

Chugach State Park Management Plan

Points Regarding the Discussion and Treatment of Arctic Valley

Arctic Valley Ski Area (AVSA)
Anchorage Ski Club (ASC)
Joint-Base Elmendorf Richardson (JBER)
Chugach State Park Management Plan (CSPMP)

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Original Anchorage Ski Club Lease

Signed Nov 15, 1967

Recreation

- Recreation is key component of the CSPMP and the legislation establishing Chugach State Park.

- CSPMP designates AVSA as within a Recreation Development Zone. The current recreational use and operations of AVSA are compatible with the legislation and policies set forth by the State of Alaska for Chugach State.
- ASC's operation of AVSA provides a truly unique recreational opportunity for CSP and southcentral residents. AVSA is an extraordinary alpine experience with proximity to Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley while offering affordable lift-operated skiing.

Access

- ASC provides consistent winter access and facilities at AV through the following management activities:
- ASC plows parking lots at the ski hill for use by customers and non-customers of the ski hill.
- ASC maintains and operates the AV Lodge. In the winter, this provides a heated facility with shelter, water, and restrooms. In addition, food and drink are available for purchase.
- This Lodge is open to the general public during regular operating hours. It is regularly used by cross-country skiers, hikers, runners, and bikers that use the Arctic Valley road and surrounding trails for winter training and recreation.
- ASC retains an Agreement with JBER whereby JBER plows and maintains the AV road in the winter allowing access to the ski area and public trailhead facilities. ASC also occasionally requests additional plow and maintenance work from JBER, but must pay an hourly rate specified in the agreement.

Public Safety

- During winter months when the ski area is in operations, AVSA is staffed by members of the National Ski Patrol – Denali Patrol trained in emergency care and rescue.
- Denali patrollers perform regular avalanche hazard mitigation and management in the ski area boundaries. This increases the safety to the ski area users as well the general public using the adjacent trails in the valley bottom.

Fee Collection

- As noted in the CSPMP, fee collection "...is burdensome and requires substantial investments of staff time."
- ASC manages the collection of parking fees at the Arctic Valley trail head and therefore removes this responsibility from Park personnel. In return, ASC keeps revenues received from parking, but pays an annual lease to the State of Alaska.

Issues in Current Draft Plan

ASC Lease is currently not included in the list of Management Agreements. (pp67-70). This oversight is indicative of the lack of acknowledgment of the role and importance of the current 55-year lease agreement between Anchorage Ski Club and the State of Alaska.

An ongoing agreement with ASC is not included in the section New Management Agreements (p71). This section could include a long-term agreement between ASC and DPOR for the continued maintenance of the roads, trails, and facilities within the ASC lease and surrounding (Special Use Permit) areas.

DNR/CSP have interpreted the state park legislation and related statutes to specifically exclude a public and charitable use lease similar to the Club's current lease. But there is no specific wording in the statute requiring this limitation; rather, it is only DNR/CSP's policy to limit CSP leases to concession contracts.

ASC's current lease arrangement, or a similar form, is essential to ASC's continued operation of AVSA. ASC's operating margins are thin; therefore a concession contract's revenue-sharing requirements would likely prevent ASC's future operation of AVSA in a financially viable manner.

Ship Creek Planning Unit

Arctic Valley Ski Area is a historic site established by the Anchorage Ski Club and the US Military in 1941. The ASC has continuously operated a ski area in Arctic Valley for 60 years. Despite this, the historical nature of the ski area is not acknowledged in the plan.