

Outdoor Recreation as a Strategy for Anchorage Revitalization

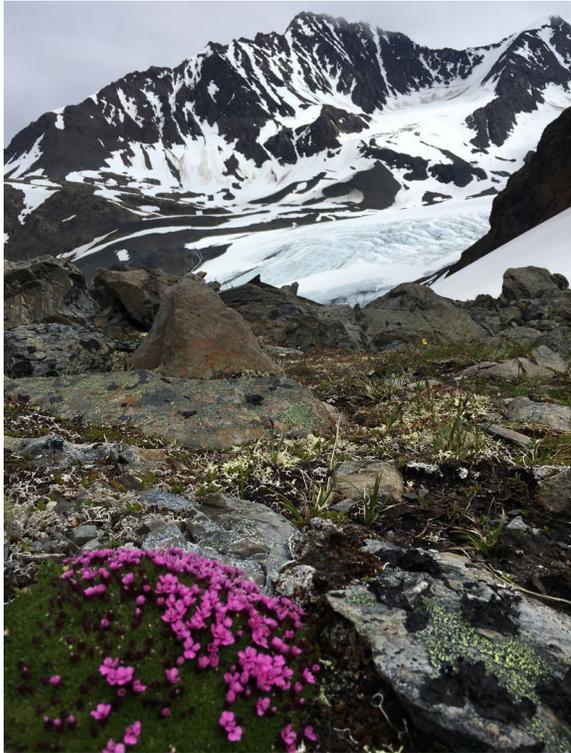
Background to the Proposed Chugach State Park Access Service Area



Anchorage Municipality Assembly Work Session
January 20, 2023

Chris Beck – retired consultant/trail advocate

***Starting Point:* Anchorage has only just begun to take full advantage of our phenomenal outdoor recreation resources.**



No lack of globally competitive, spectacular outdoor places...

...but we need to start investing – in facilities, access, planning and management – to respond to growth and fully benefit from existing and growing demand

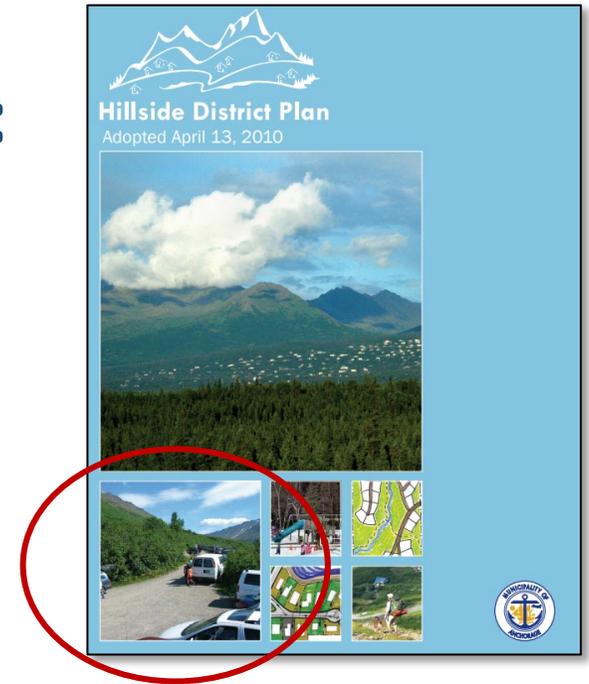
The Future of Outdoor Recreation in Anchorage: Three Reference Points

2022-2027 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (“SCORP”)

- State plan, keeps Alaska eligible for \$3.5 M per year in federal Land Water Conservation and Recreation Trails Program funds
- Builds on public surveys, extensive research, and work by over 100 partners
- Makes the case for new investments in outdoor recreation; offers new ways of managing outdoor recreation assets
- Includes an “Anchorage Subregion Plan” (*that recommends a new CSP Service Area*)
- Final approval of by National Park Service and Governor expected in January

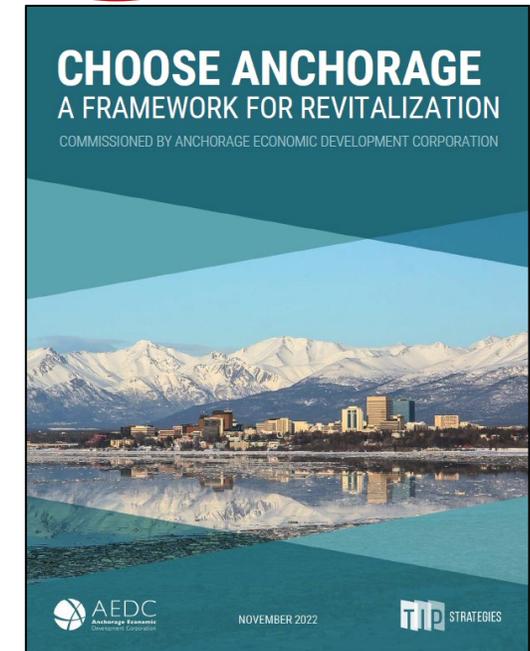
Hillside District Plan

- Approved by MOA Assembly, 2013
- Includes goals and strategies on land use, utilities and circulation, recreation & open space



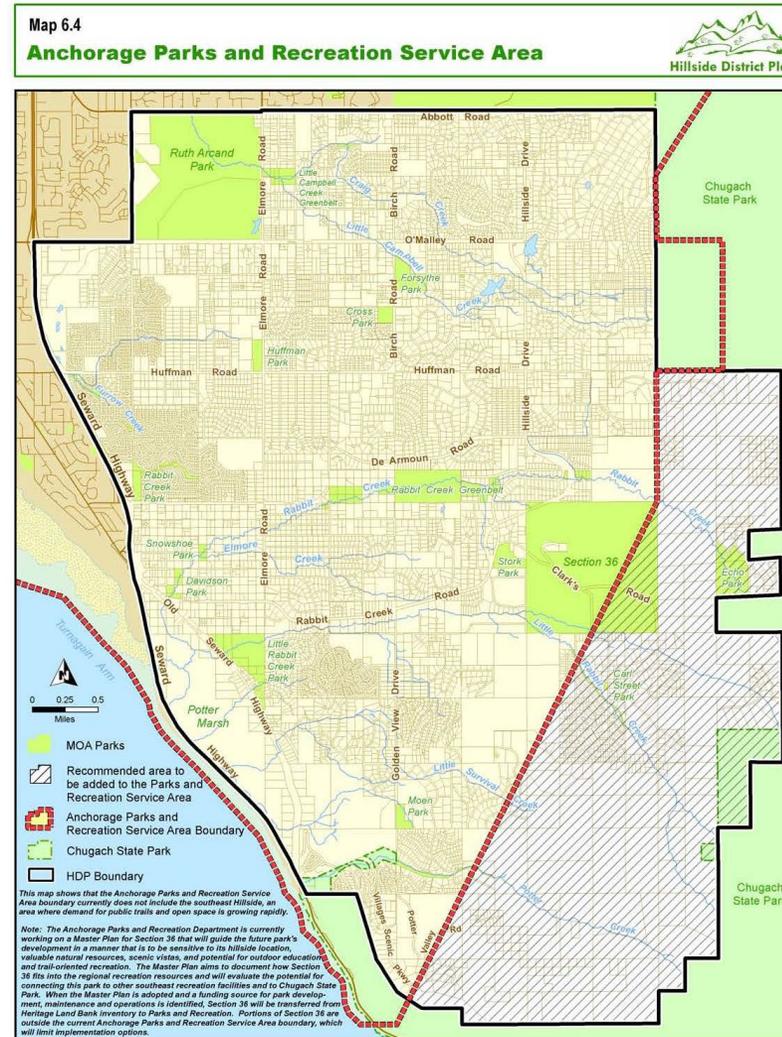
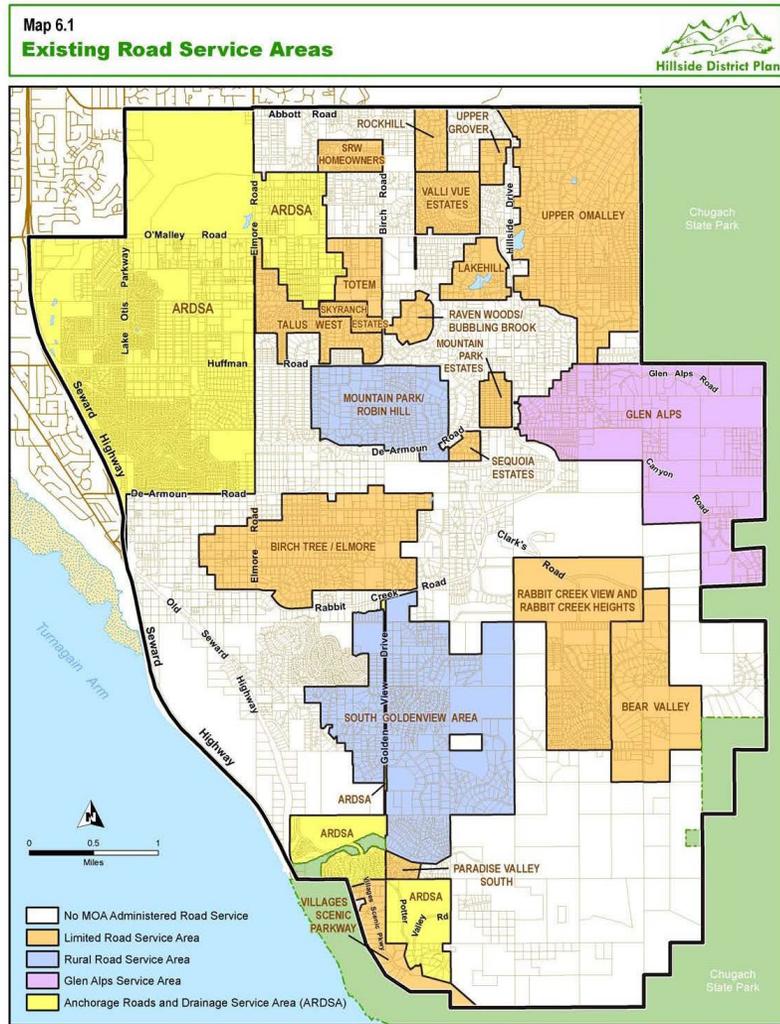
Choose Anchorage

- “Anchorage is at an economic crossroads.”
- Commissioned by AEDC
- Includes goals and strategies for economic revitalization



Hillside District Plan: calls for solutions to “structural gaps” in capacity needed to meet growing use

Policy 14-C - Chugach State Park Access: Create a new funding and management program targeted at improved Chugach State Park access with trailhead and parking facilities.



Issues include:

- Growing traffic on neighborhood roads
- Wear and tear on roads exceeding LRSA resources
- Overflow parking on neighborhood streets
- Occasional problems with trash, parties, trespass, vandalism
- Increased use of previously quiet CSP trails; new kinds of use, like mountain bikes

CHOOSE ANCHORAGE

A FRAMEWORK FOR REVITALIZATION

COMMISSIONED BY ANCHORAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TIP Strategies, Inc. (TIP), would like to thank the individuals and organizations who contributed to this planning process. TIP is especially grateful to the project steering committee for their guidance throughout the engagement.

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Northrim Bank

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RIM Architects

Jacob Lyon

Premier Alaska Tours

Joy Merriner

BDO

Michael Prozeralik

KPB Architects

Ryan Schmittinger

Weidner Apartment Homes

Brendyn Shiflea

Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce

Tabetha Toloff

Cook Inlet Tribal Council

Ethan Tyler

CIRI

Billy Wailand

GCI

Gwen Welch

Chugach Commercial Holdings

Sonya Wellman

Rasmuson Foundation

Paula Willman

ConocoPhillips

Lon Wilson

The Wilson Agency

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GOALS

- 1. Business Vitality:** Create a dynamic and diverse business base that drives higher levels of new investment and job creation.
- 2. Talent:** Build a robust talent pool with skills that meet the needs of current and future employers to foster a more resilient and diversified economic base.
- 3. Quality of Place:** Invest in Anchorage's quality of place to help reverse current migration trends and support the retention and attraction of young people.
- 4. Infrastructure:** Leverage existing assets in a sustainable manner and invest in critical infrastructure to shape quality places that are attractive to business and talent.

CHOOSE ANCHORAGE

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FIGURE 2. EMERGING MARKET OPPORTUNITIES



Air Hub Operations

Anchorage lies along a heavily trafficked air cargo route between Asia and North America. The city can evolve from a refueling stop into a thriving international transshipment location. The city is also well positioned to support new international air passenger routes.



Ocean Bounty

The Cook Inlet—and the Gulf of Alaska, beyond—represents a sustainable ocean bounty, from fisheries to offshore energy.



Base Camp Hospitality

A city's image shapes its economy. When the world thinks of Anchorage, it should picture a gateway to majestic scenery and national parks. Anchorage can become the world's base camp for the Alaska Long Trail.



Energy Futures

The future of energy production will be multi-sourced. Fossil fuels will be supplemented and gradually replaced by a range of evolving technologies involving waves, wind, and geothermal energy. Anchorage can be an epicenter for new energy development projects in Alaska.



Statewide and Regional Services

Anchorage has been and will remain a robust statewide hub for healthcare, education, and a range of professional services. Anchorage's base of foundational services is a critical asset for all Alaskans.



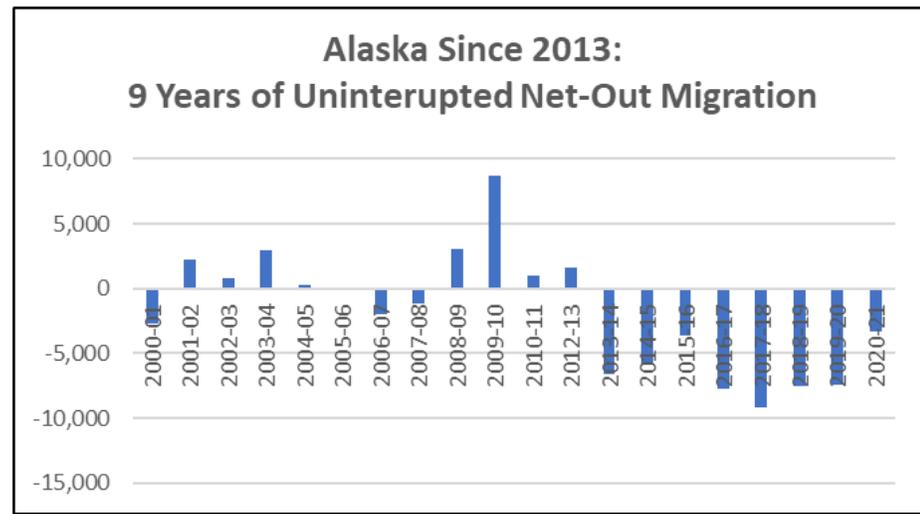
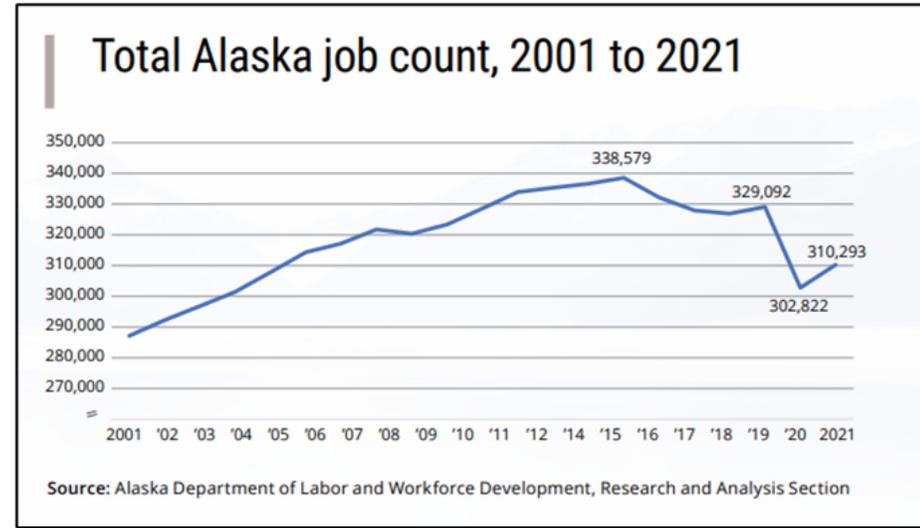
Alternative Construction

With limited housing and expensive, imported construction materials, Anchorage needs a different path. Demonstration projects and construction partnerships with 3D printing firms are options worth pursuing. See Appendix B for a description of a feasibility study to build 3D printed homes in rural Alaska.

SCORP: New Research & Outreach Findings – *Six highlights*

1. Context: Alaska's Current Economy – Sobering Trends

- **Job Loss and Out-Migration** prior to and then accelerating during COVID. 2012-21 was the longest period of negative net migration in AK's history.
- **Slowing Birth Rate** declining since 2015; the 9,445 births 2020- 2021 were the lowest since 1979-80. Young adults are leaving Alaska and having fewer kids. Alaska's population is rapidly aging.
- **Weak Pandemic Recovery.** From 2019 to fall 2022 Alaska ranked 47th among all US states in post pandemic job recovery; Idaho, Utah and Montana, states with similar public lands and outdoor recreation resources, were number 1, 2 and 3.



SCORP: New Research & Outreach Findings

2. Context: Outdoor Recreation – a Needed Solution

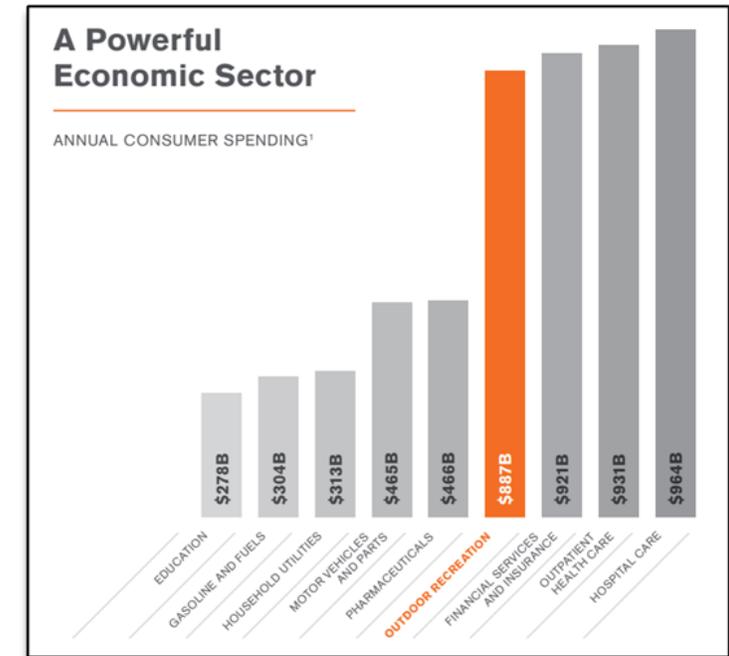
- **The “Sleeping Giant” of the U.S. Economy**

Outdoor recreation is a diverse, often under-appreciated sector, which generated \$887 B in U.S. GNP in 2019.

- **A Growing Sector**

Outdoor recreation was one of only sectors of Alaska’s economy that grew between 2012 and 2017. While the State GDP declined 9%, the outdoor recreation sector grew 19%. Between 2021- 2022, Anchorage airport passenger counts grew 18%, and hotel revenues per room grew 34%.

- **\$250 Million a year!** That’s the increase in annual spending if typical out-of-state visitors had reasons to add One More Day to their Alaska visit. The average stay in New Zealand is 19 days; in Alaska 9 days. Alaska has barely tapped its remarkable outdoor recreation potential.



Economic Impact:

In 2017: \$1.5 B in labor income; \$4.5 B in total economic output
More than \$126 M in state revenues;
\$88 M in municipal revenues



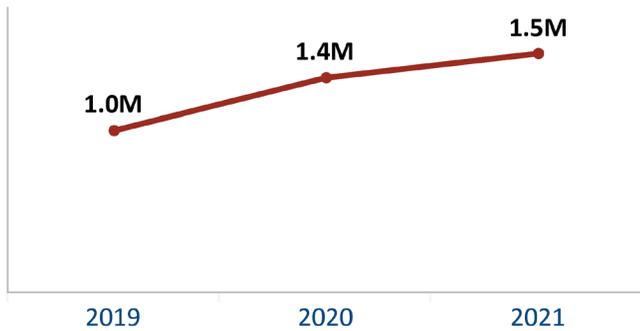
SCORP: New Research & Outreach Findings

3. Alaska outdoor recreational users increased substantially from 2019 to 2021, despite a dramatic drop off in cruise visits. (counts of anonymized mobile phone “device days”)

Alaska Statewide Results

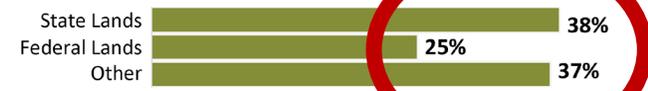
SAMPLE SIZE

DEVICE DAYS BY YEAR



USE BY AGENCY

PERCENT OF DEVICE DAYS



TOP 5 LOCATIONS

BY DEVICE DAYS

- 1 Chugach State Park
- 2 Tongass National Forest, Juneau Ranger District
- 3 Kenai River Special Management Area
- 4 Matanuska Valley
- 5 Palmer Hay Flats

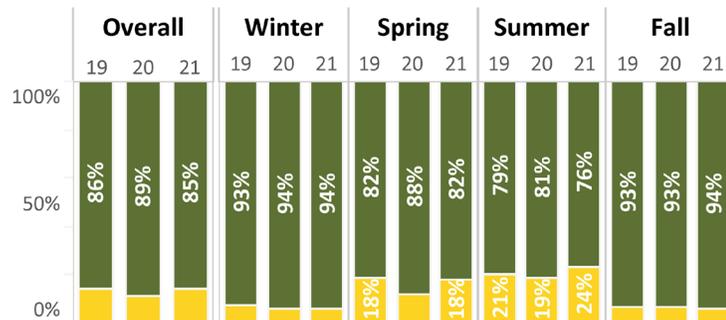
DISTRIBUTION OF USE



VISITOR ORIGINS

PERCENT OF DEVICE DAYS BY SEASON AND YEAR

■ In-State ■ Out-of-State



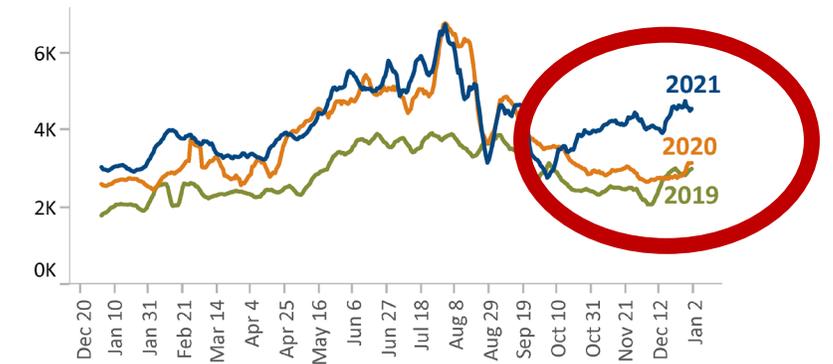
VISITOR ORIGINS

PERCENT OF DEVICE DAYS BY BOROUGH (TOP 5) AND YEAR

	2019	2020	2021
Anchorage Municipality	37%	40%	39%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	13%	13%	12%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	8%	8%	7%
Juneau City and Borough	5%	5%	6%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	4%	4%	4%
Other Alaska	18%	16%	14%
Out of State/International	16%	12%	16%

PATTERNS OF USE

7-DAY MOVING AVERAGE OF DAILY DEVICE COUNTS



SCORP: New Research & Outreach Findings

4. Chugach State Park is among the most heavily used recreation destinations in Alaska, reflecting the growing interest in active outdoor recreation by both residents and visitors.

Chugach State Park

STATE OF ALASKA (DPOR) | STATE PARK

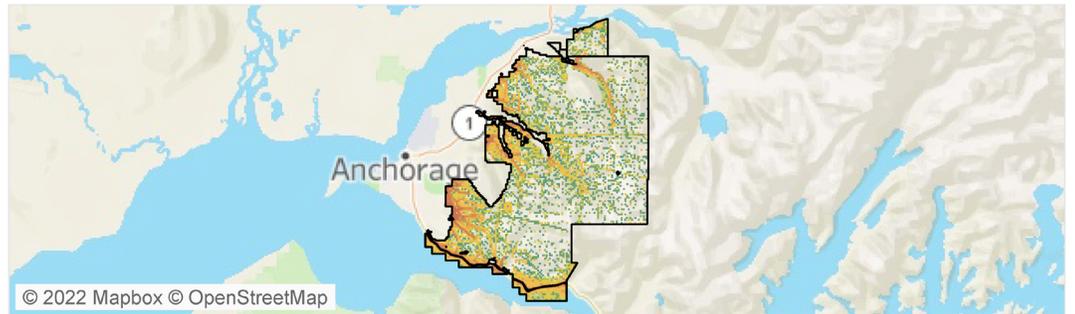
USE

RELATIVE TO STATEWIDE LOCATIONS OF INTEREST



*Use is defined by cluster analysis

DISTRIBUTION OF USE

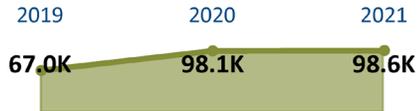


Fewer Devices More Devices

1 grid = .25 x .25 mile area

SAMPLE SIZE

ADJUSTED DEVICE DAYS BY YEAR

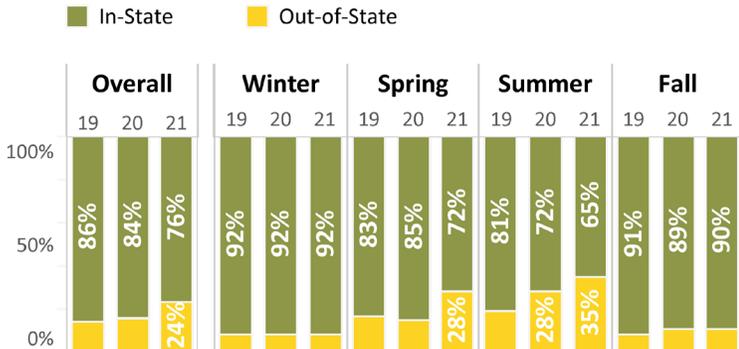


TOP 5 LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1 Glenn Alps Parking
- 2 Eagle River Campground
- 3 Turnagain Arm Trail
- 4 McHugh Trailhead
- 5 Glenn Alps Anchorage Overlook

VISITOR ORIGINS

PERCENT OF DEVICE DAYS BY SEASON AND YEAR



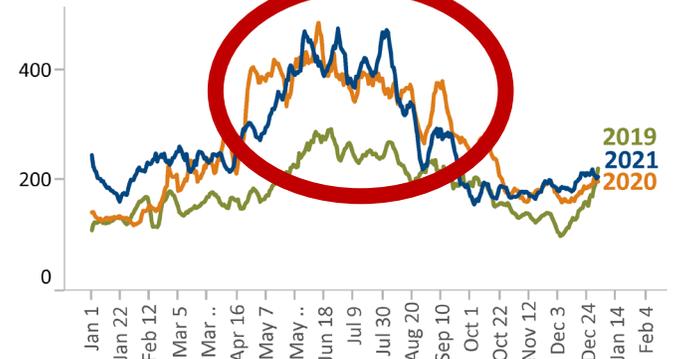
VISITOR ORIGINS

PERCENT OF DEVICE DAYS BY BOROUGH (TOP 5) AND YEAR

	2019	2020	2021
Anchorage Municipality	71%	70%	64%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	7%	7%	6%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	4%	4%	3%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	1%	1%	1%
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	0%	0%	0%
Other Alaska	1%	1%	1%
Out of State/International	16%	18%	25%

PATTERNS OF USE

7-DAY MOVING AVERAGE OF DAILY DEVICE COUNTS



SCORP: New Research & Outreach Findings



5. Despite steady growth in demand, federal outdoor recreation budgets are tight. State budgets are tighter.



<i>Public Park/Forest</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Annual Visitors</i>	<i>Annual Budget & Staff</i>
Chugach State Park	495,000	1-1.5 Million	\$1 M; 8 full time, 1 seasonal
Chugach National Forest	5,400,000	.5 to 1 Million	\$21 M; 110 full time, 100 seasonal
Denali National Park	6,100,000	600,000	\$15 M; 129 full time, 135 seasonal



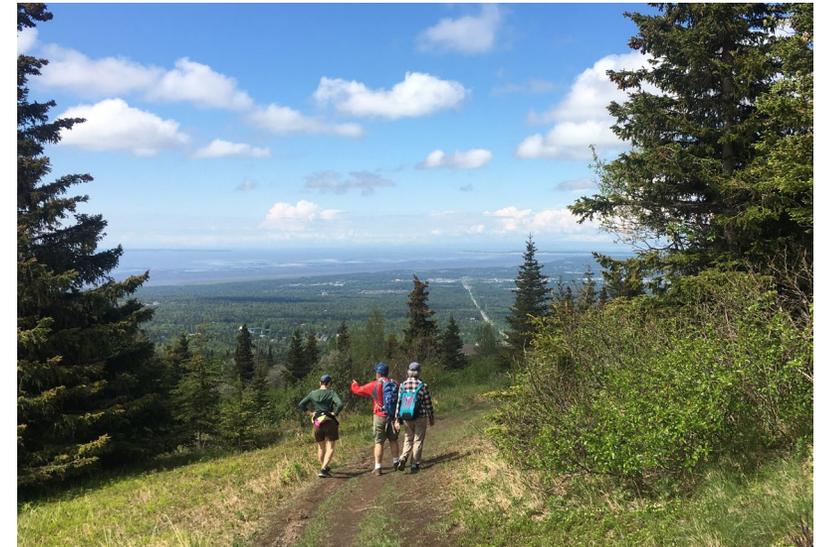
WHY INVEST IN IMPROVED CHUGACH PARK ACCESS, PARKING, TRAILS & TRAILHEADS?

- Build a stronger, more durable Anchorage economy; help reverse our multi-year economic decline.
- Attract and retain residents, businesses, entrepreneurs, young people and retirees.
- Make it easier and more inviting to lead active, healthy lives.
- Grow equity and diversity in outdoor recreation users.
- Guide growth to help sustain what makes Anchorage and Alaska unique.



WHY SUPPORT THE PROPOSED CHUGACH STATE PARK ACCESS SERVICE AREA?

- CSP offers a spectacular, accessible alpine wonder world. Whether we seek it or not, demand will keep growing, by both residents and visitors. And growing use is a good thing.
- The Service Area provides a practical way to support *managed growth* – to do well by upper Hillside residents, residents Muni-wide, Alaska businesses, and Anchorage’s economy.
- The Service Area merely sets up the *possibility* of future bond measures; actual projects and associated funding requires separate, subsequent votes.



***Ending Point:* Anchorage has only just begun to take full advantage of our phenomenal outdoor recreation resources.**



Sunnyside of Flattop/Peak 3 crowds – April 24, 2022

Anchorage has the great good fortune to have Chugach State Park in our backyard.



Now is the time to invest more in planning and management, access and facilities so everyone benefits from this remarkable public resource.