

Chilkoot River

Fishing with Bears



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Fishing with Bears

Welcome to the Chilkoot River Valley. For more than two thousand years humans have shared the Chilkoot River Valley with salmon, brown bears and eagles. It's important to realize that wild bears are and can be dangerous. A passive bear, especially a sow with cubs, is not a guarantee of safety.

Remember: Bears come here to fish, too. When bear activity is at its peak (summer and fall), both bears and anglers compete for the same resources. Every human visit has an impact on bears and their habitat. Some bears are seen by multiple fishermen, causing potentially cumulative stress. Be aware of the lasting effects of your fishing experience on bears.

For your safety and the bear's safety, please learn and follow the basic guidelines in this brochure when fishing around wild bears. You can be a good example for others while fishing around wild bears in their natural habitat.

Failure to follow the guidelines can lead to the destruction of a bear. It is very important that we all respect the Chilkoot River and the wildlife that live here.

Remember that your actions make a difference. Please help us protect this special place and its inhabitants.



Use Good Judgement

Be aware of your surroundings

You are responsible for your own safety in bear country. You do not want a bear surprising you. More importantly, you do not want to surprise a bear. Be aware of your surroundings, especially in times of low light and areas of low visibility. Use all your senses, especially your eyes and ears. Keep a sharp eye to the bushes, the upstream and downstream shorelines. While fishing, it is hard to keep an eye to your back, however, you will want to stop on occasion and look behind you. Avoid places where geographic factors, such as heavy cover, prevent you from seeing what is around you. Be alert in noisy areas where the sound of running water may prevent you from hearing bears, and bears from hearing you in the brush.

Fish with a group of friends

Bears are much less likely to approach a group of people, more eyes looking out mean better awareness, and a friend can help you out if a dangerous situation occurs, and things turn for the worst.

General Courtesy

- Dogs can antagonize bears. **Keep them on a leash under control.** Better yet, leave them home or in your vehicle.
- Park in road pullouts not on the road to prevent blocking the flow of traffic on the road.
- **THE BEAR MONITOR IS HERE TO PROTECT YOU AND THE BEARS. PLEASE RESPECT THEIR DIRECTIVES.**



Do Not Crowd the Bears

Give bears plenty of room and the right of way

Some bears are more tolerant than others, but every bear has a "personal space"-the distance within which a bear feels threatened. If you stay within that zone, a bear may react aggressively. Special caution should be taken around both sows with cubs and cubs themselves.

RELEVANT ALASKA STATE LAW:

IT IS ILLEGAL TO HARASS WILDLIFE

(5 AAC92.080)

If you see bears AVOID THEM!

If a bear approaches your area from a distance, try to move away. NEVER run away from a bear. Running can provoke a bear's natural hunting and chasing instinct. Since they can run faster than 30 mph (50 km/hr), you have no chance of outrunning them. If a bear is a good ways off, and coming in your general direction, moving away at a normal pace can often avoid bad bear contact. The minimum recommended safe distance from any bear is 50 yards, and from a sow with cubs 100 yards. When you leave, **take all** your fish and equipment with you. If you leave fish or equipment behind, a bear will begin to associate fishing activity with an easy meal, and will become more dangerous to people. Open tackle boxes left behind becomes a curiosity which can be just as dangerous as fish left behind.



Actions to Take When a Bear Approaches

If a bear approaches while you are fishing, stop fishing

When you are fishing and you see a bear, and if the bear approaches you, avoid actions that interfere with bear movement or foraging activities. If the bear continues to approach, stop fishing and move away. If you have a fish on your line, don't let it splash. Splashing fish attract bears. If that's not possible, cut your line. A bear quickly learns to associate anglers and/or the splashing of a fish in play with an easy meal and can take away your fish in seconds. Never let a bear take anything away from you. Never feed or toss fish to a bear. If a bear learns to can obtain fish just by approaching fishermen, it will return for more.

Do not tempt the Bears

Bears have an amazing sense of smell, and will home in on your location if they smell fish or blood. You need to keep your area clean. When you catch a fish you intend to harvest, immediately kill and clean your fish, then bleed it **IN THE WATER**. If you filet your fish, chop up the remains into small pieces and toss them into fast moving water. Bleeding into the water reduces the chance that blood on rocks or streambanks will put out the scent of FISH FEAST, attracting hungry bears from the entire area right to your spot. **After cleaning your fish IMMEDIATELY take it to an airtight cooler that is inside a secured vehicle.**



Do Not Feed the Bears

Do not leave your fish or food out

Bears are always looking for something to eat. Bears have only about six months to build up fat reserves for their long winter hibernation. Do not let them learn that your fish, human food or garbage is an easy meal. All fish, food, beverages, garbage and any other odorous items must be attended at all times. Unattended fish, food, coolers and other belongings **WILL** attract bears. Remember, while you are fishing your attention is on fishing so it is better not to bring any food with you to where you are fishing. **SECURE ALL FOOD INSIDE YOUR VEHICLE in an airtight cooler.** A bear that has learned that humans are a good source of food may become dangerous to people in the park and in local communities outside the park. In most cases such bears must eventually be destroyed.

RELEVANT ALASKA STATE LAWS:

- IT IS ILLEGAL TO ATTRACT BEARS WITH FOOD OR GARBAGE EITHER INTENTIONALLY OR NEGLIGENTLY (5 AAC922.410)
- IT IS ILLEGAL TO FEED BEARS (5 AAC92.230)

