
Chapter 7

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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Introduction

To further clarify how the land and resources in park, the three State Recreation Areas, and proposed park additions will be managed, four types of designations were developed and assigned to each unit. Figure 10 shows the boundaries of these designations. The general intent for these designations derives from the *Statewide Framework* (DPOR, 1982)¹, which established this system to help standardize the language that addresses management intent for state park units. The descriptive characteristics and development activities allowed within the original designations in the *Statewide Framework* were modified to reflect the specific conditions in Denali State Park. The four designations include: Recreational Development, Natural Area, Cultural and Wilderness.

Land Use Designation Descriptions

Described below are the purposes, characteristics, and developments/activities allowed under each designation. The guidelines that apply to each designation are listed in Figure 11 later in this chapter. Specific facility developments are described in Chapter 8.

Recreational Development. Three areas in the park adjacent to the Parks Highway have been designated Recreation Development. Areas with this designation are intended to accommodate facilities recommended in Chapter 8 including the proposed South Denali Visitor Complex.

Lands designated Recreation Development in the park’s south end along the Parks Highway are intended to allow for large-scale public recreation and tourism facility development in the future, provided that potential management problems are addressed. Those potential problems include inappropriate spillover development, conflicts with existing recreational uses, and impacts on wildlife and their habitats. Major development in the south end should be addressed by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough adopting effective land use regulations for the area, both inside and outside the park. See the mitigation section in Chapter 9 for measures that will be used to minimize the adverse effects of facility construction and activities associated with the use of the facilities.

Cultural. A small area surrounding the old Curry Lookout is the only area designated Cultural in the park. The lookout, which was used by visitors to the railroad’s old Curry Hotel, is the only known area warranting this designation.

¹ The 1989 Management plan delineated areas of the park in different “zones.” The amended plan now refers to “land use designations” to avoid confusion with the borough’s Denali State Park Special Land Use District that applies to both public and private property.

Natural Area. Areas designated Natural Area are intended to be relatively undeveloped and provide users opportunities for a high value, natural experience. Additionally, areas with this designation serve as a buffer between larger scale recreational developments and areas designated Wilderness. A significant portion of the park has been designated Natural Area, including the three State Recreation Areas (Tokositna, Blair Lake, and Indian River SRA's), the proposed Tokositna River land exchange area, most of the Chulitna River Valley, the Tokositna River Valley, the west slope of Curry-Kesugi Ridge, and a half-mile wide buffer adjacent to the Susitna and Indian rivers.

To address specific concerns associated with traditional use patterns, and protection of wildlife habitat and natural resources while providing for development of limited recreational facilities, a Special Management designation has been assigned to portions of the Natural Areas. The Special Management designation recognizes the special nature of these areas that require additional protection.

Much of the Tokositna valley lowland area is trumpeter swan habitat and is used for nesting and fledging. This area is also used for boating, snowmachining, dog mushing and cross-country skiing. Currently, existing regulations prohibit airboats upstream from Pirate Lake between April 20th and July 10th unless authorized by the Director.² Due to typically heavy snowfall conditions in the Tokositna Valley area, there is often still adequate snow depth for snowmachining in April when the first swans arrive in the area. State Parks will continue to monitor this use to determine if there are significant impacts on swans nesting.

The other Special Management Natural Area is located on the western slopes of the Curry-Kesugi Ridge System. While most of the alpine areas and the eastern slopes of the ridge have been designated Wilderness, the Special Management area includes the ridge trail, including areas that are popular for camping and may have designated campsites in the future. The Special Management designation limits facility development to trails and campsites, including bear caches, toilets, hardened tent sites or tent pads, shelters and public use cabins.

Wilderness. Two large areas of Denali State Park have been designated Wilderness.³ The majority of the Curry-Kesugi Ridge east slope and a large part of the Troublesome Creek drainage have this designation. The alpine ridge area is very fragile and susceptible to damage even by limited activity. The east slope of the ridge, overlooking the Susitna River, is steep and difficult to traverse and, with the exception of the old Curry Ridge Trail, has remained undeveloped. The Troublesome Creek drainage has a high bear population during the salmon run and is designated Wilderness to preserve its natural resource values.

The second area designated Wilderness is the remote area west of the Fountain and Chulitna rivers. This area is remote and difficult to access, adjacent to areas found suitable for Wilderness under the 1986 Denali National Park and Preserve General Management Plan, and contains unique features such as Spink Lake.

² From 11 AAC 20.415(c)

³ “Wilderness” as used in this plan refers to a State Park administrative designation and has no relationship to federal lands designated “Wilderness” under the Wilderness Act or the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Figure 9 LAND USE DESIGNATIONS⁴

Recreation Development

Purposes and Characteristics. Areas designated Recreation Development are established within State Park System units to meet the more intensive recreational needs of the public with convenient and well defined access via roads, railroads, boats, airstrips, and high-standard trails; with more intensively developed recreational facilities such as campgrounds, public use cabins, picnic areas; with guided activities; and with information centers to orient visitors to the unit's special features.

The landscape within these areas can be modified to support educational and recreational activities and/or to enhance wildlife habitat and scenic qualities. These areas are established where soils, slope, drainage and vegetation can support more intensive recreational activities. Fire suppression and insect and disease control may be used, where appropriate, within this area to maintain or enhance recreational use. Areas designated Recreation Development may already have been influenced by prior developments and are intended to include transition areas between recreation developments and adjacent Natural Areas.

Development and Activities. The highest level of developments and activities are meant to occur in these areas within park units. The developments allowed in these areas include, but are not limited to, roads and trails, private vehicle and public transportation routes or access, campgrounds, picnic areas, visitor and interpretive centers, high standard trails for all ages and abilities, park management facilities and commercial lodges or resorts as provided for within the unit management or site development plan. High intensity activities related to the use of the developed facilities are generally encouraged. Snowmachines are allowed with adequate snow cover but may be restricted in certain areas or at certain times. Summer off-road vehicle use is generally prohibited by existing park regulations.

Natural Area

Purpose and Characteristics. Natural Areas are established to provide for moderate-to-low impact and dispersed forms of recreation and to act as buffers between areas designated Recreation Development and Wilderness.

These areas are relatively undeveloped and undisturbed, and are managed to maintain high scenic qualities and to provide visitors with

opportunities for significant, natural outdoor experiences. An area's natural landscape character is the dominant feature within these areas. Landscape modification may be allowed to enhance, maintain or protect the natural setting according to the unit management plan. Use of fire suppression, insect or disease control, or wildlife habitat enhancement as management techniques in Natural Areas will be defined in the unit management plan. Portions of Natural Area may be designated Special Management Areas.

Developments and Activities.

Developments in areas designated Natural are intended to provide for the safety of park visitors and to provide for a moderate level of convenience in a high-quality natural setting. Allowable developments include shelters, public use cabins, high standard hiking and bicycle trails (paved or gravel), and bridges and roads where necessary to access development designations and as provided for in an approved management plan. A medium level of activity is encouraged in these areas. Activities include, but are not limited to, hang gliding, bicycling, backpacking, fishing, hunting, cross country skiing, camping, sledding, berry picking and rock climbing. Snowmachines are allowed with adequate snow cover but may be restricted in certain areas or at certain times. Summer off-road vehicle use is generally prohibited by existing park regulations.

Wilderness

Purpose and Characteristics. Areas designated Wilderness are intended to promote, perpetuate and, where necessary, to restore the wilderness character of the land and its specific values of solitude, physical and mental challenge, scientific study, inspiration and primitive recreational opportunities.

Areas designated Wilderness are of such size as to maintain the area's wilderness character, tailored to protect associated values and, if possible, defined by watershed boundaries. These areas are characterized by the natural landscape, its vegetation and its geologic forms. Resource modification can occur in these areas only to restore areas to a natural state. Natural processes will be allowed to operate freely to the extent that human safety and public and private property are protected. Insect and disease control as a management technique may occur only through the implementation of a plan approved by the Director. Wildlife habitat enhancement activities such as vegetation manipulation may not occur in this designation.

Developments and Activities. In these areas, no man-made improvements should be provided except for primitive trails with minimum trail maintenance, bridges, and signing. Developments or other improvements will be undertaken only if significant threats to public safety exist or

improvements are necessary to reduce adverse impacts on the areas resources and values. Access to and within this designation, for other than management, research and emergency purposes, will be by foot or other non-motorized means except for 1) aircraft and boats consistent with park regulations and Figure 11, 2) situations specifically allowed by law, 3) when there is adequate snow cover for snowmachines. Aircraft landing may be allowed in certain areas or when authorized by the Director. Summer off-road vehicle use is generally prohibited by existing park regulations.

Activities which threaten the character of the area will be monitored and if need be, restricted. Methods of restriction may include measures such as separation and control of use activities through time and space allocation, use/area rotation schemes, and/or a permit system.

Cultural

Purpose and Characteristics. Areas designated Cultural are established to preserve, investigate, document and interpret Alaska's cultural resources and heritage.

Cultural designations are designated to provide adequate protection of historical, cultural, archaeological, or anthropological resources. These areas may contain a single feature or an assemblage of historic features.

Developments and Activities. Areas designated Cultural are managed to insure that public use in the area does not impair the integrity of historical, cultural, archaeological, or anthropological resources. Any development within areas designated Cultural should have minimal impact on the cultural and historical values within the unit and should involve minimal introduction of artificial features for activities not related to the cultural resource and its values. Development generally will be associated with the necessities of public access, safety, interpretation, and improvements to stabilize and protect cultural resources. Hardened trails, toilets and interpretive displays are examples of such development. Activities in these areas are for educational or scientific purposes. Recreation-related facilities are generally secondary and will be separated from the site(s) of cultural resources by sufficient buffers. Activities in keeping with the historical period of the cultural resources may be encouraged. To protect the cultural values for which the area is designated, resource modification, fire suppression, and insect and disease control management techniques will be utilized only when absolutely necessary in these areas.

⁴ Excerpted, with modifications, from Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework, 1982

Figure 10
LAND USE DESIGNATION

Figure 11
GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES WITHIN LAND-USE DESIGNATIONS
IN DENALI STATE PARK⁵

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
Resource Management⁶				
<u>Research, Monitoring and Management Studies.</u> Collection of data necessary for park management decisions or to further science. Priority will be given to studies that contribute to the use and management of native fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. Studies may be conducted by the Division or by other researchers under Division permit. A permit is required if natural objects will be disturbed.	Will be encouraged when in accord with established principles and when consistent with the purposes of the park.	Same	Same	Same
<u>Ecological Monitoring.</u> Activities or studies that address how fish and wildlife and their habitats are changing, due to either natural or human causes. Also see Mitigation section in Chapter 9.	Will be practiced as part of normal park operations in cooperation with the Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agencies.	Same	Same	Same
<u>Fish and Wildlife Inventories.</u> Using acceptable inventory techniques to obtain information on species distribution, harvests, abundance, habitats, and population dynamics, to meet park management objectives.	Compatible	Compatible	Not applicable	Compatible

⁵ These are general guidelines. In the case of conflict between these guidelines and the specific recommendations in this plan, the specific recommendations will prevail.

⁶ Guidelines on fish and wildlife management are advisory only, and the Division recognizes the authority of the Board of Fisheries, Board of Game, and the Department of Fish and Game to regulate fish and wildlife management.

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Fisheries Enhancement.</u> Action taken to increase fishery stocks above historical levels, such as building hatcheries and fish passages, artificially incubating fish in streams and fertilizing lakes.	By permit as specifically allowed by law.	Not compatible	Not applicable	By permit as specifically allowed by law.
<u>Fisheries Restoration.</u> Action taken to restore fish access to spawning and rearing habitat or actions taken to restore populations to historical levels. Includes fish ladders, fish passages, and lake fertilization.	By permit as specifically allowed by law.	Same	Not applicable	Same
<u>Wildlife Habitat Manipulation.</u> Modification of habitat to increase target wildlife populations. Includes both enhancement and restoration activities, such as prescribed burning and mechanical manipulation.	Conditionally compatible	Not compatible	Not applicable	Conditionally compatible
<u>Wildlife Introduction.</u> Introduction of non-indigenous or exotic species.	Not compatible	Same	Same	Same
<u>Wildlife Stocking.</u> Used to re-establish native, species within their original breeding range.	Compatible after adequate research to insure there will be no detrimental impact on other resident species.	Same	Same	Same
<u>Predator Control.</u> Relocation or removal of predators to favor other wildlife species or populations, and the protection of re-introduced species.	Not compatible	Same	Same	Same
<u>Pest and Disease Control.</u> The use of poisons or chemicals to control or eradicate insect pests and/or diseases to indigenous animals, plants, or forests.	Not compatible, except to control species not indigenous to the area.	Same	Same	Same
<u>Tree Felling and/or Timber Sales.</u> Actions taken to eradicate pests such as spruce bark beetle, remove fire hazards adjacent to developed areas, or to improve views from developed waysides.	Compatible, as managed by DPOR.	Not compatible	Not applicable	Compatible, as managed by DPOR.

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Fire Suppression.</u> Actions taken to suppress wildfires.	Compatible, as consistent with the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan and other interagency agreements.	Same	Same	Same
Public Uses <u>Walking, Skiing, Snowboarding, Mountaineering.</u> Access may be provided by foot trails or be restricted in the absence of a trail system.	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
<u>Motorized Boats.</u> Includes use of inboard and outboard motorized boats and jet boats on rivers and lakes. Does not include small boats with electric trolling motors. See below for personal watercraft, hovercraft, and airboat restrictions.	The use of powerboats is allowed except on Byers Lake where only small boats with electric motors are allowed. ⁷	Same as Natural	Not applicable	Same as Natural
<u>Airboats.</u> By park regulations, the use of airboats is allowed except on Byers Lake. Airboats must remain on the water column and may not be operated on adjacent wetlands. The Tokositna River is closed to the use of airboats between April 20 and July 10 annually, unless authorized by the director. ⁸	Compatible	Compatible	Not applicable	Compatible
<u>Personal Watercraft (jet skis) and Hovercraft.</u> Prohibited by park regulation except on the Susitna River. ⁹ Hovercraft must remain on the water column of the Susitna River and may not be operated on adjacent wetlands.	Compatible on the Susitna River only.	Not compatible	Not applicable	Compatible on the Susitna River only.

⁷ From 11 AAC 20.415.

⁸ From 11 AAC 20.415 and 11 AAC 20.985.

⁹ From 11 AAC 20.415(d).

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Non-motorized boating.</u> Includes canoes, rafts, rowboats, kayaks, sailboats and sailboards.	Compatible	Compatible	Not applicable	Compatible
<u>Land-Based Motorized Vehicles.</u> Includes motorized devices for carrying persons or objects over land and includes automobiles and off-road vehicles. See other sections that address snow vehicles, aircraft, bicycles and motorized boats.	Not compatible off roads and parking areas. ¹⁰	Same	Same	Same
<u>Use of Snow Vehicles.</u> Open when Director finds that snow depth is adequate to protect underlying vegetation. ¹¹ Snow vehicles over 1,000 lbs. allowed by permit only for uses such as grooming, hauling in supplies to inholdings, etc.	Compatible with adequate snow depth.	Same	Same	Same
<u>Bicycles.</u> Allowed only on designated trails west of the Parks Highway, on the Byers Lake Loop Trail and on roads and parking areas. ¹²	Compatible on roads, parking areas and designated trails west of Parks Highway.	Not compatible	Not compatible	Compatible on roads, parking areas, Byers Lake Loop Trail, and parking areas.
<u>Fishing.</u>	Compatible, subject to state fishing regulations.	Same as Natural	Not applicable	Same as Natural

¹⁰ From 11 AAC 12.020.

¹¹ From 11 AAC 20.425 and 11 AAC 20.935.

¹² From 11 AAC 20.437 and 11 AAC 12.020.

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Hunting, Discharge of Weapons.</u>	Compatible, subject to state hunting regulations. The use and discharge of a weapon for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping is allowed except within one-half mile of a developed facility or the trail around the shoreline of Byers Lake, or within a quarter-mile of the Parks Highway between Mile 132 and Mile 170. ¹³ Hunting in certain areas may be limited by state hunting regulation to allow for wildlife viewing.	Same	Same	Same
<u>Trapping.</u> Trapping of fur-bearers for private or commercial use.	Compatible, subject to state harvest regulations.	Same	Same	Same. Trapping in certain areas may be limited by state (Board of Game) regulation to allow for wildlife viewing.
<u>Motorized Equipment.</u> Includes all internal combustion equipment (i.e. chainsaws and generators).	Compatible	Not compatible, except for necessary park management, research, and emergency purposes.	Same as Wilderness	Compatible

¹³ From 11 AAC 20.400.

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Primitive Camping.</u> Camping in undeveloped areas without designated or improved sites.	Compatible, subject to 10-day camping limit. Disturbance of natural materials is prohibited. A person may not camp within one-half mile of a developed campground or within one-half mile of a road except as authorized by the director or as otherwise provided. ¹⁴	Same	Not compatible	Not applicable
<u>Campfires.</u>	Open fires are allowed on the gravel bars in and along the Chulitna, Susitna, and Tokositna Rivers ¹⁵ and in structures provide by DNR for campfires.	Not compatible	Not compatible	Conditionally compatible
<u>Camping in Developed Campgrounds.</u>	In a developed campground, camping allowed only at developed campsite or in designated camping spaces. ¹⁶ Camping limited to 15 days unless posted otherwise.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Same as Natural
<u>Dog Sledding.</u> Use of dog teams and sleds as a means of winter access and recreation.	Compatible	Same	Same	Same

¹⁴ From 11 AAC 12.230.

¹⁵ From 11 AAC 20.420.

¹⁶ From 11 AAC 12.230.

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Wildlife Observation.</u> Viewing wildlife and its habitat in natural conditions. Includes photography, bird watching, and educational, interpretive activities and programs.	Compatible	Same	Same	Same
<u>Recreational Gold Panning.</u> Use of simple, non-motorized tools for gold prospecting.	Compatible except as provided in points 1 and 2 below, recreational gold panning is allowed only if the following conditions are met: no motorized equipment is used; only a gold pan or a shovel, or both, may be used; and no chemicals are used. 1: Recreational gold panning in Denali State Park may be conducted on an anadromous fish stream only between May 16 and July 14 annually; and, 2: a person may not extract or disturb natural materials above the ordinary high water line or where live vegetative matter exists. ¹⁷	Same as Natural	Not compatible	Same as Natural

¹⁷ From 11 AAC 20.435.

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<p><u>Horses and Pack Animals.</u> Use of horses, mules, and burros for riding or packing supplies and gear. A group using 10 or more animals must obtain authorization from the director before entering the state park; tethering horses, mules, and burros within 100 feet of fresh water is prohibited; and loose herding of animals is prohibited.¹⁸ Refer to the Land Use Regulations and Proposed Monitoring and Management Recommendations sections of this chapter for additional considerations.</p>	<p>The use of horses, mules, and burros is allowed except for the following areas: designated campgrounds; Byers Lake Trail; Troublesome Creek Trail; Little Coal Creek Trail; Ermine Hill Trail; south of the township line between T29N and T30N, west of the range line between R4W and R5W; and east of the Parks Hwy, except as authorized by the Director.¹⁹</p>	<p>Same</p>	<p>Same</p>	<p>Same</p>
<p><u>Fixed-Wings Landing.</u> Fixed-wing aircraft that provide access to the park. Practice landings prohibited by park regulation.²⁰</p>	<p>Except for park management, research, and emergency purposes, landings limited to areas west of the Parks Highway and on Blair and Ermine lakes.</p>	<p>Same as Natural</p>	<p>Same as Natural</p>	<p>Same as Natural. Under Alternative B, one landing strip may be designated in conjunction with the Tokositna backcountry lodge.</p>

¹⁸ From 11 AAC 20.430.

¹⁹ From 11 AAC 20.430.

²⁰ From 11 AAC 20.410(a)-(b).

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<p><u>Helicopter Operations.</u> Landing and take-off of rotary-blade aircraft to provide access to the park if authorized by the Director.²¹ Practice landings prohibited by park regulation.</p>	<p>Conditionally compatible. Except for park management, research, and emergency purposes, landings limited to gravel bars or beaches on the Tokositna, Chulitna, and Susitna rivers if authorized by the Director. Under Alternative B, one helicopter landing zone may be designated in conjunction with the Tokositna backcountry lodge.</p>	<p>Not compatible, except for park management, research, and emergency purposes.</p>	<p>Not compatible, except for park management, research, and emergency purposes.</p>	<p>Same as Natural</p>
<p>Facilities</p> <p><u>Improved Campsites.</u> Permanent site clearings that may include tent platforms, hardened campsites, fire pits, shelters, picnic tables, sanitary facilities, and interpretive displays.</p>	<p>Compatible, as developed and maintained by DPOR. Recreational facilities in "Special Management" area on western portion of Curry-Kesugi ridge limited to those necessary for resource protection, public safety or to avoid conflicts with wildlife.</p>	<p>Conditionally compatible, if developed for public safety, resource protection or to avoid conflicts with wildlife.</p>	<p>Not compatible</p>	<p>Compatible, as developed and maintained by DPOR.</p>

²¹ From 11 AAC 20.410 (b) and (c).

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Public Use Cabins and Shelters.</u> Small, permanent structures available for overnight used by the general public on a reservation basis. No camping within 300’ of a public use cabin. ²²	Compatible, as developed and maintained by DPOR. Public use cabins are not compatible in alpine areas.	Same as Natural	Not compatible	Same as Natural
<u>Visitor Information Facilities.</u> Structures where the public can learn about and obtain information on the park, its resources, recreation opportunities, and park regulations.	Compatible, as developed and maintained by DPOR.	Not compatible except for signs and kiosks.	Compatible, as developed and maintained by DPOR.	Compatible, as developed and maintained by DPOR.
<u>Foot Trails.</u> Designated, maintained trails that are restricted to foot traffic. Where suitable, some may be used by snowmachines in winter.	Compatible, as developed and maintained by DPOR.	Same	Same	Same
Commercial Uses <u>Commercial Lodges.</u> Privately-owned and operated lodging facilities on park lands.	Not compatible	Not compatible	Not compatible	Allowed only under concession contract and when compatible with park purposes, when consistent with management plan, when enhancing public use and enjoyment of the park, and when experience cannot be provided outside park.
<u>Hydroelectric Power Development.</u> Commercial development of a site, including a dam, impoundment area, powerhouse, tail race, and other forms of associated facilities.	Not compatible	Same	Same	Same

²² From 11 AAC 12.230.

Activity/Facility	Natural	Wilderness	Cultural	Recreation Development
<u>Guiding and Outfitting.</u> Licensed big game hunting, fishing, mountaineering, and backcountry guiding, outfitting, and all other commercial operations providing services to park users for compensation.	Compatible only by permit or concession contract issued by DPOR.	Same	Same	Same
<u>Grazing.</u> Grazing or loose herding of domestic or wild animals for personal or commercial purposes. ²³	Not compatible	Same	Same	Same
<u>Resource Extraction.</u> Extraction for commercial or personal use. Removal of timber, gravel, rock, sand, minerals, plants, or other park resources.	Not compatible	Same	Same	Same
<u>Resource Extraction by State Parks.</u> Removal of timber, gravel, rock, sand, plants, or other park resources for use by State Parks in the park.	Compatible	Not Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
<u>Utilities, Transmission Lines, Pipelines.</u> Includes telephone and electrical power lines, oil and gas pipelines, communication and wind generation towers and other associated facilities.	Allowed by permit only when no viable alternative exists. Tower heights limited to 85 feet. Use best practices to minimize impacts to viewshed, especially areas within viewsheds of areas with high public use.	Not compatible	Not compatible	Same as Natural

²³ From 11 AAC 20.430.

Proposed Park Additions and Boundary Adjustments

Proposed park additions are intended to protect small areas adjacent to the park boundary that have special features. Some of the proposed park additions are intended to re-align the park boundary along natural features, such as the Tokositna and Coffee rivers. The proposed changes are illustrated in Figure 10.

The proposed land exchange with the National Park Service is intended to adjust boundaries to readily identifiable and enforceable natural features. If implemented, revised boundaries will clarify where different state and federal regulations apply. Boundary realignment will also simplify the management responsibilities of the respective agencies.

Three areas on the boundary of the park were added administratively through Interagency Land Management Assignments (ILMA). They include the Blair Lake, Tokositna, and Indian River State Recreation Areas. They are managed as part of the Denali State Park Unit and are proposed for legislative designation.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
<p><u>Tokositna State Recreation Area</u> Proposed to be legislatively designated. SRA was added to State Park System through an ILMA and is designated Natural, Special Management. See Figures 10 and 12 and legal description in Appendix C. Approximately 600 acres.</p>	<p>Establish border along obvious natural feature (Tokositna River) and provide active management.</p>	<p>Legislative rather than administrative designation will provide long-term protection. This small segment of the Tokositna River is the only part of the river not currently in a state or national park. Inclusion of the land north of the river in park will preserve natural setting along river and permit active management and enforcement in this area.</p>
<p><u>Indian River State Recreation Area</u> Proposed to be legislatively designated. SRA was added to State Park System through an ILMA and is designated Natural, Special Management. See Figure 10 and 12 and legal description in Appendix C. Approximately 470 acres.</p>	<p>Provide active management to conserve important natural resources in the area, primarily spawning salmon. Inclusion of important buffer adjacent to the park.</p>	<p>Legislative rather than administrative designation will provide long-term protection. Conserve important natural resources in the area, primarily spawning salmon. Inclusion of important buffer adjacent to the park.</p>
<p><u>Blair Lake State Recreation Area</u> Proposed to be legislatively designated. SRA was added to State Park System through an ILMA and is designated Natural, Special Management. See Figure 10 and 12 and legal description in Appendix C. Approximately 360 acres.</p>	<p>Provide active management to an area that is receiving high public use.</p>	<p>Legislative rather than administrative designation will provide long-term protection. Protect public access between the park and the lake. Conserve important natural resources in the area.</p>

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
<p><u>Land Exchange with the National Park Service</u> Adjust State Park and National Park boundaries along the Tokositna River so that the entire Tokositna River below Home Lake is entirely in the State Park. The boundaries would also be adjusted along Coffee River. Would likely require legislative and Congressional action and affect approximately 6,000 acres.</p>	<p>Make management responsibilities and jurisdiction clearer to all parties on and along the Tokositna River. Improve management efficiencies.</p>	<p>The National Park Service and State Parks have different regulations, particularly pertaining to hunting. This action would put the entire river under one jurisdiction.</p>

Land Acquisition

Denali State Park has a variety of large and small privately held properties within its boundaries. Acquisition of some inholdings or purchase of development rights should be pursued to help consolidate land ownership patterns and to avoid potential incompatibilities due to differing interests and objectives of the Division and private parties.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
Acquire inholdings along Parks Highway Mile 135-136 (160 acres).	Protect natural setting and viewshed integrity from proposed Parks Highway Visitor Center.	The viewshed integrity is very important to the proposed Parks Highway Visitor Center.
Acquire inholdings by Byers Lake (10 acres).	Protect quiet, undeveloped nature of area. Provide active management.	Consolidate area as campground area. Inholdings are small, but development could have an adverse impact on the park and park experience currently enjoyed.
Acquire other inholdings as they become available. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Byers Creek b) Parks Highway corridor c) Pirate, Spink, Lucy, Low and Blair lakes d) Allotment adjacent to Denali State Park, west of the Parks Highway to permit access to west side of Chulitna River e) Others 	Protect natural resources and avoid potentially undesirable development within the park.	Inholdings, in many cases, may deter appropriate development due to concerns about strip development. Development of inholdings, especially along highly visible sections of the Parks Highway, may significantly degrade recreational opportunities.

Wildlife Management²⁴

The emphasis of these recommendations is to establish a management program that increases the wildlife viewing potential in certain areas of the park and eliminate practices, such as bear baiting that are in direct conflict with recreational use of the park. Educational programs centered on natural history interpretation are a major emphasis of this plan. Efforts will be made to facilitate viewing of wildlife in its natural habitat, without significant impacts to the wildlife or hazard to the viewers.

The Division recognizes the authority of the Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) regarding management of Alaska's fish and wildlife. Several of the following recommendations entail cooperation with ADF&G.

Proposal	Management Objective	Justification
Propose to Board of Game establishment of Denali State Park as a Game Management Subunit.	Establish more detailed information on hunting and fishing within the park. Provide more focused management of wildlife resources with Denali State Park.	It is difficult to monitor the impact of hunting when the Park is split into two management units that are managed both out of Palmer and Glennallen. If Denali State Park were a distinct unit or subunit, recording of bear and moose harvests could be readily be attributed to having taken place inside or outside of the park. This would facilitate implementation of more specific regulations that reflect the different status of and needs of Denali State Park versus lands outside the state park.
Work with ADF&G and propose to the Board of Game that the park be closed to bear-baiting.	Avoid human-bear confrontations. Eliminate a hunting practice in the park that teaches bears to associate humans with food sources.	Bear baiting involves placing edible garbage piles to attract bears. The bears are then harvested by hunters. The practice has the potential for creating serious human-bear conflicts, by encouraging bears to associate campgrounds and other human congregation points with food sources.
Recommend to ADF&G that the biologists in charge of Denali State Park management subunit be located in Palmer.	Improve park wildlife inventory.	If biologists responsible for this area were stationed closer to the park, they could more easily research and monitor the status and trends of wildlife populations and harvests in the park.

²⁴ This section has not changed from the 1989 plan.

Chapter 7 – Management Recommendations

Proposal	Management Objective	Justification
Work with ADF&G and Board of Game to establish management practices that may lead to enhanced wildlife viewing. May include partial closures and/or limited takes in designated areas.	Provide wildlife viewing opportunities. Designate areas that may be managed to promote higher densities for viewing. This may include limitations or closures in specific areas. Reduce safety problems related to hunting in close proximity to active viewing areas.	Part of any interpretive program is the ability to view wildlife in its natural setting. Creation of designated viewing areas allows for different management practices that lead to higher densities of animals. Additionally, these designated areas reduce possible safety issues related to discharge of firearms near concentrations of people.
Work with ADF&G and the National Park Service to establish a baseline monitoring program.	Gather baseline data to study the effects development has on park resources.	A baseline monitoring program would provide information needed to more accurately manage park resources. Working with the National Park Service would help State Parks with funding and provide staffing efficiencies.
Work with ADF&G and the National Park Service to conduct environmental assessments such as in-depth vegetation surveys and bear habitat assessments prior to construction of the South Denali Visitor Complex.	To reduce wildlife conflicts and displacement and to protect sensitive habitat.	This information will be used in the design and construction phase of the South Denali Visitor Complex project to site and design facilities in a manner that would avoid wildlife conflicts and to minimize long-term impacts of development on park resources.

Research

Very little natural resource or recreational research has been conducted within Denali State Park. Large-scale resource inventories have been carried out in the area, but frequently have excluded Denali State Park. These research recommendations address methods to initiate and provide incentives to promote research programs within the park. Detailed information on park resources and recreation/tourism patterns will be very helpful in future planning and management activities.

Proposal	Management Objective	Justification
<p><u>Research Programs</u> Provide incentives and support for research programs within Denali State Park. May include provisions for housing or research grant funding.</p>	<p>Promote research that results in an increased understanding of the natural systems or human use of Denali State Park.</p>	<p>Information specific to Denali State Park is very limited. Research projects would help increase the understanding of the natural systems and human usage of the park. This data will obviously be helpful in developing management practices and interpretive programs within the park.</p>
<p><u>Educational/training program</u> Expand the educational/training program as an extension of several university programs.</p>	<p>Encourage college students studying in fields of natural sciences or recreation to gain field experience and credits for seasonal internship work.</p>	<p>Create a program for seasonal help and provide learning opportunities to students.</p>
<p><u>Camping monitoring</u> Monitor camping in alpine areas outside of designated remote campsites.</p>	<p>Identify when level of activity directs mandatory use of designated campsites or placement of pit toilets.</p>	<p>Prevent unnecessary impacts on the environment.</p>
<p><u>Backcountry permits</u> Consider use of backcountry overnight permits if conflicts between users or impacts on the park reach unacceptable levels. Consider first, use of educational techniques, redirecting use, and improved facilities (hardened trails and campsites, pit toilets, bear containers etc.) to reduce conflicts and impacts before implementing a permit system.</p>	<p>Reduce impacts on the park resources and conflicts between users.</p>	<p>Prevent unnecessary impacts on the environment, reduce conflicts between users, increase visitor safety.</p>

Proposed Monitoring and Management Recommendations

These recommendations are intended to address restrictions and limitations on uses necessary to protect and reduce impacts on the natural resources of the park, improve public safety and mitigate conflicts between incompatible uses. Where there is not adequate information to formulate recommendations, the Division will evaluate the uses or conflicts in more detail and formulate management recommendations.

Several of the proposed restrictions in the 1989 plan have been removed from this section because they have since been codified as regulations that apply to the park.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
<p><u>Trails</u> Trails in areas designated Wilderness will be maintained at primitive standards. Trails in the other three designated areas may be designed, built and maintained to higher standards. Summer uses of pack animals and mountain bikes may be restricted to certain trails that can accommodate this use without unacceptable levels of impact. Develop winter trails and improve selected trails for winter use. Winter uses of the park in some areas may be separated or restricted to minimize conflicts between user groups and protect resources.</p>	<p>Limit impact on areas designated Wilderness. Trails are designated for summer uses that will not cause unacceptable levels of impact. Provide recreational opportunities for a variety of users in winter. Minimize conflicts and protect park resources in winter.</p>	<p>Wilderness should be accessed by minimum improvements. Other trails should be managed so that they can be sustained for the uses they were designed for. Park winter trails are managed to provide for a variety of recreational users. To minimize conflicts between users and to promote public safety, it may be necessary in some areas to separate some user groups.</p>
<p><u>Hunting, Discharge of Weapons</u> Continue to monitor whether the existing no-shooting areas are sufficient to protect the public.</p>	<p>Protect visitor safety adjacent to developed facilities, Byers Lake and the Parks Highway.</p>	<p>Currently, the use and discharge of a weapon for the purpose of lawful hunting or trapping is allowed within the park except within one-half mile of developed facilities, the trail around the shoreline of Byers Lake, and within a quarter-mile of the Parks Highway between MP 132 and 170.²⁵ Hunting regulations already prohibit taking game by shooting from, on, or across a highway.²⁶</p>
<p><u>Use of snow vehicles</u> Use patterns and vegetation should be monitored to determine if special limitations are necessary.</p>	<p>Protection of vegetation and visitor safety.</p>	<p>Currently, use of snow vehicles in the park is allowed when the Director finds that snow depth is adequate to protect underlying vegetation.²⁷ Use does not appear to be impacting vegetation at this time.</p>

²⁵ From 11 AAC 20.400.

²⁶ From 5 AAC 92.080.

²⁷ From 11 AAC 20.425 and 11 AAC 20.935.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
<p><u>Horses and pack animals</u> Evaluate the use and impact of horses and other pack animals.</p>	<p>Determine if horses or other pack animals should be permitted on certain trails, and/or if separate trail systems should be developed.</p>	<p>There is not enough data available at this time to formulate an effective management policy for pack animals.</p>
<p><u>Mountain Biking</u> Evaluate the use and impacts of mountain biking. Determine whether use limitations are needed.</p>	<p>Protect fragile areas, such as alpine, from the negative effects of off-road biking. Identify and provide suitable areas for this activity.</p>	<p>Mountain biking is a new and growing recreational activity. The Division should assess its impacts to ensure that fragile soils, wildlife concentration areas, and other sensitive areas are protected.</p>
<p><u>Dog Sledding</u> Dog sledding is permitted throughout the park. Monitor use patterns.</p>	<p>No significant conflicts apparent at this time. Monitor use patterns to track any conflicts. Possibly separate uses by area if necessary. May require separate trail systems.</p>	<p>No need to limit at this time. Data collection is necessary.</p>
<p><u>Byers Lake walk-in/canoe-in campground cooking/eating/food storage area</u> Restrict cooking, eating and food storage to a central location.</p>	<p>Reduce bear problems.</p>	<p>If a central cooking/eating/food storage area (including food locker(s)) is developed at this campground, campers should be required to cook, eat, and store food at this central location to reduce bear problems. This campground has had chronic bear problems in the past.</p>
<p><u>River Use</u> Monitor use of navigable rivers for wildlife and social impacts, and assess whether use limitations are needed.</p>	<p>Protect sensitive wildlife congregation areas and habitats while providing for reasonable recreational uses.</p>	<p>Rivers, particularly the upper Tokositna where swans nest, have very high habitat values. They are also attractive for recreationists and serve as access corridors to the backcountry. There is a need to monitor the locations, times, and impacts of motorized boats to ensure that river traffic does not damage habitat, displace sensitive species, or create significant conflict among recreational user groups.</p>
<p>Restrict vehicular access on the visitor center complex access road.</p>	<p>If a shuttle bus system is implemented, summer vehicular access may be restricted to buses and administrative vehicles, particularly during peak-use hours, in order to minimize the effects of traffic on viewshed, wildlife, air quality, and visitor experience.</p>	<p>To protect public safety and minimize the effects of traffic on the viewshed, wildlife, air quality, and quality of the visitor experience.</p>

Land Use Regulations

These recommendations address the need for the Division to coordinate with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough concerning review and possible revision of existing land use regulations affecting the park and adjacent areas, specifically the “Denali State Park Special Land Use District” (SPUD). Development and design standards will help mitigate potential impacts of private or other public agency development on the park and surrounding areas.

Although the Division has zoning authority over private lands within the park (under AS 41.21.025), that authority may not be enforceable on Native allotments until allotments come out of restricted status. Some of the large inholdings in the southern portion of the park are Native allotments, although some are no longer in restricted status under the Native Claims Settlement Act because they have been sold.

Proposal	Management Objective	Justification
<p><u>SPUD Coordination</u> Coordinate with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to revise the Denali State Park Special Land Use District (SPUD) that was adopted in 1991 and includes ordinances that apply to private lands in and adjacent to the park. The Borough should notice State Parks as part of the application process for any special use permit in this district.</p>	<p>Avoid non-compatible development within and adjacent to the park.</p>	<p>The SPUD should extend north and south of Denali State Park to encompass development associated with the highway approaches to the park. The SPUD should include subdivision design standards, limited access points to the Parks Highway and conditional use review for any structure larger than a specific dimension in square footage and/or height. Would also require review of all commercial developments and signage.</p>
<p><u>Tower facilities</u> Revise the SPUD to require permits for the construction of any tower facilities such as communication or wind-generating towers. Tower heights should be limited to 85 feet. Recommend using best practices to minimize impacts to viewshed, especially within areas of high public use.</p>	<p>Provide for consistency and regulation of tower development and promote viewshed preservation.</p>	<p>Application of best practices and tower height limitations would minimize any potential resource impacts and concerns related to the viewshed especially within areas of high public use.</p>

Proposal	Management Objective	Justification
<p><u>DNR Zoning</u> Consider the exercising of the Division’s zoning authority over private land inside park boundaries under AS 41.21.025.</p>	<p>Regulate development of private lands near proposed park facility development areas. Prevent the proliferation of roadside development.</p>	<p>Because of the high interest in tourism and associated developments, there is widespread concern about the potential for spillover development that may occur even if the developments proposed by this plan are not implemented. Application of the Division's zoning authority might help to control such development however, State Parks will work with the borough to revise the SPUD first.</p>
<p><u>Horse & Pack Animals</u> Consider revising 11 AAC 20.430 to restrict use in alpine areas and to clarify, as new facilities are built, which areas are open to horse and pack animals.</p>	<p>Provide opportunity for use while minimizing resource impact.</p>	<p>As new trails and facilities are built, this regulation will need to be revised to identify appropriate trails for horse and pack animals. This use may not be appropriate in alpine areas and more information will be necessary to determine an appropriate management policy.²⁸</p>

²⁸ For more information, reference the Proposed Monitoring and Management Recommendations section in this chapter.

Cooperative Management Agreements

Cooperative agreements should be developed between State Parks and the large land owners in the vicinity of the park including the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), the National Park Service (NPS), the DNR Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW), the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT/PF) and the Alaska Railroad (ARR). Cooperative agreements provide a common framework that encourages land management and regulatory agencies to inform others of their activities, and avoid incompatible or duplicative efforts.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
Cooperative management agreement between State Parks and the National Park Service for the design, construction, operation, maintenance and staffing of the visitor center and the facilities in the immediate vicinity of the visitor center.	Provides efficiencies in implementation of the South Denali Visitor Complex related projects.	Provide visitors with a world-quality exposure to the Denali Park environs through a well designed and operated visitor center and associated facilities that are operated efficiently.
Cooperative land management agreement between State Parks and other governmental landowners adjacent to the park.	Promote orderly development of these lands to prevent strip development and degradation of the viewshed integrity, and provide for protection of the Chulitna and Susitna rivers.	The DMLW, MSB, ARR and ADOT/PF manage substantial acreages adjacent to the State Park. Without a coordinated effort, unwanted development may occur adjacent to the Parks Highway and Petersville Road. Timber and other resource extraction in close proximity to the park may significantly impact recreational opportunities.
Cooperative management agreement: State Parks and ADOT/PF concerning right-of-way maintenance.	Increase visibility of mountains and Denali from the Parks Highway, particularly at waysides. Coordinate efforts and scheduling of roadside brush cutting. Maintain ROW vegetation buffers where needed to buffer views of development adjacent to the highway.	Alders and other vegetation obscure most views to the west from the highway. A cooperative plan would allow DPOR to maximize the viewing potential yet protect buffers where they are needed. This single action could significantly improve the visitors' experience within Denali State Park.
Cooperative management agreement between State Parks and ADOT/PF concerning gravel extraction sites adjacent to the highway.	Clarify management authority over sites and start a restoration program for those sites no longer in use. Control access to sites to avoid management problems, but permit limited recreation use as appropriate.	Both active and inactive sites are currently open to casual access. Sites could be restored, and utilized as controlled access staging areas for large groups.
Cooperative management agreement between State Parks and ADOT/PF concerning maintenance of the proposed visitor center roads and parking areas.	Develop efficiencies between DNR and ADOT/PF in road maintenance.	Cooperative agreement would be pursued only if either visitor center under Alternatives B or C is built.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
State Parks should continue to coordinate with ADOT/PF to plow parking areas along the Parks Highway particularly at the Veterans Memorial.	Provide for winter recreational use of the park and emergency pull-out areas.	Without plowed pull-outs, the park is relatively inaccessible in winter unless vehicles park on the side of the road (which poses a significant safety hazard to traffic along the highway).
State Parks should work with ADOT/PF, local communities and other agencies to develop and implement a Corridor Management Plan for the Scenic Byway portion of the Parks Highway.	Promote the scenic qualities associated with the State Park and highway corridor and further enhance the visitor experience in the area.	The Parks Highway was designated a State Scenic Byway between MP 132-248 in 1998. ADOT/PF has funding to begin a Corridor Management Plan that, once completed, would allow the Parks Highway to be nominated as a National Scenic Highway.
State Parks should develop a Cooperative Management Agreement or Reimbursable Service Agreement to design, build, maintain and manage some of the facilities proposed along the Alaska Railroad.	Develop high quality visitor facilities along the ARR in and adjacent to the park.	State Parks has the expertise to build and manage park-related visitor facilities. These facilities and their use would be closely associated with access to and understanding of the State Park.
Cooperative management agreement between State Parks, ADF&G and the National Park Service to conduct wildlife and habitat assessments and start a baseline monitoring program.	Gather information necessary for responsible development of the South Denali Visitor Complex and related facilities.	ADF&G is the agency responsible for managing fish and wildlife resources in the park. The National Park Service can provide staff or funding to assist in these studies.

Management and Staffing Efficiencies

These recommendations concern staffing requirements for Denali State Park. Adequate staffing is necessary to ensure public safety and resource protection, provide information to the public, supervise contracted and volunteer help, monitor recreation activities and conduct research into the park’s natural resources.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
Develop cooperative agreements with the National Park Service that addresses staffing and management of the proposed visitor center and related facilities. Agreements may also address supplemental funding for staffing and operation of the existing Veterans Memorial Visitor Center.	Establish a long-term management plan that addresses key issues relating to the visitor center and related facilities. Achieve cost efficiencies in the long-term operation of these facilities.	Enable State Parks and the National Park Service to provide for efficient funding, operation, and staffing of the visitor centers and related facilities that provide a world-class experience to park visitors.
Expand summer staffing to include more rangers, maintenance staff and volunteers. Add a winter ranger position to support the increased use the park receives in winter. Seek additional park hosts as waysides and pull-offs become more popular.	Provide better public service during the peak season including improved maintenance and repair of facilities and more opportunities for the public to receive information about the state and national park. Increased monitoring by park personnel. Increased management presence to increase public safety and reduce vandalism.	Existing ranger positions are seasonal. Rangers are performing tasks such as building maintenance, garbage pickup and fee collection. These are activities that could be done by volunteers, technicians, or contractors, so that the rangers could do more park management and supervisory tasks as well as be readily available for emergencies and contacting the public.
Establish regional resource management position and work with the National Park Service to develop a research and monitoring program for the state park.	To monitor and coordinate inventory and research projects. Provide assistance in interpretive programs.	Most effective method of increasing information on the park’s uses and resources, information that is essential to the long-term management of the state park.
Develop Reimbursable Service Agreements with local lodges and tour operators for park staff to provide nature walks, evening programs and other interpretive services.	To provide high quality interpretive programs for visitors to the park and guests lodging in and adjacent to the park.	Lodge and tour operators often don’t have the staff or training capabilities to provide staff with this expertise. Also provides visitors an opportunity to contact and interact with park rangers that are familiar with park resources.
Continue to expand cooperative agreements with non-profits to provide services and the operation of park facilities.	To provide high-quality, low-cost staffing of facilities such as the Veterans Memorial.	One example is the Friends of Denali State Park, Mat-Su that currently operates the Veterans Memorial Visitor Center at minimal cost to State Parks.
Consider contracting with concessionaires to operate and maintain some of the park facilities.	Could provide more efficient management for some facilities while still providing improved service.	Provide opportunities for local jobs, cost saving to State Parks, and improved services.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
Continue to utilize campground hosts, park volunteers, the Alaska Conservation Corps, and other service organizations to staff park facilities and assist with construction and maintenance.	Reduce staffing costs. Free up rangers for other tasks.	Allows State Parks to provide a level of service and facilities that it otherwise could not afford. Builds local support and a community sense of ownership and responsibility for the state park.

Commercial Uses

There are a number of commercial operations in Denali State Park, offering such services as guiding, outfitting, river rafting, and equipment rentals. The Division currently operates a permitting system for commercial operators requiring permittees to carry liability insurance, provide basic equipment, and possess appropriate professional licenses and certificates.

Proposal	Management Objectives	Justification
Continue to implement permit system for guiding/outfitting and other commercial activities in the park. Consider establishing performance standards for permittees.	Permit appropriate commercial activities inside the park.	The permit system provides accurate and updated information on numbers, types, locations and possible impacts of commercial activities, and also ensures that firms are qualified and equipped to operate safely.