



Alaska State Parks Overview

Senate Resources Committee

**Presentation by Ethan Tyler, Division Director
Division of State Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
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TODAY'S OVERVIEW

- **Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation primary sections**
- **Regions and regional points of interest**
- **FY17 Highlights**
- **Moving forward**

OFFICE OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Serves as the State's Historic Preservation Agency**
- **Maintains statewide inventory of cultural resources**
- **Serves as the state liaison to federal agencies, representing the state's interests in protecting its heritage resources**

OFFICE OF BOATING SAFETY

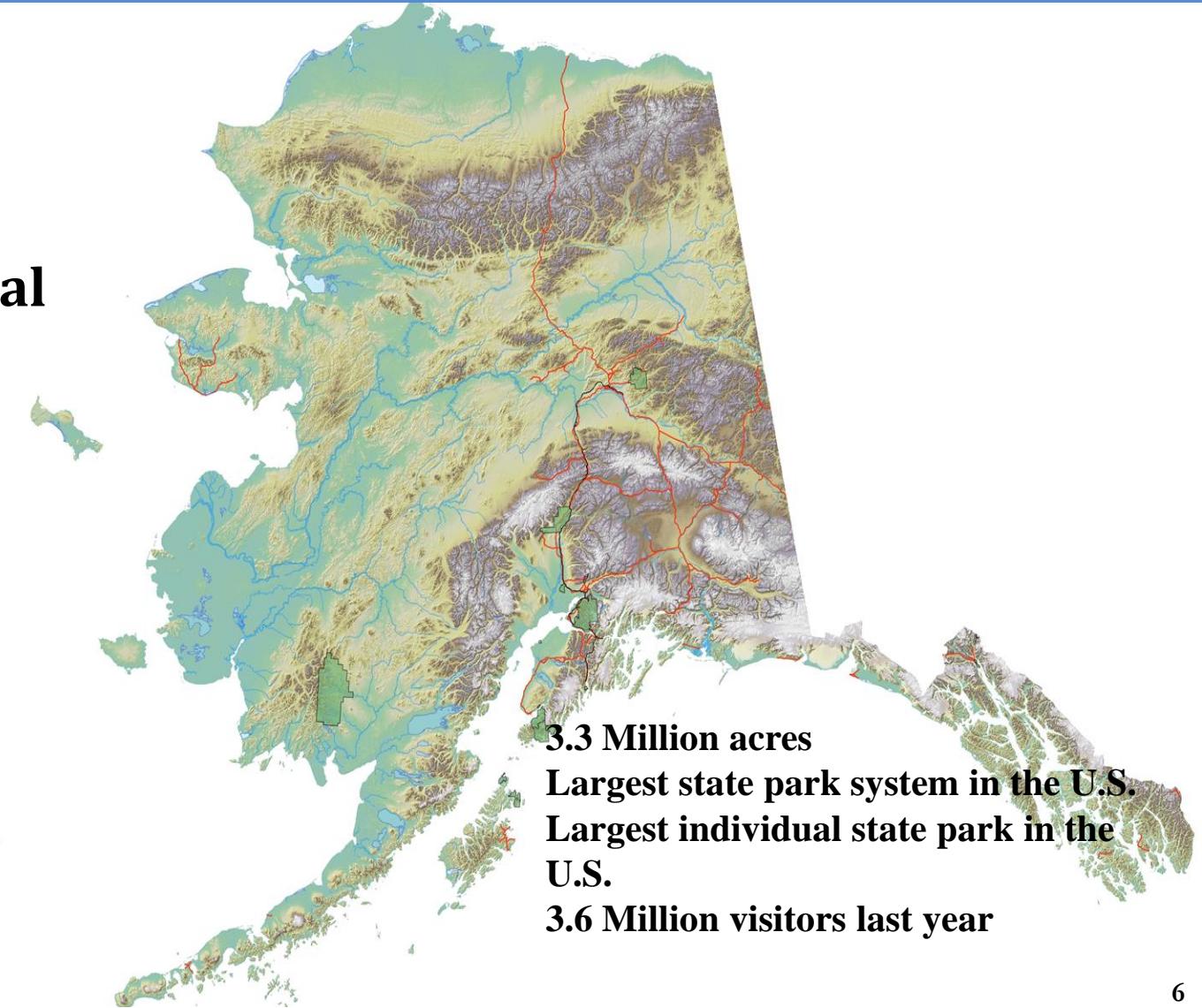
- This year marks the 10,000th participant in the Kids Don't Float Program
- Staff Member Kelli Toth Received the prestigious National Boating Safety Educator of the Year Award
- At least 33 Alaskan lives have been saved by the use of a “Kids Don’t Float” life jacket.

FIELD OPERATIONS

- **Provides public safety and law enforcement in State Parks**
- **Works with 12 local citizen advisory boards that provide public input on park management**
- **Ensuring Alaska's State Parks provide high quality, sustainable park facilities that enhance the visitor experience**
- **An important partner of the state's visitor industry and community economic driver**
- **Park fees covered 51% of operations costs in FY17**

SIX PRIMARY REGIONS

- **Southeast**
- **Southcentral**
- **Kenai**
- **Kodiak**
- **Mat-Su**
- **Northern**



REGIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Chugach Region:**
 - At 495,000 acres, the 4th largest state park in the U.S.
 - Because of its proximity to Anchorage, it sees high use
 - Joe Hall, Park Specialist was awarded a partnership award from the non-profit Alaska Geographic
 - Wood Tikchik State Park falls under the management of the Chugach region

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REGIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Kenai Region:**
 - Kenai region park areas are some of the most diverse in the state, including:
 - Prince William Sound
 - Kachemak Bay State Park / Homer
 - Seward Parks
 - Kenai River Special Management Area

REGIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Northern Area:**
 - Utilized federal highway funds to add significant improvements to Olnes Pond ATV Trail
 - Improvements / Riverbank stabilization at Big Delta Historic Park
 - Increase in fee stations and public use cabins
 - Delta Parks Permitted to private sector operators in FY18

REGIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Mat-Su – K'esugi Ken Campground:**
 - **Denali State Park**
 - **32 new RV / tent campsites with electric**
 - **10 Walk in Campsites**
 - **3 Public use cabins**
 - **Interpretive Pavilion**
 - **Partnership with the National Park Service**

STATE HISTORICAL SITE ACCESS FEES

- **Independence Mine State Historic Park:**
 - Began charging historic access fees in 2017
 - April through September saw 43,000 visitors to the area
 - Rated number one attraction in Wasilla on Tripadvisor
- **Totem Bight State Historic Park:**
 - Began charging historic access fees in 2017
 - Summer 2017 saw over 45,000 visitors to the park
 - Rated the #4 recommended attraction in Ketchikan on Tripadvisor

PARKS AS ECONOMIC DRIVERS

- **626 Commercial use permits issued in 2017**
 - Fishing guides, tour guide companies, water taxis, motor coach and van tours
- **Visitor industry partnerships**
- **Adventure travel trends**

PUBLIC USE CABINS

- **Online reservation system implemented in 2017**
 - No cost contract to the State
 - Allows ease in booking and payment
- **Peak season occupancy rates for cabins exceed 85%**
- **Public use cabins have a payoff period of 3 to 5 years**



PARK SUSTAINABILITY

- **Increase number of fee areas**
- **Expand electronic fee options**
- **Statewide consistency in pricing**
- **Online booking for high use campgrounds**
- **Streamline permitting processes**
- **Increase partnerships with for profit organizations and non-profit supporters of State Parks**



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