

A scenic landscape featuring a large mountain range in the background with patches of snow. In the foreground, a person is kitesurfing on the water, with a colorful kite (yellow, red, and black) flying in the sky. The water is a deep blue-green color.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

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Alaska has remarkable outdoor recreation resources –glaciers, mountains, wildlife, rainforest islands, and salmon filled streams running through miles of wilderness. This SCORP breaks new ground to present a set of actions needed to grow and sustain the value of these unique outdoor gifts and create more benefits for Alaska and Alaska residents.

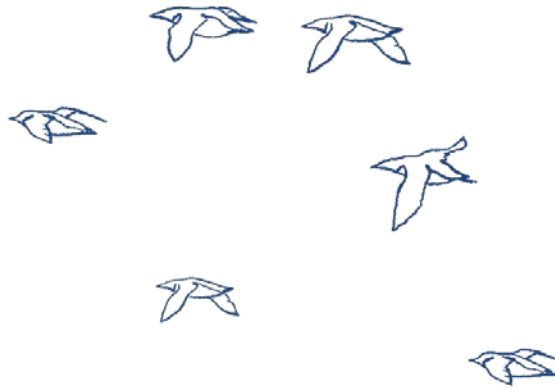
NEW TOOLS FOR DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Chapter 2 described how outdoor recreation and tourism in Alaska are growing and changing. As the data show, more people than ever want to be out and active in the Alaska landscapes, hiking, biking, skiing, fishing, sightseeing, or riding snowmachines and ATV's. This game-changing trend includes residents and increasingly, out-of-state visitors.

The SCORP has launched a set of potent, new tools to track these trends. These include a statistically valid survey of Alaska resident outdoor recreation activities, as well as separate surveys of land managers and Alaskan tribes. These surveys provide up-to-date views on outdoor recreation preferences and issues. For example, showing that Alaskan's most frequent outdoor recreation activities happen close-to-home, including visiting parks and picnic areas, neighborhood strolling, and hiking on nearby greenbelts and open space. At the top of resident's list for most needed new facilities are public use cabins, campgrounds, waysides, trailhead parking, and better access to recreation including fishing.

The SCORP introduced the use of anonymized cell phone data, a cost-effective way to track locations and use on public recreation lands around Alaska. This mobility data was recorded for 2019-2021, by coincidence, showing a peak year for cruise visitation (2019) and two years with almost no cruise visits (2020-21). The results made clear the impact of the loss of cruise ship spending, concentrated in Southeast Alaska, but also the power and importance of spending by Alaska residents and independent travelers. The mobility data revealed that State of Alaska lands, including State Parks and Special Use Areas, are the most visited outdoor recreation locations in Alaska.

The SCORP process also funded the creation of a new, outdoor recreation GIS data portal. This flexible tool provides a first ever, map-based, statewide framework to record and share information about outdoor recreation destinations and facilities. This database gives a way to record information on use and status of facilities on all public lands, including needed maintenance or improvements. A development section also provides a pathway for communities to develop and share their GIS data.



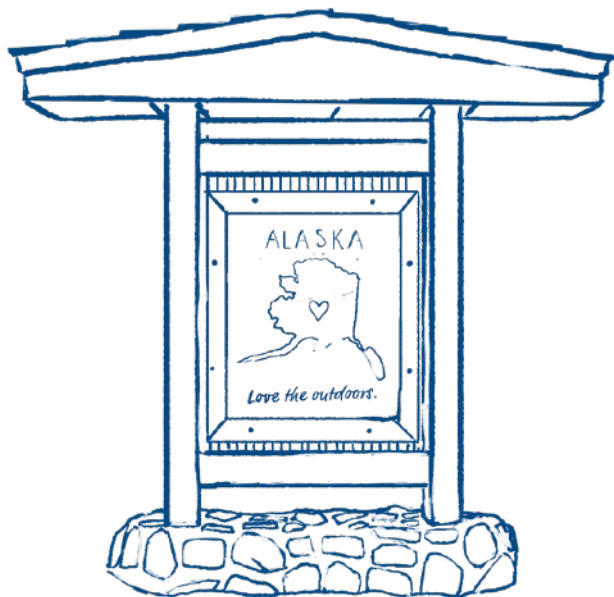
Picking Crowberries

Kenai River

Photo by Berkley Bedell, USFWS



These tools shaped recommendations in the SCORP, but their true value will be realized in coming years, to support data-driven decisions on outdoor recreation investments and management policies. Taking full advantage of this opportunity will require a commitment: to provide the means needed to keep these data up-to-date and relevant, and to ensure the information is available and used by decision makers and the public to guide Alaska's outdoor recreation future.



Ambitious But Attainable Statewide Goals

The outdoor recreation goals and strategies in the SCORP are intended to guide decisions in two broad categories. The first is for use of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Recreation Trails Program (RTP) funding. Together, these two funding programs will bring close to \$38 million to Alaska in outdoor recreation funds over the five-year life of this edition of the SCORP. Equally important, the SCORP provides a comprehensive framework to guide all outdoor recreation investments in Alaska, including funding from other federal programs, as well as state, local, and private investments.

With these investment goals in mind, Chapter 4 of the SCORP presents seven goals. These goals listed below describe both the remarkable range of issues and benefits tied to outdoor recreation in Alaska, and the actions needed to grow and sustain these benefits.

GOAL 1: Support the Alaska Outdoor Recreation Way of Life

GOAL 2: Make Outdoor Recreation a Cornerstone of Alaska's Economy

GOAL 3: Grow the Outdoor Recreation Workforce; Use Outdoor Recreation to Attract and Retain Residents and Businesses

GOAL 4: Empower and Enable Alaskans to Lead Active, Healthy Lives

GOAL 5: Balance Outdoor Recreation Growth and Stewardship

GOAL 6: Grow Stable and Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Funding

GOAL 7: Strengthen Partnerships to Improve Outdoor Recreation Management

Statewide Perspectives and Initiatives

These goals were built from statewide perspectives and from regional and subregional scales, where partners work with on-the-ground outdoor recreation challenges and opportunities. Chapter 3 gives a big picture overview of the recreational resources and issues in six Alaska regions, providing a sense of the full geographic scale and variety of Alaska's outdoor recreation settings. Planning templates in the appendices provide a pathway for all communities to join in the effort to generate local and subregional outdoor recreation objectives and strategies.

Partnerships for Progress

The SCORP was produced through an unprecedented top-down and bottom-up set of partnerships. To implement the actions outlined in the SCORP, and truly make Alaska a world leader in outdoor recreation, will require continuing to build and strengthen these partnerships. With sensible investments and smart management, outdoor recreation has an almost unlimited potential to build healthier communities, healthier economies, and healthier people. While much progress was made in creating this SCORP, it remains a work in progress.

DPOR, on behalf of all our partners and all Alaskans, looks forward to continuing this critical task, working together to grow and sustain all that outdoor recreation does today, and can do going for forward, to make and keep Alaska a wonder-filled place to live and make a living.