

PART FOUR: FURTHER ACTIONS NEEDED FOR MANAGEMENT
OF SCENIC RESOURCES ALONG THE GEORGE
PARKS HIGHWAY

This report is, in many ways, only the beginning step towards the conservation and management of scenic resources found along the George Parks Highway. The following paragraphs identify approaches and tasks which need to be considered as "next steps". Three of these are of fundamental importance and immediate concern:

1. Educational - informational programming.
2. Integration of scenic resource management recommendations into ongoing land and natural resource management plans and policies.
3. Adoption of scenic highway designation management statutes and regulations.

EDUCATION

Throughout this report, the importance of a public education - information program, particularly with a focus on scenic resources, has been stressed. Only through education will planners in public agencies and private individuals dealing with land and resource development begin to see the importance of scenic resource identification and management. Only through education will the public and legislators who represent them begin to support such concepts as greenbelts, scenic zoning ordinances and scenic highway corridors. Only through education will private individuals see that they too can affect scenic resource management through litter control, sensitive design considerations in private land development, management of the visual clutter on their own land, and demanding laws, regulations and policies which help to protect Alaska's rich endowment of unique and spectacular scenery. Any public information - education program would need to be multi-faceted to address these various levels of concern, responsibility, and involvement in scenic resource management.

Public education - information programs could take on a variety of forms, ranging from community workshops, special classes at the community college, high school and junior high school level, brochures, and even television and radio spots. It is not in the scope of this report to define a specific education - information program - only to point out the need and importance of such programs. Initial energy in this respect should be directed towards state and local government elected

representatives in an effort to adopt scenic resource management related statutes, ordinances and regulations, and towards land planners presently involved with the use and development of lands and resources adjacent to George Parks Highway.

INTEGRATION INTO OTHER LAND PLANNING - MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

This report contains some of the only scenic resource information in Alaska today. Since there is no specific George Parks Highway land management plan, this information and set of recommendations need to be integrated into ongoing planning programs which deal with the lands which the George Parks Highway traverses. Two such programs, presently being coordinated by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources would benefit from this report - the Susitna Basin area plan and the Tanana Basin area plan. Additionally, three borough governments, the Municipality of Anchorage, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and Fairbanks North Star Borough should find this scenic resource data of interest in land use planning within their boundaries. Cook Inlet Region, Inc., AHTNA and Doyon Unlimited all will own land adjacent to the George Parks Highway. They could benefit from this report in the determination of how they will develop these lands. Land management recommendations related to those areas within the highway right-of-way and development of roadside rest areas should be of interest to the State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities which has direct responsibility and control of right-of-way lands. Additionally, various other federal and state agencies such as the National Park Service, Department of Fish and Game, and the Division of Parks and Division of Forest, Land and Water Management within the Department of Natural Resources are involved in decisions related to the use of land adjacent to the George Parks Highway. This scenic resource information should be available to them to help guide decisions which could have an impact on roadside visual quality. Finally, many private consultants doing studies related to land and resource development along the George Parks Highway would benefit from this information. For example, it should be of primary importance in studies related to the location of a powerline intertie between Anchorage and Fairbanks, and as an example of scenic inventory techniques which may be applicable to other developments such as pipelines and coal mines. A concerted effort needs to be made to see to it that this report is available all of those identified above and that they comprehend those ways that it can be of use to them.

SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATIONS

The George Parks Highway could be the prototype for a means of officially recognizing scenic resources along Alaska's highways. Many such techniques and consideration could be extended to the designation of scenic waterways and scenic trails. Research needs to be done as to ways to legally and functionally designate and manage those lands adjacent to the roadway within areas identified as scenic highway routes. Official designation initially should be made at the state legislative level - through the adoption of appropriate scenic highway statutes and regulations and at the borough government level through adoption of zoning ordinances, performance standards and other implementation tools for management of lands adjacent to the highway. The appendix to this report contains information regarding such a process for scenic highway designations in the State of California. Additional research into scenic highway designation and management techniques employed by other states would be helpful in the design of a program specific to Alaskan highways. An important first step in this effort would be an education - information program directed towards state and local government elected officials which clearly communicates the value of a scenic highway designation and points out some ways it might be accomplished. Obviously, for any such program to occur it requires that someone take an interest in it. Such an initial push and support should come from both the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

While the above recommendations are the most important, mention should be made to other tasks which would be of value to scenic resource management along the George Parks Highway.

- Development of design guidelines for commercial and residential development adjacent to the highway.

- Research regarding methods available to the state for the acquisition of privately owned roadside lands where they have been identified as highly desirable for public use as scenic turnouts and roadside rest areas.

- Research highway right-of-way landscaping and maintenance techniques which could help to reduce the visual impact of the highway on the land, aid in reducing wildlife road kills, and help to screen visually objectionable roadside land developments. A set of right-of-way

design guidelines, adopted by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities would be a useful tool along all Alaska's highways.

- . Development of policies and standards for the location, size and visual impact of commercial signs adjacent to the highway - particularly within those corridors identified as highly suitable for scenic highway designation.
- . Policies and standards related to the number, spacing and character of public and private access roads to state highways in an effort to control commercial strip development and hazardous intersections.
- . Develop similar techniques for the identification of scenic resource values around communities, recreation areas, along rivers, coastlines and trails with the objective of developing appropriate management recommendations.
- . Complete scenic resource inventories and recommendations for other Alaskan highways - particularly those subject to rerouting, upgrading and other alterations. In this way work can be done in a fashion which optimizes the value of scenic resources.
- . As a matter of policy, complete an on site visual analysis of state land adjacent to a highway prior to any land disposal actions and retain developemnt rights of those portions determined to be of significance to scenic resources management.