

Recreation, Tourism, and Scenic Resources

Recreation is a significant use of state land within the rural parts of the planning area that are some distance from the Parks Highway, and occurs in both concentrated and dispersed forms. Areas of particularly high recreational use occur at public use sites and state recreation areas. Use is especially concentrated at boat launches that access the Susitna River, within the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, and in both designated and undesignated campgrounds, and is associated with camping and sport fishing during the summer. Dispersed recreation use is somewhat more characteristic of the winter months with snowmachine use occupying areas of wetlands and the generally level terrain west of the Parks Highway. Significant snowmachine use also occurs east of the Parks Highway, with much of this use occurring in wetlands and other lowlands but also along trail systems that have developed over time to accommodate this use. Summer dispersed recreation is associated with sport fishing along the principal streams within the planning area, including the Little Susitna, and Susitna Rivers and with Montana, Sheep, and Willow Creeks. Hunting is a predominantly fall activity, usually associated with moose, and is common in the foothills of the Talkeetna Mountains, in the area accessed by Knik-Goose Bay Road, and in several state game refuges, including the Susitna Flats, Goose Bay, and Palmer Hay Flats.

Goal

Recreation Opportunities. Lands will be provided for accessible outdoor recreational opportunities with well-designed and conveniently located recreational facilities. In addition, undeveloped lands should be provided for recreation pursuits that do not require developed facilities. These opportunities shall be realized by:

- providing recreation opportunities on less developed land and water areas that serve multiple purposes such as habitat protection, timber management, and mineral resource extraction;
- assisting communities through cooperative planning, conveyance of state lands, and grants-in-aid for parks and trails within population centers;
- encouraging commercial development of recreational facilities and services through concession contracts, land sales, leases, and permits where public recreation needs can most effectively be provided by private enterprise, while minimizing environmental impacts and conflicts with the existing users of an area;
- protecting recreation resources including public access, visual resources, fish and wildlife important for recreation, and, where appropriate, the isolation and unique wilderness characteristics of the planning area;
- managing recreation to minimize user conflict, provide for a quality experience for all user groups, and protect the natural values and attributes of the area within which the recreation occurs; and,

- protecting ecosystems and habitat from damage caused by inappropriate recreation use.

Management Guidelines

A. Coordination with Other Landowners and Users of an Area. Recreation management, including the location and management of recreation facilities, will take into account the current and projected future uses of lands owned by local governments and private landowners, and should strive for compatibility with adjacent current and projected uses.

B. Roles of Different Public Land Owners in Providing Public Recreational Opportunities. Generally, the state's role is to retain and manage land supporting recreational opportunities of regional or statewide significance. The state and federal governments are most capable of providing recreational opportunities that require large land areas, while local government is generally best suited for providing and managing community recreation opportunities. To recognize local government's role in providing community recreation needs, the state may transfer state land designated Public Recreation-Dispersed (Rd) or state recreation sites within or near existing communities, if the municipality has parks and recreation powers and if this action is in the overall best interest of the state (AS 38.05.810). The selection of these sites shall be agreed to by local government and the state, and shall be contingent on the local government's commitment to develop and maintain the recreation uses, facilities, and values of these areas.

C. Public Use Sites. Uses that adversely affect public use sites or areas should not be authorized. Uses that are made available to the public, recreational or other sites (such as airstrip development or docks) may be authorized if consistent with the management intent for the public use site or area and if there is a demonstrated public need.

D. Private Commercial Recreation Facilities and Operations on State Land. Lodges or other private commercial facilities and operations designed to be run as, or to support, private commercial recreation facilities may be authorized if the facility or operation fulfills the conditions outlined in this section, conforms to the requirements of AS 38.05.850, AS 38.05.070 and .075 or AS 38.05.073, or a management plan is prepared in accordance with AS 41.21.302(c) authorizing the facility.

If so authorized, the facility or operation should be sited, constructed, and operated in a manner that creates the least conflict with natural values and existing uses of the area. The commercial facility and the use it generates should avoid significant adverse impacts on fish and wildlife habitat and existing uses of an area. For facilities supporting recreational fish and wildlife harvest, ADF&G should be consulted on the possible effects of increased harvest on fish and wildlife resources, and on established commercial, recreation, and subsistence users.

E. Commercial Recreation Leasing Processes. There are two processes for leasing state land for commercial recreational facilities – one process is described by AS 38.05.073, the other by AS 38.05.070 and .075. Unless Chapter 3 specifically requires the .073 commercial leasing process for a management unit, applications may be adjudicated under either process. DNR will determine the appropriate process on a case-by-case basis. ADOT/PF has its own leasing process that applies to land it manages in rights-of-way, airports, materials sites, and other lands and facilities it manages.

- 1) **The .070 / .075 Process.** The .070 / .075 process is simpler and faster, but it offers the state less flexibility in choosing the lessee and in structuring lease payments. It is generally suited to small projects with few anticipated impacts. The management intent for the parcel need not specifically state that this type of leasing is an allowed use for it to be authorized under this process.
- 2) **The .073 Process.** The .073 process is longer, but it allows submission of alternative proposals for a particular lease, requires more public involvement in reviewing a proposed lease, and offers the state more choices for structuring payments on the lease. The .073 process is generally suited to large projects that are likely to have significant impacts on surrounding areas. Under the .073 process, DNR will give public notice that it intends to solicit proposals for a lease. DNR will then prepare a “request for proposals” that must include specific information on the lease and must be advertised in state and local newspapers. Once a prospective lessee has been chosen, DNR must give public notice and hold public meetings on the preliminary decision to issue the lease.

For a .073 lease to be considered in a parcel, the plan must specifically allow for this type of leasing in a management unit before it can be authorized. Since no parcels are identified in this area plan specifically for commercial recreation leasing under the .073 process, a plan amendment will be required to accommodate this use.

DNR may impose eligibility standards, including proof of the developer’s financial backing and capability, experience in this type of development, ability to meet bonding or insurance requirements, and ability to comply with resource and environmental analysis requirements.

The .073 process requires that potential economic, social, and environmental impacts of the proposed project must be evaluated. DNR may require the prospective developer to fund additional studies; the studies must involve the appropriate state agencies, and ADF&G must approve any studies involving fish and game.

F. Permits and Leases Adjacent to Recreation Facilities. Upland uses may be allowed adjacent to public recreation facilities if the land manager determines that the two uses can be made compatible by design, siting or operating guidelines; or if the land manager determines there is no feasible and prudent alternative for the activity. This guideline also applies to sites reserved for future recreation facilities. The land manager’s determination will be made after consultation with the facility manager.

G. Protection of Resources. DNR, in its consideration of resources and in the management of state land, shall consider the impacts of such use upon fish and wildlife, habitat and soil degradation, and upon other forms of use that may occupy the area that is under consideration in the authorization. Uses that are not compatible with these uses and resources are to be made compatible through the use of stipulations. The ability of the Department to manage the subsequent activities that may result from the issuance of an authorization is to be taken into consideration in the adjudication of an application that requires a written determination by DNR.

H. Management of Recreation Use on State Lands. To the extent provided by law, DNR is to manage recreation use and activities to be consistent with state law and regulations generally, to enable a variety of uses and vehicles, while ensuring that adverse impacts to fish and wildlife species and habitats are avoided or minimized, and that user conflicts are avoided or minimized.

I. Consultation with ADF&G. Consult with ADF&G in the siting of facilities where impacts may occur to fish and wildlife species or to important habitats.

J. Other Guidelines that Affect Recreation, Tourism, and Scenic Resources. Other guidelines will affect recreation, tourism, and scenic resources. See other sections of this chapter.