



House & Senate Resources Hearings • March 4, 2020

## **ORDER OF APPEARANCE**

Lee Hart, Alaska Outdoor Alliance, Overview

Don Striker, Acting Regional Director, National Park Service

Topic: Value of National Parks to Gateway Communities & HJR25 - Denali Park Road

Dan Kirkwood, Pack Creek Bear Tours & Co-Chair Juneau Economic Development Council Visitor Product Cluster Working Group

Topic: Small group & indy eco-tourism

TRAIL Economics

Michele Stevens, snow machine coalition

Topic: SnowTRAC program

Chris Beck, Alaska Trails

Topic: Alaska Statewide Trails Initiative

Diana Rhoades, Anchorage Parks Foundation

Topic: Active Transportation

Natalie Dawson

Audubon Society

Topic: Regenerative Tourism/Southeast Alaska Birding Trail

WILDLIFE HUNTING & VIEWING Economics

Jen Leahy, Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Topic: sportsmans issues/fed funds

Teresa Whipple, Various Bear viewing tour companies

Topic: South central bear viewing economy

Sierra Gadaire - Gastineau Guiding, Co-Chair Juneau Economic Development Council Visitor Product Cluster Working Group

Topic: Small Group whale watching & glacier excursions

# Outdoor Recreation: Alaska's Unsung Economic Powerhouse

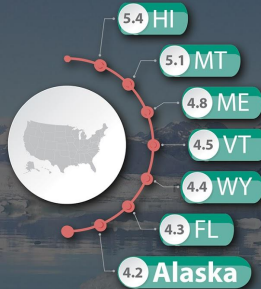


**Capital Outdoor Week  
March 2 - 6, 2020**

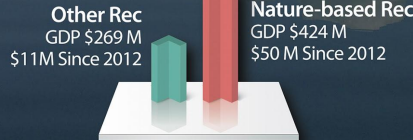


### 7th largest outdoor recreation economy

Outdoor Recreation Value Added:  
Percent of State GDP, 2017



### Nature Tourism Growing Fast



**58%** Alaskans say "opportunities for outdoor activities" are a reason they live here.

For more information, visit [AlaskaOutdoorAlliance.org](http://AlaskaOutdoorAlliance.org)

Sources: US Bureau of Economic Analysis and University of Alaska Center for Economic Development

**\$3.2 B**  
Outdoor recreation  
spending in Alaska  
Source: CED

Outdoor rec growing faster  
than overall economy



**81% / 48%**

Percentage of Alaskans/  
other Americans who  
participate in outdoor  
recreation



# The Numbers Speak for Themselves



# Impacts by Sector Add Up







# This Year's Delegation

Don Striker, Acting Regional Director, National Park Service, The value of National Parks to Gateway Communities

Dan Kirkwood, Pack Creek Bear Tours & Co-Chair Juneau Economic Development Council Visitor Product Cluster Working Group, Small group & indy eco-tourism

## TRAIL Economics

Michele Stevens, snow machine coalition. snowmachine trails

Chris Beck, Alaska Trails, Alaska Statewide Trails Initiative

Diana Rhoades, Anchorage Parks Foundation, Active Transportation

Natalie Dawson - Audubon Society, Regenerative Tourism/Southeast Alaska Birding Trail

## WILDLIFE HUNTING & VIEWING Economics

Jen Leahy - Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, sportsmans issues/fed funds

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When making decisions about developing resources  
“to the maximum use consistent with the public interest”





**THANK YOU!**

**For more info**

**Lee Hart**

**[leehartAK@Gmail.com](mailto:leehartAK@Gmail.com)**

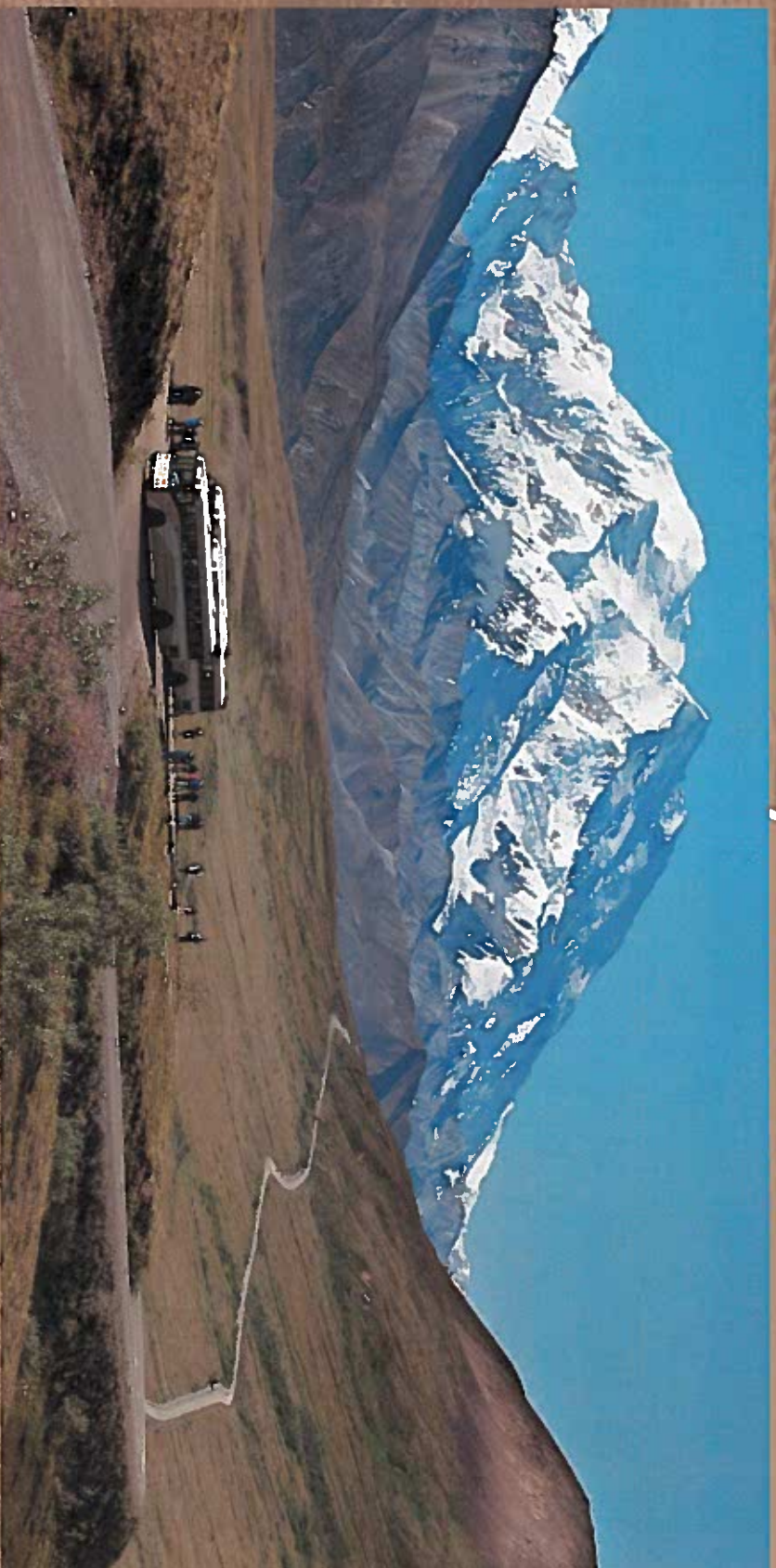
**303.898.4141**





Alaska Regional Office  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

# The Value of National Parks in Alaska's Gateway Communities



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## National Park System in Alaska

Alaska Region  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



1:12,000,000

Alaska Albers Projection on NAD83 Datum

0 50 100 200 300 400 500 Miles

- NPS Alaska manages over 54 million acres, about 2/3 of all the land in the National Park System.
- 15 national park units both on and off the road system.
- Park with the highest visitation:
  - Glacier Bay
  - Klondike Gold Rush
  - Kenai Fjords
  - Denali



# Americans Love Their National Parks

## NEWS RELEASE-

### National Park Visitation Tops 327 Million in 2019

*Visitation in 2019 surpassed 2018 by more than 9 million recreation visits, a 2.9 percent increase*

WASHINGTON – America's national parks continue to be popular destinations. Visitation to national parks in 2019 exceeded 300 million recreation visits for the fifth consecutive year. The 327.5 million total is the third highest since record keeping began in 1904.

**"The numbers once again affirm that Americans and visitors from around the world love the natural, cultural and historic experience provided by our nation's national parks," said Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt.**

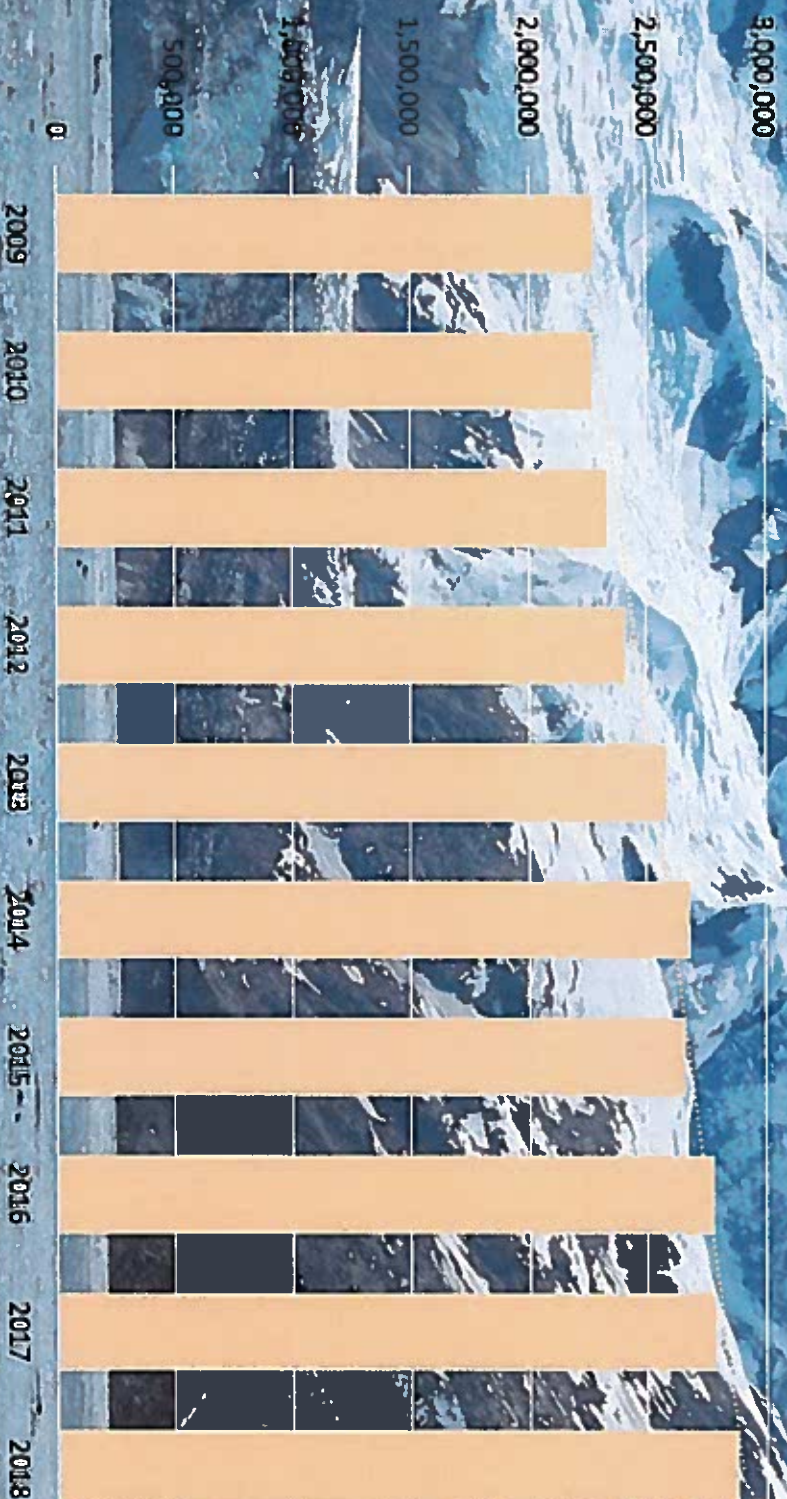
**"The 419 parks in the national park system provide a vast array of opportunities for recreation and inspiration for visitors of all ages," said National Park Service Deputy Director David Vela. "With at least one located in every state, national parks offer nearby history, culture and adventure."**





# Visitation in Alaska National Parks

Total AK NPS Recreational Visitation

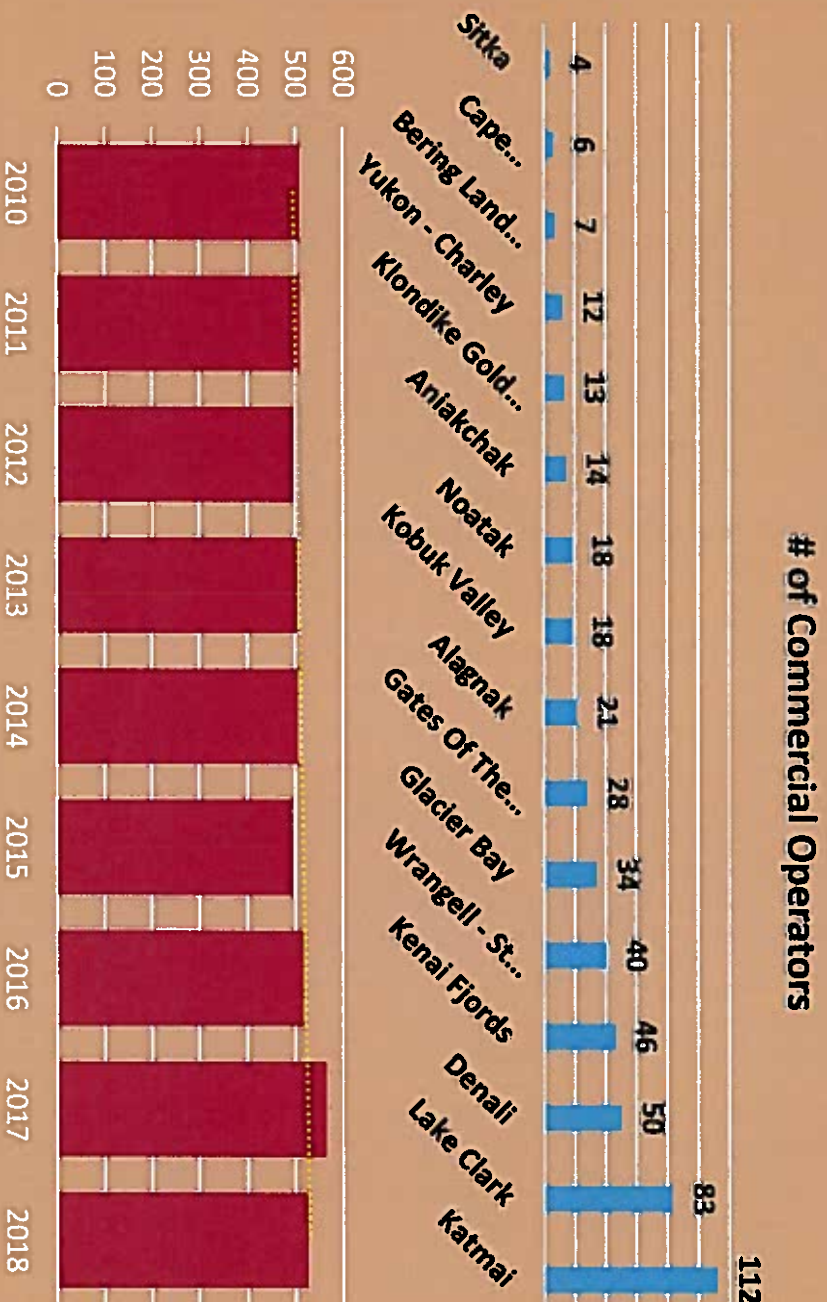


27% increase in visitation over last decade

In 2019, NPS had another record breaking year with nearly 3 million visitors to Alaska's parks resulting in nearly \$2.0 billion in economic output in the state and supporting 18,000 jobs.



# Commercial Services in AK Parks



NPS in Alaska licenses about 525 private businesses to provide visitor services within national park units. These range from large, multi-national corporations to sole proprietor local businesses.





New and bigger cruise ships drawn to Southeast Alaska parks creates a ripple of economic activity from Ketchikan to Fairbanks as overland packages offer visitors more choices.



# Visitor Spending

## Visitor Spending Effects - Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending

Download the 2018 National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report (PDF - 1.63 MB)

This interactive tool is a collaboration between the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey and displays results from the Visitor Spending Effects report series. Economic contributions of National Park Service visitor spending are displayed at the national, state, and local levels.

Select an economy to get started:

NATIONAL ECONOMY

STATE ECONOMIES

PARK ECONOMIES

MORE INFORMATION

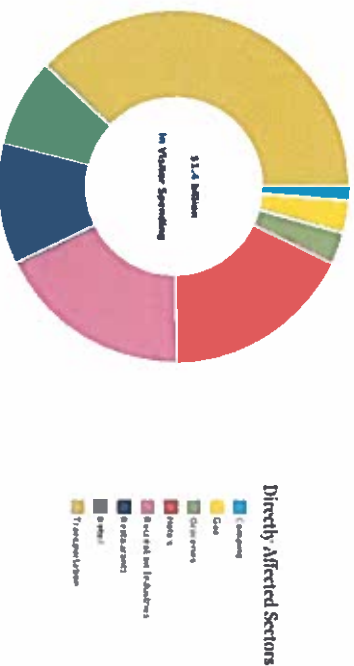
### Economic Contributions to the Alaska Economy

In 2018, 2.9 million park visitors spent an estimated \$1.4 billion in total gateway region retail sales using National Park Service lands in Alaska. These expenditures supported a total of 17,800 jobs, \$258 million in labor income, \$1.2 billion in value added, and \$2.0 billion in economic output in the Alaska economy.

☒ Visitor Spending
 ☐ Jobs
 ☐ Labor Income
 ☐ Value Added
 ☐ Economic Output

Click on a State for more information or select a State

Alaska



### Contributed to the Alaska Economy



©2018 Visitor Spending Effects report data was updated for the following Alaska parks: Gateway National Park & Preserve, Kenai National Preserve, and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

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# Economic Output

## Visitor Spending Effects - Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending

Download the 2018 National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report (PDF) - 1.83 MB

The information used in this collaboration between the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey and analysis results from the Visitor Spending Effects report series. Economic contributions of National Park Service visitor spending are displayed across national, state, and local levels.

Select an economy to get started

NATIONAL ECONOMY

STATE ECONOMIES

PARK ECONOMIES

MORE INFORMATION

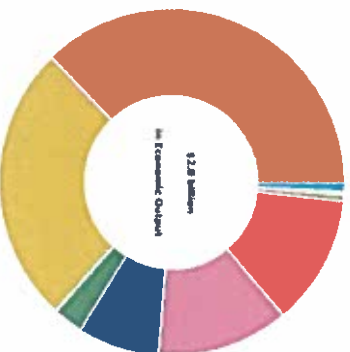
### Economic Contributions to the Alaska Economy

In 2018, 2.8 million park visitors spent an estimated \$1.4 billion in local gateway regions while visiting National Park Service lands in Alaska. These expenditures supported a total of 17.8 equivalent jobs, 3658 million in labor income, \$1.2 billion in value added, and \$2.0 billion in economic output in the Alaska economy.

Visitor Spending    Jobs    Labor Income    Value Added    ☒ Economic Output

Click on a State for more information or select a State

Alaska



#### Directly Affected Sectors



### Contributed to the Alaska Economy



\*2018 Visitor Spending Effects profile data was updated for the following Alaska parks: Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve, Kodiak Island National Park & Preserve, and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

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# Jobs

Select an economy to get started

NATIONAL ECONOMY

STATE ECONOMIES

PARK ECONOMIES

MORE INFORMATION

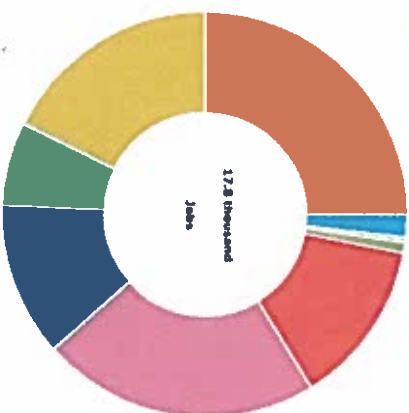
## Economic Contributions to the Alaska Economy

In 2018, 2.9 million park visitors spent an estimated \$1.4 billion in total gateway region retail visiting National Park Service lands in Alaska. These expenditures supported a total of 17.8 thousand jobs, \$558 million in labor income, \$1.2 billion in value added, and \$2.0 billion in economic output in the Alaska economy.

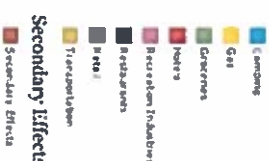
☐ Visitor Spending ☒ Jobs ☐ Labor Income ☐ Value Added ☐ Economic Output

Click on a State for more information or select a State

Alaska



### Directly Affected Sectors



### Contributed to the Alaska Economy



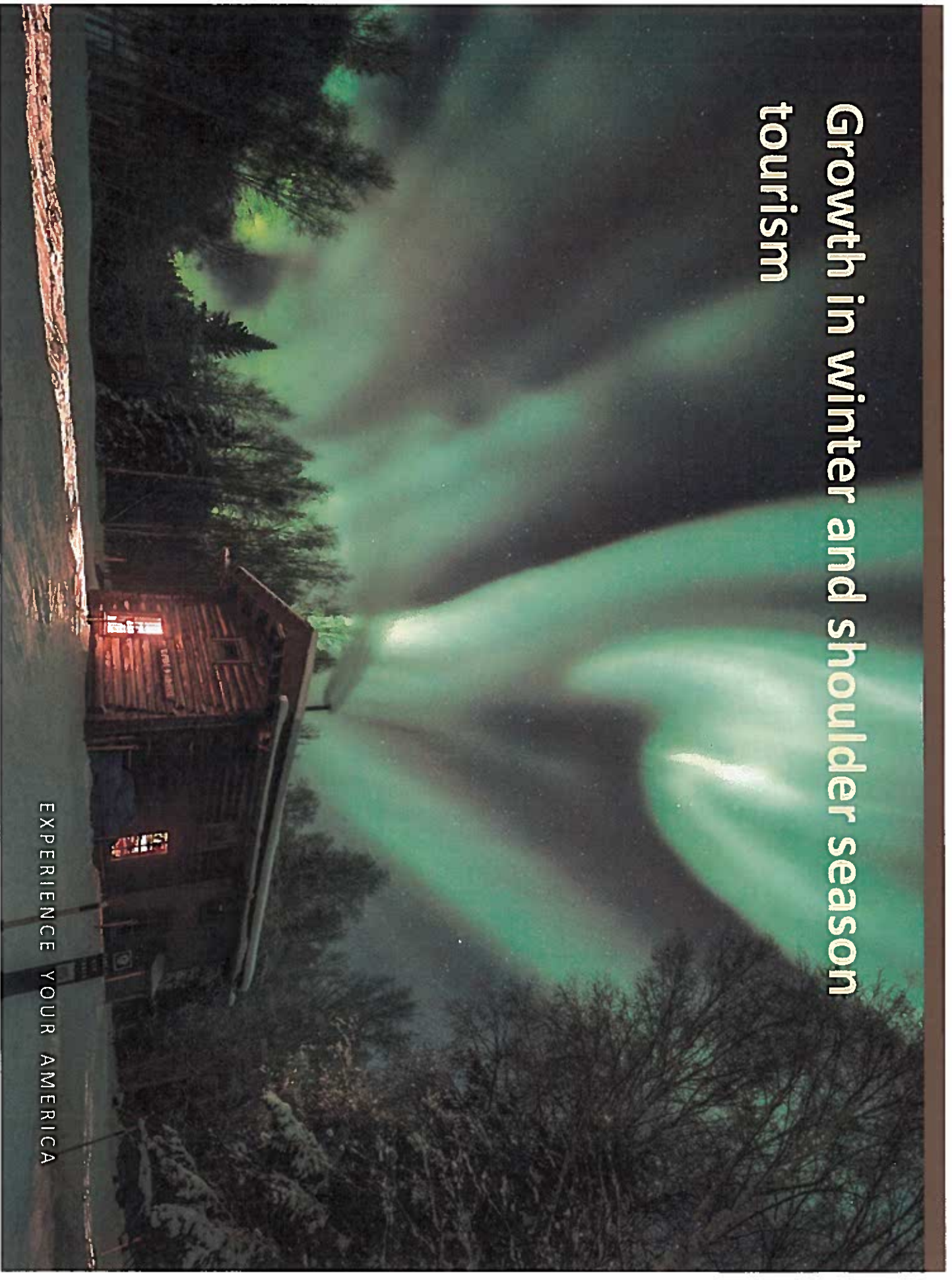
\*2018 Visitor Spending Effects probe data was updated for the following Alaska parks: Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve, Kodiak Gold Run AK National Historical Park, Denali National Park & Preserve

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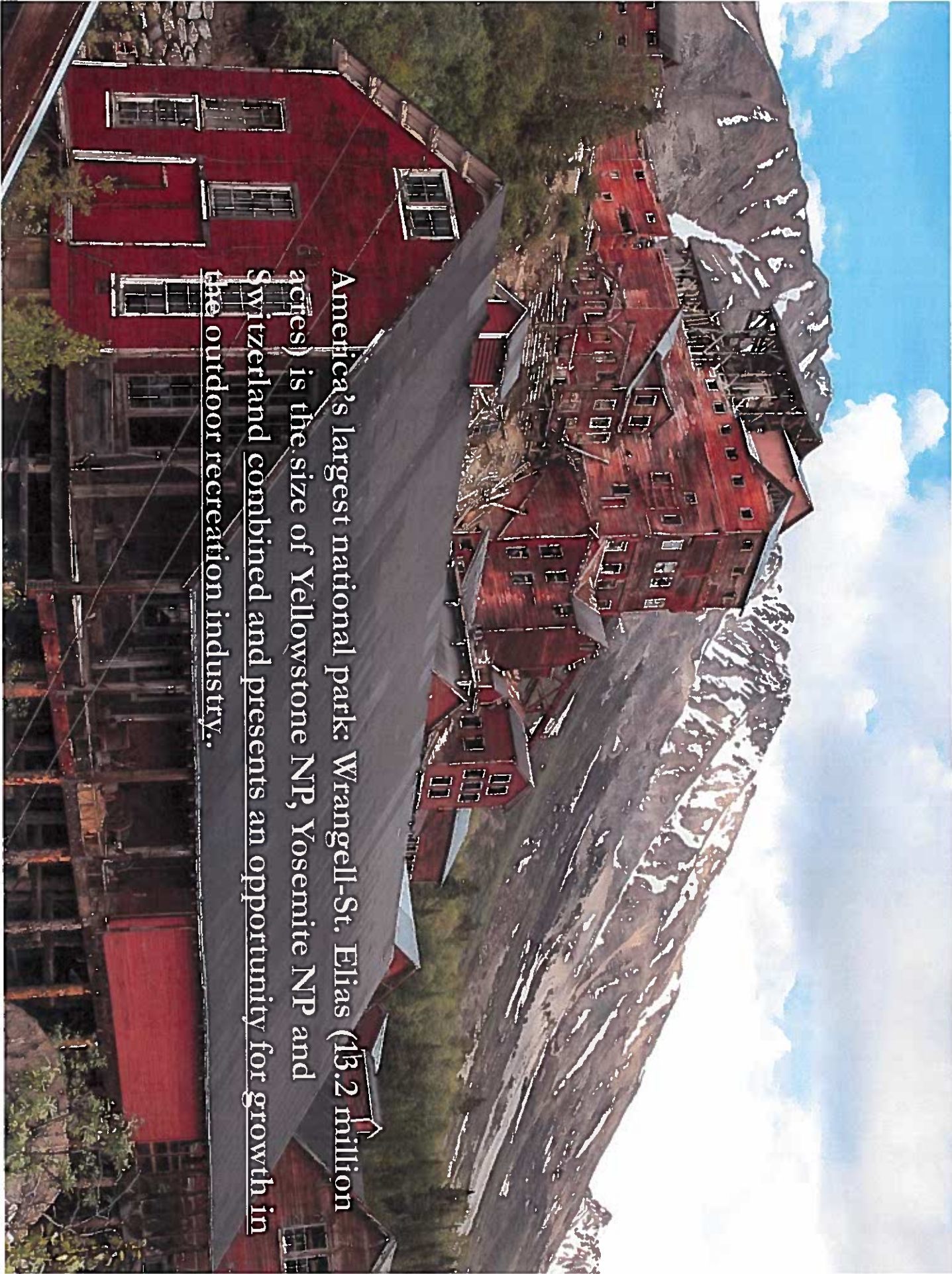


# Growth in winter and shoulder season tourism

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A photograph of a historic mining town, likely in the American West. The foreground and middle ground are filled with several large, multi-story wooden buildings with red-painted siding and dark roofs. Some buildings appear to be in various states of repair or disrepair. In the background, rugged mountains with patches of snow are visible under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene suggests a well-preserved historical site in a mountainous region.

America's largest national park: Wrangell-St. Elias (13.2 million acres) is the size of Yellowstone NP, Yosemite NP and Switzerland combined and presents an opportunity for growth in the outdoor recreation industry.



# Denali--Engine or Anchor?





# Denali National Park

## Pretty Rocks Landslide







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# Meeting the Challenge

Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA)

Governor of Alaska

Congressional Delegation

Secretary of the Interior

Denali Borough Mayor

HJR-25

*"Encouraging the President of the United States, the United States Congress, and the Governor of the state to assist the National Park Service in its efforts to ensure long-term access into Denali National Park and Preserve by way of the existing roadway."*

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# Questions?



Alaska Regional Office  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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March 14, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate

RE: Opportunities to improve access, infrastructure and permitting for outdoor recreation.

Dear Senator Murkowski and Members of the Committee:

### **Introduction**

My name is Daniel Kirkwood of Juneau, Alaska. I am the General Manager of Pack Creek Bear Tours and the Co-Chair of the Visitor Products Cluster Working Group with the Juneau Economic Development Council. I am deeply grateful to be able to provide testimony on opportunities to improve access, infrastructure and permitting for outdoor recreation on public lands.

Alaska's public lands provide outstanding opportunities for our state's growing tourism sector. On the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska, the U.S. Forest Service provides essential services to operators including planning, permitting and managing commercial recreation. However, funding cuts and competing for limited agency resources has kept the Forest Service from adequately meeting the needs of our growing sector. Through the Juneau Economic Development Council, we have made specific recommendations to the Forest Service for improving the management of tourism. These recommendations, along with better ways of measuring the Forest Service's contribution to tourism, will help our sector continue to grow in Alaska.

### **Pack Creek Bear Tours**

At Pack Creek Bear Tours we provide one of the most outstanding outdoor experiences in the world. We fly clients by float plane into the Alaskan wilderness to see and photograph wild brown bears that congregate to chase the wild salmon that return to the Tongass National Forest each summer. The islands that we visit have the highest concentration of brown bears, or "grizzlies" in the country. This is a premium small group adventure with experienced, professional Alaskan guides. While we are a small company, we are just one of the hundreds of local businesses that cater to the growing number of visitors who are coming to Alaska each year.

Outdoor recreation is at the core of the visitor experience. People come for hiking, hunting, fishing, whale watching, paddling and exploring. Spectacular scenery, iconic fish and wildlife and unique cultures make this a world-class tourism destination. Access to vast beautiful places with glaciers, mountains and forests, bears and wild salmon is the true Alaskan experience. In my travels outside of Alaska and abroad, eyes light up when you say "Alaska." It is a destination that is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for most people. This is brand-recognition most companies only dream of.

### **Tourism and Recreation Economics and growth projections**

This year more than 1.3 million people will visit southeast Alaska on cruise ships, growing 14% in 2019 and with 5% additional growth 2020. According to Southeast Conference, tourism employment is up 12% from 2014 to 2017. During this time our earnings increased 23%. It's not just cruise ships. Air travel is up 13%, bringing the independent travelers who spend more money in our communities by staying in our hotels, eating in our restaurants. According to the McDowell Group, the tourism sector contributes over \$1 billion in economic activity in southeast Alaska each year.

While this growth is an outstanding opportunity, the challenge to our industry and the Forest Service is to accommodate expansion while preserving the outstanding, authentic experience for visitors and locals. Our industry experienced similar growth in the 1990s. Kirby Day of Princess Cruises led the Tourism Best Management Practices in Juneau, a voluntary and collaborative community program to identify and decrease tourism impacts on residents and businesses. This award-winning program continues to evolve and be successful in Juneau and has been replicated in other ports. Innovators in the Forest Service have used this "Best Management Practices" model to address conflicts in remote parts of the Forest, such as crowding conflicts. These are examples of how the tourism industry is committed to working hard to be a good neighbor in our communities.

While tourism has clear economic benefits, it is closely tied to outdoor recreation. Outdoor recreation is an important part of the Alaskan culture and economy. According to the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development, Alaska has the highest rate of participation in outdoor recreation in the country, tied with Montana. Recreation overlaps with other important local cultural values, such as hunting, fishing, gathering, subsistence and traditional cultural activities. The UA Center for Economic Development report found that in-state consumer spending on outdoor recreation was nearly \$3.2 billion. Outdoor recreation was responsible for 29,000 direct jobs and contributed to 38,100 jobs state wide. One in ten jobs in Alaska is supported by outdoor recreation. Investments in trails, facilities and management will benefit Alaskans who use these resources.

### **JEDC Advocacy and working group**

The Juneau Economic Development Council convened the Visitor Products Cluster Working Group in 2011 as part of a sector-by sector or "cluster" approach to helping encourage positive economic development in Southeast communities. This group has collaborated with Forest Service staff to address the sector's needs, concerns and opportunities. It has also become a way for the visitor sector to advocate to agency staff and elected officials. The success of this model has been the opportunity for the Forest Service to learn about how our businesses operate and for us to learn about their processes. The Visitor Products Working Group has brought competing businesses together with one voice. While we have had some positive developments and success, there is more to do.

Every single person who comes to southeast Alaska experiences the Tongass National Forest. Tourism is an important part of a working forest and the demands for outdoor recreation opportunities have changed drastically. The Forest Service provides essential support to the tourism economy by managing access and providing infrastructure but with growing visitor numbers the agency can't be expected to do so without more resources. We look to the agency to ensure that we balance the opportunity for growth

with the need to preserve the world-class experiences that the Tongass provides. Our group has identified ways for the Forest Service to improve recreation management.

These recommendations include;

- Reverse the decline in appropriated funding for Recreation programs.
- Invest in improved permitting and infrastructure.
- Restore leadership and other recreation positions that facilitate good recreation and tourism planning and management.
- Apply consistent permit standards across districts, while retaining the expertise of individual permit administrators.
- Use a collaborative approach with permit holders and residents.

### Access

Tourism access is about ensuring that National Forest Recreation staff have the funding and direction to help us provide outstanding tourism products. The Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center and Recreation Area is the most visited center in Alaska. Improvements to infrastructure here are essential to accommodate increased numbers. Conversely, companies like mine, are not looking for infrastructure, but rather permitted access to natural, pristine places. We require beautiful places to go where we can offer solitude and avoid other groups. This requires the adequate staffing capacity of the Forest Service to plan, process permits and manage use in ways that maintain the exclusivity and character of our products.

Big or small, tourism operators are not asking for unlimited access. Rather, we are asking for the agency to proactively manage growth and work with us to find solutions to the problems inherent to a growing, changing industry. Investing in proactive and collaborative Forest-wide recreation planning, staffing and self-sustaining infrastructure will benefit access to our incredible recreation resources.

### Infrastructure

For remote-setting nature tours, undeveloped areas without significant infrastructure are key to meeting our client's expectations of Alaska. Our clients are no longer satisfied to just look, they want to touch and hike and explore. For example, companies like mine, Uncruise Adventures or Northwest Navigation may be looking for a few strategically located trails, or no trails at all. The undeveloped forest is what people want to experience. For front country sites like the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area, infrastructure is key to accommodating increased numbers. The Forest Service is currently undergoing a Master Plan process that could increase the sustainability and value of this Recreation Area to businesses and locals. We applaud the Forest Service for undertaking this Master Plan and thinking big-picture about both the challenges and opportunities. Through our collaborative efforts we have built trust and support for fees that will help pay for necessary improvements. We acknowledge that funds are tight nationwide for infrastructure, which is why we want to see more proactive, collaborative planning to develop self-sustaining infrastructure and support for existing facilities. Public private partnerships will continue to be an opportunity for this, but the agency needs to have the staff and time to be a good partner. For example, even if an operator wants to pay for a new project, the agency may not have the capacity to plan or maintain the project. Additionally, a company may offer to maintain a trail they use, but the agency cannot guarantee that they will be permitted to use that trail. If the Forest

Service is going to rely on partnerships, they need to provide a workable and mutually beneficial partnership program.

### **Permitting**

Timely and flexible Special Use Permitting is the key to commercial access. Our permit administrators do excellent work. They know the resource, they understand our businesses. However, they are severely under-staffed. This creates long wait times for new permits and renewals, which impacts our ability to sell tours and plan for future growth. Too often, I believe, people in the agency say “no” to new tour ideas simply because there is not enough staff to keep up with their existing work load.

We have advocated that Congress and the Forest Service increase investments in staffing recreation management to better plan for, permit and manage reasonable access. We have advocated the agency apply consistent permit application process and respond in a timely manner to permit applications. We have asked the Forest Service to convene meetings with permit holders and residents to offer constructive feedback on permits, infrastructure and partnerships.

### **Funding**

We recognize that the funding situation for the agency is challenging and constrained by increasing wildfire costs. We thank Senator Murkowski for her commitment to working with us and the Forest Service. Thank you, Senator, for sitting down with us and digging into these challenging issues. Thank you to this committee for addressing these funding challenges and seeking to meet our needs in Alaska. However, what funding is made available is still not enough to keep pace with the growing tourism sector, or plan for new tourism sector opportunities in rural communities.

### **Metrics for Measuring Success**

What we measure matters. We need the Forest Service to have congressional direction and enough funding to meet the visitor sector’s growing need. The current Region 10 Leader’s Intent for Recreation charts a course for the Forest Service to provide less support and fewer services for recreation and tourism in the face of increasing demand. We are working with Forest Service staff who are not adequately evaluated on their success in supporting tourism outcomes. Existing metrics for tourism and recreation are vague and poorly defined. For example, with increasing visitation at the Mendenhall, staff are measured against successfully developing things like “new recreation programs,” which, while these new programs would be positive, this target fails to encourage efficient, necessary outcomes. New metrics that capture visitor numbers and economic contributions have been proposed for piloting in Region 10. These could be incorporated into strategic plans, budget justifications, reports to congress and the public. These metrics can ensure that the Forest Service has data to justify supporting diverse tourism experiences. The agency deserves credit for the successes they deliver to visitors, businesses and locals in the Tongass. New metrics could provide clear direction to encourage the Forest Service to engage on these issues.

### **Collaboration**

We believe that the Forest Service must embrace a proactive vision for tourism in the Tongass. This means engaging the industry to develop solutions, taking collaborative steps to support tourism

businesses in southeast Alaska and ensuring that tourism resources remain intact. The Forest Service could mirror collaborative landscape-scale restoration programs underway in other parts of the country to deliver success for recreation and tourism. We need the Forest Service to plan, innovate and collaborate with the 33 communities of southeast Alaska. Due to the remote and rugged nature of Alaska, commercial guiding services are an essential part of helping Americans access their public lands. For our businesses, public lands are the key to our success. Places and resources for tourism should be maintained and improved for the economic contribution they make to the region's culture and economy. Thank you for your consideration and action on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Dan Kirkwood  
Co-Chair, Visitor Products Cluster Working Group  
Juneau, AK  
Pack Creek Bear Tours  
Juneau, AK

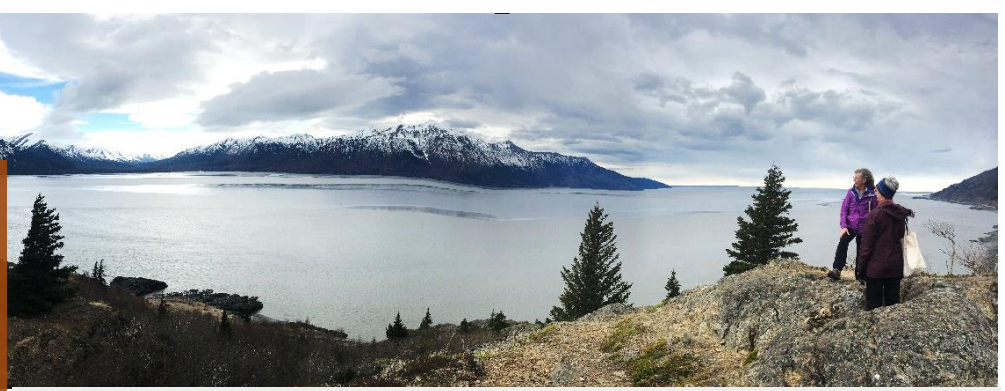


# Alaska Trails Initiative

*Stronger Trails  
Stronger Economy*

## Trails are magic!

Trails offer a relatively low-cost way to deliver amazing experiences – ways to see and touch Alaska up close.



*A coalition of trails organizations from around the state are collaborating with leaders in government, business, the health industry and the non-profit sector to invest more in the trails we love. (Above Turnagain Trail, just south of Anchorage)*

## Alaska has only just begun to take full advantage of our State's phenomenal outdoor recreation resources.

By working together to expand trails, huts, trail maps, signage and trail marketing we can:

- build a stronger, more durable Alaska economy
- attract and retain residents, businesses, retirees
- make it easier and more inviting to lead active, healthy lives
- help expand diversity in outdoor recreation users

*Some supporting facts for economic benefits (sources below):*

### **\$137 Million Dollars in Annual Spending...**

...what we would generate if just half of current out-of-state visitors had reasons to spend O.M.D. - One More Day - in Alaska.

### **Hiking/Nature Walks Are the Fastest Growing Activities Among Out of State Travelers to AK.**

For visitors coming to Alaska by air, hiking/nature walks grew from 38% in 2011 to 46 percent in 2016, the biggest increase of any visitor activity (for cruise visitors, increase was 20 to 26%).

### **Trail Users Spend More, Stay Longer.**

International tourists to New Zealand who participate in walking and hiking spend \$3600/trip vs. \$2800 spent by all holiday visitors. The average stay in New Zealand – where there have been major investments trails, huts, bike routes – is 19 days. In Alaska the average stay is 9 days.



**SPONSORED BY ALASKA TRAILS & GROWING ALLIANCE OF STATEWIDE PARTNERS;  
FUNDING PARTNERS INCLUDE:**

Sitka Trail Works | Juneau Trail Mix | Mat Su Parks and Trails | Anchorage Park Foundation |  
NPS Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance | Kenai Mtn Turnagain Arm National Heritage  
Area | USFS Alaska Regional Office



*Sources, in order: Alaska Visitor Statistics Program (AVSP) VII: Section 7 Visitor Spending; AVSP VII: Section 5 Destinations & Activities - Participation by Transportation Market; NZ Tourist Special Interest Report; Walking and Hiking, 2014*

## Three Strategies for Results

### 1. Build a diverse, potent trails advocacy coalition

We are listening, learning and sharing, gaining support of state and public agencies, local governments, businesses large & small, elected officials including the State Legislature & Congressional delegation, destination marketing organizations, Native corporations and tribes, schools, hospitals, conservation organizations, and user groups from advocates for snowmachines, to hunting and equestrian groups.

### 2. Craft and gain broad support for an ambitious, phased Alaska Trails Investment Strategy

To be circulated for review and support Spring 2020

### 3. Make progress on doable near-term projects.

*A few examples below:*

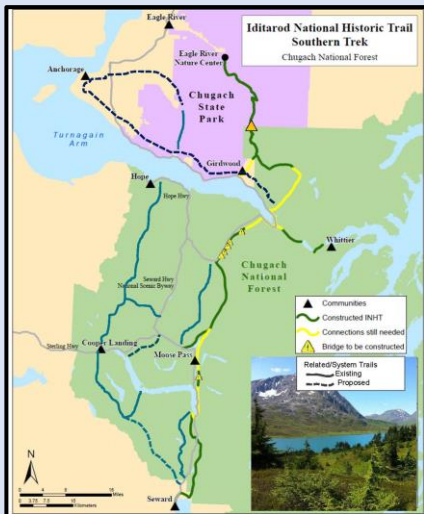
#### Bison Trail, Denali Borough

Helped secure a \$500,000 Federal Lands Access Program Grant

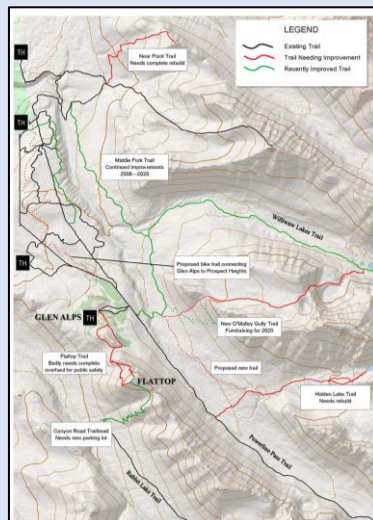
#### Rosie Creek, Fairbanks North Star Borough

Helped get a \$100,000 RTP grant for trails linked to timber mgt. in the Tanana State Forest

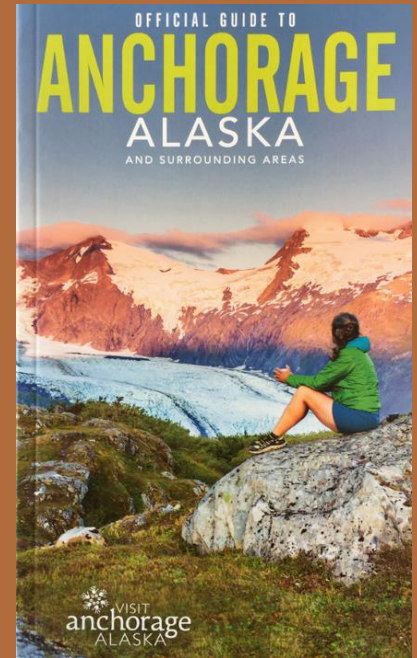
#### Iditarod/Anchorage to Seward Trail systems



#### Chugach Front Country Access and Trails



**Iditarod & Chugach:** bringing together partners to leverage these partially-developed trail systems, identifying priority gaps to fill, secure funding, and better maintain existing trails



*We can grow our economy by investing more in the experiences featured in our marketing material. (Above: what Anchorage uses to entice visitors)*

*Studies show smart investments in trails and related outdoor rec infrastructure have great returns: \$1 in produces \$5-10 in local job and business growth (see report below for sources)*

### We're making progress!

The coalition is growing. We're advancing a list of high value projects and policies. But we need your views, ideas and support!

#### For more information:

- Steve Cleary  
[steve.cleary@alaska-trails.org](mailto:steve.cleary@alaska-trails.org)  
- Eric Boraas  
[ecboraas@gmail.com](mailto:ecboraas@gmail.com)  
- Chris Beck  
[chrisAK1beck@gmail.com](mailto:chrisAK1beck@gmail.com)

Join the team/download our report at [Alaska-Trails.org](http://Alaska-Trails.org)

**Thanks!**



## Alaska Trails Initiative

*More and Better Trails; More and Better Ways to Experience the Best of Alaska*

### Spring 2020 Trails Investment Strategy – SC AK



#### **FAIRBANKS TO SEWARD ADVENTURE CORRIDOR**

**Recommendations for Priority Trails/Access Infrastructure -**  
**Draft in progress** *Reasons for “OMD” (One More Day in AK)*

##### **Fairbanks North Star Borough – *Pioneering Partnerships***

- Rosie Creek Trails/Timber Management project
- Equinox Marathon loop
- *And other projects being identified...*

##### **Denali Borough – *Frontcountry Alternatives***

- Bison Creek Parking/Trailhead & Trail – Phase 2
- McKinley Village Bridge/Trailhead & Trail
- Expanded winter rec opportunities, Denali Hwy and other locations

##### **Matanuska Susitna Borough – *New/Improved Destinations***

- South Denali Visitor Center
- Kesugi-Curry hut-to-hut & trail system
- Traverse Trail – Skeetawk to Govt Peak Rec. Area
- Independence Mine
- Mat Su Visitor Center/Three- way Trails Hub
- Knik River Valley trail systems

##### **Anchorage Bowl – *“Destination Anchorage”***

- Chugach State Park – “Five Front Doors to the Alpine Frontcountry” plus new “signature trails”.
- “The Moose” – in town trail system
- “Mountain to Sea” Trail Connector

##### **Seward – Anchorage – *AK’s Most Accessible Alpine Terrain***

- Fill key gaps the Iditarod & related trails
- Whistle Stop hut to hut system
- “Trail towns” – Girdwood, Cooper Landing, Seward...
- Turnagain Connector/Windy Corner – filling a critical gap in existing bike/hiking trails

*(not included here: comparable, worthy projects in SE and Rural Alaska)*



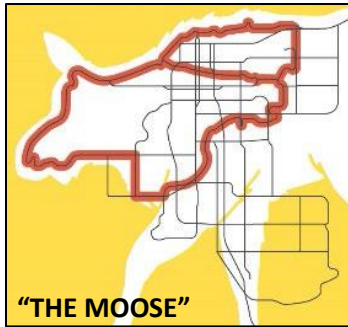
Alaska Trails

Draft Jan 2020

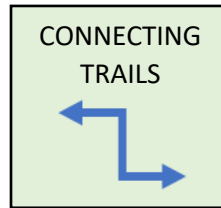
# Investment Strategy Contents: Anchorage Example

## OVERVIEW – “DESTINATION ANCHORAGE 365”

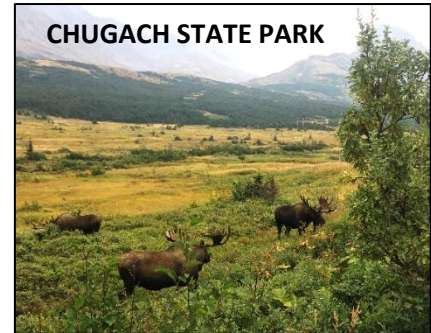
- Take better advantage of Chugach State Park to create a much **stronger four-season destination**
- **Hiking/nature walks are the fastest growing activity** for out-of-state visitors to Alaska<sup>1</sup>
- Give visitors reasons to stay an **extra day and generate \$100's of millions in additional spending**
- Investments in trails, marketing and wayfinding **bring life and spending to a struggling downtown**



*Untapped Opportunities: a well-publicized, clearly marked loop trail*



*Fill one key gap, create ability for ride or ski from Chugach S.P. to in-town destinations*



*Untapped Opportunities: including North America's single best moose viewing location*

## PRIORITY PROJECTS – DRAFT IN PROGRESS

Project	Lead (s) & Support	Est Cost	Priority
<b>"Moose"</b>			
Lk Otis Overpass	Park Foundation, MOA, DOT/PF	\$13 Million	<b>Near term/costly</b>
Wayfinding – signs, marketing	Park Found., MOA, Visit Anchorage	+/- \$50,000	<b>NEAR TERM/affordable</b>
<b>"Mtns to Sea" Connecting Trail</b>			
Fill the ¼ mile gap in the route	MOA, STA	+/- \$50,000	<b>NEAR TERM/affordable</b>
Wayfinding – signs, marketing	Park Found., MOA, Visit Anchorage	+/- \$50,000	<b>NEAR TERM/affordable</b>
<b>Chugach Alpine Frontcountry</b>			
<i>"Five Front Doors to the Alpine"</i>			
1. Arctic Valley	Chugach St. Pk., Arctic Valley ski club	See notes	Mid Term – work needed
2. Glen Alps	Chugach State Park	See notes	Mid Term – work needed
3. Rabbit Creek/Flattop South	Chugach State Park, MOA	See notes	<b>Near term/costly</b>
4. McHugh/SW Chugach	Chugach State Park, MOA	See notes	Mid Term – work needed
5. South Fork of Eagle River	Chugach State Park,	See notes	Mid Term – work needed
<i>"Signature Trail(s)"</i>			
1. Two Valleys Ballfield Loop	Chugach State Park	+/- \$100,000	<b>NEAR TERM/affordable</b>
2. Upgraded Flattop Trail	Chugach State Park	\$1,000,000	<b>Near term/costly</b>
Little O'Malley Trail	Chugach State Park, Park Foundation	+/- \$50,000	<b>NEAR TERM/affordable</b>
Comprehensive CSP Strategic Plan	Chugach State Park, MOA	+/- \$100,000	Mid term/affordable
<b>Regional Connections</b>			
– Anchorage to Palmer	Park Foundation, MOA,	TBD	Longer term – work needed
– Windy Corner – "Turnagain Gap"	MOA, Chugach State Park		<b>Near term/costly</b>

## PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

Developing the Priorities: Partners to date:	Other Involved parties – ongoing and planned	
Anchorage Park Foundation Chugach State Park (staff, Advisory Board) Trail user groups and trail businesses Municipality of Anchorage Staff	Anchorage Assembly State legislators Congressional delegation Downtown Partnership	Visit Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Anch Economic Development Corporation

<sup>1</sup> For visitors coming by air, participation grew from 38% in 2011 to 46 % in 2016; for cruise visitors, from 20 to 26%. (AVSP VII – Section 5 Visitor Activities). Both are the fastest rate of increase of any participation category.

Municipal Clerk's Office

**Approved**

Date: **February 11, 2020**

Submitted by: Assembly Chair Dunbar, Assembly  
Vice-Chair Weddleton, Assembly  
Members Constant, Dyson, Kennedy,  
LaFrance, Perez-Verdia, Petersen,  
Quinn-Davidson, Rivera and Zaletel

Reviewed by: Assembly Counsel

For reading: February 11, 2020

**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA  
AR No. 2020-42**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY URGING CONGRESS TO  
INCREASE INVESTMENT IN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION.**

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**WHEREAS**, the Municipality of Anchorage recognizes that traffic fatalities and serious injuries are preventable and therefore unacceptable, and have partnered with state agencies and community organizations on a “Vision Zero” campaign to make roadways safer for everyone – pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists - through a data-driven approach involving road design, education, community engagement and enforcement; and

**WHEREAS**, we cannot build our way out of road congestion, other strategies must be used such as decreasing the number of trips by motorized vehicles; and

**WHEREAS**, the health of the Municipality’s residents begins where we live, work, learn and play. Connecting networks for walking and biking, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility, with everyday destinations like schools, workplaces, stores and playgrounds improves our ability to be physically active every day. Regular physical activity protects us from the most common and costly diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity and many cancers; and

**WHEREAS**, *active transportation*—human powered mobility—increases physical activity, improves public health, provides balanced transportation choices and fosters vibrant neighborhoods with a high quality of life; and

**WHEREAS**, the Municipality of Anchorage Bike and Pedestrian Plans, the 2040 Land Use Plan, and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan identify public safety improvements for non-motorized accessibility for users of our existing trail infrastructure investments – a network that links the Coastal Trail to the Campbell Creek Trail to the Chester Creek Trail to the Ship Creek Trail to the Fish Creek Trail and other associated greenway-supported development; and

**WHEREAS**, to qualify for federal transportation funds, Anchorage follows national standards and best practices for managing transportation as required by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. Anchorage does this through the Metropolitan Planning Organization, AMATS; and

1 **WHEREAS**, the main federal transportation law—the FAST Act—governing funding  
2 of America's surface transportation programs, including trails and active  
3 transportation infrastructure, is set to expire in September 2020 and Congress is  
4 currently considering funding priorities; now, therefore

5  
6 **THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RESOLVES** that the Municipality of Anchorage  
7 supports increased investment in active transportation networks to link trails,  
8 sidewalks, bicycle facilities and other associated greenway-supported development  
9 into a seamless system for community mobility; and

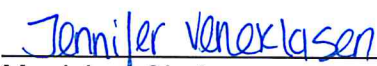
10  
11 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Municipality of Anchorage encourages  
12 Congress to increase investment in a robust, modern transportation system that is  
13 designed to create and maintain connected active transportation networks by:

- 14  
15 1. Increasing funds for the Federal Transportation Alternatives Program;  
16 2. Increasing funds for the Federal Recreation Trails Program;  
17 3. Authorizing New Funding for Active Transportation Networks

18  
19  
20 **PASSED AND APPROVED** by the Anchorage Assembly this 11th day of February,  
21 2020.

22  
23  
24   
25 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 Chair

27 **ATTEST:**

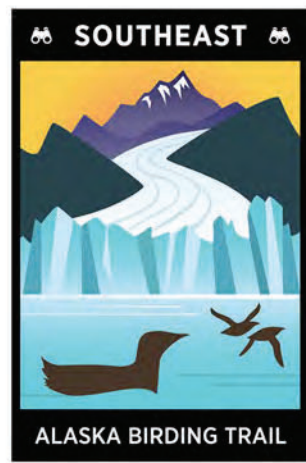
28  
29  
30   
31 \_\_\_\_\_  
32 for Municipal Clerk



# SOUTHEAST ALASKA BIRDING TRAIL

Southeast Alaska is a fantastic place to go birding! It boasts more than 350 bird species, including the highest densities of Marbled Murrelets and Bald Eagles in the world. In spring, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to feed here on their way to the Arctic. And, birds found nowhere else on Earth inhabit the region's ancient forests.

Audubon Alaska worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service, Juneau Audubon Society, and many regional bird experts from local communities to create the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail. This online resource helps bird enthusiasts plan a safe, easy, and fun birding adventure in Southeast Alaska while supporting local communities.



# Juneau Birding Sites

The region's largest community, Juneau, is an obvious choice for inclusion on the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail with easy access to a diverse set of landscapes and hosting a wide range of bird species. The trail includes nineteen sites in the area, including Juneau town center and Mendenhall Glacier.

The numerous birding trail locations highlight different habitats and bird species. Plus, there are options for bird enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels. Checklists can be found on the website, as well as travel information, and other resources.

Visit [ak.audubon.org/southeast-alaska-birding-trail](http://ak.audubon.org/southeast-alaska-birding-trail).

