

# FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK – MANAGEMENT PLAN

## 50% First Draft - Summary of Public Comments and Agency Responses



The Alaska Department of Natural Resources has been working to develop the Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park Management Plan since June 2009. As part of this effort, a 50% draft of the plan was issued for review on December 2, 2009. The public comment period extended until January 15, 2010. A summary of these comments and responses are listed below. Since they are not “issues,” comments regarding editing, document organization, and non-management issues are not included in this summary.

ISSUE	COMMENT	RESPONSE
<b>Caretaker Facility</b>	Could the caretaker facility be multi-use and possibly used as a public use cabin September through April?	This is a possibility; however, the second draft will state that the location and type of facility are to be determined.
<b>Caretaker Facility</b>	Concrete would be uncomfortable, and wood was what they used anyway. Wouldn't you have a problem with visitors thinking it was a historical building if you made it blend in with the historical features? Why not make a reproduction and label it as such?	The second draft will state that the location and type of facility are to be determined— a building material will not be recommended during this planning process.
<b>Caretaker Facility</b>	Further analysis should be given in reference to the need for a caretaker facility and what type of building it would be. Adaptive reuse of an existing structure might be recommended, however, consider the implications to adding a new building in the landmark.	The second draft will state that the location and type of facility are to be determined—a building material will not be recommended during this planning process. Adaptive reuse of an existing structure is an option.
<b>Caretaker Facility</b>	I strongly disagree with the statement “The Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park will house caretaker facilities to allow for an on-site staff or volunteer presence.” The State Parks Advisory Board never supported a strong 24/7 presence on the causeway. This is not a needed facility at this time, will cost too much money, and detract from the real need to stabilize and interpret the deteriorating World War II facilities.	Park managers feel that once improvements are made in the park, including but not limited to trail improvements, historic preservation, and interpretation, that an increased management presence is important for the safety and maintenance of the site. The recommendation for a caretaker facility will remain in the second draft, with language that explains that the location and type of facility are to be determined. Staffing or volunteer hours will not be decided at this time until further evaluation of need can be accomplished.

<b>Cost Estimates</b>	The plan should include cost estimates for proposed projects and for preservation of historic buildings.	Since the proposals and preservation methods in the final document will be general, and since costs change every year, the final plan will not include cost estimates.
<b>Existing Conditions</b>	The management plan should focus on recommendations for the park, not the existing conditions.	The goals, objectives, and recommendations are important components; however, it is also important to understand and describe the park's existing conditions in order to make those recommendations. Describing existing conditions also establishes a baseline for evaluating whether goals and objectives are being met.
<b>Interpretive Displays</b>	Will the interpretive displays be removed seasonally?	The second draft will not recommend that interpretive displays be removed seasonally. It will be recommended that interpretive displays be fabricated using a durable, weather-resistant material that is not affected by rain, snow, and other weather.
<b>Mahknati Island – Safety</b>	Before you fix up Mahknati Island and improve access, could the worst hazards be mitigated so no one assumes it is ok when the rest of the causeway [islands] are fixed up?	The second draft will recommend that major trail enhancements and preservation techniques for Mahknati Island be a low priority due to its current inaccessibility and the desire to focus on the central visitor experience area on Sasedni, Gold, and Virublennoi islands. The second draft will include language addressing how the division will address safety concerns, including that signage is an important factor in letting the public know when they are outside of a developed zone.
<b>Partnerships</b>	There is too much emphasis placed on the importance of Sitka Trail Works as a partner and not enough emphasis placed on the importance of the Sitka State Parks Citizens Advisory Board, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and other groups and private citizens.	The language related to partnerships, in both the "Existing Conditions" and "Recommendations" sections, has been improved to better describe the contributions from these and other groups.
<b>Roadbed</b>	Can you scrape off the organic material and use the old road bed?	The second draft will include a recommendation to use the original causeway road on the islands themselves, and widen it to near-historic widths. It will not be recommended that the causeway between islands be repaired to the original road width and surface due to cost and maintenance.

<b>Role of the Sitka State Parks Citizens Advisory Board as a contributor to the establishment of the park</b>	The introduction to how the causeway became a state historical park is in error because it favors Sitka Trail Works, Inc.'s involvement and does not mention the Sitka State Parks Citizens Advisory Board (SSPCAB).	The text in this section has been reduced to place emphasis on the actual designation and the purpose of a historical park as defined by the "Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework." References to both Sitka Trail Works, Inc. and the SSPCAB have been removed.
<b>Toilets</b>	Toilets are not mentioned, but I assumed you are the experts on how many and where.	The first draft did describe that one toilet was recommended for the day use area on Sasedni Island. The second draft will include this same recommendation; however, the location will not be specified.
<b>Toilets</b>	A single toilet on Sasedni Island might be inadequate and possibly an uncomfortable distance from either end of the causeway.	A single toilet on Sasedni Island is the current recommendation; however, additional toilets could be added if needed. Sasedni Island was chosen as the designated recreation area and is nearest to the main landing area at Whiting Harbor.
<b>Trails</b>	The interpretive trail recommended to circumnavigate Sasedni Island should not be a dirt walking path, rather a hardened surface, likely D1.	The second draft will recommend the interpretive trail circumnavigating the island be a hard-packed, accessible trail.
<b>Vision Statement</b>	The Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park vision statement is too specific and should not include specific actions.	The vision statement in the second draft will not include specific actions and will be considerably shorter.
<b>Visitation</b>	There is no evidence to support the statement that "it is likely that the majority of park users will be Sitka community members..."	This statement has been deleted and replaced with a more general statement.
<b>Visitation</b>	The statement that "As the included visitor data shows for cruise ship passengers, the average age of visitors, their limited time in port, and inclement weather influence their decision making when choosing on-shore tours; the division could deduce that the number of cruise ship passengers interested and able to tour the causeway islands by kayak or boat will be small" is deeply flawed and should be removed.	The reference to the first part of the statement, which was published in a Union College 2006 visitor survey study, is included in the second draft; however, the language has been generalized to show recognition that nothing should be deduced from the findings of one single study relating to potential visitation in the park and lists several park improvements that could potentially lead to a dramatic increase in visitation.

<b>Visitor Center Facility</b>	I do not support a visitor facility at this time, which would be a very expensive, ongoing commitment not justified by the primary purpose of the park.	A visitor center facility would be a long-range project, dependent on the need, community support, and division's support for this type of facility, in addition to a separate feasibility study to determine costs, maintenance, and ongoing operation. This language will be included in the second draft.
<b>Visitor Center Facility</b>	One of the existing historic structures ought to be adapted for a visitor center facility. A new feature to the landmark has the potential to compromise the site's historic integrity.	A visitor center facility would be a long-range project, dependent on the need, community support, and division's support for this type of facility, in addition to a separate feasibility study to determine costs, maintenance, and ongoing operation. This language will be included in the second draft. Adaptive reuse of an existing structure could be an option.