

Pasagshak — Pas'rsaq

QUTEQ PAS'RSAMI CUCUNARTUQ. – THE BEACH AT PASAGSHAK IS BEAUTIFUL.



Photo: Aerial view of Pasagshak from Shaft Peak.

Place names are like the layers of an archaeological sites, an accumulation of cultural information reflecting local history. Over time, as events shape communities and cultures change, the names used to describe the landscape evolve as well. Some names stick, others fade. The resulting accumulation creates a cultural mix. Pasagshak Bay and its surrounding features are a great example.

Pasagshak is a deep u-shaped bay on the north shore of Kodiak Island's Ugak Bay. Kodiak residents love the region for its beautiful black sand beaches, salmon-filled rivers, scenic lakes, and dramatic peaks, all accessible by road.

Archaeological deposits illustrate the Alutiiq people lived along the bay's shores for thousands of years, hunting and fishing from its productive waters. The name Pasagshak comes from the Alutiiq place name—Pas'rsaq. The meaning of this word has been lost to time, but Elders recall it as the traditional term for the region.

In contrast, we no longer know the Alutiiq name for the large lake at the head of the bay. Today it is called Rose Tead, reflecting the World War II buildup of Kodiak. This includes the road that leads to Pas'rsaq and the remnants of an airstrip and bunkers near the lake's shore. The name of the lake honors Rose Cecelia Teed Wohlstetter, a Chicago-born beauty who became a Broadway dancer. During the war years, she served as a USO Camp Show performer and was one of Kodiak's favorites.