
Chapter 2

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Park Mission Statement
Denali State Park Goals and Objectives
Regional Goals
State Park System Goals and Policies

Chapter 2

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Park Mission Statement

The park’s enabling legislation does not include a formal statement of purpose for Denali State Park. The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, as part of the planning process and in conjunction with the Susitna Valley State Park Citizen’s Advisory Board, developed the following “Mission Statement” to serve in the absence of an explicit legislative statement of purpose.

Denali State Park shall be managed and developed in a manner compatible with the following goals:

- I. Protect the natural and cultural resources of the park and ensure that the park’s resources are maintained to allow for the public’s experience and understanding of the unique natural features that are found in this part of Alaska.
- II. In a manner that is compatible with Goal I, provide for a variety of opportunities for visitors to the park to experience and understand the park’s natural and cultural resources, including viewing Denali.

Park facilities shall be designed and developed to support the public use and understanding of the park and its resources and not serve as attractions in and of themselves.

- III. In a manner that is compatible with Goals I and II, recognize and accommodate, in so far as reasonable, the diverse needs of different types of visitors to the park. Avoid conflicts between different groups of visitors or between visitors and park resources.

Denali State Park Goals and Objectives

There are a number of goals and objectives to be achieved in the management and development of Denali State Park. This section presents a list of goals, organized into four groups: environmental, cultural, recreational, and tourism. Each goal statement is followed by specific objectives. The objectives are not ranked in terms of priority.

1. Protect Natural Resources within the Park. The park’s natural resource base consists of two parts: 1) the natural ecosystem with its processes and wildlife, and 2) the visible landscape composed of natural and man-made features.

- Protect naturally significant areas, such as:
 - specific habitat areas (such as bear denning and swan nesting areas),

Chapter 2 – Goals & Objectives

- sensitive wetlands,
- sensitive alpine and sub-alpine tundra,
- wildlife concentration areas, such as along rivers and creeks during salmon spawning season.
- Minimize impact to the park landscape, in general, by:
 - locating non-recreational activities outside the park,
 - locating facilities and activities where carrying capacity is adequate,
 - concentrating development in nodes to minimize the area disturbed,
 - locating recreation facilities relatively close to the highway to reduce impact to the backcountry,
 - rehabilitating disturbed areas, such as existing gravel borrow sites, to natural conditions or using them to meet recreation facility objectives,
 - designing and locating recreation facilities to minimize the need for management controls, and
 - limiting opportunities for misuse of the park.
- Minimize conflict with natural processes by:
 - locating facilities and activities on soils that are well-drained, permafrost-free, and not subject to erosion,
 - locating intensive development on sites that have gentle slopes that will not be subject to erosion,
 - locating facilities and activities outside floodplains (including glacier outburst floods),
 - locating recreation facilities where there is adequate water for proposed uses, and
 - locating facilities where the soil is suitable for waste disposal (Note: a package treatment plant is recommended for intense development sites, such as a lodge).
- Protect the natural character of the landscape by:
 - protecting the view from the road and the railroad, and keeping major development out of sight,
 - designing facilities to blend, rather than contrast with, the natural landscape, and
 - keeping the scale of facilities (including roads, parking, buildings, and other structures) relatively small.

2. Protect Historic Sites and Current Land Uses, and contribute to a new sense of community in the Denali Region.

- Protect historic and cultural sites, such as:
 - the Curry Lookout, and
 - any archaeological sites discovered (none are known to exist in the park).

- Minimize impact on existing land uses, both within and adjacent to the park, such as:
 - inholdings, particularly at the south entrance,
 - the Tokosha community south of the park,
 - the Chase community east of the park,
 - the Peters Hills community southwest of the park, and
 - the Talkeetna and Trapper Creek communities.
- Develop a sense of community for new development, should it occur, such as:
 - a synergistic relationship between outside development (including Talkeetna and Trapper Creek) and the park,
 - a village-like community atmosphere for development in or out of the park, and
 - an overall park ambience that is socially enjoyable for residents and tourists.

3. Provide Recreation Opportunities and Facilities for present and future Alaska residents. Denali State Park is a major component of the state park system, which exists primarily to serve Alaska residents. Non-resident and tourist recreation can be provided in Denali State Park to the extent that it complements but does not significantly displace recreation by residents.

- Provide a wide range of recreation opportunities for people of different ages, abilities, incomes, and recreational interests.
- Provide opportunities for year-round use, including the summer, winter and shoulder seasons in spring and fall.
- Provide those recreation facilities and uses that are most in demand given the regional status of the park and the existing recreation facilities in the area, including:
 - visitor center(s), campgrounds, campsites, and trails;
 - recreation facilities identified as in demand in the regional overview analysis, including campgrounds, campsites, visitor center, public use cabins/shelters, trails (hiking and cross-country skiing), and fishing access;
 - facilities that complement and support the private recreation industry in the region, most specifically parking and pick-up areas, information centers, and raft launching and pick-up points.
- Provide those recreation facilities and uses that take advantage of the special natural qualities of the park, such as views of Denali, glaciers, wildlife, river corridors, lakes, and the Curry-Kesugi Ridge landscape.
- Provide recreation facilities that are located and designed with human needs in mind, with concern for such factors as:
 - slope that is suitable for the activity;
 - southerly aspect for warmth and early snowmelt;
 - light breezes but not high winds;
 - attractive vegetation that provides visual scale and separation; and

- soils that are well-drained with good walking surfaces.
- Provide recreation facilities and uses that encourage compatible recreation use of adjoining land, such as:
 - trails and bridges to lands owned by the Alaska Railroad and to private and municipal lands to the south;
 - river access that provides access to adjacent state, federal, borough and private land; and
 - undeveloped overland access to Denali National Park adjacent to the north border of the state park.
- Provide recreation facilities and uses that enable a certain level of management presence, such as:
 - permit system on the number of users;
 - reservations and fee collections; and
 - vegetation management.
- Provide facilities for people approaching from either north or south:
 - information on recreation opportunities including signs and kiosks,
 - Denali viewpoints, picnic areas and waysides.
- Provide recreation facilities and uses that are highly accessible:
 - by road, including auto, bus, and RV;
 - by railroad and boat; and
 - during all seasons.
- Provide recreation facilities and uses that are not subject to adverse impact from:
 - mining claims, especially in the Peters Hills;
 - remote subdivisions; and
 - inholdings.
- Provide recreation facilities that minimize the safety risk to visitors from such sources as:
 - wildlife (especially bears);
 - landscape dangers, floods, glaciers, cliffs; and
 - conflict of pedestrian/vehicle traffic.

4. Support the State's Tourism Industry, which depends on both resident and non-resident visitors.

- Provide recreation facilities and uses that feature the natural resources of the park, including:
 - views of Denali;
 - wildlife (especially bear congregations at salmon spawning streams);

- glaciers (especially the Tokositna view);
- wooded and alpine areas; and
- river corridors.
- Provide a diversity of recreation opportunities that fit with various tourist groups, such as:
 - Large and small tour groups staying in lodges in the region, or just passing through on their way to Denali National Park who wish to visit the state park for a few hours or a day or more;
 - independent non-resident travelers who have a more flexible schedule in terms of number of days, activities, and lodging type; and
 - Alaskan residents, who are perhaps the most flexible in terms of itinerary and who make up the majority of visitors to the park in both summer and the winter.
- Provide a diversity of recreation facilities and opportunities that will encourage people to stay in the region longer, such as:
 - information centers to inform people of attractions and opportunities;
 - a major visitor center/interpretive facility featuring the natural and cultural history of the Denali area;
 - one or more minor interpretive destinations, such as overlooking a glacier or a bear/salmon stream;
 - gathering points for guided tours, such as for wildlife viewing and river rafting; and
 - opportunities for self-guided activities, such as hour, half-day, and day hikes.
- Provide opportunities for all seasons, such as:
 - high demand summer season;
 - “shoulder season” of spring and fall, which tends to require more protective facilities; and
 - winter season, which requires the greatest level of protection from weather.
- Provide recreation facilities that complement and support the private sector, in particular:
 - existing tourist and air charter facilities in Talkeetna;
 - existing lodges and service stations along the Parks Highway; and
 - existing lodges and guide services that occur within or near the park, particularly in the Tokosha community south of the park.
- Provide recreation facilities that complement Denali National Park and Preserve, such as:
 - major viewpoints of Denali;
 - a major interpretive center for the natural and cultural history of the region;
 - minor interpretive centers with specific emphasis, such as the Veterans Memorial;
 - camping and campsites;

- hiking and other trail-related activities;
- public use cabins and shelters; and
- wildlife tours, rafting tours, nature tours.
- Provide recreation facilities that are:
 - close to the main highway and adjacent to the railroad (or accessible by minimal spur; and
 - have adequate room for parking.
- Provide at least minimal recreation facilities at both ends of the park, for tourists traveling north or south, such as:
 - viewpoints of Denali;
 - picnic areas or waysides with vault toilet facilities; and
 - roadside view pull-outs with interpretive signs and kiosks.

Regional Goals

A number of conclusions were drawn from the information presented in the regional analysis (Chapter 6), and they form the basis for the regional goals presented here. They relate primarily to developing the recreation potential of the region. The final two recommendations, however, address development in Denali State Park. Specific goals and criteria for deciding what should be located inside park, and where, conclude this section.

1. Prepare a “Denali Recreation Region Study”. Federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector should join together to promote the “Denali Recreation Region,” extending, at least, from Talkeetna to Healy. The common goal would be to coordinate development so that the natural values of the region, particularly the “view from the road,” are protected as development occurs. Experience shows that tourism and recreation decline if an area develops a reputation as a “strip,” and that both tourism and recreation are enhanced if development looks coordinated and does not detract significantly from the natural landscape. DNR, NPS, ADOT/PF and the Denali and Matanuska-Susitna Boroughs should prepare a study assessing recreation values both north and south of the Alaska Range and propose alternative mechanisms for protecting visual resources along the highway while still allowing for development.
2. Develop a Regional Interagency Cooperative Agreement. Many public agencies are responsible for land management in the region, including the DNR, NPS, ADF&G, BLM, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Denali Borough, Alaska Railroad, and ADOT/PF. These agencies should meet periodically to coordinate plans, so that the action of one agency does not conflict with, or duplicate, the actions of others.

3. Provide Information Centers, North and South of Denali State Park. The centers should be located at Healy, Cantwell, and Talkeetna (or the Talkeetna Junction). The information centers (not visitor centers) would house maps, brochures and other information about both public and private facilities and services in the region. Structures would be low-cost and permit low-cost maintenance, such as kiosks.
4. Provide Visitor Interpretive Centers. The Denali region offers an exceptional opportunity for interpretation of natural and cultural resources. There is some merit in having several visitor centers in the region. For example, there might be one large center with a view of Denali in the park, a somewhat smaller facility that focuses on cultural/ historical interpretation in Talkeetna, and one or more smaller “remote” centers near glaciers or wildlife viewing points.
5. Limit Development inside Denali State Park. Although there is a need for a variety of recreation facilities, many of these might be provided outside the park on public or private land adjoining the park. In particular, the large tracts of state land north of the park appear to offer a variety of opportunities. There are also public lands south of the park, both state- and borough-owned, that appear to be suitable for recreation development. As a general rule, facilities located within the park should have a higher recreational, educational, interpretive or public safety value than could be achieved if located outside the park.

State Park System Goals and Policies

Overall goals for the State Park System are found in the *Statewide Framework Plan* (DPOR, 1982a) and summarized below:

1. Provide for the outdoor recreational needs of present and future generations of Alaskans and visitors. Within the system there will be a variety of park units that offer year-round facilities that are responsive to user demand, and offer a statewide or regional (as opposed to national or local) attraction.
2. Preserve and protect areas of natural significance. More specifically, the Division will identify naturally significant areas within its park units and to manage them so the natural qualities, including fish and wildlife populations, are not diminished. Overall, the Division will protect the natural resource base of parks for future generations.
3. Preserve and interpret Alaska’s cultural heritage. The Division will inventory and manage its units to protect cultural resources, and to provide visitor orientation and interpretive programs and facilities designed to foster understanding and appreciation of historic and cultural resources.
4. Protect and manage areas of significant scientific or educational value. Areas of special value should be identified through an inventory process and protected through the planning and design processes.

5. Provide support to the state's tourism industry. This goal will be met by protecting scenic areas, providing recreation and tourism opportunities, providing facilities and services within park units that complement outdoor recreation and natural history interpretation opportunities, and coordinating with other agencies.

The *Statewide Framework Plan* also presents policies applicable to Denali State Park. These policies are also contained in a strategy document entitled *Mission 1990* (DPOR, 1986).

Land Acquisition. The Division will identify land of recreational and resource value which should be added to existing parks or serve as buffers. This land will be acquired on a willing seller - willing buyer basis.

Planning. The Division will plan so that the park system meets needs within the region. Not all parks need to provide for all uses. Facilities should be provided where most appropriate and, in general, they should not duplicate proximate public or private facilities. Through planning, the Division should attempt to prevent loss of future recreational opportunities and it should develop opportunities for special recreation uses where appropriate.

Development. Parks will be resource-based, that is, the development itself should not serve as the attraction. Facilities should not unnecessarily harm the cultural or natural environment, nor should they be designed where they can impact or be impacted by adjacent private lands. Facilities should be given highest priority where crowding is evident. Facilities should be designed, both visually and functionally, to fit the Alaska environment.

Management. Facilities should be arranged and designed for ease and economy of operation, including protection of natural and cultural resources, reduction of hazards for users and staff, and general elimination of distractions from the recreation experience.

Concessions. Concession contracts are encouraged, where consistent with park values, to provide for management and visitor services within the park. Private development of recreational facilities, compatible with park purposes, on private lands outside park unit boundaries, is encouraged.

Visitor Information. Visitor information and interpretation are fundamental aspects of state park system management. Within each park the Division will provide an interpretive program with a particular theme, such as the natural ecosystem. The Division will cooperate with other agencies, the private sector, and volunteers to promote visitor information services.