



An Alaska Wildland Adventures raft carries wildlife watchers along Alaska's Kenai River into the designated Wilderness of Kenai NWR. | Photo courtesy of Kyle Kelley, Alaska Wildland Adventures

Kyle Kelley, General Manager, Alaska Wildland Adventures, Cooper Landing, Alaska

A strong refuge for us means strong business for us," says Kyle Kelley, General Manager of Alaska Wildland Adventures in Cooper Landing, Alaska. Kelley is a guide who has been leading nature and rafting tours into the backcountry of Kenai National Wildlife Refuge for many years. His company brings visitors into the refuge wilderness via rafts and drift boats on the Kenai River to experience the spectacular scenery, fish for salmon and trout, and catch glimpses of moose, brown bear, lynx and other wildlife. Visitors stay at the Kenai Backcountry Lodge, located on a five-acre inholding within the refuge. "The refuge's spectacular scenery and wildlife and its protected, pristine environment create a strong economic system for tourism and habitat protection needed for commercial salmon fishing," Kelley says. Backlogs in funding for maintenance at the remote refuge have created challenges with trail maintenance and upkeep that Kelley would like to see addressed. "These challenges make it difficult for some of our guests," he notes.