

CHUGACH STATE PARK MASTER PLAN

prepared by
Alaska Division of Parks
Department of Natural Resources

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STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF PARKS

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Dear Reader:

To have created the 490,000 acre Chugach State Park in direct juxtaposition with our largest city, Anchorage, must stand as one of the most significant actions ever taken by the Alaska State Legislature. Like some great pressure release valve, this accessible wilderness is available for relief from the rush of urban living. With full recognition of the value of Alaska's second largest State park, our former Director, Terry A. McWilliams, instructed her staff to approach the job of determining the future use of this area with the highest care. I fully agree with her concern in the development of this master plan.

A fully two years of labor went into this document: inventorying the park's features, resources, and use patterns; determining options for development and use; conducting eight public meetings; numerous public presentations and copious reviews. I'm thrilled with the results. I believe that the art of planning is to simply imagine possible futures and to grasp the practical ideal. This master plan is that ideal.

It must be remembered that Chugach State Park is not intended to provide all recreational opportunities for a population of infinite size. The park is too fragile. Rather, the intent is to provide a spectrum of recreational opportunities necessary to maintain both human values and the natural values of the park. Included here are the chances to associate with nature without having to travel long distances, the opportunities to be free from mankind's noise and structures, to observe wildlife in its natural state, a chance to share these experiences with friends and family, and a chance to be alone.

This plan properly balances use and development with natural, cultural and scenic values of the park.

Sincerely,



Chip Deckerlein
Director

FOREWORD

The master plan for Chugach State Park is being published at this time with full knowledge that many of the uses proposed for the northern part of the park may never be implemented. Approximately ten percent of the park's 495,000 acres have been selected by Eklutna, Inc., and may pass into private ownership as part of the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. This area includes Eklutna Lake and most of Eagle River between the existing Eagle River Campground near the Glenn Highway, including the land adjacent to and on either side of the river, and a point 8 miles up-river. Other areas subject to selection are along Peters Creek, Thunderbird Creek, Eklutna River, Goat Creek, Hunter Creek, and approximately 700 acres southeast of Upper Fire Lake and along portions of Meadow Creek.

As development of new park facilities proceeds according to the implementation schedule of this master plan, those areas which are still subject to selection will remain undeveloped. As the status of land ownership is resolved, those areas remaining as part of the park will then be developed as planned.

For those areas where proposed recreational developments become impossible because of lands being withdrawn from the park, an evaluation of alternative sites for recreational developments will occur and an addendum to this master plan will be written for the affected areas.



*COVER PHOTO: South fork of
Campbell Creek in early summer*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

- 2 Purpose and scope
- 3 Size and location
- 3 Regional characteristics
- 6 Growth projection
- 7 Planning process
- 8 Parkwide objectives

CHAPTER TWO - NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 12 Topography
- 13 Soils
- 14 Vegetation
- 16 Fish and Wildlife
- 16 Hazards

CHAPTER THREE - PARK USES & TRENDS

- 20 Historic use
- 21 Current recreational use
- 21 Current non-recreational use
- 22 Recreational trends

CHAPTER FOUR - DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

- 27 Land use classifications
- 30 Planning units
- 31 EKLUTNA-PETERS CREEK PLANNING UNIT
 - 31 Setting
 - 32 Existing uses and trends
 - 33 Special considerations
 - 34 Unit objectives
 - 35 Unit proposals

40 EAGLE RIVER PLANNING UNIT

- 40 Setting
- 41 Existing uses and trends
- 42 Special considerations
- 43 Unit objectives
- 45 Unit proposals

50 SHIP CREEK PLANNING UNIT

- 50 Setting
- 50 Existing uses and trends
- 51 Special considerations
- 51 Unit objectives
- 53 Unit proposals

56 HILLSIDE PLANNING UNIT

- 56 Setting
- 56 Existing uses and trends
- 57 Special considerations
- 59 Unit objectives
- 61 Unit proposals

64 TURNAGAIN ARM PLANNING UNIT

- 64 Setting
- 64 Existing uses and trends
- 66 Special Considerations
- 67 Unit objectives
- 69 Unit proposals
- 73 General parkwide recommendations

CHAPTER FIVE - IMPLEMENTATION

- 80 Phasing
- 80 Implementation guidelines

APPENDICES

- 87 Appendix One
- 88 Appendix Two

LIST OF FIGURES

fig. 1	Statewide Map	4
fig. 2	Location Map	5
fig. 3	Population projection table	6
fig. 4	Mountain peaks list	12
fig. 5	Land use classification map	26
fig. 6	Activity/Facility list	29
fig. 7	Planning units map	30
fig. 8	Eklutna-Peters Creek proposals	35
fig. 9	Eagle River proposals	45
fig.10	Ship Creek proposals	53
fig. 11	Hillside proposals	61
fig. 12	Turnagain Arm proposals	69
fig. 13	Proposed developments summary	82



SUMMARY

This plan provides necessary information and recommendations for the management, use, development and protection of Chugach State Park.

Located adjacent to Anchorage, Alaska's largest and most metropolitan city, the park's nearly 495,000 acres (200,000 hectares) provides a scenic backdrop and a recreational area intensively used by local residents and out-of-state visitors.

This master plan cites legislation establishing the park, describes features of the natural landscape and presents existing uses and recreational trends. Park lands have been classified into three land use zones which direct the establishment of uses and facilities. The plan also divides the park into five planning units: Eklutna-Peters Creek, Eagle River, Ship Creek, Hillside, and Turnagain Arm for planning and management purposes. Each has a distinctive hydrographic boundary. Recommendations for development and use are made for each of these units, the map on page 82 summarizes these items.

Public Participation

During 1977, eight workshops were held throughout the Municipality of Anchorage focusing on the park and its new master plan. Over two hundred persons with many suggestions and ideas spoke with park rangers and planners. In many instances these comments have been translated directly into proposals for park developments and uses including campgrounds, picnic areas, trails, parking areas and wilderness zones.

Major Recommendations

Visitor centers/ranger stations are recommended at the west end of Eklutna Lake, near mile 12 of the Eagle River Road, and near Bird Creek along the Turnagain Arm. The historic Iditarod Trail is directly linked with the proposed Eagle River Visitor Center. Here visitors may walk or ski along this well known route retracing a fascinating bit of Alaska's history.

Picnic areas are to be established along the Park's western and southern fringe, closest to population centers and throughout the Eklutna and Eagle River drainages. Over thirty trailheads with parking areas and toilet facilities should be constructed creating a web of access points enabling use of established trails and the more remote wilderness areas of the park. Trails will lead from each trailhead up valleys, along ridges to mountain tops and through areas of alpine tundra.

A canoe trail along Eagle River is proposed with five launch and take-out sites located at the river's edge. These simple facilities will enable greatly expanded access to the river and will enable people to use areas of the park which are inaccessible by other means. Staging areas currently exist for snowmachines at Bird Creek and the Upper Huffman parking area in the Hillside area, and are planned at a newly-proposed access point in the Little Peters Creek Valley. Senior citizens and the handicapped will have use of newly-designed facilities in some development areas and some trails which are gently sloped and hard surfaced.

People seeking short day hikes, ski trips, summer and autumn berries, photographic opportunities, rock climbing areas and other pursuits can pick a starting point at any one of the trailhead sites or picnic areas where parking areas, toilet facilities and park information will be provided.

Hunters will face more restrictive regulations as park visitation increases. It is proposed that there be an immediate cessation of all trapping throughout the park.

Implementation

Implementation will occur in four phases as recommended in the implementation chapter of this plan. Each phase will include a series of developments designated to provide optimum opportunity for park use without compromising park resources and values.