

HILLSIDE PLANNING UNIT

SETTING

The Hillside planning unit consists of approximately 26,000 acres (10,530 hectares) located in the southwest corner of the park. The area has several mountain peaks over 5,000 feet (1,500 meters) high. It contains the drainages of Campbell and Rabbit creeks, Williwaw Lakes, Rabbit Lake, Long Lake and numerous others. The drainages of Campbell Creek are an important watershed area supplying underground aquifers which in turn are a major source of water for Anchorage, via deep wells located outside the park.

The mountains of this unit have high aesthetic value for Anchorage residents and visitors. It is these mountains which cradle the morning sun, display the first snow of winter, provide a kaleidoscope of changing colors, form a backdrop for many photographs of Anchorage and draw moisture from Pacific storms to supply the city with essential water. Real estate ads frequently tout "a view of the mountains." Some of the popular peaks providing destinations for hikers are Near Point, 3,050 feet (900 meters), Flattop, 3,600 feet (1,180 meters), Wolverine Peak, 4,455 feet (1,335 meters), O'Malley Peak, 5,445 feet (1,640 meters), and The Ramp, 5,240 feet (1,730 meters).

This unit is what most people perceive as being "Chugach State Park" because of its proximity, visibility and accessibility with respect to Anchorage. It is therefore an area which must accommodate and withstand heavy use, particularly along the western edge, where numerous vehicle access points exist along adjacent residential streets.

The primary vegetation in this unit is willow, alder and white spruce, with some cottonwood and mountain hemlock stands in scattered areas. Soil is generally well drained but thin, with no significantly large areas of bog. Above treeline is typical alpine tundra, including edible berries and wild flowers.

Wildlife is scarce in this unit due in part to intensive recreation and nearby development pressures. Moose may be found wintering in the lower portions of the North, Middle and South Forks of Campbell Creek and in the Rabbit Creek area. Sheep and bear are occasionally sighted in this area. Small game is found off the beaten path.

There are grayling in the lakes at the headwaters of the North Fork of Campbell Creek and Rabbit Creek. Dolly Varden are in Rabbit Creek and Rabbit Lake.

EXISTING USES AND TRENDS

While this is the smallest of the five planning units, it receives the heaviest year-round use due to its proximity to Anchorage and its easy access. It is used by rock climbers, hikers, berry pickers, photographers, sightseers, skiers, snowmachiners and others. Visitors gain access to the park's western boundary via numerous roads which receive year-round private or public maintenance. There are public access points designated at Rabbit Creek, Glen Alps, Upper Huffman, Upper O'Malley and Prospect Heights.

In spite of the difficulty in driving the steep and narrow road to the Glen Alps access, it receives the heaviest year-round use, frequently exceeding the capacity of parking spaces available. Existing improvements consist of a bulletin board

containing park information, trailhead signs and parking for about 25 cars. Once at this access point, different recreational opportunities are available. These included easy day-hikes, challenging climbs and spectacular vistas. In the winter, it serves as a staging area for cross-country skiers and sledgers.

Upper Huffman access, located several hundred feet lower and 1 mile (1.6 kilometers) northwest of Glen Alps, has the best facilities with parking for 50 cars, bulletin board, trailhead signs, picnic tables and trails specially designed to accommodate the handicapped and the aged. A trail leads southeast from the parking lot up the South Fork of Campbell Creek to a snow machine area in the Campbell Creek watershed. When snow cover is sufficient to protect vegetation, the area is opened for snow machine use. Signs clearly mark the snow machine route and use area.

Upper O'Malley access point provides parking for approximately 10 cars. There are no trailhead signs or other improvements. Access to the park from this point requires a climb in all directions since the surrounding terrain is moderately steep. There is little potential for adequate improvement of this area.

Prospect Heights is the northernmost access point in the Hillside unit. Immediate access can be gained from here to the 5,000 acre (2.025 hectares) Far North Bicentennial Park. There are two small parking areas about 200 yards (180 meters) apart which can accommodate a total of about 30 cars. The only improvements are signs marking the trailheads to Near Point and Wolverine Peak, and a bulletin board. This access receives considerable use in both summer and winter and frequently precipitates complaints from nearby residents whose roads are blocked by recreationists seeking parking places.

Rabbit Creek access is via poorly maintained private roads which cross private and park lands. There are presently no park facilities at this access point, and the road is impassable during much of the year. In spite of the poor road, there is considerable traditional use of Rabbit Creek Valley.

Hiking, berry picking, climbing, picnicking and wildflower observation in the summer and snow machining and cross-country skiing in the winter are the main uses of the Hillside unit. It is expected that these uses, together with increased picnicking and sight-seeing, will dominate the recreational activities as access and facility improvements occur in the Hillside unit.

Conflicts in the unit occur between motorized and non-motorized users. Although snow machine use is fairly well confined and controlled to reduce the conflict with non-motorized users and to prevent damage to vegetation, there is a considerable amount of illegal entry and activity by off-road vehicles during the summer. This activity causes damage to the watershed by destroying vegetation, scarring the terrain and promoting erosion.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Management

Residential development and public access along the western edge of this unit and the close proximity of metropolitan Anchorage will place extreme pressures upon the watershed, trails, vegetation, animal life and facilities of this unit.

At this time, hunting is legally limited to small game with shotgun and bow only. Trapping is open according to current Fish and Game regulations. As use of the unit increases, there may be increased public pressure to reduce or eliminate hunting and trapping so as to protect visitors and wildlife.

Management of motorized vehicles, especially the illegal use of off-road vehicles in summer, is currently a difficult problem to deal with. It will require better education of the public through media advertising, signing, and strict enforcement of park regulations. Barriers will need to be installed where necessary to prevent unauthorized and damaging use of off-road vehicles.

The combination of steep slopes, heavy snow, high winds and heavy use, makes the Hillside unit a potentially high risk winter use area due to avalanches. Use patterns and activities must be planned to lessen the dangers to visitors from avalanches. Strong educational and forecasting programs need to continue to prepare park users and managers to deal with this danger.

Inholdings

There is one large parcel of private land located in the Rabbit Creek drainage totalling 320 acres (130 hectares). The existence of this private land within the park hampers public access and could severely damage impact recreational use and facility development.

There are two rights-of-way through this unit. One of these belongs to Chugach Electric Association and contains an above-ground electric transmission line. The other belongs to the U.S. Army and contains an 8 inch fuel line. Both of these rights-of-way roughly parallel one another and sometimes overlap as they cross the unit from near the Prospect Heights access point to Powerline Pass. There is a maintenance road along the entire length of the pipeline.

Public Concerns

The major public concerns at the April 1977 Hillside area workshops favor development of better access to the western edge of this unit. This would include adequate parking, toilets, and other facilities which would enhance opportunities to reach and use the park. The following is a summary of these major concerns:

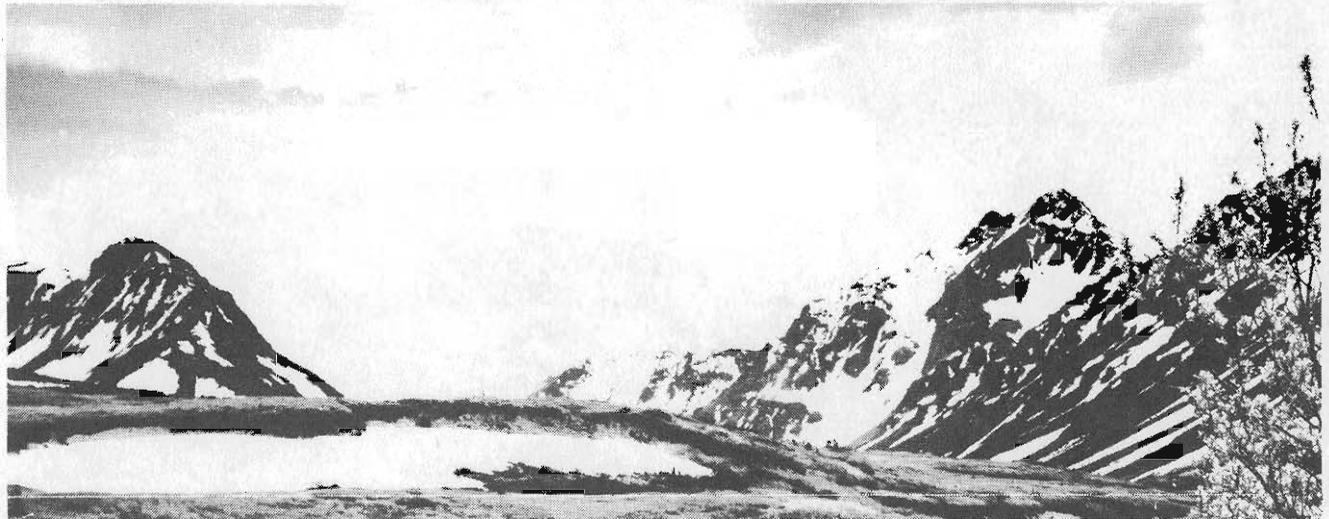
- Access points should be developed and enlarged. Park visitors presently park in private roadways, driveways, etc.
- There is no place to park at Stuckagain Heights (inside Far North Bicentennial Park). The site could be developed into an access point.
- Access points need to be adequately patrolled and maintained.
- Need additional parking at Glen Alps access.
- There is a sense of urgency to solve the access problems in the Hillside unit.
- Better directional signs are necessary in the Hillside unit.
- State monies should be diverted to local road maintenance since the State encourages use of these privately-maintained roads by the location of access points to the park.
- Sanitary facilities should be provided at park access points, along with trash receptacles.
- There should be no commercial facilities or concessions in the park.
- There should be some toboggan trails in the park.
- More trails are needed to accommodate increasing park use.
- Some type of emergency phone should be installed at each park access.
- When trails are constructed, loop trails should be created wherever possible.

- Developments in the Hillside unit should not be located in direct proximity to residential areas or prospective residential areas.
- The front range of the park should be closed to hunting and trapping.
- A small percentage of the park should be open to ORV use.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Based upon the unit's resources, current and anticipated use and public input, the following unit objectives have been developed:

1. Preservation of the Campbell Creek watershed.
2. Construction and upgrading of facilities on the west edge of the unit to provide increased parking and recreational opportunity and to permit better management of the unit.
3. Improvement and development of trail routes within the unit.
4. Reduce the visual impact of the power and pipeline rights-of-way.
5. Acquire all private lands held within the unit to preserve park integrity and improve public access.
6. Coordination of state park developments with development of the (Municipal) Far North Bicentennial Park.
7. Provide State contribution toward maintenance of privately maintained roads leading to established park access points as appropriate to the amount of traffic generated.



SPRING ARRIVES in the South Fork of Campbell Creek Valley in a flurry in mid-June.

62 MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Map No.	Devel. Phase	Proposal	Location	Scope	Justification
26	B ₁	Stuckagain Picnic area and trailhead	Stuckagain Heights Road at powerline crossing	Parking for 30-50 cars within sight of existing road, 10-15 picnic sites, 1 picnic shelter, bulletin board, trailhead sign, toilets. May require 250 feet (75 meters) of new road. Possible winter toboggan run. 250-500 feet (75-150) meters of bike trail connecting parking area to Far North Bicentennial Park bike trail. Coordinate site developments with Far North Bicentennial Park.	To provide park access point from Far North Bicentennial Park and Northeast Anchorage to North Fork of Campbell Creek and the Hillside trail system.
26	B ₁	North Fork trail	Between Stuckagain trailhead and South Fork Gorge, Near Point Wolverine, Williwaw, Knoya and Tikishla Peaks.	Mark and maintain 8-10 miles (13-16 kilometers) of trail, including connection to Hillside trail system via 20-50 foot (6-15 meters) bridge.	Improve safety for users and increase opportunity for people to gain access to the Hillside trail system.
27	A ₁	Prospect Heights Picnic area and trailhead	Prospect Heights access point	Relocate parking area 300-500 feet (90-150 meters) within the park. Parking area for 50-75 cars, 10-15 picnic sites, trailhead signs, bulletin board and toilets. Annual contribution by State should be made to help maintain private roads.	Area is heavily used and needs expansion. Relocation allows expansion, relieves situation of overflowing parking on roadway and permits addition of convenience facilities screened from resident's views.
28	A	Upper O'Malley Trailhead	Upper O'Malley access point (Stroganof Drive at Shelakof Drive)	Remove existing access point. Remove all references from brochures. Dig drainage ditch to relieve drainage problem created by the former parking area.	The site is ill-planned and serves little need. Site is not suitable for expansion.
29	C	Upper Huffman viewing structure	Upper Huffman access point	Construct a viewing platform for viewing of Mt. McKinley, Alaska Range and Anchorage. Annual contribution by State should be made for maintenance of private roads.	Completes site development.
29	C	Picnic shelter	Upper Huffman access point	1 picnic shelter.	Completes 1971 Master Plan project for this site.

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30	B	Glen Alps access road	Upper Huffman to Glen Alps	A road approximately ½ mile (1 kilometer) long between Upper Huffman access road and existing road to Glen Alps. May need to acquire right-of-way through private land.	To bypass steepest and most hazardous portions of existing Glen Alps road. Reduces amount of State's contribution to road maintenance by shortening distance to Glen Alps.
31	A1	Glen Alps picnic area and trailhead	Glen Alps access point	Relocate parking 500-800 feet (150-240 meters) inside the park. Construct parking area for 50-75 cars, 10-15 picnic sites in wooded area, bulletin board, trailhead signs, avalanche warning signs, toilets, dumpster, picnic shelter and emergency radio /phone. Annual contribution by State should be made for maintenance of private roads.	Area heavily used year-round. Parking frequently overflows into road. Highly scenic area capable of sustaining high use levels without danger to park resources. Public demand is high.
31	D	Glen Alps viewing and interpretive structure	Glen Alps access point	Wind break and interpretive structure at a high point to provide view of Anchorage, Mt. McKinley and the Alaska Range and to serve as a center for avalanche forecasting, search and rescue and interpretive education.	Excellent views from site. Would provide facility for visitor protection and education.
---	A1	Hillside trails	All forks of Campbell Creek plus interconnections, spurs and new construction of a trail between Glen Alps access and Flat-top.	Mark and maintain 50-60 miles (80-97 kilometers) of existing and new trails as determined by on-site investigation. Foot bridges, drainage accommodations and required cuts and fills will be added where necessary.	This is the most heavily used trail system in the park in both summer and winter. Improvements will allow more diversity of use and improve safety.
32	B2	Rabbit Creek trailhead	Rabbit Creek Road at park boundary	Construct a parking area for 10-15 cars at or near the park boundary. Upgrade existing privately maintained road to site. Construct toilets bulletin board and trailhead sign. Annual contribution by State should be made for maintenance of private roads.	Valley has no practical access from the west without this improvement. Valley offers high quality hiking and skiing opportunity. Constitutes a terminus for vehicular traffic.
32	B2	Rabbit Creek trail	Rabbit Creek between trailhead and Rabbit Lakes with connection to McHugh Creek trail.	Mark and maintain approximately 6 miles (10 kilometers).	Allow easy access to high quality scenery of Rabbit Creek valley.