

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Regional Characteristics and Planning Area Overview

Located on the southern end of the Kenai Peninsula in Southcentral Alaska, Kachemak Bay extends 40 miles easterly along the base of the Kenai Mountains on the east side of Lower Cook Inlet. The uplands on the north side of the bay are characterized by rolling forested hills sloping down to the bay. In contrast, the snowcapped Kenai Mountains, rise dramatically on the south side of the bay, to heights of over 5,000 feet. Heavily forested forelands, steep rocky slopes, and glacially scoured fjords continue uninterrupted as Kachemak Bay merges into lower Cook Inlet and onto the rugged outer coast on the Gulf of Alaska.

On May 9, 1970, the Legislature approved 105,387 acres as Kachemak Bay State Park (KBSP). The Legislature set aside these lands as special purpose to “protect and preserve ... [its] unique and exceptional scenic nature.” Two years later, the Legislature added nearly 200,000 acres of remote and rugged land and waters adjacent to KBSP to the state park system through creation of the Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park (KBSWP). Today, augmented by several legislative additions, these two park units encompass about 371,000 acres (see Map 1 - Boundaries on page 3 of this chapter and Appendix B – Enabling Legislation).

Located also within the boundaries of the KBSP and the KBSWP are 201 privately owned parcels totaling approximately 845 acres of land. Another 189 acres (7 parcels) are owned by the University of Alaska, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Seldovia Native Association, and (Bureau of Land Management (BLM). While these private and agency owned lands are within the planning area, the plan policies and recommendations do not apply to them.

Plan Scope and Purpose

Management responsibility for the park units is assigned to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) for the purposes of control, development and maintenance. The purpose of this management plan is to provide management direction that facilitates recreational use opportunities while conserving the natural and cultural resources through a set of policies and recommendations that guide permitting activities, uses, facilities, and trail development on all the state owned and managed land and waters within KBSP and KBSWP. In addition to the above described park units, the Management Plan (the plan) for the Kachemak Bay State Park and Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park addresses several small administratively designated park system units

located on the north side of Kachemak Bay. These State Recreation Sites (SRS) include the Eveline SRS, Diamond Creek SRS, Overlook Park SRS, and two relatively small State-owned parcels directly adjacent to the KBSP (see Map 2 - General Land Ownership on page 5 of this chapter). The term “park units” used in this plan refers to all the lands within KBSP, KBSWP, and the smaller park units and recreation areas.

Management issues or opportunities to be addressed in the park units are identified and facility and management recommendations are provided. This plan provides a framework for management and permitting decisions made by DPOR staff. The plan is intended to be a twenty-year document; therefore, it should be periodically reviewed to determine the effectiveness of management recommendations and adapted to reflect changing use characteristics and new issues that affect resources, management, and public use of the park units.

Reason for Revision

Plans are more than a tool to address issues – the planning process allows DPOR to reassess its management policies to determine if they are meeting the needs of the recreating public while ensuring that uses and activities are not significantly impacting the natural and cultural resources. This plan, therefore, addresses several significant issues that have arisen since the last management plan. The primary reason for revising the management plan is to update the management guidelines and trail and facility recommendations where necessary to support an increasing number of visitors to the park units and to provide diverse recreational opportunities consistent with the mission of the agency and the purposes of the units.

State Park Unit Purpose and Definition

Kachemak Bay State Park and Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park were created via legislation in the early 1970s. The founding statute for KBSP provides that it was created to “...protect and preserve this land and water for its unique and exceptional scenic value, the park is established and shall be managed as a scenic park.” (Alaska Statute (AS) 41.21.131) A scenic park is defined in statute as:

“...relatively spacious areas of outstanding natural significance, where major values are in their natural geological, faunal, or floral characteristics, the purpose of which is directed primarily toward the preservation of its outstanding natural features and where development is minimal and only for the purpose of making the areas available for public enjoyment in a manner consistent with the preservation of the natural values such as camping, picnicking, sightseeing, nature study, hiking, riding, and related activities which involve no major modification of the land, forests, or waters,



Kachemak Bay State Park & State Wilderness Park

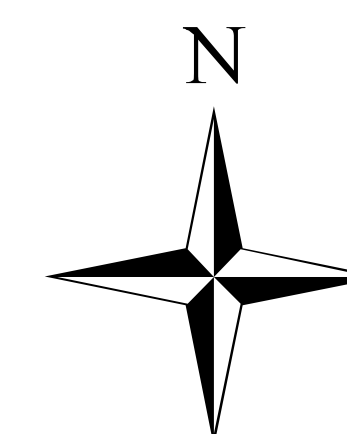
Map 1: General Boundaries

- State Park (AS 41.21.131)
- State Wilderness Park (AS 41.21.140)
- State Park Managed Areas
- State Critical Habitat Area
- Roads



The State of Alaska makes no expressed or implied warranties (including warranties of merchantability and fitness) with respect to the character, function, or capabilities of this product or its appropriateness for any user's purposes. In no event will the State of Alaska be liable for any incidental, indirect, special, consequential or other damages suffered by the user or any other person or entity whether from use of the product, any failure thereof or otherwise, and in no event will the State of Alaska's liability to you or anyone else exceed the fee paid for the product.

Created: September, 2018
RJK, DNR, DMLW, RADS
Projected Coordinate System: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 6 North



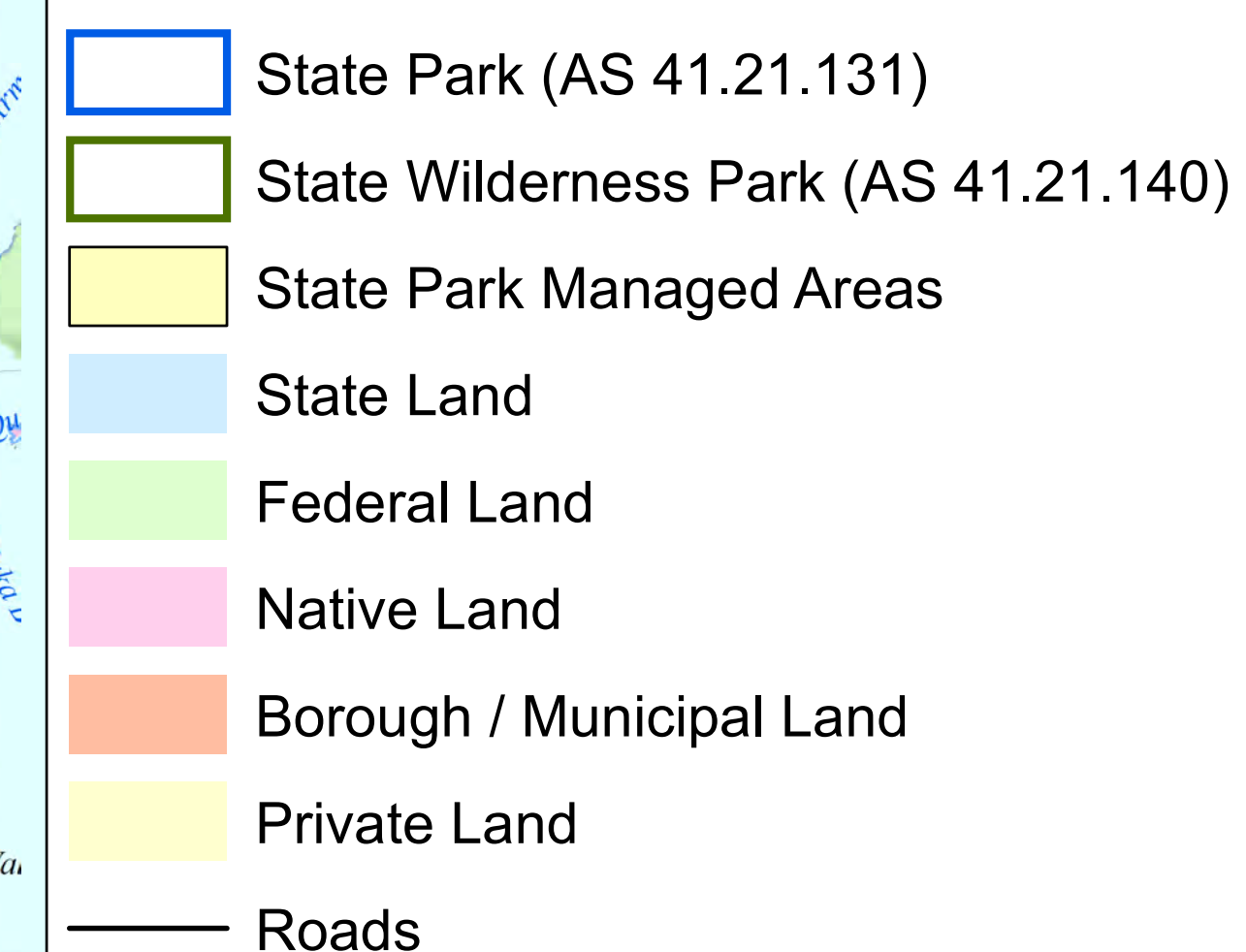
0 1.25 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

Cook Inlet

Gulf of Alaska

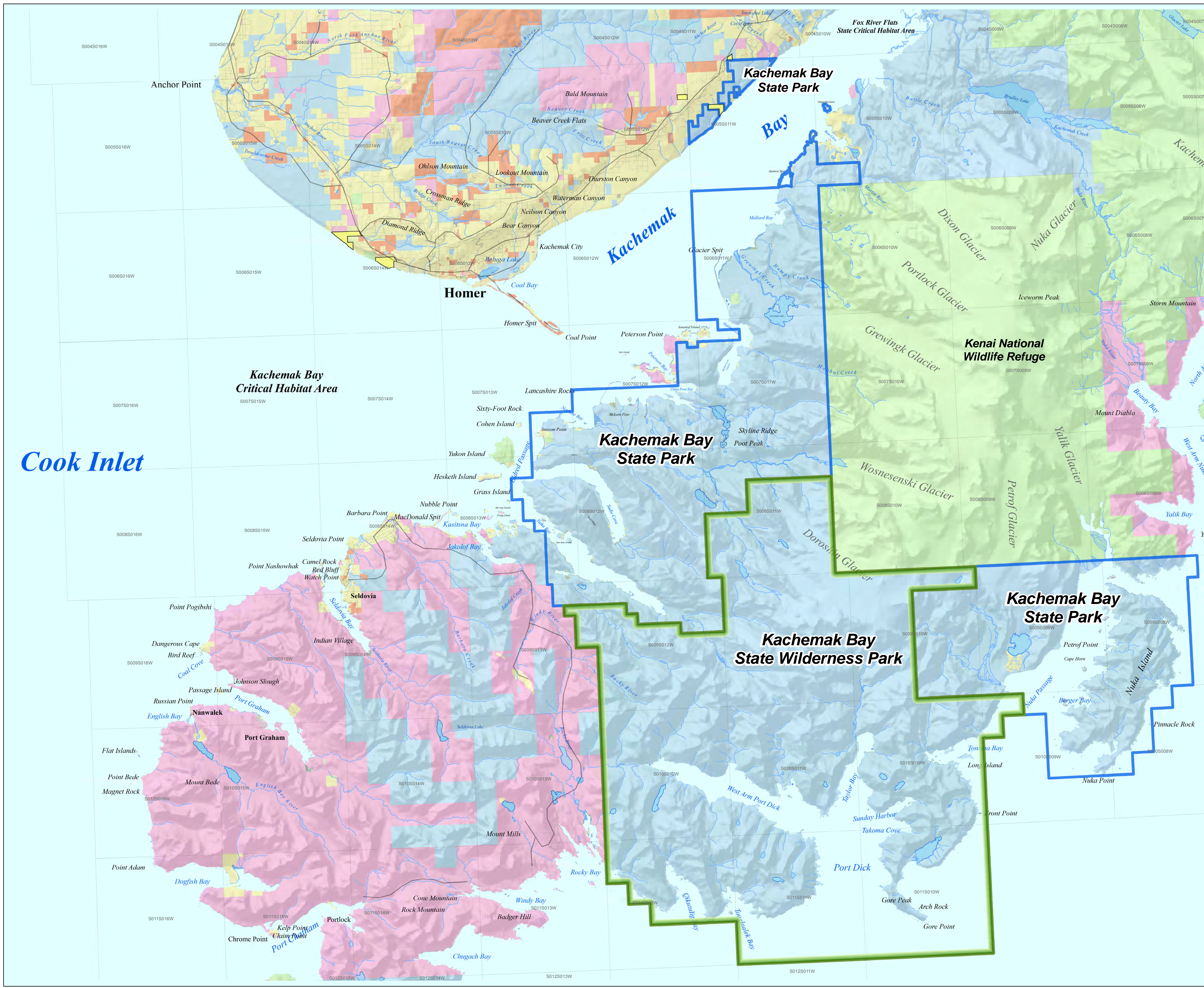
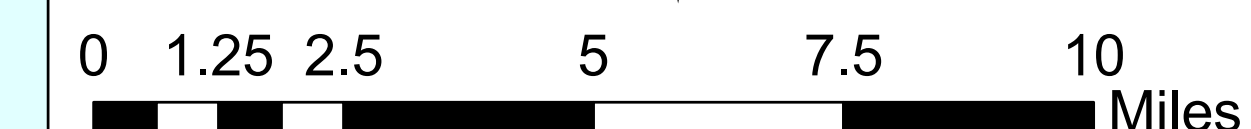
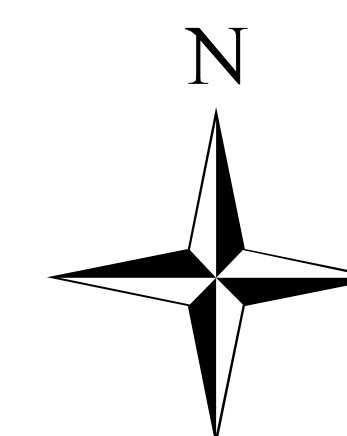


Map 2: General Land Ownership



The State of Alaska makes no expressed or implied warranties (including warranties of merchantability and fitness) with respect to the character, function, or capabilities of this product or its appropriateness for any user's purposes. In no event will the State of Alaska be liable for any incidental, indirect, special, consequential or other damages suffered by the user or any other person or entity whether from use of the product, any failure thereof or otherwise, and in no event will the State of Alaska's liability to you or anyone else exceed the fee paid for the product.

Created: September, 2018
RJK, DNR, DMLW, RADS
Projected Coordinate System: NAD 1983
UTM Zone 6 North



1 and without extensive introduction of artificial features or forms of recreational
2 development that are primarily of urban character.”¹
3

4 The founding statute for KBSWP provides that it was created to “...protect and preserve this
5 land and water for its unique and exceptional wilderness value, the park is established and
6 shall be managed as a wilderness park.” (AS 41.21.140) A wilderness park is defined in
7 statute as:
8

9 “...an area whose predominant character is the result of the interplay of natural
10 processes, large enough and so situated as to be unaffected, except in minor ways, by
11 what takes place in the non-wilderness around it, a physical condition which activates
12 the innermost emotions of the observer and where development of man-made objects
13 will be strictly limited and depend entirely on good taste and judgment so that the
14 wilderness values are not lost.”²
15

16 The policies found on page 7 of the Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework
17 (Framework) defines a state park as “...a relatively spacious area possessing outstanding and
18 distinct natural, cultural, scenic and/or scientific values.” The purpose of the unit, identified
19 as the dominant management objective, is to “... maintain the park’s natural and cultural
20 resources for long-term use and enjoyment by the public. A level of recreational
21 opportunities, which is compatible with the unit’s resource values, shall be provided.”
22
23

24 **State Recreation Site Definition and Purpose**

25

26 In addition to KBSP and KBSWP, this plan also provides management direction for several
27 relatively small SRSSs on the north side of the bay. Because the Diamond Creek, Overlook
28 Park, and Eveline State Recreation Sites were created administratively, and not by an act of
29 the Legislature, they lack a purpose statement or unit-specific statutes.³ On page 11, the
30 Framework document defines a State Recreation Site as:
31

32 “...a relatively small area and provides one or more outdoor recreational
33 opportunities. A state recreation site may also be established to provide access to
34 outdoor recreational lands and opportunities not managed as part of the State Park
35 System.”
36

37 Management objectives are to be site specific and emphasize “...recreational use over
38 resource protection.”
39

¹ AS 41.21.990(1)

² AS 41.21.990(2)

³ Subsequent to administrative creation, management of the Overlook Park Site was assigned to the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society, and, while still listed as a State Recreation Site, it is more closely aligned with the purposes of a State Preservation Area. As such, management intent for Overlook Park is addressed in Chapter 6.

“The management of a state recreation site allows for resource modification to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities as long as natural and cultural resources are protected. Activities and developments will vary according to the intent and purpose for which the unit is designated. Developments and activates which may be found at state recreation sites include – but are not limited to picnic areas, campgrounds, parking lots, boat launches and scenic overlooks.”

Current Planning Process

DPOR leadership and managing staff met with DNR planners in late 2011 and early 2012 to discuss known issues within the Kachemak Bay park units and discuss possible needs for revising the existing 1995 management plan.

The decision to revise the plan was made in 2012, and planning staff began to identify the range of agency issues the plan would address. Research and review of available information and data sources began, and staff initiated development of a public contact list.

In November 2013, DNR released a two-part questionnaire seeking public input regarding recreational use, access, and facilities for KBSP and KBSWP. Part A consisted of ten questions related to recreation and facilities in the park units; Part B consisted of six questions that were specific to those who own the land within or adjacent to the park units. The purpose of landowner specific questions was to better understand how private property is being used and accessed.

The planning team held a series of ‘open house’ format public meetings in spring 2014 in the communities of Homer, Seldovia, Port Graham, Nanwalek, and Anchorage.

Meeting participants voiced many issues at the public meetings (captured by facilitators) and completed and submitted 122 questionnaires to DNR planning staff.

The public scoping written comment period was open from November 13, 2013 through May 15, 2014. After the public scoping period, a series of public stakeholder meetings were held in May 2016. Meetings were scheduled to gain additional information from stakeholders who had detailed knowledge of the area’s recreational uses and public impact. Stakeholder groups were provided with customized questionnaires and given the opportunity to present their ideas/perceptions at the meeting. Following the stakeholder presentations, the planning team, parks staff, and other stakeholders convened a round table discussion.

The public process outreach associated with this planning effort was typical for management plans of this type and involved multiple opportunities for the public and non-governmental agencies to interact directly with planning and management staff to provide input on the future management of these popular park units.

Plan Organization

The plan is organized to provide a broad scale overview in the first chapter, then successively more detailed information and management intent and recommendations in subsequent chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the planning area; the statutes and guidance that established and defined the units; and an overview of the planning process. Chapter 2 provides area-wide and unit-specific goals and objectives for the park units. Chapter 3 presents information on the natural and cultural resources; Chapter 4 provides information on uses within the park units and issues identified through this planning process. Chapters 5 and 6 provide area-wide management direction and guidelines and unit-specific management, respectively. Finally, Chapter 7 presents implementation, review and modification information. The appendices contain a glossary of terms; the parks' enabling legislation; a detailed catalog of species in the parks; park management guidelines; summaries of public comment and historically permitted use; guidelines for future permitted use; and the associated Kachemak Bay Trails Management Plan for the park units.

Relationship to Other Plans

Other plans in the area were reviewed during the preparation of this plan. Adopted in January, 2000 the DNR Kenai Area Plan (KAP) guides management of the general domain state lands on the Kenai Peninsula. Because the KBSP and KBSWP park units were removed from the public domain, the KAP does not classify or provide management intent for these lands. Lands within the State Recreation Sites, however, are not withdrawn from the public domain and the KAP does classify and provide management intent for those lands. Should DPOR decide to withdraw from current Interagency Land Management Agreements for these lands, the management intent and classification provided in the KAP will guide management of the lands.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) adopted the latest version of the Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats Critical Habitat Areas (KBFRFCHA) Management Plan in 1993. The KBFRFCHA management plan area overlaps this plan for approximately 21,439 acres of tide and submerged lands on the south side of the bay (see Map 1- General Boundaries at the end of this chapter). See Appendix G – Cooperative Agreement for a description of DNR's and ADF&G's agreement on managing this overlap area.