

HB

635

HB 635 - WILLOW CREEK STATE REC 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.

*Sett Aside  
3,500 Acres  
of Public  
Land*

*Prime  
Use is  
for Recreation*

As we all know, there is a shortage of state revenues available and so there may be some question as to the State's ability to pay for operating expenses and capital improvements to the Willow Creek Area. However, this bill would only set the land aside and not create any additional positions, nor is there a request for funding for capital improvements. We envision those things occurring in the future as funding may come available.

By setting aside the land base for the Willow Recreation Area now, we can be assured of saving a very desirable piece of recreational property, one in which there is a great deal of public interest. Furthermore, in developing these sites within the Susitna drainage, we will be able to attract some of the people who currently make the Kenai Peninsula their destination; thereby alleviating some of the crowding that occurs on the rivers in that area now. We feel this is a good piece of legislation which will meet a real need. It will be the first step in promoting recreation and tourism in the Mat-Su Boro, which will provide better economic stability.

*This bill  
will reserve  
this recrea-  
tional area  
and  
relieve  
the pressure  
on the  
Kenai Penn.*

POINTS OF CONCERN:

Mental health lands - have been taken out

Fiscal note - Reflects idea of setting aside land now for protection for future public use without requesting any development at this time.

Acreeage - 2,747.8 are Mat-Su Boro lands which they have agreed to  
835 are state lands of which 248 are contained in an  
3582.8 existing wayside site  
75 were taken out as they are mental health lands

# Alaska State Legislature

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## Senate Committee on Resources

M E M O R A N D U M

April 25, 1986

TO: All Members  
Senate Resources Committee

FROM: Staff, Senate Resources Committee

RE: HB 635 (Res) "An Act establishing the Willow  
Creek State Recreation Area; and  
providing for an effective date"

This bill would create a state recreation area along Willow Creek near the Parks Highway. The land area is 3582.8 acres of which 2747.8 are Mat-Su Borough lands and 835 acres are state lands. There are no mental health lands in CS HB 635 (Res).

A management plan is to be adopted within two years of the passage of this bill and would include a cooperative effort with the Mat-Su Borough.

The fiscal note is zero.

### Enclosures:

- Fiscal note
- Sectional analysis
- Bill analysis from Fish and Game
- Map
- Background information

**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 : 02-28-86

**FISCAL DETAIL**

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

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

OPERATING	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>

<b>CAPITAL</b>						
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<b>REVENUE</b>						
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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 : *Mme. J. Amundson, 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)

HB 635 - WILLOW CREEK STATE REC 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 lands 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 commisssioner 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 41.21.41.21.497.

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.



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 W. M. M.	DATE 24 6/86	COMMISSIONER'S SIGNATURE Donnell	DATE 2-28-86

**SUMMARY**

OTHER AGENCIES AFFECTED BY BILL DNR, DEC, Matanuska-Susitna Borough	CONSTITUENT GROUPS 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.

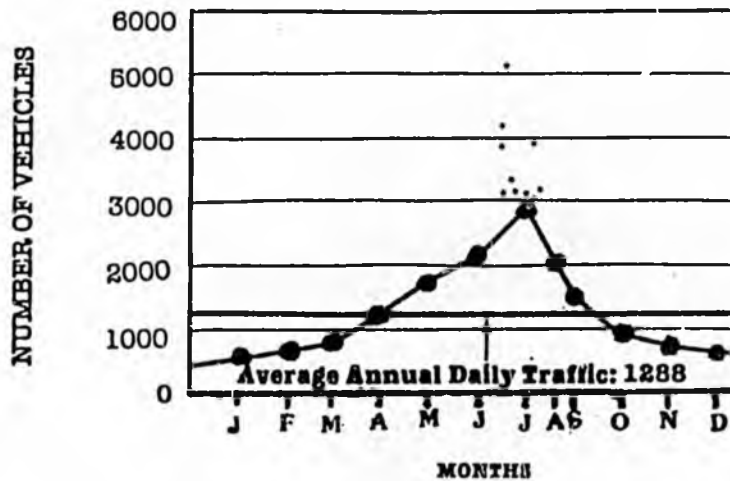
ANALYSIS OF BILL/PROGRAM EFFECTS  
HB 635 is basically identical to HB 86 but cleans up major flaws in the location description of the Willow Creek site.  
  
Creation of the Willow Creek recreation area will not adversely impact the operations of the department. Development of the site with appropriate 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. 41.21.48a(3)).  
  
(3) allow sport fishing, fishery rehabilitation or enhancement...

PLEASE ATTACH A SEPARATE SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR ANALYSIS.



**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.

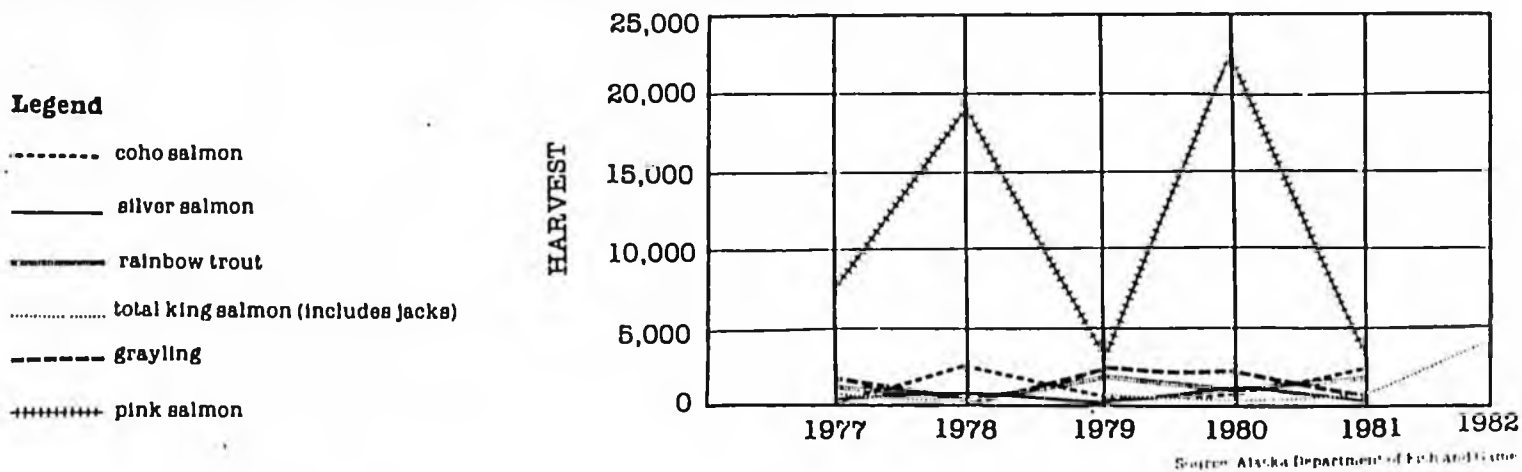
Private Sector. Several privately operated recreational facilities are located within the vicinity. The Willow Island Drive Inn is situated at the northwest corner of the Parks Highway/Willow Creek intersection. Facilities include parking, boat launch, trailer storage area, and camping units. Shore fishing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

#### 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 concern 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.

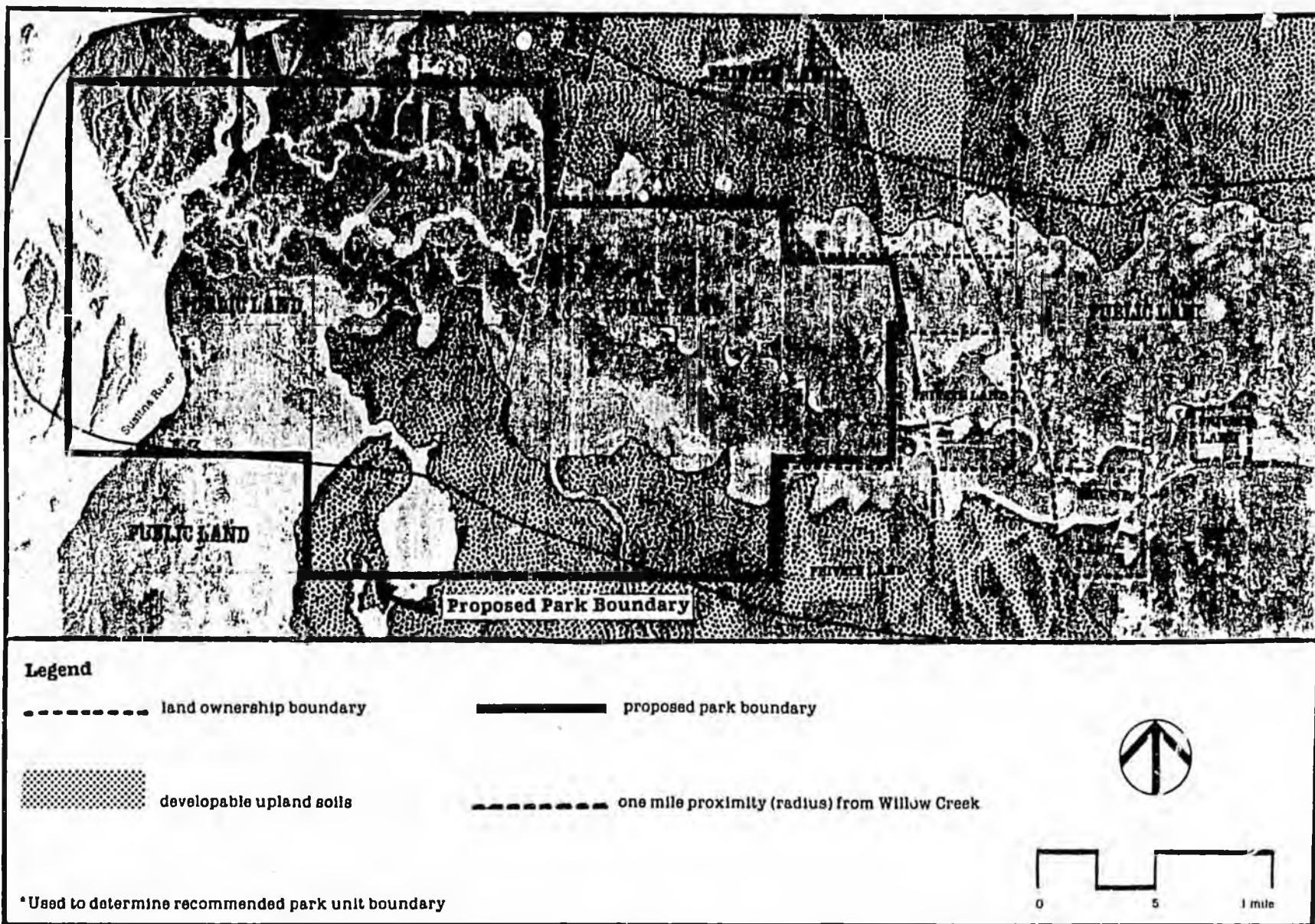
Trail Management. Concern has been expressed about difficult foot access to Willow

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

# 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 relocating 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 materials 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 fur-bearers 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 bissects 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 and 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%
Sailing .....	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. Travelling/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.

- 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.
- 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%
6. Bicycle, walking, skiing or horseback riding trails	84%
7. Motorcycle, snowmachine and other ORV Trails	78%
8. Paved roads	89%
9. Unpaved roads	86%
10. Overnight lodging	86%
11. Electrical hook-ups, showers general store	66%
12. Playfields	60%
13. Lawns & benches	49%

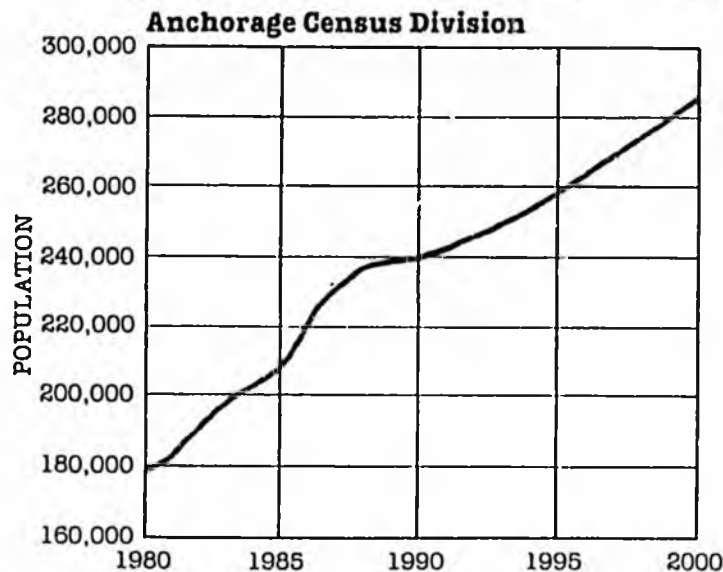
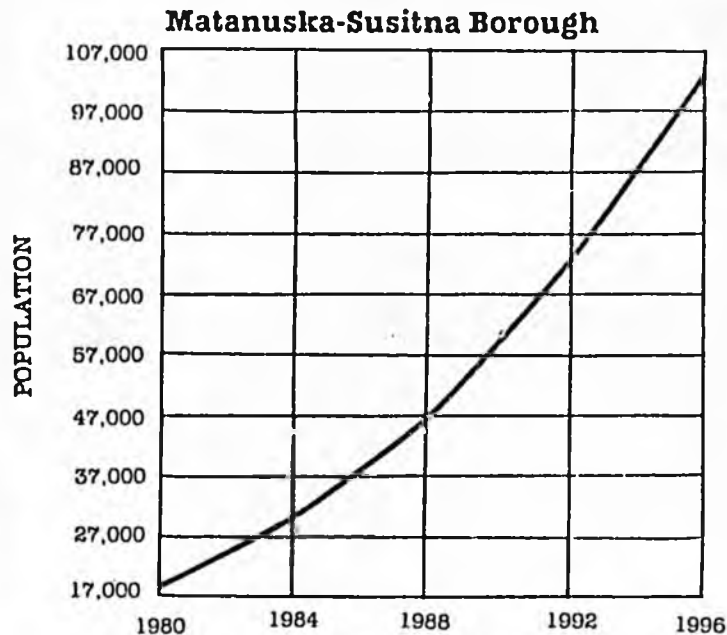
Source: Alaska Division of Parks

**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	51%
10. Fishing areas	56%
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.

Bradley  
4/26/86

*OUT - ADDITIONAL  
LAND  
IN - COMES BACK  
TO LEG. FOR  
REVIEW*

Original sponsor: Larson

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2 SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 635 (Resources)

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act establishing the Willow Creek State Recre-  
7 ation Area; and providing for an effective date."

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

9 \* Section 1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this Act is to:

10 (1) designate as a state recreation area the land and water  
11 described in AS 41.21.491(a);

12 (2) emphasize and manage recreational uses and associated devel-  
13 opment activities in the unit; and

14 (3) maintain and enhance the fishery and wildlife habitat in the  
15 unit.

16 \* Sec. 2. AS 41.21 is amended by adding new sections to read:

17 Sec. 41.21.491. WILLOW CREEK STATE RECREATION AREA. (a) The  
18 surface estate in the land and water owned by the state as of the  
19 effective date of this Act and all land and water acquired by the  
20 state in the future, including shore and submerged land, lying within  
21 the parcels described in this subsection is designated as the Willow  
22 Creek State Recreation Area:

23 Township 19 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian

24 Section 5: Lot 3, Lot 4, S1/2NE1/4NE1/4, SE1/4NW1/4NE1/4,  
25 SW1/4NE1/4, N1/2NW1/4SE1/4, S1/2NW1/4

26 Section 6: Lot 3, Lot 4, Lot 5, SE1/4NW1/4

27 Township 19 North, Range 5 West, Seward Meridian

28 Section 1: SE1/4, W1/2, Tract A, Tract B, Tract C

29 Section 2

1                   Section 3: N1/2

2                   Township 20 North, Range 5 West, Seward Meridian

3                   Section 34

4                   Section 35

5                   Section 36: S1/2

6                   (b) The Department of Natural Resources may agree to manage land  
7 owned by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough that is within the parcels  
8 described in (a) of this section and that is designated by ordinance  
9 or resolution of the borough as a part of the Willow Creek State  
10 Recreation Area.

11                   (c) Subject to valid existing rights, the land and water de-  
12 scribed in (a) of this section are designated as a special purpose  
13 area under art. VIII, sec. 7, Constitution of the State of Alaska.

14                   (d) Except for oil and gas leasing under AS 38.05.180, the  
15 mineral estate in the state-owned land and water described in (a) of  
16 this section is closed to mineral entry under AS 38.05.181 - 38.05.-  
17 280.

18                   Sec. 41.21.492. DESIGNATION OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES. (a)  
19 The land and water described in AS 41.21.491(a) and the land and water  
20 owned by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and designated by the borough  
21 under AS 41.21.491(b) are assigned to the Department of Natural Re-  
22 sources for control, maintenance, and development, consistent with the  
23 purposes of AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.496.

24                   (b) Nothing in AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.496 affects the responsibil-  
25 ities of

26                   (1) the Department of Fish and Game, the Board of Fisher-  
27 ies, or the Board of Game under AS 41.99.010 and AS 16;

28                   (2) the Department of Environmental Conservation under  
29 AS 46.03; or

1 (3) state agencies and municipalities under AS 44.19.-  
2 145(a)(11) and AS 46.40.100.

3 Sec. 41.21.493. COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN. The commissioner  
4 shall develop and adopt and may revise a comprehensive management plan  
5 for the Willow Creek State Recreation Area with the concurrence of the  
6 Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Each management plan adopted or revised by  
7 the commissioner under this section shall be submitted to the legisla-  
8 ture for its review at the first regular session to convene after the  
9 adoption or revision.

10 Sec. 41.21.494. REGULATIONS. The commissioner shall adopt  
11 regulations under the Administrative Procedure Act (AS 44.62) that are  
12 necessary to achieve the purposes of AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.496 and to  
13 implement the plan adopted under AS 41.21.493. The regulations shall

14 (1) designate incompatible uses and prohibit or restrict  
15 them;

16 (2) allow road, railroad, and utility crossing of Willow  
17 Creek so as to minimize disturbance to the river's habitat and scenic  
18 and recreation values;

19 (3) allow fishery rehabilitation or enhancement practices  
20 under terms that are compatible with AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.496;

21 (4) allow the legal taking of fur-bearing animals; and

22 (5) allow for hunting, except where it must be prohibited  
23 for reasons of public safety.

24 Sec. 41.21.495. COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS. The commis-  
25 sioner may enter into cooperative management agreements with a federal  
26 agency, a municipality, another state agency, or a private landowner  
27 to achieve the purposes of AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.496.

28 Sec. 41.21.496. CIVIL ENFORCEMENT. In addition to any other  
29 remedy provided by law, the attorney general may seek an injunction

1 and damages, at the request of the commissioner, for a violation of a  
2 regulation adopted under AS 41.21.494 or a regulation that is applica-  
3 ble to the Willow Creek State Recreation Area established under  
4 AS 41.21.491.

5 \* Sec. 3. The commissioner of natural resources shall adopt the compre-  
6 hensive management plan under AS 41.21.493, enacted by sec. 2 of this Act,  
7 within two years after the effective date of this Act.

8 \* Sec. 4. This Act takes effect immediately in accordance with AS 01.-  
9 10.070(c).

Offered: 3/5/86  
Referred: Finance

Original sponsor: Larson

*2 as final note  
800 state land  
2500 met base*

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 635 (Resources)

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

FOURTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5

A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act establishing the Willow Creek State Recre-  
7 ation Area; and providing for an effective date."

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

9 \* Section 1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this Act is to:

10 (1) designate as a state recreation area the land and water  
11 described in AS 41.21.491(a);

12 (2) emphasize and manage recreational uses and associated devel-  
13 opment activities in the unit; and

14 (3) maintain and enhance the fishery and wildlife habitat in the  
15 unit.

16 \* Sec. 2. AS 41.21 is amended by adding new sections to read:

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19 effective date of this Act and all land and water acquired by the  
20 state in the future, including shore and submerged land, lying within  
21 the parcels described in this subsection is designated as the Willow  
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27 Township 19 North, Range 5 West, Seward Meridian

28 Section 1: SE1/4, W1/2, Tract A, Tract B, Tract C

29 Section 2

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Section 3: N1/2  
Township 20 North, Range 5 West, Seward Meridian

Section 34  
Section 35  
Section 36: S1/2

(b) The Department of Natural Resources may agree to manage land owned by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough that is within the parcels described in (a) of this section and that is designated by ordinance or resolution of the borough as a part of the Willow Creek State Recreation Area.

(c) Subject to valid existing rights, the land and water described in (a) of this section are designated as a special purpose area under art. VIII, sec. 7, Constitution of the State of Alaska.

(d) Except for oil and gas leasing under AS 38.05.180, the mineral estate in the state-owned land and water described in (a) of this section is closed to mineral entry under AS 38.05.181 - 38.05.-280.

Sec. 41.21.492. DESIGNATION OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES. (a) The land and water described in AS 41.21.491(a) and the land and water owned by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and designated by the borough under AS 41.21.491(b) are assigned to the Department of Natural Resources for control, maintenance, and development, consistent with the purposes of AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.497.

(b) Nothing in AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.497 affects the responsibilities of

(1) the Department of Fish and Game, the Board of Fisheries, or the Board of Game under AS 41.99.010 and AS 16;

(2) the Department of Environmental Conservation under AS 46.03; or

1                   (3) state agencies and municipalities under AS 44.19.-  
2 145(a)(11) and AS 46.40.100.

3                   Sec. 41.21.493. COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN. The commissioner  
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5 Creek State Recreation Area with the concurrence of the Matanuska-  
6 Susitna Borough.

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8 regulations under the Administrative Procedure Act (AS 44.62) that are  
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12 them;

13                   (2) allow road, railroad, and utility crossing of Willow  
14 Creek so as to minimize disturbance to the river's habitat and scenic  
15 and recreation values;

16                   (3) allow fishery rehabilitation or enhancement practices  
17 under terms that are compatible with AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.497;

18                   (4) allow the legal taking of fur-bearing animals; and

19                   (5) allow for hunting, except where it must be prohibited  
20 for reasons of public safety.

21                   Sec. 41.21.495. ADDITIONAL LAND. (a) The commissioner may  
22 acquire, in the name of the state, title to or an interest in land or  
23 improvements on land that is adjacent to or within the boundaries of  
24 the Willow Creek State Recreation Area in order to achieve the pur-  
25 poses of AS 41.21.491 - 41.21.497. This acquisition may be by lease,  
26 purchase, exchange under AS 38.50, bequest, gift, or other lawful  
27 means, but not by eminent domain.

28                   (b) The commissioner may adjust the boundaries of the Willow  
29 Creek State Recreation Area under AS 38.05.295 - 38.05.300 by adding

*up to 640 acres*

*Possible  
Amendment*

1 state-owned land and water to achieve the purposes of AS 41.21.491  
2 41.21.497.

3 Sec. 41.21.496. COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS. The commis-  
4 sioner may enter into cooperative management agreements with a federal  
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8 remedy provided by law, the attorney general may seek an injunction  
9 and damages, at the request of the commissioner, for a violation of a  
10 regulation adopted under AS 41.21.494 or a regulation that is applica-  
11 ble to the Willow Creek State Recreation Area established under  
12 AS 41.21.491.

13 \* Sec. 3. The commissioner of natural resources shall adopt the compre-  
14 hensive management plan under AS 41.21.493, enacted by sec. 2 of this Act,  
15 within two years after the effective date of this Act.

16 \* Sec. 4. This Act takes effect immediately in accordance with AS 01.-  
17 10.070(c).

18

Bradley  
4/26/86

*add  
Mental Health  
boards amendment  
if any - didn't  
mean it*

Original sponsor: Larson

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BY THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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17 280. <sub>S</sub>

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5 \* Sec. 3. The commissioner of natural resources shall adopt the compre-  
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