

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE & SCOPE

This master plan establishes guidelines for the current and future use and development of Chugach State Park. It is based upon an analysis of the park's environment, current and anticipated trends in recreational use, and recognized human demands on this public resource. The primary purposes of this plan are to provide:

- A land use plan allowing for optimum recreational use of the area while preserving the natural environment of the park for future generations.
- A consistent set of principles and policies for park management.
- A basis for future funding requests.
- A phased implementation schedule for recommended development projects.

As with all master plans, continuous review will be necessary to insure that the concepts and recommendations of this plan reflect the changing needs of the public and the purposes for which the park was created.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARK

With the power vested in it by the State Constitution, the Legislature established Chugach State Park in 1970. Six state senators co-authored the original bill, SB 388, "An Act creating the Chugach State Park." They were senators Lowell Thomas, Jr., Joe Josephson, Brad Phillips, John Rader, Tom Koslosky and Nick Begich. The legislation establishing the act was signed by Governor Keith Miller on May 8, 1970. The legislation is found in chapter 112 of the Session Laws of Alaska (AS 41.20.200-240).

Five primary purposes were outlined in the law creating the park:

- To protect and supply a satisfactory water supply for the use of the people.
- To provide recreational opportunities for the people by providing areas for specified uses and constructing the necessary facilities in those areas.
- To protect areas of unique and exceptional scenic value.
- To provide areas for the public display of local wildlife.
- To protect the existing wilderness characteristics of the easterly interior area.

The act further states "The eastern areas of the park shall be operated as a wilderness area, the central area as a scenic area



and the periphery areas as recreational areas.” In accordance with these mandates, a system of land classification has been developed in this plan to protect these values.

The legislation creating Chugach State Park established management authority for park land and water, road maintenance and fish and game resources:

The state lands and waters described in section 210 of this chapter as Chugach State Park are assigned to the Department of Natural Resources for control, development and maintenance, except that the Department of Highways is responsible for the repair and maintenance of all existing public roads within the park. The control of highway access and roadside structures within the Chugach State Park is the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources. The Department of Fish and Game shall cooperate with the Department of Natural Resources under sections 210 of this chapter relevant to the duties of the Department of Fish and Game. (AS 41.20.210)

Additionally, the act presents guidelines for park boundary adjustments:

If, in the exercise of management responsibility under this section, conflicts of land ownership, jurisdiction, or authority are unreconcilable or unmanagable other than at an unreasonable cost and expense to the state, the commissioner after public hearing in accordance with AS 44.62 may modify, subject to the approval of the legislature, the boundaries of the Chugach State Park not to exceed 20 per cent of the total acreage described in...this chapter (AS 41.20.220).

## SIZE AND LOCATION

Chugach State Park contains approximately 495,000 acres (200,000 hectares), making it one of the four largest state parks in the United States. It is located in Southcentral Alaska mostly within the Municipality of Anchorage. The Park’s westernmost boundary lies in the western foothills of the Chugach Mountain Range and is a mere seven miles to the east of the Anchorage Central Business District. The Park is further defined by Knik Arm on the north, Turnagain Arm on the south, and Upper and Lower Lake George and the Chugach National Forest on the east. Within minutes of the Park are the smaller communities of Palmer, Eagle River, Chugiak, Indian, Bird Creek, and Girdwood, the village of Eklutna, Elmendorf Air Force Base, and Fort Richardson.

## REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Southcentral Alaska is an area of diverse land forms and rugged topography, bounded on the north and west by the Alaska Range, and on the east by the Chugach and Wrangell Mountains and Prince William Sound. The region contains extensive ocean shoreline, abundant lakes, massive glaciers and ice fields, and North America’s highest mountain, Mount McKinley.

Although vast portions of the Southcentral Alaska region are sparsely populated, almost half of the State’s population resides in or near Anchorage. Anchorage represents the most highly developed urban area of Alaska. Anchorage’s fast-growing population has been spurred by extensive natural resource development throughout the State during the 1960’s and 1970’s.

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With the construction of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, Anchorage entered into its most recent period of economic boom. The city became the State's center for oil, finance, transportation, construction and support activities. As these industries grew, associated service industries developed, effectively broadening the economic base of Anchorage.

### GROWTH PROJECTION

Over 200,000 people reside within the greater Anchorage area, and a population growth rate of between 5-8 percent is anticipated during the next five years. Anchorage residents are typically young, mobile and active. Over 63 percent of the population is under 30 years of age. Most people living within Anchorage can be characterized as urban residents who live an urban life style. More distant from the heart of the city, physical structures and lifestyles are more suburban or rural.

### POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR ANCHORAGE: 1978 - 1995

Year	Project Population	Growth in %
1978*	202,000	5.0
1979	207,900	6.0
1980	224,600	8.0
1981	240,000	7.0
1982	255,000	6.0
1983	275,000	8.0
1984	292,000	6.0
1985	300,000	3.0
1990	374,000	4.5
1995	466,000	4.5

figure 3

## PLANNING PROCESS

In 1971 the Division of Parks hired a consulting firm to write a development plan for Chugach State Park. Because of an increase of 75,000 in the Anchorage population and a park visitation increase of over 200 percent, the Division of Parks decided in 1976 to place the revision of that plan high among its priorities. Work began on the new master plan in June of 1976. The following steps were followed in developing this plan.

### 1. WRITING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ATLAS

Gathering Information. Evaluation of the plan first completed in 1972 revealed that extensive research was necessary to complete a satisfactory revision of the plan. To accomplish this, the atlas was conceived and designed as an in-depth research document focusing on the park's environmental features, its regional setting and current and anticipated recreational use trends.

The atlas is the foundation of this plan. It contains comprehensive data on land status, history, climate, wildlife, vegetation, hazards, recreation use and demand, and other subjects. The atlas should be continually updated by the Division of Parks and shall become the basis for any future changes in this master plan.

Planning Team. An interdisciplinary planning team was formed to help compile resource information on the park. Members represented the Division of Parks, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and the Anchorage Municipal Planning Department. Working actively for over a year, the team provided valuable information which formed the foundation of this plan.

Analysis of Information. An analysis of the information contained in the atlas resulted in writing a series of "implications". Completed for each chapter in the atlas, the lists of implications represent an analysis of important data and translate it into a series of do's and don'ts for park development and use.

### 2. PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

In April of 1977, five workshops were conducted by the Division of Parks to gather public input for the plan. These workshops were held in Chugiak, Eagle River, Downtown Anchorage, the "Hillside" area of Anchorage and at Indian. Advertised in local and regional newspapers and on radio and television, the meetings drew approximately 165 people. The informal setting allowed participants to voice their opinions about the park, its management, its facilities, and their desires for its future. Immediate concerns aired at each of the meetings included the lack of good access points, hunting in the park, wildlife viewing areas, the kinds and numbers of park facilities, and the use of off-road vehicles in the park during winter and summer.

### 3. PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN

Division of Parks landscape architects and planners then compiled newly gathered data, lists of implications from the environmental atlas of Chugach State Park, public concerns, and recommendations into a preliminary plan.

### 4. PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN REVIEW

The final step in this planning process was the review of the preliminary plan by the Director of Parks, the Commissioner of

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the Department of Natural Resources, the planning team, the public through a second series of public workshops held in Eagle River, Anchorage and Indian, and the mailing of over 150 draft copies to individuals, groups and agencies who are especially affected by or interested in the park. These last comments were inserted along with other minor revisions, approved by the Commissioner and the Director, and publication of this plan is the result.

### 5. FINAL MASTER PLAN

This extensive research, careful analysis and public participation has resulted in this Master Plan for Chugach State Park. It is the guiding document for management and development of the park.

### 6. FUTURE UPDATING

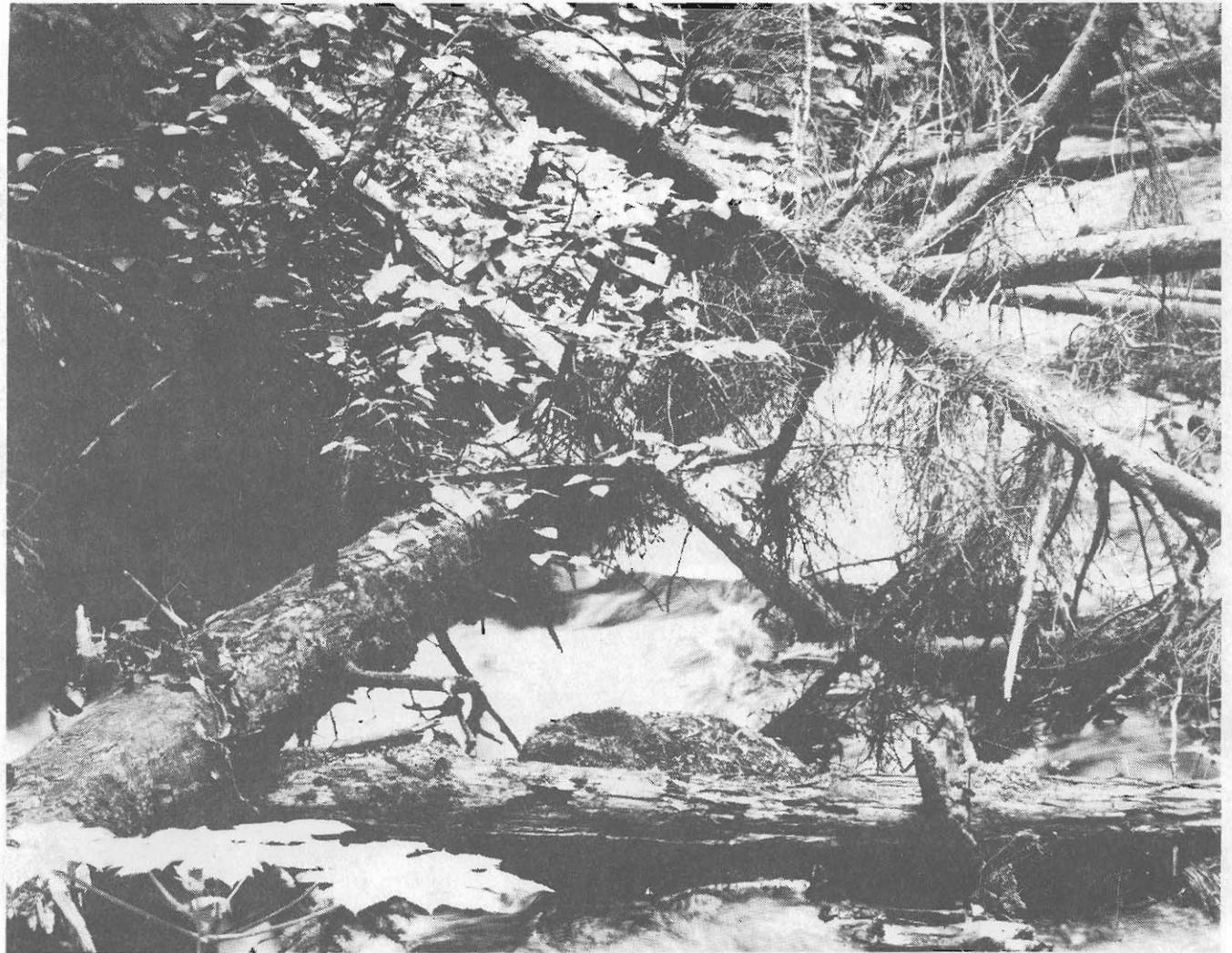
Continuous review and updating of this master plan will be necessary because of continuing rapid population growth of Anchorage and surrounding communities, development of private lands within and adjacent to the park, trends in outdoor recreation and tourism, and the outcome of land selections within the park authorized by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. The environmental atlas of Chugach State Park and the "Alaska State Park Visitors" publication will serve as the basis for future revisions to this plan. With continuous review and revision of this plan as dictated by changing recreation demands, the response of the parks natural environment to future use, and sound planning principles, this plan will continue to provide the required guidance for the development, use and management of Chugach State Park.

### PARKWIDE OBJECTIVES

Twelve parkwide objectives have been developed to guide planning, recreation facility construction, plan implementation and management of Chugach State Park. A result of public and professional input, they are designed to protect park resources while providing for a spectrum of significant outdoor experiences. The objectives are:

- To protect and interpret the park's natural features.
- To provide recreation facilities and opportunities for the general public with due consideration given to appropriate facilities for the handicapped and aged.
- To minimize the impact of human presence, particularly in wilderness, scenic, and fragile areas.
- To avoid the construction of permanent or vulnerable facilities in flood plains and in other areas of known natural hazards.
- To preserve existing wildlife habitat and encourage the opportunities for wildlife viewing throughout the park.
- To identify, preserve, protect and interpret archaeological and historic objects, sites and routes.
- To designate a series of well-defined access points along the park's perimeter and provide appropriate facilities.
- To construct facilities with concern for ease of maintenance and management.
- To construct park facilities with natural materials which blend into the landscape.
- To coordinate and assist in planning the development of privately owned lands within the park through cooperative planning, zoning, or acquisition in order to maintain the park's integrity and natural values.

- To initiate boundary adjustments as necessary to increase the potential for outdoor recreation and for protection of the park.
- To investigate land exchanges and management agreements with public and private agencies in order to consolidate park lands and management functions.



*SITKA SPRUCE* trees crisscross the cold, clear waters of McHugh Creek above McHugh Creek Picnic Wayside.