

Recreation, Tourism, and Scenery

Recreational use and commercial tourist destinations are concentrated in small areas across the planning area. The majority of recreational use is concentrated in the Dalton Highway corridor, and in areas surrounding communities in the region. The use of off-road vehicles, including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobiles, is prohibited within the Dalton Highway Corridor. Allowable means of access include boat, fixed-wing aircraft, foot, ski, or dog team. The front country is accessible year-round via automobile off the Dalton Highway, the Atigun Pass and Galbraith Lake; these areas are the most popular for front country recreation. The main source of backcountry access is during the summer months via the river corridors that generally flow south to north through the region. The main river corridors are the Colville and Itkillik Rivers in the western half, and the Canning, Ivishak and Kavik Rivers in the eastern half. These rivers generally are accessed via fixed-wing aircraft for drop-off of primarily inflatable boats, with the exception of the Ivishak which can be accessed via powerboat from the Dalton Highway.

Common recreation activities along the Dalton Highway include camping, hiking, boating, gold panning, hunting, and fishing. Sport and subsistence hunting also occur throughout the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area. Hunters traverse off the Dalton Highway to hunt beyond the 5-mile management boundary with firearms, or hunt within the corridor closer to the road with bow and arrow. The area surrounding Atigun Pass is particularly popular for hunting and viewing Dall Sheep, and the slope north of Galbraith is popular for hunting caribou. Sport fishing occurs predominantly along the Dalton Highway in the Sagivanirktok River, as well as Galbraith Lake. Trapping activities are limited, but generally originate in the Chandalar Shelf area and extend east towards the Chandalar Lake area. Until recently, tourism on the North Slope has been limited but has seen increased interest. Tourism activities are generally concentrated along the Dalton Highway up to Deadhorse. Tourism activities occur in regional communities related to cultural activities, as well as for wildlife viewing for species like polar bears and whales. In general, recreation and tourism activities are increasing throughout the region.

This section will consider the recreation and tourism resources within the planning boundary. The Goals, Objectives, and Management Guidelines that follow apply to areas classified Public Recreation throughout the planning area.

Goals

Maintain Multiple Use. Maintain recreation opportunities on state land and water that serve multiple purposes such as subsistence and sport hunting, local and commercial tourism, and backcountry wilderness activities.

Contribute to Economic Diversity. Encourage commercial development of recreational facilities and services through concession contracts, land sales, leases, and permits where public recreation needs can most effectively be provided by private enterprise, while minimizing environmental impacts and conflicts with the existing users of the area.

Protect Recreational Resources. Protect resources including public access, visual and aesthetic resources, as well as the isolation and unique wilderness characteristics of the planning area.

Minimize Use Impacts. Maintain protection of ecosystems and habitat to prevent damage caused by inappropriate recreation use.

Objectives and Management Guidelines

Objective A. Manage state land within the planning area for multiple uses without eliminating, or unreasonably limiting recreation, tourism, or scenic resources.

- **Guideline A-1.** *Management of Recreation Uses on State Lands.* To the extent provided by law, ADNR is to manage recreation use and activities to enable a variety of uses and vehicle types, while ensuring that adverse impacts to fish and wildlife species and habitats are avoided or minimized, and to avoid the creation of user conflicts and if in existence, to minimize their impact.
- **Guideline A-2.** *Roles of Different Public Landowners in Providing Public Recreational Opportunities.* Generally, the State's role is to retain and manage land supporting recreational opportunities of regional or statewide significance. The state and federal governments are most capable of providing recreational opportunities that require large land areas, while local government is generally best suited for providing and managing community recreation opportunities. To recognize local government's role in providing community recreation needs, the state may transfer state land designated Public Recreation-Dispersed (Rd) or state recreation sites within or near existing communities, if the community has parks and recreation powers and if this action is in the overall best interest of the state (AS 38.05.810). The selection of these sites shall be agreed to by local government and the state and shall be contingent on the local government's commitment to develop and maintain the recreation uses, facilities, and values of these areas.
- **Guideline A-3.** *Coordination with Other Landowners and Users.* Recreation management, including the location and management of recreation facilities, will consider the current and projected future uses of lands owned by local governments and private landowners, and should strive for compatibility with adjacent current and anticipated uses.

- **Guideline A-4. *Public Use Sites.*** Uses that adversely impact public use sites or areas should not be authorized. Uses that are made available to the public, such as an airstrip development or dock, may be authorized if consistent with the management intent for the public use site or area, and if there is a demonstrated public need.
- **Guideline A-5. *Scenic Areas of Exceptional Value.***
 1. To the extent feasible and prudent, areas of exceptional scenic value are to be retained by the state and protected with easements, setbacks, or other management techniques.
 2. Authorizations issued by ADNR shall consider scenic values and such areas during the process of adjudication, and if found to be in the state's best interest, should retain or protect these areas through appropriate stipulations or management requirements.
- **Guideline A-6.** Consult with ADF&G in the siting of recreational facilities where fish and wildlife species or important habitats are present.

Objective B. Consider the needs of recreational use to minimize user conflict, provide for a quality experience for a range of user groups, and protect the natural values and attributes of the planning area.

- **Guideline B-1. *Private Commercial Recreation Facilities and Operations on State Land.***
 1. Lodges or other private commercial facilities and operations designed to be run as or to support private commercial recreation facilities may be authorized if the facility or operation fulfills the conditions outlined in this section, conforms to the requirements of AS 38.05.850, AS 38.05.070 and .075 or AS 38.05.073, or a management plan is prepared in accordance with AS 41.21.302(c) authorizing the facility.
 2. If authorized, the facility or operation should be sited, constructed, and operated in a manner that creates the least conflict with natural values and existing uses of the area.
 3. The commercial facility and its generated use should avoid significant adverse impacts on fish and wildlife habitat and existing uses of an area.
 4. For facilities supporting recreational fish and wildlife harvest, ADF&G should be consulted on the possible effects of increased harvest on fish and wildlife resources, and on established commercial, recreation, and subsistence users.
- **Guideline B-2. *Commercial Recreation Leasing Processes.***
 1. There are several processes for leasing state land for commercial recreational facilities under the following Alaska Statutes (AS): AS 38.05.070, 38.05.073, 38.05.075, and 38.05.810. The first three are used for commercial recreation facilities and the last is used for not-for-profit entities that provide some type of recreational use or service.

2. In particular, AS 38.05.073 is designed for creating recreational facility leaseholds. This statute requires that the regional land use plan identify areas suitable for recreational facility leasing. Given the broad scope of this plan, the determination of specific sites is impractical, although such uses are generally appropriate within most classified lands.
 3. Authorizations under AS 38.05.073 must evaluate the adequacy of the proposed recreation facility, and a final site determination and best interest finding must support this determination. Any amendments to this plan to accommodate such a commercial lease shall be reviewed by the Director of DMLW prior to or concurrent with the adjudication process.
- **Guideline B-3.** *Permits, Easements, and Leases Adjacent to Recreation Facilities.* Permits, easements, and leases may be issued adjacent to recreation facilities if the land manager determines that the two uses can be made compatible by design, siting or operating guidelines; or if the land manager determines there is no feasible and prudent alternative for the activity. This guideline also applies to sites reserved for future recreation facilities. The land manager's determination will be made after consultation with the facility manager.
 - **Guideline B-4.** Consult with ADF&G in the siting of recreational facilities where fish and wildlife species or important habitats are present.

Objective C. *Other Guidelines affecting Recreation and Tourism.* Many of the resource guidelines found within Chapter 2 either directly or indirectly affect recreation and tourism in the planning area. Other resources addressed in this chapter's sections should also be considered.