



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519



MEMORANDUM

Date: May 14, 2026

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Cc: Taylor Keegan, Superintendent

From: Ellen Devine, Senior Park Planner

Subject: PRC 26-09: Potter Marsh Watershed Park Master Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) is seeking approval of the Potter Marsh Watershed Park Master Plan.

In 2024, Potter Marsh Watershed Park was established through a partnership between Great Land Trust and the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department. The approximately 300-acre natural resource park borders the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge and Chugach State Park, creating a continuous corridor for wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and passive outdoor recreation.



The Master Plan establishes a 20-year vision for the park that balances conservation, stewardship, passive recreation, and public access within the limitations of the Potter Marsh Watershed Park Conservation Easement.

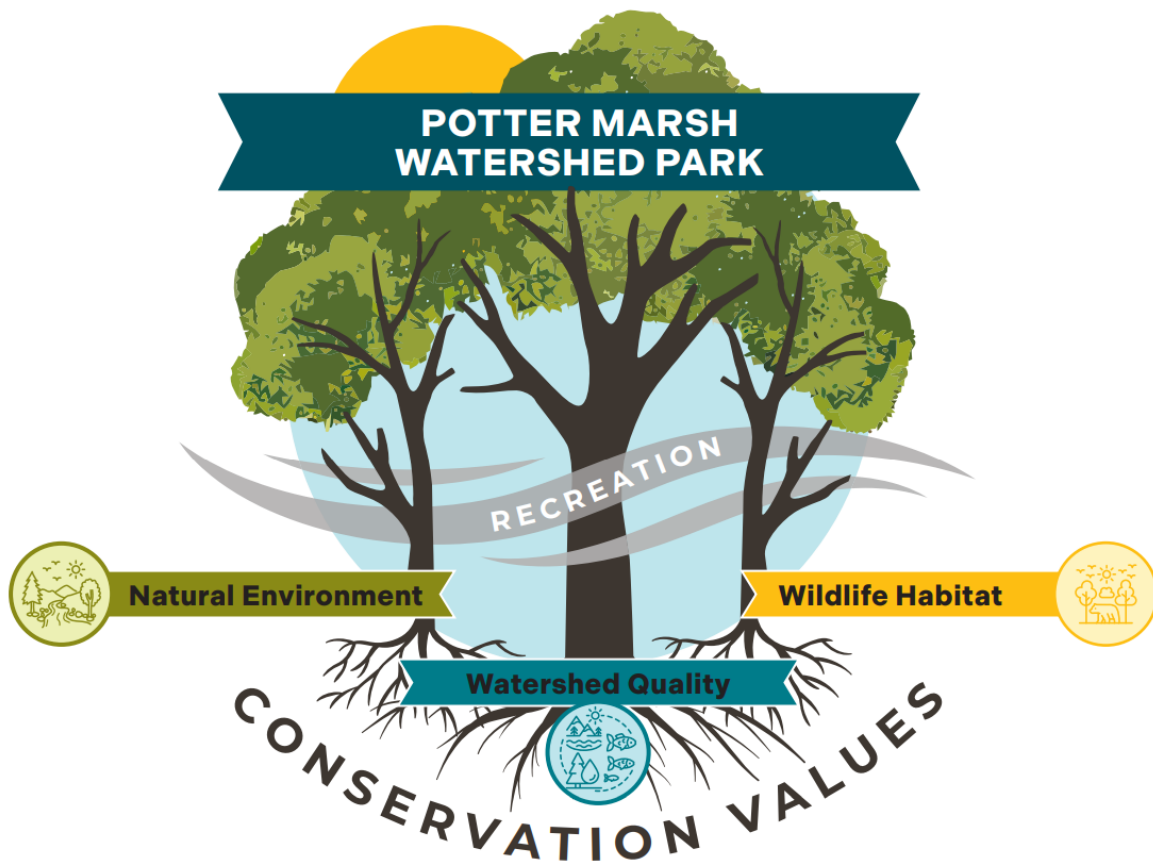
CONSERVATION EASEMENT

The park is protected by a Conservation Easement held by Great Land Trust. The easement establishes conditions for future improvements and permitted uses to protect the area's natural habitat, open space character, and recreational and educational opportunities.

The Conservation Easement divides the park into two primary management areas:

- **Resource Protection Areas:** Encompassing the majority of the park, where development is limited and focused on maintaining natural conditions.
- **Limited Development Areas:** Designated areas where amenities and access improvements may occur under defined restrictions.

The Master Plan prioritizes conservation as the park's primary purpose, with recreation serving as a secondary use.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Master Plan was developed through a collaborative public process that included community open houses, online engagement, stakeholder coordination, community council outreach, and a Community Advisory Group made up of neighbors and stakeholders who advised staff throughout the development of the Master Plan.

Public outreach identified several key challenges and opportunities that helped shape the recommendations within the Master Plan.

Key Challenges

- **Access:** Identified that the park is surrounded by neighborhood roads and highlighted opportunities to concentrate development at a primary access location while maintaining a light footprint throughout the remainder of the park.
- **Funding and Maintenance:** Highlighting the need for partnerships and long-term financial stability to support ongoing stewardship and maintenance of the park.
- **Design Integrity:** Prioritizing the conservation value of the park while balancing with improved accessibility of low-impact use.

Key Opportunities

- **Conservation and Education Leadership:** Recognizing the park's unique ecological role and opportunity to serve as a hub for citizen science, environmental education, and interpretive experiences.
- **Unique Design:** Creating a distinctive visitor experience that encourages recreation and exploration while protecting the surrounding natural environment.
- **Collaborative Management:** Identifying opportunities for partnerships and coordinated stewardship due to the park's location adjacent to other public and conservation lands.



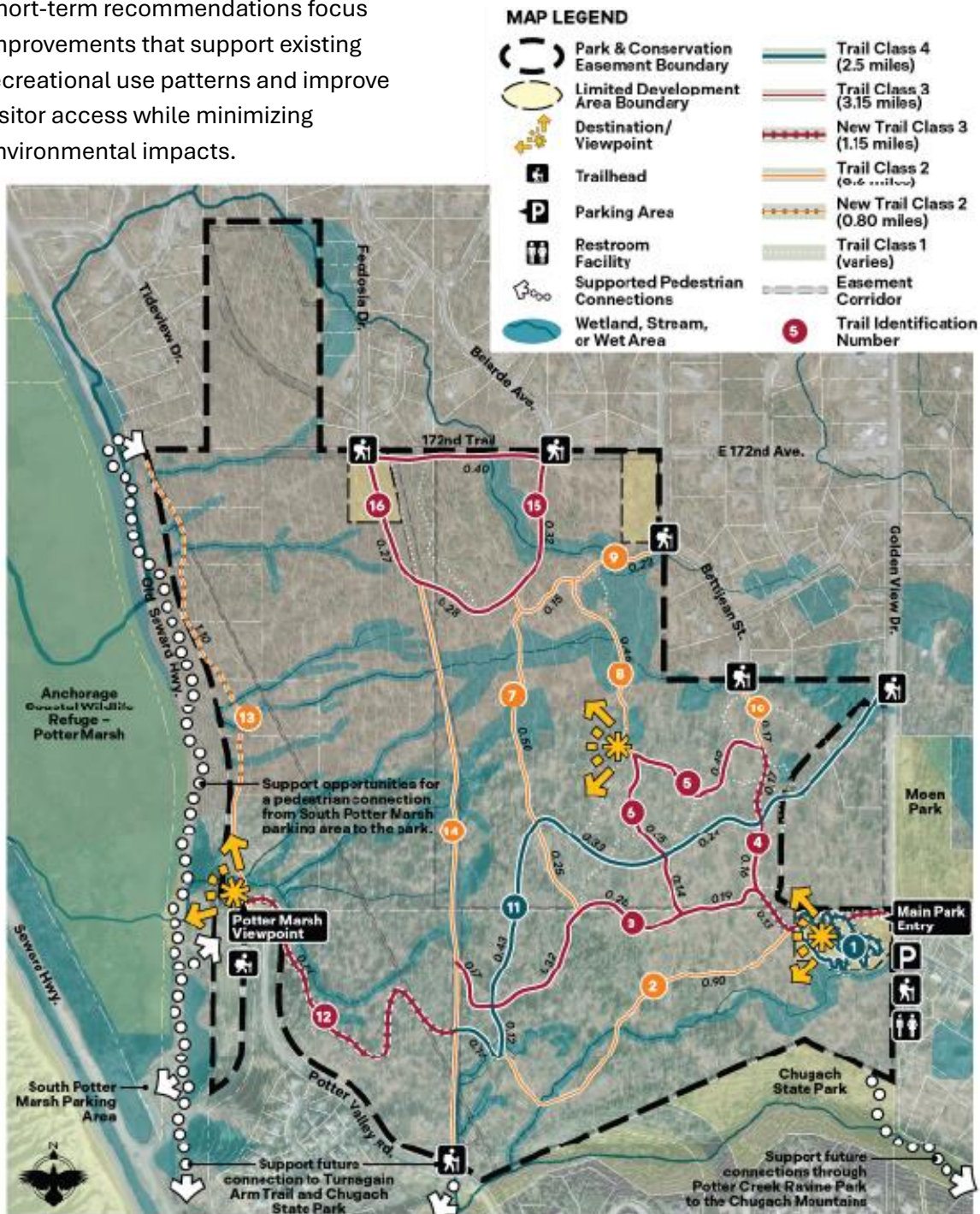
THE MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan establishes both a short-term and long-term concept for park improvements while remaining within the limitations established by the Conservation Easement.

Summaries are provided below:

Short-Term Development

Short-term recommendations focus improvements that support existing recreational use patterns and improve visitor access while minimizing environmental impacts.



Recommendations

- Establish a formalized trailhead and primary access point with parking.
- Provide minor site improvements (benches, trash cans, etc.)
- Install wayfinding, education, and regulatory signage.
- Improve trail access by maintaining existing trails and implement limited trail upgrades and resource protection measures.
- Create small accessible loop trails.
- Develop a viewpoint that overlooks Potter Marsh

These improvements are intended to support safe public use while allowing the Municipality to better understand long-term visitation patterns and management needs.

Long-Term Development

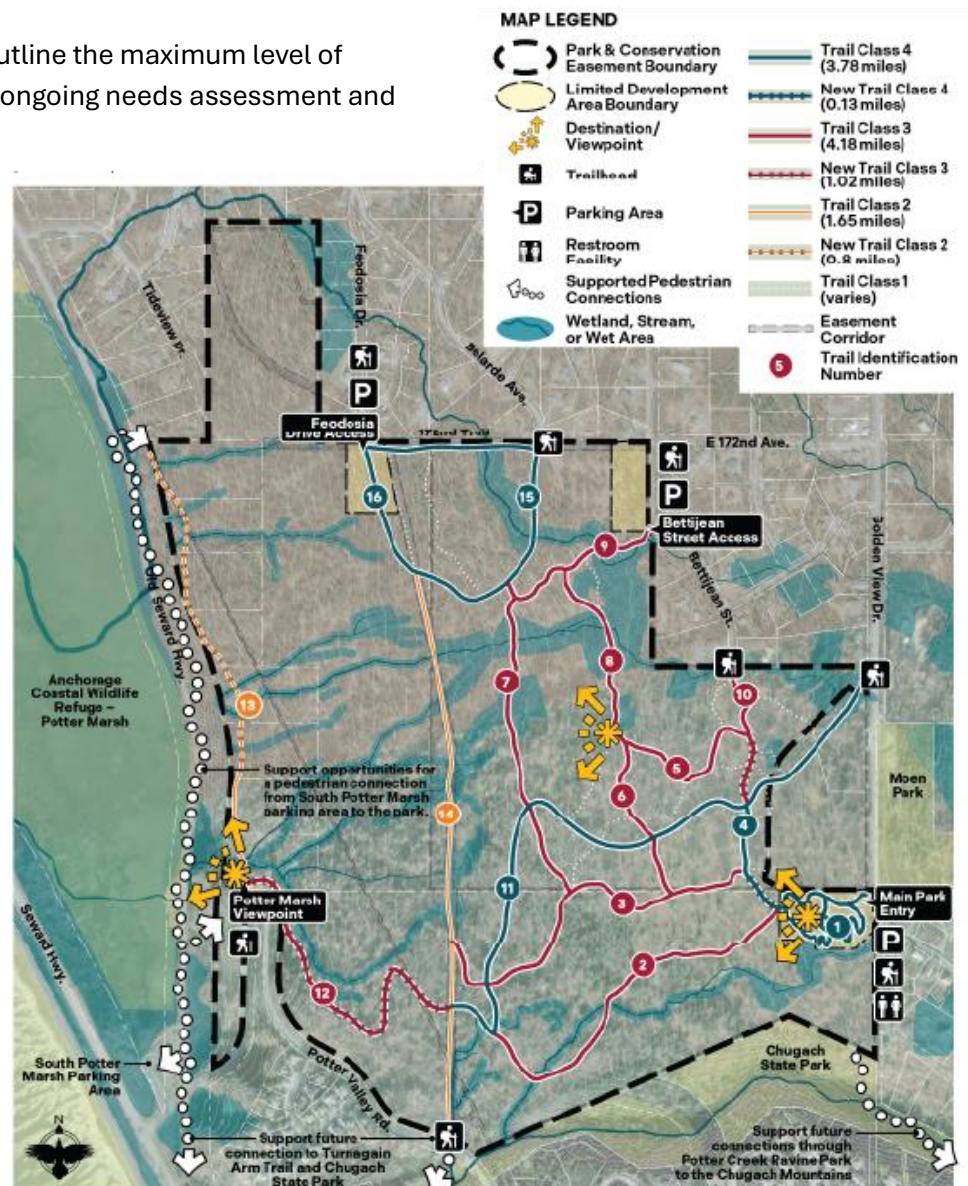
Long-term recommendations outline the maximum level of development as determined by ongoing needs assessment and public use patterns.

Potential future improvements may include:

Recommendations

- Develop secondary trailheads and parking areas.
- Upgrade trail sections to allowable trail classifications

The Master Plan emphasizes that future development should occur incrementally and only as supported by demonstrated public need, available funding, and continued alignment with the Conservation Easement.



FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Anchorage Parks and Recreation will need to utilize funding from a variety of sources and partners to achieve the goals in this Master Plan, including municipal park bonds, state and federal grants, fundraising, and public-private partnerships.

The planning process itself has been funded through a partnership with Great Land Trust.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Parks and Recreation Department recommends the approval of the proposed Potter Marsh Watershed Park Master Plan.

The plan was created through coordination between Anchorage Parks and Recreation, Great Land Trust, stakeholders, and community members. The resulting recommendations establish a balanced framework of conservation and access for recreational and educational opportunities that are consistent with the Conservation Easement.

ATTACHMENTS

- Full Master Plan Draft
- Public Outreach Timeline



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630

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PRC RESOLUTION NO. 2026-08 Potter Marsh Watershed Park Master Plan

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long-term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, Potter Marsh Watershed Park is a recently established 303-acre municipal park located between the Old Seward Highway and Golden View Drive that borders the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge and Chugach State Park, creating a corridor for wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and passive outdoor recreation; and

WHEREAS, Potter Marsh Watershed Park is protected by a Conservation Easement held by Great Land Trust that establishes conditions for future improvements and uses to protect natural habitat, open space character, and recreational and educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the primary purpose of Potter Marsh Watershed Park is the long-term protection of watershed functions, wildlife habitat, and natural open space while supporting compatible low-impact recreation; and

WHEREAS, in 2025, the Parks and Recreation Department in partnership with the Great Land Trust began a public process to develop a Master Plan for Potter Marsh Watershed Park that would identify and prioritize park improvements over the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan was developed through a collaborative public process that included community open houses, online engagement, stakeholder coordination, community council outreach, and guidance from a Community Advisory Group; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan establishes short-term and long-term concepts for park improvements while remaining within the limitations established by the Conservation Easement; and

WHEREAS, the key recommendations include improved trailheads and access points, trail maintenance, limited trail upgrades, wayfinding and educational signage, resource protection measures, and amenities to support low-impact recreation; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan provides a framework for conservation, public access, phased implementation, funding, and partnership coordination to implement the Plan; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission supports the proposed Master Plan for Potter Marsh Watershed Park and recommends its approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 14th day of May, 2026.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Director
Parks & Recreation Department