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# STATE OF ALASKA 1986 LEGISLATIVE SESSION FISCAL NOTE

Revision Date : \_\_\_\_\_

**REQUEST**

Bill/Resolution No. : HB 635  
 Title : An act establishing the Willow Creek State Resreation area  
 Sponsor : Rep Larson  
 Requestor : House Resource Committee  
 Date of Request : 2-28-86

**FISCAL DETAIL**

Agency Affected : Natural Resources  
 BRU : Parks Management  
 Components : \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPENDITURES/REVENUES : (Thousands of Dollars)**

RATING	FY 86	FY 87	FY 88	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>

CAPITAL						
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REVENUE						
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**FUNDING : (Thousands of Dollars)**

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>-0-</b>

**POSITIONS :**

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

**ANALYSIS :** Attach a separate page if necessary

If there is a CIP appropriation for area improvements, there will be associated operating expenses.

Prepared by: Barbara Lee Hope *BLH* Phone: 762-4565  
 Division: Parks & Outdoor Recreation Date: 02-28-86

Approved by Commissioner: Ann D Arnold, Deputy Date: 2/28/86  
 Agency: Natural Resources

Distribution (by Agency preparing fiscal note):

- Legislative Finance
- Legislative Sponsor
- Requestor
- Office of Management and Budget
- Impacted Agency(ies)





**STATE OF ALASKA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
BILL ANALYSIS**

DEPARTMENT Fish and Game	DIVISION Sport Fish	BILL NUMBER HB 635	SPONSOR Representative Larson
DEPARTMENT POSITION Support			
PREPARED BY <i>[Signature]</i>	DATE 2-28-86	COMMISSIONER'S SIGNATURE <i>[Signature]</i>	DATE 2-28-86

**SUMMARY**

OTHER AGENCIES AFFECTED BY BILL DNR, DEC, Matanuska-Susitna Borough	CONSTITUENT GROUP(S) AFFECTED BY BILL Cook Inlet basin residents and visitors
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR BILL Unknown	ORGANIZATIONAL OPPOSITION TO BILL Unknown

FISCAL IMPACT:  NONE       FISCAL NOTE ATTACHED

BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE INTENT  
Create approximately a 4,000-acre state recreation area along Willow Creek near the Park Highway.

ANALYSIS OF BILL/PROGRAM EFFECTS  
HB 635 is basically identical to HB 86 but cleans up major flaws in the location description of the Willow Creek site.  
  
Creation of the Willow Creek recreation area will not adversely impact the operations of the department. Development of the site with appropriate campgrounds and boat launch facilities will improve access to Susitna River tributaries for hunters and anglers. Fish stocks can presently stand increased utilization.

AMENDMENTS PROPOSED  
Page 3, Line 19 (Sec. 41.21.494(3)).  
(3) allow sport fishing, fishery rehabilitation or enhancement...

PLEASE ATTACH A SEPARATE SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR ANALYSIS.

HB 635 - WILLOW CREEK STATE RECREATION AREA

This bill would set aside some public lands in the Mat-Su Borough for public recreation around the mouth of Willow Creek. This is a prime destination for many Southcentral residents, especially during the summer sportfishing season. We envision this as one of the steps in developing optimum recreational opportunities in the Mat-Su area.

By setting aside this area in the state recreation system we can preclude it from other land use designations, while we work toward obtaining the necessary funding for such items as an access road and boat launch facility at the mouth of Willow Creek. We believe this would bolster tourism type activities and would be of great financial benefit to the Mat-Su area.

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

Sec. 1: Describes the purposes for the land and water being set aside in the Willow Creek State Recreation Area.

Sec. 2(a) Establishes the Willow Creek State Recreation Area in AS 41.21.491 and gives the property description.

2(b) Allows for cooperation between the state and the borough.

2(c) Designates land and water in Willow Creek as a special use area under the state constitution.

2(d) Allows for oil and gas leasing within the lands described in AS 41.21.491.

Sec. 41.21.492:

Describes the management responsibilities of the Department of Natural Resources for Willow Creek State Recreation Area in relation to the Mat-Su Boro, the Department of Fish and Game and the Boards of Fish and Game.

Sec. 41.21.493:

Directs the department to develop a management plan with the Mat-Su Boro.

Sec. 41.21.494

This section directs the commissioner to develop regulations necessary to carry out the provisions in the purposes section of the bill.

Sec. 41.21.495:

Allows the commissioner to add on new land which are adjacent to Willow Creek State Recreation Area and that are needed to sustain the purposes described in AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.497.

Sec. 41.21.496:

Allows the commissioner to enter into cooperative land agreements with other agencies or private parties in order to achieve the purposes described in AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.497.

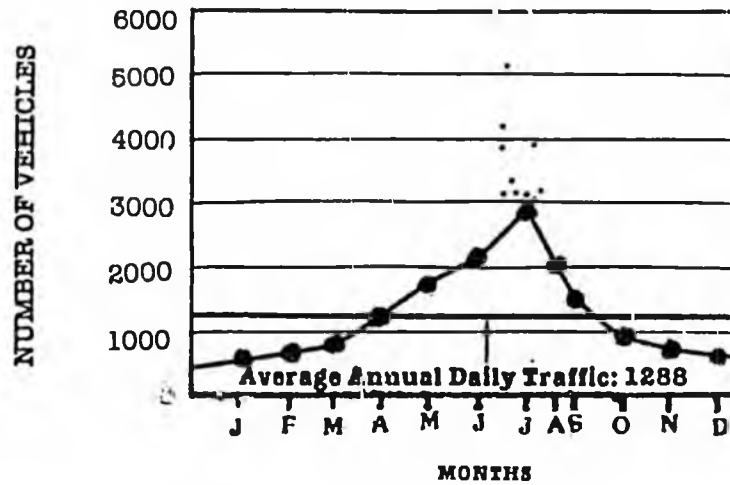
Sec. 41.21.497

Allows for enforcement of the regulations adopted under AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.497.

Sec. 3: Requires the commissioner to adopt the management plan for Willow Creek State Recreation Area within two years after the effective date of this act.

Sec. 4: States when this act will take effect.

**Figure 8. PARKS HIGHWAY TRAFFIC VOLUMES  
AT WILLOW, 1980**



**Legend**

- \* 10 peak annual days
- Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)
- Average Monthly Daily Traffic (AMDT)

Source: Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

**Land Ownership**

Most of the land within the study area is publicly owned. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the State of Alaska own large blocks of land west of the Parks Highway. The area around the Parks Highway/Willow Creek junction is privately owned. Upstream of the Parks Highway, the Willow Creek State Recreation Site is a 240 acre parcel surrounded by private lands (see Figure 9, page 22). Ownership of the subsurface has been retained by the State of Alaska.

*Background Material  
Comments from the  
Plan for the Willow  
Creek State Rec. Area.*

toric park is owned by the State of Alaska. It receives year-round recreational use, particularly during the winter season, when skiers and snowmachiners converge. Popular summertime activities include hiking, mountain climbing, and berrypicking.

City of Houston. The City of Houston owns and operates a campground bordering the Little Susitna River and the Parks Highway, located 15 miles south of Willow.

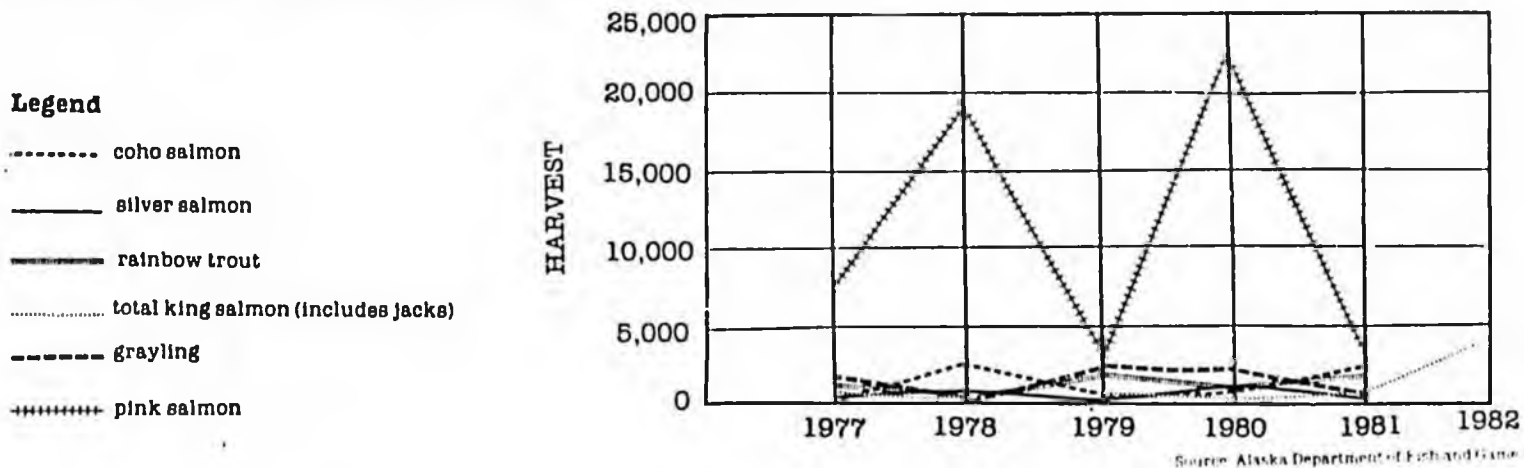
Private Sector. Several privately operated recreational facilities are located within the vicinity. The Willow Island Drive Inn is situated at the northwest corner of the Parks Highway/Willow Creek intersection. Facilities include parking, boat launch, trailer storage area, and camping units. Shore fishing is popular along the area's Willow Creek frontage.

Susitna Landing is a privately owned and operated boat launch located at the Susitna River/Kashwitna River confluence, 11 highway miles north of Willow Creek. From Susitna Landing, boaters travel to points north and south, including the Yentna River, Kroto Creek, and Alexander Creek.

#### Willow Creek Sport Fishing

Most recreationists visiting Willow Creek are attracted to the stream by its sport fishing opportunities. Willow Creek hosts significant runs of king salmon, chum salmon, and pink salmon. A small run of silver salmon and year-round populations of rainbow trout and arctic grayling are also sport fishing attractions. See Figure 11, page 25 for a historical summary of fishing effort and harvest at Willow Creek.

**Figure 11. WILLOW CREEK SPORT FISHERY HARVEST, 1977-1982**



Willow Creek waters open for king salmon fishing stretch from the mouth to the Parks Highway bridge. Other salmon species may be taken legally from the mouth up to the Deception Creek confluence.

Fishing occurs at two major activity nodes: near the Parks Highway and railroad bridges; and at the mouth where the stream enters the Susitna River. The road-accessible node receives very heavy use beginning in mid-June as the king salmon enter Willow Creek, and tapering off as the pink salmon run ends in late August. During the busy season, this area will often host several hundred shore anglers. These anglers are often fishing from privately owned land, an issue which is receiving increasing attention (see page 28).

The activity node at the Willow Creek mouth is accessible by riverboat only. Most effort is expended during four consecutive weekend openings during the king salmon run. At the peak of the run, shore anglers will line up elbow-to-elbow along a particularly good 300 foot stretch of the Susitna River immediately downstream of the southernmost Willow Creek mouth. At such times, the number of anglers will exceed 100. There are no sanitary facilities in this area, which has raised concerns about the effects of random and untreated human waste and litter. Fishermen will also anchor their riverboats offshore during these weekend openings and cast into fishing holes.

King Salmon. The king salmon has historically been the most sought-after sport fish

species at Willow Creek and throughout the Susitna River basin. In 1964, due to dangerous declines in fish stocks, king salmon fishing throughout the Susitna basin was prohibited. As the stocks rebounded, fishing was again opened, but on a much reduced basis. Allowable king salmon catch in Willow Creek has been set at 300 fish (over 20 inches in length), although biologists suspect that this number could be raised without endangering the run.

Pink Salmon. Pink salmon enter Willow Creek in very large numbers in even-numbered years, and in moderate numbers in odd-numbered years. This species provides excellent opportunities for family-oriented outings, with much higher rates of fishing success than for other salmon species.

Chum Salmon. Chum salmon is attracting increasing attention as a sport fish species, due to its relatively large size and its fighting abilities. Harvest at Willow Creek increased from 343 in 1977 to 1,533 in 1981.

Silver Salmon. Despite a small run, an important silver salmon sport fishery does occur at the mouth of Willow Creek. Silvers destined for spawning grounds at other streams temporarily hold in the clear waters of the Willow Creek/Susitna River confluence, where they become available for harvest. Figures from 1980 show 1,207 silver salmon harvested in this manner, with a drop in 1981 to 747 fish.

Rainbow Trout. Rainbow trout attract a significant number of anglers to Willow

Creek. Most effort for rainbows occurs early in the season before salmon species arrive, and again after the salmon have spawned. Use is dispersed over a wider area than for the salmon species, extending from the mouth past the Parks Highway bridge and up into the Talkeetna Mountain foothills.

### Willow Creek Riverboating

A major recreational use of Willow Creek is as a riverboating corridor. Most boaters launch at commercial facilities near the Parks Highway bridge.

The great majority of riverboat traffic is downstream, and then towards outlying areas within the Susitna basin. Thus, Willow Creek serves as an important transportation corridor by accessing the roadless areas to the west, where dispersed settlements have developed as a result of government land sales, homesteading, mining, and other attractions. As these areas have become more settled, the volume of riverboat traffic on Willow Creek has risen correspondingly. Important destination points include Kroto Creek (Deshka River), the Yentna River, and Alexander Creek.

### Recreational Issues

Angler-Boater Conflicts. The most difficult problem concerning use of Willow Creek is the growing conflict between riverboaters and shore anglers. Riverboaters have traditionally traveled between the Parks Highway and the mouth to gain access to

fishing spots and to outlying areas. But as population increases have brought more sport fishermen to Willow Creek, clashes have become more common between the two user groups. Anglers complain that high speed boats create wakes which disturb fishing holes, create safety hazards, and harm spawning grounds. Boaters respond that Willow Creek is the only reasonable access to outlying areas and that high speed operation is required in order to maintain maneuverability. After a State Recreation Area is established at Willow Creek, the Division of Parks will have responsibility for managing the stream's water column and for resolving this conflict.

Fishing Regulations. Because demand for king salmon far exceeds the natural run in Willow Creek, the Department of Fish and Game has regulated sport fishing in order to ensure that escapement goals are met. There are concerns that state park establishment would bring more anglers and place additional pressures on fish stocks, forcing the Department of Fish and Game to shorten the king salmon season.

Winter Recreation Management. Because the Willow area receives abundant snowfall and moderate temperatures, its potential for winter recreation is high. Development of a trail network along Willow Creek will invite skiers, snowmachiners, and dog mushers. These user groups have experienced conflicts at other locations, and the Division of Parks should manage the area to avoid such problems.

Trespass Recreation. "Trespass recreation," the inadvertent or deliberate use of private property by recreationists, is an issue. Trespass situations are increasing, particularly upstream of the Parks Highway bridge. Private owners have posted signs and taken other actions to protect their property interests.

Commercial Activities. At present, commercial riverboat operators have established businesses at the Parks Highway bridge. Clients include those destined only for the mouth and others bound for outlying areas. With establishment of the park unit, state regulations will govern all commercial enterprises within the park boundaries.

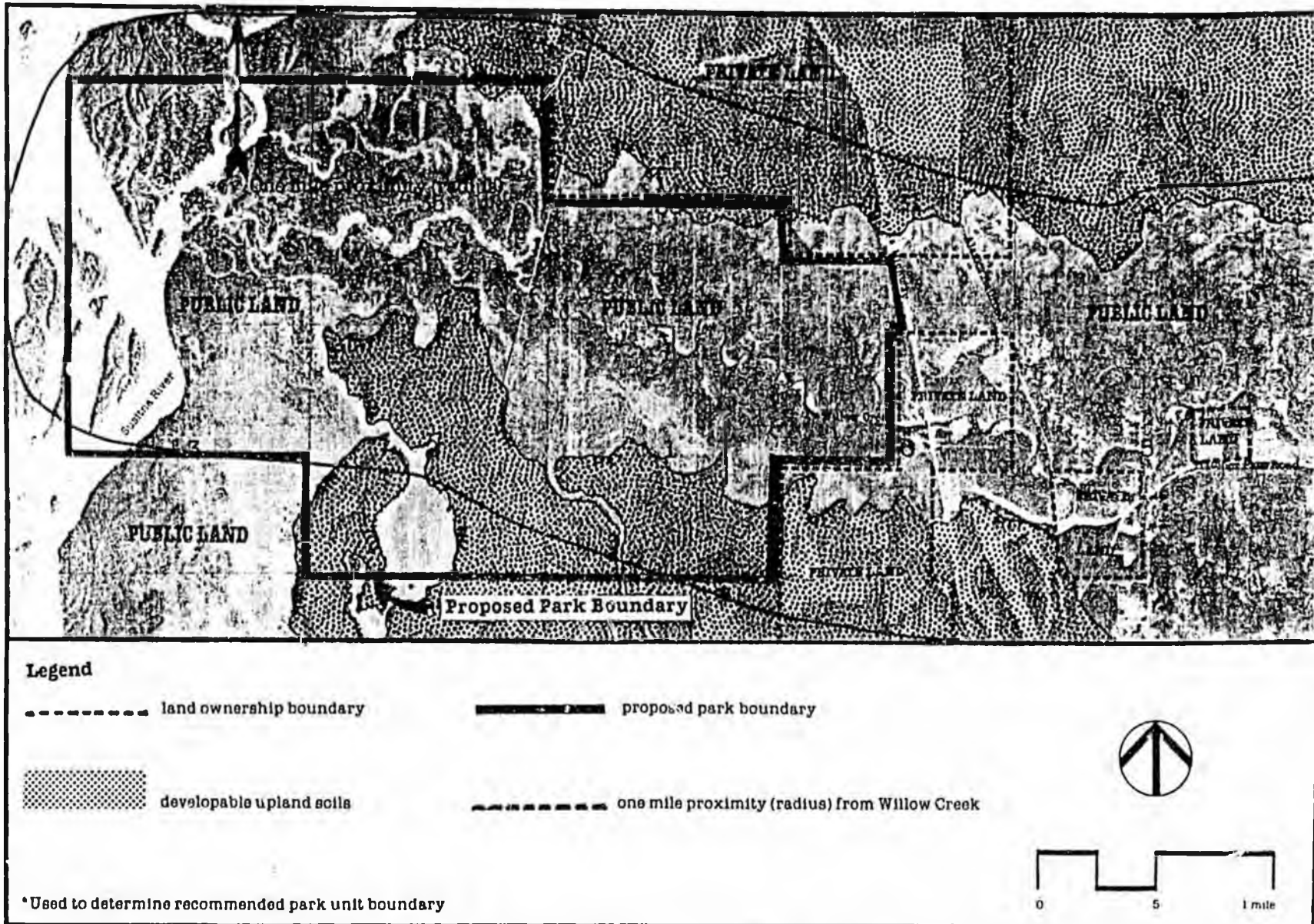
Trail Management. Concern has been expressed about difficult foot access to Willow

Creek below the Parks Highway bridge. At present, primitive trails extend a short distance downstream before disappearing. This has the effect of concentrating anglers around the highway bridge in spite of excellent fishing areas further downstream.

Other issues include the following:

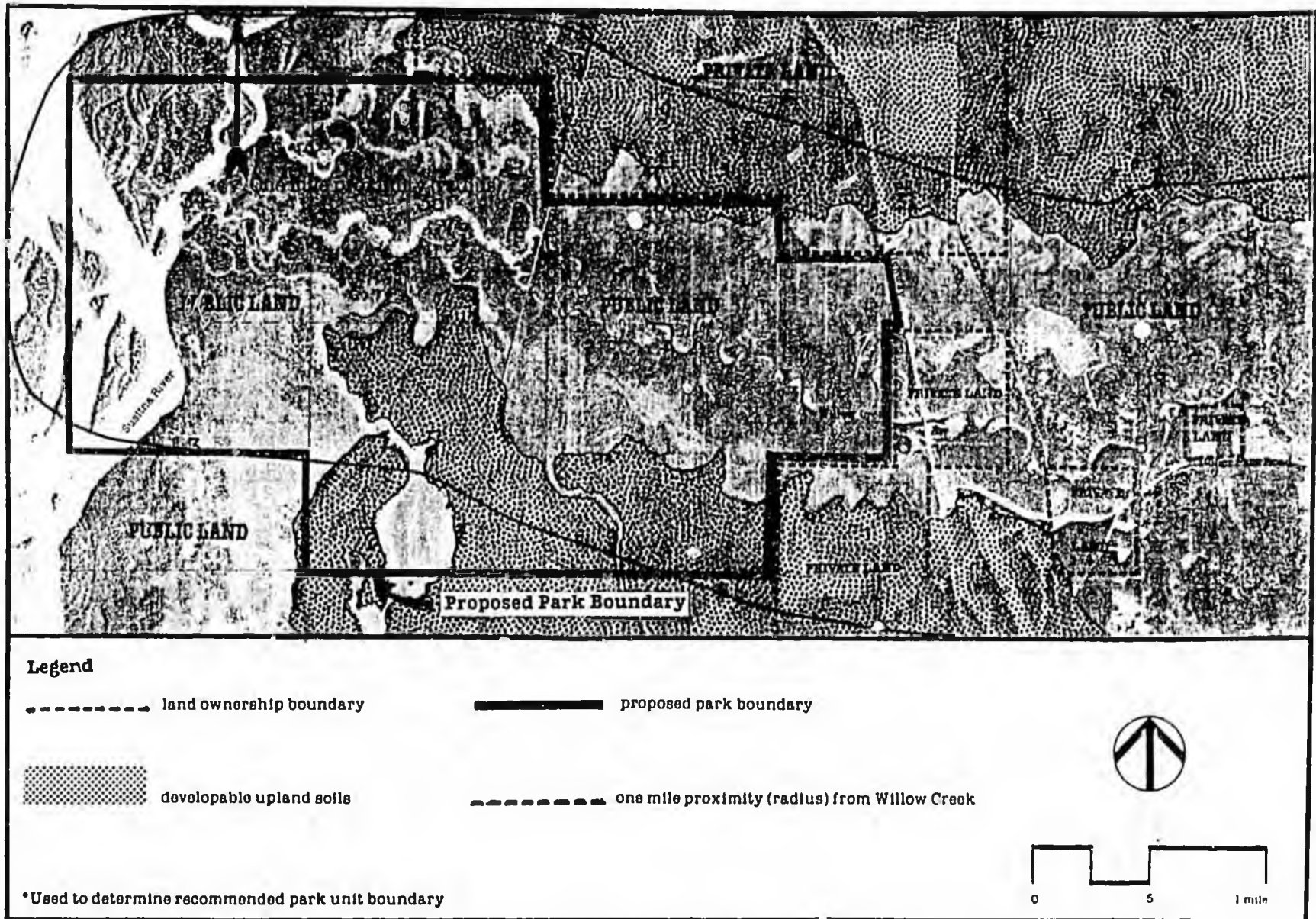
- power transmission lines
- hunting and trapping regulation
- sanitation
- fish habitat protection
- preservation of archaeological resources
- handicapped access to fishing areas
- historic trails
- state competition with private recreation providers
- road development within the park
- floodplain or wetlands construction
- regional road network

Figure 18. BOUNDARY ANALYSIS\*



Source: Alaska Division of Parks

Figure 18. BOUNDARY ANALYSIS\*



# 6 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## Zoning

To further clarify the intent for management of land and resources within state park units, all lands within each park unit are classified into one or more of the following zones:

- natural zone
- cultural zone
- recreational development zone
- wilderness zone

Figure 19a, page 44, is excerpted from the Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework, published in 1982. The intent and management considerations for each zone are described.

The proposed Willow Creek State Recreation Area is zoned in Figure 19b, page 45. Only the recreational development and natural zones are applied within this park unit.

## Regulation of Commercial Activities

With legislative establishment of the Willow

Creek State Recreation Area, the Division of Parks will become responsible for regulating commercial activities within the park. At the present time, commercial activities are limited to riverboat operators whose charter services are based at the Park Highway bridge. A large portion of the boat traffic on Willow Creek is by commercial operators.

As the facilities recommendations of this plan are implemented, a boat launch will be built at the Willow Creek mouth. At that time, it is recommended that the Division of Parks institute a permit system which will allow commercial riverboat operations to be conducted at the boat launch area. Permits will be issued with appropriate stipulations.

This recommendation is intended to reduce conflicts between boaters and anglers by re-locating the commercial operations to a better location. It is consistent with proposed regulations governing the operation of state park units.

### Riverboating Regulation

With establishment of a state park unit at Willow Creek, Division of Parks will accept responsibility and authority to resolve conflicts and protect the area's natural environment. One management tool is the authority to regulate the various recreational activities.

A major recreational issue at Willow Creek is the growing conflict between riverboaters and other users and increasing concerns about the environmental impacts of riverboating. In an effort to resolve this issue, a new boat launch at the Willow Creek mouth is recommended (see recommendation, page 55).

By providing an alternative to boat launching at the Parks Highway bridge, the new launch is intended to alleviate the problem. If conflicts continue in spite of the alternative launch, it is recommended that the director exercise the Division of Parks' authority and close Willow Creek to motorized boating. Such a closure would take place after appropriate public notice and review.

### Visitor Education, Interpretation

A nature trail is recommended as one component of an interpretive program (see recommendation, page 59). As visitation at Willow Creek increases, another component should be an active, ranger-assisted series of topical programs. A third component, which should be initiated early, is the production of a brochure describing the area's natural features and resources.

A final educational subject should concern boating safety and handling techniques. With construction of the new boat launch at the Willow Creek mouth, boaters will be launching into the difficult and potentially dangerous waters of the Susitna River. It is recommended that the Division of Parks take every opportunity to educate boaters, with such devices as bulletin boards, lectures, and demonstrations.

### Archaeological Preservation

The locations of facilities in this plan have been selected without the benefit of a comprehensive cultural resources survey (see recommendation, page 53). It is possible that a survey will discover significant resources in an area slated for development. In such a case, the Division of Parks should make every reasonable effort to reroute or relocate the facilities to avoid the prehistoric resources. If rerouting or relocation is not feasible, other efforts to preserve the cultural material will be explored, including excavation and removal.

### Driveways, Intersections on the Willow Creek Parkway

Although primarily a park road, the Willow Creek Parkway can meet multiple use objectives by providing access to lands south of the park. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough owns land bordering the park. In the future, the borough may choose to dispose of the land. In anticipation, this plan identifies acceptable locations where access roads might intersect the parkway (see Figure 20, page 46). These points have been selected

and spaced so as to preserve the natural experience of the parkway while providing reasonable access to outlying areas. Permits for parkway intersections will be issued by the Division of Parks only for those designated points.

#### Vegetation Thinning, Revegetation

Most of the facilities recommended in this plan will be located on the forested upland benches south of Willow Creek, where vegetation limits distant views of Mount McKinley and the Alaska Range. Selective hand thinning of trees and brush should be performed in certain areas to enhance scenic qualities. Specific areas will be identified by landscape architects during the site planning phase of development and again during construction.

During construction of new facilities, vegetation will inevitably be impacted by heavy equipment. To the extent practical, impacted areas should be reclaimed and revegetated. Road cut and fill slopes should be dressed with surplus topsoil and seeded or planted with native ground cover and brush species. These revegetation efforts will be detailed by landscape architects during the construction phase of development.

#### Disposal of Construction Waste Materials

Based upon investigations by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, it has been determined that the silty soils found on-site are not acceptable

road construction materials. These organic silts must be excavated, typically to a depth of two feet, and removed before suitable materials can be brought in from off-site.

In order to reduce construction costs, two disposal sites within the park have been identified to receive surplus excavated material (see Figure 20, page 46). In this manner, transportation costs are reduced and these topsoils are available for later use.

The disposal sites will be revegetated according to guidelines set forth by landscape architects during the site planning process. Access will be limited by gates or other barriers.

#### Signing

Because of the size and magnitude of facilities proposed for the Willow Creek State Recreation Area, a signing plan should be formulated at an early stage to ensure that regulatory and informational signs are both effective and consistent with park values. The sign plan will be particularly valuable during the lengthy period of development, expected to occur in phases over several years.

#### Trapping

The Willow Creek corridor supports a number of fur-bearing animals, most notably beaver. Trappers have for many years taken furbearers in the corridor, in a sustained yield manner which has not substantially dimin-

ished populations. It is recommended that trapping be allowed to continue, with the understanding that the Department of Fish and Game has authority for managing the area's wildlife resources.

#### Transportation, Utility Corridors

In anticipation of continued growth in the railbelt region, reconnaissance transportation and utility studies are identifying various corridors for roads, electricity transmission lines, etc. For example, the Alaska Power Authority is studying route alignments for transmission lines which will be necessary if the proposed Susitna hydroelectric project is constructed. One possible alignment bisects the park, traveling over the proposed location of a vehicle campground.

In order to preserve park values and protect recreational resources from intrusion, it is recommended by the Division of Parks that new transportation and utility corridors avoid the boundaries proposed for Willow Creek State Recreation Area.

#### Operations and Maintenance Staffing

To provide quality public recreation, it is not enough for the state to simply establish new parks and construct new facilities. Equally important is funding for staff personnel, maintenance, repairs, and equipment needs. These are the operational items which are so often neglected as budgets are formulated, yet they provide benefits which accrue directly to recreationists in the form of well-managed facilities and ranger assistance.

As the Division of Parks makes capital funding requests to implement the facilities recommendations of this plan, companion fiscal notes will also be prepared. The notes will detail the support functions, additional staff, special equipment, and other ongoing operational needs which the construction of new facilities will bring. Figure 21, page 50, compiles the phased operational requirements at Willow Creek, designed to coincide with the phases of facility construction.

#### Hunting

The Alaska Board of Game is responsible for developing hunting regulations addressing such factors as opened/closed areas, seasons, species, and bag limits.

The boat launch area will be heavily used during the autumn big game hunting season by hunters destined for outlying areas. Because of this concentrated use, a real danger would be created by other hunters stalking the surrounding area inadvertently shooting in the direction of the launch. For public safety purposes, it is recommended that the Board of Game close the state recreation area to all hunting during the fall big game season. Afterwards, when boat launching activity has declined, the area would be opened for small game hunting, with small caliber rifles and shotguns.

Failing action by the Board of Game, it is recommended that the Division of Parks exercise its authority to protect public safety by closing the area to the discharge of firearms.

- Facilities thought to be inappropriate include overnight cabins, lodges/hotels/motels, convenience stores, and playfields.
- Sport fishing is the primary attraction at Willow Creek. Other attractions include its accessibility, pleasant atmosphere, and riverboat access to downstream areas such as the Deshka River.
- Overcrowding was most often mentioned as a negative feature of the area. Anchorage residents next indicated poor maintenance, while local residents complained of boat traffic on Willow Creek. Another problem cited is a lack of developed camping areas.
- When asked what type of overnight accommodations they used, 58% of Anchorage respondents listed some type of vehicle and 56% used tents. (Note that because some people use both types of accommodations, the percentages total more than 100.) Seventy-one percent of Matanuska-Susitna respondents used a vehicle, while 50% used a tent.
- Most people favored locating camping areas within reasonable walking distance, as opposed to streambank development or areas located several miles away.
- Anglers were satisfied with their fishing success rates for most fish species. King salmon fishing brought a mixed response, with 50% of the fishermen being dissatisfied.

## Regional Preferences

The Alaska Outdoor Recreation Plan, published by the Division of Parks in 1981, contains detailed information about the preferences of Southcentral Alaska residents. Figures 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are excerpted from the plan and lead to the following conclusions relating to the management and development of a Willow Creek State Recreation Area.

- Fishing and tent camping are the two activities which respondents desired to do more often (Figure 12). The Willow Creek area can provide opportunities for both these activities, consistent with the land and water's ability to absorb adverse impacts.

**Figure 12. ACTIVITIES THAT SOUTHCENTRAL PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE TO DO MORE OFTEN**

	Percent of Respondents
Fishing .....	25%
Tent camping .....	12%
Hunting .....	7%
Motorboating .....	8%
Hiking/walking* .....	4%
Alpine skiing .....	4%
Swimming .....	3%
Flying .....	3%
Horseback riding* .....	3%
Golfing .....	2%
Canoeing/kayaking .....	2%
Bicycling* .....	2%
Beach combing .....	2%
Traveling/sightseeing .....	1%
Cross-country skiing* .....	1%
Other .....	21%
None .....	0%
* Trail related activities subtotal .....	
	10%

Source: Alaska Division of Parks

- The four most popular outdoor recreational activities in the region are fishing, tent camping, hiking/walking/running, and hunting (Figure 13). The Willow Creek corridor is capable of supporting all of these activities, with care taken that increased usage does not spoil the area's natural character.
- Acquisition and development of more backpacking campsites are favored by a majority of southcentral residents (Figure 14). In its extensive lowlands with complex drainage patterns, the Willow Creek corridor is especially suited to these low-impact facilities.
- More and better developed roadside campgrounds and picnic areas are favored (Figure 14). The well drained uplands overlooking Willow Creek are capable of meeting some of this demand, due to their suitability for a range of intensive activities and facilities.
- Southcentral residents want more hiking trails (Figure 14). The Willow Creek corridor is suited for a network of streamside and back-country trails. Such a trail network would serve several user groups, including anglers, hikers, skiers, snowmachiners, and dog mushers.
- More and better developed canoeing, kayaking, and rafting trails are favored in the southcentral region (Figure 14). Comments received during public meetings indicate that the curving and

**Figure 13. FAVORITE SOUTHCENTRAL OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES†**

1. Fishing	24%
2. Tent camping	9%
3. Hiking/walking/running*	5%
4. Hunting	6%
5. Motorboating	5%
6. Beachcombing	5%
7. Baseball/softball	4%
8. Bicycling*	3%
9. Cross-country skiing*	4%
10. Alpine skiing	4%
11. Winter off-road vehicle*	3%
12. Swimming	2%
13. Flying for pleasure	2%
14. Summer off-road vehicle*	2%
15. Traveling/sightseeing	2%
16. Horseback riding*	2%
17. Other**	

\* Trail related activities  
 \*\* Twenty five other activities were listed and represent one percent or less each  
 †† Represents first preference given

Source: Alaska Division of Parks

**Figure 14. PREFERENCES FOR SOUTHCENTRAL STATE PARK ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE**

	More Areas	Develop Areas	Just Maintain	Less Areas
Hiking trails	63%	31%	15%	1%
Roadside campgrounds/picnic areas	61%	17%	20%	2%
Backpacking campsites	48%	29%	21%	2%
Canoeing, kayaking, and rafting trails	41%	33%	22%	4%
Developed recreation areas	61%	23%	24%	2%
Well-accessed natural areas	38%	33%	25%	4%
Historic sites	37%	32%	25%	6%
Wilderness areas	23%	25%	35%	17%

Source: Alaska Division of Parks

debris-strewn waters of Willow Creek are dangerous for canoe operation. Rafting and kayaking, however, are judged to be suitable activities in these waters.

- o Desired features in out-of-town recreational areas include fishing areas, access to water, facilities such as campsites and picnic tables, and undisturbed natural areas (Figure 15). Willow Creek is capable of meeting some of this demand, in an area within two hours driving time of Anchorage.
- o For many Susitna valley residents, a park at Willow Creek will serve as a community recreational area. Desired features in community recreational areas - which are also consistent with the mission of the State Park System - include trails, paved roads, water access, and picnic tables, campsites, drinking water, and restrooms (Figure 16).

#### Recreational Demand

In keeping with Alaska's explosive population growth, demand for outdoor recreation rose dramatically during the decade of the seventies. The number of sport fishing licenses issued increased from 113,394 in 1970 to 206,804 in 1980, according to the Department of Fish and Game. Division of Parks figures indicate that visitation at the Matanuska-Susitna district parks rose from 92,078 in FY73 to 391,923 in FY81, representing a 426% increase in 8 years.

**Figure 15. DESIRED FEATURES IN SOUTHCENTRAL OUT-OF-TOWN RECREATION AREAS**

Features	Percentage of Southcentral Population in Favor of Features
1. Fishing areas	95%
2. Access to water for swimming or boating	91%
3. Areas for hunting	87%
4. Picnic tables, campsites drinking water, restrooms	91%
6. Undisturbed natural areas	88%
8. Bicycle, walking, skiing or horseback riding trails	84%
7. Motorcycle, snowmachine and other ORV Trails	76%
8. Paved roads	69%
9. Unpaved roads	66%
10. Overnight lodging	66%
11. Electrical hook-ups, showers general store	66%
12. Playfields	60%
13. Lawns & benches	49%

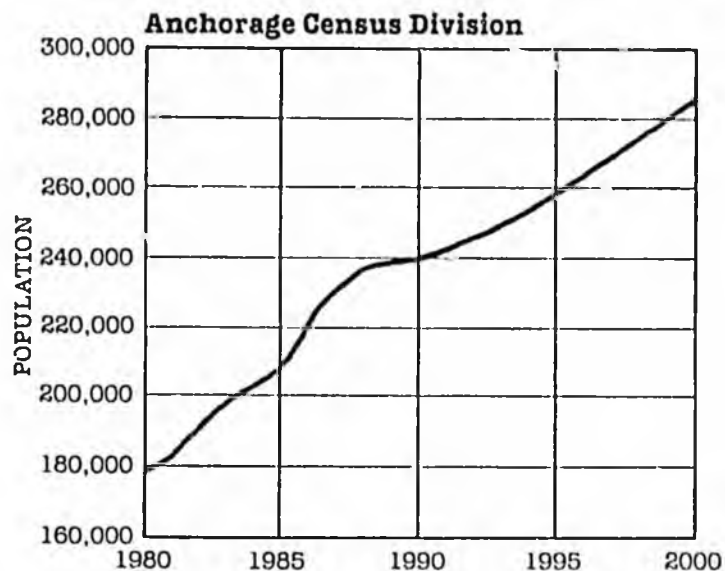
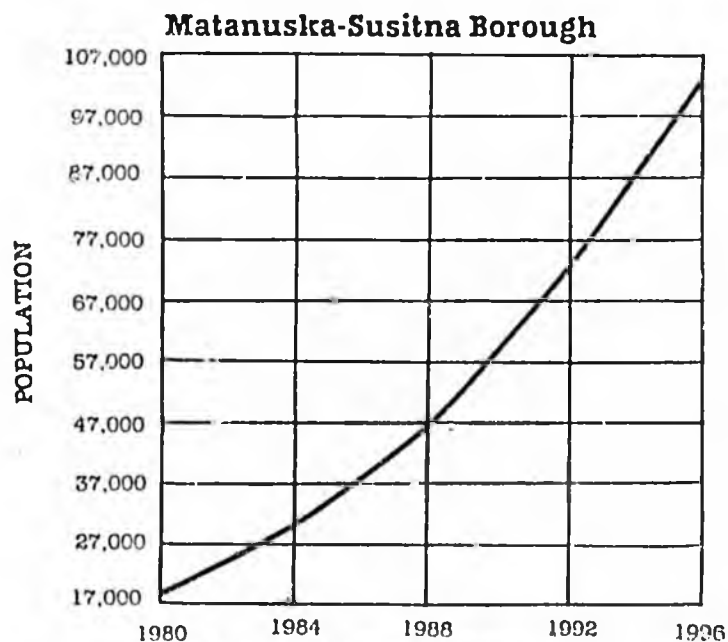
Source: Alaska Division of Parks

**Figure 16. DESIRED FEATURES IN SOUTHCENTRAL COMMUNITY RECREATION AREAS**

Features	Percentage of Southcentral Population in Favor of Features
1. Playfields	95%
2. Lawns & benches	92%
3. Bicycle, walking, skiing or horseback riding trails	85%
4. Paved roads	85%
5. Access to water for swimming and boating	77%
6. Picnic tables, campsites, drinking water, restrooms	76%
7. Undisturbed natural area	64%
8. Overnight lodging	61%
9. Electrical hookups, showers, general store	61%
10. Fishing areas	66%
11. Motorcycle, snowmachine and other ORV trails	44%
12. Unpaved roads	21%
13. Areas of hunting	9%

Source: Alaska Division of Parks

**Figure 17. POPULATION FORECASTS**



Source: Institute of Social and Economic Research

Population growth is forecasted to continue into the next century (see Figure 17, page 33), although at slower rates than in the past 10 years. Likewise, demand for recreational opportunities will continue to grow (particularly for such favorite activities as fishing, camping, hiking), but at reduced rates. Consistent with a national trend toward closer-to-home recreational outings, this moderation in demand will be offset somewhat by the Matanuska-Susitna district's proximity to population centers.

For the purposes of this plan, it is assumed by the Division of Parks that recreational demand exceeds the capability of the Willow Creek corridor to provide quality experiences. Therefore, this plan will recommend only those facilities and activities which can be accommodated while maintaining the area's high natural and aesthetic qualities.



# Alaska Sportfishing Association

3605 Arctic Blvd., Suite 800 • Anchorage, Alaska 99503

February 5, 1985

Representative Ron Larson,  
Pouch V  
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Ron,

The Alaska Sportfishing Association wishes to share our concerns and objectives for 1985 with you. We hope that it will be possible to assure the continued preservation of the habitat surrounding critical streams and rivers in the Mat-Su Valley area through the establishment of corridors on these streams, and to initiate action to develop access to numerous recreational rivers. We addressed these points in our candidates' night in October 1984.

As background information on these subjects it should be understood that there are several rivers in the Susitna drainage that are fantastic fishing resources for the state of Alaska. These rivers have practically no access, no camping, no boat launching, no parking, and no sanitation, so they are currently not providing an outlet for the sportfishing public they should. As a result, the Kenai River and others with good access are bearing an inordinate amount of the pressure. These rivers likewise need to be protected by means of corridors from man's destructive forces to assure future generations of productive waters.

We sincerely hope that you will throw your support by votes and funding to the access measures that have been and will be submitted this session. The expansion of access in the Mat-Su area and Kenai peninsula has a long-term future value, not only in terms of greatly increased tourist dollars, but in recreational outlet expenditures by Alaskans. These are very much a "permanent fund" for this state and of great future importance to all of us.

Protection of these streams can be done now and not repeat mistakes made along other rivers. This can be best accomplished by establishment of corridors along these streams that will permit recreational activities but prohibit habitat destructive activities, such as mining, gravel extraction, or timber cutting. Bills should be analyzed on this basis. Restrictions on recreational activities must be on the basis of what is needed for that river to protect its habitat.

The introduction of HB 86 establishing the Willow Creek State Recreational Facility is a step in that direction. We further identified the Doshka, Alexander, Lake, Talkeetna, Talachulitna, Peters Creek, Little Susitna, and Clear Creek (Chunilna) rivers as those necessary for development and protection. These are tied up in the Susitna Plan at present but must be a part of the recreational outlet system. These have been sifted out from seventeen important streams in that area.

We feel that protection is necessary now, and it should preclude the travesty of permitting mining claims that have been filed on Camp Creek, Lake Creek, Sunflower, and others by one party. We are extremely concerned about our mining laws. It would seem illogical that a law passed in 1847, or whenever, would now exclude the rights of the public to access to and preservation of recreational fishing waters.

Another-example is the application for a permit by an outside company to dredge up Cook Inlet in the most highly utilized recreation area of Cook Inlet. Oddly enough these permits now do not conflict with commercial fishing operations but are right in the middle of our key areas, both for our use and shellfish and halibut habitat. A bill is being introduced by Senator Kertull to authorize expenditure of \$400,000 to renovate the 10-year old abandoned mining claim at the headwaters of Lake Creek to prevent it from destroying that productive stream. The abandoned mine is now pouring mud and sediment into that stream. Can we not provide legislation and restriction on mining permits so that in the future we will not continue to destroy our renewable resource habitats?

A surety bond of adequate amount is one possible means of assisting this goal. We ask you for your help on how best to solve these problems. It must be recognized that, although there are a few mining operations near streams that conscientiously apply techniques successfully to preclude downstream contamination, most mining operations are unsupervised, provide their own water samples for analysis, and are destroying the waters below them as a fish habitat for generations to come. It need not be so. Nevertheless, under current law, once the Department of Natural Resources issues a permit, whether testing, exploratory, or operational, it is virtually impossible to stop that operation. We cannot live under such irreversible laws.

We wish to once again express our opposition to SB 37 introduced by Senator Paul Fischer. No capabilities exist for the Board of Fisheries, or any other governmental agency, to obtain such data. Senator Fischer has submitted this solely to protect his commercial fishing constituency in an area highly used as a recreational and tourist facility.

We urge your support of HB 29, 36, 43, 86, and 93 that have been introduced to date. We also urge continued expansion of the Homer small boat harbor facilities as rapidly as possible, as another major recreational and tourist outlet.

The above subjects are near and dear to our hearts, and thankfully, there are actions and bills underway in support of them. Others, such as mining, need your assistance in developing more livable laws. We will appreciate all of the assistance and support you can muster.

Sincerely,

*Bob Hunter*

Robert L. Hunter  
Chairman, Legislative Committee  
Alaska Sportfishing Association

*Tom,  
Thanks for your bills.  
Hope we can get them through.  
We need Fish & Game on an  
equal basis with DNR on  
Avenor's bills.  
Bob-H.*

HOUSE  
COMMITTEE REPORT

(9)

Date referred: 2/17/86

FURTHER REFERRALS: FINANCE

DATE: MARCH 3, 1986

The RESOURCES Committee has considered HB 635

"An Act establishing the Willow Creek State Recreation Area; and providing for an effective date."

and recommends:

- do pass
- do not pass
- do pass with attached amendment(s)
- no recommendation
- replace with CS HB 635 (RES)  same title
- new title

and recommends NO RECOMMENDATION

further referral to the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

- and attaches:
- letter of intent
  - first fiscal note
  - new fiscal note
  - zero fiscal note

SIGNING DO PASS: *first*

SIGNING OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Sund [Signature]

Shultz [Signature]

[Signature] No Rec  
Jenkins

[Signature] NO REC  
Pearce

[Signature] DO NOT PASS WITHOUT  
HONEST FISCAL NOTE  
Thompson

[Signature] No Rec  
Cato

[Signature] Co-Chairman

[Signature] Shultz