

INTRODUCTION

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PURPOSE

The purpose of the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area (NLSRA) is to provide a diversity of outdoor recreation activities appropriate to the area's resource character and regional setting. This master plan examines the regional recreation opportunities, resource capabilities, management capabilities, operational budgeting capabilities, public needs, and recommends management and development of the unit to maximize the public's recreational use and enjoyment.

The master plan will provide direction and justification for

capital and operational budgeting, site planning and development, land acquisition, facility and trail construction, visitor information signing, programs for public education and enjoyment, and recreational activity management.

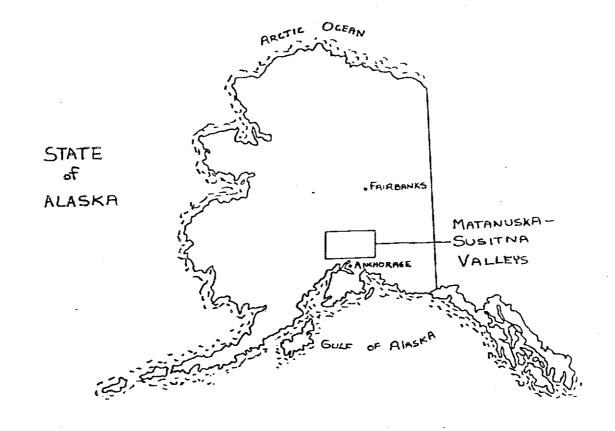
ESTABLISHMENT

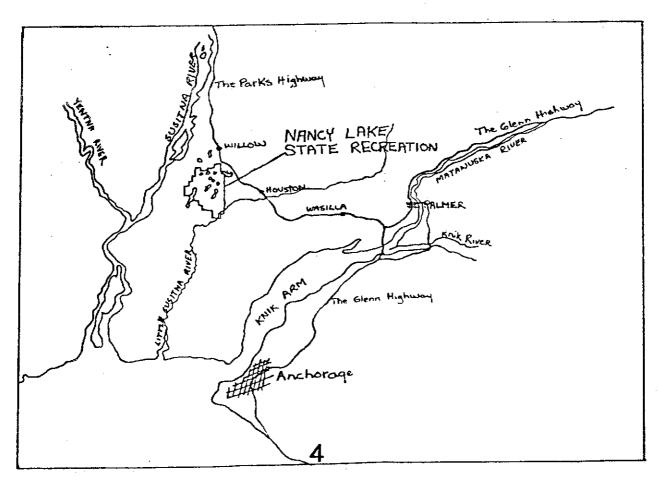
The Nancy Lake State Recreation Area was established July 6, 1966 by the Alaska Legislature. The legislation is contained in the Alaska Statutes under Article 14, AS 41.20.491. In 1970, the legislation was amended to adjust park boundaries, which reduced park acreage, and to permit the borough to extract gravel from lands within the park which had been previously selected by the borough. By those acts, all state-owned lands and waters within the boundaries of the recreation area were reserved for public recreation and from all uses incompatible with public recreation.

One day prior to the establishment of NLSRA, on July 5, 1966, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough established a special land-use district within the boundaries of the recreation area (Borough Ordinance 66-2). Its purpose was to reinforce the legislation which established the area for recreational purposes; to superimpose borough zoning laws designed to discourage non-recreational developments and uses; and to prescribe penalities for violation of the zoning ordinance.

The Nancy Lake State Recreation Site, also included in this master plan, was established as a unit of the State Park System by administrative action (ILMT No. 37437) on December 15, 1967. By that action this 35.59 acre parcel of state land was transferred to the Division of Parks for management. This site provides the only developed public access to Nancy Lake.

FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF NLSRA





SIZE, LOCATION, SETTING, AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, which includes the waters of Nancy Lake, is located in the heart of the lower Susitna valley in Southcentral Alaska. The total acreage of the unit is 22,685 acres. The Susitna River flows four miles to the west, and the Little Susitna River traverses the southeastern corner of the recreation area. The Parks (Anchorage-Fairbanks) Highway, paralleling the Alaska Railroad route, passes by Nancy Lake to the northeast bringing over 80% of the recreation area's visitors from Anchorage, 67 miles to the south.

The Nancy Lake State Recreation Area is within the political jurisdiction of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and principally serves the communities of Anchorage, Palmer, Wasilla, Willow and Houston. Approximately 200,000 residents are within two hours traveling time of the NLSRA.

Water is the dominant feature of NLSRA with lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands occupying half of the recreation area. The elongated lakes oriented northeast-southwest, rolling hills, and discontinuous ridges were laid down by retreating glaciers over 9,000 years ago.

The significance of the area is its quiet, graceful, and natural beauty; ease of access; its close proximity to the Municipality of Anchorage where half the state's population lives; its dedication for the single purpose of recreation; and the diversity of outdoor, year-round, recreational opportunities.

DEFINITION OF A STATE RECREATION AREA

The following is an excerpt from the Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework, published in 1982.

Definition and Purpose

A state recreation area is a relatively spacious unit and possesses a diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities. The dominant management objective of the unit is to provide a maximum level of outdoor recreational opportunities based on the natural values of the unit and its ability to sustain use without significant adverse effects on natural systems.

Developments and Activities

The management of a state recreation area allows for carefully planned and controlled resource modification to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities as long as the intensity of modification does not diminish the unit's natural and cultural values. Such

modifications must be based upon a formal decision to enhance public enjoyment of the state recreation area's natural values or to provide for site-appropriate outdoor recreational activities. Lands within the unit will be developed to provide diverse, high quality outdoor recreational experiences in keeping with regional use patterns and preferences. Other than state recreation sites, state recreation areas are generally the most intensively developed type of unit in the State Park System.

PLANNING PROCESS

In 1967, the original master plan for the NLSRA was prepared and identified the necessity "of providing future generations with unspoiled, openspace recreation of natural character" as a critical factor of NLSRA, a concept we are still in agreement with. The plan recommended by Sam L. Huddleston and Associates, called for the construction of 2900 picnic sites, 1750 campsites, a 160 unit lodge with heated pool, a marina with slips for 150 boats, a riding stable, a floatplane drome, a gas station, a grocery store, a 36-hole golf course, two group camps, and 20 miles of road. Not only are these recommendations far in excess of demand, as shown by visitor use and recreation data of NLSRA, they would overtax the capability of the recreation area to absorb these facilities and the use they would generate, as well as greatly increasing management and development costs. Such high usage would negate "providing future generations with unspoiled open-space recreation of natural character."

Therefore, the master plan has been rewritten, profiting by user surveys, budgetary constraints, site capabilities and park character, and is to be used as a tool for management, planning and development of the area. The planning process followed the guidance contained in the Division of Parks' standard operating procedure for master planning.

During the preparation of the master plan, emphasis was placed on making contacts with park visitors, individuals, organizations, and businesses. A mailing list of over 400 people was maintained. Approximately 190 people came to four public meetings in Willow and Anchorage to share information and opinions. Over 350 questionnaires were distributed to recreation area visitors, with 94 returned. The tabulated results are included in Appendix A.

At all times during the planning process, there has been active and continuous participation by the district superintendent and the chief ranger. This is to insure that management experience and the field personnel's special knowledge of the recreation area and its visitors have been incorporated into the recommendations.