permit I paid for...now I'm in the penalty box when it was outside my control! • I received a permit in the past towards the end of the season. I hadn't realized that there wouldn't even be the normal float planes operating then and the only option was a private charter for several

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thousand dollars. If this information was available when applying for the lottery it would have been greatly appreciated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know a couple of people that had to fly many different legs at multiple times to make it there. • People have spent big bucks on their current planes. Changing the rules mid game seems cruel. I think the government can rarely do anything cheap without surveys permits etc. you could probably save money keeping it the way it is. You have a great safety record currently keep it that way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow as much flexibility as possible/practical to insure available slots are filled. • I wish it was easier to attain a permit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've said my piece. Keep McNeil an exclusive place that is run under tight controls for specific purposes. We will all regret it if you don't. <p>Tom Allen Dover, NH</p> <p>ps..I am a one-time visitor to Alaska who did a DIY float of the Talachulitna followed by some road trip silver salmon fishing. My only skin in the game is a desire to go back to your great State to hopefully repeat my Tal fishing/rafting/camping experience with a McNeil bear visit as icing on the cake.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was so impressed with the spreadsheet when I was applying for the first time. I hope I win some day. I live in brown bear lower continent country. This just seems like such a great opportunity through local state run G and F.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process was well done.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are uncontrollable factors like tides, permit holders should be able to make changes. I lost my permit due to this and cannot apply this year because I won last year despite actually getting to go. It's a lose-lose situation for me.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually works very well and although dates are sometimes marginal with tides, there seems to always be a way to get to/from McNeil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think creating blocks of time based on the tides would be a fairer approach, although i admit that I chose blocks of time when the tides were small so I could stay longer. :-)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am extremely grateful that permits are available for people to step out of the human world and into the wild one; one that is completely out of our control. This is what makes Alaska so special. To disrupt the nature and environment in which not just the bears, but various other animals and ecosystems thrive is not right. Part of being an Alaskan is rolling with the punches; if the tides, weather, or bears don't cooperate, then we need to get over it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow more visitors within reason.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the McNeil permits and lottery should be advertised more effectively to attract more visitors to the timeblocks. I definitely think the 10 person limit should remain the same, because this is one of the reasons visitors are able to have such a close, unique and intimate experience with the bears.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think, perhaps, past winners/visitors should be deprioritized somehow. Maybe they pay more for the lottery or they end up on the reserve list so people that have never been have a better chance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program works great. If it's not broken don't fix it. If people want to go they will make the necessary arrangements and make it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was the permit winner and went with my husband. When I applied, I stated there would be 2 of us. I think the permit winner should be allowed to potentially change their travel partner. It's still 2 people, and it would have been great to go with my daughter (the husband was not so keen on camping).

Written responses (Question 21)

- Permit times should be adjusted to minimize problems caused by low tides. A combination of adjusting time periods and using wheel planes only when float planes can't land should allow more access with minimal additional disturbance of bears.
- I like the current process, based on type of viewing one would like to do, you can apply for appropriate blocks. I am unaware of the challenges of the current process so would defer to the administration to make the right call.
- NA
- It's been working well for a long time and probably doesn't need fixing.
- None.

