

MEDIA UPDATE: June 19

—HEADLINES— *Scroll down for full stories and links.*

| **Alaska National Guard** |

TOTAL COVERAGE: Alaska National Guard airlifts “Into the Wild” bus from Stampede Trail

News articles: 350+

Facebook post engagement: 3,600+

Facebook post views: 15,630+

Picked up by:

Major Media: People, Time, CNN, NBC News, ABC News, CBS News, BBC News

Major Military Media: Army Times, Military Times, Marine Corps Times, nationalguard.mil, army.mil

1. Video: “Into the Wild” Bus Removed by Alaska Guard
2. Alaska National Guard Airlifts Iconic *Into the Wild* Bus from Where It Sat for Decades
3. 'Into the Wild' bus airlifted out of Alaskan wilderness due to concerns over tourist safety
4. 'Into the Wild' bus removed from Alaska backcountry for public safety
5. Officials Remove *Into the Wild* Bus From Alaska Backcountry, Citing Public Safety Concerns
6. National Guard airlifts “Into the Wild” bus from Alaska trail over safety concerns

| **Alaska News of Interest** |

7. Fixes underway to COVID-19 testing at Alaska’s airports, after long waits for results

| **Nation/National Guard News of Interest** |

8. National Guard COVID-19 Response

—ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD—

1. Video: “Into the Wild” Bus Removed by Alaska Guard

Military Times/June 19

A helicopter from the Alaska Army National Guard removed an old bus from a remote part of the wilderness because too many tourists and adventurers were getting lost or injured trying to reach it. The bus became famous after a book and movie about a young man who died there of starvation in 1992.

Video: <https://www.militarytimes.com/video/2020/06/19/into-the-wild-bus-removed-by-alaska-guard/>

2. Alaska National Guard Airlifts Iconic *Into the Wild* Bus from Where It Sat for Decades

People by Georgia Slater/June 19

The abandoned bus made famous by the book and movie *Into the Wild* has been airlifted from its longtime resting place in the Alaskan wilderness out of concern for public safety, the state's National Guard announced.

On Thursday, an Alaska Army National Guard helicopter lifted the 1940s-era Fairbanks Bus 142 from its decade-long spot near Healy, Alaska, according to a press release.

The bus was removed out of concern for safety as it became a "sometimes deadly attraction to outdoor adventurers," the release noted, ever since the debut of Jon Krakauer's book *Into the Wild* in 1996 and the movie adaptation in 2007.

The book and film are based on the true story of hiker Christopher McCandless, who traveled the Alaska wilderness in 1992 with little supplies and food, and spent the summer living in the "Magic Bus." In September of that year, his body was found inside the vehicle.

Emile Hirsch starred as McCandless in the film version, which was written and directed by Sean Penn.

"After studying the issue closely, prioritizing public safety and considering a variety of alternatives, we decided it was best to remove the bus from its location on the Stampede Trail," Commissioner Corri A. Feige said in the release.

Feige explained that while Alaska's Department of Natural Resources and the Alaska Army National Guard "encourage people to enjoy Alaska's wild areas safely," the abandoned bus was a "deteriorating vehicle that was requiring dangerous and costly rescue efforts."

"More importantly, it was costing some visitors their lives," he added.

According to the Department of Natural Resources, there were 15 search and rescue operations by the state between 2009 and 2017 related to the Into the Wild bus. Since 2010, two people drowned on their way to or from the bus.

While officials did not disclose where the bus will reside, it will be stored "at a secure location," Feige said.

In February, a group of Italian hikers had to be rescued on their journey home from the abandoned bus.

Multiple outlets, including the *Associated Press* and CNN, reported that the group (with one person with "severe frostbite" on his feet, according to CNN) was rescued after setting up camp near the city of Healy following their visit to the Fairbanks Bus 142, according to Alaska State Troopers.

Trooper spokesman Tim DeSpain told the *AP* that he didn't know how far the hikers were from the famed "Magic Bus" when they were recovered. The man with frostbite was transported to a hospital about two hours away in Fairbanks to be treated, while friends picked up the other four hikers in Healy.

The *Anchorage Daily News* reported that Tri-Valley Fire Chief Brad Randall wasn't sure how long the hikers had been outside but believed they'd been in the area overnight at the very least. He added that temperatures that morning in the campsite area were between 5 and 10 degrees.

Link: <https://people.com/movies/alaska-national-guard-airlifts-iconic-into-the-wild-bus/>

3. 'Into the Wild' bus airlifted out of Alaskan wilderness due to concerns over tourist safety

ABC News by Morgan Winsor/June 19

The abandoned bus where American adventurer Chris McCandless died almost 30 years ago has been airlifted away from its longtime resting place in the Alaskan wilderness.

A helicopter on Thursday removed the 1940s-era Fairbanks city bus, which became a sometimes deadly tourist attraction, from the Stampede Trail on the remote side of the Teklanika River near Healy, Alaska. The operation was a joint effort of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources and the Alaska Army National Guard.

"After studying the issue closely, prioritizing public safety and considering a variety of alternatives, we decided it was best to remove the bus from its location on the Stampede Trail," Alaska Natural Resources Commissioner Corri Feige said in a statement. "We're fortunate the Alaska Army National Guard could do the job as a training mission to practice airlifting vehicles, at no cost to the public or additional cost to the state."

The dilapidated bus will be stored in a safe location while Alaska's Department of Natural Resources considers options for its permanent disposition, according to Feige.

The vehicle had been hauled to the Stampede Trail decades ago by a construction crew to house workers who were building a pioneer access road linking Stampede with Lignite on the Alaska Railroad. The bus was subsequently abandoned upon completion of the road in 1961 and used since as an emergency shelter, according to a press release from Alaska's Department of Natural Resources.

The bus was made famous by John Krakauer's 1996 book "Into the Wild" and a 2007 movie by the same name that told the story of 24-year-old McCandless, who in April 1992 hitchhiked to Alaska where he set out on the Stampede Trail with little food and equipment, hoping to live a simple life. He found the abandoned Fairbanks Bus 142 while hiking along the snow-covered trail and used it as a makeshift shelter that summer.

McCandless, who documented his trek with journal entries and snapshots, apparently tried to head back to civilization after a couple months, but the trail was blocked by the swollen Teklanika River, so he returned to the bus. He is believed to have died of starvation in mid-August 1992, approximately 113 days after he had walked into the wild. A group of moose hunters came across the bus that September and discovered McCandless' body inside.

Hundreds of fans and sightseers have sought to reach the abandoned bus by retracing McCandless' steps along the Stampede Trail. Many have died, were injured or required search-and-rescue services while doing so. Since 2010, at least two people have drowned on their way to or from the bus while crossing swollen rivers, according to Alaska's Department of Natural Resources.

"We encourage people to enjoy Alaska's wild areas safely, and we understand the hold this bus has had on the popular imagination," Feige said. "However, this is an abandoned and deteriorating vehicle that was requiring dangerous and costly rescue efforts. More importantly, it was costing some visitors their lives."

Link: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wild-bus-airlifted-alaskan-wilderness-due-concerns-tourist/story?id=71342462>

4. 'Into the Wild' bus removed from Alaska backcountry for public safety

NBC News by Associated Press/June 19

JUNEAU, Alaska — An abandoned bus in the Alaska backcountry, popularized by the book “Into the Wild” and movie of the same name, was removed Thursday, state officials said.

The decision prioritizes public safety, Alaska Natural Resources Commissioner Corri Feige said.

The bus has long attracted adventurers to an area without cellphone service and marked by unpredictable weather and at-times swollen rivers. Some have had to be rescued or have died. Christopher McCandless, the subject of the book and movie, died there in 1992.

The rescue earlier this year of five Italian tourists and death last year of a woman from Belarus intensified calls from local officials for the bus, about 25 miles from the Parks Highway, to be removed.

The Alaska Army National Guard moved the bus as part of a training mission “at no cost to the public or additional cost to the state,” Feige said.

The Alaska National Guard, in a release, said the bus was removed using a heavy-lift helicopter. The crew ensured the safety of a suitcase with sentimental value to the McCandless family, the release states. It doesn’t describe that item further.

Feige, in a release, said the bus will be kept in a secure location while her department weighs various options for what to do with it.

“We encourage people to enjoy Alaska’s wild areas safely, and we understand the hold this bus has had on the popular imagination,” she said in a release. “However, this is an abandoned and deteriorating vehicle that was requiring dangerous and costly rescue efforts. More importantly, it was costing some visitors their lives.”

McCandless, a 24-year-old from Virginia, was prevented from seeking help by the swollen banks of the Teklanika River. He died of starvation in the bus in 1992, and wrote in a journal about living in the bus for 114 days, right up to his death.

The long-abandoned Fairbanks city bus became famous by the 1996 book “Into the Wild” by Jon Krakauer, and a 2007 Sean Penn-directed movie of the same name.

The Department of Natural Resources said the 1940s-era bus had been used by a construction company to house employees during work on an access road in the area and was abandoned when the work was finished in 1961.

In March, officials in the Denali Borough based in Healy, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) from the bus, voted unanimously to be rid of it.

Link: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/wild-bus-removed-alaska-backcountry-public-safety-n1231591>

5. Officials Remove *Into the Wild* Bus From Alaska Backcountry, Citing Public Safety Concerns

Time by Becky Bohrer, Associate Press/June 19

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Link: <https://time.com/5856321/into-the-wild-alaska-bus-removed/>

6. National Guard airlifts “Into the Wild” bus from Alaska trail over safety concerns

CBS News by Associated Press/June 19

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Link: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/into-the-wild-bus-removed-alaska-safety-concerns/?fbclid=IwAR2bDWQ-0wDOJr6ukZ19OMp4Yc1JZg0GfsxmdKOP1J86szej73N8HP_U4WI

—ALASKA NEWS OF INTEREST—

7. Fixes underway to COVID-19 testing at Alaska's airports, after long waits for results

KTOO by Tegan Hanlon, Alaska Public Media/June 19

Dale Reid and his wife, Janice, got tested for COVID-19 at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport on June 6, the first day it became an option for travelers.

Reid, 75, had surgery in Arizona. And they were on their way home to Juneau. Reid said the testing process went well. But then, days passed and they didn't receive their results.

"We never heard," he said. "So we started calling. And for a while it was a full mailbox."

Reid said it took about a week for his wife to get her result back. It was negative. By Thursday, Reid said he still hadn't gotten his result. He tested again in Juneau.

Reid isn't alone. Some travelers who tested at the airport within the first week of the new system reported waiting at least six or seven days for their results. By Thursday, 60-year-old Lynn Carter, from Oregon, said she still hadn't gotten the result from her test on June 8. She had quickly booked a flight to Alaska after her teenage grandson died in a car accident, and she had no time to test in Oregon.

Alaska health officials acknowledge that the testing system had issues in the beginning that led to some delays and confusion. But they say fixes are underway, and the process should be smoother and faster now.

"Ideally, we would like for all travelers to have their results within 72 hours. And, in most cases, that is what we're seeing," said Tessa Walker Linderman, a nurse consultant at Alaska's Division of Public Health and the state's port of entry coordinator for its COVID-19 response.

"However, there are exceptions where we're seeing three to five to seven days for the result's turnaround," Walker Linderman said in an interview Wednesday. "A lot of that, I would just say, is just the growing pains of standing up a process really fast and having thousands of people coming in and trying to get everything going really quickly."

Gov. Mike Dunleavy announced on May 29 that the state would provide alternatives to the mandatory, two-week quarantine for travelers arriving in Alaska. The changes went into place about a week later.

"Since June 2, I have been working around-the-clock to get all the airports up and running," Walker Linderman said.

People traveling to Alaska from out of state can now bring proof of a negative result from a test taken within 72 hours of their departure. Or, they can get tested at the airport and quarantine until they get their results.

Setting up the system involved hiring contractors and, some of them, then had to hire dozens of new employees. It also involved creating paper forms for travelers to fill out.

The testing process includes transferring a lot of data, and some issues sparked there.

"Sometimes it's just a matter of, there's somebody whose handwriting wasn't very good," Walker Linderman said. "And so we input their email address wrong or we couldn't read something on their form."

The contractors have to send the tests to a lab. And then the results are sent back to the contractors who notify the travelers.

“We are working on adding more people to be able to process things at the lab on our end and then also equipping our contractors with enough resources,” Walker Linderman said.

Also, the testing site at the Anchorage airport — the busiest location — has moved to online forms, according to Micky Boyer, the operations manager for Capstone Family Medicine, the company running the health screenings there.

Boyer said he expects results to come back quicker as the online forms are used more often, coordination improves and employees settle into their new jobs. Capstone recently had to hire about 160 new workers to staff the airport.

“Getting all those people trained up and settled in and focused was part of the challenge,” he said. “We’ve made tremendous progress in the last week and a half.”

During the first week of testing, Walker Linderman said, about 13,000 travelers went through the new health screenings. And, about 30% of them opted for airport testing.

Walker Linderman said Thursday she did not have the number of passengers who decided to quarantine or the number who brought a negative test result with them. She said the state will have those totals from the second week of testing soon.

Boyer said, generally, Capstone is now telling travelers testing at the Anchorage airport to expect their results in three to five days.

“I think that we’re getting them out sooner now,” he said on Thursday. “So we will probably be able to tell them something different shortly. But I don’t want to give them false expectations.”

Both Boyer and Walker Linderman advised travelers to try to get tested before their flights. They said it’s still the fastest way to move through Alaska’s new process.

Link: <https://www.ktoo.org/2020/06/19/fixes-underway-to-covid-19-testing-at-alaskas-airports-after-long-waits-for-results/>

—NATION/NATIONAL GUARD NEWS OF INTEREST—

8. National Guard COVID-19 Response

Indiana National Guard helps with COVID-19 study; NY Guard resizes COVID-19 response for steady-state missions; Guam National Guard, ROTC train together despite COVID-19

Latest news articles: <https://www.nationalguard.mil/coronavirus/>

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