Archaeological Survey Focuses on Chiniak Bay

With a $43,075 Tribal Heritage Grant from the National Park Service, Leisnoi, Inc. and the Alutiiq Museum are partnering to study ancestral Alutiiq settlements in the Chiniak Bay region. The two-year Leisnoi Lands Survey, which began this month, is helping the corporation locate and document archaeological sites on their lands.

Research will take place on Leisnoi lands throughout the Chiniak Bay region. Museum archaeologists have already taken advantage of warm spring weather to complete survey in the Termination Point area and to investigate sea stacks and small islands near Cape Chiniak. Work along the shores of Middle Bay, Kalsin Bay, Cape Chiniak, Woody Island, and Long Island, is planned for this summer. Museum archaeologist and project leader Patrick Saltonstall explained.

“Part of our field work is to visit the locations of known sites and record their current condition. The other part of the project is to look for sites that have not yet been documented. Surprisingly, although much of Leisnoi’s land is close to town, there are areas that have yet to be reviewed by an archaeologist. We have already found several undocumented sites in our first days of research and expect to find more.”

In addition to documenting archaeological sites, the project will provide training on the care of archaeological sites for Leisnoi staff and develop an educational brochure about the corporation’s cultural resources.

The Leisnoi Lands Survey is part of a larger Alutiiq Museum effort to create an inventory of archaeological sites in the Kodiak region and assist tribal land managers with their care. The museum completed similar projects for Koniag, Inc. and the Afognak Native Corporation, and continues to work with the US Fish & Wildlife Service on efforts to record ancestral Alutiiq settlements in the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

“I am always amazed at the number of ancestral settlements preserved around Kodiak. Every study reveals more about our ancestors,” said Alutiiq Museum Executive Director April Laktonen Counceller. “We are grateful to Leisnoi for the opportunity to keep learning and for their interest in preserving our past.”

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.