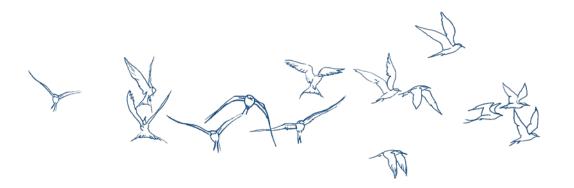
Alaska's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2027

ALASKA LIFE OUTDOORS



The revision of this plan was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578) as amended.

Thank you to our SCORP 2023-2027 partners

Alaska Trails – Project Management; Alaska Map Company – GIS Support; RRC – Data Support; NPS RTCA – Project Guidance; DPOR Interpretation and Education Unit with Terragraphica – Design.



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Governor Mike Dunleavy STATE OF ALASKA

December 29, 2022

Mr. Matthew Lawson Outdoor Recreation Planner State and Local Assistance Programs National Park Service 601 Riverfront Drive Omaha, NE 68102

Re: Alaska Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2023-2027

Dear. Mr. Lawson:

I am pleased to present Alaska's updated Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This document has been updated, as required by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (L WCF) grant program, and represents our ongoing commitment to public outdoor recreation. The SCORP serves as a reference for outdoor recreation usage trends and various components that are crucial to Alaska's economy.

The updated SCORP that covers 2023-2027 presents a snapshot of our Alaska Life Outdoors. This document was developed by seeking input from hundreds of Alaskans across the state and ample opportunities for public participation. The SCORP provides direction and establishes priorities for funding public outdoor recreation activities. The goals and objectives identified in this plan will help guide our funding decisions for the next five years. The Alaska SCORP 2023-2027 is the result of thousands of hours and coordinated efforts of state, local and federal agencies, outdoor recreation providers (both public and private), Alaska State Parks staff, and the Alaskan residents who are outdoor enthusiasts. Completion of this updated plan allows for continued LWCF grant support for public outdoor recreation facilities throughout Alaska. We look forward to further investment in outdoor recreation opportunities which will enhance the present and future well-being of all Alaskans.

Sincerely.

Mike Dunleavy Governor

Enclosure: Alaska SCORP 2023-2027

cc: Ricky Gease, Director, Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation Jean Ayers, L WCF Grants Administrator, Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Department of Natural Resources





DIVISION OF PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION Office of the Director

> 550 W 7th Ave., Suite 1380 Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Main: 907-269-8700 Fax: 907-269-8907

Greetings,

Here's to celebrating and fostering Alaska Life Outdoors as we look forward and plan for the future of Outdoor Recreation. Alaska is unique in that life outdoors is integrated and at the core of our well-being. The Alaska SCORP 2023-2027 documents this importance while charting a course for the future of Outdoor Recreation in the state. The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) initiated this update of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan with three primary intentions:

- 1. To expand partnerships and involvement with outdoor recreation agencies, users, stakeholders, industry, non-profits, and the public.
- 2. To generate a new set of outdoor recreation data tools to better inform decision making.
- 3. To produce a broad, encompassing set of Alaska centric outdoor recreation goals, that improves user participation and access, economic, workforce, health and stewardship benefits, and collaboration for funding and management.

Towards this intention, we thank all those who participated in its development and invite you to engage and explore the Alaska SCORP 2023-2027. A solid foundation has been established to achieve many of the goals and objectives set forth in this document.

And of course, as there is no substitute for firsthand experience, we encourage you to engage and explore Alaska Life Outdoors, to connect with our state's world class natural, cultural, and historic resources, and to form enduring bonds and memories with family, friends, others, and oneself.

Very respectfully,

Richy Slease

Ricky Gease Director, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation Alaska Department of Natural Resources

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Alaska Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2027

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ACRONYMS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	ID	Identification
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game	IMBA	International Mountain Biking Association
ADN	Anchorage Daily News	JBER	Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
AEDC	Anchorage Economic Development Corporation	K-12	Kindergarten-Twelfth grade
AK	Alaska	KANA	Kodiak Area Native Association
ANCSA	Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act	КМ	Kilometer
ARDORS	Alaska Regional Development Organizations	LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
ASLO	Alternate State Liason Officer	М	Million
ASNA	Arctic Slope Native Association	MHT	Mental Health Trust
ASRC	Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	MLW	Mining, Land, and Water
ATIA	Alaska Travel Industry Association	MSB	Matanuska-Susitna Borough
ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle	MSTPF	Mat-Su Trails and Park Foundation
AVCP	Association of Village Council Presidents	NPS	National Park Service
AVSP	Alaska Visitors Statistics Program	NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
AZ	Arizona	NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
BBNA	Bristol Bay Native Association	OIA	Outdoor Industry Association
BBNC	Bristol Bay Native Corporation	OPSP	Open Project Selection Process
BEA	Bureau of Economic Analysis	OR	Outdoor Recreation
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color	ORTAB	Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board
BLM	Bureau of Land Management	ORV	Off-Road Vehicle
CBJ	City and Borough of Juneau	PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
CDP&HP	Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion	PWS	Prince William Sound
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	ROW	Right Of Way
CIA	Chilkoot Indian Association	RTCA	Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
CIRI	Cook Inlet Region Incorporated	RTP	Recreational Trails Program
CITC	Cook Inlet Tribal Council	RV	Recreational Vehicle
CNV	Chickaloon Native Village	SCORP	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
CVTC	Chickaloon Village Traditional Council	SLO	State Liason Officer
DCCED	Department of Commerce, Community, and	SnowTRAC	Snowmobile Trails Advisory Council
	Economic Development	SSP	Sustainable Southeast Partnership
DHSS	Departmnent of Health and Social Services	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization	SWAG	Statewide Advisory Group
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles	TAP	Transportation Alternatives
DNR	Department of Natural Resources	TCC	Tanana Chiefs Conference
DOT&PF	Department of Transportation and Public Facilities	TRAYLS	Training Rural Alaska Youth Leaders and Students
DPOR	Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation	UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	U.S.	United States
FLAP	Federal Lands Access Program	USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
FY	Fiscal Year	USFS	United States Forest Service
GAOA	Great American Outdoors Act	USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	WFL	Western Federal Lands
GIS	Geographic Information System	WWII	World War Two
GPS	Global Positioning System	YK	Yukon-Kuskokwim





OUTDOOR RECREATION FACTS

Nationwide, American consumers spend over \$800 billion a year on outdoor recreation; top categories: trail sports, camping, water sports.

The average out-of-state visitor spends nine days in Alaska; in New Zealand the average stay is 19 days. If visitors had a reason to spend one more day in Alaska, annual visitor spending would grow by \$250 million per year.

City parks, biking and hiking, cross-country skiing, camping, ATV riding are the biggest recent outdoor recreation growth areas, as found in the Land Managers survey.

Smart public improvements in outdoor recreation consistently deliver a big return on investment – typically \$5 back for every \$1 invested.

Alaska Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2027

Executive Summary

Outdoor recreation is vital to the lives and livelihoods of Alaskans. The state's stunning wild landscapes, vast expanses of public land, productive ecosystems, vital cultural traditions, and four seasons of outdoor adventure position Alaska to be a world leader in outdoor recreation.

This SCORP is a call to action; providing a path forward for Alaska to take advantage of our state's remarkable outdoor recreation strengths.



Below are four opportunities and challenges facing Alaska. In each case, new outdoor recreation strategies and investments would deliver big benefits and lasting solutions.

- Active outdoor recreation demand is skyrocketing. Guided by social media and online maps, Alaska's tourism industry is evolving, with a growing percentage of travelers seeking active, intimate, self-directed outdoor experiences. Alaska residents, who already led the nation in outdoor recreation participation, were even more active outside during the COVID pandemic, driving record use of Alaska State Parks which continued even as COVID constraints declined.
- 2. A sizeable share of Alaska's outdoor recreation facilities and destinations are undersized, overcrowded, and not well maintained. While there has been a recent uptick in funding, Alaska has chronically underinvested in outdoor recreation planning, construction, and maintenance.
- 3. Alaska is in a multi-year economic recession, triggered by declining oil revenues, which led to nine years of net out-migration. By building on Alaska's intrinsic strengths, outdoor recreation and tourism can help the state rebuild a strong, durable economy.
- 4. Alaska faces growing rates of Type II diabetes and obesity. More than 60 percent of Alaskans are obese or overweight. A growing body of research shows outdoor activity delivers a wide range of physical and mental health benefits, often on par with pharmaceutical treatments.

OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES: THE SCORP RESPONSE

The SCORP includes facts about how outdoor recreation is growing and changing, new tools for data-driven decision making, and ambitious but attainable statewide goals. Additionally, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) is developing an online companion to the SCORP, a GIS Hub web portal for Outdoor Recreation, to act as a collaborative clearinghouse for Alaska outdoor recreation analytics, information and resources such as agency management plans, planning templates and examples.

OVERVIEW OF STATEWIDE GOALS (CHAPTER 4)

- 1. Support the Alaska Outdoor Recreation Way of Life: "Alaska for Alaskans." Outdoor recreation is deeply woven into Alaska life. This SCORP goal identifies the unique ways Alaskans enjoy getting outside, from city parks to subsistence, and the types of outdoor recreation improvements most needed.
- 2. Make Outdoor Recreation a Cornerstone of Alaska's Economic Future. SCORP strategies under this goal focus on supporting the categories of outdoor recreation growing fastest with residents and visitors, including biking and hiking, public use cabins and hut-to-hut systems, winter activities, and in-town or near-town recreation. Additional strategies to expand economic benefits include stronger gateway communities and spreading more economic opportunities to rural Alaska.
- 3. Use Outdoor Recreation to Attract and Retain Residents and Businesses; Grow Alaska's Workforce. Goal 3 strategies aim to improve outdoor recreation amenities, which have proven to attract and retain residents, entrepreneurs, and businesses. To expand the outdoor recreation workforce, SCORP strategies include stronger career pipelines, reducing seasonality of outdoor recreation jobs and reducing the growing gap between Alaska wages and the state's high cost of living.

- 4. Empower Alaskans to Lead Active, Healthy Lives. Strategies to improve health include expanding outdoor programs for youth and underserved populations and improving day-to-day recreation access or facilities that bring in new users – facilities such as comfortable, year-round facilities with skills training, rentals, food, and beverages.
- 5. Balance Outdoor Recreation Growth with Stewardship. Alaska's attractions ensure growth is coming, whether we seek it or not. The SCORP aims to grow outdoor recreation benefits and sustain what makes Alaska a great place to live and visit. Strategies include new recreation destinations, improved access to disperse recreation use, sustainable facility design, and providing a spectrum of opportunities from destinations that successfully support large volumes to less visited, wilder places.
- 6. Grow Sustainable and Stable Outdoor Recreation Funding. Increasing outdoor recreation investment is a top SCORP priority. Strategies include expanding public-private partnerships and taking full advantage of federal dollars. The priority is building better linkages between growing recreation use and growing recreation revenues. Examples include increasing recreation site program receipts, voter approved recreational bonds, park and recreation service areas, and putting more local government tax revenues into the recreational facilities that help generate those dollars.
- 7. Strengthen Partnerships to Improve Outdoor Recreation Management. To reach these goals, Alaska's diverse outdoor recreation industry interests need to work together! The SCORP recommends creating a new State Office of Outdoor Recreation. A growing number of U.S. states – states that compete with Alaska for visitors and residents – are using this approach to bring together diverse partners to support and guide outdoor recreation growth and investments.



OUTDOOR RECREATION FACTS Being fit/staying active is associated with

a more than 50 percent reduction in risk of cardiovascular disease.

Four of the top five most used public recreation areas in Alaska are on state land, with the top one being Chugach State Park.

STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES: AREAS OF HIGH USE

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a statewide overview of outdoor recreational supply and demand profiles, resources and issues, and a more detailed look at six Alaska regions with subregional details of areas with high use, respectively. Appendix B provides links to the new DPOR web portal GIS HUB for outdoor recreation, with links to agency management plans and planning initiatives. Appendix B3 has more detailed information for seven of Alaska's most intensely used outdoor recreation areas: Greater Fairbanks and Denali Borough (Interior), Mat-Su Borough, Municipality of Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula/Turnagain Arm/Prince William Sound (Southcentral) and Southeast Alaska.

NEW TOOLS FOR DATA-DRIVEN OUTDOOR RECREATION DECISION MAKING

This SCORP launched a powerful set of new outdoor recreation tools: anonymized and aggregated cell phone mobility data that tracks trends in use; the first ever statewide outdoor recreation GIS data base; a statistically valid survey of Alaska resident outdoor recreation activities; and separate surveys of land managers and Alaskan tribes. These tools shaped recommendations in the SCORP, but their true value will be realized in coming years as they continue to be

PATTERNS OF USE

7-DAY MOVING AVERAGE OF DAILY DEVICE COUNTS



Statewide mobile phone device days. See Chapter 2 for more details.

staff supported and used to inform outdoor recreation decision making.

MEETING THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN UPDATED SCORP

The SCORP must be updated every five years for Alaska to remain eligible for federal Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars. These funds – if matched within Alaska – provide approximately a combined total of \$5 million per year for outdoor recreation projects and land acquisition.

This SCORP fulfills the specific requirements for the five-year update of the document. This includes a comprehensive approach, strong public involvement, recommendations for LWCF as well as other sources of funding, and a solid approach to implementation at the statewide and local levels. Chapter 1 presents updated LWCF criteria that support the SCORP's statewide goals and includes a section on wetlands consistent with Section 303 of the Emergency Wetlands Act.

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH: NEXT STEPS

This SCORP was built through an ambitious, unprecedented effort to bring in voices from around the state, including individual residents, communities, agencies, Native organizations, businesses, non-profits, and user groups. These groups deserve our hearty thanks for the hours invested in its development.

To implement the actions outlined in the SCORP and making Alaska a world leader in outdoor recreation will require building and strengthening these partnerships. While much progress was made in creating this SCORP, it remains a work in progress. Important next steps include exploration of the feasibility of an Office of Outdoor Recreation as well as investment in the new DPOR GIS HUB web portal for outdoor recreation. Together, let's continue the effort to make Alaska an even more enjoyable place to visit, live, and make a living.



Sitka Playground Photo by Chris Beck



Eklutna Lake Photo by Krista Karstensen



Photo by Patrick Endres

Delaney Park, Anchorage Photo by Chris Beck

ALASKA SCORP 2023-2027 Annotated Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the ambitious goals of this SCORP, how it was developed, and explains the public comment process. The chapter demonstrates how this update meets NPS requirements including the new Land Water Conservation Fund project criteria and Alaska wetland requirements. Additionally, this chapter provides a pictorial overview of life outdoors in Alaska in all its diversity.

CHAPTER 2: DEMAND AND SUPPLY: OUTDOOR RECREATION TRENDS IN ALASKA

Chapter 2 presents a set of statistics and survey results on how outdoor recreation is growing, changing, and affecting Alaska. This information sets the foundation for the recommendations in Chapters 3 and 4. Sections of this chapter are briefly described below:

OUTDOOR RECREATION ANALYSIS

Section B: Outdoor Recreation Statistics

This section provides an overview of national and statewide statistics that provide key outdoor recreation trends on opportunities. The example at right shows how the \$887 Billion spent annually by U.S. consumers on outdoor recreation compares to other economic sectors. *See page 8, figure 1.*

OUTDOOR RECREATION TOOLS

Section C: Mapping and Measuring Trends in Use Demand

This SCORP update employs a new, cell-phone-based technology that collects anonymized, aggregated recreation user information with minimal on-theground efforts. Mobile cell phone location data allows tracking of changes in the intensity and location of activities across all public lands, and can be scaled at statewide, regional, or site-specific geographic levels, providing an up-to-date, data-driven foundation for SCORP policies and informed decision making. Example below shows data at the regional level, documenting the fall off in use in 2020 with the closure of cruise visits, but the rebound as Alaskans and, in Southeast, limited numbers of independent travelers got out to enjoy public recreation areas. *See page 8, figure 2.*

Sections D, E, and F: Surveys

This SCORP update conducted a series of statewide outdoor recreation surveys in 2022. This included a representative, statistically-valid sample of Alaskan views on public recreation, in addition to a survey of recreation land managers and Alaska tribal governments. Results give new, valuable insights on outdoor recreation participation, needs for new or improved facilities and infrastructure, issues and opportunities, and preferences for funding sources. Below is one example from the public survey. *See page 8, figure 3.*

Section G: Mapping Outdoor Recreation Supply Data

A consolidated Geographic Information System (GIS) was produced to show locations and facilities of outdoor recreation resources statewide. This cutting-edge resource includes a standardized geodatabase, hard copy maps, interactive dashboards, and reports that illustrate the supply and status of Alaska's public outdoor recreation facilities and infrastructure. Coupled with the mobility data, this provides a vital new tool for data-based decision making. *See page 9, figure 4.*

CHAPTER 3: REGIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION OVERVIEW

Chapter 3 presents outdoor recreation characteristics, priorities, and challenges for the six SCORP regions: Arctic, Western, Southwest, Interior, Southcentral, and Southeast. The regional descriptions are enhanced by regional trend analysis and statistics, mobility data, and maps. Below is an example of the regional maps that appear in this chapter. *See page 9, figures 5 and 6.*

CHAPTER 4: STATEWIDE OUTDOOR RECREATION GOALS

Chapter 4 summarizes the seven statewide SCORP goals. Each goal presents achievement strategies and associated action items. These goals reflect the foundational work by the SCORP Statewide Advisory Group and are supported by the data and analysis presented in Chapter 2. The seven goals and their associated objectives are listed below, while their supporting strategies and actions can be found in the chapter.

GOAL 1: SUPPORT THE ALASKA OUTDOOR REC-REATION WAY OF LIFE

Objective 1. Expand outdoor recreation opportunities **Objective 2.** Support the "stepping stone approach" for programs and facilities

Objective 3. Promote winter recreation opportunities **Objective 4.** Integrate history, heritage, subsistence, culture, education, and the arts **Objective 5.** Improve information on outdoor

recreation options, locations, and activities

GOAL 2. MAKE OUTDOOR RECREATION A CORNERSTONE OF ALASKA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

Objective 1. Increase awareness of how outdoor recreation benefits Alaska's economy

Objective 2. Spread the economic benefits of outdoor recreation more broadly across Alaska

Objective 3. Balance strategies to grow outdoor recreation economic benefits with stewardship **Objective 4.** Recognize and take advantage of the varying economic impacts of different types of outdoor recreation use and users

Objective 5. Expand winter outdoor recreation opportunities

Objective 6. Expand opportunities for biking, hiking, public use cabins, and hut-to-hut systems **Objective 7.** Develop travel options with themed itineraries

Objective 8. Develop stronger gateway communities **Objective 9.** Develop accessible, approachable outdoor recreation opportunities

GOAL 3: GROW THE OUTDOOR RECREATION WORKFORCE; USE OUTDOOR RECREATION TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

Objective 1. Invest in outdoor recreation facilities, infrastructure, and programs that attract and retain businesses, employees, residents, and retirees **Objective 2.** Improve information needed to better understand the outdoor recreation industry's workforce trends and needs

Objective 3. Expand outdoor recreation training and skill development; work to create career tracks

Objective 4. Expand the size of the outdoor recreation workforce to meet growing outdoor recreation demands

Objective 5. Emphasize investments in outdoor recreation, which in turn will have an effect on the Alaskan workforce

GOAL 4: EMPOWER AND ENABLE ALASKANS TO LEAD ACTIVE, HEALTHY LIVES

Objective 1. Identify new partnerships for the planning and funding of outdoor recreation

Objective 2. Expand research and improve data collection

Objective 3. Invest in outdoor recreation infrastructure that empowers more Alaskans to be active outside **Objective 4.** Invest in community and regional outdoor health programs

Objective 5. Plan for more inclusive, equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities

GOAL 5: BALANCING OUTDOOR RECREATION GROWTH AND STEWARDSHIP

Objective 1. Document challenges and benefits of outdoor recreation growth

Objective 2. Invest in sustainable, built-to-last infrastructure

Objective 3. Proactively guide growth with inclusive regional and local plans

Objective 4. Support growth and stewardship through partnerships

GOAL 6: GROW STABLE AND SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION FUNDING

Objective 1. Secure funding by focusing on high value projects

Objective 2. Maximize use of established and one-time federal funds to increase federal funding

Objective 3. Grow and sustain in-state public and private funding

Objective 4. Engage new public and private partners to establish shared priorities and expand investment. opportunities

Objective 5. Provide facts and build a coalition to increase investments in outdoor recreation

GOAL 7. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE OUTDOOR RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Objective 1. Develop new systems to track outdoor recreation use, trends, and economic impact and leverage the information to make informed decisions **Objective 2.** Manage federal funding more effectively **Objective 3.** Reduce hurdles and provide more options for improving outdoor recreation facilities, infrastructure, and programs

Objective 4. Work with partners statewide to help residents and tourists better understand and enjoy Alaska's outdoor recreational opportunities **Objective 5.** Expand technological solutions in all aspects of outdoor recreation

Objective 6. Adequately fund, facilitate, develop, and update plans

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This final chapter briefly summarizes the top-down, bottom-up approach and principal recommendations of the SCORP. The potential benefits and utilization of new outdoor recreation tools are also revisited.

APPENDICES (ONLINE ONLY)



2023-2027 SCORP User Data Collection and Interpretation

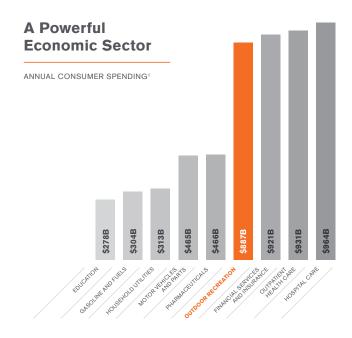
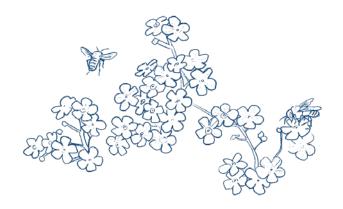


Figure 1. CHAPTER 2, Section B: Outdoor Recreation Statistics



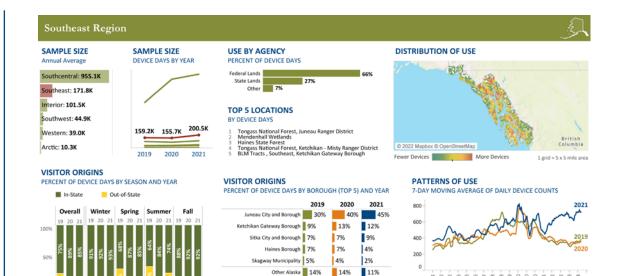


Figure 2.

CHAPTER 2, OUTDOOR RECREATION TOOLS, Section C: Mapping and Measuring Trends in Use Demand

Out of State/International 28% 14%

17%

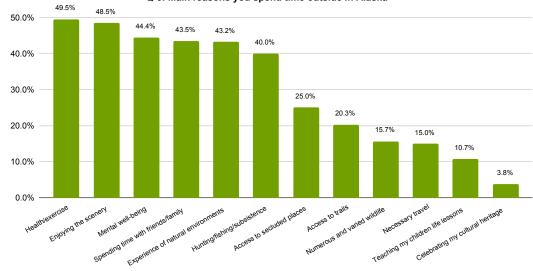




Figure 3. CHAPTER 2, OUTDOOR RECREATION TOOLS, Sections D, E, and F: Surveys



Figure 4.

CHAPTER 2, OUTDOOR RECREATION TOOLS, Section G: Mapping Outdoor Recreation Supply Data



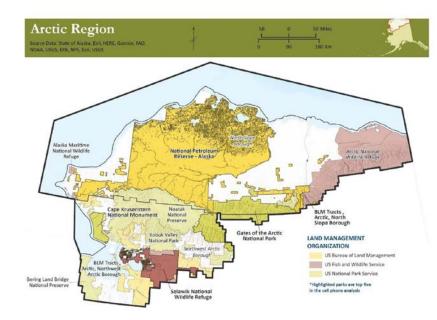


Figure 5. CHAPTER 3, REGIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION OVERVIEW

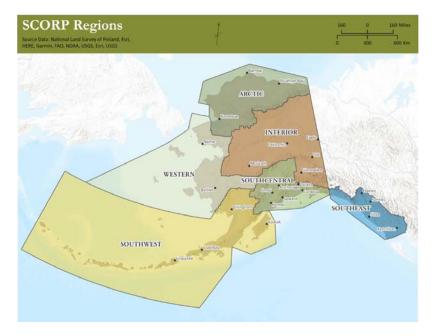


Figure 6. CHAPTER 3, REGIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION OVERVIEW