Chance to Learn About Kodiak's Back Yard Over Lunch

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

For five days starting Tuesday, it’s National Wildlife Refuge Week.

Here on the island, the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge is a major landholder, and its manager, Gary Wheeler, would like residents to be aware that it has more to offer than just the relatively new visitor center near the ferry dock.

-- (Refuge 1 11 sec “You know we try and bring the refuge into town with our visitor center, but thought it would be worthwhile for folks to know a little bit more about the refuge.”)

Wheeler will be holding a brown-bag lunch talk on Thursday (Oct. 11), hoping to familiarize locals with all the opportunities there are on the refuge land, even if the only ways to get there are on foot, by boat or airplane: As it is, the closest one can get to the refuge from the road system is about 20 miles – and that’s not likely to change.

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(Refuge 2 21 sec “Within the National Wildlife Refuge system, we have a slogan that says ‘Wildlife First,’ and that sort of exemplifies our mission. So definitely the refuges were set a side to first take care of the wildlife of the nation. But also public recreation is very important.”)

He says since there’s no gate to keep track, it’s difficult to place an exact figure on how many people use the refuge per year. He said hunting and fishing are popular activities, as are fly-out bear viewing trips.

-- (Refuge 3
26 sec “We have permits that are required for commercial enterprises; if you’re an air taxi or a guide, but if you’re just a member of the public, doing private recreation, no permits are required. And we do have nine cabins on the refuge that are available for the public to rent. So that’s done through recreation.gov online.”

The Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge is one of 550 nationwide. It covers nearly 2-million square miles and about two-thirds of Kodiak

Island. You’re sure to learn more from Wheeler (next) Thursday from noon to 1 at the refuge visitor center downtown at the corner of Center and Mission.

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