

Natural and Cultural Resources

Goal: Sustain Alaska's cultural, ecological, scenic and scientific assets through proactive stewardship pursuant to the division's parks and programs.

Many of Alaska's State Park units include lands that are of regional, statewide and national significance. With responsibility for over 3.2 million acres and 121 park units, the division manages large and small areas possessing outstanding and distinct natural, cultural, scenic and scientific values. These values should be conserved and protected for all time. With increased threats to natural and cultural resources, caring for existing resources and meeting the division's resource stewardship mandate will require increased focus and attention.

As intact natural systems are reduced throughout Alaska, the division should, wherever appropriate and possible, serve as models of healthy, natural and sustainable ecosystems. To succeed in such efforts, existing resources must be understood. This understanding begins with an inventory of all flora, fauna and other resources within each park. The division must continue to increase collaboration with other agencies and higher-education institutions, taking advantage of outside expertise to expand agency knowledge and foster help with resource

management. To ensure that resource management remains a high priority, these values and priorities must be integrated into division plans, parks must be adequately staffed, and the staff must be properly trained to effectively manage these resources.

As development pressures increase, and with the passage of time and the effects of the elements, historic and archeological artifacts deteriorate and are lost. The division must strengthen efforts to identify study, designate, interpret, and protect or treat significant archaeological and historic resources. To accomplish this, the Office of History and Archeology needs to conduct surveys to identify and evaluate sites, buildings and structures. The office also needs to encourage communities to conduct surveys, and document, interpret, and protect or treat historic and archaeological properties. To promote recognition of cultural resources, the division must document properties to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Finally, the statewide inventory of cultural resources sites should continue to be expanded.



Objective I.

Inventory state parks' natural and cultural resources to determine their nature, location and overall condition.

Action Strategies:

1. Complete a set of baseline natural and cultural resource inventories by 2015 and develop a matrix of additional inventories desired at all parks by 2016.
2. Develop and implement a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) plan that identifies the most cost-effective way to meet the natural and cultural resource inventory and mapping needs of the park system. This may be accomplished by partnering and sharing information with other agencies and universities.
3. Utilize and integrate with the rest of the department a GIS to map features such as cultural resources, park boundaries, trails, facilities, roads and inholdings in at least five percent of the larger park units per year starting in 2008. Integrate data into a GIS database and provide training and infrastructure to assist in better managing resources.
4. Continue to develop an integrated business system within the Office of History and Archeology for the tracking and management of cultural resources.



Objective II.

Manage and monitor state parks' natural and cultural resources to limit user impacts and ensure that the condition of the resources, natural viewshed and ecological communities remain intact and fully functioning for future generations.

Action Strategies:

1. To help enhance the division's natural and cultural resource decisions and expertise, form an interdisciplinary team of division staff and external cultural and natural resource scientists and experts for one large park or region by 2008. Define the team's purpose and responsibilities through the development of a charter and standard protocols. Use the team to review park management plans and best management practices. If successful, form teams for other areas.
2. By 2009, create and implement a cultural and natural resource monitoring schedule for one model park that addresses monitoring needs by resource categories and identifies appropriate monitoring frequency and responsibilities along with associated funding requests. If successful, apply to other areas.
3. Ensure on-the-ground actions to meet stewardship objectives are carried out at each park unit by creating annual work plans listing targeted resource actions for the coming year, along with associated funding requests.
4. Provide adequate and timely staff assistance to parks for natural and cultural resource issues (e.g., noxious weeds, native revegetation, and historic building rehabilitation).



Castle Hill, Sitka



Fort Abercrombie, Kodiak



Totem Bight, Ketchikan



Rika's Roadhouse, Big Delta

Objective III.

Coordinate resource management with other agencies, organizations and stakeholders to collect, share and disseminate natural and cultural resource information.

Action Strategies:

1. Improve the understanding and visibility of state park units within Alaska's conservation and historic preservation community and with the public by creating and implementing a communications plan to share and disseminate information.
2. Ensure division personnel identify opportunities for resource management collaboration within their park units by working closely with universities and government agencies to coordinate collection and evaluation of natural and cultural resource information within state parks. Provide a matrix of resource study needs to these entities by December 2008; secure at least 3 agreements with these entities by 2009.
3. Review permits and proposed authorizations to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to protect recreational, environmental and cultural resources.
4. Managers will actively engage in regional planning efforts that affect recreational and cultural resources or may impact units of the state park system and will promote incorporation of recreation and cultural preservation issues in plans.

Objective IV.

Strengthen efforts to identify study, designate, interpret and protect or treat significant archaeological and historic resources.

Action Strategies:

1. Conduct archaeological and historic surveys to identify and evaluate sites, buildings and structures.
2. Encourage communities to conduct surveys and document, interpret, and protect or treat historic and archaeological properties. Document properties for the National Register of Historic Places to promote recognition of resources.
3. Improve the statewide inventory of cultural resources sites.
4. Support and strengthen the professional historic preservation community.
5. Continue to enforce the Alaska Historic Preservation Act.



Independence Mine at Hatcher Pass