

Chapter 1

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Summary

Nancy Lake State Recreation Area (NLSRA) and Nancy Lake State Recreation Site (NLSRS) remain popular destinations for many recreation enthusiasts. These two areas are in close proximity to the majority of State residents in Southcentral Alaska and can be easily accessed by highway vehicle or float plane. While relatively compact in size, these two areas support a diversity of recreational opportunities year-round. Recognized as a “crown jewel” in the state park system, NLSRA is well known for the Lynx Lake Loop Canoe Trail, the South Rolly Lake Campground, and its 13 public use cabins. NLSRS is known for its public launch facility, easily accessible campground and day use facilities. Taken together, these areas offer an escape from urban environments where opportunities to engage in many recreational pursuits abound. See Map 1 on page 13 for a map depicting the planning boundary which includes the NLSRA and NLSRS.

The Nancy Lake State Recreation Area Management Plan (Plan) guides the management of recreation and other uses within the NLSRA and NLSRS for the next 20 years. It is intended to be adaptive to the changing needs of the recreating public and resource managers while preserving the primary function of the land as public recreation land. This plan substantially maintains the management orientation from the 1983 Plan; however, some changes have been made. The management intent and recommendations clearly articulate how this area is to be managed on both a near and long-term basis while remaining sufficiently flexible to address changing or unforeseen circumstances. Important issues related to agency management and public use of the area are also addressed.

Maintaining the quiet natural setting while enhancing and expanding recreational opportunities remains the focus of management for the majority of land and water within NLSRA. To achieve this, the Plan recommends management that facilitates low density dispersed recreation opportunities for much of NLSRA. Recommendations that facilitate moderate to high density concentrated use are proposed in relatively close proximity to the South Rolly Lake Campground, Nancy Lake Parkway, and the NLSRS.

Key outcomes of this plan include: a policy to address access to private property; a policy to address the numerous existing unpermitted private structures; increased efficiency and consistency in permitting new structures; and, facilities and trails recommendations that meet current and future demands for public recreation. These are not the only solutions to issues

identified in the plan however. You are encouraged to read the plan in order to understand the full range of management guidelines and recommendations to determine how DPOR will manage these important areas for future generations in more detail.

Plan Purpose

This Plan provides guidance for management and development on all state-owned lands and waters within the boundaries of the NLSRA and NLSRS for the next 20 years. Facility and management recommendations that meet the current and anticipated future needs are provided. The Plan will bring consistency in management and permitting decisions made by DPOR staff. However; it is not intended to replace short-term or day-to-day operational management decisions or project specific decisions that are best handled by DPOR staff more familiar with the specific issues and resources. Once signed by the Commissioner, the plan becomes the policy and basis for decision making by DNR generally and specifically the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR).

Overview

NLSRA contains approximately 22,000 acres of rolling hills with mature spruce/birch forests, numerous lakes and ponds, and extensive wetland habitats. It was established in 1966 by an act of the Legislature (AS 41.21.450 – 41.21.465¹). Consistent with these statutes, regulations specific to NLSRA were adopted (11 AAC 20.540 – 20.555²). These regulations specifically address weapons, aircraft, motorized boats, and snowmobile use in the recreation area. The recreation area is well known for the Lynx Lake Loop Canoe Trail, its 13 public use cabins, and the largest campground in the state park system – the South Rolly Lake Campground. Camping also occurs at the NLSRS Campground and at the 31 remote camping sites on Lynx, Big Noluck, Red Shirt, Skeetna, and Ardaw lakes. Hiking opportunities are somewhat limited with only four terra trails receiving most of the pedestrian use – Red Shirt Lake Summer Trail, East Red Shirt Lake Trail, Chicken Lake Cross-Park Trail, and the Butterfly Lake Trail. Water orientated recreation is popular and includes motorized boating, waterskiing, fishing, swimming, and canoeing. Winter uses include snowmobiling, dog mushing, skiing, snowshoeing, and ice fishing among other uses.

NLSRS, established in 1967 by administrative action between the Division of Mining, Land & Water and DPOR, contains approximately 30 acres of relatively flat to steeply sloping wooded lakefront land on the northeast shore of Nancy Lake. These lands and waters are currently managed to facilitate relatively intensive recreational use with a campground, picnic area, and a highly developed state-owned boat launch. The campground is a short distance from the Parks Highway and is a popular stop for “car camping” or staying in a recreational vehicle. The boat launch is popular for lake front property owners and for

¹ Statutes specific to NLSRA are provided in Appendix B.

² Regulations specific to NLSRA are provided in Appendix B.

people launching watercraft to recreate on Nancy Lake. A small user created trail adjacent to the launch provides an opportunity to view spawning salmon and other wildlife. Fishing is possible from the floating dock associated with the launch.

There are 41 private parcels totaling approximately 323 acres of private inholdings³ within NLSRA. Hundreds of private parcels are contiguous⁴ or adjacent⁵ to the boundaries of NLSRA and NLSRS and are primarily located in the areas of Nancy, Butterfly, Delyndia, and Red Shirt lakes. See Map 2 on page 15 for a depiction of land ownership in this area.

Nancy Lake State Recreation Area Purpose

The enabling legislation for NLSRA states: “The purpose of AS 41.21.450-41.21.465 is to restrict state-owned land and water within the boundaries described in AS 41.21.455 to use as a public recreation area.” AS 41.21.455 provides additional direction stating: “The presently state-owned land and water and all that acquired in the future by the state, lying within the following described boundary, are hereby designated as the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, are reserved from all uses incompatible with their primary function as public recreation land, and are assigned to the department for control, development, and maintenance. [legal description omitted]” Of the eight different types of units in the state park system, recreation areas are one of two types of units that are intended to have a more intensive public use management emphasis. See “*Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*” discussion below for information on the different park system units.

Nancy Lake State Recreation Site Purpose

Management of the recreation site was transferred from the Division of Mining, Land & Water to the DPOR through an Interagency Land Management Transfer agreement in 1967. This administrative action allowed the DPOR to assume all management of the site. Because the recreation site was not created by an act of the Legislature, it lacks a purpose statement or unit specific statutes. State recreation sites are the only other type of unit in the state park system that are intended to have an intensive public use management emphasis. See “*Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*” discussion below for information on these units.

³ Inholdings are defined for the purpose of this document as private properties within the boundary of NLSRA.

⁴ Contiguous parcels are defined for the purpose of this document as those parcels that are outside of the NLSRA or NLSRS, but share a common boundary with NLSRA or NLSRS.

⁵ Adjacent parcels are defined for the purpose of this document as those parcels that lie near the boundary of NLSRA or NLSRS but do not share a common boundary line with the NLSRA or NLSRS.

Mission Statement

The enabling legislation for NLSRA did not provide detailed statements on how the area was to be managed. In the absence of detailed management statements in the enabling legislation, a mission statement has been developed for NLSRA. DPOR developed the mission statement during the planning process in conjunction with the DPOR MatSu Copper Basin Citizens Advisory Board. The mission statement for NLSRA is:

The Nancy Lake State Recreation Area shall be managed and developed to provide a balance of high quality recreational opportunities while maintaining and enhancing remote recreational experiences consistent with the natural and scenic values of the lake system at the heart of the area.

Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework

Approximately 1 ½ years before the 1983 Plan was finalized, DPOR approved as policy the document titled *Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework* (Framework)⁶. The Framework was developed to:

- Define the purposes and goals of the State Park System;
- Establish criteria for the selection of state park units;
- Define the eight types of state park units;
- Establish a land-use zone classification system for the management and development of lands and resources within park units;
- Establish goals and policies for the management of the State Park System; and
- Facilitate the consideration of State Park System issues and concerns in the preparation of the Department of Natural Resources Statewide and Regional Resource Plans.

Among the policies established in the Framework, the classification of eight types of State Park System units and the establishment of the four land-use zones⁷ within those park units are discussed in greater detail in the following text. The first of these two policies provide a definition and purpose for each type of park system unit, describes the characteristics of the units, and identifies development and activities for each of the park system units. Once classified into a unit, the second policy directs land and resources to be allocated into one or more land-use zones and more specific management direction to be provided through a planning process. These policies are highlighted here because they articulate where

⁶ Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework; DPOR 1982: Available on the DPOR Nancy Lake State Recreation Area planning website.

⁷ The four zones identified in the Framework are: Recreational Development Zone, Natural Zone, Wilderness Zone, or Cultural Zone. Of these four land-use zones, this plan continues to use the same two zones used in the 1983 Plan – Recreational Development Zone & Natural Zone.

Recreation Areas and Recreation Sites fit within the statewide park system and how land and resources within these park system units are to be managed. The general and specific direction provided in the Framework was followed in the development of this plan. The classification of park system units and land use zones is discussed in greater detail in the following text.

Classification of Park System Units

Eight different types of units are identified within the statewide system of parks. Each of these units fulfills a niche within the statewide park system and is managed for varying levels of development and public use. See Table 1 on page 17 for a table illustrating the eight different unit types. Understanding the differences between park system units will help the reader better understand the management intent and guidelines provided in this Plan. Classification of a park system unit into one of the eight types of park units identified in the Framework establishes the general management direction for a given unit. For NLSRA, this means that the area will be managed to provide a maximum level and diversity of recreational opportunities in a high quality natural setting. It is intended to have an intensive public use management orientation with moderate to high intensity developments. Similarly, NLSRS will be managed for intensive public use with moderate to high intensity developments. Unlike the NLSRA; however, NLSRS will be managed for site specific recreational uses. The following text is taken from the Framework and provides general management direction for the two state park system units within the plan boundary.

State Recreation Area

Definition and Purpose

A state recreation area is a relatively spacious unit and possesses a diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities. The dominant management objective of the unit is to provide a maximum level of outdoor recreational opportunities based on the natural values of the unit and its ability to sustain use without significant adverse effects on natural systems.

Characteristics

A state recreation area possesses recreational and/or natural resources of statewide or regional significance. Geographical distribution of these units and their relationships to population centers are important factors in the designation of an area as a state recreation area. The minimum size of a unit should be 200 acres so that the unit may have diverse natural landscapes capable of supporting a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities. The uniqueness and significance of an area's natural and cultural resources are not key criteria for the establishment of state recreation areas as is the case with state parks.

The majority of the lands within a state recreation area will be classified as natural and recreational development. Cultural zones will be established where appropriate. Only in special cases will any lands be classified as wilderness. Wilderness zones, if established, will be based upon documented public desire for wilderness-oriented recreation within the unit.

Development and Activities

The management of a state recreation area allows for carefully planned and controlled resource modification to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities as long as the intensity of modification does not diminish the unit's natural and cultural values. Such modifications must be based upon a formal decision to enhance public enjoyment of the state recreation area's natural values or to provide for site-appropriate outdoor recreational activities. Lands within the unit will be developed to provide diverse, high quality outdoor recreational experiences in keeping with regional use patterns and preferences. Other than state recreation sites, state recreation areas are generally the most intensively developed type of unit in the State Park System.

State Recreation Site

Definition and Purpose

A state recreation site is a relatively small area and provides one or more outdoor recreational opportunities. A state recreation site may also be established to provide access to outdoor recreational lands and opportunities not managed as part of the State Park System. Management objectives are site-specific, but generally emphasize recreational use over resource protection.

Characteristics

State recreation sites possess recreational resources of statewide or regional significance. The unit should be of sufficient size to allow for future expansion of recreational facilities, to provide an adequate buffer between adjoining land uses, and to provide an adequate buffer for the protection of the quality of recreational opportunities in the unit.

Normally, from one-quarter to three-quarters of a state recreation site's land area will be classified as a recreational development zone. Because of the small size and recreation-use-oriented objective of these units, the wilderness zone will not be applied. Sensitive areas such as wetlands, beaches or streambanks normally will be classified as natural zones. Cultural zones will be identified and established where the presence of historic or archaeological resources is significant enough to warrant this designation.

Developments and Activities

The management of a state recreation site allows for resource modification to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities as long as natural and cultural resource values are protected. Activities and developments will vary according to the intent and purpose for which the unit is designated. Developments and activities which may be found at state recreation sites include – but are not limited to – picnic areas, campgrounds, parking lots, boat launches and scenic overlooks.

Land Use Zones

Consistent with the Framework, lands within each state park unit are classified into one of four land-use zones. These land use zones are intended to clarify the management intent and provide more detailed management direction. NLSRA has two land-use zones – Recreational Development and Natural, while NLSRS has one – Recreational Development.

These are the same land-use zones used in the 1983 Plan. As directed by the Framework, allocation of land and resources to a land-use zone is based on information contained in the plan. For this Plan, allocation of land and resources to a zone is based on the area-wide intent and management guidelines for state lands and waters provided in Chapter 5.⁸ The land allocated to the zones and the more specific management direction for these zones is provided in Chapter 6.⁹ The Framework also identifies the compatibility of many public-use activities generally within the zones and directs DPOR to use the table to guide preparation of a plan.¹⁰ These general compatibility guidelines are included in Table 2 on pages 18 and 19 at the end of this chapter while specific guidelines for land-use zones are included in the Use Compatibility Table in Chapter 6.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal grant program that is administered by the National Park Service (NPS). The LWCF provides matching funding to state and local governments to acquire, develop, and plan for public outdoor recreation areas. In Alaska, DPOR is the government agency that disperses federal grant dollars under this program. LWCF provisions require the agency receiving the grant dollars to maintain the funded project for public use and must identify and reserve enough area around the project to ensure continued public use. The boundary for the reserved lands is included on a map that is mutually agreed to by the State and NPS, this map is referred to as the “6f3 Boundary Map.” Any property where LWCF funds have been expended may not be wholly or partly converted to anything other than public outdoor recreation uses without the prior approval of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. If for some reason the recreational nature of the property is lost, it represents a conversion of use requiring mitigation in the form of acquisition of other recreational properties or outdoor recreational enhancement as approved by the National Park Service and the LWCF program administrators. The process to convert LWCF protected lands can be lengthy and can be costly for the agency requesting the conversion.

LWCF funds have been expended at both NLSRA and NLSRS to acquire private lands and to develop many of the public facilities that people enjoy today. As a result both areas, in their entirety, have been included in the 6f3 boundary map. Both areas are to be retained for outdoor public recreation in perpetuity and are subject to the LWCF program provisions. Actions that may represent a conversion of use include installation of cell towers or above

⁸ The Framework states, “For any given park unit, the location of these zones and amounts of land and resources allocated to each zone will be determined during the preparation of a park management plan or site development plan.”

⁹ The Framework states, “Specific developments and activities for a given park unit’s land use zones will be directed by a specific state park unit management or site development planning process.”

¹⁰ The Framework states, “This table is intended to guide preparation of unit management plans and the review of proposed park management actions in park units.”

ground utilities, development of roads for primary purposes other than recreation, private developments, or encroachments such as driveways. Uses that may constitute a conversion of use are identified in the Use Compatibility Table in Chapter 6.

Reasons for Revision

There are two primary reasons for this plan revision: 1) address serious issues identified by park staff and members of the public; and, 2) update management guidelines and facility recommendations.

The plan is more than a tool to address issues; it is an opportunity to identify new or changing recreational needs and adjust management guidelines and facilities recommendations to meet those needs. Facilities recommended in the 1983 Plan may be functioning beyond their designed life; may be inadequate for current use levels; need to be re-designed and modernized to enhance use and safety; or, may need to be replaced to address environmental impacts.

Similarly, management recommendations from the 1983 Plan will need to be updated to reflect changes in agency policy and management direction. Management recommendations that are no longer applicable will be removed while management recommendations necessary to address identified issues will be included. Due to the extensive anticipated changes to the existing plan document the Department determined that a plan revision was appropriate. The process to revise the plan included public participation at several steps in the process.

Authorities

The authority for the Legislature to create special purpose sites (such as NLSRA), reserve them from the public domain, and provide for their administration and management is contained in Article VIII, Section 7 of The Constitution of the State of Alaska. The authority for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), through DPOR, to develop and manage these areas is provided for in Title 41 of the Alaska Statutes. Title 11 of Alaska Administrative Code provides both general (statewide) and unit specific regulations for components of the state park system, which includes state recreation sites and areas. DPOR is the agency responsible for managing recreation areas and recreation sites among other units of the state park system. DPOR has the authority and responsibility to address issues related to management and use within the NLSRA and NLSRS.

Planning Processes

Overview previous and new plan

The first plan for NLSRA (Nancy Lake Plan Program Budget) was presented to the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in the spring of 1967 by Sam L. Huddleston & Associates. That plan envisioned an intensively developed recreation area where just over 16 miles of road looped around the lakes at the heart of the canoe trail. This road was proposed to provide access to a number of developed facilities including: just over 1,700 campsites, almost 3,000 picnic sites, 2 marinas, a 160 unit lodge, a grocery store, a gas station, a float plane drome, a golf course, and winter sports complex. The 1967 Plan analyzed the land base within NLSRA so planning would "...minimize the impact of mans' unnatural facilities on the natural scene. This is the critical factor in providing future generations with unspoiled, open-space recreation of natural character." Recognizing that some people would like to recreate in a natural area, the 1967 Plan recommended that the roughly 3 mile by 5 mile area within the looped road be preserved as a quiet zone "...for the hiker, the horseman, the canoeist, and the back packer or others who wish to get far away from it all." While the first plan for the area clearly articulated a heavy development orientation it recognized the need for natural areas for people to engage in low intensity recreational pursuits. It was this concept that was carried forward to the 1983 revision of the original plan.

It is clear from the text of the 1983 Nancy Lake State Recreation Area Master Plan – a revision of the 1967 Plan – that DPOR considered the intensive development orientation in the original plan to be inconsistent with the demands of the recreating public, inappropriate for the land base, costly, and would allow use at levels that would "negate" the ability of NLSRA to provide recreation opportunities in an unspoiled open space. The 1983 Plan shifted management orientation from intensively developing the majority of the area while maintaining a centrally located natural area, to restricting higher intensity development to a relatively compact area around the Nancy Lake Parkway while maintaining the remainder of the area as a minimally developed and primarily natural area. The revised plan emphasized retention of the quiet natural setting as the quality that people valued above all others. As a result, the Nancy Lake Parkway provides the majority of access to recreation opportunities as well as access to the largest campground in the state park system while the areas north and south of the parkway remain minimally developed. The 1983 Plan recognizes the wide variety of recreational uses that occur and the difference in use characteristics based on season.

This current planning process has resulted in a plan that maintains the management orientation of the 1983 Plan to a large extent. Similarly, several of the management and facility recommendations contained in the last plan are carried forward in this plan though they may have been revised or updated. As such, recommendations in this current plan reflect the desire to recreate in a quiet natural setting as well as the opportunity to engage in motorized recreation on specific lakes in the summer and to use snowmobiles south of the

parkway when snow conditions allow. Unlike the previous two plans developed for the NLSRA and NLSRS, this plan provides specific guidance for permitting uses and activities and provides clarity in policies that affect access to private property.

Public Participation in Current Planning Process

DPOR decided to update the 1983 Plan after an internal analysis of that plan and a discussion of current and future management needs for the area. Soon after that decision was made, DPOR developed a planning website, began compiling a distribution list with almost 1,000 contacts, and initiated the public planning process which began late in the fall 2008.

The early public scoping process consisted of two public meetings (one in Wasilla and one in Anchorage) and a formal comment period. Notice of the scoping meetings was provided via the online public system, email, letter, by public service announcement request, media release, and by a meeting flyer. Over 80 people attended the two scoping meetings. Written public comments were accepted via mail, email, fax, or through submission on the NLSRA planning website. Public comments were reviewed to help DPOR refine/redefine issues and to identify additional data needs. Eighty-six public comments were received during the scoping process.

In the summer of 2010 a questionnaire was developed to get more specific information on preferences for facilities and trails and to learn more about access methods to private property. Notice of the availability of the questionnaire was mailed or emailed to 967 people. One hundred and fifty-one people responded to the questionnaire. Responses to the questionnaire were analyzed in the late summer/fall of 2010.

Late in the fall of 2010 and winter of 2011, focus meetings were held to learn specifics about the types of recreational uses currently occurring and what types of recreation were not currently allowed but could be considered appropriate and facilitated at NLSRA or NLSRS. These discussions provided detailed information on the different types of recreation that people currently engage in and the changes that could be made to enhance existing recreation opportunities or provide new or different types of recreation. Types of facilities and levels of development for various types of recreational uses were also discussed during focus meetings.

In the fall of 2012 several proposed management actions and a suite of alternatives that addressed access on Lynx Lake Road and Butterfly Lake Trail were provided for public review and comment. Notice of the alternatives and recommendations meetings was provided via the online public notice system, letter, email, newspaper display advertisement, media release, and flyer. Shortly after the release of this information two public meetings were held (one in Willow and one in Anchorage) which were attended by over 90 people. A formal comment period provided an opportunity for the public to submit written comments via email, mail, fax, or through submission on the NLSRA planning website with 97 public comments received.

Multiple meetings were held with DPOR staff to identify issues and to discuss policy and management direction based on the available information as well as issues of mutual interest to participating agencies. Several meetings were held with Alaska Department of Fish and Game or Matanuska Susitna Borough staff to discuss issues of mutual concern between the agencies.

Plan Period

This plan is written as a twenty-year document; however, it should be periodically reviewed to determine the effectiveness of management prescriptions and to remain adaptive to changing use characteristics or new issues that affect resources, management, and public use of the areas. Even though it is written as a twenty-year document, this plan remains in effect until formally revised.

Map 1: Location of Nancy Lake State Recreation Area & Site

Map 2: Generalized Land Ownership

Table 1: State Park Unit Characteristics

	Representative Example	Description	Management Objective	Overall Intensity of Development	Management Orientation	
					Intensive Public Use Management Emphasis	Resource Preservation Management Emphasis
STATE PARK	Chugach State Park	An area possessing outstanding distinct natural and/or cultural resource values	Prevent the deterioration of the natural and cultural resources while providing for appropriate outdoor recreational opportunities	Low		
STATE HISTORIC PARK	Independence Mine State Historic Park	An area containing an assemblage of cultural resources	Preserve and interpret the cultural resources	Low to Moderate		
STATE HISTORIC SITE	Old Sitka State Historic Site	A small area containing a single cultural resource	Preserve and interpret the cultural resources	Low to Moderate		
STATE RECREATION AREA	Nancy Lake State Recreation Area	A spacious area possessing a diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities	Provide the maximum level of outdoor recreation opportunities in a high quality natural setting	Moderate to High		
STATE RECREATION SITE	Dry Creek State Recreation Site	A small area providing one or more outdoor recreational opportunities	Emphasis on site specific recreational use	Moderate to High		
STATE TRAIL	Juneau State Trails	A land-based linear corridor	Provide for and protect resource related opportunities	Varies	Variable 	
STATE RECREATION RIVER	(Potential) Lake Creek State Recreation River	A corridor encompassing a river (or portions) and associated uplands	Provide for and protect resource related opportunities	Varies	Variable 	
STATE (SCIENTIFIC, EDUCATIONAL OR ECOLOGICAL) PRESERVE	(Potential) Augustine Island State Preserve	An area containing outstanding scientific and/or educational values	Prevent the deterioration of scientific, educational or ecological resources	Low		

