



## **Kachemak Bay State Park and Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park Planning Update**



In November 2013, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released a questionnaire seeking public input regarding recreational use, access and facilities for Kachemak Bay State Park and Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park (KBSP and KBSWP respectively). The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part A consisted of ten questions related to recreation and facilities in KBSP and KBSWP. Respondents were asked to make selections from a list that was provided and were given the option fill in any additional information on the line listed as “Other”. Part B consisted of six questions that were specific to those who own land within or adjacent to the park. The purpose of the landowner specific questions was to better understand where private property is located, how it is being used, and how it is being accessed. One hundred twenty two completed questionnaires were received by the January 31, 2014 deadline.

### **Summary**

Nearly all of the respondents indicated they had visited KBSP and the majority of respondents indicated they had visited KBSWP. Issues related to accessibility, including distance and cost, were the main reasons listed for not visiting KBSWP. Question three asked respondents to indicate why they chose to visit KBSP. Respondents were given a list of twelve options, including an “Other” line where they could write in any additional information, and encouraged to select as many options as applied. Top selections for why respondents chose to visit KBSP were scenic beauty, established trails, and nearby and convenient. A number of responses under this category were listed on the “Other” line including hatchery operations specifically related to anchored net pens, salmon enhancement and commercial fishing, as well as entries for clamming and hunting.

Next, respondents were asked about where they had recreated in KBSP, what types of activities they engaged in during their visit, and what time of year they usually recreate at the park. The majority of respondents indicated that they have recreated in Halibut Cove, Tutka Bay, Sadie Cove, and China Poot Bay. While visiting these areas, respondents most often engaged in general recreation, hiking, boating, and sport fishing. Respondents were given the opportunity to list additional activities on the “Other” line, and common responses were hatchery operations including anchored net pens and fishery/salmon enhancement, berry picking, and climbing (including both rock & ice)/mountaineering. Additionally, most respondents indicated that they typically recreated at the park during the summer.

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferences regarding what recreational uses or facilities, that may or may not currently be available, were appropriate and not appropriate for KBSP. Respondents were able to make as many selections from the list of twenty eight options as they deemed appropriate, as well as being able to write in additional comments on the “Other” line. Top selections for appropriate uses and facilities were hiking, camping, wildlife viewing/birding, non-motorized boating, public use cabins, and cross country skiing. The most common entries under “Other” were hatchery operations

including anchored net pens, salmon enhancement and commercial fishing, and allowing all users/uses equal access to the park. Top selections for uses and facilities that were considered not appropriate were use of personal watercraft, ATVs, snowmobiles, and heli-skiing. Some respondents indicated on the "Other" line that they were either undecided on the appropriateness of certain activities including personal watercraft, motorized boating, helicopters, snowmobiles, and hunting, or they felt these uses could be appropriate if the activity was limited to selected areas, subject to permitting, and done responsibly. Nearly one third of all respondents did not make any selections from the provided list under the "Not Appropriate" category, however a number of those respondents did elect to enter additional comments on the "Other" line. The common theme from the comments listed on the "Other" line was that all uses should be allowed, and no users or type of activity should be singled out and prohibited.

Next respondents were asked to tell us about what they liked most and liked least about KBSP. The top selections regarding what respondents liked most about KBSP were scenic beauty, opportunity to escape urban environment, and remote boating. Once again, respondents were given the opportunity to add their comments on the "Other" line. Top comments included commercial fishing, salmon enhancement, remote anchored net pens, hatchery operations and accessibility including proximity to/from Homer and the ocean. Respondents indicated that lack of accessibility was the least liked attribute of KBSP. This issue was raised again when respondents noted on the "Other" line that the cost of transportation across the bay limited their access to the park. Respondents also listed the prohibition on Personal Watercraft (PWC) and restricting salmon enhancement, hatcheries, anchored net pens, and commercial fishing as two of the top things they liked the least about KBSP.

Part B of the questionnaire was specific to landowners whose property is within or adjacent to the park. Twenty six respondents indicated that they were property owners, and the majority of those indicated that their property is used as a private residence. Seasonal use was also indicated as a common use of private property. Some landowners indicated that they use their property as part of a commercial operation or are considering using the property in a commercial operation based on new recreational opportunities such as the water trail. Half of all landowners indicated that they live on the property full time and slightly less than half indicated that they live on the property on a part time or seasonal basis. A small number of landowners indicated that they do not live on the property at all.

A large majority of respondents indicated that they have existing structures on their property. The most common responses included homes, cabins, sheds, and shops. Only one respondent indicated that they had no plans to add any structures to the property because the land is for sale. The remaining land owners indicated that they plan to build common structures like houses, cabins, sheds, or shops on their property. Responses pertaining to duration of property ownership were broken into three categories, one to ten years, eleven to twenty years, and twenty one years or more. Half of the property owners indicated that they have owned their land for at least twenty one years. A quarter of those that responded have owned their property for ten years or less, with the majority falling into the four to five year range. Responses indicated that Tutka Bay, East End Road, and Halibut Cove were the most common areas for private land ownership, and boats and roads were listed as the most common means of access.

The planning team would like to thank all of those who took the time to complete and submit a questionnaire. This questionnaire was not developed for rigorous statistical analysis so selections will not be treated as votes. The questionnaire was developed as a tool to gather information on recreational preferences. The information gathered helps the planning team focus research efforts and will be used when considering and evaluating different management options and alternatives.