

Type of TBPA: Two or more contiguous protected areas across a national boundary.



Introduction:

This protected areas complex currently includes four large protected areas on both sides of the border between Canada (Yukon Territory and British Columbia) and the United States of America (USA) (Alaska). The areas include:

- Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve: USA (IUCN Category II, 1,304,550 ha)
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve: USA (IUCN Category II, 5,332,097 ha)
- Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park: Canada (IUCN Category II, 958,000 ha)
- Kluane National Park Reserve: Canada (IUCN Category II, 2,201,330 ha)

The parks together comprise the largest transboundary protected area complex in the world. Kluane National Park Reserve was established as a game reserve in 1942 and then as a Joint National Monument in 1976. It was added to the World Heritage List in 1979 along with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, which was first established as a Joint National Monument in 1976. The World Heritage Site was extended with the inscription of Glacier Bay National Park (the park is considered IUCN category II and 81% of it wilderness, IUCN category 1b) in 1992 and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park in 1994. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve was first established as a National Monument in 1925. Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park, the most recent park designated, was established in 1993 after an intensive campaign by Canadian and American conservation organizations to halt mining exploration and development in the area and protect the area for its strong natural heritage and biodiversity values.

Importance to biodiversity:

The Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers in this mountainous protected areas complex serve as key low elevation corridors linking coastal and interior areas. Biodiversity is rich as ecosystems range from sea-level to over 4,500 m and from coastal to subundra. The area supports significant numbers of large predators and ungulates including the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), Dall's sheep (*Ovis dalli*) and caribou (*Rangifer arcticus*). Also present is the "Blue" or "Glacier" bear (*Ursus americanus emmonsii*), thought to be a colour phase of the black

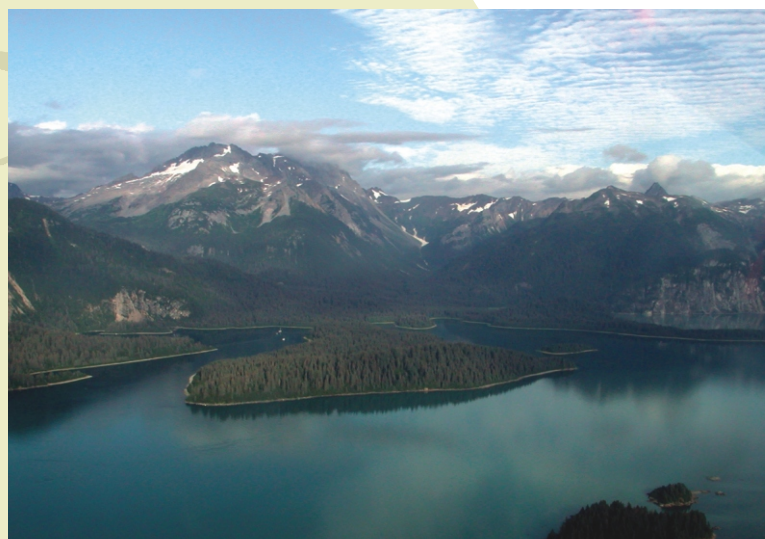


Photo: Charles Besançon

bear found nowhere else in British Columbia or Canada, and considered rare in Alaska. A number of rare plant species can be found in the area including Alaska Nagoon berry (*Rubus arcticus stellatus*), fragile sedge (*Carex membranacea*) and wedge-leaved primrose (*Primula cuneifolia saxifragifolia*).

Importance to regional economic growth and integration:

A number of nature-based tourism businesses operate in this protected areas complex, including river rafting outfitters on the Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers. Revenue generated is split between Canadian and American river rafting companies. Mining has been important in this area but is now largely not permitted save for areas such as in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve where mining is only allowed to continue on valid existing claims, but not in new locations. Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park had 171 mineral claims in the area before designation of the park, although no further mineral activity is now permitted. Over 50 conservation groups from both the United States and Canada launched a protest against mining in the area in the early 1990s, leading to creation of the park in 1993.

Importance in promoting a culture of peace and cooperation:

The parks are managed as independent units but there is a high degree of cooperation among staff from both the United States and Canada. The Northern Borderlands Managers' Workshops has served as a discussion forum for staff from the US National Park Service, Parks Canada, US Forest Service, Alaska State Parks, British Columbia Parks, Yukon Parks and First Nations co-managers on the Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias/Glacier Bay/ Tatshenshini-Alsek complex. The workshops have provided an opportunity for discussion and cooperation between Canada and the United States, and also among different agencies and interest groups within these countries.

Main partners:

In the United States, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve are administered by the National Park Service. Kluane National Park Reserve is administered by Parks Canada. Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park is administered by the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection in the British Columbia provincial government. Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park lies within the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation traditional territory and is managed under the terms of the 1996 *Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Agreement* signed by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation and the Province of British Columbia.

Organization:

Land tenure in the protected areas complex is held by a number of agencies including the British Columbia provincial government (Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park), the Government of Canada (Kluane National Park Reserve) and the Government of the United States of America (Kluane National Park Reserve, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve). Separate management plans exist for each park.

Main challenges:

Currently, there is no international agreement that outlines management for all four parks as a unit. The parks are affected by similar issues including poaching of species such as Dall's sheep, presence of unsettled mining claims and mining (Kluane National Park Reserve and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve), changes in natural conditions and increasing visitor pressure.

Lessons learned:

The proximity of protected areas to one another in a transboundary complex means that there is a capacity to provide positive input into each park's policies, management approaches and resource issues. This was illustrated in the early 1990s when conservation organisations in the United States and Canada appealed to the US Congress, White House, British Columbia provincial government and Canadian federal government to halt mining exploration and protect what is now the Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park. A subsequent review by the British Columbia provincial government found that mining in the Tatshenshini-Alsek was unacceptable as it would negatively impact not only the immediate area, but also on fish and wildlife habitat in adjacent Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. Thus collaborative efforts by both Canada and the United States helped to address concerns of outside development near existing transboundary parks and to unify public support for creation of an additional park with exceptional natural qualities.

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Photo: Jim Thorsell

