

2012 NATIONAL MARINE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Frequently Asked Questions (and answers!)

PLANNING YOUR TRIP TO THE CONFERENCE

Should I register and make airplane, hotel, and dorm reservations as soon as possible after early registration opens (on January 16)? Yes! Air fares to Alaska go up the closer you get to summer. Availability and hotel and dorm rates are only guaranteed until 30 days before the conference (i.e., May 25). **Dorm rooms are limited and will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.**

How many people that I am traveling with can stay in dorm rooms? Because the number of dorm rooms is limited, each person who registers for the conference may reserve one room for themselves and may also reserve **only one** additional room for an accompanying spouse, family member or friend. Only one person can stay in each bedroom which shares a bathroom with one other person and shares a common area with one or three other people. No pets are allowed.

Can people who are not staying in the dorms visit me in the dorms? Can they sleep on the floor? Guests must be escorted through the secure entrance accessible only by key card. They may not stay overnight.

How long can I stay in the university dorm at the conference-reduced rate? From June 17 – July 5.

What will the weather be like in terms of clothes I should bring? Anchorage summers are pleasant with daytime temperatures usually in the 50s, some days in the low 60s, and nighttime temperatures down into the 40s. Rainy weather is not uncommon. The best approach is to bring clothes that you can layer. Be sure to bring one warm sweatshirt, sweater, or coat, and a windproof, waterproof layer. If you will be going on field trips that involve boat trips, bring a warm hat and gloves and rain pants as well as a rain coat.

Can I bring my children to conference events? Can they stay in the dorm? Some events like the opening reception and the Anchorage Museum are adult events while the barbecue and field trips are suitable for children. Children may go on field trips. You may stay in the dorms with an infant in your room and you may reserve a dorm room for one older child as your accompanying family. Please ensure that alcohol is not served in your two or four-bedroom unit if a child under 21 is present. The Conference Committee is currently exploring day care services but cannot offer or promise options at this time.

Can I change my dorm reservation after I make it? No.

What if I need to cancel my conference registration? If you cancel your conference registration by May 25, all but \$50 of your fees will be refunded with the exception of post-conference field trip fees. After May 25, there are no refunds.

What if I want to change my post conference field trip plans? The Conference Committee agreement with tour providers requires a guarantee of tour numbers which is why refunds are not an option.) You can, however, sell your trip to someone else. We will maintain a wait list for field trips and may be able to assist you in finding a replacement. If you find yourself in this situation, contact us. (alaska2012@pacname.org). If you signed up for a trip that is cancelled **due to lack of interest**, we will notify you by May 10, 2011 and provide a full refund for that trip.

PLANNING YOUR ALASKA VACATION

Conference organizers are not be able to help you plan your vacation! Here are top 5 favorite things to do in Southcentral Alaska if you have an extra few days:

1. Drive to Talkeetna and go flightseeing up in a bush plane around Denali (Mt. McKinley, N.A.s highest peak)
2. Drive to Homer and walk on the beach at Homer Spit with eagles overhead. Be sure to look for humpbacks!
3. Drive or get a ride up to Glenn Alps parking lot in Anchorage and go for a long hike with a bag lunch (you are in the 500,000-acre Chugach State Park). Shuttles are available.
4. Visit Eagle River Nature Center and take a hike on their trail system (15 miles north of Anchorage).
5. Go to Anchorage's Saturday market downtown.

Start with the websites and resources below and consider consulting a local travel agent.

The official Alaska State Vacation planner website is at: <http://www.travelalaska.com/> . On that site, you can order the state's 2012 travel guide which they will mail you immediately. It is an excellent resource. If you have a specific community in mind that you would like to visit, Google their Chamber of Commerce or Visitor Information. They can often also send you a guide to what to do, where to stay, etc. around that community.

Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (APLICs or "ack-plicks") are located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Ketchikan. They support the appropriate use and enjoyment of Alaska's public lands and resources through "one-stop shopping" for information, trip-planning assistance, and resource education. Go to <http://www.alaskacenters.gov/> for online information from all of the centers and for a schedule of activities and tours scheduled at the Anchorage center during the summer. You can also visit the Anchorage center (located downtown) after you arrive to plan travel in Southcentral Alaska after the conference.

You can travel to and from Anchorage by plane, train (see <http://www.alaskarailroad.com>) or car (Alaska's road system is limited). Connecting to our ferry system, the Alaska's Marine Highway (see <http://www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs/>), requires a drive or flight to one of the communities where ferries stop. Alaska's ferries include cabins and car transport and are an excellent alternative to cruises but require pre-planning A variety of tours are offered which you can research on the websites above.

ARRIVING & GETTING AROUND

How do I get from the airport to the dorms or my hotel? The conference hotels and many other Anchorage hotels have free shuttle service. Call your hotel if needed (there are boards with direct phone connection in the baggage claim area). If you are going to the dorms, you can take a taxi for about \$25-30 one way. Taxis are available continuously from in front of a covered area on a traffic island outside the front doors of the airport on the baggage level. Shuttle vans will pull up in the area to the right of the covered area (as you come out of the airport).

You can also take a city bus to the downtown transit center and catch a second bus out to the UAA campus where there is a stop near the dorm areas (approximately three blocks away). Go to the "Anchorage People Mover" site.

(<http://www.muni.org/departments/transit/peoplemover/Pages/default.aspx>) to see current route maps and fares.

Can I check in late at the dorms? Yes, the check-in desk is open 24 hours a day.

How far is it from the dorms and hotels to the places where events and sessions will be held? It's about a 20-30 minute walk from the dorms and the Springfield Marriott Hotel to the part of campus where the opening reception, plenary and concurrent sessions, and on-campus meal events will take place. All of the buildings where events are scheduled are very close to each other. Shuttles between that part of campus and the dorms and Springfield Marriott will be provided after breakfast and at the end of the day's sessions as well as to all special events and, if needed to field trip departure areas.

Where can I park on campus? Several parking lots are reserved for NMEA conference attendees near the locations of the special events and sessions. We will provide information on exact locations closer to the conference. Lots in other areas of the campus, including the dorm and cafeteria area, are available on a pay-to-park basis or with a \$25 special UAA parking pass for conference attendees which you can purchase on arrival.

How do I or my traveling companions get around Anchorage? The campus is on a bus route which connects into routes throughout the Anchorage area. Bus schedules and fare information will be available at the conference or you can check out routes and fares at the Anchorage People Mover website. You can also call a taxi cab for pick-ups from campus or other Anchorage locations and to return from the campus to the airport. There are several vendors who rent bikes and each has information on-line. Anchorage has an amazing bike trail system (Paved and off-road. Check out <http://www.trailsofanchorage.com/TrailwatchMap.pdf> and <http://alaska.org/anchorage/parks-and-trails.jsp>)

DORM HOUSING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

What does a dorm room at UAA look like (the video)? For a YouTube tour a room and common area in a 4-room unit, and the Commons/cafeteria facility at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Knzc_liPKC4&feature=related (Additional residential accommodations are also shown in addition to the three residence halls but these will not be available.) To see a 2-bedroom unit, see a student tour at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xolusuwgWkk>

What will be provided in the dorms? Each bedroom within a double or quad suite contains an XL twin bed with bed linens, desk, dresser, and closet. Each suite has a coffee maker, coffee and condiments, bath and hand soap, and bath linens [exchanged at front desk for clean set when needed]. The hall front desk is open 24/7. The dorms have a coin-operated laundry room but you may want to bring a small quantity of laundry soap to avoid paying high prices at the convenience store in the Commons which is open limited hours. To ensure reliable Internet service, bring an Ethernet cable. You will be able to access a free public network without a password.

What other campus facilities are available near the dorm? The Commons facility has the cafeteria, meeting rooms (where pre-conference meetings will be held), a small work-out room (accessible with a dorm key-card), a small computer lab with a printer and scanner, a gathering area around a fireplace, and a convenience store. Anchorage's trail system is a five-minute walk away (see links above).

MEALS

Can additional meals be purchased at the cafeteria in the Commons for my guests who are not attending the conference? Yes. Anyone can purchase meals.

Can I get a refund for cafeteria meals I paid for through registration but didn't eat? Only if you cancel your entire trip before May 25 (see above).

ALCOHOL

What's the alcohol policy in the dorms and on campus? The university alcohol policy permits dorm residents who are a minimum of 21 years of age to possess and consume limited quantities of alcoholic beverages. Please be discreet and do not consume alcohol outside your dorm room or outside on campus.

Do the conference hotels serve alcohol? The Springfield Marriott is owned by an Alaska Native Corporation and does not serve alcohol as a corporate policy. Please be discreet if you choose to drink in your room. The Ramada Inn has a restaurant which serves alcohol.

INTERNET & CELL PHONE SERVICE

Will internet service be available and what does it cost? Wireless service is available free throughout the campus over a public network that does not require a password. The dorms, however, get poor reception so you will need to bring an Ethernet cable to ensure good connectivity.

Will my cell phone work in Alaska? Alaska has a limited number of cellphone service providers. Be sure to check your roaming plan to find out if its geographic coverage includes Alaska. If you travel outside the Anchorage area, cell phone receptivity may be lacking in some areas for your carrier.

GROCERIES, SUPPLIES, COPYING, SHIPPING

What if I want groceries or supplies? The convenience store in the Commons building stocks a limited number of food items and toiletries. The campus bookstore has a wider selection of office supplies and a copy center and FedEx/UPS/Post Office are located in the same building.

Fred Meyers, which has a wide selection of groceries and other items, is the nearest store to the campus and the Springfield Marriott Hotel, about 20 minutes away by car or taxi.

RECREATION

Where can I work out or recreate on campus? The Wells Fargo sports complex with a gym, swimming pool, ice rink, fitness center, jogging track and dance studio is close to the building where sessions will be held and is available to conference participants for a fee of \$5/session that is collected at the main desk in the complex, downstairs by the locker rooms. The campus has an extensive trail system you can access from the dorm or main campus area (see links above).

In addition to bikes (see above), can I rent other outdoor equipment? REI rents camping equipment, is on the bus line.

Are there places to walk dogs? Yes, but most Anchorage parks and trails require dogs to be on a leash. There are designated “dog parks” where dogs need to be under voice control (http://www.muni.org/Departments/health/animal_control/Pages/dogparks.aspx). The closest park to UAA and the Marriott is University Lake Park and it has both leashed and unleashed areas. (Please remember, there are no dogs permitted in the UAA dorms.) If walking your dog in this area, talk to locals re: dog safety with Moose and aggressive beavers.

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

I have accessibility needs. How can I get these met? Contact us and please be specific about your needs on the registration form to help us help you participate fully. The dorms have specially-equipped ground-floor rooms and also have elevators.

MEDICAL NEEDS OR EMERGENCIES

What if I need medical assistance or a pharmacy? A major hospital complex with a pharmacy is adjacent to the UAA campus close to dorm housing and all conference events. In addition, there is a Fred Meyers (see above/Groceries) and Walgreen’s about 20 minutes away by car from the dorms.

DANGEROUS ANIMALS

What do I do if I meet a moose or bear? While you may have opportunity to see moose or bears in the Anchorage area and even on campus, especially on the trails, do not approach them for any reason, even if this means changing your direction of travel or plan to get to a specific destination. Seeing such large and wild animals is part of what makes Anchorage a truly wild urban setting. Consider it an exciting opportunity and learn all you can to be safe and view these animals respectfully. How you respond to bears and moose is different. Take some time before your visit to learn all you can. We suggest the following sites: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livingwithbears.bearcountry>
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livewith.moose>

BONUS FREQUENTLY-ASKED ALASKA VISITOR QUESTIONS

Will I need to change my money? Alaskans do get this question fairly frequently. We are the 49th state in the U.S., we’ll take your greenbacks and we have ATM machines.

What elevation is Anchorage at? Visitors who look at our mountains sometimes seem to think we are high up even though they are standing near sea level. Anchorage is at elevation 102 ft. Just outside of town are the ‘foothills’ of the Chugach Mountains including O’Malley Peak, elevation 4,928.

Why are glaciers blue? Why don’t they clean off all the dirt before the tourist season?

Glacial ice is blue for the same reason the ocean can be blue, which all NMEA-ers know (right?). The dirt is the debris scraped off the surface of the land as the glacier advances and retreats.

Those mud flats look cool out by the water! Why isn’t anyone walking out there? If you do see someone walking out on the mud flats, don’t follow. The mud flats of Turnagain Arm in Cook Inlet can be exceedingly dangerous, acting more like quicksand or fast drying concrete. Cook Inlet has one of the

largest tidal ranges in North America and rapidly-moving bore tides. Unfortunately, people have died after becoming stuck on the mudflats or out so far they can't outrun the tide.

Will I see the Northern Lights? No, come back in January, February, or March and be amazed.

Will it be daylight all the time while we are there for the conference? Well, no, not officially. On June 21st, summer solstice, we will have 19 hours and 22 seconds of daylight in Anchorage (In Barrow AK, thousands of miles north, the longest day starts on May 10th and stays light for 3 months!). You need to go north to the Arctic Circle to reach 24-hour daylight. We suggest you bring one of those nifty eye patches that are sold at most airports.