

# Sitkalidak Island



Photo: Kodiak Brown Bear by Steve Neel

## AN ALASKAN TREASURE

Tight along the southeast coast of Kodiak Island on the western edge of the Gulf of Alaska lies a 73,000-acre island that stands out for its outstanding natural resources, even in a region defined by ecological superlatives. Sitkalidak Island is the third largest island in the Kodiak Archipelago and one of the most ecologically rich, as its irregular shoreline and position in the Gulf trap abundant food sources that feed huge numbers of seabirds and marine mammals. The island remains unprotected, however, and ALC is working with the Old Harbor Native Corporation and other partners to ensure its many ecological and cultural treasures are conserved.

Sitkalidak Island and its surrounding waters provide high quality habitat to many of the wildlife species that were impacted by the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. The island contains sixteen wild salmon streams that sustain local fisheries and contribute to high densities of Kodiak brown bears. Its nearshore waters support whales, sea lions, and several important harbor seal haul-outs. Concentrations of Pacific herring around the island are among the highest in the archipelago, and the largest flock of common murrens ever recorded was observed in Sitkalidak Strait.

"Few places on earth can match the marine and terrestrial resources and cultural riches packed into this one island," says ALC Alaska Program Director, Tim Richardson. "It's not only a wildlife wonderland, but also

a highly significant archaeological resource."

Sitkalidak Island was the founding site of the 7,500 year-old Ocean Bay Culture of the Sugpiaq Eskimos, who populated the



region in ancient times. Their descendants on Kodiak and Prince William Sound have achieved many large-scale conservation agreements with the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council.

"More than twenty years have passed since the spill, but some species are still struggling," explains Richardson, who played key roles for Native corporations and nonprofits in the oil spill settlement aftermath. "Sitkalidak Island provides

exceptional habitat for many oil spill injured fish and wildlife species. We are fortunate to have an opportunity to protect what would be the largest single parcel yet conserved with *Exxon Valdez* restoration funds."

Elsewhere in Alaska, ALC continues its efforts to protect a three-mile portion of the lower Karluk River on Kodiak Island, as well as portions of the north shore of Afognak Island.



*Sitkalidak Island is home to whales and many other wildlife species.*

Whale Photo by Old Harbor Native Corporation