
MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH TALKEETNA LAKES PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

**Adopted by the Assembly
April 2004**



Prepared for:
Matanuska Susitna Borough
Community Development Department

Prepared by:
Agnew::Beck Consulting, LLC
Land Design North

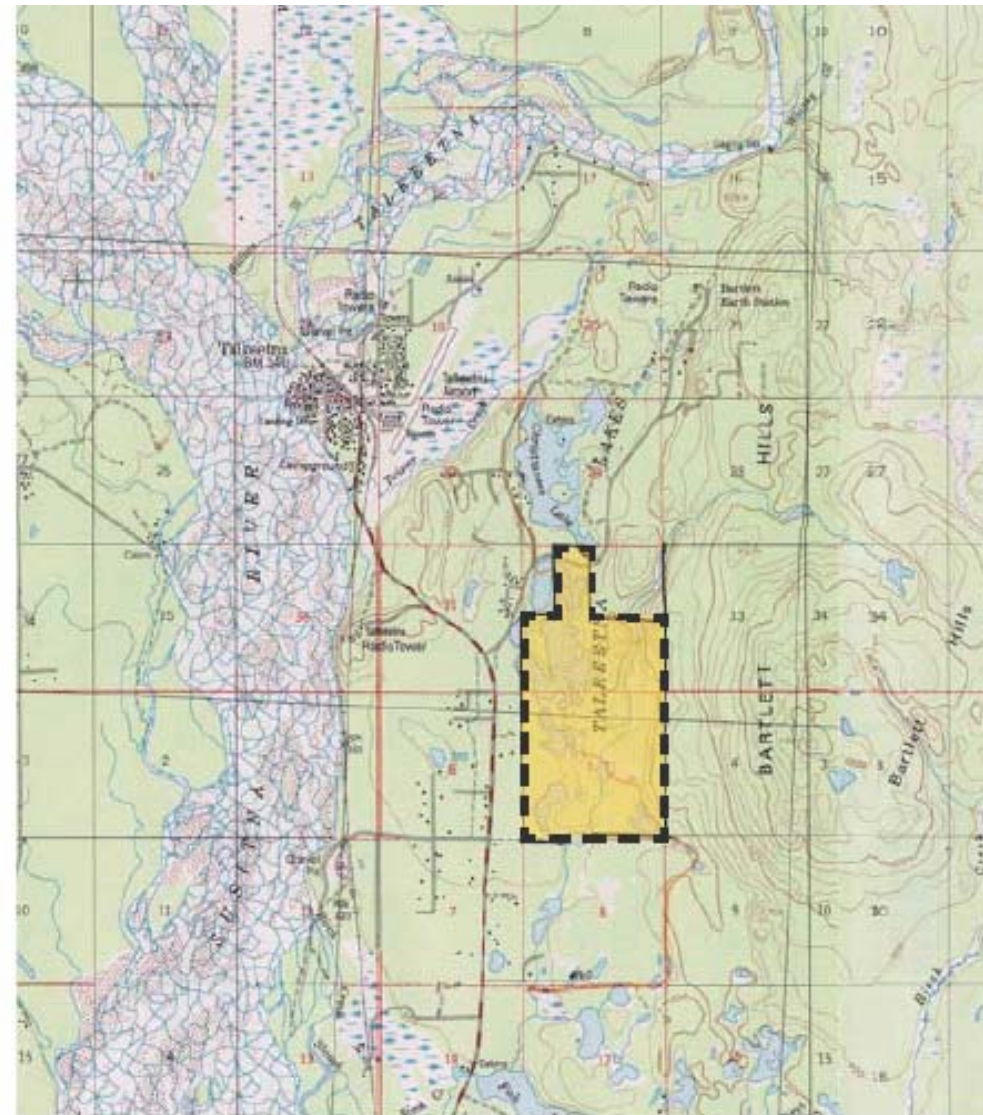


Talkeetna
Community
Council



TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN CONTENTS

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Legend



Project Boundary

NON-CODE ORDINANCE

By: Borough Manager
Introduced: 03/16/04
Public Hearing: 04/06/04
Adopted: 04/06/04

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
ORDINANCE SERIAL NO. 04-049

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY ADOPTING THE TALLEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN, AND OFFICIALLY NAMING THE AREA THE TALLEETNA LAKES PARK.

WHEREAS, the Talkeetna Comprehensive Plan recommends that the land adjacent to the Talkeetna Lakes be parkland; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance Serial No. 02-064 classified specific land around Talkeetna Lakes for "public recreation use"; and

WHEREAS, at the request of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Parks, Recreation and Trails Advisory Board, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly adopted Ordinance Serial No. 02-064 on May 7, 2002, which directed the administration to prepare a management plan for the property prior to building trails or developing park facilities; and

WHEREAS, the administration has prepared a management plan for the area that provides for multiple uses, trails and day-use facilities, while maintaining a clean, natural setting, along with a plan for monitoring, management, and maintenance; and

WHEREAS, this plan was prepared with extensive public involvement and input and is supported by the Talkeetna Community Council and Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce; and

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Ordinance Serial No. 04-049
IM No. 04-055

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Parks, Recreation, and Trails Advisory Board has passed Resolution 03-11, requesting the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission and Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly support the Talkeetna Lakes Recreation Management Plan and officially name the area the Talkeetna Lakes Park; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission passed Resolution 04-05 recommending the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly adopt the Talkeetna Lake Recreation Area Management Plan and name the area the Talkeetna Lakes Park.

BE IT ENACTED:

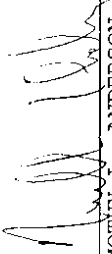
Section 1. Classification. This is a non-code ordinance.

Section 2. Adoption of management plan. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly does hereby adopt the Talkeetna Lakes Recreation Area Management Plan.

Section 3. Park name. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly hereby names the borough-owned land described as the E1/2 NW1/4, S1/2, Section 32, Township 26 North, Range 4 West; and Government Land Office Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, S1/2, S1/2 N1/2, Section 5, Township 25 North, Range 4 West, Seward Meridian, Alaska, as the Talkeetna Lakes Park.

Section 4. Effective date. This ordinance shall take effect upon adoption by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 6 day
of April, 2004.


TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


MICHELLE M. MCGEHEE, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Bush, Allen, Colberg, Kvalheim, Simpson,
Colver, and Vehrs

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Ordinance Serial No. 04-049
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A note on terms used in this document

'Talkeetna Lakes Recreation Area' / Talkeetna Lakes Park

The Parks Advisory Committee recommended this area be formally renamed "Talkeetna Lakes Park". This term conveys the intended management for the area, that is, land held in public ownership for recreation, open space and conservation of natural character. Formal renaming of the area from 'recreation area' to 'park' will require Borough approval. In the meantime, this document uses the term 'recreation area.'

'XYZ vs. Talkeetna Lakes'

Over the course of the planning project it became clear the names of the lakes within the area are not settled. Those at the meetings agreed that the name Talkeetna Lakes is neither memorable nor widely used. The name "XYZ" is somewhat impersonal, but has been used locally for a number of years. People attending the meetings were enthusiastic about the idea of sponsoring a contest at the Talkeetna Elementary School to re-name the lakes.

It was also noted at the meetings that the names of 'X' and 'Y' Lakes are often confused. Some official (i.e. Alaska Department of Fish & Game) agencies record the northernmost lake as 'Y' and the middle lake as 'X.' However, locals, and most at the meetings, refer to these in the reverse. In this plan the area as a whole will be referred to the Talkeetna Lakes area; the local designations area used for individual lakes.

TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In 2000, the Denali Nordic Ski Club approached the Borough about building ski trails around XYZ lakes. This request led the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to classify the land as a public recreation area, a process which took about 1.5 years.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough encourages the development of a plan to guide the future use of any Borough lands classified for public recreation where public interest is high and there are competing views regarding future uses. The Borough has allocated some funding toward physical improvements to this area (separate from the budget for this planning process). Only after this Talkeetna Lakes Recreation Plan is adopted by the Talkeetna Community Council and approved by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough can the allocated funds be released.

Some views expressed at the community meetings about the future of the area:

"I'm afraid we'll lose this nice place to encroaching business and visitors. The problems aren't significant now, but there is a more evidence of use today than there was ten years ago. Now that this area is dedicated as a public recreation area, we want to plan how to take care of it before it's too late."

"Snow-machines are part of life here – but we don't want to be a snow-machining destination."

"We need to think about what this place (XYZ lakes) will mean for Talkeetna not as it is today, but what it will be like in 10 or 20 years. We've got to imagine and plan for that future."

"If we build a lot of parking and wide trails, we'll lose our sanctuary. This is the last [public] place in the area to go for solitude."

"The trail's we've used in the past are in serious jeopardy and it's going to get worse. This is the last piece of borough property in the area that offers a possibility for public trails."

"I personally want to leave the area alone, but I know others want ski trails, and recognize we have to find a way to make this work for the community as a whole. If the issue of motorized access could be solved, I could live with [some wider trails]."

TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process allows community members to set goals for and to determine what, if any, improvements (e.g., trails, parking) or management strategies (e.g., controls on type of trail use) are necessary to reach these goals.

The process began with a community-wide meeting in March 2003. A Park Advisory Committee was formed to guide the planning process. Advisory Committee members are: Jim Kellard, Chris Mannix (chair), Pamela Robinson, Roger Robinson, Missy Smothers, John Strassenburgh, James Trump, Mark Wildermuth and Ellen Wolf.

Once the Talkeetna Community Council approves this plan, it will go to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough for final review and approval. Physical improvements to the area (i.e. trails, parking) can then begin using MSB funds identified for this purpose.

Who is involved?

- ♦ The *Talkeetna Park and Recreation Advisory Committee* to the Talkeetna Community Council (formed spring 2003),
- ♦ *Mat-Su Borough representatives*, and
- ♦ *Land Design North* is the prime consultant on the project contracted by the Mat-Su Borough. Land Design North is working with Chris Beck and Amy Tomson of *Agnew::Beck Consulting*.

Role of the Advisory Committee

The Borough establishes Advisory Committees whenever there are diverse views on best management of a Recreation Area. The *Talkeetna Park and Recreation Advisory Committee* is comprised of two membership levels, 'core' members and 'at-large' members, as described in the by-laws. This committee, chaired by Chris Mannix, guided the development of this draft plan for management and improvements to the XYZ Lakes Recreation Area.

Affected Agencies

- ♦ *DNR (Alaska State Department of Natural Resources)* owns tracts of land that are adjacent to the *XYZ Lakes Recreation Area*.
- ♦ *DOT&PF (Alaska State Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities)* will be involved with any parking improvements and maintenance along the road. There are also two DOT/PF rock quarries near the *XYZ Lakes Recreation Area* on the DNR tract to the northeast (near X Lake).
- ♦ *ADF&G (Alaska Department of Fish & Game)* has been stocking Tigger, X & Y Lakes with fish for the past 25-30 years. The Talkeetna Community Council will work with the ADF&G for the continued management of fish populations and stocking of lakes.

TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN

PROJECT TIMELINE

1. Land Classification

Mat-Su Borough classifies area as Public Recreation Area fall 2002

2. Community & Advisory Committee Meetings

1st Community Workshop March 2003

Advisory Committee formed

2nd Community Workshop, with Advisory Committee May

3. Prepare Management Plan

Prepare Draft Plan summer

4. Draft Review & Approval

a. Release plan for community review Late Aug

b. Public Workshop Sept 4, 2003

c. Revise plan based on public comment September 2003

d. Present for approval by:

- Advisory Committee – Approved as amended Oct. 2, 2003

- Talkeetna Community Council November 14, 2003

- Mat-Su Borough Park & Rec & Trails Advisory Board November 24, 2003

- MSB Planning Commission January 19, 2004

- MSB Assembly April 6, 2004

5. Implementation

Spring 2004 & ongoing

TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN

TALKEETNA LAKES FEATURES AND USE

a. Location and Overview of character

Talkeetna Lakes, often referred to as *XYZ and Tigger Lakes*, are located about 1.5 miles southeast of downtown Talkeetna, east and south of the fork of Spur and Comsat Roads. The Talkeetna Lakes recreation area discussed in this plan cover approximately 1040 acres, area roughly 1 by 2 miles. (For comparison, Kincaid Park in Anchorage is approximately 1400 acres.)

The XYZ Lakes are unique because they are easily accessible by road, yet largely undeveloped and natural.

Both local residents and visitors use the lakes and surrounding lands for a variety of outdoor activities including hiking, skiing, mushing, camping, fishing, swimming, canoeing and orienteering. Bear, moose, beaver, waterfowl are a few of the wildlife species that live in the area; trout are found in the lakes.

The population of Talkeetna is approximately 800 and the community serves as the social and business center for the area's population.

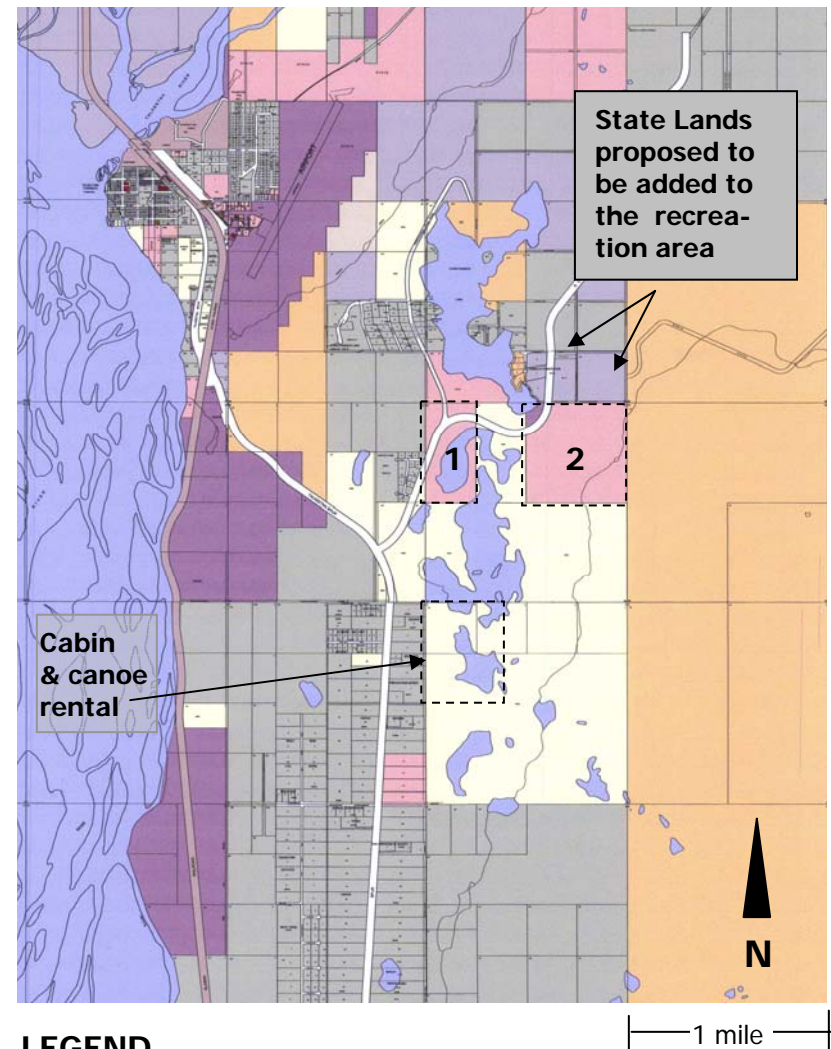


b. Land ownership

The land surrounding Talkeetna Lakes is experiencing a steady increase in residential use, both as primary residences and second homes. The odds are good that, over time, the Talkeetna Lakes Recreation area will be one of the community's few remaining large, undeveloped parcels. Ownership of the land surrounding the recreation area is summarized below:

- ◆ The Mat-Su Borough owns land within the recreation area
- ◆ *To the east:* owned by Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI)
- ◆ *To the north:*
 - A patchwork of ownerships: CIRI, the State of Alaska, individual private owners, the Alaska Mental Health Land Trust, and the University of Alaska.
 - State-owned parcels south of Comsat Road (identified as 1 and 2 on map) are being transferred to MSB ownership. Area 1, owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), will likely transfer in the next year. Area 2, owned by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF), will transfer at the same time, but the agency will retain rights to the rock quarry and currently inactive gravel pit on this parcel.
- ◆ *To the south:* privately-owned
- ◆ *To the west:* The Borough operates a transfer facility on land at the northwest end of the recreation area. Other lands are in private ownership. One adjacent owner has a Borough permit for a canoe and cabin-rental business on land between X and Y Lakes within the recreation area.

Section line public access easements ring the recreation area's outer boundaries. The section line easement crossing through the center of the area is recommended by this plan to be vacated.



LEGEND

Gold:	CIRI	Grey:	Private	Dk Purple	Other public
Pink:	State	Yellow:	MSB	Lt. Purple	University
Lt. Brown	Mental Health				

Areas marked 1 and 2 will transfer to Mat-Su Borough ownership (see text at left). This map was produced by the Mat-Su Borough Office of Information Technology/GIS on May 8, 2003

c. Physical environment

Topography around the larger lakes in the western half of the recreation area is relatively flat to rolling with a mix of marshy and better drained soil.

The land in the east half of the area marks the lower, western edge of the Bartlett Hills. The eastern portion has variable, glacial-created topography with a complex pattern of mounds, ridges, and flat areas and several large, glacial erratics hidden among the trees. A high ridge (at appx. 500 ft.) running N/S offers good views of Denali.

The complex shapes of the lakes create an enjoyable interconnected waterway system. The shorelines are a mix of low angle and relatively steep forested slopes and wetlands. A small stream flows through the recreation area from the north into Fish Lake, located 2 miles south of the boundary. The larger lakes (X, Y & Z) are not connected by streams.

Vegetation includes a mix of forested and marshy areas. Birch and spruce are the dominant trees. The forest is relatively open and walkable in some areas; thick with devil's club and brush in other sections.

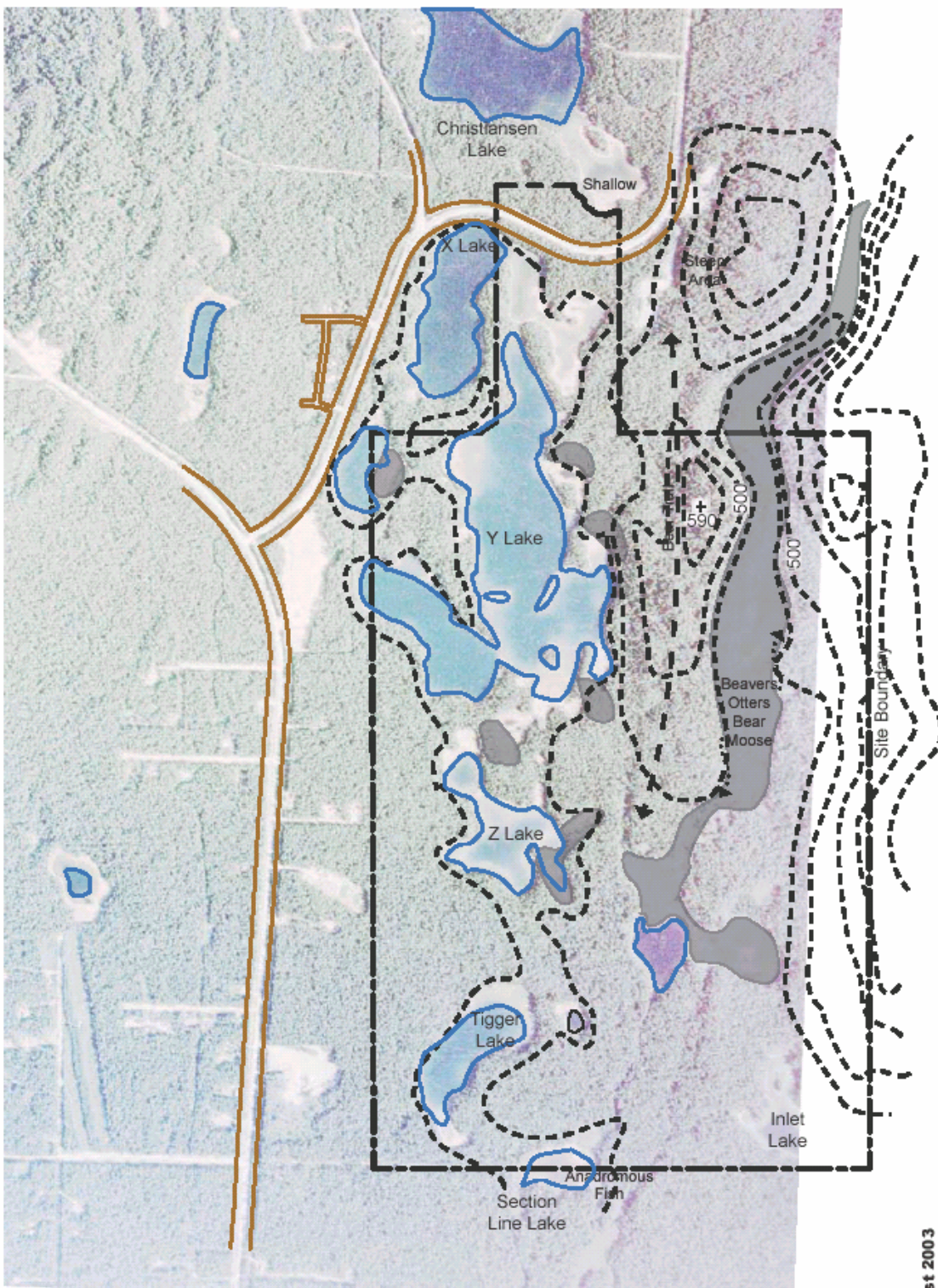
Wildlife found in the area includes beaver, otter, bear, moose and fox. A bear trail follows the above-mentioned ridge-line. Over 100 species of birds pass through or reside in the area, including waterfowl, perching birds and raptors. Among the waterfowl often seen (and heard) include scoters, long-tail ducks, loons and grebes.



Glacial erratic near the lakes



Rolling hills on the east side



- Legend**
-  Wetland Area
 -  Contours (50' Intervals)



Wildlife, Vegetation and Topography
Talkeetna Lakes



Master Plan - August 2003

d. Use, Users, Facilities Today

Facilities: trails, access points, parking

There are several spots along the road at the north end of the recreation area currently used for parking. These lead by short trails to the lakes and provide access for canoeing, fishing, camping or swimming. Parking space is limited to several small, informal roadside pullouts. The primary pull-out is located on the junction of Comsat Road and Christensen Lake Road.

There are small game trails in the area, but no real dedicated trails. In the winter, dog mushers and snow machines establish an informal north/south winter trail system that parallels the Spur Road, and crosses frozen lakes and wetlands.

Users: Who? How many? How often?

Currently the borough owns all the land inside the recreation area. There are no in-holdings, or houses in the area. As discussed further below, the borough has authorized one local commercial business that rents canoes and tent cabins.

On summer weekends, up to 4 vehicles are generally parked around the north edge of the recreation area, with an estimated average of a dozen summer users/day.

TALKEETNA LAKES – Existing Use				
ACTIVITY	WHERE	Mostly Local	50/50	Mostly Non-local
Winter Use				
Skiing	On frozen lakes	X		
Winter camping	Lake edges	X		
Mushing	Informal north/south trail	X		
Ice fishing	Tigger Lake, X, Y		X	
Snow-machining	East edge of 'Y', playing on frozen lakes; occasional "drive through" traffic on north south Trail	X		
Snowshoeing	Entire area	X		
Ice Skating	All lakes	X		
Summer Use				
Berry picking	Near landfill	X		
Canoeing: commercial rentals	Concentrated on X, Y			X
private	All lakes	X		
Fishing	Tigger Lake, X, Y		X	
ATV	South end of the rec area, along 'unimproved' dirt trail and E/W section line easement almost to Inlet Lake.		X	
Hiking	Minimal summer trails, so not much use, some exploring on east side	X		
Camping	Around Y & Tigger Lakes, on islands	X		
Swimming	Small lake west of Y	X		
Wildlife Viewing	East ½	X		
Hunting (Moose)	East ½		X	
Orienteering	East ½	X		
Bird-watching	Around lakes	X		

This table is based on input gathered at the spring community workshops.

The area is big enough that several people can canoe at once while others are camping or fishing without feeling crowded. X and Y Lakes are more known and used by non-locals. The area is more popular in winter than in summer, but, as one person said, *'you always see people in the water on the weekends in the summer.'*

X, Y and Tigger Lakes have been stocked by ADF&G for the past 25-30 years – this has significantly contributed to increased user numbers during this time.

Commercial Activities: Cabin and Canoe-rental business

A local landowner operates a canoe and cabin rental business allowed under a permit from the borough. The operation is centered between X and Y Lakes, adjoining land he owns to the west (*see map on page 7*). The business includes two wall-tent cabins, eight canoes and two flat-bottomed fishing boats. Most of his clients are from Anchorage, and include women's fly-fishing courses. The cabins are booked fairly consistently on the weekends through the summer; they are closed in the winter. On average, he rents four canoes and/or boats per day in the peak summer months. The use is non-exclusive, meaning other recreationists are free to use the area.

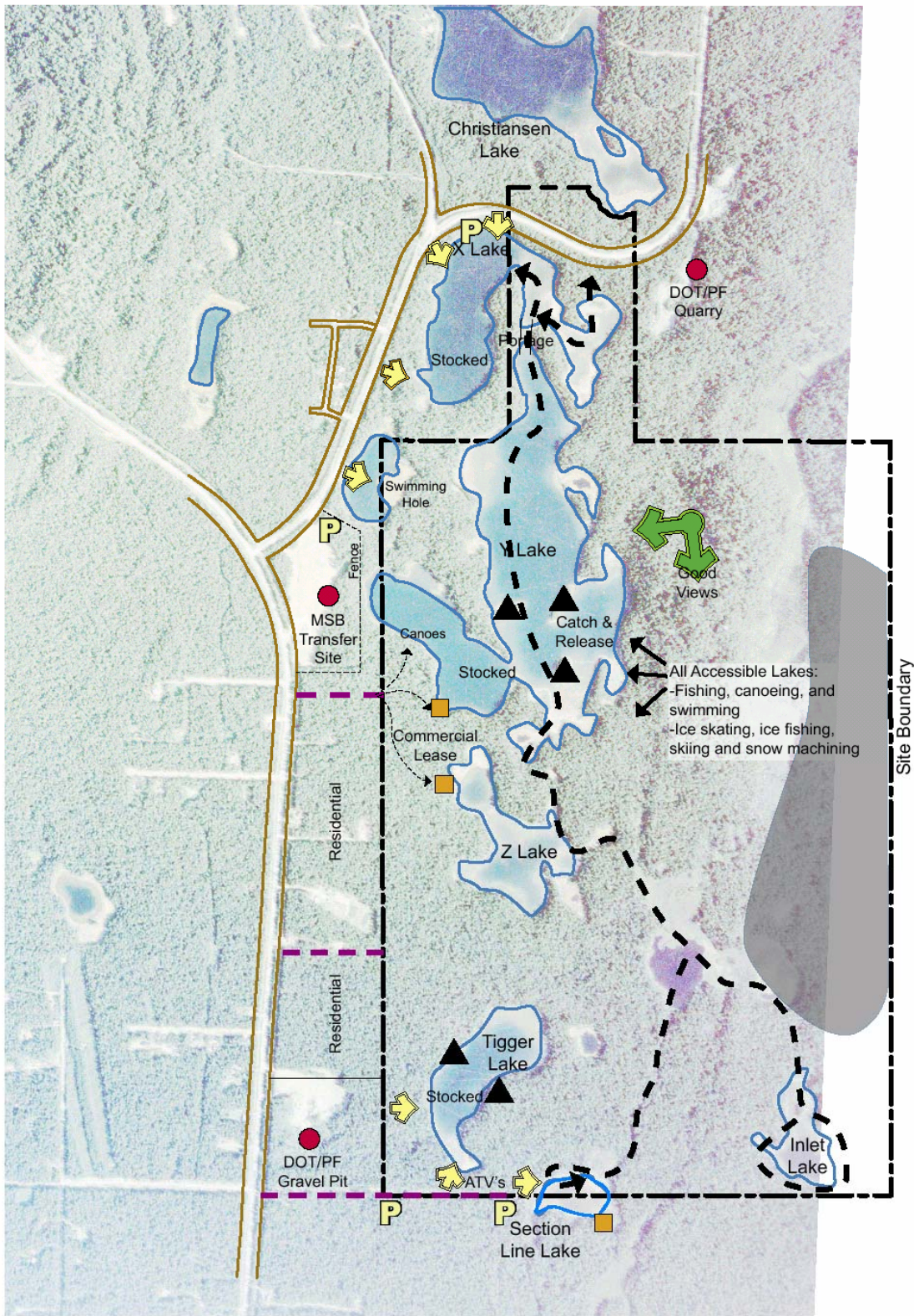


Evidence of Use

Most people at the spring workshops agreed that the area is relatively 'clean' and 'pristine,' but several noted some evidence of use. For example, some trash and fire-pits can be seen near the bend in the road at the north end of the recreation area. One person noted seeing two metal oil drums dumped in the lakes. There are an increasing number of canoes chained to trees around the lakes (mostly owned by locals).

There is also increasing evidence of ATV use around the southern end of the recreation area at the end of the short road off of the Spur Road. In the last five years, as visitor numbers to Talkeetna have increased, so has traffic to the lakes. As one person said, *'People are looking for things to do.'*

A locally installed sign (pictured above) along the road at the most visited, northern end of the recreation area warns that the area is public access but motorized use is prohibited. Currently virtually no motorboats travel on the lakes.

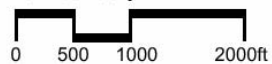


Legend

- Hunting Area
- Primary Public Access
- Popular Camping Site
- Parking
- Facilities - See Notes
- Cabin
- Winter Trail
- Section Line Boundary



Existing Uses and Issues
Talkeetna Lakes



Master Plan - October 2003

TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT

Participants at the spring workshops agreed that the goals listed to the right should guide future action and use in the Talkeetna Lakes Recreation Area. The rest of this section presents actions to achieve these goals.

Strategies for Specific Issues:

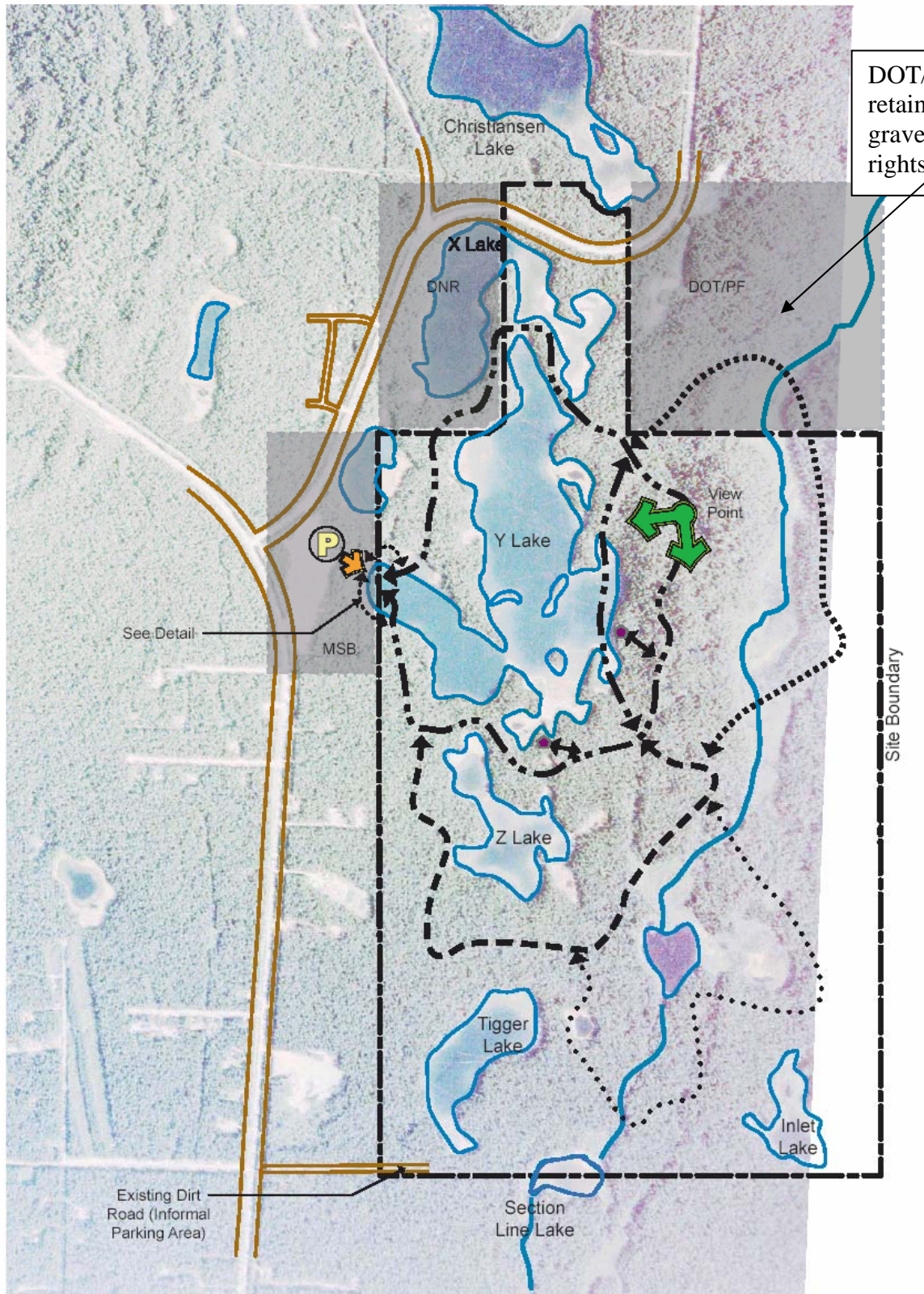
To achieve the desired goals, the following issues will need to be addressed:

Issue #1	Maintain largely natural character
Issue #2	Parking
Issue #3	Trail System
Issue #4	Day use & Camping Facilities
Issue #5	Commercial Recreation
Issue #6	Management & Maintenance

Strategies to address these issues are outlined on the following pages.

TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA GOALS

- ◆ **Maintain existing, largely natural and undeveloped character of the area** - in particular around the shores of the area's lakes.
- ◆ **Aim to continue the low-moderate level of recreation use currently found at the area.** Continue to use other, more developed public recreation areas (e.g., Christiansen Lake beach) to meet the need for activities that bring higher use.
- ◆ **Provide limited new facilities or other improvements** – primarily small parking areas, trailheads and trails
- ◆ **Prohibit motorized use in the park** except as authorized in sections 1 and 3



DOT/PF will retain rock gravel extraction rights in this area

Legend

- Access Points (with portable toilets)
- Parking
- Picnic Tables

- Phase 1 Trail
- Phase 2 Trail
- Phase 3 Trail
- Phase 4 Trail

- Areas to be Added to Park (All or in Part)
- Stream



Recommended Park Improvements

Talkeetna Lakes



Master Plan - October 2003

Issue #1: MAINTAIN NATURAL CHARACTER

A. BACKGROUND

Because resident population and visitation to the region continue to increase, the natural character of the Talkeetna Lakes can only be maintained by stewardship and good management. If carefully planned, improvements like parking, a trail system, limited day use, can allow new and traditional uses to take place, while protecting the area's attractive character. This section presents an overview of strategies intended to protect the area's existing character; subsequent sections give details.

B. SUMMARY OF RECREATION AREA POLICIES

- **Recreation Area Boundaries** Work with DOT/PF and DNR to transfer the two state parcels that adjoin the recreation area to the Borough, and then add these areas, as well as a portion of the existing MSB transfer site parcel, to the recreation area.
- **Access** Create a single, primary access point into the area with clearly marked trailheads; de-emphasize other access points.
- **Day-use** Provide limited day use facilities - picnic tables, trash cans.
- **Avoid clearing vegetation** Minimize clearing to protect natural habitat and to buffer noise from road
- **Parking** Provide new, parking area
 - locate in areas already impacted as much as possible
 - create safe parking (e.g., so users don't have to walk across road carrying a canoe)

Issue #1

PUBLIC OPINION SUMMARY

Those at the meetings agreed that 'maintaining the natural character' of the recreation area is a primary goal. However, some at first felt this could only be attained by 'doing nothing.' As the discussion continued, most came to agree that demand for use of the area will increase, and therefore the character of the area can only be maintained by making an effort to guide this use.



- **Shorelines/Fishing** Protect and restore shorelines
 Talkeetna Lakes is a popular place to fish and will become more accessible as trails are improved. Actions are needed, outlined below, to protect lakeshores from damage tied to growing fishing and related recreation use. (facilities section has details)
 - Build a dock for canoe launching
 - Reduce impacts on shore lines by encouraging fishing and other water-oriented summer activities to happen on the water, e.g., in canoes or float tubes, rather than from on the shore.
 - Generally minimize development on lake front (so, for example, people paddling in the summer do not see facilities); however if use grows to a point where damage to lake front vegetation is extensive, put in boardwalks and/or additional floating docks.

- **Camping** Control impacts
 - Camping and fires are prohibited until proper sites are established.
 - Woodcutting is prohibited. (see section 4 for details)

- **Trails** Develop 'limited access,' non-motorized, multi-purpose trails.
 - *Trail width:* wide enough for groomed skate skiing
 - *Trail Use:* accommodate variety of users (skiers, mushers, etc.) while keeping impact to natural setting low
 - *Trail Location:* establish new trails in loops that stays within the recreation area so they do not pass onto adjacent private land, and so trails do not encourage motorized uses
 - *Phased approach:* Introduce trails in phases over the next several years, allowing responsible use patterns to develop while limiting impact to the area. Establish new parking area & trail head with the first phase of trails.

"I personally want to leave the area alone, but I know others want ski trails. The biggest thing for me is making sure heavy motorized use stays out. I have a problem with clearing a big swath trail in an area that is now natural. I grew up near what was called a 'natural area' – but this could not be called 'natural' if wide trails are put in. But, if the issue of motorized access could be solved, I could live with [some wider trails]."

Prohibit motorized use except as authorized below:

Snow-machines: Prohibited except for maintenance and official use (e.g. for trail grooming).

ATV's, Off Road Vehicles: Prohibited except for maintenance and official use.

Motorboats: Gas motors are prohibited. Electric motors are permissible (they are quiet and do not pollute).

Aircraft: prohibited to the extent permitted under state and federal law

○ **Equestrian and Bicycles**

Horses: Unless gravel or other fill is brought in to harden trails, horse use in the recreation will damage summer walking trails, as well as winter ski and mushing trails. Consequently, in the near term, equestrian use in the recreation area will be prohibited. In the future, if approved by the Talkeetna Community Council and the Mat-Su Borough, and if the equestrian community finds resources to develop additional trails surfaced to support equestrian and other uses, equestrian uses should be allowed.

Bicycles: If trails are available that can support bike use without damage, personal use during the summer is permitted. As is the case at Kincaid Park in Anchorage, restrictions will be required so bike use only is permitted during times when trails are dry and in good condition. Commercial and winter use would remain prohibited."

○ **Education and enforcement**

Develop signage and education programs to explain rules; work with community and the Mat-Su Borough to enforce rules (see more in implementation section).

Issue #2: PARKING

A. BACKGROUND

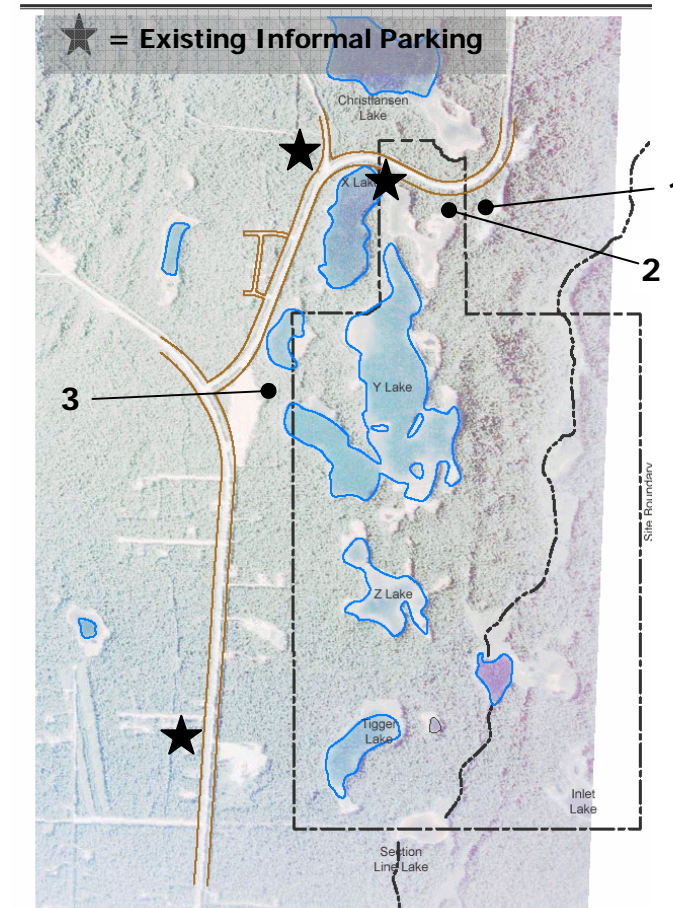
The following criteria were established to guide the selection of an appropriate entrance to the recreation area:

- *Small* - keep the volume of visitors low – “we don’t want this to become busy like Christensen Lake”
- *Safe* - keep parking away from dangerous corner on Comsat Road Phase-out across-road parking.
“Kids come up the steep edge of the road – it’s very risky.”
- *Minimum impact* – if possible, establish parking in an area already cleared of vegetation.
- *Accessible canoe launch* – Locate parking where it will be easy to launch canoes. The currently launch points require a road crossing and or travel up and down a steep bank.
- *Central Location* - provide good access to rec. area amenities

ALTERNATIVES Three alternatives were considered (see map):

	Benefits	Problems
Option 1 <i>DOT-owned gravel pit northeast of the area boundary.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Already cleared of vegetation - Pits appear to be abandoned - Parking pattern / informal trailhead already established here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DOT&PF owns land, wants to retain future option for gravel extraction and will not allow parking in these pits; DOT&PF is also concerned about liability issues.
Option 2 <i>between Comsat Road and the east finger of ‘X’ lake.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Near existing parking areas and road - Provides safe parking - Near existing canoe launch - On MSB land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires clearing of vegetation - Steep slope down to lake
Option 3 <i>On old landfill site</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recently cleared of vegetation (alder has grown up in cleared area) - Safe location - Easy canoe launch nearby - Trailhead in location that will deter motorized use (see trails section) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires establishment of new use pattern - Shifts some use to a new portion of the rec. area

SELECTED



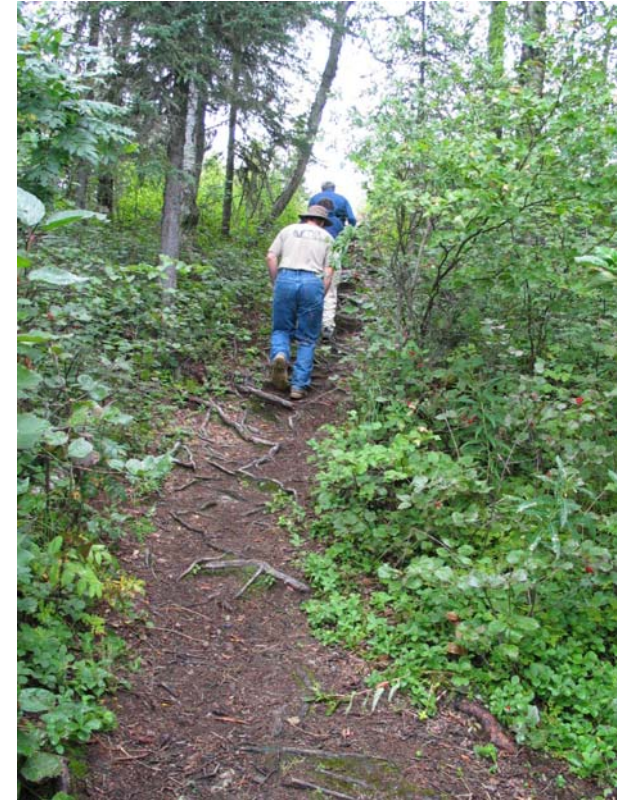
B. RECREATION AREA PARKING POLICIES

Option 3, at the old landfill site, most closely matches the above criteria. Option 1 has some advantages, but is not supported by DOT&PF staff, and has a less central and accessible location. The old land fill site provides a central location for parking and access, uses already cleared land, has mild topography and allows good canoe launch access to lakes. Option 3 may impact the existing cabin & canoe rental business. While this will bring more activity to this area, it could also be beneficial to the business, bringing more people to rent canoes and cabins. The presence of the business might also serve as a deterrent to irresponsible activity.

An unstructured access and parking area has developed at the south end of the recreation area, along the section line that leads to Section Line lake. ADF&G has placed bollards and made improvements to this area, with the goal of restraining ATV use. Work to date has been ineffective, and consequently each summer has seen an expansion of ATV trails. The community will work with ADF&G to set a boundary on ATV use in this area, and to enforce this boundary.

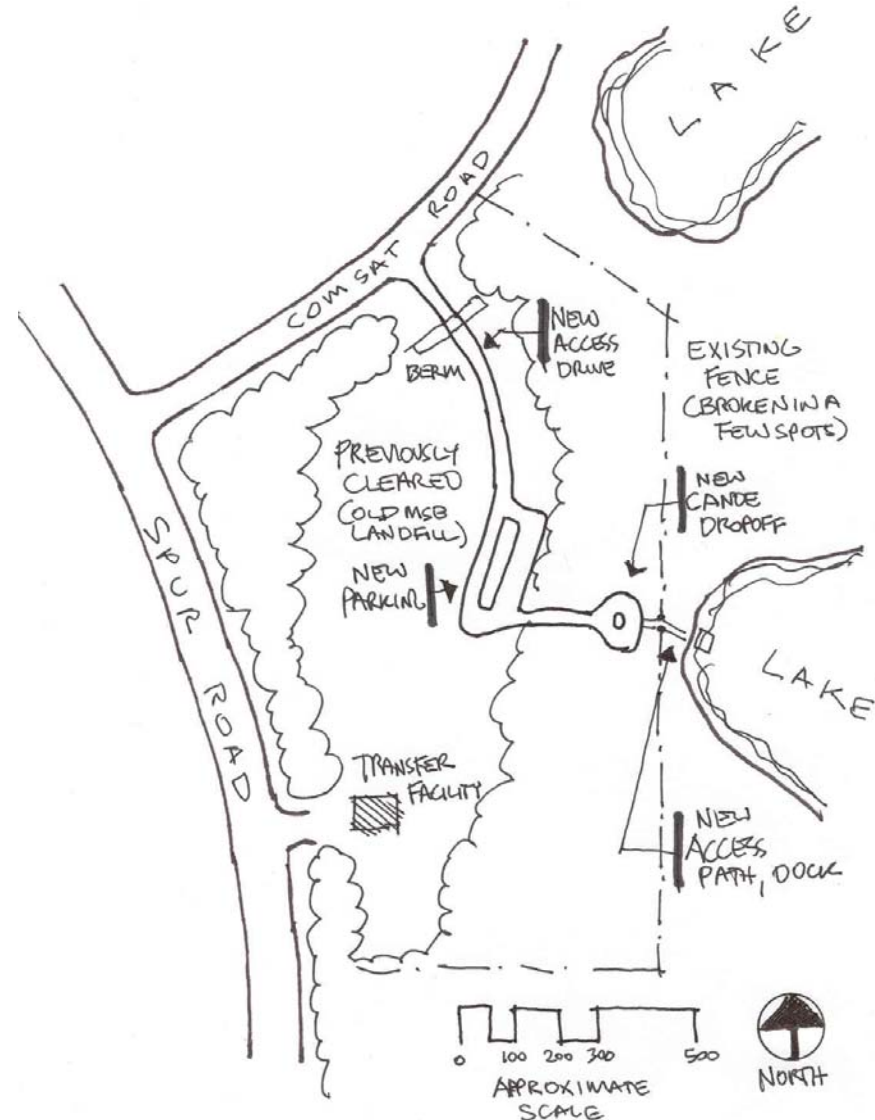


Steep, eroding trail at the Comsat-Christiansen Lake Rd informal parking area; Pat Owens clings to Chris Mannix for fear of sliding into the lake....



C. PARKING/ENTRY AREA DESIGN DETAILS – New Parking Area and Trail Head

- *Parking turnaround* – Design parking (see diagram) so that vehicles can use a ‘turn-around’ to unload a canoe relatively near the lake, return to park their car, and then walk back to their canoe. This will limit parking to the area already cleared, and minimize clearing closer to the lake.
- *Use existing fence to control access* – An older fence exists in this area, remaining from the time this area was used as a landfill. Create an opening in this fence that works for pedestrians, but not for ATVs, for example using a set of bollards. Portions of the existing fence have fallen over, and need to be repaired.
- *Accessibility* - The parking area should provide a wheelchair accessible entry to the recreation area and access to water.
- *Camping* - Camping (tent and RV) will be prohibited in the parking and entry area – signs will be posted to this effect.
- *Signage* - Add an information kiosk/signpost in the entry area that in a clear, friendly way, sets out park rules. (see appendix for preliminary version of this sign)



Issue #3: TRAIL SYSTEM

A. BACKGROUND

Trail use has long been an important part of Talkeetna life, including trails for hiking, skiing, snow machines, ATVs and dog mushing. Many of these “public” trails are actually not on public lands. Increasingly, these important trails are disappearing, for example, when private lands are subdivided, sold and then developed, or when Right-of-Ways (ROWs) used for trails get built out as roads, or when private owners prohibit trail use. While there is an effort in the community and throughout the Borough to maintain these trails, the process is difficult, costly, and will not be able to save all the trails the community has long enjoyed.

As a result of these changes, large blocks of publicly owned lands, like the Borough land at Talkeetna Lakes, will be increasingly important as places for public trail activities. Such a trail system can be valuable both for residents and visitors. Making the Talkeetna Lakes trail system work will require careful design, phased expansion and ongoing education, monitoring and enforcement.

B. TRAIL POLICIES

- *Focus on non-motorized trail use* - select right trail locations and widths to accommodate strolling, hiking, dog mushing, classic & skate style cross country skiing. Mountain bikes and equestrian uses may be allowed if hardened trails are available.
- *Prohibit motorized use except as authorized below:*
 - Snow-machines: Prohibited except for maintenance and official use.
 - ATV's, Off Road Vehicles: Prohibited except for maintenance and official use.
 - Motorboats: Gas motors are prohibited. Electric motors are permissible (they are quiet and do not pollute).
 - Aircraft: prohibited to the extent permitted under state and federal law

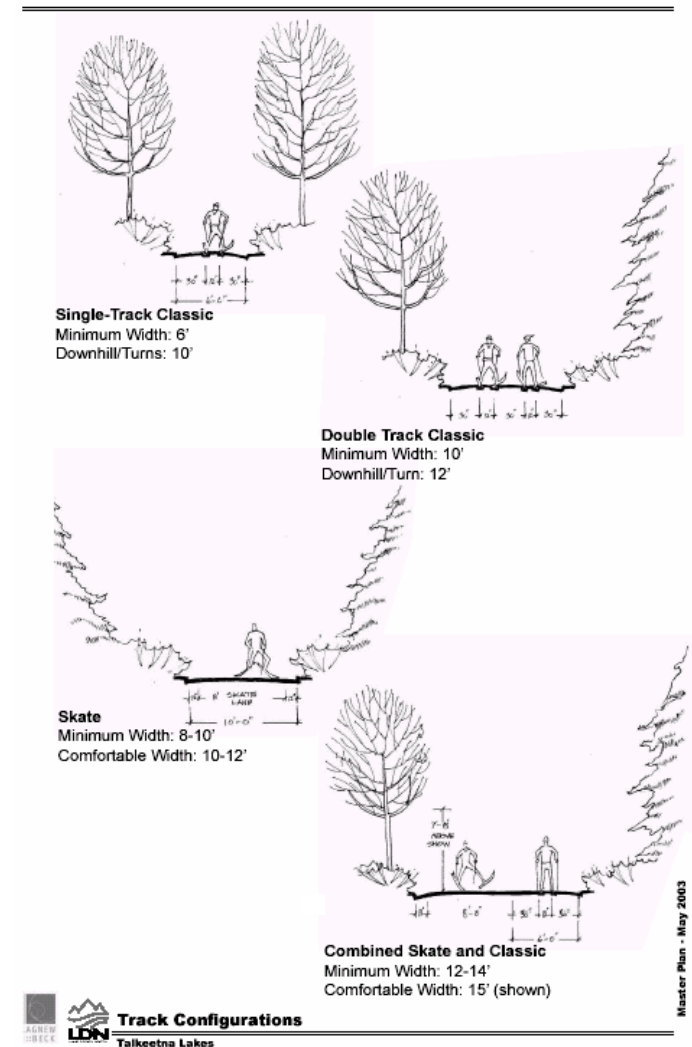
Issue #3

PUBLIC OPINION SUMMARY

At the planning meetings, most agreed that some type of trail system would benefit the community as a place for residents and visitors to enjoy cross-country skiing, dog-mushing and walking.

There were various opinions about an acceptable trail width - many were concerned that the construction of a trail would open the area to increased motorized use. In the end, however, most agreed that the construction of trails and trailheads, with signs and blocks to ATVs, would guide the future of the area in a way that would most benefit the local community and protect the natural habitat.

- *Trail Locations/Form* - Design trails to discourage motorized access (see drawing). Do not build new trails that cross through the area, as this would make it easier for ATVs and snow machines to enter the recreation area; instead, focus trail building on loops that stay within the area.
- *Range of Trail Types* - Provide trails of varying length and difficulty, to meet the interests of a variety of trail users. Locate trails to give views of the lakes and over the surrounding landscape.
- *Phasing* - (See map on page 16, table on following page) – Gradually expand system as resources allow. Use lessons learned from initial phases to guide subsequent trail system expansion.
- *Controlling ATVs* – As noted above, ATV's are prohibited. Use a combination of education, blockades, a closed trail system (no external trail links), phased trail construction, and natural barriers to limit use (see more in design details)
- *Trail Widths* – Primary cross-country ski trails will be designed for both skating and classical skiing. While ski trails in established cross country ski areas (e.g. Kincaid) measure 18-22 feet, for the Talkeetna Lakes recreation area, ski trails will be 14' wide. Depending on use and community desires, these widths may be expanded in the future. This width provides trails big enough to be safe and groomable, while retaining the natural character sought by the community. Other, narrower trails, will be developed for walking or classic skiing. (See table following page.)
- *North/South Existing Winter Trail* – Retain but don't improve the existing informal route (see existing uses map, page 14). Allow minor, low visibility improvements including grooming to this trail. Over time the community needs to define and secure a better North-South multi-use trail. The new Spur Road trail may be used this way, but this use is not legal.



TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN – TRAILS SUMMARY

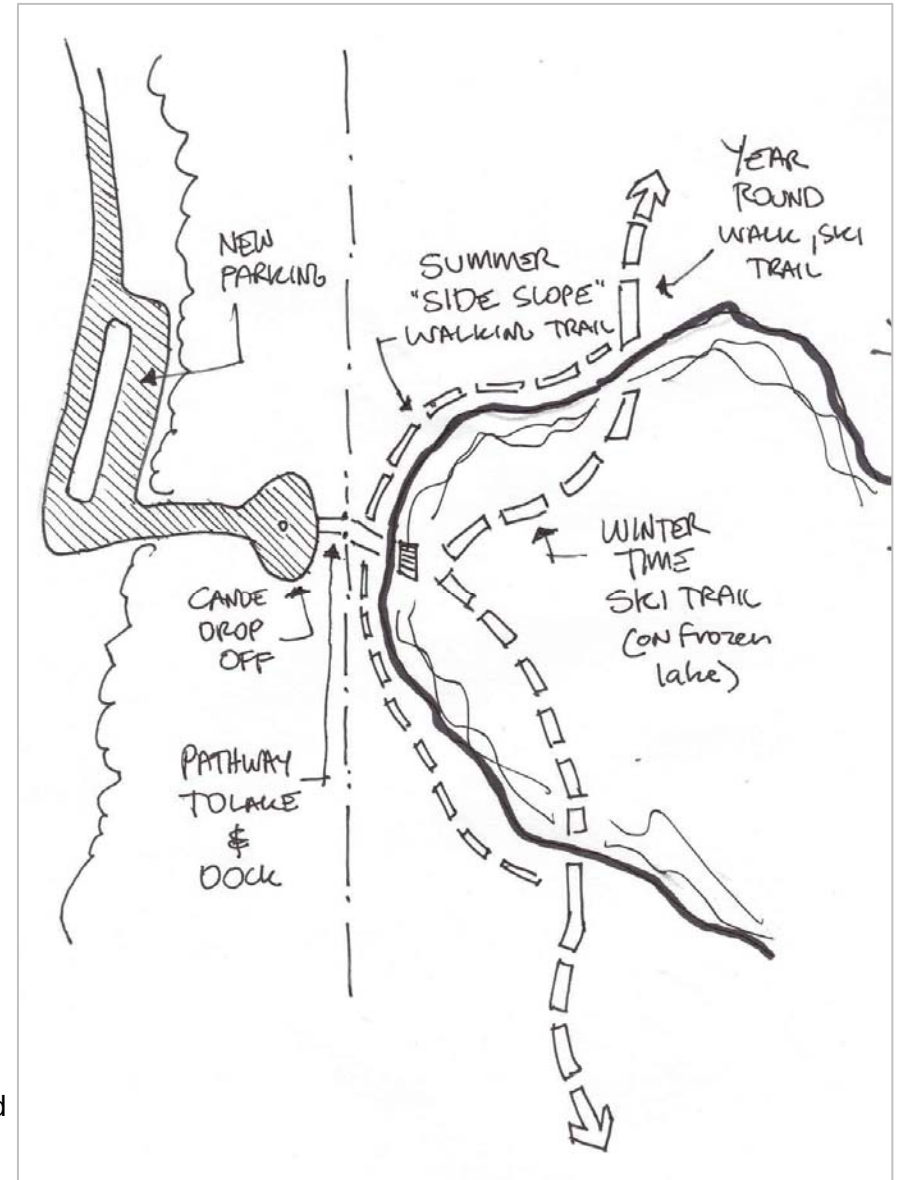
<i>Timing</i>	<i>Location/Name*</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Restrictions</i>	<i>Use/Notes</i>
PHASE 1	Lake Access Trail – from parking to Y Lake dock	very easy	14' wide; 300 feet long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No motorized vehicles ○ No bikes unless trail surface & conditions allow use without damage ○ No horses unless hardened trail is developed 	Handicapped accessible, hard packed gravel surface
	Lake Loop - portions cross water	easy to moderate	14', except at trailhead, which is narrower; 5-6 km long	<i>same as Lake Access Trail</i>	Groomable mixed technique ski loop; summer walking & potentially biking trail; offers attractive views, varied terrain
	Ridge Loop hiking trail – branch of Lake Loop, climbs to ridge	moderate	4-6' wide; 2 km long	<i>same as Lake Access Trail</i>	Summer walking trail, available for winter classic skiing
PHASE 2	'Z' Lake Loop	Very easy	14' wide; 2 km long	<i>same as Lake Access Trail</i>	Good beginner ski loop
PHASE 3	Outer Porcupine Loop –	Moderate to difficult	Width: near term: 4-6' later: 14' wide; 3-4 km long	<i>same as Lake Access Trail</i>	Challenging, terrain; needed before the area can host regional or statewide cross country events
PHASE 4 <i>optional</i>	<i>Tigger Lake Loop</i>	moderate	14'	<i>same as Lake Access Trail</i>	Delay opening a second rec area access point until ATV use is under control

*Names are preliminary, working titles; community needs to pick actual names

EXISTING	<i>North South winter trail</i>		Varies, informal		
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C. TRAIL DESIGN DETAILS

- *Trail Route Design Process*
The plan presented in this document (page 16) shows only a general concept for trail routes; actual routes will be worked out in the field.
- *Trail Design – Relationship to Commercial Permittee*
Use trail design and signage to direct public use away from permittee's trails (although access is not prohibited – permit is non-exclusive)
- *Trail Design - Use Of Natural Barriers*
Natural barriers, such as wetlands, trails across lakes, trails on side slopes, are used to discourage use by ATV's. As the illustrations below and at right show, the summer trail is narrow and follows a side slope. In winter, after freeze up, wider trails can be groomed across the lake, linking to the full size trails that start where the side slope trails end.



C. TRAIL DESIGN DETAILS (CONTINUED)

Trail width - Details

The drawing on p 26 shows common widths for cross-country trails. Considerations in trail width include impact on Recreation area character, safety, and trail grooming needs. Currently Talkeetna area groomers drag a 6' wide groomer behind a snow machine. In the future, the community hopes to partner with the Mat-Su Borough to get a mechanical groomer. For this plan, ski trail widths of 14' are planned, with the option to increase widths in the future. During the summer, grass will grow on these trails, creating the sense of a 2-3' wide walking route in a vegetated, small country lane (see BLM Ridge Loop photo). In addition, narrower trails 4-6 wide, will be developed for walking or classic skiing.

Anchorage ski trail photos are provided by the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage.



This small path was created by 4 wheelers in the section line lake area; the length being measured is approximately 9' wide



BLM Ridge Loop in Anchorage – example of tree removal at 12' clearance



Arlene's Way Loop at Kincaid Park in Anchorage – 18'; cleared area in foreground is a small, turf covered memorial seating area



Heavily used Besh Loop at Hillside Park in Anchorage --22' wide, imported surface material

Issue#4: DAY-USE & CAMPING FACILITIES

A. BACKGROUND

Currently the rec area has no day-use or established camping facilities. Camping, picnicking and similar uses occur where people find a small clearing, at the edge of a lake or open area, or where a fallen log provides a seat. While wanting to maintain the existing natural character of the area, the community agrees that limited day-use facilities (trashcans, picnic tables and benches) can help visitors and locals to enjoy the recreation area concentrate use at a few selected points. These facilities can also help guide use to areas deemed more appropriate, e.g. an informal picnic area set back from the lakefront.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Facilities at the entrance to the recreation area* – provide a sign with map and recreation area rules, toilets, provide a small dock at the end of the primary lake access trail for canoe launching. In general, as outlined under issue #1, the goal for this recreation area is maintain a natural feel with relatively minimal facilities. Users are urged to use canoes or floats rather than walk the lake edge. In the future, however, if use grows in the entry area and if the lake bank is being damaged by this use, provide picnic tables to help concentrate use, and if needed, a boardwalk along the water's edge to reduce impact on lakeside vegetation.

- *Facilities within the recreation area* – provide picnic tables and benches (but not trash cans) in a handful of sites within the area (2-5 areas initially).

Specific recommended sites are listed below:

- One or two benches at 2-3 spots along the planned hiking trail, with the sites selected in the field at good view points. Likely locations include the top of the knoll (see viewpoint shown on map p. 16), and at two points midway between this knoll and the recreation entry area, in locations with filtered views of the lake.
- Two–three picnic tables limited to sites at the west end of Y lake near the park entry.

Issue #4

PUBLIC OPINION SUMMARY

Participants in the spring planning meetings agreed that formalized camping, such as that offered by the US Forest Service, should not be offered in the XYZ Lakes recreation area. *"It's too soon for something like this – maybe when Talkeetna has a parks department to maintain it."*

However, the group agreed that the existing level of informal camping is acceptable, if garbage cans and signs are provided to alleviate litter problems.

The group agreed that a few picnic tables and benches, made from local materials and carefully sited, will provide a few concentrated places for visitors and residents to picnic or rest, protecting the rest of the area.

- *Camping* - Camping and fires are prohibited until proper sites are established. Once such sites are available, the rules below will apply. In addition, add an entry sign explaining leave-no-trace camping strategies.
 - 2 night limit
 - no camping within 150 feet of access/trail/water body
 - no fires in summer
 - no wood cutting

C. DAY-USE DESIGN DETAILS

- *Benches and tables* – With the right design, new benches or tables can be added in the recreation area in a very unobtrusive way. Specific strategies:
 - Use local designs and local materials, rather than “off the shelf” products.
 - Provide facilities that blend into the natural landscape. For example, create a bench from an existing down tree, so that it appears almost to be a fortunate find rather than something imported. Done right, this design strategy can provide imaginative, aesthetically pleasing (but still functional) facilities that become part of the pleasure of visiting the recreation area.
 - Locate picnic areas with good views, but away from shore line and out of view of canoers.

Issue #5: COMMERCIAL RECREATION

A. BACKGROUND

The Talkeetna Lakes recreation area is not primarily a destination for commercial recreation. The area currently has one small commercial operator, permitted by the Borough, but this activity blends well into the existing pattern of use in the area.

Christensen Lake, directly to the north, is already a destination for high volume recreation activities, including docking of planes used by commercial operators. Over time, if residential and tourism growth continue, there may be a need for new lake-oriented commercial uses in the Talkeetna Lakes area, such as lake front camping and rentals. This management plan concludes that, while this may be needed in the community, such activities should occur in a location other than Talkeetna Lakes. In particular, the Talkeetna Lakes area should not be open to individual or commercial motorized use or equestrian use (such as jet boat rentals, or commercial equestrian tours). More planning is needed to better consider the best community locations for such uses.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allow continuation of the existing level of commercial use. Elements of this use which ensure it is compatible with goals for the recreation area include:
 - a non-exclusive use
 - small scale, low impact
 - provides canoe rentals that open the area up to a broader array of users
 - creates an informal management presence in the recreation area – someone with a stake in watching over the character of the area, reporting on problems
- Evaluate future requests for commercial use (extensions of existing or new) on a case by case basis, consistent with the intent described above.

TALKEETNA LAKES RECREATION AREA PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

BACKGROUND

In order for the recreation area to successfully accommodate multiple users, with trails and day-use facilities, while remaining a clean, natural setting, a plan for monitoring, management and maintenance is essential. This short section gives a preliminary structure for organizing this effort. At this point, this information provides a general framework. Subjects covered in the section are listed below:

1. MONITORING

- camping
- snow machining

2. DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION – SETTING PRIORITIES

- Trails
- Parking
- Signs - directional (maps) & instructional (no ATVs)
- Day-use facilities
- Shoreline restoration?
- Block unwanted access points

3. ONGOING OPERATIONS

- maintain trails
- groom ski trails
- collect garbage, clean toilets, minor repairs
- enforcement



1. MONITORING & RESPONDING TO CHANGE

This draft plan allows for the future possibility of camping, biking and equestrian uses in the recreation area. Camping has traditionally occurred in the area at low levels, and has resulted in (mostly) minimal impacts on the area's character. Biking and horseback riding have not occurred due to lack of trails.

In the future, if these uses are permitted, monitoring programs will be needed to ensure impacts are minimal. Faced with similar situations, some state and federal public land managers have adopted systems that set up a monitoring process, tied to an action plan (e.g., Federal "Level of Acceptable Change"). Under these programs, criteria are established that identify existing conditions - for example, the amount of use of a campground. The next step is to describe specific indicators of change that might alter the character of the campground (e.g., trampling of vegetation, removal of all near by firewood, or frequent crowding). These conditions are then tied to a course of action (e.g., "if vegetation is being trampled, and erosion is an increasing problem, then we will first increase education, and if that is not enough to reduce the problem we will restrict allowed use").

In the future, if camping, biking and equestrian activities are permitted, Talkeetna Lakes should use a similar, albeit simplified strategy, as outlined below.

ACTIVITY	TYPICAL RECENT USE	INDICATOR OF CHANGE	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
Camping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at most 2-3 campsites in use on a busy weekend night - almost all local users, staying for 1-2 nights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant increase in number of campers using the area, compared to recent years - Traditional campsites begin to show noticeable evidence of camping: fire rings, notable cleared areas, broken branches, trampled vegetation, most nearby firewood removed; new campsites being developed creating some or all of the impacts - Growing numbers of campers are staying for longer periods (more than 3 days, including people who are staying for the season) - Growing litter, human waste problems 	<p>Step 1: "harden" a few campsites – with permanent fire rings; established tent areas</p> <p>Step 2: limit number of allowed campers</p> <p>Step 3: prohibit camping.</p>
Bikes Horses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temporary ruts in trails from bikes - Conflicts between walkers and bike riders - Lasting trail damage, from bikes or horses - Use of bikes, trails on groomed winter trails 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education 2. Tighter control on season of use 3. Trail improvements

2. DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION – SETTING PRIORITIES

Planned improvements and their relative priority are shown in the following table, using the system below. These rankings reflect steering and community committee review.

Note: cost information is very preliminary, and will vary greatly on the level of local involvement. Costs shown reflect high end of the cost range, assuming this facilities would be built by contract labor at full union (“Davis Bacon”) labor rates. Use of local volunteers, donated materials and equipment, etc, could greatly reduce these costs.

Rank	1	2	3	4
<i>Priority</i>	Highest	High	Medium	Lower

Capital Improvements Costs

Project	Rough Cost	Source of Funding	Priority
Parking Lot and Access Road <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1000’ access road, including canoe drop-off (20 ft width, @ \$92.5/linear foot) b. 15 car parking area (approx \$1000/space) c. 150’ trail to lake (10 ft, @ \$46.25/linear foot) d. Small dock e. Bollards, entry area “gate”, fence repairs f. Small roadside pullout along the Comsat Road for winter parking, with space for about 12 cars (to serve as winter parking if summer area is n’t plowed) 	\$100,000 \$15,000 \$7,500 \$7,500 \$5,000	Combination of local volunteer and donated materials and MSB bed tax and CIP funding	Highest Highest Highest Highest
Trail Construction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Phase 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lake Access Trail (covered above) - Lake Loop (skiing) - Ridge Loop (portions single track) h. Phase 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Z Lake Loop 	Depends on level of local participation. Ski Hill Trails averaged \$2500-5000 per kilometer; in Kincaid Park, 20-25’ wide trails can cost up to \$18,000 per kilometer,	Combination of local volunteer and donated materials, MSB bed tax and CIP funding, trail grant programs	Highest Highest High

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Phase 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outer Porcupine Loop - Horse Trail <p>Trail Grooming Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> j. Existing style – snow machine k. Future Pisten Bully or equivalent 		<p>MSB is considering seeking funding for a trail groomer to be shared by for Trapper Ck. Talkeetna, "Y"</p>	<p>Medium Lower</p>
<p>Day Use Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> l. trash cans m. picnic tables 3 @ \$300 each n. restroom/porta-potties o. benches <p><i>Total</i></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">\$1000 \$900 \$25,000 <u>\$1500</u></p>		<p>Highest High High Medium</p>
<p>Signage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Parking signage b. Trail signs (e.g., restrict motorized use) c. Interpretive signage <p><i>Total</i></p>			<p>Highest Highest High</p>
<p>TOTAL</p>			

Handicapped trails – do we need them? - Check with LDN & MSB

3. OTHER IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

ADD BOROUGH LAND

As explained on page 9, it is recommended that two areas on the north end of the recreation area be added to the rec area boundaries.

VACATE SECTION LINE EASEMENTS

The MSB platting board should vacate the section line easement that crosses the recreation area.

NAME CHANGE

As explained on page 4, the MSB, upon adoption of this plan, should simultaneously change the name of this area to Talkeetna Lakes Park.

4. ONGOING OPERATIONS

More work is needed regarding specific actions required for ongoing park management. Some of the suggestions for addressing the need for recreation area management are outlined below:

- Hire MSB parks employee to oversee parks in whole northern MSB region.
- Have a contracted person based in Talkeetna for maintenance, but not for enforcement.
- Create partnership with a non-profit to enforce, groom trails. MSB can assist with enforcement of rules. The Talkeetna Nordic Ski Club might be willing to take on this role.

Some of the specific operational actions required are outlined below:

<i>PARKING/ENTRY AREA</i>	<i>Cost/Yr</i>
Snow Removal – D&S, a local company, charges \$90-\$120/plow.	
Annual Grading Maintenance - about \$175 to grade lot, only needed every 1-3 years.	
Annual Repairs – signs, fee collection equipment, curb blocks	
<i>Total Parking Costs</i>	
<i>MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES</i>	
Maintenance – (empty trash, clean restrooms)	
Enforcement	
Annual repairs – day use, camping facilities; trails	
Insurance – <i>by MSB</i>	
Grooming winter ski trails – <i>BY LOCAL VOLUNTEERS</i>	
<i>Total Recreation Area Management Costs</i>	
<i>TOTAL OPERATIONS COSTS</i>	

AMENDING OR UPDATING PLAN

Insert standard borough procedures

TALKEETNA RECREATION AREA – PROPOSED REGULATIONS

- Firearms use is prohibited except in self-defense; target & skeet shooting not allowed
- Alcohol prohibited
- No motorized vehicles (including snowmachines, ATVs, gas-powered motorboats)
- No camping except in designated locations?