

Chapter 1

Introduction

Plan Purpose

This plan has been prepared to provide overall guidance for the management and development of Fort Abercrombie State Historic Park. A master plan prepared in 1973, a park-wide site development plan prepared in 1979, and a draft revision to the master plan prepared in 1983 were used, in part, to create this plan revision. The plan describes the physical and cultural resources of the park and provides a discussion of special management issues. The plan also lists park goals and policies, makes management and facility recommendations, and provides implementation information.

Establishment of the Park

Fort Abercrombie became a unit of the State Park System in 1969. The park, never legislatively designated, was established instead through an Interagency Land Management Agreement (ILMA), ADL 39239, with the Division of Mining, Land and Water. This action set aside 182 acres of state land to be managed by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation for the enjoyment and preservation of the areas unique historical and natural features.

Overview of the Park

Few other units of the Alaska State Park System, which are comparable in size, possess the cultural and natural resources that are found in Fort Abercrombie. The historic ruins of a World War II coastal defense installation coupled with the steep surf-pounded cliffs, deep spruce forests, wildflower laden meadows, and a lake containing trout offer the public a unique opportunity to learn of the events of World War II while enjoying the natural beauty of the park.

Today, the park fulfills many needs. For local residents and visitors to Kodiak, it provides a place to hike, swim, or fish. The Miller Point area is also important to local residents as a location from which to radio fishing boats at sea. Local interest in the fort's historic features has developed over time and interest for its preservation is growing. In addition, local tour operators include the park in their scheduled tours of Kodiak Island. Ft. Abercrombie has become an integral component of the island's tourism-based businesses.

During the years immediately after establishment, the park had a history of vandalism and law enforcement problems. This situation had lead to high operations costs and frequent turnover of park staff. In 1979, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation placed a full-time ranger at the park and built a ranger office and residence at the park entrance. A

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redesign of some of the park facilities, the installation of vehicle control gates and a vigorous enforcement of park regulations have resulted in greater enjoyment of the park by both local residents and visitors to Kodiak Island.

Historical Background

During the 1930's concern over Japanese and Russian expansion in the Pacific rim led to the construction of naval bases in Alaska at Sitka, Dutch Harbor and Kodiak. To protect the new naval bases from attack, the U.S. Army created defense posts such as Fort Abercrombie. In June 1941, President Roosevelt signed an executive order reserving 780 acres of land for a military post at Miller Point. The fort was later named Fort Abercrombie in honor of Lieutenant Colonel William R. Abercrombie, an army explorer in the Copper River region during the late nineteenth century.

Fort Abercrombie was built in stages. Ten days after the Pearl Harbor attack, on December 17, 1941, the Army installed a searchlight. By March of 1943, two 8-inch coastal defense guns were placed at Miller Point. Fort Abercrombie's guns were first fired in practice the spring of 1943, just a few months after the Aleutian campaign ended. The Army closed Fort Abercrombie in 1945 and abandoned it in 1947. The fort became a State Park in 1969, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1985.

Planning Process

The previous plan, adopted in January of 1973, was outdated and needed revision to recognize facilities that have been built, improved or modified, to plan for proposed future development, and to address some of the issues the area was facing with increased visitation. The Department of Natural Resources began the planning process to revise the Management Plan in December of 2005.

A public scoping workshop was held in December of 2005 in Kodiak to identify issues and concerns. Public comments were accepted through the end of the month for the initial scoping phase. Department staff then spent time gathering information and preparing and evaluating land use alternatives. A draft plan was prepared and distributed for public review.

In April of 2006, a public meeting was held in Kodiak to present the Public Review Draft of this plan and gather input on the proposals. Many comments were received during the comment period. The Public Review Draft version of the plan was revised based on these comments and internal discussions. The Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources adopted the revised plan in October of 2006. The plan guides management decisions in the park.

Figure 1: Location Map