Chapter 3: Natural and Cultural Resources

This chapter describes the natural and cultural resources within Chugach State Park and is included because of the influence these resources have on planning for and managing park use. Natural and cultural resource implications were considered when making the management and facility recommendations in this plan.

Natural History

Geographic Location and Physiographic Features

Chugach State Park occupies much of the west end of the Chugach Mountain Range. Within the park, rugged peaks rise from sea level to over 8,000 feet with local relief frequently varying in excess of 5,000 feet. The landscape within the park is a conspicuous result of glacial action, although undoubtedly the action of glaciers only remodeled previously existing stream valleys and mountain slopes. At higher elevations in the park, ice fields and glaciers remain, many of which are large and vigorous. Most of the remaining major glaciers, Eklutna, Whiteout, and Eagle are restricted to the eastern portion of the park and are currently receding. The most prominent non-ice physiographic features are found in the high, hard bedrock area which extends roughly in a band from the slopes along the north fork of Ship Creek northeasterly to the area around the headwaters of Hunter Creek just outside the park boundary. Within this general area, active rock glaciers are found in the heads of most of the small valleys and in the cirques of the rugged peaks.

Within the park are a series of northwest-southeast trending glacial valleys. These U-shaped troughs, such as Eklutna River Valley, Eagle River Valley and Ship Creek Valley generally parallel the axis of the Chugach Mountain Range. These and other similarly oriented glacial valleys terminate in the plain of glacial deposits upon which the city of Anchorage is situated. Along the southern edge of the park is another series of glaciated valleys, somewhat smaller than the valleys to the north and normal to the axis of the Chugach Range. Bird and Indian creeks trend northeast-southwest and drain into Turnagain Arm. The valley floors are mantled with stream and glacial deposits. The divides separating these valleys are sharp glacially cut ridges with cols, aretes, horns and other typical ice erosional features.

Hydrology

Chugach State Park is drained primarily by two major rivers, Eklutna and Eagle rivers, and by several streams of smaller proportion. The principal streams in the park are Bird, Indian, Campbell, Ship, Peters, Thunder Bird and Goat creeks. Local drainage patterns and hydrological features in the park have been shaped, and are still being modified, by mountain valley glaciation that occurred during the Pleistocene. Most stream valleys are the classic U-shape formed by valley glaciations. The streams are characteristically shallow, fast flowing braided streams and are still in the youthful cycle of stream erosion. A significant portion of the southeastern portion of the park is covered by glaciers and ice fields. The rivers and streams draining this area constitute a significant portion of the total runoff from the area. Surface runoff from streams in Chugach State Park reaches peak discharge levels during June, July and August when the glaciers and ice fields begin their annual melt. The period of low flow is during January, February and March when precipitation and glacial melt is at a minimum.

Other hydrological features in the park that have been shaped, and are still being modified, by mountain valley glaciations are the numerous lakes. Eklutna Lake, at nearly 7 miles long and 1 mile wide, is the largest lake within the park boundary and probably the most well-known. This natural lake and the surrounding Eklutna Valley watershed, in addition to the Ship Creek Valley watershed, presently provide 75 percent of the Municipality of Anchorage's domestic water supply. Also contributing to the municipal water supply is the Campbell Creek drainage. Protection of the Anchorage water supply which originates in the park is one of the mandates of the legislation which created Chugach State Park.

Geology

Chugach State Park and the Chugach Mountains have a complex geologic history and include parts of several terranes. Terranes are blocks of rock units that did not form at the same time or place but were subsequently juxtaposed along faults. The Chugach Mountains are part of a 1,000-mile belt of rock called the Chugach terrane. The Chugach terrane runs from Kodiak Island south of Cook Inlet, up through the Kenai Mountains across Turnagain Arm, curving past Palmer then eastward toward the Wrangell Mountains. The Chugach terrane is composed of two rock units- the McHugh Complex and the Valdez Group.

The landward side of the Chugach terrane is the older McHugh Complex, which is a convoluted formation known as a mélange which formed from Late Triassic through mid-Cretaceous time (235-90 m.y.a. - million years ago). It consists of metamorphosed fragments of ocean crust (basalt, chert, and limestone) and turbidites (conglomerate, sandstone, and mudstone). Much of this rock has been metamorphosed and sheared in a long lasting subduction zone similar to the Aleutian trench of today. The McHugh Complex mélange can be seen in outcrops running from McHugh Creek to Eklutna Lake.

The seaward side of the Chugach terrane is the younger Valdez Group, which is Late Cretaceous (~70 m.y.a.). It consists of metamorphosed turbidites. The Valdez Group is metamorphosed and sheared but not as much as the McHugh Complex. Other terms for the turbidites are greywacke and flysch. These turbidites are made of pieces of rock eroded from a volcanic arc to the north (present day coordinates) that were deposited in a subduction trench. Few fossils have been found in the Valdez Group, primarily the fossil bivalve *Inoceramus*. Between Indian Creek and Girdwood there are fine examples of turbidites of the Valdez Group.

Along Turnagain Arm the mélange of the McHugh Complex and the flysch of the Valdez Group are separated by the Eagle River thrust fault, which crosses the road near Indian Creek and continues across Turnagain Arm and up Resurrection Creek. The fault zone is several hundred yards wide. Breccia (angular fragments of broken rock) and slickensides (a polished and grooved surface formed when two masses of rock move past each other under pressure) can be seen along the fault.

The northern boundary of the Chugach terrane is the Border Ranges fault, which defines the break in slope between the flat lands of Anchorage and the foot of the mountains. The fault runs north along the front of the Chugach Mountains to Pioneer Peak where it curves eastward along the north side of the Chugach Mountains. The fault separates the Chugach terrane on the southeast from the Peninsular terrane on the northwest, and forms the eastern margin of Cook Inlet. The fault is considered active even though no large earthquake has yet been recorded along its length, but the records don't go back very far.

Major uplift of the Chugach Mountains started in the Tertiary (~60 m.y.a.). Cook Inlet is filled with over 50 kilometers of Tertiary (65-2.5 m.y.a.) river deposits. No Tertiary rocks are found in Chugach State Park because the Chugach Mountains were being uplifted and eroded while Cook Inlet was subsiding and filling. Evidence from the Tertiary rocks in the region hint of temperate and subtropical climates as well as pre-Pleistocene glaciations. During the Quaternary (2.5 m.y.a. through today) a change in climate resulted in the onset of a major glaciation. Throughout the Pleistocene, glaciers were the dominant force shaping the mountains we see today. They formed the U-shaped valleys, moraines, erratics, and tarn lakes found throughout the park. Southcentral Alaska is still under great pressures from plate motions causing continued uplift of the Chugach Mountains, volcanoes of the Aleutian Range, and frequent earthquakes.

Mineralization

There appear to be no economically significant mineral resources in Chugach State Park. However, chromite and cinnabar occurrences have been noted in the Eklutna area, and a number of placer gold and hardrock gold prospects are located at the headwaters of Peters

Creek and along Indian, Rainbow, and Bird creeks. Minor outcrops of marble and travertine occur in the Peters Creek and Eagle River drainages and minor jasper is found along the shoreline of Eklutna Lake.

Soils

Major soils within Chugach State Park are the product of topography, vegetation, climate, and geologic materials altered by natural processes over time. These soils formed in gravelly materials either deposited by glaciers (glacial drift) or materials transported down steep slope by gravity (colluvium). Overlying these deposits is a mantle of windblown deposits and volcanic ash of varying depths but generally less than 20 inches thick. Along small streams within the park, soils are formed in gravelly and loamy alluvial materials deposited by water. The alpine life zone includes elevations above about 2,500 feet within the park. Soils consist of a thin mantle of windblown deposits and volcanic ash over gravelly colluvium and bedrock. Typic Eutrocryepts and Lithic Eutrocryepts are the major subgroups as defined by USDA Soil Taxonomy. These soils are found interspersed with areas of non-vegetated rock outcrop, talus slopes and permanent snow and ice fields. On mid to lower mountain slopes within the boreal and subalpine life zones between 1,000 and 2,500 feet elevation, the major soil subgroup includes well drained, forested Typic Humicryods on smooth or convex positions on mountains. To a lesser extent, poorly drained, forested Typic Cryaquands occupy concave positions and drainages.

Landforms below 1,000 feet elevation include glaciated valley bottoms, plains, hills and flood plains. Soils include well drained Typic Haplocryods on well drained, convex positions with relatively productive hardwood and conifer forest vegetation. Depressions consist of poorly drained organic soils, primarily Typic Cryofibrists and Typic Cryohemists, with shrub and sedge vegetation and these areas are referred to locally as muskegs.

Bore Tide

A “bore” is an abrupt rise of tidal water moving rapidly inland from the mouth of an estuary into a constricted inlet. The only locations in the United States where tidal bores occur regularly are Turnagain and Knik arms, two arms of the giant Cook Inlet tidal estuary. Cook Inlet has one of the largest fluctuating tides in the world, ranging as high as 35 feet. The extreme range of Cook Inlet tides can be attributed to the natural resonance of the inlet being nearly equal to the daily tidal interval of 12 hours and 25 minutes. Every basin of water has a natural resonance, that is, a natural vibration associated with the time it takes the water to slosh back and forth from one end of the basin to the other. Cook Inlet’s tidal ranges are amplified to phenomenal heights due to the combined tide and resonant effects.

Turnagain and Knik arms are uniquely suited for the formation of tidal bores because they are both adjacent to a body of water with a large range in tide (Cook Inlet) and their configurations are, by comparison to Cook Inlet, narrow, shallow, and gently sloping, forcing the rapidly rising tide waters to form a tidal flood with a raised abrupt front. The Turnagain Arm bore tide is a daily occurrence, and can be seen nearly every day somewhere in Turnagain Arm just after low tide. Its size depends on the range of the tide for that day. In Turnagain Arm, bores range in size from ½ foot to 6 feet high and travel at speeds between 10 and 15 mph. The most dramatic bore tides occur during days with extreme minus tides (between -2.0 feet and -5.5 feet).

The ever-changing channels throughout the Arm dictate the size of the bore tide and the best points from which to view them. Typically, Turnagain's bore tides can be viewed along the Seward Highway between Bird Creek and Girdwood. Surfing the bore tides in the choicest locations around the world, among them Turnagain Arm, is a dangerous, yet growing sport.

Climate

The park, located in the southcentral region of Alaska, is considered to have subarctic climate with a strong maritime influence. The mountainous terrain within the park can produce local weather patterns that can change rapidly. Snowfall in the park ranges from an average of 150-200 inches at sea level along the windward areas, south and east facing terrain, to 600-700 inches at 2,500-3,500 feet MSL - Mean Sea Level. Leeward areas average far less snowfall; typically around 50-70 inches at sea level to 150-200 inches at 2,000-3,000 feet MSL. Snow depth and loading will vary significantly with areas having an average spring snow pack as low as 10-20 inches in the leeward low elevation areas to 20-60 feet or greater along windward high elevations of 3,000 feet and higher. A major contributor to the heavy snow loading will be the terrain and predominant wind flow that produce the snow loading. It would not be unreasonable to expect snow depths much greater than 60+ feet in the loading prone areas of the park.

The rain pattern is very similar to the snow pattern with much higher rainfall along the windward side of the mountains than the leeward side. Average annual precipitation ranges from 70 to 200+ inches water equivalent along the windward side of the mountains to 15-20 inches of water equivalent on the leeward side of the mountains. Summer (May or June through September) rainfall averages from 70+ inches along windward terrain to as low as 9 inches on the leeward side of the mountains.

Wind is far more variable than precipitation. Strong wind events are common in the spring, fall and winter. The strongest and most common wind storms are east to southeast wind events that can produce wind gusts over 120 mph through mountain gaps and passes. Ridge top wind in the fall, winter and spring can easily exceed 50-70 mph with any given storm system that moves into the Gulf of Alaska. Summer wind will be lighter in general and tend

to be terrain driven. They will typically be the classic up slope and up valley afternoon wind of 5-10 mph and light drainage type down slope and down valley of 2-4 mph in the late evening to early morning hours. The gap and pass winds can and do occur in the summer, but they are much lighter, typically not exceeding 40-50 mph.

Vegetation

The geographic distribution of Alaska vegetation, particularly trees, is tied very closely to the climatic variations found in the state. Soil, topography and water also determine vegetation distribution. In the Chugach State Park area, the marine influence decreases as one moves inland and continental weather with lower rainfall and lower temperatures begins to dominate. Under this climatic influence, coastal forests give way to interior forest species where white spruce, paper birch, and poplars dominate. As one moves out from the Turnagain Arm and up the Knik Arm, the vegetative transition becomes complete and the forest becomes the typical interior type.

Both of these forest types range up the slope until the limiting factors of soil depth and temperature preclude tree growth and a subalpine transition zone takes over. This zone is dominated by alder and willow. Above this zone is the true alpine vegetation. Where soil is available in the alpine zone, an association of small plants, mosses and lichens form some of the most beautiful plant communities found. Where more severe environmental conditions exist in this zone, rocks, sometimes covered by lichens and ice, dominate the landscape.

On the north side of the park, the treeline rises to almost 3,000 feet, spreading up the valleys deep in the mountains. On the south side of the park, the treeline generally follows the 1,500 foot contour of Turnagain Arm, but zig-zags up and down drainages along the front range as it passes above Anchorage. Between sea level and 1,500 feet, most of the park is heavily forested. In the southern area adjacent to Turnagain Arm, a typical Sitka spruce-mountain hemlock forest dominates. This is thought to be the farthest northern occurrence in North America of these forest species. The remainder of the forested part of the park is a mixture of white spruce, black spruce, Alaska paper birch, balsam poplar, black cottonwood, aspen, mountain ash, alder, and dwarf mountain hemlock. Localized areas of poor drainage create areas of black spruce and muskeg while above the treeline dense brush composed of willow and alder, and alpine tundra dominates. There are approximately 430 vascular plants known to occur in the park. Some of the most common can be seen in Appendix D.

Fish and Wildlife

Mammals are not as abundant in Alaska as they are in more temperate regions of North America however, most of the mammals found in Alaska also reside in Chugach State Park, including some of the largest most visible species. The park has approximately 40 naturally

occurring species of mammals (see Appendix D for a listing), and most can be seen year round. Moose are found throughout most of the area and are driven down into the spruce and hardwood stands by winter snows. Dall sheep and mountain goats range over the higher peaks and black and brown bears are found throughout the area. Marine mammals, especially beluga whales are known to use Turnagain Arm at various times of year and are frequently observed along the coastal areas of the park.

Over 135 species of birds (see Appendix D for a listing) are known to exist in the park. Golden eagles and bald eagles are park residents, as well as hawks, owls, woodpeckers, grouse, ducks, and many species of warblers and other songbirds. The Coastal and Pacific migratory routes straddle the park and birds can be viewed following Cook Inlet north or going down Turnagain Arm or the Knik River drainage during peak migration times.

Only eleven species of fish are found within the lakes and streams of Chugach State Park. Fish are not abundant in the park because the numerous glacially-fed streams create silty gray water in lakes and waterways. Bird Creek and Eagle River are the primary salmon spawning streams, containing king, silver, pink, red, and chum salmon. Penguin, Indian, Rabbit, Campbell, Ship, Peters, Thunder Bird, and Hunter creeks also have fish, while Rabbit, Symphony and Eklutna lakes support small fish populations. Numerous sea run species are found in Cook Inlet.

Sport Fishery Enhancement

Many of the lakes and streams within Chugach State Park have been subject to numerous sport fisheries enhancement efforts undertaken by ADF&G. Formal objectives for the lake and river stocking within the park are contained in ADF&G's Statewide Stocking Plan for Recreational Fisheries, which is subject to internal and public review on an annual basis. In lieu of future changes to the statewide stocking plan, ADF&G plans to continue efforts to enhance the sport fisheries within the park. The stocking history of Chugach State Park is chronicled in the following table.

Location	Year(s)	Species	Currently Stocked or Planned
Eklutna Lake	1992	Chum salmon*	no
	1996	Coho (Silver) salmon*	no
	1987-1997	Rainbow trout*	no
	*The Chum and Coho salmon were from the Eklutna Hatchery and were only stocked 1 time each. The Rainbow trout were from Fort Richardson Hatchery and were often fry surplus to program needs.		
Symphony Lake	2001-2003	Arctic grayling	no*
	*The population appears to be self sustaining, and will not be stocked again.		
Rabbit Lake	1996-2005	Rainbow trout	yes*
	*Stocking is scheduled to resume in 2012 when catchable Rainbow trout are produced at the William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery. Plan is to stock every 3 years.		
Eagle River*	1991-1994	Chinook (King) salmon	no
	1990-1998	Rainbow trout	no
	*Stocking discontinued after poor returns to fishery.		
Bird Creek	1992-2010*	Coho (Silver) salmon	yes
	*Fish not released from 2001-2003 due to local construction safety concerns.		
Streams with upper reaches within CSP, but fish released downstream of park boundary.			
Ship Creek*	1966-2010	Chinook (King) salmon	yes
	1968-2010	Coho (Silver) salmon	yes
	1969	Rainbow trout	no
	*Fish are released at or below the Elmendorf Hatchery and a dam just upstream of the hatchery prevents fish from moving up stream.		
Campbell Creek*	1992-2010	Coho (Silver) salmon	yes
	1984-2006	Rainbow trout	yes
	1985-1986	Steelhead trout	no
	*Coho salmon stocked at Folker Street below the CSP boundary. Poor returns of hatchery fish to Campbell Creek in recent years, most likely due to small amolt size due to the loss of warm water rearing at hatchery. Rainbow trout stocked near Folker Street and Taku Campbell Lake, and stocking is scheduled to resume in 2012.		

Figure 3: Geology

Figure 4: Vegetation

Figure 5: Anadromous Fish & Large Game Distribution

Cultural History

The First Alaskans

It is not known how the first people arrived in the upper Cook Inlet region, but evidence shows they entered the territory about 10,000 years ago. Artifacts show that Beluga Point, which offered access to the uplands as well as protection from prevailing east winds, was repeatedly inhabited for almost 10,000 years. Around 2,500 years ago, Pacific Eskimos arrived from the Bering Sea, displacing earlier arrivals. Well adapted to life on the sea, Pacific Eskimos paddled the waters off Chugach State Park as late as 1700. At Beluga Point, Eskimo hearths date back to 1300.

Sometime between 1650 and 1780, the Dena'ina supplanted the Eskimo and spread across most of Cook Inlet. Why the Eskimo population in Cook Inlet left is still a mystery. Lack of marine mammals might have pushed them out. Whatever the cause, the Dena'ina mountain people moved from west of the Alaska Range, to upper Cook Inlet by 1700. The Knik Arm group, one of three different Dena'ina societies that occupied the Cook Inlet basin, used the area in and around Chugach State Park. They settled into semi-permanent villages, fishing from streams and hunting in the mountains. Their lives were closely attuned to the natural cycles of the land—a plentiful supply of salmon and other fish and wildlife provided them with food throughout the year. Elements of their traditional culture are reflected in the many Dena'ina place names located within the park.

European Exploration

The Russians reached Alaska in the mid-1700s, but didn't enter Dena'ina territory until the late 1700s. An Englishman, Captain James Cook was the first European known to write about contact with the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina. Cook sailed up Cook Inlet in 1778 hoping to find the Northwest Passage, but had to "turn again," leading him to name the water body "River Turnagain." As his ship was at anchor off the mouth of the "River Turnagain," he wrote the following description:

> "On the north side of the river the low land again begins, and stretches out from the foot of the mountains, down to the banks of the great river; so that, before the River Turnagain, it forms a large bay, on the south side of which we are now at anchor; and where we had from twelve to five fathoms, from half-flood to highwater."

By 1800, the Russian-American Company was given exclusive rights by the Russian tsar to obtain furs in the Alaskan territory; collecting sea otter pelts was their primary objective. The Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina escaped the repressive acts of Russian occupation that befell other Native peoples of Alaska. In 1867, the United States purchased Alaska, ending Russian occupation.

The Gold Rush

The discovery of gold on the Kenai Peninsula in the late 1890s brought new attention to Turnagain Arm. In 1895, prospectors crossed to the north side of Turnagain Arm from mining camps at Hope and Sunrise, and discovered gold along California Creek. Soon, miners worked Glacier, Crow, Winner, Bird, Indian and Rainbow creeks. A ferry was established in 1898 to transport people and supplies from the Hope and Sunrise area to Bird Point to reduce the time and trouble to traverse overland.

By 1908, most of the gold-bearing streams were mined out. The thousands of men and women drawn to Turnagain Arm moved on, but the legacy they left was the permanent settlement of the region by Americans. Roads and clearings exist throughout the park where people homesteaded. Other reminders of gold rush history are the trails over Crow Pass and Indian Pass, remnants of a telegraph, the old mail trail (much of which has been replaced by highway construction), rusted mining machinery, and cabin and roadhouse foundations.

Approximately twenty-five mining claims existed within the park boundary when it was created in 1970. Most of these claims have lapsed by becoming inactive. A couple operating under valid claims remain near Bird Point. The nearby Crow Creek Mine in Girdwood is now a tourist attraction and it along with the Indian Valley Mine are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Iditarod Trail

The Iditarod Trail, marked by the Alaska Road Commission in 1910 and 1911, connected Native villages, trading posts, and trapper and miner trails into a route from Seward to Nome that also went to the Iditarod mining district. From Seward, the trail wound along Turnagain Arm, over Crow Pass, down Eagle River Valley, northward to the community of Knik and beyond. In the fall of 1908, a new alternative trail was completed from Girdwood through Indian Pass to bypass the steep, avalanche-prone Crow Pass Trail. The Indian Pass route was three miles longer, and although less steep still crosses potential avalanche areas.

With completion of the railroad between Seward and Anchorage in 1918, the Iditarod Trail through the park fell into disuse. It would be many years before these trails became popular thoroughfares again—this time for recreation. In 1978 Congress designated the Iditarod Trail as a National Historic Trail, still today the only Alaskan trail with this designation.

Alaska Railroad

In 1903, the Alaska Central Railway began building a railroad from Seward to Fairbanks. The company cut a telegraph trail and established a line along Turnagain Arm to facilitate the project. The company soon went bankrupt as did its successor, the Alaska Northern Railway. The United States Government bought the railroad in 1915 and improved the trail to handle the horse and wagon traffic needed for railroad construction. The trail was also used to deliver mail between Anchorage and Seward. Construction crews worked for three years from Anchorage to Girdwood on the rugged section on the north side of Turnagain Arm. By 1918 the railroad extended from Seward to Anchorage, with flag stops at Bird Creek, Indian, Rainbow and Potter. Part of the trail is now covered by the Seward Highway, which was completed in 1950, paved in 1954, and subsequently realigned in sections. Remnants of railroad construction camps remain along the trail but are barely discernible.

The Potter Section House State Historic Site helps tell the story of the Alaska Railroad in the early 1930s. The house, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was built in 1929 and is the only one of 14 section houses remaining. The site has the restored house and outbuildings that were once part of a railroad section camp and currently functions as the Chugach State Park Headquarters. Interpretive displays include the huge rotary snowplow used by trains to clear the tracks.

After the railroad was completed, some people homesteaded along the north side of Turnagain Arm. To access their sites, the homesteaders cut trails and cleared short roads. Only a few of the homesteads were patented because the area is rugged. When the park was created, the valid inholdings were respected. Several homesteader access routes are now trails in the park, powerlines and pipelines supplying power for Anchorage and fuel in the past for the military and now natural gas to residents.

The Eklutna Dam

In the 1920s a diversion dam was constructed at Eklutna River not far below the Eklutna Lake outlet. This dam was part of the system that generated the major source of power for Anchorage for many years. The dam was upgraded several times. In 1955, a new dam was constructed and it raised the level of Eklutna Lake to an elevation of 875 feet above sea level. The 1964 Earthquake severely damaged the new system. Because of this, a new storage dam was built downstream—an earth and rockfill structure 815 feet long and 51 feet high. As this dam impounds 100% of the flow from Eklutna Lake, the river's volume immediately downstream is zero.

Commercial Logging

Formerly, timber rights in the Bird and Indian valleys had been leased to various logging contractors and the logs from the area were milled at two small spruce mills: one in the Bird Valley and one in the Indian Valley. In 1969, the tentative sale of the logging rights to the Bird and Indian valleys threatened to disrupt a rugged, forested retreat enjoyed by many local residents. A group of citizens filed suit against the State of Alaska to prevent private logging operations from harvesting timber from this region. Claiming "grandfather" rights, they won their suit to preserve this area. Several miles of road in the Bird and Indian valleys remain as evidence of the commercial logging that occurred until 1973- when the timber rights to the parcels in the valleys expired.

Establishment of the Park

The region's close proximity to Anchorage, Alaska's largest urban center, soon awakened interest in its recreational potentialities for large numbers of city dwellers. Members of relatively small, special interest groups such as the Nordic Ski Club and the Mountaineering Club of Alaska had used the area already for some years. The explosive growth of the Anchorage metropolitan area, however, soon posed a variety of problems. Private acquisitions of lands blocked public access into the Chugach Mountains and the accumulation of garbage at various entrance points became an eyesore to many, newly environmentally conscious, citizens. Despite pressures for wider recreational opportunities, little or no maintenance of foot paths and trails existed, nor were sorely needed camping places developed. In addition, haphazard use and development threatened the watershed which supplies Anchorage with this vital commodity.

The varying interests seeking to use the Chugach Mountains and surrounding areas and the difficulties they encountered trying to use what appeared to be available land led to the formation of the Chugach State Park Ad Hoc Committee. Despite the diversity of interests (conservation, hunting, hiking, equestrian use, historical preservation, wilderness, dog sledding and snowmobiling, among others) among this group, they built support for the formation of a state park that would protect the mountains they felt belonged to the people. A number of State legislators, among them Lowell Thomas, Jr., Helen Beirne, Joe Josephson, Brad Phillips, John Rader, Tom Koslosky and Nick Begich, took an interest in 1970 and worked to pass SB 388, "an act creating Chugach State Park", found in Chapter 112 of Alaska's Session Laws (AS 41.20.200-240). On August 6, 1970 the legislation establishing Chugach State Park became a reality when Governor Keith Miller signed it onto law.