



Rabbit Creek Community Council

1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100, Anchorage AK 99503



October 5, 2015

Monica Alvarez
Chugach State Park Planning
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1050
Anchorage, AK 99501
By email

RE: Comments on Intent to adopt Chugach State Park Trails Plan and Chugach State Park Management Plan

Dear Monica:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the revisions to the Chugach State Park Management Plan and Trails Plan. The plans reflect a great deal of work, and in general they appear very good. We have a few concerns, however, and we have listed them below.

CHUGACH STATE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

In the comments below, we refer to page numbers in the “List of Recommended Revisions,” as found at
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/chugach/manageplanchug.htm>

Chapter 5: Areawide Management Direction and Guidelines

Page 3, “Table 5.2: Public uses— Land-based motorized vehicles (page 50)” and Table 5.2: Public uses— snowmobiles (page 50)”: For these two items, the suggested revision is “Add ‘where there is a park benefit . . .’ ”

The phrase “park benefit” is extremely vague and could be used to justify almost anything. The phrase strongly needs to be defined. Does it give useful guidance to managers? Can the public tell what is authorized and what criteria are used for issuing permits? We don’t see how the phrase informs either group of people.

Also, these two revisions are confusing, because the phrase “where there is a park benefit” does not appear in Table 5.2 of the List of Recommended

Revisions, even though Tables 5.1-5.5 supposedly reflect all revisions. The lines in Table 5.2 for vehicles and snowmobiles are on pages 10 and 11.

Table 5.1, Resource Management

A. Fisheries enhancement, Page 7: We understand that this means boosting numbers of naturally occurring populations, not introducing new species. Enhancement of natural populations seems fine for the “Recreation Development” zones along the periphery of the park. *However, it is not appropriate to increase populations to non-natural levels in the “Natural” zone, and would be objectionable in the “Wilderness” zone.* This is a change from the previous Management Plan, which did not permit “enhancement” in Wilderness zones.

In Wilderness, people are supposed to enjoy the natural features of the area, not converge on an artificially “enhanced” fish stock. Heavy use by fishermen causes shoreline damage, excessive garbage (from fish cleaning along the shore), and would spoil the experience of other wilderness users.

B. Fishery restoration, Page 7: Restoration would be OK for Wilderness. It differs from enhancement— it means bringing back a previous natural population.

C. Wildlife habitat manipulation, Page 7: Our comments are similar to those for Fisheries Enhancement, above. Manipulating wildlife habitat, and thereby wildlife populations, *should only be done cautiously in the Natural Zone, and it would be highly inappropriate in the Wilderness Zone.* The only reason for habitat manipulation in wilderness should be restoration of natural habitats that have been *damaged* in some way, but the revision would permit much more.

CHUGACH STATE PARK TRAILS PLAN

In the comments below, we refer to page numbers in the “List of Recommended Revisions,” as found at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/chugach/trailmgmtplan.htm>

Chapter 3: Trail Classification System

Nordic trail grooming, Page 2: “Language will be added to the plan indicating that park staff will work with the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage (NSAA) to insure that trails can be easily groomed.” *Where are the trails that NSAA will groom? In which zones of the park?* We have not been able to locate such trails on any maps in the previous plan or elsewhere. We would oppose any grooming in Wilderness zones, since it involves motorized equipment. Skiers in

Wilderness zones are seeking a back-country experience, not manicured trails or snowmobile noise.

Chapter 4: Trail Specific Comments . . .

McHugh Peak Area Trails (445), Page 5: We gather that these trails are envisioned for the Potter Creek drainage, where access to the park is finally being negotiated with the Municipality of Anchorage. This is a long-awaited development. However, we have concerns regarding the scale of plans and the design for this new McHugh Peak “trail system.”

We strongly suggest that, since the new McHugh Peak trails are likely to be developed soon, you add some specific information about how many trails and where they will be.

Please add language that additional parking and signage to manage parking will be a prerequisite to at least some of the trailheads. Our Council residents have experienced nuisances related to people parking to access the Potter Creek and McHugh Peak vicinity (especially near the end of Steamboat Springs drive)

In addition, please at least state how and when CSP staff will plan the McHugh Peak trails, and how the hiking public will be able to comment on them.

The bubble for the Potter Creek/McHugh Creek trailhead should be enlarged so that it extends into Bear Valley. There is Muni-owned HLB land there that could serve as a trailhead with parking for the McHugh Peak trail system.

Sincerely,
Nancy Pease, Co-Chair

CC: Vivian Mendenhall, Joan Diamond, Thede Tobish