

RECREATION

Goals

Quality Experience. Protect and enhance public use and enjoyment of the Recreation Rivers.

Areawide Opportunities. Provide for a spectrum of recreation opportunities on the six Recreation Rivers.

River-segment Opportunities. Provide specific recreation opportunities on river segments.

Signs of use. Improve overcrowding, litter, and human waste conditions in heavily used areas.

Scenic Qualities. Maintain and enhance for viewing the existing characteristic natural landscape within the Recreation Rivers.

Public Use Sites. Ensure the availability of public use sites to meet the needs of all users.

Public Facilities. Provide public facilities for the protection of the natural resources, and to provide for public access, convenience, and safety.

Challenge and Risk. Encourage self reliance and maintain the opportunity for users to encounter challenges and risks inherent in the natural environment, particularly on the more remote rivers.

Health and Safety. Minimize human-caused risks resulting from developments or particular activities which may endanger the public.

Education. Promote public understanding and appreciation of the resource values in the Recreation Rivers.

Monitoring. Monitor conditions to ensure that the desired recreation opportunities are maintained through time.

Management Guidelines

Recreation River Permits. The department shall develop regulations that require permits for certain uses in the Recreation Rivers. *Recreation Rivers Permits* may be issued for activities that are generally allowed activities on other state lands but are restricted in the Recreation Rivers. This type of permit may be issued for activities such as large events or for large assemblies that previously did not require a permit. Existing types of authorizations such as land use permits and rights-of-way may be used whenever possible. Proposed regulations for these permits are described in this section and other parts of this chapter. Also see *Appendix D, List of Regulations*, and *Appendix F, Authorizations for Use of State Land and Water*.

Primitive Tent Camps. Examples of primitive tent camps include portable camps such as pup tents, tarps supported by poles, and other similar designs. They require no authorization on state land throughout the Recreation Rivers under the following conditions. Between May 15 and August 31, primitive camps may remain in one place for up to 96 hours (four nights) before they must be disassembled and moved to another location at least one-mile away. Between September 1 and May 14, primitive camps may remain in one site for up to 14 days before they must be moved. Exceptions to this limit may be made for camping in developed public facilities (see next section). The department should promulgate regulations to enforce this limit. Also see *Commercial, Commercial Camps* in this chapter.

Storing Equipment and Vehicles. Storing equipment or parking vehicles is generally allowed in the Recreation Rivers under the following conditions. Between May 15 and August 31, vehicles and equipment may remain in one place for up to 96 hours (4 nights) before they must be moved to another location at least one-mile away unless authorized. Between September 1 and May 14, there is no limit on the time that these may be stored on state land. The department should promulgate regulations to enforce these limits. The department should also develop regulations to address abandoned equipment.

Storage of boats is addressed under *Shoreline Development, Boat Storage* in this chapter.

Public Facilities. Under Section 41.23.470(d), "To enhance public use and enjoyment of a recreation river corridor under a management plan adopted under AS 41.23.440, the commissioner may provide for the construction and operation of commercial facilities such as lodges, campgrounds, and boat launches."

The public generally opposed building developed public facilities in the Recreation Rivers. However, public facilities may be necessary for certain river mouths and road accessible areas where public use increases to the extent where degradation of the natural environment, public health, and the recreation experience may result without management actions.

Primitive Public Facilities. These include improvements such as privies, fire rings, log benches, and minimally developed campsites. These facilities are compatible in heavily used public use sites. The highest priority sites for primitive facilities are those where there is excessive site destruction including the proliferation of campsites multiple fire rings, compaction of soil, or damage to vegetation. However, each public use site should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Developed Public Facilities. These include significant improvements such as hardened campsites, parking areas (in road accessible areas), toilets, and caretaker facilities. Public docks and boat ramps are discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Developed public facilities are being considered in two areas at this time. The borough proposes building two public campgrounds -- one at the mouth of the Deshka River and one along the South Big Lake Road Extension.

Improved campsites in both primitive and developed public facilities shall not be constructed in a manner that blocks bank access along the river. When designing public facilities, the department will consider access for the handicapped. Public facilities shall be built consistent with general guidelines for upland development in this chapter. Also see *Commercial, Commercial Campgrounds* in this chapter and *Other Recommendations, Commercial Facilities* in Chapter 4.

Vandalism. The department should promulgate regulations prohibiting the disturbance, damage, defacement, or removal of state property, facilities, or signs.

Public Use Cabins. DNR will manage public-use cabins only if there are adequate funds to upgrade unauthorized cabins or build, maintain, and operate new cabins. Public use cabins may be constructed or rehabilitated to provide the public with recreational opportunities in the Recreation Rivers. Public use cabins are prohibited in Class I areas. Existing unauthorized cabins in Class II, III and special management areas will be evaluated for their conversion to public use cabins on a case-by-case basis. See *Upland Development, Unauthorized Cabins* in this chapter.

To minimize vandalism, cabins should not be located near the road system except where they are designed to provide opportunities for use by the handicapped. Cabins should be sited so they are not visually obtrusive from the river. However, some cabins may be visible from the river or lake, particularly unauthorized cabins which have been converted to public use cabins. Cabins should not be located in moose concentration areas identified by DFG, in public use sites, or in areas of intensive public use. On-site analysis by DNR in consultation with DFG will be required prior to construction or conversion. If a cabin becomes difficult to manage, the state maintains the option to remove it.

The department should promulgate regulations to limit occupation of public use cabins to those who have reserved and paid for their use. Agreements may be made with recreational groups for construction, maintenance, and operation of public use cabins. Groups who construct cabins under such an agreement may reserve the cabin at certain times for exclusive use by the group but will not have exclusive year-round use.

Camp Fires. The department should promulgate regulations similar to 11 AAC 12.180 to allow the department to restrict camp fires to fire rings or grills in certain areas. At present, this restriction should apply only to improved campgrounds or campsites. The intent of this regulation is to prevent damage to vegetation, soiling of

campsites with charcoal, or accumulation of unburnable garbage in heavily used areas.

Use of Weapons. Under Section AS 41.23.420, DNR may not restrict the use of weapons, including firearms, within the Recreation Rivers except in sites of high public use, such as picnic areas, boat ramps, campgrounds, and parking areas when it is determined that the use of weapons constitutes a threat to public safety. Under state law, discharge of firearms is prohibited from or across a highway or developed trail [AS 11.61.210(a)(2) and 11.81.900(a)(24)].

The most heavily used area in the Recreation Rivers is the mouth of the Deshka River. This area has intense fishing pressure, high public use, private residences, and public facilities. Between June 15 and August 31, discharge of weapons is prohibited within one-quarter mile of the Deshka River on state land and water between the mouth and the DFG camp. During restricted periods, weapons may be used in defense of life and property, or as a signalling device in emergencies. DNR may implement restrictions in other areas in the future consistent with AS 41.23.420 if the use of weapons constitutes a threat to public safety in high-use areas. The department should adopt a regulation to implement this restriction. The borough should consider a similar ordinance for the mouth of the Deshka.

Fireworks. Fireworks are prohibited unless authorized by a permit.

Assemblies and Events. The department should promulgate regulations that require a permit to organize or conduct an assembly of more than 15 people in Class I areas and more than 50 people in all other areas between May 15 and August 31. A permit will also be required for any promotional event or entertainment event, including an organized athletic event, race, fishing derby, or spectator event, whether or not an admission fee is charged, that occurs between May 15 and August 31. Bonding may be required at the discretion of the department. This will ensure that concerns such as public safety, natural resource protection, sanitation, and compatibility of events with the management intent for the river, including crowding during peak use periods, are addressed when large assemblies or events are planned. Permittees may be required to provide

sanitation facilities, litter receptacles, fireplace, or other temporary improvements to accommodate participants.

Marking Natural Objects. Several trees and rocks in and along the Recreation Rivers have been spray-painted to mark mining locations, rocks, and trails. Natural objects such as trees and rocks within 100 feet of the river may not be painted, blazed, or similarly marked. When marking is necessary, flagging is encouraged, rather than marking natural objects, as long as it is removed at the end of the season. The department should promulgate regulations to implement this guideline.

Closures and Use Management. The department should develop regulations that allow closures and other management actions to ensure that:

1. Upon a determination that the action is necessary for the maintenance of public health and safety, protection of environmental or scenic values, protection of natural or cultural resources, aid to scientific research, implementation of management responsibilities, equitable allocation and use of facilities, or the avoidance of conflict among visitor use activities, the director may:

A. Establish, for all or a portion of the Recreation Rivers, a reasonable schedule of visiting hours, impose public use limits, or close all or a portion of a Recreation River to all public use or to a specific area or activity;

B. Designate areas for a specific use or activity, or impose conditions or restrictions on a use or activity; or

C. Terminate a restriction, limit, closure, designation, condition, or visiting hour restriction imposed under (1) or (2) of this subsection.

2. A closure, designation, use or activity restriction or condition, or the termination or relaxation of one, which is of a nature, magnitude and duration that will result in a significant alteration in the public use pattern of the Recreation River, will adversely affect the Recreation Rivers natural, aesthetic, scenic, or cultural values, or will require a long-term or significant modification in the resource management objectives of the unit, must be adopted as a regulation.

3. Except in emergency situations, before implementing or terminating a restriction, condition, public use limit, or closure, the director shall prepare a written determination justifying the action. That determination must set out the reasons the restriction, condition, public use limit, or closure authorized under (1) of this section has been established, and an explanation of why less restrictive measures will not suffice, or in the case of a termination of a restriction, condition, public use limit, or closure previously established under paragraph (1) of this section, a determination why the restriction is no longer necessary and a finding that the termination will not adversely impact Recreation River resources. This determination will be available to the public upon request.

4. To implement a public use limit, the director may establish a permit, registration, or reservation system.

5. No person may violate a closure, designation, use or activity restriction or condition, schedule of visiting hours, or public use limit. When a permit is used to implement a public use limit, violation of the terms and conditions of the permit is prohibited and may result in the suspension or revocation of the permit.

Volunteers. If funding and staffing allow, DNR should designate a coordinator for volunteers to assist recreation rivers staff. The coordinator would recruit volunteers and organize work projects. If volunteers or groups offer to construct public improvements in the corridor, DNR should work with them to develop a work plan with project standards, timeliness, and plans for long-term management of the improvements.

Crowding and Use Limits. Crowding and overuse were identified as problems by users on some river segments. Many users report more camping competition, fishing competition, or encounters with other groups than they desired. If use and impacts continue to increase on these segments, the type of experience currently provided will be compromised.

While the planning process has provided substantial information about users' standards for various impacts, there is less information about relationships between use levels and impacts. In addition, public opinion on use limits on most river segments is divided.

There are several different methods of reducing "interaction" impacts in order to meet users' tolerances or standards. One of the most direct methods is to limit use (develop a permit system). Use limits should only be implemented when the impacts from overuse cannot be mitigated in any other way, if the relationship between use and impacts are known, and if there is strong public support.

While use limits are one alternative for addressing crowding issues in the future, they are not proposed for any segment of the Recreation Rivers at this time. However, the following programs to reduce these conflicts are proposed:

Monitoring of Whitewater Stretches. Three of the Recreation Rivers offer wilderness-oriented whitewater opportunities: the Talkeetna River Canyon, stretches of the Talachulitna River, and Lake Creek. On these reaches there is a strong consensus among users about the type of experience desired, acceptable levels of impacts for types of experiences, and the appropriateness of use limits if use and impacts continue to increase. For these river segments, specific "impact standards" have been prescribed (see Chapter 3, *Talkeetna, Lake Creek, and Talachulitna subunits*). These standards are the targets for evaluating the need for a permit system. A monitoring program will be developed to observe changes in impact levels (see Chapter 4, *Monitoring*). If impact levels become greater than the prescribed standards, and mitigation efforts have been unsuccessful at reducing those impacts, a use limit system may be implemented.

Other River Segments. Standards for interaction impacts in other subunits are not proposed in this plan. No need for use limits is anticipated in the near future. However, future planning efforts should set standards for these other subunits. Standards focus attention on recreation experience quality, allow managers to define the type of experience to be provided, guide monitoring programs, and provide a way to measure the effectiveness of management alternatives. However, throughout the Recreation Rivers planning process, users emphasized addressing litter and resource damage impacts first. These impacts are less directly tied to use levels.

Use Allocation. If use limits are adopted, a use allocation or permit system will need to be developed. Developing a fair and workable permit system will require a number of decisions to be made, many of which depend upon the proposed use limit level, access characteristics, the type of use on the segment, and legal constraints. Extensive discussions with interested groups and the public will be needed. This plan defers specific decisions on any allocation to the time when a permit system is needed. Also see *Commercial, Allocation* in this chapter.

Any use allocation system for the Recreation Rivers should attempt to meet the following objectives:

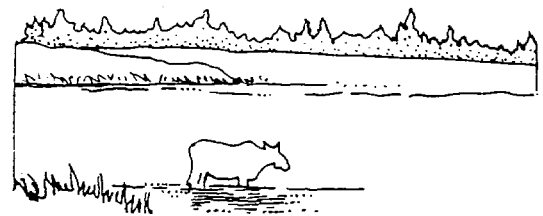
1. Be simple and easy to understand and use;
2. Minimize "no shows" and make unused permits available to other users;
3. Be flexible (allow for reasonable changes in users' plans, group composition, weather, water levels, etc.);

4. Provide stability for guide businesses;
5. Give no preference based solely upon past use of a river;
6. Be responsive to the relative amount of use demanded by the private and commercial sectors; and
7. Be the same procedure for all users.

Other Guidelines Affecting Recreation.

Several other guidelines may affect recreational activities. See the following sections of this chapter.

Shoreline Development	Heritage Resources
Commercial	Education
Upland Access	Enforcement
Water & Solid Waste	Phasing & Interim Management



FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT

Goals

Sustained Yield. Manage, protect, and maintain fish and wildlife populations and habitat on a sustained-yield basis.

Recreation and Economic Use. Ensure continued recreation and economic use of and enjoyment by the public including activities such as fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and trapping.

Ensure Access to State Lands and Waters. Ensure access to state lands and waters where appropriate to promote or enhance responsible public use and enjoyment of fish and wildlife resources.

Mitigate Habitat Loss. Avoid or minimize reduction in quality of fish and wildlife habitat where resource development projects occur.

Functional Integrity of Lands. Maintain the functional integrity of land supporting crucial life cycle stages of important fish and wildlife indicator species.

Management Guidelines

Eagles and Timber Harvesting. Under the Forest Resources Practices Act, timber harvesting is prohibited within 330 feet of eagle nesting trees. The Susitna Forestry Guidelines also prohibits forestry activities from March 15 through August 31 within 660 feet of known eagle nesting trees. If a nesting tree is not occupied by June 15, operations can occur between June 15 and August 31 between, 330 feet and 660 feet from the nest tree. Known eagle nests are shown on the plan resource assessment maps.