

The Last Frontier

Alaska's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2009-2014



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This is the executive summary; you can find the entire SCORP with the survey instruments online at www.alaskastateparks.org.

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SCORP

The Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2009-2014 explores outdoor recreation preferences, issues, use trends, needs, and facility development. It assists recreation providers, advisory boards, user groups and the public in making outdoor recreation decisions. This plan is available to all interested parties, including recreation providers, communities, and the public statewide.

Alaska has 366 million acres and 47,300 miles of shoreline. Of that 366 million acres, 322 million acres are available for recreation. Wetlands cover 43.3% of the State. It is the largest State in the U.S. in terms of land. The Alaska State Parks System has more acreage than any other state park system in the U.S. and is the State's largest provider of wildland recreation facilities.

Despite its size, Alaska is the second smallest state in the country by population; with 1.1 people per square mile (U.S. average is 79.6 people per square mile). The highest density is in the Anchorage area: about 153.4 persons per square mile.

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Trends

To identify what Alaskans currently do for outdoor recreation and what opportunities are desired for the future, Alaska State Parks posted an online survey for the general public, park professionals, and youth. Overall more than 2,500 surveys were completed by recreation enthusiasts from around the State. Also a telephone survey was conducted during April 2009. Information from a mail out survey for recreation providers and the general public was collected in spring 2009, along with 5 public meetings that were held throughout the state. The online youth survey was taken by students at several different school districts.

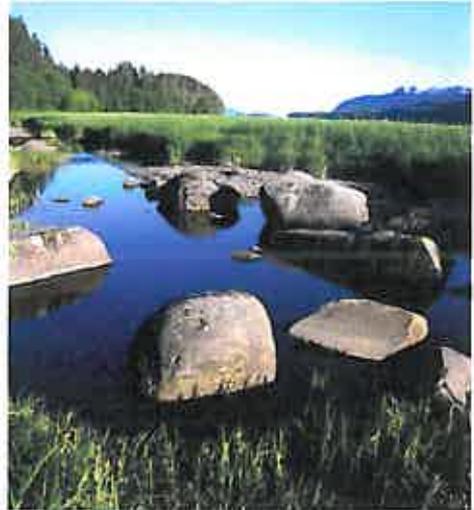


EQUIPMENT OWNERSHIP

TYPE OF EQUIPMENT	2009
Backpack	97.0%
Tent	93.1%
Bicycle	90.0%
Fishing Equipment	89.0%
Cross Country Skis	73.1%
Hunting Equipment	68.1%
Canoe or raft	57.9%
Skis/Snowboard	56.1%
ATV or ORV	47.0%
Snowmachine	39.6%
Motorboat	37.7%
RV	25.0%
Sea Kayak	21.4%
Dog Team	4.2%
Sailboat	3.5%

ATTITUDES ON FACILITIES, MANAGEMENT, AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT	SUPPORT
Maintain existing trails	87.7%
Maintenance of existing facilities	74.1%
Public use cabins	70.9%
New parks and recreation areas (from state land)	70.5%
Trail heads along highways	68.7%
Roadside toilets at regular intervals	62.19%
Trails for non-motorized use only	61.4%
Facilities for the disabled	56.2%
Develop more campgrounds	54.1%
Increase the level of law enforcement	54.0%
Upgrade existing park roads	49.3%
New parks and recreation areas (buy new land)	49.0%
Trails for legal use of off road vehicles	47.5%
Boat Launches	41.0%
Picnic areas	40.8%
Organized recreation programs in parks	31.3%
Tourist facilities on park lands	30.7%
RV dump stations	30.5%
RV accessible sites at campgrounds	29.6%
Develop more visitor centers	26.6%



* % support is from survey results in

SUPPORT FOR FUNDING PROPOSALS

TYPE OF PROPOSALS	Support
Allocate a portion of annual RV registration fees	83%
Allocate a portion of annual all-terrain vehicle registration fees	78%
A bond package for deferred maintenance in parks	59%
Impose a one penny per gallon tax on gasoline	52%
Impose a small tax on the purchase of outdoor gear	41%

* % support is from survey results in 2009



Volunteers are essential to the upkeep and development of State parks, trails, and recreation areas. In 2008, 474 Alaska State Park volunteers donated 66,394 hours of labor. According to the Financial Accounting Standards Board the hours of labor donated equal a dollar value of \$1.3 million. Although in 2008 the number of volunteers increased from the year before, volunteers have decreased drastically since the peak of 1,136 in 2004. Gasoline prices have become a large factor in the number of volunteers that parks can recruit. This is because many of the volunteers are from out of state and as gas prices rise it becomes too expensive for them to drive their Recreation Vehicles to Alaska. As funding becomes more scarce, volunteers become more and more important.

VOLUNTEERS IN THE STATE PARKS

YEAR	TOTAL
1999	730
2000	690
2001	773
2002	671
2003	719
2004	1136
2005	838
2006	731
2007	360
2008	474



Alaska's Recreation

While most of Alaska's 322 million acres of public lands are available for recreation, about 168 million acres, or 46 percent of Alaska, is managed for wildland recreation. Sixty percent of America's national park acreage, the country's largest state park system, and the nation's two largest national forests are located in Alaska. Twenty-five Alaskan rivers and over 3,200 river miles are protected under the National Wild and Scenic River designation. Additionally, there are six legislatively designated State Recreation Rivers, encompassing 460 river miles and 260,000 upland acres. Approximately 12 percent of state land is under some form of legislative designation that protects or enhances wildland recreation. Approximately 82.4 million acres of federal land and 400,000 acres of state land are designated as wilderness.

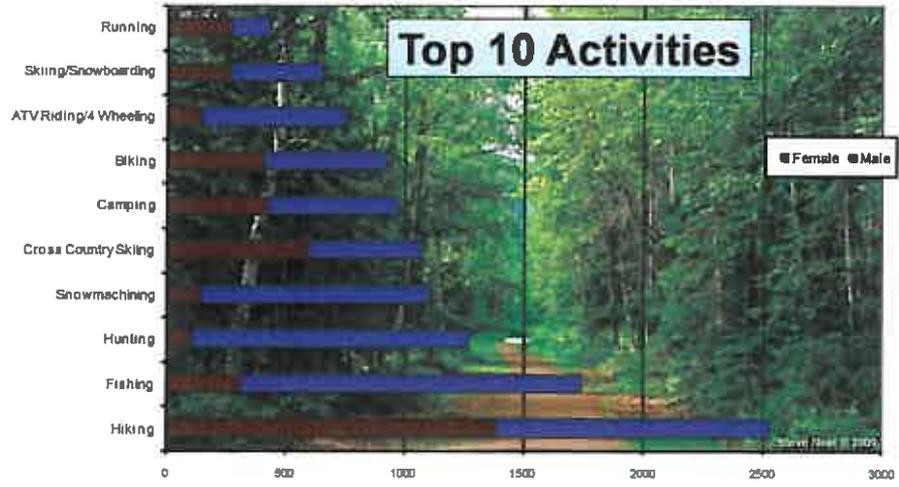


Alaskans place a high value on the availability and quality of outdoor recreation opportunities: 96 percent of all respondents said parks and outdoor recreation were important to their lifestyle. The Alaska Recreation and Park Association recognizes four areas of recreation benefits that enhance quality of life: **personal** (such as fitness, relaxation, leisure, play); **social** (including community recreation that builds strong families and communities, promotes healthy social behaviors and ethnic and cultural harmony); **economic** (investment in recreation positively affects businesses, visitor industry, and a fit populace who then are more productive in the workplace); and **environmental** (environmental health, protection, and insurance for the future).

SCORP



Top 10 Activities



Love of the outdoors is a major part of the fabled "Alaskan lifestyle." Alaskans participate in wildland recreation at twice the rate of the rest of the country. Wildland recreation in Alaska includes a wide spectrum of popular activities, from fishing, hunting, hiking, skiing, spelunking, bird watching, snowmobiling, ORV riding, wildlife viewing, recreational mining, to mountaineering, white-water rafting, dog mushing, ocean kayaking, and power boating.

SCORP AND THE LWCF PROGRAM

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965, as amended, has a stated goal of providing a nationwide legacy of high quality outdoor recreation. The Act created a 50/50 match grant program available to state and local governments to acquire, develop, and improve basic outdoor recreation facilities to serve the general public. In Alaska this program is administered by Alaska State Parks.



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Survey results for State outdoor recreation priorities.

PROJECT TYPE	PRIORITY
Rehabilitate, upgrade or expand existing high-demand facilities	High
Rehabilitate, upgrade or expand trails	High
Meet accessibility requirements of ADA including completion of inventory of recreation facilities and programs	High
Land acquisition of in-holdings or access to existing recreation lands and facilities	Medium
Acquisition of wetlands to protect recreation values	Medium
Land acquisition for new parks or outdoor recreation areas	Low



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To be eligible to participate in the LWCF program, each state must have a current SCORP on file with the National Park Service. Through the SCORP planning process, agencies and the public identify capital investment priorities for acquiring, developing, and protecting outdoor recreation resources. These priority needs are then used as a guide to direct the state's allocation of its LWCF apportionment. Proposals that are 1) submitted by eligible applicants, 2) for eligible types of projects, and 3) that address priority needs identified in the SCORP, are eligible to compete for 50/50 matching grants.



Survey results for community outdoor recreation priorities.

PROJECT TYPE	PRIORITY
Community parks/playgrounds	High
Trails/trail heads	High
Rehabilitate, upgrade or expand existing facilities	High
Campgrounds	High
Public use cabins	High
Meet accessibility requirements of ADA	Medium
Land acquisition of in-holdings or access to existing recreation lands and facilities	Medium
Land acquisition for new parks or outdoor recreation areas	Low

LWCF





YOUTH SURVEY

For the first time, Alaska State Parks completed a survey for the youth in Alaska. We asked each of the school districts to have their students complete an on-line survey to help determine future trends for outdoor recreation. We had 248 students respond. Of the responses, 86% of the students were from rural areas such as Tununak, Tuntuliak, Eek, Toksook Bay, and Kwigillingok while only 14% were from urban areas. The majority of the students (87%) were between the ages of 11 and 17. We were interested to see what impact the electronic age has had on recreation.

We included 17 of the favorite youth activities as there were many ties. For example playing football and hanging out with friends were equal as were biking and reading as well as fishing, the Native Youth Olympics and walking. It is clear how important the Native Youth Olympics are to the rural communities.

The electronic age did have a huge effect on the top activities with video games and computers being in the top 10 for the youth. With the number of portable video games and entities offering Wi-Fi these are no longer considered indoor activities.

Of the top ten activities, four are organized sports either through the school district or the community and two are motorized activities.

Favorite Youth Activities

