

# Pack Creek Kayak Rental & Information Packet



Written and Provided by: Alaska Boat & Kayak Rental Shop



Pack Creek Tide Flat



Brown Bear



Windfall Harbor

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Admiralty Island is a large island located to the west and southwest of Juneau. The island falls within the Tongass National Forest (est. 1907) and the majority of the island was designated as a National Monument in 1978, then protected as a Wilderness area in 1980. It is best known for the abundance of Brown Bears that call it home. The island is about 1650 square miles and has an estimated 1500 to 1700 brown bears, more than all the lower 48 states combined. One of the best locations to view these brown bears is at Pack Creek in Seymour Canal. Access to Pack Creek is by permit only. The Pack Creek Zoological Area consists of three large, primeval salmon spawning rivers and estuaries. The forested coastline around and including the Pack Creek Zoological Area supports the highest density of nesting Bald Eagles and grizzly (brown) bears found anywhere in the world.

The vast majority of visitors to Pack Creek arrive by floatplane from Juneau and spend 3-4 hours at Pack Creek. A handful of others come by private boat, and may anchor nearby overnight and spend a longer day ashore. Probably less than a few dozen people a year come to camp and more fully explore the area. Of those who do, very few make it into Windfall Harbor, and maybe only a couple of parties a year manage to paddle the distance to Swan Cove and navigate the tidal flats to explore this bear-rich area. The camping is remote Wilderness camping. There are no official camp sites, services, shelters, bathrooms, signs, or platforms; just pristine temperate rain forest and rocky or gravelly beaches.

Alaska Boat & Kayak Rental Shop's goal is to make it easy for do-it-yourself campers, with at least some camping and kayaking experience, to spend 3 or more days exploring Pack Creek, Windfall Harbor, Swan Cove, and hopefully other pristine islands and watersheds in Seymour Canal on Admiralty Island. We provide the ability for you to rent kayaks and camping equipment. The kayaks are stored on an island near Pack Creek and the camping equipment is available at our shop in Juneau.

## **PACK CREEK GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **ABOUT PACK CREEK –**

When you travel to Admiralty Island and to Pack Creek you enter a place where human's are mere visitors in the animal's kingdom. A place where the bears and other wildlife are at home in their natural setting: fishing for salmon, wrestling on the shore, sleeping in the grass, and sauntering through the woods.

Pack Creek has been a popular bear viewing site since the 1930's. In 1935 the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed a trail and a small tree stand above the creek. In 1956 Stan Price, an Alaskan jack of all trades, homesteaded in the estuary and his presence helped to habituate the bears in the area. Due to an increased amount of traffic in the early 1980's the USFS decided that the site needed to be properly managed to protect both the bears and the human visitors. Currently Pack Creek is jointly managed by the US Forest Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The management rules and philosophy is designed to protect the bears way of life. The bears at this site are wild animals that must be allowed to live naturally without undue stress caused by human interference. In order to accomplish this, human visitors are restricted to certain areas. They are instructed to do the same thing as the previous visitors and in the same way. The bears become accustomed and comfortable with the

predictable human presence and this creates the unique bear viewing experience that Pack Creek offers. It is important to note that because the Pack Creek Bear Viewing Area is within the Kootznoowoo Wilderness Area there are NO facilities on site: no bathrooms, no shelter from the elements, and no cell phone service.

For more information the Forest Service has compiled a good list of FAQ's for Pack Creek visitors:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/admiralty/packcreek/faq.shtml>

They also have on-line a comprehensive Zoological Assessment, with a series of really interesting maps that begin on page 66, showing bear trails and food resources and vegetation types at Pack Creek, Windfall, and Swan: [http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev3\\_069197.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev3_069197.pdf)

## PERMITS –

You are required to obtain your own non-guided permit. You should start with checking into permit availability for the dates you want, at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) (after February 1 each year). Just enter “Pack Creek” and you can scroll through blocks of dates. Note that the permits are not needed in May, and are required but not limited in number from June 1-July 4 or after August 25 (the “shoulder season”), and they are also half price during these times. In the “Peak Season” (the time period when the salmon usually return to the streams and bears are seen in greater numbers), permits are \$50 per day (half price under 16 and over 62) and are limited to 12 people a day. (An additional 12 are reserved for the guided trips. If you decide you want to do a guided trip, visit Above & Beyond Alaska's website or contact us by phone or email.)

When you visit the Pack Creek site, you must have a printed copy of your permit. Don't forget this!

## VISITOR RULES and NOTES –

In order to preserve the unique bear viewing opportunity Pack Creek offers, it is important that everyone follow a set of established rules. When you arrive at Pack Creek and meet with the Rangers they will review most of the rules listed below

### RULES

- Visitors must hand a permit to the Rangers when they arrive that includes your names and ages.
- Viewing time is 9am-9pm, do not arrive before this or leave after this
- Keep your group together. Stay within arms reach as you walk to and from the viewing areas (a mob is better than a millipede.)
- Do not stop when moving between the South Spit and Viewing Spit.
- If you encounter a bear, Stand Your Ground, we do not want to habituate them to seeing us as submissive. If you meet one on the Trail, make the bear go around you, do not give up the trail.
- Always ask for permission to go to the Observation Tower or to use the Trail
- Use of the Observation Tower is on a first come first served basis. There is a three-hour time limit for a Tower visit. The time starts from when you leave the beach and at 3 hours you must be off of the tower. There is a limit of 10 people at the Tower or one group of up to 12 people.
- If the Tower is full, it may be possible to go on a hike along the trail. Ask the Rangers and approval will be on a case-by-case situation.

- There is no limit of time spent at the viewing spit.
- The Rangers want to minimize noise and movement. Human noise and movement can increase the stress on the bears and will also prevent them from coming closer for optimal viewing.
- Never stand on the logs at the Viewing Spit. This is a rule because it changes the profile of the Viewing Spit and can potentially stress the bears.
- Gear must never be more than an arms reach away (boats, boots, accessories, packs, etc). If you are at the viewing spit and you move from one end of the log to the other, carry your bag.
- Anything that is flavored (i.e. hot tea, food, gum) is only allowed at the cache and the South Spit. When not in use, put it in the cache.
- They do allow sunscreen, insect repellent, medications, and chapstick at the Viewing Spit/Observation Tower. If you are a diabetic, while unlikely, they may make an exception to have some snack bars, check with the Ranger.
- Smoking is allowed, but discouraged. If you must smoke, please do so away from the other visitors (as much as is possible).
- When going to and from the Viewing Spit, follow the line where the gravel meets the mud, if the tide is high, then walk the water's edge.
- You must not travel over the tide flats of Pack Creek – by foot or by boat. If you are paddling to/from Swan Point stay well away from the tide flats even when the tide is high. Do NOT paddle into the estuary at high tide.

#### NOTES

- Tie kayaks up to the set of lines closest to Windfall Harbor on the rope closest to Windfall Harbor
- Big high tides are not good bear viewing, avoid anything above 16' if possible. You will be unable to get to or return from the viewing spit when the tide is above 16'...plan accordingly
- At high tides, try to go on the trail/to the Observation Tower
- Mid-tide incoming and Mid-tide outgoing are the best bear viewing times
- The Food Cache/Bear Box on the left as your back is to the ocean is used by the Rangers, use the two on the right.
- The Rangers have a trauma kit and AED in their bear box
- Food and gear that clients do not wish to carry around can go in the bear boxes
- There is a spotting scope available for use by all visitors (guided and unguided) at both the Viewing Spit and South Spit. Make sure your group is not monopolizing these scopes.
- Excellent photos can be taken with small point and shoot cameras by putting the lens right up against the spotting scopes. It may be best for the guide to take these photos for the clients.

## CAMPING INFORMATION

### LOCATIONS –

There are no established campsites in the area; this is pure Wilderness. However, there are several great areas to camp that are either located where ABAK's kayaks are stored or a short paddle away. Most groups will be dropped off at Windfall Island, depending on bookings and client requests you may also be dropped off at Staunch Point.

Windfall Island – There are two areas to camp on Windfall. The first is a beach on the northeast tip, the second is the small cove just west of Late Point on the southwest tip near the stored kayaks. From your float plane drop off on Windfall you should walk the beach to the south and go into the woods in a few spots and pick out a nice place to camp. At the Late Point site there is an established bear hang for safely securing your food that is available for your use. Windfall Island does not have any water available. Late Point is about 1.5 miles from Pack Creek.

Staunch Point - This site offers excellent camping with a mountain stream running on the edge of the camp and plenty of flat surfaces to accommodate 5 or more tents. The actual camping area is about 1/3 of a mile southwest of Staunch Point as it's shown on the map. There is an established bear hang and a mountain stream on the edge of camp. Staunch Point, located at the mouth of Windfall Harbor is a 1/2 mile from Late Point and 2 miles from Pack Creek.

Swan Island – The west shoreline of Swan Island offers some excellent camping in close proximity to Pack Creek. There are several beaches where you can camp at the forests edge above the high tide line or find flat areas just inside the guard timber. Clear water can be found in a few small streams on the island. Bears will frequent this island, particularly in May-mid June. From Windfall Island camping on Swan is a 1-4 mile paddle away. Paddling to Pack Creek from the west side of Swan Island will range from 1-4 miles.

Windfall Harbor – It is possible to camp on the East side of Windfall Harbor, but not recommended, as there are a lot of bears in Windfall Harbor.

Camping Further from Pack Creek – Throughout Seymour Canal you can find beautiful camping areas with flat surfaces for tents and flowing water nearby. When camping on the beach be aware of the large tidal fluctuations and when in the forest don't camp along animal trails.

#### Camping Notes:

- Tents should be placed inside the trees for maximum protection from rain and wind, and for the softest ground. A few tents spots can be found on the upper beach zone, but be sure to check your tide book!
- All cooking and eating MUST be done on the beach zone, preferably below the high tide mark so future tides will erase all food scraps and odors.
- Wood fires are allowed but ONLY on the beach zone, below mean high tide. Do not place any fire rings in the woods or at any time build a fire in the woods (even during rain, the duff under

ground can smolder and catch fires after you leave – this has happened on Windfall!). Firewood is scarce, so collect your wood from a wide area, and do not cut live branches.

- Leave No Trace camping principles apply (please read the LNT section) – A few things to think about: this means all food scraps and veggie material must come out with your garbage; dishes should be scraped and washed in the salt water. Do not cook excess food—either eat it all or bag the leftovers and return to town with your garbage rather than dumping big globs of food in the intertidal zone. Do not leave rock rings around your tent, and kick back branches and cones so as not to harden these camping areas. It's a pristine area; let's keep it wild!
- The toilet is on the beach, below high tide, always! Pee on the beach anywhere. Poop behind a big rock, and then smash it with a nice flat rock and cover it with beach gravel and voila!- the next tide will flush all remains out to sea and microorganisms will quickly dispatch the rest. Fly out wet TP and feminine items with your garbage, or burn in a hot beach fire. Dry TP can be burned on the spot, but only below high tide on the beach. And speaking of feminine products; don't worry about bears and time of month issues. Any concerns along those lines are a myth.

## WATER –

Water can be found in one of several streams that cascade off of the mountains on Admiralty Island. It is recommended that all water be treated by either boiling, using a pump/filter, or adding iodine tablets/chlorine based drops (AquaMira). Drinking water is not available anywhere in the area, even at the Pack Creek viewing site.

While there is a lot of water to be found along the coastline, there are no streams on Windfall Island. The island is too small to support any freshwater creeks. Instead you should fly in with 3-5 gallons of fresh water (ABAK has water containers available), and can re-supply with new freshwater from the creek with a small waterfall on the main beach of Admiralty Island directly facing the kayak cache, about a half mile paddle across the water. This is most easily done on your way back from a day at Pack Creek.

At Pack Creek there is a small stream that you can collect some water from at the beginning of the Observation Tower trail.

## FOOD –

You can bring any type of food you wish, from backpacker's fare to gourmet fresh local produce and meats or fish. However, keep a few suggestions in mind:

- Food should be in zipper duffels lined with garbage bags or waterproof bags, and hung from a tree branch. So --no coolers, no multiple six-packs of beer, and nothing needing freezing or refrigeration (other than our usually cool weather).
- Plan on bringing a stove and cooking on a stove. In our wet climate you cannot rely on building fires to cook on.
- You must carry out all garbage and leftover containers.
- The food you bring to Pack Creek, Windfall Harbor, or Swan Cove for the day must be easily consumed on the spot, without any preparation or warming; snack bars, fruit, sandwiches you prepare back in camp; leftovers in a plastic tub, etc.

- For cocktail hour I recommend a small flask of your favorite booze, or for wine lovers, the small 3-glass servings of boxed wines which are now becoming available and are compact and indestructible. Beer is an inefficient beverage to haul up a tree. If you bring beer cans are recommended as they crush down.... Do not bring any alcoholic drinks to Pack Creek!
- Keep your food hanging or in bear cans whenever you leave camp for more than an hour or so, and during the night. Don't keep any snacks or sweet drinks (including booze) in your tent. It's fine to leave your clean cook gear on the upper beach and personal bags outside your tent.

For a fee ABAK will also buy and pack your food, based on a few simple menu options that can be sent to you.

## LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES –

The greater Pack Creek area is entirely within the boundaries of the Kootznoowoo Wilderness and receives minimal impact from humans, particularly anywhere on the land. One of the great things about the area is that it looks the same as it did 100 years ago. As a paddler you are able to experience the feeling of being the first to explore this wild land. In order to preserve this Wilderness character it is important that you follow the seven Leave No Trace principles. Below are the seven principles as well as some guidelines for the Kootznoowoo Wilderness area.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare: make sure that you have all of the appropriate route knowledge, clothing, gear, safety equipment and food so that you do not have to disturb the natural environment (i.e. cut pieces of trees to make a shelter because you forgot a tent)
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces: choose tent sites that will not destroy fragile plant life, avoid using the same footpaths to prevent social trails from forming
3. Dispose of Waste Properly: Pack out all trash – this includes biodegradable things such as apple cores or orange peels. If it didn't come from the environment you are in, then it shouldn't be left there. Human waste should be dealt with in the intertidal zone in areas where the current will flush the waste out to sea, if you choose to use toilet paper then pack it out or thoroughly burn it in a proper LNT fire!
4. Leave What You Find: Leave treasures for others to find, unless the "treasure" is trash left by previous travelers
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts: Use a stove to cook on. If possible avoid making fires altogether, if you choose to make a fire then build a small fire in the intertidal zone (BELOW the high tide line, NOT in the forest), only burn wood up to the diameter of your wrist and make sure that everything is burnt completely, no one wants to see large charred pieces of wood floating around on or on the beach where they camp. Please, please, please do not make fire rings in the forest that scar the land for decades or cause forest fires. Even if it's raining the forest duff can smolder/burn for days and spread across large areas of land.
6. Respect Wildlife: Follow the Alaska National Marine Fisheries Service wildlife viewing guidelines and regulations by not approaching marine mammals closer than 100 yards and limiting time to observing one individual to 30 minutes. Keep your food in bear resistant containers or properly hang it to prevent the bears from getting into your food and becoming habituated to



people. Keep a clean kitchen free of micro food trash, we DON'T want to feed ANY wildlife...even squirrels, birds, voles, and mice.

7. Be Considerate of Others: If there are other travelers in the inlets, keep your visual and auditory impact to a minimum. Follow the other LNT principles so that future travelers can appreciate the Wilderness to the fullest extent.

## TIDES –

Tidal currents are not a significant factor in planning your trip or paddling in Seymour Canal or to Pack Creek, but **the tides themselves are very large**, and you need to always be aware of whether the tide is coming in or out, and whether the next high tide is higher or lower than the previous. Many people have had problems with underestimating the high tides, and have lost kitchen equipment or even their kayak to an unexpectedly large high tide. Check the tide tables provided with the kayaks, and be sure you understand that there are two high tides and two low tides every day, often with a 15-20 feet difference, and always with one set of tides several feet higher/lower than the other set in the day. Don't rely on the seaweed line to indicate the height of the next tide! Better to mark high tides during the day with a little rock pile or a stick, and then consult the tide tables to see if the next high tide will be several feet higher or lower. And remember that on shallow beaches, an incoming tide can float a beached kayak within a few minutes, so if you stop and go poke around in the woods during an incoming tide, be sure to bring your kayak much further up the beach than you might think necessary, and always tie the bow line to a rock. You really don't want your kayak to float away.....

You can print out tides for your trip by going to <http://westjuneau.com/weather/July.htm>.

Note that any high tide above about a 16 ft. tide can be considered a very high tide, and any minus tides can be considered quite low. For example, you want to keep gear high on the beach or in the woods if there is a very high tide at night, and always carry your kayak into the rye grass zone **and** tie the bow line to a bush or big rock. Also, ideally you will want to avoid landing at Pack Creek or leaving Windfall Island at a minus low tide, or you will be making a long slog through the low tide muck with a heavy kayak and gear.

## WEATHER –

The weather on Admiralty Island is about the same as it is in Juneau. Plan to have cool temperatures with rain showers and hope for sunshine. This area of Southeast Alaska receives measurable precipitation around 220 days a year with 300 cloudy days a year. However, the rain typically falls as relatively light, intermittent showers. The average summer temperature is 56 °F (13°C) with day time highs in the low 60's and overnight lows in the low 50's. Although it is possible to have temperatures in the 70's and low 80's. The winds in Seymour Canal are generally light, unless the wind is coming directly from the south. Often times Windfall Harbor and the west side of Windfall Island will be calm while the east side of Windfall Island in Seymour Canal is rough and windy. Weather can change quickly, so be prepared for it. Only paddle in conditions you can handle.

## SUGGESTED ITINERARIES –

Depending on your time and interests there are an endless number of ways that you can do a trip in the Pack Creek area. Given that the majority of the cost of a Pack Creek trip is the float plane flight, we strongly suggest that you spend 3 or more days camping, kayaking, and exploring. Our favorite itinerary is for a 3 day/2 night camping trip, as follows:

Day 1- Get your gear and orientation from Alaska Boat & Kayak Rental Shop the day before, and the next day fly in to Windfall Island around 9/9:30am. Set up camp, have a snack, pack a lunch and paddle into Windfall Harbor. Spend the day exploring the coastline searching for bears around one of the three salmon streams in the harbor. No permit is necessary and on most days there are no other visitors around.

Day 2- After breakfast pack your lunch and extra snacks, then paddle over to Pack Creek to arrive as close to 9am as possible. Spend some time at the viewing spit, eat some lunch, take a hike to the Observation Tower, then stop by the viewing spit afterward. You can stay until it closes at 9 pm. If you stick around you will likely have the last couple of hours for just you, the rangers, and the bears! Bring plenty of snacks, and plan on a late and easy dinner back at camp. (It will still be light until after 10 pm most of the summer, until mid-August.) It's also possible to paddle back to camp for a mid-day break and return to Pack Creek. Note – you must have a permit for the day(s) you visit Pack Creek.

Day 3- Depending on your flight schedule you can do one of several things: visit Pack Creek again (permit required), paddle to Swan Point, explore the Swan or Tiedeman Island Coastline, or simply enjoy a quiet day in camp. Prior to leaving camp for a paddle you should pack up camp to be prepared for your return flight. When you paddle back to Windfall Island, clean the cockpit and hatches of the kayak with the sponge, stash the kayak back where you found them, and await your plane pick-up – anytime from about 1-6 pm will likely work. Please be ready for your pickup at least 30 minutes before the scheduled pickup time.

This gives you 3 full days of exploration, and 2 nights. Or stay another night to enjoy the wilderness solitude and camping, and fly out after breakfast on Day 4 (there is no extra charge; camping is free!). An added bonus to spending an extra night: there may be discounts available for empty flights returning from dropping off clients in the morning (call our office to inquire about sharing the cost of a flight).

With more time, you could also paddle to the back of Swan Cove, or actually move camp and explore more of Seymour Canal. In a week you could easily paddle south to Mole Harbor, hike some of the Cross-Admiralty Canoe Route, and paddle back. Or paddle two days to the State Park cabin at Oliver Inlet, spend a night in luxury (well, it's dry and heated), and paddle back to Windfall. A week is not at all too long to explore the myriad islands and coastline of the Seymour Canal area of Pack Creek.

## **KAYAKING INFORMATION**

### **REQUIRED EXPERIENCE –**

You should be comfortable camping in a cool and wet environment, and have had some experience setting up tents, cooking and living outdoors, etc. This is not an experience for novice campers.

Kayaking experience is also required. The waters around Pack Creek are somewhat protected and usually quite calm, but winds do come up and you need to know how to handle a kayak in waves of up to one foot. You must also know how to paddle forward, stop, turn, and load and unload a sea kayak. If you need kayak lessons are unable to take a lesson before coming to Alaska, we may be able to arrange a 2-3 hour private lesson in Juneau before you go.

### **KAYAK STORAGE LOCATIONS –**

The kayaks are stored on Windfall Island about a 20 minute flight by floatplane from Juneau. For Windfall Island the floatplane pilot will land on the beach near the kayaks, which are located on the ground just 30 feet in from the beach, about 20 yards to the north of the huge boulder on the beach. Kayaks can be kept in these locations during your rental, or you can paddle them to one of the other available campsites.

Return kayaks to the same location when you are done, and be SURE to turn them upside down as you found them. Also empty out all water from the cockpits and storage areas, and sponge out dirt and gravel and mud. Please leave them as you would like to find them! All other gear comes back to town in your plane.

### **KAYAK DESCRIPTIONS and ADJUSTMENTS –**

There are a mix of single and double rotomolded plastic touring kayaks available for renters use at Windfall Island. The doubles are heavy boats. They can be carried by two people, but if possible it's best to carry them with 3 or 4 people. All of the kayaks are sit-in kayaks that require a spray skirt (provided). It is possible to pack up the kayaks with gear for multiple days, however, they are tight on space and you will need to pack lightly and compactly. There may be rental periods where a single is unavailable for an odd number of people. In this instance, it is possible to paddle a double solo, but you will need help getting it to the water.

The kayaks all have rudders that are controlled with foot pegs (in the rear cockpit for the doubles). The pegs are adjusted by either pulling a strap (like tightening a backpack strap) or by pushing and sliding the system beside your leg. It is important that the rudder is centered when your feet are pressed evenly on the pegs. To operate the rudder – push left to go left, push right to go right. As you push the foot forward to turn the other foot must slide back.

## KAYAK SAFETY –

All renters are responsible for their own safety while kayaking. Please look at the attached kayak safety page at the beginning of the Maps section for more information and tips.

## PADDLING ROUTES AND INFORMATION –

### PADDLING TO PACK CREEK FROM WINDFALL ISLAND

It is about 1.5 miles from Late Pt. to Pack Creek, which normally takes about 30-45 minutes. You can paddle along Windfall Island for the first mile, and then it is only a half mile crossing from the north end of Windfall over to the South Spit at Pack Creek, where you land. These are very protected waters. Only during high winds and storms would you need to hug the shore or delay your paddle.

If you paddle past Pack Creek to the north, be sure not to cross over the large intertidal area in front of Pack Creek even when the tide has covered it. This is completely closed to human use, to give the bears a wide buffer. This tide flat extends about one half mile out from the Pack Creek estuary, and is often marked by a line of crab pot buoys. Paddle wide around this tide flat even at high tide if you are exploring the waters to the north of Pack Creek. Remember that the South Spit is the ONLY access point for all visitors to Pack Creek, whether by kayak, floatplane, or vessel.

### AT PACK CREEK

Consult the maps to see where to land your kayak at Pack Creek, at the South Spit. There are two outhaul ropes for public use, and kayakers should use those to the left of the South Spit landing zone. Each is marked with an orange buoy in the water and two wooden posts on land; they consist of a large loop of rope that goes from land to a submerged pulley under the orange buoy, and allow you to store your kayak offshore while at Pack Creek. Note that if you are visiting Pack Creek before June 1<sup>st</sup> the outhauls may not be set up. In this case you will have to carry your kayaks up the beach and securely stow all accessories so bears cannot get to them either in a hatch or in the underground bear proof storage bins that are at the forest edge above the South Spit. A paddle float or life jacket makes a great chew toy for a bear.

After beaching the kayaks, take your day packs up a few feet to dry ground, and then stash the two-piece paddle and your life vest and spray skirt in the kayak (best to put the spray skirt on the cockpit and cinch it up). Tie the bow line to the outhaul rope with a couple of simple half hitches or a clove hitch: don't put any loop or knot in the outhaul rope itself! Then float the kayak, and then walk up the beach with your day pack while holding on to the other side of the outhaul line: this will pull your kayak offshore. Pull the kayak out until it almost reaches the orange buoy.

Once the kayaks are beyond where the lowest tide will reach go check in with the Ranger on duty. They will ask for your permit and give you an orientation to the area. These folks are super helpful; ask them all the questions you want. Also ask them for advice on when you should go to the Observation Tower. The answer will depend on time of day, the tides, your available time and what other groups are planning to go there. And also ask them to point out the two active eagle nests visible from the beach!

After having a snack put ALL your food and drinks except water bottle into the underground storage bins at the South Spit. The Ranger will direct you to their location. You can also leave extra clothing, rain gear (if sunny) and rubber boots or other back-up gear that you want available but not in your day pack.

The food you bring to Pack Creek should be neatly packaged and ready to eat WITHOUT cutting or laying out on the ground, etc. No picnics! No crumbs! You will be shown where to eat on the beach. The bears will sometimes walk up to lunching visitors and it's important that they can secure their food and stand their ground.

Toilets at Pack Creek – there are none! You will use the bathroom as is described in the camping information section. There is a pile of rocks on the South Spit that provides some privacy for peeing. If you must poop, then you'll have to walk down the shoreline past the outhauls and go in the intertidal zone. You will need to bring your own TP with some plastic ziplocks to pack it out. You are not allowed to go into the woods to poop or pee near the South Spit or Viewing Spit (that's where the bears go). Don't be shy; that's just how it's done in bear country! (On the trail to the Tower of course you might have to pee, and if so just carry out your toilet paper, but try to avoid having to poop along that hike if possible.)

In general we recommend going first to the viewing estuary and spending 1-3 hours there, then going to the Tower (with a stop at the South Spit for a snack or lunch), and then going back to the Viewing estuary. However, the Ranger might advise you to go first to the Tower if it is empty or high tide.

Most people come to Pack Creek between 9 am (when it opens each day) and 5 pm, and usually stay 3-5 hours. They usually come by floatplane; a few arrive by private vessel. If you bring a lot of snacks and stay until it closes at 9 pm, and go back to camp for a late dinner, you will likely be rewarded by few or no other visitors, and great evening bear viewing.

Note that you will not be allowed to walk to or from the Viewing estuary at very high tides, above about 15 ft. That is a good time to go to the Tower, or just to come earlier or later in the day.

The Forest Service has compiled a good list of FAQ's for Pack Creek visitors:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/admiralty/packcreek/faq.shtml>

They also have on-line a comprehensive Zoological Assessment, with a series of really interesting maps that begin on page 66, showing bear trails and food resources and vegetation types at Pack Creek, Windfall, and Swan:

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/admiralty/2005\\_packcrk\\_zool\\_area\\_landscape\\_assess.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/admiralty/2005_packcrk_zool_area_landscape_assess.pdf)

### DAY TRIP TO WINDFALL HARBOR

A full day of kayaking and hiking the beaches of Windfall Harbor is highly recommended. It is within the Zoological Area, but no permit is required, and few people visit every summer. Bears there are somewhat habituated to people (especially those that include Pack Creek in their home range), but are usually more shy, and tend to fade into the forest when you approach. Thus, paddling close to shore and being quiet is often the best way to see bears in Windfall.

The Forest Service requests that paddlers going to the head of the Bay only go ashore at the 3-sided Shelter on the western shore. You can leave your kayak high up on the beach, put food and extra gear (including spray skirts, paddles and life vests, which bears like to chew on) inside the bear-proof storage bins inside the Shelter, and then walk the beach the half mile to the estuary. Don't go out into the estuary and over to the creek, or you will scare bears away – just find a place to sit overlooking it all and use your binoculars. You can also poke into the woods around the Shelter (which is not allowed at Pack Creek except on the Tower trail), and look for bear trails, scat, etc. The forest edge between Windfall and Pack Creek is a heavily used bear corridor; don't wander too far into the brush or forest without making some noise.

You can also stop at the south end of Middle Creek (see map) and walk up to Middle Creek to look for bears, or again, to check out the bear trails just inside the forest. It is pretty magical.

You can either return to Windfall Island the same way you came in, along the western shore, or paddle back along the eastern shore until Staunch Pt., and then do the easy ½ mile crossing back to Windfall. This entire stretch is a good place to go ashore and walk into the forest. There are fewer bears here, and you can look for sign of deer, otter, mink, eagles, song birds and, after mid-July, lush edible blueberry and huckleberry.

#### Notes on bear viewing in Windfall Harbor

- The bears in Windfall are generally less habituated than the Pack Creek bears, they will be stressed and displaced more easily.
- The area from Middle Creek to the next creek north should not be walked on. For viewing bears at Middle Creek, land the kayaks on the south end of the tideflat and walk north towards Middle Creek from there.
- The Windfall Creek area has a lot of high grass and dips along the shore. View with caution in this area as it is easy to surprise bears
- Do not leave any food or scented items in the kayaks on the beaches. Either carry it with you or put it in the bear box that is available at the Windfall shelter.
- This area is currently rarely managed by the USFS/ADF&G, use your own judgment and follow the management philosophies that are used for Pack Creek (first concern – protection of the bears, second concern – following the rules of the Wilderness Act)

#### SWAN POINT and SWAN COVE

Swan Cove is the third major watershed within the Zoological Area, and is difficult to access except at very high tides due to the huge mud flats. It is also too far from Windfall Island for most paddlers to visit in a day trip from Windfall or Staunch Point. Thus it is very rarely visited at all, and then usually by those on longer trips who move camp closer.

But you can do a day trip to Swan Point; the spit of land 2.5 miles north of Pack Creek, which has a great gravel beach and an incredible, giant Sitka Spruce with multiple sub-trees growing off it. This makes a nice destination for a day trip. Spend a couple of hours at this little peninsula, see the bear trails and berry bushes and giant tree, and head back. On the paddle to and from the Swan Point area be sure not to paddle over the tide flats in front of Pack Creek, which are off limits to all and serve as a buffer from interfering with bears feeding at Pack Creek. In calm sea conditions you can paddle back along the

western shore of Swan Island and take a break to explore some of the muskeg (Southeast Alaska bog) just inside the forest guard timber.

### TIEDEMAN AND SWAN ISLAND

Tiedeman Island is to the east of Windfall Island and Staunch Point. It is a long skinny island that rarely has bears on it. On the north end is a common harbor seal haulout. The north end of Tiedeman Island and the south end of Swan Island are excellent areas that you can safely explore in the forest or go beach combing. There are some interesting small islands with beautiful gravel beaches just to the northeast of Tiedeman that are worth spending time on. Additionally, at certain times of the year humpback whales will frequent the area around Tiedeman Island.

### **BEAR SAFETY**

Bears swim out to all the small islands during May and early June, when the sedges are coming up and snow covers the higher slopes. While it is rare to see bears on Windfall Island during July and August, you should still practice your good bear country camping techniques (hanging food, no food in tents, cooking and eating on the beach, etc. as outlined below). You may cook any type of food; don't worry about odors, but do worry about leaving scraps on the ground – we don't want bears to ever start associating campsites in the area with food opportunities. When camping on Swan Island or at Staunch Point on Admiralty the likelihood of having a bear walk through camp is higher than on Windfall Island.

### **FOOD STORAGE –**

When bear camping all food must be either stored in a bear proof canister (available for rent from Alaska Boat & Kayak Rental Shop) or properly hung from trees. When hanging food from trees the food bags should be off the ground at least 12 feet and at least 5-8 feet away from the tree trunk. If you are camping in an area without an established bear hang then you will need to look for a sturdy tree branch that is at least 12' off of the ground. Tie a rock or water bottle to the end of the rope and toss the rope over the branch. Tie your food bags to the other end of the rope and hoist it as high as you can. Then wrap the rope around the tree trunk several times and tie it off. In addition to hanging your food it is also a good idea to hang other “smellables” such as toothpaste, pots, and dishes. Lastly, never cook near your tent or keep food or other smellables inside your tent!

### **BEAR CAMPING PROCEDURES –**

Bears outnumber permanent human residence on Admiralty 3 to 1; it is important to follow bear camping guidelines. For the layout of your camp you want to think of a triangle with each point 100 yards apart. One point will be your tent, another point will be your kitchen and the last point will be where you go to the bathroom. Please adhere to the following procedures to prevent our bears from associating people/campers with food and toys.

- Follow the food storage guidelines above.
- Cooking should be done away from camp in the intertidal zone so that all the associated smells will be washed away by the ocean.

- When walking into the woods it is a good idea to make some noise to alert any bears of your presence. This is especially important if you are camped on Admiralty Island or camping in May or June.
- Keep your camp clean. Everything should either be in your tent, in a bear can or bear hang, or readily accessible. Bears can be like large puppies – anything new is a fun chew toy.

## PROTECTION: BEAR SPRAY, NOISE MAKERS, GUNS –

Bear spray is available for purchase in multiple stores in Juneau, it may be possible to rent it through Alaska Boat & Kayak. Note bear spray must be handed to your floatplane pilot before any flight. It will be stored in the float of the plane (not in the main cabin) in case of any accidental discharge. Bear Spray has a range of approximately 30 feet and is very effective if sprayed downwind on a bear that approaches within about 20-30 feet.

However, Pack Creek bears can approach harmlessly within that distance, either on the viewing spit, or along the trail to the tower. There is almost no foreseeable occasion to use bear spray at Pack Creek, and even in Windfall Harbor it would be highly unusual. If on a rare occasion a bear approached a campsite, you might consider using bear spray, but even then it is better to group together between your camp and the bear and just stand your ground and not let the bear move you off of your camp or kitchen area. If you stand together and make a little noise, they will likely go around you and eventually give up and walk away.

Noise makers, such as a whistle or air horn, can be excellent bear deterrents. They are unnecessary at Pack Creek, but would be a good thing to have with you when camping on mainland Admiralty or visiting Windfall Harbor and Swan Cove. Do not walk with bear bells, if you are concerned about bears when hiking then talk out loud. This is a sound that bears would associate with people and make them move away from you. Bells may not alarm them.

Guns are allowed anywhere in the area; probably anywhere in Alaska! But I do not recommend guns, especially at Pack Creek where there has **never** been human contact by a bear. The Forest Service ranger on duty at Pack Creek by the estuary will have a gun, but again, a gun has never been used.

## PROCEDURES FOR A BEAR ENCOUNTER –

When traveling anywhere on Admiralty Island you should bring along bear spray and noise makers, such as whistles and signal horns. If you encounter a bear the first thing you want to do is group together tightly. Then, let the bear know you are there by talking to it in a loud, low voice. If it approaches you, stand your ground, particularly if you have food with you or are in the Pack Creek/Windfall Harbor area. Continue to talk to it loudly and make it clear that it needs to travel around you. If you do not have food and are not in the Pack Creek viewing area, then it is acceptable to back away slowly while continuing to talk to the bear. When in the Pack Creek viewing area the bears are habituated to people, so it is unnecessary to talk loudly to make your presence known.



A good acronym for responding to bear encounters is SPRAY.

- S – Stand Your Ground
- P – Pull Out Your Bear Spray
- R – Roundup Your Group
- A – Act Human (stand tall, talk to the bear)
- Y – Yield To The Bear

## **EQUIPMENT INFORMATION**

### **EQUIPMENT PROVIDED WITH RENTAL –**

With a kayak rental the following equipment is included:

Kayak, paddle, life jacket, spray skirt, paddle float and bilge pump

### **RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT LIST –**

It is important to be prepared for the cool, wet climate of Southeast Alaska. Bring enough equipment to be warm, dry, and comfortable. However, be aware that there are space and weight limitations in the floatplanes and kayaks. Below is a basic recommended equipment list.

<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Camping</b>	<b>Other</b>
T-Shirt	Sleeping Pad	Insect Repellant
Hiking Pants	Sleeping Bag	Sunscreen
Long Underwear Top and Bottom x 2	Tent	Binoculars
Fleece/Insulating Jacket x 2	Cookset and Knife	Camera
Rubber Rain Jacket	Camp Stove	Toiletries (minimal)
Light Weight Rain Jacket	Fuel/Fuel Bottles	Medications
Fleece or Wool Hat	Lighters/Matches	Watch
Fleece or Wool Gloves	Water Bottle	Sunglasses
Sun or Baseball Hat	Water Bags/Containers	Bandana
Socks and Underwear	Water Treatment	Day Pack
Rubber Boots	Headlamp	First Aid Kit
Camp Shoes (tennis shoes/hiking boots)	Tarp	Hand Sanitizer

### **EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FOR RENT –**

Alaska Boat & Kayak Rental Shop has a limited supply of equipment available for rent. We currently have bear canisters, marine radios, dry bags, dry suits, and rubber boots. We do not rent bear spray but we do sell it at our kayak shop. Please contact our shop to inquire about availability, costs, and to make a reservation.

## OTHER INFORMATION

### EMERGENCIES –

There is no cell phone service at or near Pack Creek. It is recommended to travel with a marine radio, a satellite phone, or a satellite messenger – such as a SPOT or InReach. A marine radio is available for rent through Alaska Boat & Kayak. The marine radio can be used to check the marine weather forecast (press WX button), and to call for assistance on Channel 16 (and then switching to channel 10 usually, after contact is made). These work line of sight for a few miles, and can be used to reach a passing boat or the Ranger Camp if you are at Pack Creek or nearby (probably will not work across land from your campsite on the south end of the island).

The Rangers maintain a camp with three wall tents on the north end of Windfall Island, within view of the South Spit at Pack Creek. They have radio contact with their Sitka Dispatch office, and can arrange for 911 emergency service out of Sitka (either floatplane or helicopter with medical personnel). For lesser emergencies, the Rangers can help. They have some first aid training and equipment, but are NOT medics.

If you need Ranger help during the evening or night, you should paddle to their camp rather than attempt to hike the one mile overland across Windfall Island. There is no trail, and the understory is thick and challenging to bushwhack through.

If you need to change the time of your floatplane pick-up, or have other non-medical issues, it would be best to ask another visitor or pilot who is there for the day to relay that message for you, rather than asking the rangers to use the government radio system. But depending on the situation, and your level of pleading, you might obtain their help.

### PLANE CAPACITY –

There are several Juneau-based air taxi carriers that may be used depending on your group size and schedule. In general, these are the planes and weight limits (including passenger weights!):

<u>Float Plane</u>	<u># of Passengers</u>	<u>Weight Capacity</u>
Cessna 180/206	2/3 + gear	750 lbs / 340 kg
Beaver	4 + gear (up to 6 with minimal gear)	1200 lbs / 545 kg
Otter	5-9 + gear (up to 10)	2400 lbs / 1090 kg

It should be relatively easy for people weighing 150-200 pounds to keep their gear and food within these total limits for any 3-5 day trip, even considering you will want to bring 3-6 gallons of fresh water in portable bags/jugs. You and your gear **will** be weighed at the airport before departure.

Be aware that in addition to a weight capacity, the planes also have a space capacity.

## FISHING –

Fishing is not allowed within the Zoological boundaries, but you may fish from Windfall Island or other islands. Be sure to clean fish away from camp, and leave all remains below high tide. Fishing licenses are needed for anyone over age 16 for all saltwater fishing, and can be obtained for 1, 3 or more days from several outlets in Juneau.

## QUESTIONS or COMMENTS

If you have any other questions, please contact the Alaska Boat & Kayak Center by phone or email. 907-209-6088 or [info@juneaukayak.com](mailto:info@juneaukayak.com).

Contact our office to let us know of any additional information you would have liked to have had prior to your trip. Also, we would love to hear back from you about how your trip went. Send an email, call on the phone, or write a review on Trip Advisor or our Facebook page.

Thank you.

## SEA KAYAKING SAFETY TIPS and INFORMATION

### PREVENT A CAPSIZE:

- Avoid Sudden Movements
- Keep Your Weight Centered (shoulders over hips)
- Point Your Bow Into or at an Oblique Angle to Approaching Waves
- DO NOT Rush or Try to Paddle As Fast As Possible – plan ahead and keep track of time
- DO NOT Make Adjustments When Away From Shore (i.e. changing seat position or rudder position)
- Avoid Paddling in Waves that are White-capping
- Stay 100 Yards Away from Marine Mammals

### GENERAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Leave a Float Plan. Let Someone Know Where You're Going
- Stay Close Together as a Group
- Stay Close to Shore as Much as Possible
- Break Before You Are Tired
- Paddle Slow and Steady
- Take a Break Before Making an Open Crossing
- Know the Tides and Marine Forecast – Observe the wind
- Carry the Appropriate Rescue and Safety Equipment
- Carry a communication device in a waterproof case

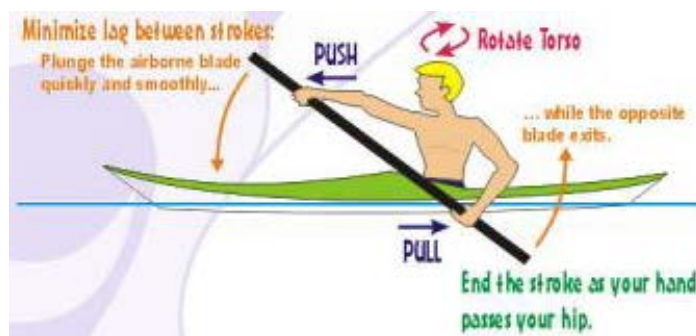
### IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:

- **REMAIN CALM**
- **Attempt to Manage Situation (rescuers will take 30 minutes or more to arrive)**
- **Contact the Alaska Boat & Kayak Rental Shop staff: 907-209-6088**
- **If necessary, contact the US Coast Guard 907-463-2980 for immediate assistance**
- **If you have a marine radio – hail the coast guard or other vessels on channel 16**

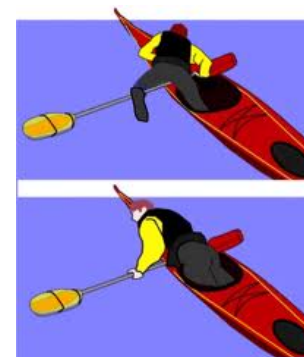
### Assisted Rescue



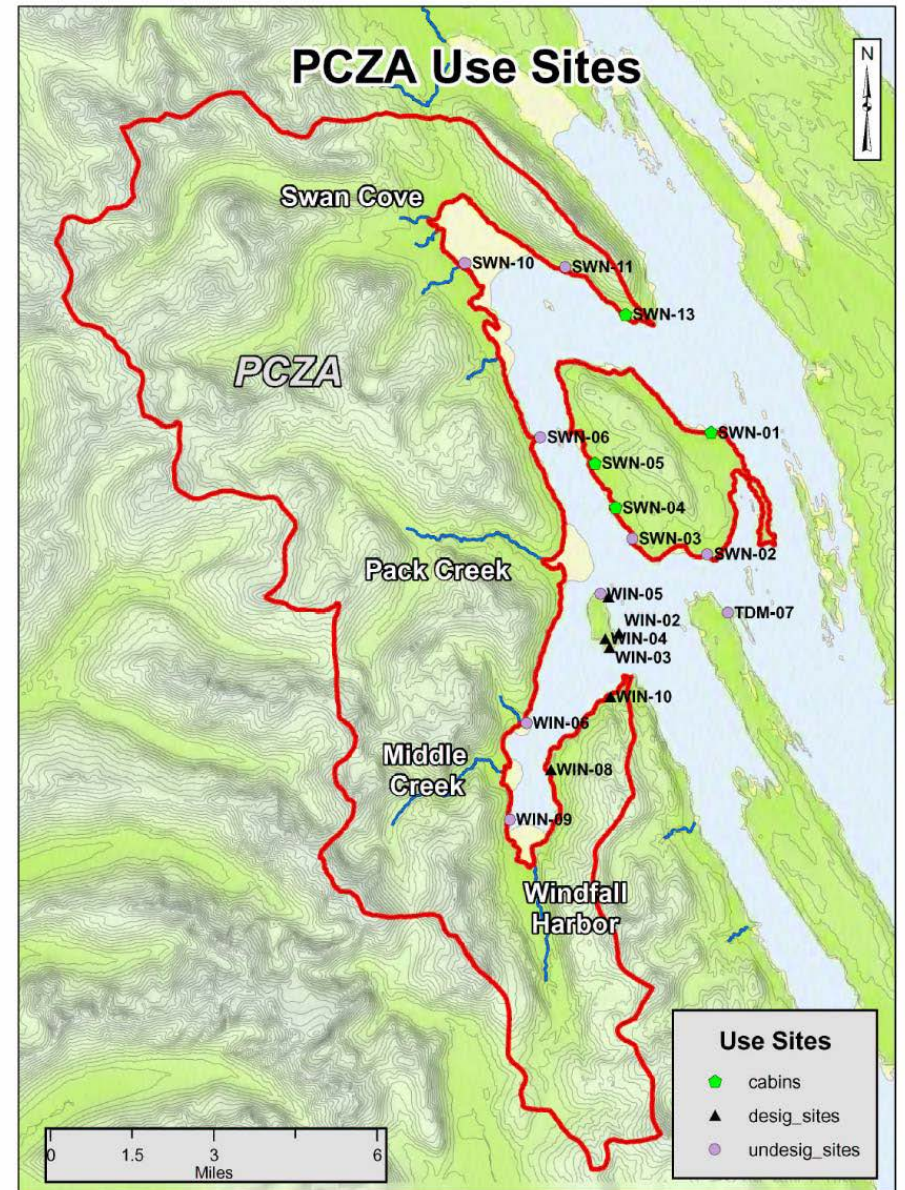
### Paddling Technique



### Self Rescue









TOPO! map printed on 04/03/14 from "Untitled.tpo"

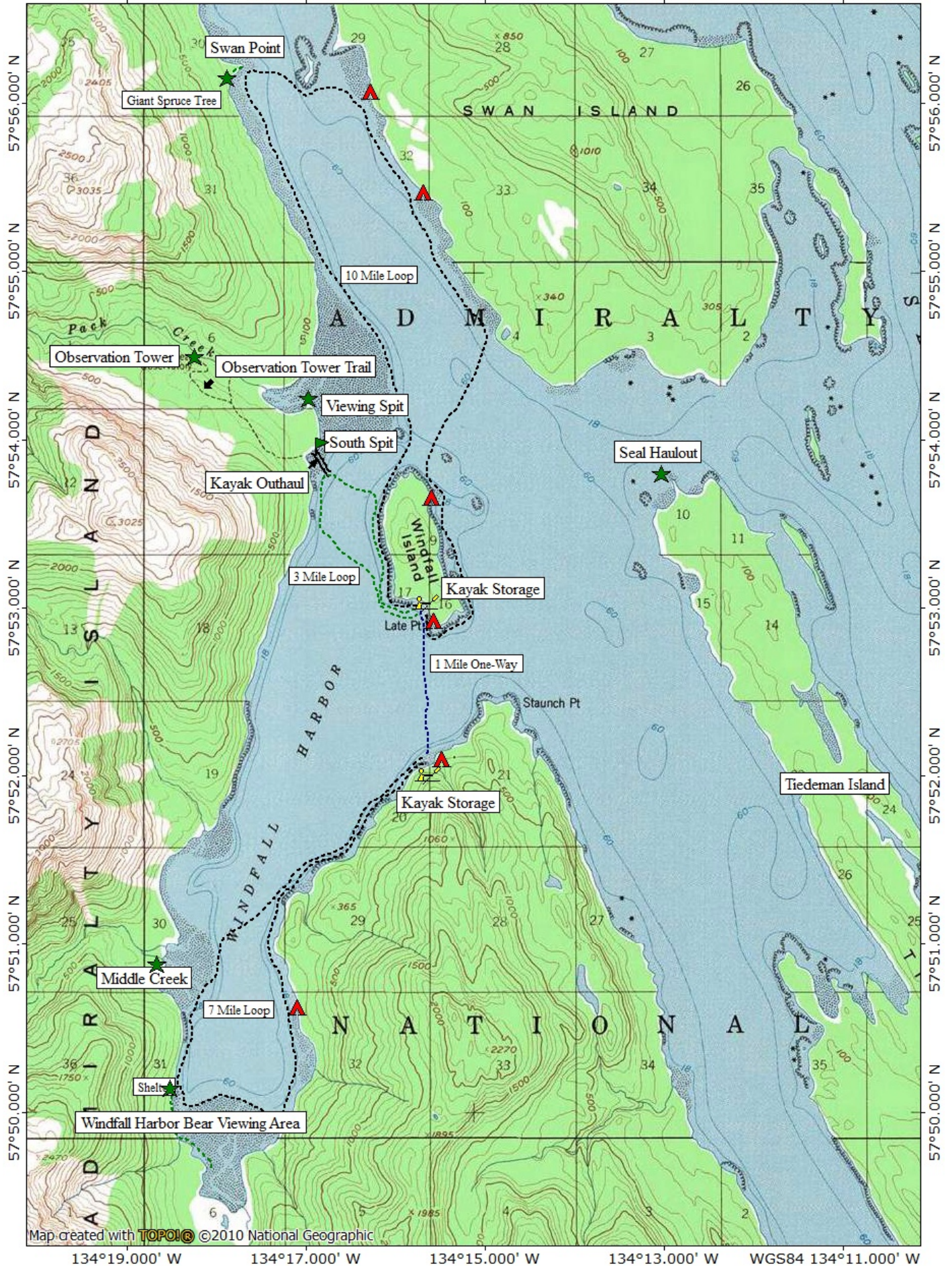
134°19.000' W

134°17.000' W

134°15.000' W

134°13.000' W

WGS84 134°11.000' W



134°19.000' W

134°17.000' W

134°15.000' W

134°13.000' W

WGS84 134°11.000' W



0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 miles

0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 km

TN\* / MN  
20 1/2°



# Pack Creek Bear Viewing Area Boater Information Map

↑  
To Swan Cove

## Legend

- Outhall Line
- \*\*\*\* DO NOT CROSS \*\*\*\*
- Outhall Buoys
- Outhall Anchor Buoy
- ▲ Ranger camp
- 🏠 Pack Creek Obs Tower
- ▲ Public Camping Area
- 🚶 Trailhead

**\*\*Set all anchors beyond pink outhall anchor buoys\*\***



**Tidal Flat exists  
from shore to  
Red Line  
\*\*Area CLOSED to  
All Boat Traffic  
At All Tide Levels\*\***

Viewing Spit

South Spit

Approach routes  
for drop-offs

**IMPORTANT:  
Do NOT moor  
boats to any buoys**

↓  
To Windfall Harbor

Windfall Island

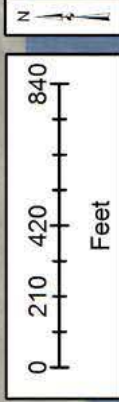
Pack Creek  
Observation Tower Trail

**NOTE:** From June 15 to August 15 commercial crabbers make use of the Seymour Canal area for the Dungeness Crab season. Please steer clear of all crab pot buoys and be aware of commercial crab boat activity in the area.

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet



# Pack Creek Plant Food Resources



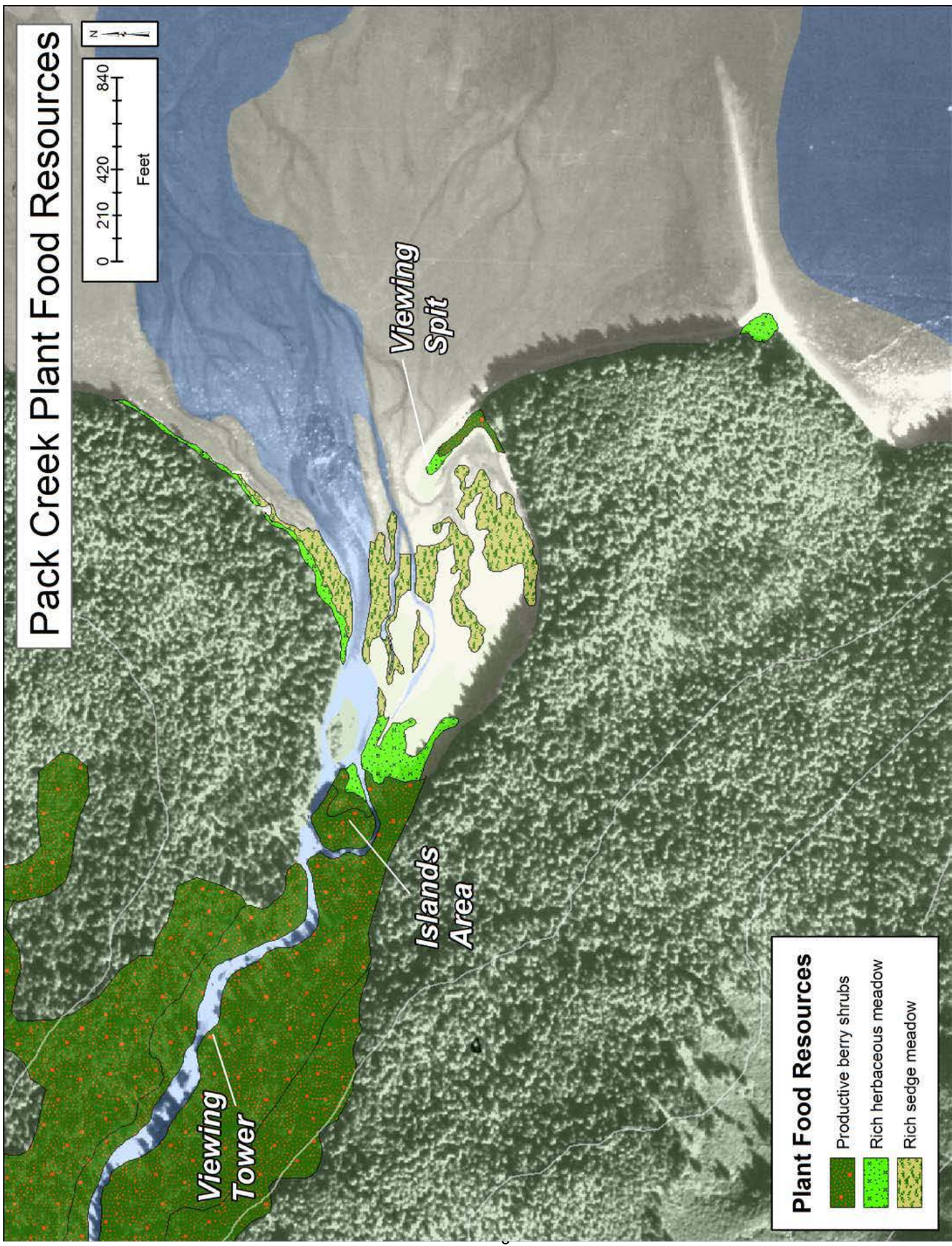
Viewing  
Spit

Islands  
Area

Viewing  
Tower

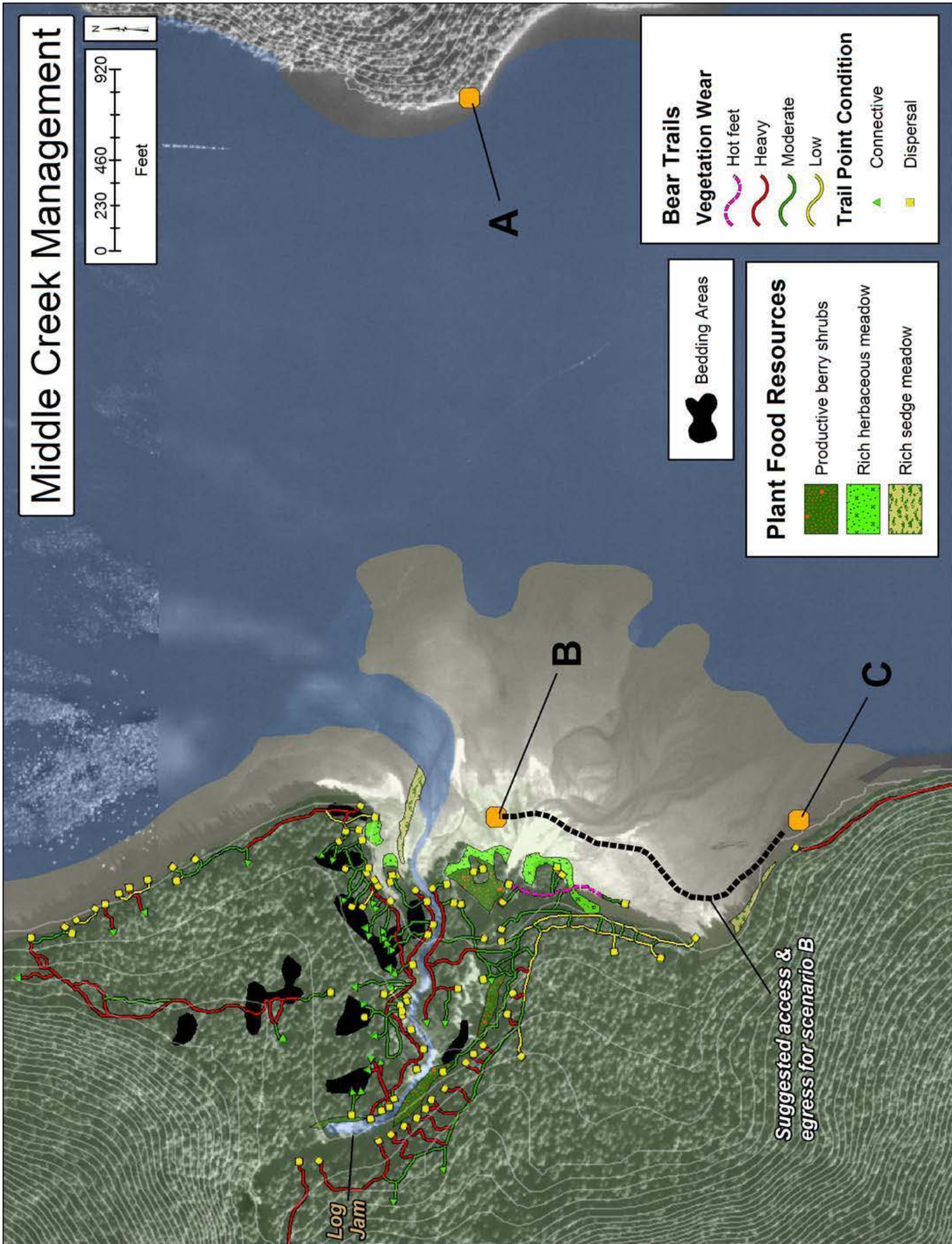
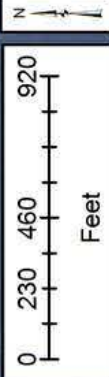
## Plant Food Resources

- Productive berry shrubs
- Rich herbaceous meadow
- Rich sedge meadow





# Middle Creek Management



## Bear Trails

### Vegetation Wear

Hot feet

Heavy

Moderate

Low

### Trail Point Condition

Connective

Dispersal

## Bedding Areas

## Plant Food Resources

Productive berry shrubs

Rich herbaceous meadow




Rich sedge meadow


*Suggested access & egress for scenario B*



# Windfall Estuary Management





## Plant Food Resources

-  Productive berry shrubs
-  Rich herbaceous meadow
-  Rich sedge meadow



 Bedding Areas

## Bear Trails

### Vegetation Wear

-  Hot feet
-  Heavy
-  Moderate
-  Low

### Trail Point Condition

-  Connective
-  Dispersal

*Suggested access & egress for scenario B*

**B**

**A**

0 240 480 960  
Feet

