

letters

Parks confusion

State of Alaska
Department of Natural
Resources
Division of Parks
Oct. 16, 1978

Dear Editor:

In the wake of the D-2 controversy, there seems to be much confusion over the difference between State and National parks, and, indeed, the need for two systems at all. We are writing to you, and your readers, in an effort to provide education on this distinction, and to better inform the public of our purpose.

The Division of Parks was established in the Department of Natural Resources in October 1970, based upon the philosophy of maximizing recreational opportunities while also protecting recreational and scenic resources. Our by-words are Accessibility and Use — now and for all future Alaskans and their visitors.

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The little-appreciated distinction between federally operated parks in Alaska and the State's management of recreation resources and parks, primarily for its own citizens' benefit deserves reinforcement. It is important, too, to remove this vital Alaskan resource — its State Parks — from the raging controversy over federal governing of vast areas of federal lands which include parks and recreational resources. This is clearly a difficult educational process.

Recreational facilities and park lands administered by the State of Alaska may be large in extent by lower '48 standards, but they are exceedingly modest by Alaskan needs. The world average for management of lands for parks is approximately 5 per cent - 6 per cent of total government holdings. In Alaska, the Division of Parks manages less than 3 per cent of the state's projected holdings. In addition to the increasing use of state park areas and waysides by Alaskans themselves, the state parks have become increasingly magnetic for tourists from outside of Alaska. The Alaska Visi-

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tors Association estimates that each tourist day in Alaska, and in her parks, has a value of \$75 in cash to the state's economy. On this basis, the state parks income for the State of Alaska during the current year equals almost 15 times that of the Alaska Division of Parks budget.

On the general election ballot in November there will be one item devoted to statewide recreation facilities and State parks development. Twenty-four recreation and parks development capital funding items will appear on one ballot option in November, bond item No. 2 on the ballot. Whatever additional help or information you might wish to have, please let me know. My telephone number in Anchorage is 274-4676. Should I not be available when you call, please consult with Bob Baker, Deputy Director of the Division of Parks, or with Neil Johannsen, Chief of Planning. We will make immediate response to your inquiries.

Sincerely,
Terry A. McWilliams
Director