

GENERAL PARKWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding proposals for the various planning units and the following general recommendations should occur simultaneously to insure a balanced master plan for Chugach State Park.

Operations and Maintenance

Due to the complexity and length of this document the Development Section of the Division of Parks should periodically compile a companion document which specifically lists the cost of implementation of this master plan. Costs and priorities for development will be prepared annually for the Division's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget.

Park Signing

Appropriate signing of highways, access roads and facilities must be achieved in order to direct visitors to park facilities. All signs should incorporate the use of internationally recognized symbols and metric distances.

Zoning of Private Land

Approximately 5,830 acres of privately-owned land exist within the boundary of the park. These lands are presently zoned "unrestricted" by the Municipality of Anchorage.

Development of private lands within the park is beginning to conflict with the purposes of the park. These lands should be evaluated parcel by parcel to determine the most appropriate level of development.

The Municipality of Anchorage and the Division of Parks have undertaken zoning of these lands in accordance with guidelines established in the public interest to insure that development of lands within the park complements the recreational values that the park was established to provide.

Zoning by the Division of Parks shall not be considered a substitute for such other mechanisms as purchases and trades. Thus the rights of the landowner will be protected to the extent that they do not conflict with public values.

Mirror Lake

The Mirror Lake Picnic Wayside has been dramatically affected by changing land use. Once in a somewhat rural setting, the area is now surrounded by residential housing and a major freeway. It is heavily used on weekends, holidays and other free periods by hundreds of people seeking a place to swim, fish, picnic, ice skate and snowmachine. The "wayside" designation was originally designed for the convenience of highway travelers. It is no longer valid. The city has grown to such a point that the area is now surrounded by urban development. It is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Division of the Municipality of Anchorage take over the facility and operate it as a municipal park. A variety of methods could be used to transfer the facility, including state participation in operating funds for the first year.

Management Agreements

The Division of Parks should immediately establish a long term management agreement with the Alaska Power Administration for lands (not already in the park) which are a part of the Eklutna Power Project. Generally, this includes T15N, R2E, Section 5 & 8 and T16N, R2E, Section 17, 20, 29 and 32, Seward Meridian.

Similar written agreements should be established with other agencies, organizations or individuals, as appropriate, where none now exist.

Wildlife Viewing Areas

At the present time there is only one legally designated "wildlife viewing area" within the park. It is located at Eklutna Lake, some 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the Anchorage metropolitan center. State law mandates that areas of the park be set aside for the "local display of wildlife".

Hunting, Trapping and Firearms

As park use and development increase, it may become necessary to further restrict hunting and the use of firearms in the park. Since most intensive recreation occurs in the development zone, all hunting with firearms should cease in these areas. Use of firearms should also be limited in some areas of the natural environment zone such as within an appropriate distance of a trail or road. Trapping should be prohibited throughout the park. Safety of park visitors, their pets and the desire to encourage increased game populations within the park provide the basic rationale for this recommendation.

Fire Suppression

If a proposed park development increases the potential for fire, appropriate measures shall be taken to reduce the increased risk of fire to levels at or below those existing prior to the development. These safeguards include, but are not limited to coordinating proposed developments with the firefighting section of the State Division of Lands, training of park rangers in initial suppression techniques, acquisition of basic fire suppression and reporting equipment, installation of fire pits, increased surveillance of newly developed areas, and reducing the amount of unnecessary combustible material in the vicinity of the development.

Informational Brochures

New brochures should be developed for the following activities and locations:

1. Eagle River Canoe Trail
2. Hiking (summer), Skiing and Snowmachining (winter) for (a) Peters Creek and Eklutna areas (b) Eagle River area, and (c) Turnagain Arm area.

District Headquarters

The location of a new District Headquarters should provide easy and quick access to the park, efficient management control, and a high degree of public visibility. These demands would be best met by establishing a headquarters near the junction of Stuckagain Heights and Tudor Roads, although other locations may be considered.

Boundary Adjustments

Boundary adjustments are recommended to ease day-to-day administrative problems and to expand the recreational opportunity offered by the park.

1. Bird Creek. Along the valley floor of Bird Creek and part of Penguin Creek, lie 2,265 acres (917 hectares) of land owned by the Municipality of Anchorage. Although a master plan for this municipal park completed in June of

1973, it was not implemented. Later, a management agreement was developed with the Division of Parks to manage these lands. The Chugach State Park Master Plan outlines developments for the area conforming to the municipal master plan. Before any development occurs, however, bringing the land into State ownership or long-term management is necessary. A small acreage could be retained by the Municipality for municipal park development.

2. Fort Richardson Military Reserve. It is anticipated that a portion of the Fort Richardson Military reserve may be surplus. If any such changes in land status become probable, the Division of Parks should seek to include within the boundary of the park those lands in the Fort Richardson Military Reservation between a point approximately 2 miles (3 kilometers) east of the existing Eagle River Campground (in T14N, R2W, Section 24), following the 1,000 foot (300 meters) contour south until it intersects the park boundary at the North Fork of Campbell Creek (T13N, R2W, Section 32). These lands are composed of approximately 21,000 acres (8,500 hectares) of high alpine country vegetated with tundra species which are not ideally suited for development. They are however, suitable for recreational uses similar to the Hillside area of Anchorage.
3. Ship Creek Greenway. The Municipality of Anchorage has proposed the establishment of a Ship Creek Recreational Corridor between downtown Anchorage and the Chugach State Park boundary. The Division of Parks supports this greenway proposal since it provides for a permanent recreational link between Chugach State Park and the City of Anchorage. It further helps to protect the municipal and military water supplies which come from Ship Creek. Protection of the Anchorage water supply which originates in the park is one of the mandates of the legislation which created Chugach State Park. Although this master plan does not now recommend the incorporation of the Ship Creek greenway into the park, this would be an acceptable action if this area should become eligible to pass into private ownership in the future or otherwise be threatened by unacceptable development or use.
4. Lake George. The drainages of Upper, Inner and Lower Lake Georges should be included in the park. The primary reason for this eastern expansion is to add to the "wilderness zone" of the park for recreational use and for wildlife protection.

This expansion includes 249,600 acres described as T11N, R4E, Sections 1-6; T11N, R5E, Sections 1-6; T12N, R4 and 5E; T13N, R4-6E; T14N, R4-6E; T15N, R 4 and 5E, plus the S 1/2 of Range 6E, Seward Meridian. All these lands are "state selected."

Peters Creek Greenbelt

An area between the Peters Creek Campground and the park boundary following Peters Creek should be considered for inclusion into the municipal greenbelt system. Three reasons are offered for the proposal:

1. The development of a greenbelt will allow both campers and local residents to gain foot access to the park without the addition of new state park facilities.
2. Greenbelt status will ensure further protection of the water quality to downstream users.
3. The area already receives recreational use by local residents.

Visitor Counts

It is necessary to improve visitation estimation techniques and accuracy. Accurate counts of park visitors, taken on a regular basis at key use areas and access points throughout the park are necessary to determine use levels and to accurately project future demand. These figures will aid in developing future revisions to this master plan, and in substantiating funding requests for facility development, operations and maintenance.

Special Recreation Use Areas

1. Snowmachine areas. Exclusive snowmachine use areas should be established so as not to cause damage to terrain or vegetation and to separate them from conflicting non-motorized uses. These areas should be large and open for many vehicles to operate over varied terrain. They must avoid wildlife viewing areas or other areas of sensitive habit. They should avoid watershed areas if they threaten that resource. They should be out of sight and sound of residential and quiet sports areas. Vehicular access to a suitable staging area must be provided. The continued use of snowmachines should be allowed in the Bird Creek Valley until proposed campground facilities there are completed. At that time, a reevaluation of their continued use should be made.
2. Cross-country ski trail systems. Exclusive use areas should be established for cross-country skiers which will separate skiers from conflicting motorized recreational activities. Such areas should provide scenic vistas, be located close to residential areas where feasible, be accessible by vehicle, and be free from the sight and sound of snowmachines, other mechanical noises and hazardous avalanche areas.
3. Summer off-road vehicle use (other than snowmachines). The only area of the park where four-wheel drive and summer off-road vehicles use is allowed is Bird Creek Valley. No new areas of the park should be opened for this type of recreation because of resulting damage and loss of parkland value due to erosion, vegetation loss and soil compaction. Continued use of the existing area should be allowed to continue until the proposed Bird Creek Campground is completed. At that time, a reevaluation of further use should be made.
4. Horse Trails. Growing horse ownership within the Anchorage area, particularly in the Hillside area, indicates an expanding interest in the establishment of horse trails in the park. Unfortunately, much of the park's level valley bottoms are not compatible with long-term horse traffic because of soft wet ground which would be heavily impacted from such use. It is recommended that a trail or series of trails with sturdy gravel bases, such as existing maintenance roads or homestead roads in the Hillside area be designated as horse trails.

Year-round Facility Use

All park facilities should be opened year-round when operational capability and funding allows. It is important to realize that winter "openings" are the most costly due primarily to road maintenance expenses.

Utilities

Because of the growing use of various areas of the park where above-ground utilities are present, public objection has been expressed concerning the obtrusiveness of utility poles, wire and pipe. The Division of Parks should assume the initiative in identifying areas of greatest concern and working with the appropriate utility owner to reduce or eliminate objectionable aspects of the utility. Appropriate measures include burying utilities, revegetating, rerouting, or otherwise screening or disguising a utility line so as to reduce the visual impact of its presence.

These same considerations should be taken into account wherever new utilities are contemplated.

Private Development Proposals

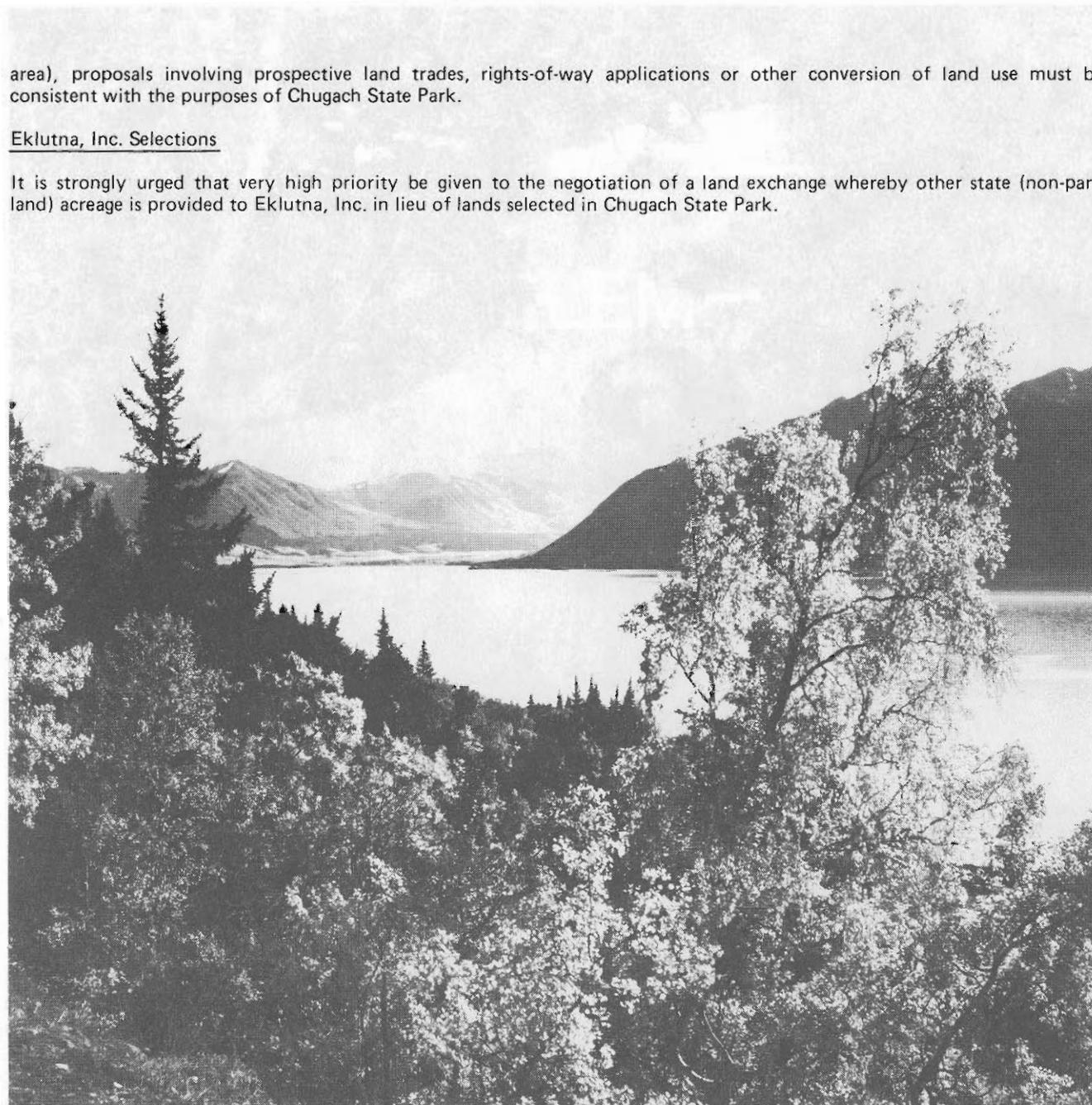
Development proposals for private lands in or near the park should be reviewed to insure compatibility of proposed land uses with the statutory purposes of the park.

Since Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds monies have been spent in Chugach State Park (as a designated project

area), proposals involving prospective land trades, rights-of-way applications or other conversion of land use must be consistent with the purposes of Chugach State Park.

Eklutna, Inc. Selections

It is strongly urged that very high priority be given to the negotiation of a land exchange whereby other state (non-park land) acreage is provided to Eklutna, Inc. in lieu of lands selected in Chugach State Park.



A TRANQUIL SEPTEMBER afternoon on the hillside above McHugh Creek Picnic Area.