



KENAI MOUNTAINS-TURNAGAIN ARM

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

# KMTA ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

FY24



PRESENTED BY KENAI MOUNTAINS - TURNAGAIN ARM CORRIDOR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION





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NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

# MEASURING OUR IMPACT

## IMPACT TO DATE



**1,500+** kids served  
across 5 programs



**250** projects  
supported



**5** low-fee youth  
outdoor ed.  
programs created



**300+** teachers,  
volunteers, partner  
staff engaged



**9** communities  
supported



**\$3M+** match  
generated in the  
past 5 yrs.



**200+** youth  
program days



**3** recreational  
races created



**20k+** hours  
spent with youth  
in the outdoors



**\$1.5M+** invested in projects focused on trails and recreation, education, interpretation, historic preservation, and environmental stewardship





# ECONOMIC IMPACT

## ECONOMIC STIMULUS

KMTA's investments leverage additional funding from government and private sources, significantly multiplying economic benefits.

### ▲ **Greater than 1:2 match rate**

For every \$1 of federal funding invested by KMTA in Alaskan communities, an additional \$2 - \$3 is generated in the local economy through donor-supported cash investments and in-kind contributions.

### ▲ **\$1M+ match raised in FY24**

In FY24 alone, KMTA generated \$1,020,015 in matching contributions to the \$500,000 of federal funding spent.



## LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT & OUTDOOR REC ECONOMY

KMTA's significant investments in outdoor recreation directly benefit Alaskan-owned businesses, including outfitters and guides, the hospitality industry, restaurants, tour operators, local transportation companies, and more.

### **In 2023, the outdoor recreation sector...**

- ▲ brought in \$3.1B to the state
- ▲ accounted for 4.6% of AK's economy (2x the national average)
- ▲ accounted for 6% of AK's jobs





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# ECONOMIC IMPACT

## TOURISM & VISITOR SPENDING

KMTA is Alaska's only National Heritage Area—the attractions in our NHA bring visitors from around the world and boost the state's economy.



### **2.7M out-of-state visitors**

An estimated 2.7M out-of-state visitors traveled to Alaska between May and Sept 2024.



### **Visited by 50% of travelers**

In 2022-2023, Southcentral Alaska was the second most visited region, with 50% of travelers visiting attractions in our region.



### **10k+ visitors from cruises**

2 of the 12 Alaska ports that received at least 10,000 cruise passengers in 2024 are located in our NHA: Whittier (240,800 cruise passengers, equating to a +7.7% increase from 2023) and Seward (220,200 cruise passengers equating, to a +15% increase from 2023).



### **41% of tourism spending**

In 2022-2023, direct tourism spending in Southcentral Alaska—where our NHA operates—accounted for \$1,608,377 (41% of the direct tourism spending in Alaska).

*Citations: 2022-2023 Tourism Impact Modeling for Alaska Report, conducted by Destination Analysts on behalf of the Alaska Travel Industry Association*

## BOOSTING SMALL COMMUNITIES

KMTA projects and programs strengthen the resilience of small communities and local businesses in the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm region. Our work honors the deep connections between people, place, and history—celebrating the ingenuity and traditions that have shaped this landscape for generations. From mining and transportation to subsistence practices to tourism and exploration, these communities embody a legacy of resourcefulness. Anchored by historic landmarks like the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the Alaska Railroad, and the Seward Highway, they serve as gateways to Alaska's wild and scenic landscapes. Through our support for outdoor recreation, cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, and education, KMTA invests in projects that honor the past while building a sustainable future.







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# KMTA AT WORK

## KMTA SUB-GRANT RECIPIENTS: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Highlighting the impact of KMTA sub-grants from a selection of our awardees:

### **K'Beq Cultural Interpretive Site Enhancements – Kenaitze Tribe**



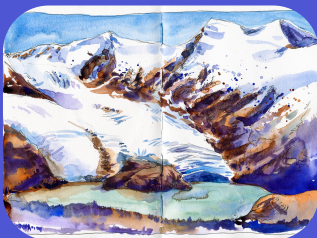
"The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's K'beq' Cultural Heritage Interpretive Site has not been open to the public since 2019 when the smoke and threat to the site by the Swan Lake fire shut it down early. After that, COVID-19 protocols prevented it from opening up in the following two summers. Then the beetle-killed spruce tree remediation kept it closed for another summer. Finally, in the summer of 2024, the site was re-opened with the support of KMTA's Community Grant Program. This program helped us to purchase necessary supplies to bring the site back to life and greatly enhance the experience of all our visitors." -*Kenaitze Indian Tribe*

### **KDLL Report for America – KDLL Public Radio**



"KMTA support helps KDLL Public Radio bring important news coverage to Kenai Mountains communities that don't have news outlets of their own. Community-focused reporting is crucial to a well-functioning society, to celebrate the culture, history and achievements of communities, facilitate public processes by providing fact-based information and be a conduit between residents and the governmental agencies passing rules and regulations that affect day-to-day life." -*Jenny Neyman, General Manager KDLL Public Radio*

### **Trailbound Postcards: Portage, Seward, Whittier – Max Romey**



"[With support from KMTA,] our project centers around the communities and regions of Portage, Seward and Whittier. However, due to the on-line landscape, it's possible to connect with non-KMTA communities and regions, too. Online watercolor classes mixing educational content with hands-on learning inspire curiosity about local and faraway places. Our hope is to connect both local and non-local communities to the KMTA Corridor through a delightful interactive online experience. Furthermore, strengthening connections for those living with KMTA in their backyards." -*Max Romey, Artist*

### **Girls Riding High Documentary – Rez Bay Mountain Bike Club**



"*Girls Riding High* premiered to a packed house in Seward, with standing room only, and has been submitted to over 30 film festivals worldwide. Beyond the screenings, the impact of the film is already being felt. *Girls Riding High* is inspiring conversations about mental health, outdoor engagement, barriers to access, and drug & alcohol prevention. This project, partially funded by KMTA, has been a powerful reminder of how one program can transform lives, and we hope the ripple effect continues for years to come. KMTA is a special place, and we know it will hold a special place in the hearts of these girls forever." -*Amy Hankins, Producer*





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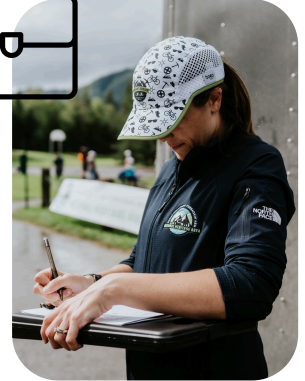
# CAREERS & VOLUNTEERS

## JOB CREATION



**115 jobs supported**

The number of jobs supported through KMTA projects, programs, and partnerships in FY24 alone.



## YOUTH & WORKFORCE TRAINING



**1,100 youth served**

The number of young people KMTA serves annually through our education programs, providing homegrown Alaskans with skills and exposure to local industries that motivate them to stay in our state and pursue Alaskan careers.

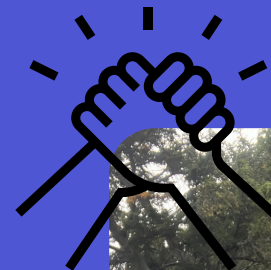


## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



**9,072 hours of volunteer time**

The total number of hours clocked by 65 volunteers across KMTA events and programs in FY24.



## THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS



**\$322,417 worth of time volunteered**

The total monetary value of time contributed by volunteers in the KMTA National Heritage Area in FY24 alone.

Citations: The value of volunteer time is set by [Independent Sector](#) and is calculated by state and region, AK's rate is \$35.51 per hour.





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# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

KMTA invests in projects focused on trails and recreation, education, interpretation, historic preservation, and environmental stewardship that directly impact the communities in our region.

**In addition to the direct programs we operate from Anchorage to Seward, KMTA has invested over \$1.5M in local community projects, including:**

▲ Seward: **\$261k+**

▲ Whittier: **\$87k+**

▲ Moose Pass: **\$65k+**

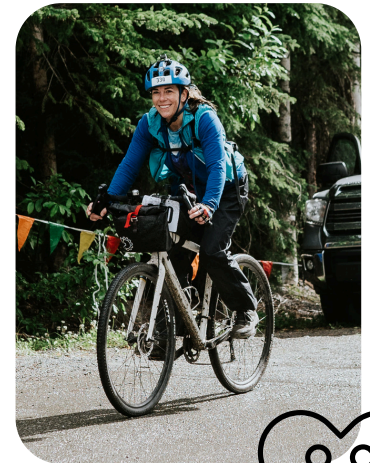
▲ Hope: **\$153k+**

▲ Cooper Landing: **\$98k+**

▲ Portage: **\$158k+**

▲ Girdwood: **\$176k+**

▲ Region-wide: **\$505k+**



## FY24 COMMUNITY IMPACT



**816** kids served  
across 111 program  
days



**63%** of kids served  
through our Alaska  
Outdoor School came from  
low income backgrounds



**75%** of kids served  
came from small or  
rural communities



**\$1M** match  
generated



**\$260k+** funds  
raised during FY24



**60+** partners  
engaged



**\$130k** directly  
invested into  
communities



**16** projects  
supported



**33** miles of trails  
maintained



**9** communities  
supported



**65** volunteers  
engaged



**10k+** volunteer  
hours generated



**8** community events  
hosted



**400+** event  
participants





# IMPACTING THE FUTURE

## **BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF KMTA STEWARDS**

KMTA's youth and school programming empowers the next generation of KMTA stewards, instilling in them a pride of place, and providing them with the knowledge and tools to recreate in our wild and wonderful region.

### **YOUTH PROGRAMS**

#### **Pathfinders Camp**

▲ **About:** Many of our region's historic corridors are preserved and enjoyed today as multi-use trails. Pathfinders empowers kids to build skills, have adventures, and create lasting connections to the KMTA via these trails across time.

▲ **Who:** KMTA area youth, ages 6-11

▲ **What:** 2-day-long summer camps

▲ **Where:** KMTA region

▲ **Testimonial:** "I just wanted to say thank you for providing such wonderful place-based youth summer programming! This was my son's first day-camp experience, and he had a blast. One of the highlights was the stewardship activity of hanging informational signs. It was so cool to see him take ownership and feel like he was making a difference. I was also so impressed that the group hiked all the way to Russian Falls and back. We spend a lot of time outside as a family, but it's great for him to have these experiences with others. We look forward to participating in future camps!" -Seward Parent, Pathfinders Camp







# IMPACTING THE FUTURE

## YOUTH PROGRAMS

### Coastal Connections Camp

- ▲ **About:** During an exciting week-long program, participants explore their local coastal ecosystem through adventure outings, science & art activities, and personal connections.
- ▲ **Who:** KMTA area youth, ages 11-13
- ▲ **What:** week-long, day camps
- ▲ **Where:** Seward
- ▲ **Testimonial:** “The camp was a great experience for [my child]. She is particularly quiet and ‘hard to read’. But she came home happy about her experiences. Thanks so much for all of your hard work and to KMTA for offering this excellent program for local youth.” -Seward Parent, Coastal Connections Camp



### Fresh Air Fridays

- ▲ **About:** Offering adventure, art, science, outdoor skill-building, and more, Fresh Air Fridays aims to build community, foster pride of place, empower kids through skill-building, and support families with safe and supervised winter fun for their kids.
- ▲ **Who:** KMTA area youth, grades K-5
- ▲ **What:** After-school and in-service day programs
- ▲ **Where:** Seward, Moose Pass & Whittier
- ▲ **Testimonial:** “[Our children] have had so much fun participating in these programs!” -Moose Pass Parent, Fresh Air Fridays







# IMPACTING THE FUTURE

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS

### Alaska Outdoor School

▲ **About:** Students reap the mental and physical benefits of being outdoors and engage directly with the natural world to learn outdoor skills, natural and cultural history, science, recreation activities, career options, and social-emotional skills. This enables students to develop an appreciation for Alaska's public lands and natural resources, think critically about big questions, and build resiliency in our changing world.

▲ **Who:** KMTA area & Anchorage 5<sup>th</sup> graders

▲ **What:** 3 day, 2 night sleepover field trip

▲ **Where:** Portage

▲ **Testimonials:** "This was such a fantastic experience for our students. It might be their only opportunity to visit (many have never left Anchorage), have a sleepover, and roast marshmallows. -Anchorage School District (Title 1 School) Teacher, Alaska Outdoor School"

"I absolutely loved the curriculum. It fit so well with the fifth-grade science kit. The students loved learning about earthquakes and tectonic plates with Oreo cookies. I think the science is especially great because it is hands-on - students typically do not get enough time for hands-on science." -Anchorage School District Teacher, Alaska Outdoor School







# IMPACTING THE FUTURE

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS

### Glacier Discover Train Days

- ▲ **About:** Students board the Alaska Railroad's Glacier Discovery Train for a day of learning at Spencer Glacier. From the train's Whistle Stop, students hike the path of the glacier's retreat to Glacier Lake, where they examine glacial ice, play in the silty mud, and make lifelong connections to this special area.
- ▲ **Who:** KMTA area students, grades K-12
- ▲ **What:** Field trip
- ▲ **Where:** Spencer Glacier
- ▲ **Testimonial:** "I just wanted to say thank you for that amazing opportunity yesterday. The kids had a great time and it was a truly memorable experience [...] I was very impressed with how well planned and prepared you were. The activities were great, the KMTA and [partner] staff were awesome, and we were just grateful to be part of this." -Girdwood Teacher, Glacier Discovery Train Days



### SnowSchool

- ▲ **About:** Our program draws on the Winter Wildlands Alliance framework and connects students throughout Southcentral Alaska to the wild and wonderful world of snow, emphasizing teachable moments and hands-on exploration of the snowpack and winterized watersheds.
- ▲ **Who:** KMTA area & Anchorage youth, grades K-12
- ▲ **What:** Classroom visits & field trips
- ▲ **Where:** KMTA region & Anchorage
- ▲ **Testimonial:** "Thanks so much for organizing this and giving us the opportunity, everyone involved had such an incredible time!" -Seward Teacher, SnowSchool







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# THANK YOU

## **DONORS, SPONSORS & PARTNERS**

KMTA's work would not be possible without the generous support of our donors, event sponsors, and partners who contribute valuable funds, time, and resources, ensuring that events and programs we operate continue to serve our communities.

### **Donors**

National Park Foundation, Huebsch Foundation, Saltchuk, Michele Schuh, First National Bank Alaska, Seward Community Foundation, Alaska Community Foundation, National Park Trust, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, Alaska Railroad, Alyeska Resort

### **Event Sponsors**

Birch and Alder, Raven Alaska Properties, Creekbend Company, Turnagain Kayak and Coffeehouse, AK Cycle Chic, TREK Anchorage, Seward Bike Shop, Powder Hound Ski Shop, The Ice Cream Shop, Girdwood, The Bake Shop, Moose's Tooth, Girdwood Brewing Company, Bliz, Alpenglöw Coffee House

### **Partners**

Winter Wildlands Alliance, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service Ocean Alaska Science Learning Center, Alaska Sea Grant, Chugach Adventures, Girdwood Nordic Ski Club, GeoCache Alaska, US Forest Service (Chugach National Forest), Alaska Geographic, Trout Unlimited, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Whittier Parks & Recreation, Campbell Creek Science Center, Alaska Resource Education, Alaska Office of Boating Safety, Premier Tours, Kenai Watershed Forum, Alaska Department of Fish & Game

