



Northern Area Alaska State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

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February 1st, 2024

DPOR Regulations Team
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1380
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3579

Re: Public Scoping Comments for Possible Updates and Revisions to DNR Regulations involving PWC's

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Northern Area Alaska State Parks Citizen Advisory Board, I am submitting these comments regarding possible updates and revisions to Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations involving personal watercrafts (PWCs) for your consideration.

The potential introduction of PWC's, commonly known as Jet Skis, into State Parks raises significant concerns for public safety, environmental protection, and compatibility with existing recreational activities. While Jet Skis may be suitable in specific contexts, their use in many State Parks would be detrimental due to several factors:

- Incompatible with existing visitor use patterns: Many State Parks, like the Chena River State Recreation Area near Fairbanks, feature narrow waterways with established use by paddlecraft. Introducing Jet Skis into these areas would create dangerous conflicts and compromise the peaceful enjoyment of other users.
- Harm to sensitive ecosystems: State Parks often encompass wilderness areas and critical habitats vulnerable to the noise, pollution, and wake impacts of Jet Skis. Kachemak Bay, for example, would be particularly susceptible to ecological damage from PWC operation.
- Increased safety risks: According to the US Coast Guard, Jet Skis are disproportionately involved in watercraft accidents and injuries (30% of accidents and 36% of injuries). Introducing them without adequate enforcement personnel (rangers) would further exacerbate these risks.
- Unfair to existing users: Established recreational users like paddlers, anglers, and nature enthusiasts deserve to enjoy State Parks without the intrusion of Jet Skis. Similarly, commercial users and ecotourism ventures depend on a tranquil environment for their livelihoods.

Therefore, we urge careful consideration of the potential impacts before authorizing Jet Ski use in State Parks. Thorough assessments of each park's suitability, robust public engagement, and the implementation of strict regulations and enforcement measures are crucial before moving forward. Prioritizing the safety, well-being, and enjoyment of all park visitors, along with the protection of sensitive ecosystems, should be paramount in any decision-making process.

Additional Considerations:

- Alternative recreational opportunities: Explore providing designated areas for Jet Ski use outside of State Parks to minimize conflicts with existing activities and protect sensitive environments.
- Education and outreach: Implement educational programs to raise awareness about responsible PWC operation and the potential impacts on park ecosystems and other users.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Establish a monitoring program to assess the impacts of Jet Ski use, if permitted, and adapt regulations as needed to ensure safety and environmental protection.

By taking these concerns into account and prioritizing a comprehensive approach, we can ensure that State Parks remain havens for diverse recreational activities, environmental conservation, and public enjoyment for generations to come.

Thank you for considering our comments. We appreciate your efforts to ensure responsible and enjoyable use of our State Parks for all. We look forward to participating in the development of balanced and effective regulations.

Sincerely,
Northern Area Alaska State Parks CAB
Matt Sprau
Chair