



Northern Area Alaska State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

3700 Airport Way Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-4613 (907) 451-2695

February 17, 2017

Representative David Guttenberg
State Capitol, Room 415
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Guttenberg:

The Northern Area State Parks Citizen Advisory Board has been informed that the Governor's proposal for the FY 2018 budget has been reduced by 3.5% from FY 2017. The next fiscal year begins July 1, 2017. To compensate for this budget reduction state parks has proposed to close their office in Delta Junction, as well as cut positions that will affect maintenance of the parks.

There are six facilities in the Delta Junction area that are managed from that office. When park staff are not available to manage these facilities state parks may request proposals for management by contract. If no parties are interested in contracting management of these properties, the properties will not be maintained. It will be Olmes Pond all over again, on a larger scale.

Without maintenance, use of these areas would decrease. Minimum use of these recreational facilities would have many negative impacts on the users and the economy in this area. Alaska's current budget challenges have resulted in efforts to maintain facilities with user fees. Without staff, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation can not maintain a plan to provide maintenance to allow maximum use of these facilities and collection of the user fees.

Alaska statutes direct state parks to "develop, manage and maintain state parks and recreational areas". We all must adjust to our current budget challenges. Focusing on our uses of outdoor facilities may be a part of the solution to our current budget challenges. These facilities are an important part of our tourism industry and our personal resident use, and therefore a building block for our economy.

We respectfully request that the legislature carefully consider budget changes that would affect operations of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. State parks are one of the biggest contributors to the quality of life in Interior Alaska, and it would be a shame to lose them for Alaskans and our visitors.

Scott Bothwell, Northern Area State Park Advisory Board Chairman