Afognak Archaeological Study Funded

A $39,942 grant from the National Park Service will help the Afognak Native Corporation develop an inventory of the archaeological sites on its lands. Through a two-year collaboration with the Alutiiq Museum, archaeologists will visit ten coastal and riverine areas of corporation lands on Afognak, Kodiak, Raspberry, and Whale islands. In each area, field crews will document the condition of known sites, look for previously undocumented deposits, and create an inventory of archaeological sites in the corporation’s care. Elder Alutiiq language experts will assist the survey by providing Alutiiq names for the sites studied. Additionally, presentations, newsletter articles, and an educational pamphlet will teach Afognak’s shareholders, employees, and land users about the protection of cultural resources.

“Although there are more than 1,900 known archaeological sites known on Kodiak, many areas of the archipelago to have yet to be studied,” said Patrick Saltonstall, the museum’s curator of archaeology and the project’s lead researcher. “Every time we have the opportunity to revisit sites or examine new areas, we find additional deposits. Through this project, we will be able to create a more thorough inventory of the archaeological sites in Afognak’s care. We will also be able to identify both threats to preservation and research opportunities.”

Alisha Drabek, Afognak’s senior vice president for community and government affairs, explains the corporation’s interest in archaeological research. “One of Afognak Native Corporation’s core objectives is to ensure that our tribal lands are culturally secure so that our Shareholders today and in the future can enjoy our shared cultural wealth. Preserving our heritage includes protecting the evidence of our ancestors’ traditions preserved on the landscape. This project will help us locate and reassess known archaeological sites on ANC lands to provide us current information that will help us care for them, whether we use our lands for traditional harvest or development. It will also help us to share the value of these sites and encourage their long-term preservation.”

The project will start in the spring of 2016 with funding from the National Park Service’s Tribal Heritage program. The Afognak Native Corporation, is a village corporation formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and just one of 14 tribal organizations nationally to receive a grant from the Heritage Preservation Fund.

The Alutiiq Museum is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and culture of the Alutiiq, an Alaska Native tribal people. Representatives of Kodiak Alutiiq organizations govern the museum with funding from charitable contributions, memberships, grants, contracts, and sales.