Beach Lake Regional Park Master Plan

July 12, 2011
Municipality of Anchorage Assembly
Adopting Ordinance No. AO 2011-70
Acknowledgements

A special thank you to the many interested community members who attended public meetings and provided email input to the planning, and to the following individuals for their support and assistance with this planning effort:

Parks & Recreation Staff
John Rodda, Director
Val Barkley, Manager

Parks Board of Supervisors
Jessica Coltrane and Janet Brand

Alaska Dept. Fish & Game
Area Management Biologist
Dan Bosch

Citizens Advisory Group
Chugiak Dog Mushers Association - Alan Peck, alternate Val Jokela
Chugiak Junior Dog Mushers - Tilly Cantor (with support from Susan Cantor)
Eagle River Nordic Ski Club - Bob Stehn, and Kinsey Loan
Chugiak High School - Juyle Neel, Activities Principal

Birchwood ABC Elementary School - Dan Reed, Principal
Fishing/Canoeing - Scott Bailey
Biking - Bob Voris and Steven Kruse
Walking / Hiking - Doug Gibson
Equestrian - Diane Sullivan, alternate Kayleen Johnson
At Large - Jill Flanders-Crosby, Jim Yergan, Peter Risse, and Jim Arnesen, Eklutna Inc.
# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1. Background & Planning Process / page 1
- Document Intent & Organization
- Park History & Community Context
- Planning Process & Community Involvement
- Regional Recreational Needs Demand Analysis

## Chapter 2. Existing Conditions / page 13
- Natural Environment
- Access, Utilities & Infrastructure
- Land Use Context
- User Groups
- Key Concerns & Opportunities

## Chapter 3. General Management Plan / page 29
- Applicable Policies, Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan
- Vision Statement for Beach Lake Park 2010 - 2030
- Management Intent & Resource Protection Standards

## Chapter 4. Conceptual Development Plan / page 33
- Park Concept Plan
- Project Priorities & Development Phasing

*Appendix A - Memo: Gravel Extraction Considerations within Beach Lake Park*
Beach Lake is located in the Chugiak area off South Birchwood Loop Road. The municipal park consists of 1,750 acres including 145 acres dedicated under AO 2006-182(S), referred to as the NW¼ Section 25. It is bounded on the north by Cook Inlet / Knik Arm, and on the west by the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson military facility. East and south of the park are private lands and neighborhoods.
Chapter 1. Background & Planning Process

Document Intent and Organization
This document replaces the 1973 Beach Lake Regional Park Master Plan to address both current and future anticipated community recreational needs.

The Master Plan is intended to guide future recreational use, infrastructure development, and the protection of existing natural resources for the park, including the NW ¼ of Section 25. The Master Plan is organized into four chapters:

Chapter 1 - The initial chapter orients readers and provides general background and history pertinent to the plan. It then describes the planning process, summarizes extensive public input and community involvement, and highlights regional population growth and recreational demand considerations.

Chapter 2 - The second chapter generally summarizes the park’s existing conditions, including its natural environment, infrastructure, and community context. It identifies existing park users and user groups, and describes existing concerns and opportunities identified through the planning process.

Chapter 3 - Foundational policies, management intent, and resource protection standards are outlined as a basis for protecting what is special about Beach Lake Park, and also allowing the ongoing physical and access improvements that population growth may demand.

Chapter 4 - A conceptual development plan identifies future park uses and development parameters. The plan integrates findings from previous chapters such as existing conditions, population growth and demand needs, and balances diverse public input. The plan also describes priorities, costs, and development phasing.

Park History & Community Context
Beach Lake Park is located north of Eagle River, in the Chugiak area off South Birchwood Loop Road. The park consists of 1,750 acres including 145 acres annexed in 2007, referred to as the NW1/4 of Section 25.

“The park should mirror the uniqueness of where we live, and honor our sense of moving here for a reason. It should provide trails and recreation even as the population grows—without compromising the rural qualities, wilderness, and beauty of the park.”

~ Citizens Advisory Group Member
Beach Lake Park serves a regional population of around 35,000 residents settled in a linear pattern between the Chugach Mountain foothills and Cook Inlet. Settlement patterns are further concentrated due to large tracts of public land in the area, including Chugach State Park and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Figure 1 and the photo above both help illustrate the park’s location and regional context.

Beach Lake Park constitutes a large percentage of the municipal parkland set aside to serve a growing regional population. Only forty percent of developable lands in Chugiak-Eagle River (C-ER) are currently supporting settlement. Given the potential for doubling of the residential population base, the park is clearly a major asset, both in terms of preserving natural, scenic open space, but also as a land base for recreational activities.

As a municipal park, Beach Lake Park is managed within Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation (ER-C Parks) under its mission:

“To enhance the quality of life for our growing community of approximately 35,000 residents by developing and maintaining our parks, trails, and facilities.”

Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation operates as a Service Area overseen by a Parks & Recreation Board of Supervisors consisting of five Community Council representatives and one mayoral appointment. The Service Area is not dependent or draw on the Municipality’s general fund. Rather, residents of the Service Area have voted to fund the Division with a one-half (.5) mil levy for maintenance and operations and a one-half (.5) mil levy for major maintenance and capital improvements only to be used within the Service Area.
The ER-C Parks & Recreation Division and Parks Board of Supervisors have long desired to update the original Beach Lake Park master plan, which dates back to 1973. The community has grown significantly over the decades, and the old plan does not reflect the reality of the day. Infrastructure that was originally planned has never been developed (roads, campgrounds, downhill ski area, community park, picnic and swimming area, etc.) and other facilities not in the plan have been constructed (Barrier Free facilities, Musher’s Clubhouse, Ski Chalet, etc.).

Even more importantly, uses designated in the 1973 plan, such as camping and cross country snowmobiling are now highly incompatible with existing uses, and in fact all motorized recreation (snowmobile, ATV, 4x4) have been illegal in Beach Lake Park for some time under Municipality of Anchorage park regulations.

“The 1973 park plan is outdated and fails to represent the existing use and development needs of the park. It fails to reflect Beach Lake Park’s unique niche in the community.”

~ Public Input

Without a functional master plan to guide Beach Lake Park, the community has addressed development decisions on an individual basis, and also has relied on other documents to provide direction, including the 1984 Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna Parks, Greenbelts, and Trails Plan; the 1997 Areawide Trials Plan; and the 2006 Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan.

Although a new master plan has been long desired, updating the master plan is of the essence for several reasons. In 2007 new parkland was included into Beach Lake Park, including 145 acres in the NW1/4 of Section 25 in 2007. Besides considering the “new” parkland as it fits into the park, this acreage also comes with long-standing subsurface gravel extraction rights now owned by the Alaska Department of Transportation. Many interests hope that this update can provide a clearer understanding of Beach Lake Park as a whole, and articulate community desires for future recreational and natural values associated with the parkland to consider as extraction moves forward.

A final reason to initiate a master plan update is that Beach Lake Park constitutes approximately 70% of Chugiak-Eagle River’s municipal parkland. Planning is needed to help consider how this regional park can...
serve a growing population’s recreational needs into the future. A 2001 Draft NW1/4 Section 25 Use Study, called for the new land addition to Beach Lake Park, and further recommended that:

“A park master plan should review the future needs of recreational user groups for the Regional Park, and coordinate, balance and preserve recreational uses through policy statements and location and design of facilities.”

Given all of these factors, Eagle River/Chugiak’s Parks & Recreation determined that “prior to proceeding with any new development within Beach Lake Regional Park a master plan update must be conducted to determine appropriate uses with greater specificity than is provided by previous studies.”

Primary users of today’s Beach Lake Park are Nordic skiers and dog mushers who maintain extensive trail systems in the park with volunteer enthusiasm. Barrier Free Recreation provides a wilderness lodge and two small cabins at Beach Lake, and numerous community members recreate informally throughout the park in both winter and summer engaging in dog walking, hiking, biking, fishing, boating, horse-back riding and wildlife viewing.

Beach Lake Park is a well-loved community asset, contributing to the region’s quality of life and supporting important recreation, open space, and habitat values. This planning effort seeks to honor the unique values present in the park by providing management, development, and investment guidance that can serve population growth needs and yet protect community values into the future.

**Planning Process & Community Involvement**

To develop this plan Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation hired the consulting firm Land Design North, with support from Agnew::Beck and HDR Alaska.

The planning process has integrated a strong public involvement component, including Community Council presentations; public meetings; a Beach Lake Park Master Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, and ongoing input and involvement by park users, community members, and neighbors.

The planning team worked hard to deliver a revised plan that—although not fully a consensus document—builds on broad input from residents of all community councils, and by all current park user groups. This plan, after some refinements and a final public process, was formally adopted by the Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation Board of Supervisors. It is now being forwarded to the Anchorage Planning & Zoning Commission, and the Anchorage Assembly to guide future park use and investments.

The community involvement program for this master plan kicked off in Spring 2009 with members of the planning team attending all six Chugiak-Eagle River Community Councils to inform community members of the initiation of the planning process and ask for preliminary information and feedback on park uses, suggestions for stakeholders to contact, and to understand the level of involvement desired by each community council.

By Autumn 2009 the planning effort had gained momentum. Stakeholder interviews had been conducted and a Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) was developed representing park users, nearby landowners, and at-large community members.
Citizen Advisory Group meetings were held at regular intervals along with workshops open to all community members to obtain input and direction throughout the planning process. Meetings were publicized through a variety of methods. Announcements were placed in the community bulletins of the local newspapers, the Alaska Star, the Frontiersmen, and the Anchorage Daily News; flyers were distributed to various community groups; the project website was kept up to date; and regular updates announcing plan related public participation opportunities were sent to an e-mail list of 102 contacts including community councils, chamber of commerce, public officials, and representatives of recreational activity groups.

The Alaska Star covered the planning process quite extensively, publishing five articles about the Beach Lake Regional Park Master Plan Update beginning in November 2009 through February 2010.

The table right summarizes the public engagement process to prepare the Beach Lake Regional Park Master Plan Update and its formal municipal approval process. A high level of interest of community members in the planning process and the dedication of a cadre of park enthusiasts truly shaped the Plan and is a testament to the quality and commitment of the C/ER community.

Eighteen members of a Citizens’ Advisory Committee represented broad community interests in considering future park opportunities, needs and values.
Regional Recreation Demands

In tandem with this planning effort, there has been both analysis and community dialogue regarding the entire C-ER region’s recreational needs and projected population growth. This discussion has been important to Beach Lake Park planning for two reasons.

First, the regional park constitutes a large percentage of municipal parkland that will be expected to serve an increasingly populated residential base in the future. The park is also directly adjacent to private vacant lands which are expected to house upward of 1,500 new homes which will impact recreational use patterns and demands within the park.

The second reason to discuss regional recreational demands alongside Beach Lake Park’s future has to do with community capacity and resources. C-ER levies special assessments for public services associated with both parks and roads. Master planning for future facilities and access at Beach Lake Park therefore must consider local capacity issues to ensure that the plan is “affordable,” and that the voting local tax base will support funding for the specific projects and needs identified within the master plan. Some of the key considerations discussed during this process include:

- What can our community afford to build and maintain into the future?
- What recreation opportunities are already provided elsewhere in the community, which we would be better served to not duplicate at Beach Lake Park?
- What unique recreation opportunities does Beach Lake Park provide that should be especially maintained and supported at that park?

Demographics trends: The 2006 C-ER Comprehensive Plan provides regional population projections that were used as a basis for discussion:

- The 2010 projected population for the region is 38,168, which is anticipated to expand to 52,695 by 2025.
- In 2005, 60% of the total land area in C-ER was vacant. A computer analysis of vacant land suitability indicates there are 7,781 acres of suitable land, 10,947 acres of marginally suitable land, and 6,889 acres of land unsuitable for development in the C-ER region.
- Bordering Beach Lake Park to the south is Eklutna’s future Powder Reserve Development with an approved master plan allowing 1,500 new homes. Development timelines will essentially depend on market forces. Bordering the park to the east is another large Eklutna parcel, which could also

“I am very concerned about population growth in the vicinity of the park, and the need for this plan to consider the future. At a community-wide planning level we need to look at all our parks, resources and needs.”

~ Citizens Advisory Group Member

- With increasing land densities, what balance of preserved, natural open space, and recreational facilities will be needed in the future?

In support of considering these issues, a generalized demand analysis was completed to include general study of community demographics, existing facilities, and public “needs and wants,” followed by discussion at CAG and public meetings. An overview of the findings and issues are presented following.

A master plan has been adopted for a residential development due south of the park with 1,500 homes.
support residential development. Road access for this development would be via Beach Lake Road, and eventually utilize a grade separated railroad crossing. For both of these large acreage development sites, it was discussed at the CAG level that internal parks, trails and open space will be needed in addition to (and not instead of) connections to Beach Lake Park.

**Existing Facilities Inventory:** The Planning team gathered existing data at a generalized level regarding areawide open space and recreational facilities. The table on page 8 lists the range of opportunities, and the parks where these activities are currently supported. Note that areawide schools' facilities, and state parks are included in this inventory.

“A community-wide planning effort needs to look at all our parks, resources and needs – just like Anchorage Bowl did parks plan a few years ago.”

~ Public Input

“C-ER has a good mix of recreation opportunities, especially if you count everything — schools, state parks, and private resources.”

~ Public Input

**Figure 2. Community Parks Context Map**
## CHUGIHA-EAGLE RIVER
### Existing Community Recreational Facilities

**Produced for the Beach Lake Master Plan**  
**4-12-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SCHOOLS</strong></th>
<th><strong>CHUGAHA-EAGLE RIVER</strong></th>
<th><strong>PRODUCED FOR THE BEACH LAKE MASTER PLAN</strong></th>
<th><strong>4-12-2010</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PLAY AREA**
- MULTIPLE USE PAVED
- MOUNTAIN BIKE/SINGLE TRACK
- DOG MUSHING
- GREENBELT
- SKIING
- NORDIC SKIING (GROOMED)
- EQUESTRIAN
- HIKING / NATURE WALK
- CASUAL (DOG WALKING/FAMILY USE)
- MOTORIZED USE
- NATURAL SETTING/GREEN SPACE
- LAKES WITH DOCKS
- FISHING
- SWIM BEACHES
- BOATING (CANOE, HABT, ETC)
- CHALET / CLUBHOUSE / EVENT FACILITY
- PAVILION / PICNIC SHELTER
- DAY USE AREA / PICNIC / BENCHES
- SLEDDING
- ICE SKATING OUTDOORS
- BACK-COUNTRY SKI-SNOWBOARD
- MULTI-USE PLAY FIELDS
- BERRY PICKING
- CABINS
- CAMPGROUND
- FITNESS COURSE
- HORSESHOE PIT
- SAND VOLLEYBALL
- OUTDOOR BASKETBALL
- HANG-GLIDER LAUNCH
- HANG-GLIDER LANDING
- BOCCE BALL
- POCKET PARK
- AMPLITHEATER
- BLEACHER SEATING
- EVENT BOOTH & AMENITIES
- CONSESSIONS
- RUNNING TRACK
- ARCHERY / BAYLION / SHOOTING
- SOCCER
- RUGBY
- FOOTBALL
- GOLF
- OUTDOOR HOCKEY RINK
- SOFTBALL
- LITTLE LEAGUE
- BASEBALL
- MOTOCROSS
- EQUESTRIAN TRAINING AREA
- DISC GOLF
- TENNIS COURTS
- COMMUNITY CENTER / MTS SPACE
- GYMNASIUM - BASKETBALL
- SWIMMING POOL
- HOCKEY RINK
- RUNNING TRACK
- ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD
- PUBLIC RENTAL CABIN
**Public Needs and Wants:** During this planning effort community members were asked to respond with input on how Beach Lake Park fits into the spectrum of C-ER’s regional recreational wants and needs. During this discussion a few individuals voiced interest in a range of new uses at Beach Lake Park: single track bike use, winter biking, golf, disc golf, cemetery, biathlon, archery, skijoring, ultimate frisbee, open play fields, dog training/retrieval, snowmachine, etc.

At the same time, however, the overwhelming message heard was a strong community appreciation for the existing park uses and attributes, and a desire to protect these uses while adding some complimentary public enhancements, particularly in the vicinity of Beach Lake.

More specifically, Beach Lake Park’s mushing trails allow longer distance training and safe youth participation, both of which are severely challenged elsewhere within the greater Anchorage-to-Wasilla area. Mushing is Alaska’s State sport, and this park provides a unique venue within proximity to major population centers. It hosts events that attract regional participants and during the Iditarod, visitors from around the world can be found stopping in the park “to see real mushing” and to exercise dogs prior to running the Iditarod. Moreover, because of mushing speeds (20 MPH+/-) and “dog team unpredictability,” mushing trails cannot be safely shared with other users during the season (August - April). Outside of the season, a broad range of users can take advantage of the mushing trails, except in extremely wet areas.

Another common theme heard regarding “Beach Lake Park’s special niche” is that Nordic ski activities focused in southern Beach Lake Park provide “the only place” in C-ER where residents can access an extensive, well-developed network of groomed, maintained, and lit cross country ski trails. These trails and the Chalet physically integrate with, and complement Chugiak High School’s facilities, particularly for cross country ski and running training and race events. Because of the extensive grooming and high levels of use, ski trails must be exclusive use in the winter. During the rest of the year, a wide range of trail users can compatibly share these trails (equestrian, dog walking, mountain biking, hiking, cross country running).

A final common theme heard was residents’ appreciation of the abundant opportunities that Beach Lake Park, and other large acreage sites in the region provide for enjoying nature, outdoor exercise, wildlife viewing, and accessing water and scenery—from the Cook Inlet mudflats, to Beach Lake, up to the Chugach Mountain peaks. As a number of residents voiced, it
is easy to “carve” up bigger parks into various sports activity and development zones, and over time lose the special character and environmental value of a park as a whole. Individuals from different user and age groups, and living in different parts of C-ER expressed a strong desire to find compatible ways of ensuring broader community access and enjoyment of this parkland into the future, while still protecting the natural and scenic character of the overall park.

Since these major themes flowed from public input gathered through the master planning process—which tended to self-select for individuals who mush, Nordic ski, and/or live near the park and generally appreciate the park “as it is”—additional sources of data from the region were also reviewed as a basis for considering future public desires and needs.

One statistically valid source of data, is the 2006 Dittman Survey commissioned by the Consortium of C-ER Community Councils. This survey of regional households asked a few questions relevant to parks and quality of life issues. Findings include:

- Four out of five Chugiak/Eagle River residents (80%) reported current satisfaction with parks in the area.
- In an open question, 8% of residents volunteered statements that the reason they choose to live in the region relates to the areas “Beauty, Parks.”
- For most regional residents, the primary attraction of the Chugiak/Eagle River area is related to its “non-urban”, “small-town” characteristics.

The only other source that considers the region’s recreational demand needs as a whole is the 2001 NW1/4 Section 25 Land Use Study. This plan is almost ten years old and was never formally adopted, but did look broadly at the best use of vacant municipal lands, and considered a range of recreational issues and needs.

The study findings pointed to the Birchwood area as needing future community park space, located within a maximum three mile radius of the additional population, which could add “another 11,000 to 14,000 persons at build out” to the area. Additionally, the study identifies a portion of the NW 1/4 as a needed school site, and identifies a new road connection between Powder Reserve neighborhoods and Chugiak High School across the NW1/4, which would bi-sect the park. In the end, because of underserved recreational needs in Birchwood, the study recommended that Heritage Land Bank lands in Section 25—which were being considered for a range of uses, including residential development—were important to dedicate as additional parkland.

The study also projected that by 2020 the Birchwood area would need 2 new soccer fields, 2 full sized baseball fields, 2 recreational soccer fields, 4 outdoor ice rinks, and a new 5-acre parking lot area, and assumed that some or all of these facilities may be developed in the new parkland, or even within Beach Lake Park.

The study, was built on certain trends and information which are not currently valid. Issues with the study assumptions include:

- The Powder Ridge reserve development timeline is pushed out by a decade or more because of slower economic demand for new residential.
- Area schools currently play an important role in the Birchwood area in helping fill community park needs, especially for developed facilities like playgrounds and play fields, and are well integrated with Beach Lake Park via an underground pedestrian connector. Specific to athletic fields, Chugiak High School now has an artificial turf field which greatly expands the season and activities accommodated there.
- The Anchorage School District has declined use of the school site within the NW1/4 section, based on current projected student demand, including with the projected Powder Ridge Development.
- Over the last decade, the C/ER Parks Division has been reconfigured to integrate the Parks Board of Supervisors. This board decidedly favors an approach to developing parks that emphasizes building only that what can be maintained, and focusing similar types of recreational fields all in one location for programmatic benefits and maintenance cost savings. Furthermore, we heard from residents during the public process that because a majority of the region’s housing is suburban and/or large lot, many families have and use back yards for “close to home” casual play. Moreover, families live a commuting lifestyle. Thus, driving to recreational facilities more than three miles from home is an acceptable model. All of these trends run counter to past assumptions in the 1985 Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan, Volume II: Chugiak-Eagle River-Eklutna, that every resident needs a complete menu of recreation facilities close to home.
- The Anchorage Bowl Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan update in 2006, recognizes a community preference for outdoor non-organized activities like hiking, biking, trail use, picnics, and wildlife watching, at rates well above the national average, and participation in sports with specialized field requirements at slightly lower rates.
The adopted 2006 Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan generally outlines a framework of the overall recreational and open space system desired by the broader community on a regional basis. Its goals, although very general in nature, are important to consider in making decisions for Beach Lake Park:

a) Establish an integrated open space and greenways network which effectively links parks, recreational facilities, schools, residential and commercial areas, and which includes ecologically valuable open space lands and scenic vistas.

b) Establish a system of parks, from the neighborhood to the regional level, to serve all segments of the community.

c) Provide a wide range of recreational opportunities to all segments of the community.

“Encounters with loose dogs on mushing trails create havoc in a dog team. When sleds suddenly slow or swerve, the long ropes holding the team together tangle, and dogs/people can be injured. If the musher is knocked off-balance, or the snow hook pulls out while the musher walks up front to straighten the team, the entire team may take off down the trail with no driver – a sure recipe for disaster.”

~ Public Input

“Skijoring just does not fit at Beach Lake Park. It belongs at Edmonds and Eklutna Lake.”

~ Public Input
Figure 3. Natural Conditions Map

Sources: Draft NW1/4 Section 25 Land Use Study, 2001
MOA Planning Department (pages 33, 60, and 65).
Chapter 2. Existing Conditions

This chapter describes Beach Lake Park’s natural character, infrastructure, settlement context, and existing park users. The information presented is fairly generalized, and provides detail appropriate for master plan decision making. The data may be inadequate for considering specific site issues both because of the large park size (1,750 acres) and the lack of highly detailed data available for use in this study.

Natural Environment

OVERVIEW

Major natural existing features within Beach Lake Park include a significant percentage of wetlands which limit summer time access, subsurface ice lenses, large and small lake systems, and lower Fire Creek, which is an anadromous fish stream supporting salmon.

The park landform bears testament to the once-massive Knik glacier, which shaped the topography of the region. The retreat of the Knik glacier left behind rolling moraine hills, drumlins, and kettle depressions, generally oriented in a northeast-southwest direction, mirroring the glacial migration (Schmoll et al. 1999).

“Past site specific studies within Beach Lake Park and NW1/4 Section 25 have recognized the hydrological complexity of major drainageways, stream features, wetlands and groundwater.”

~ Birchwood Community Council

The park’s generally cool climate is often several degrees colder in Fahrenheit than in nearby Anchorage, but is partially moderated by the maritime influence of the Knik Arm of Cook Inlet, which borders on the north. There is poor drainage and relatively abundant surface water formed wetlands in the lowest-lying areas of Beach Lake Park (USDA-NRCS 2001).

WETLANDS

Wetlands are present in over half (52%) of the park area (USDA-NRCS 2001). The wetlands in the park are classified as A and C type wetlands according to the Municipality of Anchorage Planning Department (1996) classifications. Type A wetlands, formerly Preservation Wetlands, have the highest wetland resource values. They perform at least two, and typically more, significant wetland functions. “A” wetlands are considered most valuable in an undisturbed state. Any activity that includes placement of fill in “A” wetlands requires an Individual Section 404 Permit.
from the Corps of Engineers prior to development. These wetlands are found in the Fire Creek drainage, and northeast of Beach Lake and Dee Lake. Note that Heritage Land Bank (HLB) lands currently managed as park (see Figure 4) and containing wetlands would probably require compensatory mitigation for impacts associated with proposed park-related development. HLB would expect to be compensated for any compensatory mitigation it contributes to these improvement projects.

Type C wetlands are found in the lower-lying areas in the southeast portion of the park. According to the Municipality of Anchorage planning classifications “C” sites are intended to be permitted for development. Given the predominance of wetlands in the park, access to and use of much of its acreage is only feasible in the winter when the ground is frozen. In the northern portion of the park, there are many dog sled mushing trails built through the Type A wetlands. These trails are generally very wet in the snow-free months and are largely impassable unless frozen. Some of the trails have been graded to improve drainage, have been infilled with gravel, or have simple bridges constructed to aid passage. The dog sled drivers largely avoid the wettest sections of trails in the snow-free months. Dog sled mushers use off-road vehicles instead of sleds when there is insufficient snow cover and, therefore, trails are denuded of vegetation. In the wettest areas, the trails become very muddy and puddles form in some places. The Chugiak Dog Mushers expressed a desire to improve these sections of trail to enhance summer connectivity of the usable trails.

The portion of Beach Lake Park southeast of the railroad alignment has 15 km (9 mi) of non-motorized multi-use trails, the majority of which are built on forested uplands, but they do cross some Type C wetlands (developable wetlands). In the snowy months, these trails are groomed for ski use only. All other uses are prohibited in order to protect the quality of the grooming. This trail system is limited in area by the railroad corridor, effectively eliminating conflict with the dog sled mushing trails to the north.

**SOILS & SUBSURFACE**

A soil survey was conducted in the park and surrounding areas in 2006. Over half of the soils found in the park are the Deception-Estelle-Kichatna complex with 0 to 20% slopes on undulating and hilly areas. These soils are usually found on hill slopes and till or outwash plains and are composed of coarse-silty loess over gravelly till and outwash.

The soils in the low-lying areas along Fire Creek and southeast of Dee and Beach Lakes are poorly drained to very poorly drained, meaning that water is removed so slowly that the soil is saturated during much of the growing season. These soils have the slowest infiltration rate and the highest runoff potential. These conditions are primarily a reflection of the high water table present in the low-lying areas of the park. There is no restrictive soil layer present, as the parent material is primarily glacial till and gravelly outwash. When denuded of vegetation, the risk of soil erosion by wind is high in over 50% of the soils in the park, almost all of which are wetland/hydric soils. The wetter, lowland soils are also the most acidic and corrosive to steel and concrete. All of the soils in the park have limited capacity for septic drainage fields due to slow percolation and shallow water table.

Related to parkwide soils, ground failure risk during earthquakes is low to moderate throughout the park, with moderate risk present in the wetlands surrounding Dee Lake and the large wetland southeast of Beach Lake (USDA-NRCS 2001).

Ice lenses are known to exist within the park subsurface. The presence of ice lenses cannot be reliably detected by surface features, and when evaluating sites for development, a subsurface investigation is warranted and accommodations in engineering need to be put in place to minimize risks associated with melting ground ice. Related to this issue, the Alaska Railroad’s diagonal traverse of the park curves to avoid a sizable ice lens. In 2002, a railroad engineering study to realign “Curve 133” discovered the 30 foot ice lens buried under 30 feet of gravel. After determining that winter removal of the ice lens would be required for track stability, the design was shelved because of high associated construction costs.
Beach Lake Regional Park Master Plan

In terms of posing site constraints, the upland soils in the park (Deception-Estelle-Kichatna complex and Kishwitna-Kichatna complex soils) are those best suited for future development of structures, roads, trails, and septic systems. In the low-lying areas, the soils (Doroshin Peat, Ischnuun Peat, and Jacobsen-Doroshin complex) tend to be very wet, making them less suitable for development of any kind. These soils are generally wetlands.

Trails that cross these lowland soils may experience ponding, flooding, and erosion in the frost-free months. Special planning is required to avoid compaction of the wet, organic soils and subsequent disturbances of surface hydrology.

Based on soils, type of trail use in each area should be largely governed by the drainage, soil type, and the ability of an area to retain vegetation. The trails in the northern portion of the park used in summer for dog sledding are denuded of vegetation. While this causes muddy, slippery, and wet conditions, dog sledding is not limited by these conditions.

The multi-use trails in the southern portion of the park have moderately- to well-drained soils and see less use in the summer than in the winter. These trails remain vegetated, which effectively increases surface drainage and prevents the trails from becoming muddy. Trail use should be limited when the soil is disturbed after major construction or maintenance events until vegetation is fully reestablished. Horses and bikes can cause pitting and rutting on disturbed soils and these uses should be restricted to well-vegetated and well-drained soils.

The potential for frost action is high in soils that have high organic matter content and shallow depth to the water table. This includes all the low-lying areas in the park. The remaining soil types pose a moderate risk of frost action. Because the entire park area has moderate and high potential of frost action, any development planning needs to take this condition into consideration to avoid damage to pavements and other rigid structures from frost heave and loss of soil strength during thawing.

Although many of the park soils are constrained, gravelly till and outwash soils are present, particularly in the higher park elevations located in the southern portion of the park, in the NW1/4 of Section 25. However, a legal subsurface right to gravel extraction within this area exists, which may be removed from the park over the life of this plan.

Subsurface gravel mining rights pre-date the park, which were originally lands conveyed to the Greater Anchorage Area Borough in 1968 with an unused Alaska Railroad patent for a “Free Use Gravel Permit” (BLM serial #A-026213). Subsequently, this subsurface gravel estate was transferred to the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (ADL Serial #33019). Figure 3 shows the gravel permit area, including identified “known” and “planned” extraction areas, and a specified 330’ buffer with existing residential neighborhoods.

Active proposals have been brought forward to mine the gravel three times (1976, 1977, and 2007), but as yet no approval has been granted for the gravel material extraction from the Municipality’s Planning and Zoning Commission. Although addressing the gravel extraction is not within the planning scope of this report, potential extraction impacts were voiced as major local concerns during planning and public involvement. Residents living in the area requested during this planning process that prior to submittal of a new Conditional Use application that the “risk of altered groundwater levels and possible impacts to downgradient wetlands and Fire Creek due to gravel extraction and surface drainage should also be more thoroughly understood.”

SLOPE

Overall, the park land slopes toward the Knik Arm with elevations that vary as much as 55 m (340 ft, 104 m). The highest point (380 ft, 116 m) is in the southernmost portion of the park, in the area known as the NW ¼ Sec 25. Slopes in the park are generally

Beach area soils are particularly susceptible to erosion, and disturbance of vegetation.
less than 15% with areas of steeper slopes found along Fire Creek, the coastal bluffs, and on the northeast side of many knolls, a relict feature of glaciation.

The steepest slopes in the park limit travel, especially into and out of the Fire Creek floodplain. Roads, trails, and other infrastructure development are constrained by the erodability of the steepest slopes, but also by the hydrology in the lowest and flattest areas.

Site development plans within the park need to take into account any environmental constraints associated with slope, in combination with wet conditions. Those areas of <7% slope are best suited for development of facilities, wells, septic systems, playgrounds, sports fields, recreational trails, and roads. Moderate constraints for development are present in slopes from 7 to 20 percent. In the flattest areas, such as in a developable wetland (Type C) near the eastern park boundary between Hillcrest and Pioneer Drives, and in the poorly drained, black spruce woodland along the toe of the southeast ridge, moderate constraints for development are present due to poor site drainage.

Unique site elevation features are candidates for conservation or certain appropriate uses. Mature birch forest covers the southeast ridge and hill slope, and is an attractive park setting for trails and other recreational uses. The shoulder of the southeast ridge affords scenic views of the park to the north and northwest. On the steep north facing portion of the hill, strong concern has been voiced about erosion and soil stability problems, and visible scarring associated with potential trails and multiple switchbacks.

**HYDROLOGY**

The major stream in Beach Lake Park is Fire Creek. It originates at Lower Fire Lake, crosses the Glenn Highway and then flows northeast through an extensive wetland that parallels Alaska Railroad reserve land. Near where the creek exits the park, it veers north and then empties into Knik Arm. Three lakes are located within the park, Beach Lake, Dee Lake, and Psalm Lake (within a private inholding).

The water table is within 35 cm (~1 foot) of the ground surface in just over 20% of the park area, which includes the low-lying areas. The uplands, or those areas at a slightly higher elevation, have a water table deeper than 200 cm (~6 feet), which encompasses over 60% of the park area. The remaining land (approximately 20%) is either a water body or land with water table between 35 and 200 cm deep (USDA-NRCS 2001).

The area in the NW ¼ Sec 25 is hilly in the northwestern portion. A large glacial outwash plain begins at the west end of Pioneer Drive and extends southwest to the Alaska Railroad ROW.

A shallow aquifer in an abandoned channel was identified in a hydrogeological evaluation (Munter 2007) and includes the gravel extraction site. The 1,000-ft-wide aquifer encompasses the area of the glacial outwash plain. The steep slopes in the
southeastern portion shade much of the outwash plain, creating a cool microclimate. Seasonal drainages enter the channel area from surrounding areas, but there is no well-defined surface water drainage flowing in the outwash plain. According to Munter (2007), “the depth to water in the abandoned channel aquifer varies from about 3 feet near its edge to approximately 15 feet in the central area of the proposed extraction area, to approximately 35 feet on the western edge of the site.” Evidence of a seasonally fluctuating water table was evident in the clean gravels removed from test pits.

VEGETATION

No known rare or endangered plant species have been identified or recorded as existing inside the park boundaries. The upland areas are mostly mixed birch and spruce forests, many of which are mature forests. Clearing the vegetation along ridges could create a high risk of erosion from seasonal runoff. The understory in the mixed forests includes grasses, devil’s club, ferns, willows, high-bush cranberry, and various low-growing herbaceous plants. Low-lying, wet areas tend to have dense spruce forests and mossy understory.

Low-lying areas with good drainage have dense, mixed forest with moss and low-growing herbaceous plants. The open, saturated wetlands are vegetated with moss, sedges and other plants common to wetlands, with sparse birch growing on mounds. The beach at Knik Arm is mostly sedges with some low shrubs.

The wettest areas in the park require the greatest planning for any kind of development. The beach area is especially susceptible to damage of vegetation.

FISH & WILDLIFE

The area provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife on the diverse terrain. The park provides habitat for moose, bears (both black and brown), wolves, wolverine, lynx, and many species of small game including mink, weasel, marten, fox, eagle, beaver, porcupine, squirrels, hares, frogs, ptarmigan, various waterfowl, and an occasional tundra swan (MOA 2007). Moose calving is frequently observed and game trails are found extensively throughout the park.

Fire Creek is included in the anadromous stream catalog of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Fire Creek hosts Coho salmon for spawning and rearing, and King salmon for spawning.
Until recently, Beach Lake was stocked with fish, including rainbow trout, grayling, and land-locked King salmon, by Alaska Department of Fish and Game. When it was well stocked in years past, the lake attracted 10,000 angler days per year, and was one of the most heavily fished lakes in the state. Stocking was discontinued in recent years due to an inability of the existing hatchery to isolate populations and prevent the spread of pathogens. In 2012, when the new hatchery opens, stocking will resume.

As angling becomes popular again, vegetation around the lake will need protection from foot traffic along the banks that destroy habitat for young fish and nesting waterfowl. Docks that allow water access without damaging the edge, and raised, light-penetrating walkways were some of the recommendations provided to the planning team at the second public meeting by the ADF&G Area Management Biologist.

When considering development, the health of the waterways and wildlife connectivity are important considerations. In the summer months, the Fire Creek drainage serves as a popular wildlife corridor for bears and moose. Construction of summer trails in this area should be avoided to reduce conflicts with wildlife. As existing trails are occasionally used by moose and other wildlife for traveling and browsing, occasionally closure may occur if an animal is acting aggressively.

Furthermore, because the park is rich with wildlife, it is important to avoid landscaping plants that attract wildlife. Trash containers inside the park need to be bear proofed.

### Access, Utilities & Infrastructure

**ACCESS**

**Regional & Local Access** - Beach Lake Park is located north of Eagle River with easy access to the Glenn Highway. The park currently has access at three main points, all of which are fed by Birchwood Loop Road. Beach Lake Road provides access to the northern portion of the park, while the southern portion has access from the ski chalet off of Birchwood Loop Road and from Chugiak High School where the trails pass under Birchwood Loop Road through tunnels.

There is no separated trail along Birchwood Loop Road to provide pedestrian connectivity for communities north of the park or for bus transit passengers. The only pedestrian connectivity between Beach Lake Chalet and local communities or schools is on the trail system connection to Chugiak High School.

The NW ¼ Sec 25 has no formal access, but is reached by local neighborhood roads including Hillcrest Drive, Pioneer Drive, and Almdale Avenue. In the past there were plans to integrate a new school site off of the west end of Almdale, and create a new access road to serve both the new school and Chugiak High School. As this study was underway, the Anchorage School District declined use of the school site, and residents voiced strong concern about traffic safety and congestion and new intersection pressures that would be associated with a new roadway through the NW1/4 Section.

Right now, Birchwood Loop Road sees heavy traffic during school commuting hours. School buses and vehicle traffic enter and exit Birchwood Loop Road directly from Chugiak High School.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) have collected annual average daily traffic counts for Birchwood Loop Road and Hillcrest Drive, listed below (AK DOT&PF 2008). A counter collected the number of vehicles using Birchwood Loop Road between the Glenn Highway interchange and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road Name</th>
<th>Vehicles Per Day/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birchwood Loop Road (Junction with Hillcrest Drive)</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birchwood Loop Road (Junction with Birchwood School Road)</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillcrest Drive (Junction with Birchwood Loop Road)</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Wildlife conflicts, including with moose and bear are concerns, particularly in the Fire Creek Drainage.*
Figure 4. Existing Park Conditions and Infrastructure Map
Utility transmission lines within Beach Lake Park (electrical and water) have created easy motorized access that creates serious damage which the park must pay to repair annually.

Chugiak High School, between the school and Beach Lake Road, and on Hillcrest Drive. This number was averaged over the year, but the data does not indicate the time of day it was triggered, in which direction the vehicles traveled, or the type of vehicle. Because vehicles may have been counted twice for a round-trip to this area, the totals have been divided by two in this analysis.

As there is no data available for the number of cars that use the Beach Lake Park chalet parking lot or Beach Lake Road, the available traffic counts for the area provide limited information useful for park planning. Instead, the traffic counts may be useful for future planning of appropriate intersection safety measures.

If facilities are needed for access to the NW ¼ Sec 25 to accommodate future park use, Pioneer Drive would be the likeliest point of access from a site planning perspective. For various reasons, however, it may not be the best option. First of all, Pioneer Drive is not designed as a collector road, limiting the traffic capacity in its current condition. The quarter mile stretch closest to the park is gravel. Over twenty residential properties front Pioneer Drive from Carlisle Street to the park boundaries. The end of this road is already widened and disturbed from the Eklutna water main that turns at this point. The ground at the end of Pioneer Drive and inside the park is level, well drained, and could accommodate access improvements. Upgrading Pioneer Drive, however, would substantially alter the character of this quiet, pedestrian friendly neighborhood street. The roads in this neighborhood are also maintained by the Chugiak-Birchwood-Eagle River Rural Road Service Area. Any expansion of roads or parking lots would increase the financial burden on the road board.

An alternative to accessing the park through this area is use of the historic access owned by the Alaska Railroad which connects with the Glenn Highway’s North Eagle River Interchange. If a legal public right-of-way was granted, this could allow direct vehicle traffic from downtown Eagle River to south-west corner of the park without entering the Glenn Highway or Birchwood Loop Road. It also may be able to serve as the future gravel extraction access which will be a heavy-duty road and give excellent connectivity to the higher-density neighborhoods to the south of the park. Additionally, although beyond the time frame for this plan to consider, potential talk about installing a commuter rail station at the southwest corner of the park could present unique opportunities.

Internal Park Access & Circulation - Access turning into Beach Lake Park along Birchwood Loop Road appears adequate to meet the needs of visitors to the park. If traffic volume increases significantly, improvements may need to be made to include turning lanes, street lighting, or other means to provide safe access.

The only road inside the jurisdiction of Beach Lake Park is Beach Lake Road. This road is built to adequate standards for the current use. The road lanes are 12 feet wide and the road is 24 feet wide in total, but there are no shoulders, preventing parking along the roadway. Roadside slopes and hill cuts are well designed to accommodate drainage of the road surface and the surrounding area.

Currently the section from Birchwood Loop Road to the Alaska Railroad alignment is surfaced with Recycled Asphalt Paving (RAP). The hill approaching the railroad tracks is also surfaced, but collects gravel. The road has a gravel surface as it passes through a spruce forest wetland bog where the risk of frost heave is very high between the railroad alignment to just before the first designated parking lot. The road has been built up to grade and has a deep gravel base which will help reduce heave potential. The paved section of road from the first
parking lot to the Beach Lake is in excellent condition and was recently surfaced. Minor shoulder slumping is visible, a common problem in roads built on frost-heave prone ground.

Beach Lake Road and the Chalet parking lot were resurfaced at the time the Chalet was constructed. Because this road upgrade project was done on a very limited budget. The road was constructed with recycled asphalt product with a binder. Beach Lake Road was also straightened at this time. Drainage culverts were upgraded and a below-grade dog sled mushing tunnel installed to connect trails on either side of the road.

Besides vehicular traffic, Beach Lake Road is used for recreational walking, running and some biking given the lack of adjoining trails or sidewalks. Recent surfacing of the road has limited equestrian use of the road. Safety issues with this pedestrian and recreational use of the road is a concern.

Parking Facilities - There are three main parking lots serving the park, one at the Beach Lake Chalet, one at Beach Lake/Barrier Free Lodge, and another at the Musher’s Clubhouse. This last lot is only partially paved nearest the posts used as anchors for dog teams. The rest of the large lot is gravel. All lot resurfacing was within the last five years and are in very good condition. There are no potholes and all of the lots have good drainage.

A dirt parking lot on the west side of Beach Lake Road across from the Chugiak Dog Mushers clubhouse is in need of expansion to allow for adequate trailer turn-around space. This lot is very muddy when wet. There are several large puddles that form and vehicles have caused rutting. Expanding this lot to the west north-west and paving the surface would address problems of turning around vehicles and muddy conditions when wet.

Parking Capacity - Beach Lake Chalet has 71 parking spaces available, three of which are Handicap parking. This parking lot is over capacity during Junior Nordic practice nights, forcing some to park along Birchwood Loop Road, which does not have shoulders. Future expansion of the Beach Lake Chalet parking lot could extend north. This land is sloped and would require some contouring to provide safe parking, controlled drainage, and avoid adverse impacts to the chalet sewage septic drain field. Expansion to the south of the current parking area is limited by the proximity of a ski trail. Expansion of the lot or construction of additional parking accessible to the chalet may be needed to accommodate the large numbers of vehicles during Junior Nordic ski events and races. Parking at Chugiak High School and Birchwood Elementary should be fully utilized before resources are allocated for a new facility.

The sled dog mushing main parking lot has room for staging over 20 dog trucks and trailers, with more room for additional vehicles. Across Beach Lake Road is the smaller lot. Two or three dog trucks can use the lot at one time, but turn-around space is limited, especially depending on how people park their vehicles. Although not for used for staging or accessing the trails with a dog team, there is also a new pull out on Beach Lake Road just before the sled dog mushing tunnel underpass that provides “spectator viewing” opportunities.

A very large parking lot that can hold greater than 70 vehicles (it is not striped) or about 20 vehicles hauling boat trailers is located at the end of Beach Lake Road and provides access to Beach Lake and the boat launch.

Railroad - Beach Lake Road crosses an Alaska Railroad alignment approximately two tenths of a mile from Birchwood Loop Road. There were no traffic counts.
The railway crossing of Beach Lake Road is adequate for expected levels of service, and is not a known area for accidents.

recorded for Beach Lake Road, but the roadway is currently is a low-volume route. The crossing at Beach Lake Road has adequate line-of-sight to the crossing which is currently marked with cross-bucks. There is no compelling need for flashers and gates, which would be an expensive upgrade. The crossing is not a known area for accidents.

The railroad alignment that generally divides the park is considered a low-volume railway, and generally travels within a 200 foot right-of-way. With the current curved rail alignment, trains slow down from 60 miles per hour to 35 miles per hour within a few miles of the crossing. In 2002 a re-design to straighten the rail curve at mile 133 was developed that would create a grade separated crossing/underpass for vehicles and trail users. Test borings revealed an ice lens making it a very expensive project and not realistic in the near-term. In the future, if commuter rail use increases and Eklutna, Inc. develops their land due east of the park, a separated crossing project may be installed.

UTILITIES
A number of utility corridors bi-sect and cross Beach Lake Park. Some of these utilities provide service to the park, however several major utilities serve as key regional connections.

Water & Septic - The water wells and septic systems installed at the Beach Lake Park Chalet and at Beach Lake Barrier Free Lodge are under the authority of MOA Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation Division. The well and septic at the chalet were installed at the time the facility was built. The current systems at the Beach Lake Chalet and Beach Lake Barrier Free Lodge are considered adequate at this time. As use of the park facilities increases, upgrades to the system may be required. The Anchorage Waste Water Utility (AWWU) extended service to Chugiak High School and Birchwood ABC Elementary School, but service does not extend into Beach Lake Park or to the chalet.

AWWU’s major regional waterline connecting Eklutna Lake and Anchorage travels through the NW1/4 section, set back from the residences. The physical location of the right of way has historically created physical access opportunities for illegal motorized recreational traffic and dumping, and functions as an attractive nuisance.

Power - Electrical transmission to Beach Lake Park is provided by Matanuska Electric Association (MEA). Transmission lines to the park parallel Birchwood Loop Road and a transmission spur extends west into the park to Birchwood Camp and then north, mostly paralleling Beach Lake Road to the Beach Lake Barrier Free Lodge, with a service line over to the Chugiak Dog Mushers clubhouse.

The transmission spur into Beach Lake Park is a single phase load line, the common type for residential or small commercial use. It should be adequate for the park use for at least 50 years into the future (MEA 2009). MEA holds a 100-foot wide easement inside the park boundaries that enters the park form the south-western most corner and extends north-east through the Nordic ski trails and exits the park at Birchwood Loop Road just south of Beach Lake Road. It has not been in service inside the park for some time, but it is in service beyond where it exits the eastern boundary of the park and continuous all the way back to the MEA substation at Eklutna Village.

MEA views the right of way inside the park as a future loop feed to Eklutna Inc.’s land holdings south of the park. MEA is amenable to incorporating the right of way into park trail planning and believe this will not encumber future electrical use (MEA 2009). At this time, there are no known plans to develop this easement by MEA.

Telecommunications - Local telephone service for Beach Lake Park is provided by Matanuska Telephone Association. There is telephone service to the chalet, to Beach Lake Barrier Free Lodge, and to the neighborhood bordering the NW ¼ Sec 25.

Land Use Context

Beach Lake Park is bordered to the north by Cook Inlet. On its eastern border it adjoins the Fire Creek drainage, lands which are privately owned by Eklutna Inc., and may be developed as residential (it is zoned for one home per acre) with access off of Beach Lake Road or sold for wetland mitigation. Mushing trails currently spill over from the park onto these lands.
Southeast of the park is one of Birchwood’s oldest, large lot neighborhoods. This area has attracted residents who want to walk out their door and find themselves in a natural setting, or to live a dog mushing lifestyle that is now impossible in other parts of Anchorage. Beach Lake Park, and its new parkland are considered by neighbors as an integral aspect of their local quality of life. Area residents for decades have enjoyed use of informal walking paths and access to ski trails.

They also, however, suffer downsides from their park proximity, particularly at the ends of local streets which attract foot and vehicular traffic. Some people seeking park access are respectful and quiet, including equestrians, dog walkers, and mountain bikers. Other users bring illegal and disruptive uses into the neighborhood. This includes 4WD/motorized recreationalists, “partiers,” and dumpers who cause noise, litter, and trail damage. Neighbors have worked to block these access points with tree stumps, boulders and cement blocks, however as some 4WD vehicles have winches, these blockades have been moved.

Southeast of Section 25’s new dedicated parkland are ten acres belonging to the Municipality of Anchorage’s HLB (see Figure 4, page 20) which were excluded from dedication as a public park pursuant to AO 2006-182(S). Although the land may be managed in the short term by the Parks and Recreation Department, its long-term use is not assured. This property was intended as a school site, or to be used as an exchange for other land in the nearby area for a school site.

Residents participating in this planning process voiced a strong desire to have these ten acres dedicated as park land. The HLB lands consist of upland forest, and afford nice views, vegetation, and slopes that make it valuable for recreation—particularly in contrast to Beach Lake Park’s lowland wetlands. If obtained, the HLB acres could enhance opportunities for skiing, hiking/walking, and create a more diverse open space experience.

South of Section 25 is more Eklutna, Inc. land which is zoned 3-6 homes per acre for residential development. Eklutna has an adopted Powder Reserve master plan for 1,500 new homes to be built in around ten years, or sooner if the market demand for new housing grows stronger.

The park’s western border is shared with Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBEAR), a 62,000 acre military installation and headquarters for the United States. JBEAR’s main military activities historically have been located far from its eastern border with the park.

However, since the 1950s soldiers with 4WD vehicles have often entered Beach Lake Park from the base side. Mushers, conversely, have entered the base from the park side, and established important trails on base.

Although historically there has been a good relationship between JBEAR and the mushing community, times are changing and more military activities are now located near the park, including live fire zones. The border has signage and protocol is in place to register recreationalists entering the base using “USARTRAK.” Over the life of this plan it is expected that expanded live fire zones will necessitate fencing along the shared border, and existing mushing trails will no longer be usable by the general public.

A final land use consideration is that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s (ADF&G) has jurisdiction over the management of fish and wildlife resources in the region. The park is located within the Birchwood Management Area within Game Management Unit 14C and is subject to state wildlife regulations governing the Birchwood Management Area. It is important to note, however, that Municipal regulations prohibit hunting on its parkland.
Existing User Groups

Beach Lake Park has functionally been shaped, and its existing facilities developed through cooperative, and volunteer based efforts of the park’s user groups over the past four decades:

Major Park User Groups
Chugiak Dog Mushers Association
Chugiak Junior Dog Mushers
Eagle River Nordic Ski Club
Junior Nordic Ski
Chugiak High School
Barrier Free Recreation (ADA Accessible lodge and cabins for public rental)
Cross Country Running

Regular Park Users
Recreational Boaters (small craft only)
Angling/Ice Fishing
Equestrians
Mountain Bikers
Runners
Hikers
Dog Walkers
Nature Walks
Wildlife Viewing
Scenery
Picnics
Family Outings, Informal Play
Skijoring (on Beach Lake)
Ice Skating (on Beach Lake)
Retriever Training (Dee Lake/wetlands)

Off-site activities connecting with and/or influencing park uses
Chugiak High School
Birchwood Camp
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBEAR)
Near Neighbors
Eklutna Inc.
Tidal flats waterfowl hunting
Figure 5. Existing Park Uses and Context Map
Key Concerns and Opportunities

Early in the planning process, the consulting team held private interviews with a number of stakeholders and user groups. These conversations with more than two dozen participants helped the team gain a broader picture of the park as it exists today. This was followed by months of gathering input from the public, CAG members, and Community Councils. Key concerns and opportunities emerged out of this process, which are listed below that helped shape the final recommendations.

1) 40 + Years of Volunteer Sweat Equity

Over several decades, thousands of volunteer hours have been invested in making improvements, developing recreational programming and events, and building infrastructure with the backing of government/private partnership support. This investment needs to be honored as a basis for future planning, and is a mode that should be appreciated for its ability to stretch community tax dollars.

“The value of the existing uses depends upon the natural beauty, peace and quiet that characterize the park. Additional development must not jeopardize the wilderness flavor of the park.”

~ Citizens Advisory Group Member

2) No Radical Changes

People like the less developed qualities and natural environment at Beach Lake Park. Protecting the wildlife, scenery, and rural qualities of the park are important goals, and save the community money. Moreover, as the park is functional for its existing uses, improvements should generally focus on getting more out of what is already there.

The only park “changes” needing consideration at this time are how to incorporate the new parkland, and how Beach Lake Park can accommodate future regional population growth, and serve new residents recreational needs in the future, including along its eastern and southern borders.

3) The Railroad is a “Perfect Divide”

The Alaska Railroad track separating the park is a valued and long respected dividing line. Mushing takes place north of the line, skiing to the south. This makes for very few trail user conflicts; exceptions include during transitional seasons, or illegal motorized access.

4) Seasonality

Beach Lake Park has its seasonal rhythm. In the depths of the winter, frozen lakes and the parks major wetlands freeze to allow fuller use of the park, and trail facilities are often used 24/7. Some evenings and weekends find the park at overcapacity for parking because of events and co-occurring practice sessions.
During thaw and wet periods (which are becoming more extensive) there are more challenges with trail conditions and damage, and user conflicts. In the summer, wetlands preclude access to large areas of the park, and the chalet is closed, but lakes are open for small boats and fishing, and the Barrier Free Facilities, and Birchwood Camp (private inholding) are busy.

5) Mileage

Mushers and skiers require maximum mileage for serious training and racing. Although the park appears large and natural - it is highly crisscrossed with as many mushing and ski trails as can fit without compromising these sports or the setting. For mushing the issue is minimizing distractions for dogs; for skiing it is about maintaining the scenic wooded quality. Maintaining or even extending this mileage is critical, including formalizing links to trails beyond the park. An indication of how developed the park is with trails, is the orienteers’ assessment that they won’t use Beach Lake because you “can’t get off a trail.”

6) A Uniquely Alaskan Attraction

Beach Lake Park makes uniquely Alaskan sports like mushing surprisingly accessible to Alaska’s urban population and the park is a multi-faceted attraction. Mushing and ski facilities serve all ages and abilities and the park has safe, well-maintained trails, along with the ability to host regional events. Regular park users travel from a broad region (Kenai to Mat-Su)

“People on designated trails completely disregard the nature of a dog trail. For the safety of the dogs, the people on a sled, and the safety of the other people, there needs to be no overlapping. No crossings, no roads, just a few dog trails. You cannot understand the power of a team.”

~ Public Comment

although some out-of-state and international visitors end up in the park because of the mushing and Barrier Free facilities. Also, over decades many self-selected individuals have chosen to live proximate to the park (dog and horse owners especially).

7) No Year Round Multi-Use Trails

Although there are miles of trails in the park, none are truly multi-use. They are ski trails, or mushing trails. Walkers, bikers, equestrians, and dogs off leash are “out there” in the park to some degree, but at the wrong time of year, these users damage maintained trails, and cause major safety conflicts. Mushers are reluctant to let multi-use trails into the park or near their trails for fear of injury—to unsuspecting users, to mushers, and to dogs. Moreover, there is a fear that multi-use could displace mushers, which is what has historically happened at Far North Bicentennial Park.

Members of the general public, on the other hand, want new trail opportunities that allow them to use Beach Lake Park year-round, especially along the road and near the lake and coast. Some feel that the park is a large regional asset, and “should not just cater to mushers.” The balanced compromise is some new limited multi use, with protection of existing uses.

8) Adjacent Lands are Not Park

JBEAR and Eklutna Inc. own thousands of acres bordering Beach Lake Park. Historically, much of this acreage has been “borrowed” for recreation, and to extend mileage based from the park. Master planning needs to consider a future with these non-park lands being unavailable for recreation.

“Ft. Rich [JBEAR] will be closed off to us very soon. That cuts out 40 miles of trails. It is extremely hard to try to train any kind of mid-to-distance runs on our trails. Dogs get bored seeing the same old thing . . . just like people do.”

~ Public Comment

Maintaining trail mileage by doubling back on the existing trail system, and access to JBEAR’s military lands is critical to long distance mushers’ ability to train for the Iditarod.
The 2006 Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan Update includes a number of goals helpful to guiding Beach Lake Park’s future:

**Natural Environment**
Goal A: Ensure that natural systems are protected, maintained and enhanced.
Objective A: Preserve and protect high-value wetlands, stream corridors, aquifer recharge areas and other important natural features.

**Growth**
Goal F: Encourage the development of a continuous trail network throughout the area that serves both transportation and recreation needs.
Objective A: Preserve and enhance the identity of established community areas.

**Parks, Open Space, Greenways and Recreation Facilities**
Objective A: Protect environmentally important or sensitive areas including stream and river corridors, water bodies, ridge crests, steep slopes, wetlands, scenic vistas, tidelands and coastal habitats.
Objective G: Maximize the retention and inclusion of natural native vegetation into the design and landscaping of recreational facilities to the extent possible.

**Facilities**
Objective H: Maximize the use of existing underdeveloped and new park lands.
Objective J: Identify separate use areas for motorized and non-motorized recreational pursuits as appropriate.
Objective K: Support unique thematic recreational facilities and programming that relate to the community’s history, culture and natural resources.
Objective L: Encourage the private sector to provide recreational facilities and activities.

---

**Vision for Beach Lake Park**

- **Maintain the park’s natural, rural, and scenic attributes.**
- **Support historical mushing and skiing activities as major park uses.**
- **Uphold a high standard of respect & courtesy between users, even as the population grows.**
- **Meet a growing community’s needs for family-oriented outdoor recreation.**
Chapter 3. General Management Plan

Guiding Vision
As future decision-makers consider specific proposals for Beach Lake Park, the vision statement reflects community consensus on what is envisioned for the future of Beach Lake Park. Additionally, the region’s comprehensive plan and its goals and objectives also can help guide community investment and choices.

Management Intent
Over the course of this planning effort, many hours of discussion have focused on the desired future conditions of Beach Lake Park. Since no major improvements are currently funded or are expected in the near future, a key concern has been how to “allow” future improvements, but ensure that development fits appropriately within its setting, and is compatible with a vision for the overall park.

In response, to go along with the Development Concept Plan, this chapter provides conditions that modify and clarify the management intent for specific zones within the park. Specifically, the “Recreation Intensity Designations and Park Access Map” (Figure 6, page 31) details levels of use, and management needs specific to each designated zone.

Next, it addresses the location points for future access, and provides a hierarchy of scale for the proposed access that is compatible with the existing settlement pattern, and future intensity designations. It also identifies potential sites where parking could be located, if and when new facilities are needed.

Finally, the plan highlights locations where access deterrents will or may be needed to protect the safety and compatibility of future uses.

Resource Protection Standards
Given the large scale of the park and generalized data available to this planning process, this document cannot identify what development will work exactly where. More site specific surveys, problem solving, and environmental analysis will be required in order to ensure that specific elements of the Development
Over the coming decades, population increases will strengthen demand for recreational access, particularly along main road corridors, and associated with scenic and water attractions (Beach Lake, Inlet). Designated areas should provide access points, parking, and facilities to focus and direct public use while protecting the park’s natural and scenic character. Active management will be required to address waste issues, habitat protection, and conflicts between user groups, particularly during peak use events (weekends, summer, events, etc.).

**Moderate Intensity**

These areas sustain year-round use of moderate intensity. Designated areas should anticipate and integrate opportunities for people to participate in both organized and independent activities such as athletic training/events, physical fitness, and outdoor appreciation. Functional improvements (lighting, trails) and regular management (grooming, waste removal) will be needed to support and sustain recreational use, ensure safety, manage user conflicts, and protect scenic and natural qualities.

**Low Intensity**

These areas provide a predominantly natural setting with minimal development and dispersed uses. Designated areas should support physical fitness, outdoor learning, relaxation, and escape from noise, lighting and crowds. Minimal improvements are needed to sustain regular use, with efforts focused on conflict management and resource protection that supports scenic and natural qualities.

**Very Low Intensity**

These areas contain quality habitat and scenic areas which allow outdoor activities focused around solitude, dark skies, nature appreciation, environmental education, and low-impact recreation opportunities. Designated areas will remain unimproved beyond habitat restoration and small scale access that allows dispersed users to experience the areas without compromising underlying scenic and environmental qualities. All development is conditional on environmental consideration of impacts to wildlife, vegetation, and viewsheets.

**Park Access, Circulation, and Regional Connectivity**

In support of the recreational intensity designations, vehicular access sites and potential parking areas are identified. Over the life of the plan, vehicular access improvements should be constructed only as existing sites become saturated, roads are upgraded to handle park traffic, and demonstrated financial and management capacity are present to ensure that park and adjacent neighborhood qualities are protected. Additionally, a multi-use, non-motorized trail system provides a linear system of travel connecting key destinations and parking areas. Non-permitted motorized access on any trails within Beach Lake Park is prohibited.

**Multi-Use, Non-Motorized Trail:**

Gravel, unpaved except as Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas require, particularly in the vicinity of Beach Lake and the Barrier Free facilities.

**Parking:**

Phased development when and where demand is demonstrated, maximize use at schools.

**Access Deterrents:**

Signage, fencing, berms, ditches, fines, education, etc. to discourage unsafe/disruptive access.

**Key Note:** Dashed/dotted lines represent future access.
Improvements and projects with fill located in “Very Low Intensity” zones in the park, such as Beach Lake’s eastern shore, will be required to do sufficient study to show that impacts will not seriously detract from the natural resource.

Concept Map constitute a responsible, and feasible option. Given that concern, the following steps should be involved in the pre-planning for any specific project:

- Preliminary feasibility “go /no-go” analysis to include a site visit, public involvement, more detailed site data acquisition, discussion with relevant experts, and a clear accounting of project needs and goals.

- As needed land survey, utility locate, soils borings, and/or other pre-design site research.

- Only in “very low intensity” zones, an environmental impact review process should be completed for new development or proposed fill. Development is conditional on a general understanding of potential impacts to wildlife, vegetation, and viewsheds; and on reasonable findings that impacts will not seriously detract from the natural resource, or can be easily mitigated.

- If a major project appears feasible within the park, public feedback should be sought throughout the design process.

- No project within the development concept plan that relocates, displaces, or impacts an existing use (e.g., multi use trail crossing a mushing trail) shall be constructed until measures are funded, designed, and installed that will ensure compatibility of the new development (e.g. grade separated crossings, signage, fencing).

- Mushing and Nordic trail systems will be formally dedicated to those uses and projects and improvements will be designed in collaboration between the governing organization (CDMA/ERNSA) and parks staff to ensure they meet the general public and groups’ needs, and address key design considerations.

- As needed, utilize the US Forest Service Trail Management Process (TMP) to better define specific users, needs, and design parameters:

  1) Trail Type - A fundamental trail category that indicates the predominant trail surface or trail foundation, and the general mode of travel the trail accommodates.

  2) Trail Class - The prescribed scale of trail development, representing the intended design and management standards of the trail.

  3) Managed Use - Modes of travel that are actively managed and appropriate, considering the design and management of the trail.

  4) Designed Use - The intended use that controls the desired geometric design of the trail, and determines the subsequent maintenance parameters for the trail.

- Mushin and Nordic trail systems are to be dedicated and any park improvements that would relocate or impact these uses cannot be constructed until compatibility measures are funded and built (e.g., grade separated crossings, signage).
Nordic Ski trails are formally dedicated and protected as the major trail use south of the railroad tracks, up to the designated multi-use trail crossing. Skiers have exclusive use of these trails during the winter maintenance season. Ski trail expansions south of the multi use trail are unitl and unmaintained, and are not exclusive use for Nordic ski. The rest of the year, trails are open for multi-use with improvements and/or blockages to limit trail damage in sensitive wet areas.

**Multi-Use Trails:**

- Beach Lake Road: Non-paved, one side of the road. Construct second side only if/when conflicts demonstrate clear need for additional capacity.
- Beach Lake Vicinity: Emphasize ADA accessibility, and protection of lake edge habitat.
- NW1/4 Section: Initially along powerline until re-designed as a winding forest setting trail with width capacity for 2-way horses & bikes to safely pass.

**NW1/4 Section Footpath:**
Minimal clearing, except in select scenic view areas. Revegetate disturbed areas, protect slope from erosion.

**Public Use Area**
- Winter - Multi-use ice fish, cross-country ski, ski-jor, ice skate, etc. Closure or trail priority for mushing events.
- Summer - Small craft boating, fishing, swimming, etc

- Beach Lake Day Use Area w/ Restrooms
- Existing Dock (fishing, canoe launch)
- Future Dock (exact siting/size may vary)
- Interpretive Station/Gateway elements with maps & user education/safety rules
- Day Use Area Expansion Reserve
- ADA Public Use Lodge/Cabins, or other “Gateway Lakeside Facility”
- Scenic View Areas

**Legend**

- Beach Lake Day Use Area w/ Restrooms
- Existing Dock (fishing, canoe launch)
- Future Dock (exact siting/size may vary)
- Interpretive Station/Gateway elements with maps & user education/safety rules
- Day Use Area Expansion Reserve
- ADA Public Use Lodge/Cabins, or other “Gateway Lakeside Facility”
- Scenic View Areas

**Fig 7. Beach Lake Park Conceptual Development Plan**
Chapter 4. Conceptual Development Plan

Park Concept Plan

The conceptual development plan on page 33 identifies future park uses, general trail patterns and infrastructure locations. The plan integrates findings from previous chapters such as existing conditions, population growth and demand needs, and balances diverse public input. Implementation of the plan is governed by the conditional management parameters outlined in Chapter 3.

Project Priorities & Development Phasing

The following section outlines special projects identified in the conceptual development plan, which may require funding to implement over the life of this plan. Priority project funding is intended to supplement, not replace ongoing improvement and maintenance efforts historically been carried out in a partnership approach between the parks division and major users including the Chugiak Dog Mushers Association and Eagle River Nordic Ski Association. Their efforts, and the existing area model which aligns public funding with local volunteer capacity in carrying out projects, are critical to the park’s future.

Phase I: 2010 - 2015

Near term improvements to Beach Lake Park are anticipated to be minor given current population levels, existing user needs, and the levels of infrastructure already in place. Much of it is expected to focused around improving security, defining boundaries and basic safety and legal use parameters. Investment into specific areas is critical to protect existing trails and uses, and to blocking activities that cause ongoing damage and/or repair costs.

“I frequently hike or ski Beach Lake’s perimeter and venture out onto the tidal flats. The views are outstanding, and walking trails in these areas would be quite an attraction.”

~ Public Input
Phase 1 Priority Projects:

- **Security** - Block 4WD/ATV access to the park, particularly from roadways, and along utility easements. Use ditching and earth shaping methods that illegal users with winches cannot penetrate. Moreover, provide signage that helps define the park boundaries, and clarify illegal uses and penalties.

- **Interpretation** - At key park locations, develop gateway kiosks with information describing park uses, dedicated use seasons, and educational and informational displays that help add value to the park, and help guide incompatible uses to other park locations within the community.

- **Improvements @ Mushing Parking Lots** - Make minor improvements that increase the usability of existing facilities. Additionally, the west parking lot requires minor improvements in terms of stabilizing the soil to reduce mud, and enlarging the area to the extent that trailers can turn around.

- **Soil Stabilization / Revegetation** - Park wide, repair existing damage to fragile soils and vegetation once motorized access is adequately blocked and discouraged.

Phase 2: 2015 - 2025

In this timeframe, it is likely that there will be more pressure on the park for improved infrastructure to serve the general public, particularly in the Beach Lake vicinity once ADF&G successfully stocks the lake. At the same time, JBEAR’s military use lands are expected to be blocked, increasing the need for new mushing trail mileage within the park.

Demographics are a wild-card, but strong housing markets could increase populations in the vicinity of the park, and could also scale up demand beyond its capacity for existing parking around the ski chalet and at nearby schools.

Project priorities in this second phase are clearly oriented at addressing these issues. The deferred timeline (5+ years out) gives the community some time to seek the grants, matching funding, and partnership approaches necessary for implementing some bigger ticket items.

Phase 2 Priority Projects:

- **Fenced Dog Park** – Create a gravel parking lot and fenced area to allow dog owners a “leash free zone” for dog exercise and socializing. Use the roadway, existing railroad location, and existing disturbances to vegetation to help define a clear area. Anticipate future railroad expansion which may require relocation of fencing. Work with the Alaska Railroad to ensure that they are satisfied with safety provisions associated with the dog park, and if needed to gain an ARRC use permit.

- **Ski Parking Expansion** – In 2010 the existing Chalet and school parking are often stretched. If demand exceeds capacity, develop space for an additional 85 vehicles either near the chalet, or in another preferred location as designated on map, page 31.

Many residents enjoy dog walking throughout Beach Lake Park for solitude and exercise. Other dog owners are seeking off-leash play and socialization opportunities in a dog park setting.
• **Multi-Purpose Trail Birchwood Loop/Beach Lake Road** - Initially on one side of the road create a 3 mile long multi-use pathway. To accommodate a mix of users, including equestrians, it is envisioned as wide gravel path off-set from the road with protection for adjacent mushing trails. In key locations adjacent to the lake, as required for ADA, recycled asphalt may be used.

• **Multi-Purpose Trail NW 1/4 Section 25** - Although initially the NW1/4 section powerline may support multi-use access, it should be a priority to work with neighbors, equestrians, bikers, hikers, and runners to locate and develop planning in support of the desired more natural and winding trail experience. The width will need to accommodate year round multi-directional traffic, and should be unpaved in support of equestrian use. Protect mature trees and aesthetic characteristics.

• **Ski Trail Expansion** - Work with ERNSA to plan for, locate, and develop a new set of unlit ski trails which are intended to be narrower, and ungroomed to provide a different user experience. Anticipate year round shared informal use. Limit access and provide signage to keep these other users off of the lighted and maintained ski trails.

• **Mushing Trail Expansion** - Work with CDMA to plan for, locate, and develop new trails which help relocate “off-park” trails to section lines, and replace lost mileage on JBEAR by expanding the trail system. Use sensitivity where there are easily erodible soils by allowing “winter use only” and/or by improving the tread to handle usage for dryland mushing and multi-use in the summer.

• **Informal Trails-NW 1/4 Section 25** - Work with park neighbors and walking enthusiasts to assess existing routes, and develop a narrow footpath loop system with attractive, natural overlooks.

• **West Lake Trail & Fishing Improvements, with Grade Separated Crossing** - Design and install an aesthetic bridge structure that maintains 2-way mushing traffic at the north end of Beach Lake, while allowing a walking trail on a separated grade. Work with CDMA needs, and also work with ADA specialists to determine the feasibility of making the crossing fully accessible. Then, relocate the existing footpath along the west side of Beach Lake back from the lake’s edge, and revegetate disturbed area to protect fish habitat. The trail should provide for a range of users, and if possible provide an ADA experience without paving to retain the rural feel and support equestrian use. Install hardened dock light-penetrating facilities that allow a number of individuals (including ADA users) to access the water and enjoy fishing without disturbing the lake edge.

• **Beach Lake Day Use Area** - In anticipation of growing demand for the lake by families, groups, and larger numbers of individuals, develop a day use area to include a picnic shelter with restrooms that protect water quality, tables, dock and connecting...
As demand for the park grows and the population of the area substantially expands, existing facilities (such as the ski chalet above), parking, and potentially even multi-use trails may reach capacity and require expansion.

boardwalk, and creation of an open grass play area. Additionally, enhance a small area to include a gravel beach to allow some lake edge access particularly for wading and play.

**Phase 3: 2025+**

In the long term, including 2025 or beyond, major demographic changes are expected to occur bringing strong demands for park access and infrastructure to the south-west corner of the park. At this point, the park priority should be interfacing with new subdivisions, and seeking legal access via new vehicular connections that provide the park with a direct link into downtown Eagle River. Additionally, as the population grows (potentially doubling), new recreational needs will emerge in the community council area and the region which may be addressed in a “future park reserve.” Additionally, multi-access trails and/or parking may reach capacity, and expansion of these facilities may be needed.

**Phase 3 Priority Projects**

- **NW 1/4 Section 25 Park** - Within a reserve area, planning and development of a new neighborhood park should be completed to include:
  - parking suitable for meeting projected community demand
  - a picnic area including picnic tables in open settings, and a picnic structure suitable for rental, typical of other such structures in the Municipality of Anchorage

- a trailhead with mapped connections and trail interface with Beach Lake Park trails
- an open area of approximately 5 acres, suitable for play. The play area is not to be dedicated to organized field or game use but should be suitable for informal play.
- a sledding hill

- **Additional Multi-Purpose Trail Birchwood Loop/Beach Lake Road** - If demand for the existing multi-use trail along Beach Lake Road is strong enough to create safety hazards, or displace certain users (equestrians, bikes) plan to add in a new segment of trail, working with CDMA on safe separation from the existing mushing trails.

**“As Possible” Opportunities**

In addition to the park improvements outlined above, there are other opportunities that would be highly desirable for the park, but are expected to primarily be funded and/or completed by entities other than the parks department. These should be advocated for implementation, and partnerships fostered, with the expectation that over time other interests may find the resources to help implement these opportunities.

- **Utility Undergrounding** - Over time, a number of utilities both serving the park and the region have crossed the park. Currently these lines impact scenic viewsheds and also attract incompatible uses onto...
mushing and ski trails. As possible, these should be undergrounded, and potentially even consolidated, especially in the region south of the railroad tracks where several utilities bi-sect park uses and impact natural and scenic qualities.

- **Conservation Easement/Acquisitions** - Beach Lake Park and neighboring public lands combine to provide a natural drainage with significant wetland and habitat values. Funds for conservation easements or land acquisition could be sought for the Fire Creek drainage to the inlet, and the “beaver pond” area south of the NW1/4 Section. Potential sources include Land Water Conservation Grants, and wetland credits (Great Land Trust). Support should be given to community advocacy efforts that seek funds to expand the park in pursuit of environmental/habitat values and very low intensity uses (e.g. winter mushing). Additionally, residents in the area would like to see HLB’s ten acres of upland forest land preserved in support of recreational, scenic, and habitat values. Negotiations or acquisition efforts to make these lands part of the park will go a long way toward implementing the greater vision for the park outlined in this master plan.

**Capital Improvement Plan**

Given unknowns about timing on population growth, recreational demand, and resources to be available for implementation, the following capital improvement plan is provided to serve as a loose framework for future development costs.

Realistically, much of the decision making about development timing, and priority needs will be left up to future generations of community members and Parks Boards of Supervisors, particularly in terms of deciding when investment is warranted for larger park improvement projects. Reflecting these realities, project priorities presented on page 39 include development phasing and rough cost estimates in 2010 dollars. Periodic re-assessments of community needs and resource considerations should help dictate the timeline and location of development consistent with this overall plan.
### Beach Lake Park Master Plan
#### Capital Improvement Plan, 2010-2030

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Work Item</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost/Unit</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>By Whom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Ditching</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>Prevent ATV/4WD Motorized Access</td>
<td>Parks/Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>Define park boundary and illegal and incompatible uses</td>
<td>Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Kiosks</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>Three sided, trailheads</td>
<td>Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graphics</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>3 per kiosk, interp, informational, locational</td>
<td>Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements @ Mushng Parking Lots</td>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Sq. Yd.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>West lot soil stabilization, expansion for turn-around</td>
<td>Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Stabilization / Revegetation</td>
<td>Misc. Imps.</td>
<td>Lump Sum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>Revegetation, address erosion/drainage, extent</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenced Dog Park</td>
<td>Misc. Imps.</td>
<td>Lump Sum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>Gravel parking, signage, fencing</td>
<td>Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ski Parking Expansion (At Chalet, or preferred location proximate to ski area as designated on map, page 31)</td>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Sq. Yd.</td>
<td>3230</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$484,500</td>
<td>85 vehicles</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1 - Multi-Purpose Trail Birchwood Loop/Beach Lake Road</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>15840</td>
<td>$70</td>
<td>$1,108,800</td>
<td>3 Miles, One side of road, 12' Gravel, 2-Way traffic</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Purpose Trail SW 1/4 Section 25</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>6400</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$320,000</td>
<td>1.2 Miles, 8 foot wide gravel/RAP</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ski Trail Expansion</td>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>16500</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>$82,500</td>
<td>5 kilometers-requires plan by club</td>
<td>Ski Club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushing Trail Expansion</td>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>31680</td>
<td>$1</td>
<td>$31,680</td>
<td>6 miles new trail by mushers</td>
<td>Mushing Club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Trails-SW 1/4 Section 25</td>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>$1</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>1.5 miles of narrow dirt trail</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Lake Trail &amp; Grade Separated Crossing</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>Lump Sum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>North End Beach Lake</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inlet overlook</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Design to reduce bluff soil erosion/damage</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boardwalk</td>
<td>Square Feet</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
<td>2 boardwalks/docks, west side Beach Lk.</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>$2</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>Move existing trail at lake edge</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reclalm lake edge</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>Revegetate, plant willows, soil stabilization</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach Lake Day Use Area</td>
<td>Open Play Area</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Shelter</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Tables</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boardwalk/Dock</td>
<td>Square Feet</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravel Beach</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$879,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW 1/4 Section 25 Park</td>
<td>Open Play Area</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Shelter</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Tables</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lot</td>
<td>Sq. Yd.</td>
<td>3230</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$484,500</td>
<td>85 vehicles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,043,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II (if needed) Multi-Purpose Trail Birchwood Loop/Beach Lake Road</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>Linear Foot</td>
<td>15840</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$792,000</td>
<td>3 Miles, One side of road, 8 feet wide gravel/RAP</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total CIP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,781,980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A - Memorandum

March 3, 2010

Subject: Beach Lake Regional Park Master Plan Update
Gravel Extraction for NW1/4 Section 25, Beach Lake Park

From: Wm. Dwayne Adams, Jr., FASLA
Beach Lake Master Plan Update Project Manager

The contract between the Municipality of Anchorage and Land Design North states the following:

The annexation of the NW ¼ Section 25 is subject to certain material extraction rights held by the State of Alaska (SOA). An agreement between the MOA and SOA as to potential conditions of extraction are memorialized in the Section 25 Materials Extraction Agreement (MEA) as executed by the MOA and SOA on November 8, 2006 and subsequently amended. Land use and recreational recommendations will be reconciled with the SOA rights and the MEA. (emphasis added)

This memorandum provides background and recommendations regarding the “reconciliation” required in the above statement.

As background, it is appropriate to recognize the limitations of this master plan update. The update provided investigation of planning issues for determining the most appropriate use of public lands under consideration for the study, given public input. That level of effort does not provide a determination of technical issues beyond that level of need. Thus, issues such as hydrology and geotechnical issues are not developed to a degree that allow definition of technical requirements related to the gravel extraction. Issues specific to this would include those such as separation of the gravel extraction site from ground water, traffic, noise, or other possible neighborhood impacts. This recommendation relates only to requirements governing proposed park improvements or the desired condition for the park in the long term.

The master plan update proposes that the NW1/4 of Section 25 would be left in a generally natural condition, with the exception of a reserve area in support of a future community park and access point in the southwest portion of that parcel. The community park would be provided road access from the south, at the southwest corner. The park could include amenities such as a parking lot, a trail head and trail connections, a picnic area and picnic shelter, playground, and an informal open play space.

If subjected to gravel extraction, the remainder of the NW1/4 beyond this park reserve area would be maintained or revegetated to achieve as natural a condition as possible. Within the
natural area would be a system of limited cross country ski trails that would also serve for hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use.

With respect to reconciling the gravel extraction, the following conditions are recommended as a condition of gravel extraction:

1. Prior to beginning clearing, the SOA and MOA will create a schematic plan for the community reserve park to be located at the southwestern corner of the NW1/4 of Section 25, as shown on the Beach Lake Master Plan Update. The community park will include the following:
   a. A parking area suitable for meeting projected community demand, based on similar parks within the Municipality of Anchorage.
   b. A picnic area including picnic tables in open settings.
   c. A picnic structure suitable for rental, typical of other such structures in the Municipality of Anchorage.
   d. A trailhead with mapped connections to Beach Lake Park trails.
   e. An open area of approximately 5 acres, suitable for play. The play area is not to be dedicated to organized field or game use but should be suitable for informal play.
   f. A sledding hill

2. For all other areas of the park that are cleared, they shall be revegetated within the following general parameters:
   a. The revegetation goal is to achieve a natural forested appearance within approximately 20 years, however, revegetation shall be done on an incremental basis as gravel is removed to protect water quality, provide dust control, and to speed up overall reforestation timelines and forest re-growth.
   b. Reseeding shall include a mix of non-invasive and native species based on recommendations of the State of Alaska Plant Materials Center, working with the MOA Department of Parks and Recreation. Plantings are to include young birch trees between 3 and 10 feet in height and spruce seedlings.
   c. Appropriate soil amendment shall be provided to enhance growth of vegetation by means of tilling limited organics into the soil, based on recommendations of the State of Alaska Plant Materials Center, working with the MOA Department of Parks and Recreation.

3. Clearing and gravel extraction shall take place beginning from the southwestern corner of the parcel, proceeding to the northeast. This will ensure that clearing and grubbing takes place in a methodical manner, based on the incremental need for the gravel, not the end buildout of the agreement between SOA and MOA.