

Chapter 2: Areawide Management Direction & Guidelines



BACKGROUND

The recreation area offers natural attractions and recreational opportunities of regional significance. Such features as the Granite Tors, Angel Rocks, Chena Dome, Chena River fishery, boating, trails and the public use cabin system offer destination points for residents and travelers alike.

In keeping with a national trend, participation in outdoor recreation of all kinds is increasing in the region. This is a result of population growth, increasing awareness of health, increases in disposable income, and advances in recreational equipment technology. Along with this trend is an increasing demand for recreation opportunities closer to home communities.

As the population and visitation of the area continues to grow, and more state lands convert to private ownership, pressure on open lands and facilities in the recreation area will increase. This increased use will place additional pressure on park managers to maintain existing facilities and accommodate more use.

This chapter includes management direction and guidelines on major issues in order to implement plan goals and objectives. Included is information about:

- Overall Recreation Management
- Access Roads
- Campgrounds
- Education & Interpretation
- Facilities
- Fees & Funding
- Gravel Bars
- Horse Use
- Hunting/Trapping
- Land Ownership
- Logjams
- Maintenance
- Monitoring
- Permits
- Public Use Cabins & Shelters
- River Uses
- Shooting Range
- Trails
- Wildlife Viewing

OVERALL RECREATION MANAGEMENT

State Parks' overall goal is to manage the Chena River State Recreation Area for a wide range of recreation uses, based on its natural values, use patterns, and ability to support uses without significant adverse effects to this natural area. As stated in the Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework, a state recreation area, as opposed to a state park or a state recreation site, "is a relatively spacious unit and possesses a diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities. The dominant management objective is to provide a maximum level of outdoor recreational opportunities based on the natural values of the unit and its ability to sustain use without significant adverse effects on natural systems." In the Chena River SRA, State Parks will maintain existing patterns of recreation use while managing for increased uses in developed, high-use areas and maintaining dispersed uses in less-developed, low-use areas.

State Parks will focus on gathering information to more clearly identify problems and to be able to make decisions based on facts. State Parks will seek to keep negative impacts to a minimum for both the resources and the users through a variety of methods. These methods may include providing information and education programs; involving volunteers and user groups; conducting monitoring and research programs; making site improvements and hardening; establishing seasonal restrictions, and other techniques. Future management actions will seek creative measures to minimize use conflicts and resource damage, avoiding as much as possible the use of over-reaching restrictions or unnecessary regulations.

ACCESS ROADS

State Parks recognizes more access roads exist than can be effectively managed. State Parks' priority is to maintain the existing primary access roads. Incidental, unintentional roads or access points without clear purpose will be monitored, but not actively managed or signed unless significant resource damage or public safety concerns warrant management restrictions or closure. New roads, when proposed, will consider maintenance costs, benefits, impacts, and other concerns, similar to deciding on a new facility. Any site-specific planning for new roads will include public notice and opportunity for comment.

Access road locations are listed from west to east along the Chena Hot Springs Road and right (R) or left (L) driving from Fairbanks. Based on current management practices, the plan describes specifically which roads will be: a) monitored, maintained and improved for **primary facility access**, b) monitored and maintained for **dispersed site access**, or c) monitored and not maintained for **incidental access** that may be restricted or closed.

a) Primary facility access. Eighteen recreation access roads will be monitored, maintained, signed and improved as funding allows. These roads lead to the primary facilities and destination nodes, including nine trailheads (Milepost 26.6L, 29.9L, 31.6L, 36.4L, 41.6L, 45.5R, 48.9R, 49.2L and 50.5L), three campgrounds (Milepost 27.0R, 39.5L and 42.8L), three designated boat launch sites (Milepost 27.9R, 37.8R, and 44.1L); one residential camp (Milepost 30.0L), one maintenance compound (Milepost 33.0L) and two public use cabins (Milepost 32.2R and 47.8L).

b) Dispersed site access. Seventeen access roads to dispersed sites will be monitored and maintained at Mileposts 26.7R, 28.2L, 28.6R, 29.4R, 29.5L, 31.4R, 38.2L, 39.6R, 42.3R, 42.9R, 43.0R, 43.7L, 43.9R, 44.1R, 45.5L, 47.2L and 47.9L. These roads also may be signed.

c) Other incidental access. Several other incidental roads will be monitored and not actively managed or signed unless significant resource damage or public safety concerns warrant management restrictions or closure.

As the budget allows, ranger patrols will be increased to reduce vandalism, littering, and resource damage and other types of undesirable behavior, particularly at undeveloped sites.

State Parks' will make maintaining existing access a priority over developing new access to future facilities and will seek to secure funding that reflects this priority, particularly for deferred maintenance items.

Trailer Boat Launches. Launching boats from trailers is authorized at three sites in the Recreation Area: at the Milepost 27.9, at Milepost 37.8 (called "first bridge"), and at Milepost 44.1 (called "third bridge"). These three signed sites will offer motorized boating access at key locations – from the east end for access up the East (Middle) Fork, the west end for access up the South Fork and downstream of the Recreation Area, and from the middle of the Recreation Area.

Under current statewide regulations, off-road and highway vehicles may not be operated in the active channel of anadromous streams. The intent of this law is to protect salmon streams from adverse impacts. Under a special authorization administered by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources' Office of Habitat Management and Permitting, State Parks allows vehicle access into the Chena River for the purpose of launching watercraft from a trailer at these three sites. State Parks will continue to ensure that the General Permit for public launching at these sites remains current.

CAMPGROUNDS

Current campsites are designed for 35-foot vehicles. Some future campsites will be designed to accommodate even larger vehicles including 45-foot RVs. All campgrounds in the Recreation Area allow RV camping.

Dispersed camping on gravel bars by RVs and tents will continue to be allowed. With increased use, these areas may require more active management by designating sites, limiting the number of campsites per gravel bar, and/or establishing a remote camping fee system (see Monitoring section in this chapter).

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Education and interpretation provide important tools for affecting visitor behavior and reducing negative impacts. As a management policy, interpretation and visitor information will be incorporated into all development projects.

State Parks will incorporate **boating education** in their management strategies through information displays and trainings or seminars. To increase awareness and understanding of boating safety, operator courtesy, and river ethics, State Parks will work with the State Office of Boating Safety to provide training at various venues, such as meetings for river user groups, school groups and youth groups, including topics such as boat operator courtesy, river hazards and the Kids Don't Float Program.

State Parks will promote **responsible outdoor recreation use** by adding displays, such as trail courtesy and etiquette, leave-no-trace techniques, be respectful of other users, and other educational and interpretive displays at trailheads, inside public use cabins, and other activity nodes.

Road traffic will likely increase as the population of the region grows, and as other attractions in the area experience increased use, such as the Chena Hot Springs Resort. This use is likely to result in more visitors stopping for **sightseeing and wildlife viewing**, and increasing use of interpretive facilities and programs along the road. The Recreation Area plays an increasingly important regional role in offering opportunities for wildlife viewing and scenic views.

Where appropriate, for example where safe, off-road parking exists, State Parks will install interpretive panels near wildlife viewing areas and at pull-offs with natural or cultural significance. State Parks will design interpretive recreation opportunities for diverse groups including the elderly, families with young children, and those not able to venture along more challenging trails. These facilities can provide these groups with the opportunity to learn about those areas through informational panels.

Noise caused by increased traffic along the road, the river, or trails may detract from some of the activities occurring in the Recreation Area, such as wildlife viewing and interpretive learning. Road and other upgrades should take wildlife viewing and interpretation into consideration and take measures to reduce negative impacts on these activities.

FACILITIES

State Parks will make maintenance of current facilities a priority over development of new facilities. If funding is available for new facilities or other improvements, the cost of operating and maintaining proposed facilities and upgrades is the first and primary consideration and will be evaluated on a project-by-project basis. Other factors that may be considered include benefits of reducing adverse effects to the natural environment; maintaining or improving public safety, and complying with the management intent for the

area. Unless the project is very minor, the site planning process will include public notice and an opportunity for comment. This management approach will apply to all facilities, including access roads, boat launches, campgrounds, public use cabins and shelters, shooting range, trails and trailheads.

Funding for facility development and maintenance is a major challenge for the Recreation Area. Several options have been considered to help remedy the problem. Grant writing has proven to be a good source of funding for specific projects. Partnerships with organizations to construct and maintain facilities should also be sought. State Parks will seek to use more volunteers, service organizations, and user groups to help with the maintenance of existing facilities, as well as the planning, construction and maintenance of new facilities or park improvements. Programs could be initiated that allow individuals or organizations to adopt a cabin, road, trail, or other park feature.

New public use cabins will be located a short distance from the river, trail, or road, so that a sense of privacy exists between the cabin site and other park users. Opportunities still exist for developing more pull-offs, connector trails, establishing better-defined boat put-ins and take-outs and an interpretive/welcome center. A dump station could be developed in the Recreation Area. The most logical location is the Rosehip Campground.

Future opportunities may exist to increase appropriate recreation facilities that might better serve year round recreation and be sources of revenue. For example, demand for winter recreation amenities, such as shelter cabins, yurts, or commercial facilities operated under contract or concession may be considered.

There may be undiscovered cultural resources within the Recreation Area, and development of future facilities should be done with care. Site inspections or testing is required where a cultural inventory has not been completed by the Office of History and Archaeology prior to ground disturbing development activity.

FEES AND FUNDING

In a statewide survey, the 2004-2009 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan asked respondents about five different proposals to help fund the development and maintenance of park facilities and outdoor recreation programs throughout the state. The percent of support is noted:

- Allocate a portion of annual RV registration fees (91 percent).
- Allocate a portion of annual off-road vehicle registration fees (86 percent).
- Allocate a portion of annual snowmachine registration fees (87 percent).
- Impose a one-penny per gallon tax on gasoline (57 percent).
- Impose a small tax on the purchase of outdoor gear (43 percent).

When asked if they were willing to pay user fees for maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities, 82 percent said yes. If a statewide bond issue were put on a general election ballot to fund parks and outdoor recreation programs, 64 percent said they would vote for it. Seventy-two percent said they would purchase a ten-dollar pin with proceeds going to help fund outdoor programs.

During the summer of 1999, a UAF Department of Economics study in the Chena River SRA on “willingness to pay” found that if a \$4 or \$5 user fee was imposed, 30% of the visitation would likely be lost initially. Visitation would possibly increase if visitors purchased annual passes.

State Parks seeks to assess fees consistently statewide; however, regional differences should be recognized and allowed. For example, not all units of the park system offer dispersed use sites or multiple access roads, such as found in the Recreation Area.

Opportunities to collect fees in the Chena River SRA are limited to a few developed facilities. The more heavily used, dispersed sites within the Recreation Area incur significant maintenance costs that are currently not supported by fees. Legislative action is needed to allow additional fees to be collected for uses such as dispersed camping. Currently AS 41.21.026 only allows for fee collection for use of developed sites. State Parks, with local support and sponsorship, may seek to authorize changes in legislation.

Other sources of funding should be sought for the deferred maintenance backlog and new capital improvements. State Parks will carefully consider the maintenance and operations cost before constructing any new facilities to determine if there will be sufficient revenues generated and allocated to offset or decrease maintenance and operation costs.

GRAVEL BARS

Gravel bars along the Chena River provide unique camping and picnicking opportunities. Resources are needed to ensure that the increase in these activities does not cause unnecessary damage to the river’s ecosystem. Dispersed camping, day-use, and picnicking along the river are likely to increase, but staffing and funding to minimize impacts and provide basic services are in short supply.

Camping on gravel bars by RV’s, car campers and tents will continue to be allowed. With increased use, these areas may require additional management, such as designating sites, adding sanitation facilities and better enforcement of existing sanitation regulations, limiting the number of campsites per gravel bar, or establishing dispersed-site camping fees. Also see the Monitoring section in this chapter.

Highway vehicles will continue to be allowed on gravel bars, but are not allowed to drive in the river under existing statutes (Title 41), except at the trailered boat launch sites discussed earlier in this chapter. Under current statewide regulations, off-road and highway vehicles may not be operated in the active channel of anadromous streams. See Access Roads section, Trailered Launches in this chapter.

Off-road vehicles (ORVs) will continue to be limited to trails designated open to ORV use in the Recreation Area. ORVs may be allowed on unvegetated gravel bars. To protect public safety and well-being of other campers and gravel bar users, ORVs may not create a nuisance or be operated in a reckless manner at gravel bar campsites. If use of gravel bars increases in the future, use conflicts may warrant ORV restrictions. When gravel bars are closed to ORV use, they will be posted.

Where feasible, information about gravel bar use will be displayed on interpretive panels or bulletin boards near the activity areas. Information will explain the constraints described above and offer education about user respect, courtesy, and sharing resources to minimize regulatory controls.

HORSE USE

Horse use in the Recreation Area is allowed in designated areas. Trail conditions should be monitored and managed to protect the integrity of trails. Increased horse use can cause major trail destruction unless protection measures are taken, such as seasonal closures or enhancements such as trail hardening or boardwalks. Separation of horse trails from hiking trails should also be considered.

Areas where horses are currently allowed will remain available for horse riding. When portions of these trails have boardwalks installed, the boardwalk will be constructed to meet standards for horse use or horses will be directed to an alternate route through signage. Assistance from user groups for maintenance and special construction projects will be solicited.

HUNTING/TRAPPING

Hunting with firearms is legal throughout the recreation area except within one-quarter mile of developed facilities, such as campgrounds, public use cabins and day-use areas. Hunting activities must comply with state hunting regulations.

The local Fish and Game Advisory Committee addresses hunting and trapping concerns. Changes to hunting regulations are made through the Alaska Board of Game, not State Parks.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Reasonable and feasible access to private lands within the Recreation Area should be ensured in a manner that avoids, as much as possible, recreation use conflicts and minimizes environmental damage. Resources or lands that are developed or sold on state lands surrounding the Recreation Area should not be accessed through the recreation area unless beneficial to the management objectives of the park.

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation should take the necessary steps to ensure continuing public access across private lands along the winter trail corridor, including purchase of the private land parcels or conservation easements.

Military lands south of the CRSRA require a permit before entry. See Appendix C.

LOGJAMS

Logjams will not be removed within the Recreation Area by State Park staff. Woody debris is an important component for fish and other wildlife habitat. Firewood gathering and house log permits will continue to be available for harvest of dead and down or burnt timber.

MAINTENANCE

Facility maintenance is a top priority for the Recreation Area. Management actions should be directed at caring for the facilities that already exist and should take precedence over the development of new facilities.

Funding for special projects, which in the past has come mainly from federal grants, is often restricted to construction of new facilities or upgrades to existing facilities. Federal grants cannot, as a general rule, be used for maintenance. While federal grants will continue to be sought, the cost of operation and maintenance of proposed facilities and upgrades will first be considered on a project-by-project basis. In addition, any significant facility development will include public involvement.

State Parks will seek to utilize more volunteers and non-profit organizations to help with the maintenance of existing facilities. These include trail projects, constructing interpretive signs, improving public use cabins and campground improvements.

MONITORING

Proper decision-making requires adequate information, so the focus of management action in the near term mandates that a monitoring and assessment program be developed. State Parks shall strive to collect baseline data on visitor uses and the condition of park resources within five years of plan adoption, and periodically monitor and assess conditions, so management objectives can be tailored to support the types of use and diversity of recreation experiences enjoyed and desired in the Recreation Area.

State Parks will focus on assessing existing resource and use conditions, which may include user surveys by mail, phone or on-site interviews, field surveys, public workshops or focus group meetings, public comment stations, volunteer canvasses, general ecological and sociological research, online reporting system, and other appropriate inventory methods. With this monitoring program, managers can better describe the conditions sought by the various users and identify management actions to achieve and maintain these conditions. The Citizen Advisory Board will be asked to review new information every three years and recommend to park managers any appropriate actions. Before significant changes are implemented, public involvement will occur.

Managers of the Recreation Area need baseline data on patterns of uses and activities to establish specific management objectives and to develop criteria for detecting change in patterns. State Parks will initiate a data collection strategy, and work with recreation survey professionals to design the strategy. The data should be standardized and collected over

time so trends and changes can be identified and effective management strategies can be formulated. In the future, State Parks will gather information to a) document key social and ecological conditions in the Recreation Area, and b) use that information to establish standards that identify acceptable levels of impacts on both resource conditions and the experience of Recreation Area users.

As use patterns change over time, impacts on resource and social conditions will likely occur. Management objectives should clearly identify the limits of acceptable change. Where these limits are currently known, they are included in the plan. However, much is not known about existing use patterns and user satisfaction and preferences. These must be identified and monitored over time, including:

- Level and type of gravel bar use;
- Level and type of commercial operations;
- Level and type of river use;
- Level and type of trail use;
- Level and type of dispersed camping and day use;
- Human use impacts on the resources;
- Extent of non-native plants on disturbed sites, especially those spreading along trails and gravel bars;
- Use preferences of existing Recreation Area users, particularly for river uses; and
- Tolerance for alternate types of management actions.

With this information, Recreation Area managers will work to set standards that define the conditions sought for the wide range of recreation opportunities, identify management actions desired to achieve and maintain these conditions, and adjust management accordingly.

Studies should also be initiated that address how fish and wildlife and their habitats are changing due to either natural or human causes. To assess the condition of representative wildlife habitat types within the park and their sensitivity to both natural and human-caused pressures, a baseline ecological research program should be undertaken in cooperation with ADF&G. The research should be designed as an ongoing program capable of measuring changes in the health and productivity of key habitats over time. Such a continuing research effort is especially important given the importance of fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing in the Recreation Area. Upland habitat areas identified for future research should focus on those used by furbearers and large game animals. Fish species to be addressed include, but are not limited to, Arctic grayling which are important to recreational anglers. This section of the Chena River also includes important salmon spawning habitat. Finally, water quality and stream flow should continue to be monitored within the Recreation Area.

PERMITS

Currently, State Parks does not require the public to acquire a permit to use the Chena River SRA for general recreation. Certain activities require a permit under 11 AAC 18.010, such as reserved use of facilities, special events, commercial use, or groups of more than 20 people.

If commercial operator use in the Recreation Area begins to negatively impact its resources or wildlife habitat or other users' experiences, limits on the number of permits issued or additional stipulations may be required.

PUBLIC USE CABINS AND SHELTERS

The strong public demand for public use cabins and shelters has been at least partly met in the Recreation Area. A system of seven cabins within the SRA, available on a rental basis, has increased opportunities for summer and winter overnight stays. Three shelters are also available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Road accessible cabins are booked months in advance and more cabins could possibly meet this demand. However, placement is an issue because of potential conflicts with other users.

State Parks' priority is to maintain current facilities before adding new ones. Remote facilities, particularly those with non-motorized access, are difficult and costly to maintain. State Parks will continue to assess the need for and costs of proposed future developments. State Parks will seek to expand the public use cabin and shelter program in response to public demand. State Parks will further seek partners who can help to keep the cabin program revenue-positive by maintaining existing cabins (adopt-a-cabin) or volunteering to construct new cabins or donating to cabin purchases. State Parks will consider special use permits for a private entity to construct and maintain new facilities, including public use cabins, shelters, and possibly yurts.

Cabins should be located a reasonable distance from the road, main trail and water bodies to maintain cabin user privacy. Cabins should be associated with the trail system or river system for ease of access and maintenance. Cabins should be signed and readily identifiable as state park cabins and not private cabins. The public use cabins should be available for reservation on a daily basis (with a maximum limit) to allow maximum public use. The Chena River Cabin and four cabins at the Twin Bears Camp have ramps connecting cabins to the toilet and are designed to be accessible by those with disabilities.

RIVER USES

The Chena River within the Recreation Area is one of the most important fishing streams in the region. It also contains the highest-quality salmon-spawning habitat of the Chena River. With ever changing use of the Chena River, the need to monitor the river and river use is very important (see Monitoring section in this chapter).

No restrictions on motorcraft (including PWCs) or horsepower are proposed at this time. Based on studies in 2004 and 2005, most boat use on the river is by paddlers or floaters (non-motorized boaters). However, there is insufficient information about the nature and level of conflicts to develop specific management objectives or restrictions. For the time being, the shallow, twisting nature of the river self-limits many motorboats. All uses on the river will continue to be monitored and assessed. See Monitoring section for more details.

The predominance of public comment indicated that the use of personal watercraft, such as Jet Skis, interferes with the recreation of other users. However, imposing a full restriction should be the last resort, used only after other measures do not succeed in minimizing the conflicts. State Parks will actively pursue regular monitoring and assessment of conditions and uses and seek less intrusive ways to reduce problems. Initial data gathering should identify the existing use levels and type of use and type of conflict. Management actions should seek to reduce the level of conflicts by addressing specific factors, such as seasons, locations, stretches of the river, or behaviors. State Parks will use the monitoring and assessment data to develop practical management standards that effectively address the diversity of uses and opportunities within the Recreation Area.

User education for river ethics, etiquette and safety will be a priority (see Education & Interpretation section in this chapter). State Parks will also seek funding to help identify the nature and extent of concerns and to use education and interpretation efforts to increase awareness of recreation etiquette and courtesy to other users so as not to diminish or impair other users' enjoyment. If conflicts can be minimized through education, then further regulations can be minimized.

There is little airboat use on the river and State Parks is not proposing to limit them at this time. To reduce noise impacts in heavily used areas, education efforts will be made to encourage airboat operators to use the East (Middle) and South forks of the Chena River rather than the main stem. Airboat use on the river will continue to be monitored.

Trailer boat launching. See details under the **Access section** of this chapter.

Size of groups. Under regulations that apply to all units of the State Park System, a permit is required for parties larger than 20 people for all activities to minimize conflicts with other users and to prevent excessive impacts to sites and facilities. These limits will remain in effect.

Monitor the Conditions of the River and its Uses. State Parks will continue to collect baseline data and field observations on the types of river uses, frequency of use, user preferences and user conflicts. With this information, Recreation Area managers will set standards that define the conditions sought for the various users of the river, and identify management actions desired to ensure these standards are met. Before management restrictions are considered, public involvement will occur.

Management will also put a high priority on maintaining the integrity of Recreation Area's riparian habitats, and conserving the grayling fishery through careful planning and regulation in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

SHOOTING RANGE

State Parks will work with interested individuals and user groups to improve the shooting range and make it safer for trail users and others. If demand warrants and the facility can be upgraded, State Parks may contract out the management of the facility.

TRAILS

The plan includes proposals to reroute, harden and improve existing trails. The plan also includes several proposals to build new trails. The plan does not propose changes that affect which trails are motorized or non-motorized, unless other measures prove inadequate to avoid unacceptable resource damage.

State Parks recognizes the damage that has occurred on low-lying trails during the summer by motorized uses and will make repairs a priority for Stiles Creek, Colorado Creek and Angel Creek trails. As in the 1984 plan, ORVs will continue to be limited to designated trails, which means summer motorized use is allowed only on certain trails and winter motorized use is allowed off-trail only after sufficient snow cover protects underlying vegetation.

State Parks will strive to develop summer trails on highland routes, so the lowland trails can be better maintained for use during the frozen winter months. As funding allows, trails in low-lying, wet areas will be reconstructed to withstand ORV use or rerouted to higher ground to improve conditions for trail users while reducing resource impacts. ORVs may be restricted from certain lowland trails where significant resource damage cannot be reduced to acceptable levels through other measures.

Consistent with the 1984 plan, the Angel Creek Trail will be actively managed for winter-only motorized use across wet areas because of extensive resource damage, primarily in the first three miles of the trail. The plan calls for a new or rerouted trail along the base of the hillside that will provide for summer motorized use to the Angel Creek Public Use Cabins. Acquiring funding for this new route will be a high priority for State Parks to retain the diversity of uses in the area.

The Chena Dome Trail will remain non-motorized. During the 2004 fire season, a fire break was bulldozed on adjacent general state land and within the Recreation Area. In 2005, the dozer line was rehabilitated, closed to highway vehicles, and opened to ORVs up to the Recreation Area boundary. In 2006, a new year-round motorized trail was built along the Colorado Ridge. The new trail provides a connection between the fire line and the Chena Hot Springs Road without impacting the Chena Dome area. This is consistent with the State Park's intent to develop new trails that will provide more loops and connections with the existing trail system.

State Parks will seek to enlist the support of volunteer user groups to help maintain and enhance trail use opportunities. An Adopt-a-Trail Program is one avenue to pursue.

Additional signage will be added as needed, limiting the number of signs to a reasonable level. Signage or other remediation will be added where confusion exists about the actual trail alignment.

State Parks will develop a detailed trail inventory, identify where problems exist and make appropriate repairs and improvements (see Monitoring and Assessment section). Appendix D describes the classification and management standards for each existing trail.

State Parks' goal is to provide a variety of recreation uses while maintaining trails in an acceptable condition. State Parks will seek sufficient funding to build new and reroute or improve existing multiple-use trails that require less maintenance to meet the diverse needs of motorized and non-motorized users. Future management actions designed to ensure the long term sustainability of trails and minimize damage should emphasize Best Management Practices and will conform to statewide trail standards, when they are developed. These practices may include:

- Hardening trails, installing water control features, drainage ditches and boardwalks;
- Rerouting trails to dry ground and constructing them with appropriate slopes and grades to be sustainable;
- Identifying appropriate use on the original trails when alternate trails are developed by:
 - Establishing acceptable levels of physical change with respect to hindrance of other allowed uses of the trail;
 - Evaluating environmental impacts of continued use through wet areas and determining where existing trail use creates increased resource damage;
 - Closing the original trail when damage exceeds acceptable levels and the alternate trail provides better access;
- Restricting ORVs from trails with significant resource damage where damage cannot be reduced to acceptable levels by other measures. For example, the Angel Creek Trail will be restricted to winter-only ORV use until a reroute or trail hardening occurs; and
- Trail closures during breakup;
- Continuing to limit ORV use to designated trails.

Within the limits of available funding for maintenance and operation costs, where extensive trail damage exists, the following trails will be repaired or rerouted:

Multiple use motorized trails (horse riding, ORVing, snow machining, dog sledding, bicycling, hiking and cross-country skiing)

- Colorado Creek Trail – reroute to higher ground where possible; harden existing trail where affordable; eliminate braided sections by posting and consolidating the trail to one route.
- Angel Creek Trail – reroute to higher ground where possible; harden existing trail where affordable; allow motorized use only during the frozen-season in damaged, low-lying wet areas.
- Stiles Creek Trail – harden existing trail where affordable; eliminate braided sections by posting and consolidating the trail to one route.
- Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail – manage trail to maintain or improve current condition.
- Compeau Trail – maintain appropriately to sustain stable condition.

Non-motorized Trails: (horse riding, snow shoeing, dog sledding, cross-country skiing and hiking)

- Granite Tors Trail – replace aging boardwalk across wet areas.
- Angel Rocks Trail – install boardwalk across wet areas; reroute trail to avoid areas subject to erosion; harden trail to eliminate cutting switchbacks. Keep existing trail open for horse use by installing boardwalks that meet standards for horse use or establish alternate routes for horses.
- Chena Dome Trail – harden or reroute hillside route segments subject to erosion.
- Mist Creek Trail – brush trail and install trail markers.

The trails program for the SRA should focus on maintaining and improving existing trails within the recreation area, as well as maintaining or enhancing connections to existing and proposed trail networks both within and outside the Recreation Area. State Parks should continue to develop and link Chena River SRA trails to the regional trail network, including the Chena Hot Springs Winter Trail from Fairbanks, other trails systems to the west (Jenny-M and Two Rivers, Chatanika and Cleary trails) and possibly extend trails to other areas, including to the north (White Mountains National Recreation Area and Steese National Conservation Area), east (Yukon-Fortymile country), and south (Salcha-Delta area).

No specific plans exist for new trails. Several routes are possible and should be considered for the future, such as trails connecting the Colorado Creek Trail with the Stiles Creek Trail or connecting the Mist Creek Trail with the Granite Tors Trail. Future new trails should link with existing trails to create more loop trail opportunities or to extend access into new areas. Before constructing new trails, the Citizen Advisory Board should be consulted and the public should be notified.

The plan designates areas for motorized and non-motorized use and trails for motorized use, summer or winter. Trail design, alignment, and allowed uses are in accordance with the conditions of the trail and the management intent for that unit. Trails will be classified into five general categories that will guide the trail's development, construction, maintenance, management and use. See Appendix D. Trail Classifications in the Chena River SRA. These trail classifications should be modified to comply with statewide trail maintenance and construction standards when they are developed.

Chena Dome Trail Interagency Land Management Agreement

Two short segments of the Chena Dome Trail lie outside the Recreation Area on land managed by the DNR Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW). State Parks should obtain management rights from the DMLW through an Interagency Land Management Agreement for these two segments so the entire length of the trail is managed by one agency.

WILDLIFE VIEWING

State Parks will continue to seek opportunities to develop safe wildlife viewing areas, particularly along the highway. Existing roadside pull-offs and other sites with wildlife viewing potential that could be improved are located at Milepost (MP) 27.8, 28.2, 29.2, 29.4, 38.8, 39.1, 41.6, 42.0, 42.8, 42.9, 46.0, 46.7 and 49.9.

MAP 2-1: RECREATION AREA TRAIL SYSTEM