

CITY & BOROUGH OF SITKA

DRAFT COMMERCIAL LAND USE PLAN

Parks & Recreation Committee Recommendation for Approval

December X, 2024

Assembly Adoption

December X, 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TERMINOLOGY

COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL LAND USE

Generally: Offering commercial guiding, outfitting, and transportation services on CBS recreational assets. Fully defined in SGC 14.10



Requirements that must be complied with to operate under a permit:

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

STANDARD conditions apply to all permits & all assets

SPECIAL conditions apply to permits issued for particular assets

Preferred / best practices:

SPECIAL GUIDANCE

Should be largely adhered to, but with understanding there is accommodation & flexibility for unforeseen circumstances

RECREATIONAL ASSET

A CBS owned/managed recreational area such as trails, parks, beaches, lakes, roads, docks, boardwalks, bathhouses, etc.



COMMERCIAL CARRYING CAPACITY

MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE

The maximum number of people allowed in a commercial use group for each asset. The maximum group size includes clients plus guides.

MAXIMUM GROUPS PER WEEK

The maximum, total number of commercial client groups allowed per week for each asset



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PERMITTABLE COMMERCIAL USE

Asset	Commercial Carrying Capacity		Special Guidance*	Special Conditions**	Fees	
	Max Group Size	Max Groups per Week			Annual Minimum	Per Client Fee
Cross Trail North	8	26	1) Hours of Use 2) Weekends	1) Bike & e-bike limitations 2) Vehicle parking 3) Proof of additional authorization	\$400	\$5
Cross Trail South	8	23	1) Hours of Use 2) Weekends	1) Bikes & e-bikes 2) Vehicle parking		
Gavan Hill Trail Access	8	19	1) Hours of Use	1) Bikes & e-bikes 2) Vehicle parking 3) Proof of additional authorization		
Indian River Trail	8	23	1) Hours of Use	1) Bikes & e-bikes 2) Vehicle parking 3) Proof of additional authorization		
Thimbleberry Lake/Heart Lake Trail	7	24	1) Hours of Use	1) Bikes & e-bikes 3) Proof of additional authorization		
Herring Cove/Beaver Lake Trail	8	18	1) Hours of Use	2) Vehicle parking 3) Proof of additional authorization		
Medvejie Trail & Lake	6	16	1) Hours of Use	1) Bikes & e-bikes 3) Proof of additional authorization		
Herring Cove Beach	5	24	1) Hours of Use			
Blue Lake (Road/Lake)	8	25 / 20		1) No Fuel Powered watercraft 2) No Commercial Jet Ski Use		
Green Lake (Road/Lake)	8	26 / 20		1) No Commercial Jet Ski Use		
Swan Lake	5	16	1) Hours of Use	2) Vehicle parking		
Eagle Beach ("Back Beach")	5	18	1) Hours of Use			
Sitka Sound Islands	6	18				
Baranof Warm Springs	6	18	1) Hours of Use	4) Stakeholder meeting 5) Bathing instruction		
Goddard Hot Springs	4	10	1) Hours of Use	5) Bathing instruction		

*Special Guidance includes preferred/best practices for permittees conducting activity on a particular asset. See Use Plan Section III for a special guidance overview, and the Permittable Commercial Use for each asset for applicable special guidance provisions.

**Special Conditions are additional conditions of approval associated with commercial recreational use at a particular asset. See Use Plan Section IV for a special conditions overview, and the Permittable Commercial Use for each asset for applicable special conditions.

Definitions

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Definition
Bikes	A wheeled vehicle that is propelled by human power, typically through pedals.
Carrying Capacity	The maximum number of visitors a site can accommodate without causing unacceptable environmental degradation or social conflict
CBS	City and Borough of Sitka
Commercial Recreational Land Use	Offering commercial guiding, outfitting, and transportation services on City and Borough of Sitka recreational assets. Fully defined in Sitka General Code 14.10.
Commercial Use Groups	Groups of people who are paying to use recreational assets.
Conditions of Approval	Requirements that must be complied with to operate under a permit.
Cross Trail North	The section of the Sitka Cross Trail that spans from Starrigavan to Kramer Avenue North.
Cross Trail South	The section of the Sitka Cross Trail that spans from Kramer Avenue South to Indian River Trail.
DNR	State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
E-Bikes	A bicycle equipped with an electric motor that assists the rider's pedaling or propels the bike independently.
Guiding	Providing services or assistance (such as supervision, protection, education, training, packing, touring, transporting people of interpretation) for monetary or other gain to individuals or groups on municipal lands.
Maximum Group Size	The maximum number of people allowed in a commercial use group for each asset. The maximum group size includes clients plus guides.
Maximum Groups Per Week	The maximum total number of commercial client groups allowed per week for each asset.
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Outfitting	Renting on or delivering to municipal lands for monetary or other gain any vehicle, bicycle, e-bike, boat, kayak, canoe (motorized or human powered), camping gear, or other similar supplies or equipment.
Permittee or permit holder	The business entity or its authorized representative conducting commercial activities in a recreation area according to a permit issued under these regulations.
Recreation assets	A City and Borough of Sitka owned/ managed recreational area such as trails, parks, beaches, lakes, roads, docks, boardwalks, bathhouses, etc.
SGC	Sitka General Code
Sitka Sound Islands	City-owned islands in Sitka Sound
Special Conditions	Conditions that apply to permits issued for particular assets.
Special Guidance	Guidance that should be largely adhered to, but with understanding there is accommodation & flexibility for unforeseen circumstances.
Standard Conditions	Conditions that apply to all permits and all assets.
Trail	Footpaths, bridle paths, bicycle paths, ski trails, dog sled trails, motorized vehicle trails, a road or street that is open to public and used as a trail and other paths and trails along highways, streets, roads or boardwalks maintained by the city and borough of Sitka.
Use Plan	Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan
USFS	United States Forest Service

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I. Introduction

The City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) recognizes the significant role that recreational activities play in the community's well-being and quality of life, as well as the visitor industry. To ensure sustainable and equitable management of recreational resources, this Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan ("Use Plan") aims to establish a comprehensive framework for permitting and managing commercial recreational activities on and in CBS lands and facilities.

A. Background

Sitka has experienced a surge in its visitor industry, resulting in increased demand for commercial recreational activities. Addressing the growth and complexities of modern recreational use—particularly concerning capacity limits, types of use allowed, mitigation of negative environmental impacts, and user experience—it is important for CBS and the community to build management tools for overall use.

As outlined in SGC 14.10, commercial recreational users of all municipal lands, facilities, and trails (together, "recreation assets"), as well as joint-jurisdiction recreation assets, must apply for a permit. The Parks and Recreation Committee is charged with developing, maintaining, and recommending for adoption, a Use Plan that identifies recreation assets at which commercial recreational use may be permitted. The Use Plan may also contain limitations on commercial recreational use at each recreational site or facility including but not limited to hours of operation, use of recreational equipment, size and number of client groups, etc.

B. Goals and Objectives

- 1) Prioritize Community Quality of Life
 - a) Management practices match the community's desired level and type of commercial use.
 - b) Facilitate robust community input and engagement in the continued development of the Use Plan.
- 2) Protect Natural and Cultural Resources
 - a) Minimize negative impacts on sensitive ecosystems and cultural sites.
 - b) Promote responsible and sustainable recreational practices.
- 3) Balance Competing Uses
 - a) Accommodate diverse recreational interests.
 - b) Manage conflicts between commercial and non-commercial users.
- 4) Visitor Industry Considerations
 - a) Provide high-quality recreational opportunities.
 - b) Provide sufficient business opportunities for commercial operators while adhering to community-desired capacity restrictions.
 - c) Ensure safe and enjoyable experiences for all users.

C. Key Components of the Use Plan

- 1) Inventory and Assessment of Recreational Assets
 - a) Develop a comprehensive inventory of CBS recreational lands and facilities.
 - b) Collect public comment to assess desired levels and types of use.
 - c) Assess each asset's carrying capacity and desired allowance of use.
 - d) Identify potential conflicts and opportunities for improvement.
- 2) Permitting Process
 - a) Develop clear and concise permit application guidelines.
 - b) Establish standardized permit conditions, including fees and operational standards.
 - c) Base permit issuance on the community input for carrying capacities and other management practices.
 - d) Create a transparent and efficient review process.

- 3) Monitoring and Enforcement
 - a) Monitor compliance with permit conditions and regulations.
 - b) Enforce regulations through education, warnings, and, if necessary, penalties.
 - c) Collect data on recreational use patterns and impacts.
- 4) Public Involvement and Education
 - a) Annually engage with stakeholders, including commercial operators, recreational users, and community members, to gather input for future planning and revisions to Use Plan.
 - b) Develop educational materials and outreach programs to promote responsible recreational practices.
- 5) Adaptive Management
 - a) Regularly review and update the Use Plan to reflect changing conditions and needs.
 - b) Implement a flexible and adaptive approach to management.

Through adoption of the Use Plan, a comprehensive and adaptive approach to commercial recreational land use, the CBS can ensure the long-term sustainability of its valuable recreational resources while supporting the local economy and enhancing resident and visitor experiences.

II. Determining Carrying Capacity

In the context of commercial recreational land use, carrying capacity is the maximum number of visitors a site can accommodate without causing unacceptable environmental degradation or social conflict.

Considerations to determine carrying capacity generally include physical characteristics such as unique geological features, terrain and natural resource constraints, and supporting infrastructure. Additionally, non-physical elements such as community preferences in the level of activity combined with the interest and demand of the visitor industry are critical in determining carrying capacity.

To determine the carrying capacity of each recreational asset, CBS studied current levels of trail use through deployed trail counters and mobile analytic data, and also reviewed past permitting data. Community preferences were collected through a public survey, in-person meetings and discussions, and testimony received at Parks and Recreation Committee meetings during permit hearings in 2024. Specific stakeholders including the Parks & Recreation Committee, USFS, DNR and permit holders were also engaged. The USFS Commercial Use Allocation on Sitka Area Trails and Roads Environmental Assessment (2019) was also a key data source used. Additionally, CBS staff knowledge of trail conditions, traffic flows, use patterns, visitor industry trends, and existing infrastructure was leveraged in the analysis.

In this Use Plan, commercial carrying capacity has two primary components:

- 1) **Maximum Group Size:** The maximum number of people allowed in a commercial use group for each asset. The maximum group size includes clients plus guides.
- 2) **Maximum Groups per Week:** The maximum total number of commercial client groups allowed per week for each asset.

III. Special Guidance

Special guidance may be issued for certain assets. Special guidance is used for defining preferred or best practices that include the following circumstances:

- May be more general in nature rather than specific and enforceable like a condition of approval.

- Should be adhered to as much as possible with the understanding that there is flexibility for unforeseen circumstances.

The following contains anticipated types of special guidance, though more may be applied on a case-by-case basis:

- 1) Hours of Use: Assets may have preferred hours of use for commercial purposes. Permittees should schedule activities accordingly with the understanding that unexpected issues (e.g. a delayed cruise ship arrival, a guest group moving slower than anticipated) might warrant deviation from preferred hours of use.
- 2) Weekends: Assets may have a preference for weekday, rather than weekend, commercial use. Permittees should schedule activities accordingly with the understanding that unexpected issues (e.g. accommodating a week-of tour rebooking, closure of another asset that would usually allow weekend use) could warrant deviation from non-weekend use.

While limited and infrequent deviations from special guidance are permissible, reports of permittees frequently/regularly operating outside of special guidance provisions may be grounds for indefinite permit suspension and/or permit denial in the future year in accordance with SGC 14.10.

IV. Conditions of Approval

A. Standard Conditions

The following operating requirements apply to activities conducted under all permits unless otherwise specified in an issued permit:

- 1) No one may litter, obstruct traffic, use glass containers; disturb, damage, deface or remove natural objects including trees, plants, animals, moss, rock, shells, gravel, or minerals; disturb or remove cultural, archaeological, or historical material.
- 2) Activities conducted under the permit shall be confined to the area stipulated in the permit application except as required for safety reasons.
- 3) No alterations or improvements to the permitted area are allowed, nor may anything be posted or signs of any kind be installed in the area unless expressly allowed by written permission of CBS.
- 4) No one may fish or hunt under this permit unless expressly allowed by the written permission of the municipality. No one may harass wildlife. Camping or lighting fires may be permitted in designated areas or in areas stipulated in the permit application and subject to approval of the municipality.
- 5) The permit holder shall promptly notify the municipality of any accident, injury, or claim relating to the permitted activity.
- 6) The permit holder shall promptly notify the municipality of any repair or maintenance needed in the permitted area, or any natural condition which constitutes a hazard.
- 7) Permit holders shall comply with all state, federal, and local laws applicable to their activities.
- 8) All use will incorporate "Leave No Trace" practices into all activities in accordance with the Appendix D: Leave No Trace document.
- 9) The permit holder shall reimburse CBS for any damage to municipal property caused by the permit holder while engaged in permit activities, including the cost of litter abatement, removal of structures or remediation of the site to its original condition.
- 10) No pets shall accompany any person engaged in permit activities unless the pet is restrained on a leash and all fecal material is promptly removed and properly disposed.
- 11) No equipment or supplies may be stored at any municipal facility or permit area unless written approval by the municipality is secured in advance.

- 12) All vehicles under the ownership or control of the permit holder shall be lawfully operated or legally parked while the permit holder is engaged in permit activities. The permit holder shall be responsible for following all parking restrictions and requirements imposed by permit conditions.
- 13) Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6-8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. Bury toilet paper deep in a cathole or pack the toilet paper out along with hygiene products.
- 14) Permit holders utilizing assets that carry special guidance provisions under the Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan are expected to adhere to said special guidance. While limited, infrequent deviations from special guidance are permissible, reports of permittees frequently or regularly operating outside of special guidance provisions may be grounds for indefinite permit suspension and/or permit denial in the future year in accordance with SGC 14.10.

B. Special Conditions

Particular assets may also carry special conditions. The following list contains anticipated types of special conditions, though more may be applied on a case-by-case basis:

- 1) Bikes & E-Bikes Limitations: Assets may have limitations regarding commercial recreational bike/e-bike use including only allowing guided bike and/or e-bike use, or not allowing any commercial bike and/or e-bike use.
- 2) Vehicle Parking: Assets may have limitations regarding which parking lots, if any, can be used.
- 3) Land Ownership and Access: Land ownership can often be mixed. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to determine ownership and obtain proper authorization for use of private, native, and/or other government-held lands. For assets with joint jurisdiction and/or property ownership, proof of authorization from other agencies or property owners must be provided before the permit can be utilized.
- 4) Areas of Authorized Use: The City and Borough of Sitka only authorizes use on CBS lands. The permit holder must understand where they are authorized to take clients under the terms of their permit.
- 5) Stakeholder Meeting: Assets with sensitive uses and/or CBS maintenance agreements may require permittee participation in a pre-season stakeholder meeting.
- 6) Bathing Instruction: Baranof Warm Springs and Goddard Hot Springs require permittees to submit with their application a copy of instructional bathing etiquette that will be provided to all guests. This bathing etiquette will address food and drink use, soaking times, where to wait when tubs or springs are full, and any other considerations the permittee deems appropriate.

V. Plan Use for Permit Issuance

In accordance with SGC 14.10, commercial recreational use permits will be issued in accordance with this Plan, adhering to the permissible commercial use provisions for each asset. Group sizes under issued permits shall not be larger than the maximum group sizes, and the total use for each asset across all issued permits shall not exceed the maximum groups per week. Standard conditions of approval will be applied to all permits, and any asset-specific special guidance and/or conditions will also be applied accordingly. Exceptions may be granted if Use Plan permitted commercial use is in conflict with permit provisions as issued by other agencies for joint-jurisdictional assets if the applicant can demonstrate that: they have an existing, valid permit from other joint-jurisdictional agencies that was issued in 2024 or earlier, that adhering to Use Plan permitted commercial use limitations would present a significant financial and/or administrative burden, and the joint-jurisdictional agency confirms that the permit holder is in good standing.

In cases where the total requested amount of commercial use for an asset exceeds Use Plan permissible commercial use, CBS staff will use the following methods to make final determinations:

- Negotiate with applicants to come to a consensus decision wherever possible

- Consider available alternatives for applicants (i.e. those that can or cannot easily utilize other assets instead)
- Honoring established/historic use
- Providing opportunities for new businesses

For requests to use any CBS recreational assets that are not included in the Use Plan, the Parks & Recreation Committee will review the application and make recommendations to CBS staff on permit issuance.

VI. Asset Profiles and Permittable Commercial Use

Cross Trail: Kramer Avenue North to Starrigavan



CONSIDERATIONS

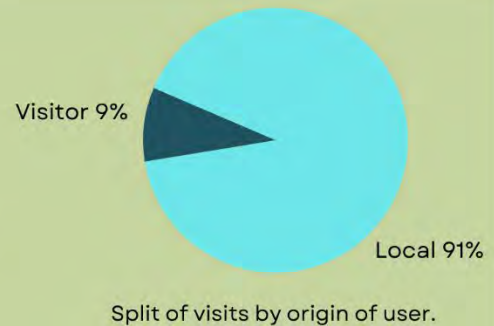
- This page is only concerning the northern Cross Trail from Starrigavan to Kramer Ave.
- Multiple trailheads along trail allow access with varying levels of parking

DESCRIPTION:

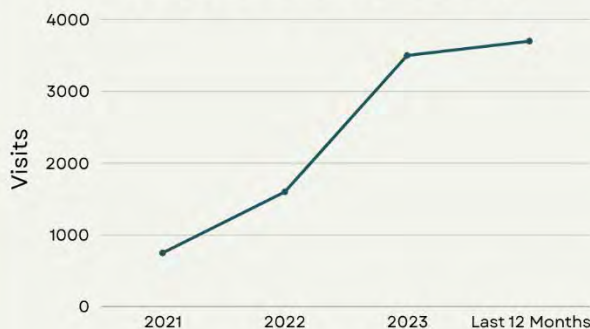
- 2.5 mile section of 8 mile gravel pathway, with many trailheads and connections along the way including Starrigavan, Cruise Dock Connector, Harbor Mountain Road, Kramer Ave. North
- Used for hiking, hunting, fishing, foraging, biking, transportation, connection to other recreational areas
- Bike use is allowed

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Sunday
- Peak levels of use at 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- 1700 unique users of the trail
- 23 users on per day on average in peak season 2024



HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 6 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 14 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 3790
2024 (predicted): 2750

Cross Trail: Kramer Ave North to Starrigavan

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage and Value:** The Sitka Cross Trail is a popular recreational resource used by locals, businesses, and tourists for hiking, running, biking, and other outdoor activities.
2. **Strong Public Demand:** The trail's heavy usage reflects strong public demand for outdoor recreation opportunities in Sitka.
3. **Balancing Usage and Preservation:** While the trail's condition and width could accommodate more use, survey respondents prioritize low-impact use and solitude.
4. **Group Size Preferences:** Most sections of the Northern Cross Trail favor medium to large group sizes, with a slight preference for larger groups on the Cruise Dock Connector.
5. **Group Frequency:** A preference for medium to low group frequency was expressed, with the Cruise Dock Connector showing a slight preference for more groups per day.
6. **Bike Use:** Bike use, including e-bikes, is generally more acceptable on the Northern Cross Trail, though e-bikes, especially non-guided, are less favored.
7. **Proximity to City Center:** As the trail segments get closer to the city center, the preference for bike use (all types) decreases.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
9	26

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Weekday use is preferred. (Weekend use is discouraged.)

Special Conditions

- Only guided commercial bike and e-bike permits.
- Commercial vehicle parking allowed at Kimsham fields back parking lot, SHS parking lot when school is not in session. All other Cross Trail access point parking is for commercial use passenger drop off only.

Cross Trail: Kramer Avenue South to Indian River Trail



CONSIDERATIONS

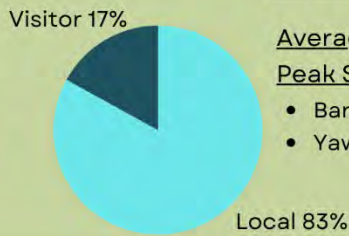
- This page is only concerning the southern Cross Trail from Kramer Ave. to Yaw Drive
- Multiple trailheads along trail allow access with varying levels of parking
- Connects to Forest Service owned land with Gavan Trail where the group size limit is 7 visitors + 1 guide

DESCRIPTION:

- 6.5 mile long section of 8 mile gravel pathway, with many trailheads and connections along the way including Kramer Ave. Benchlands, Cascade Creek, Charteris Street, Kimsham Ballfields, Sitka High School, Baranof St., Yaw Drive
- Used for hiking, hunting, fishing, foraging, biking, transportation, connection to other recreational areas
- Bike use is allowed

Kramer Ave to Sitka High School

- Busiest day on Saturday
- Peak use at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- 2100 unique visitors



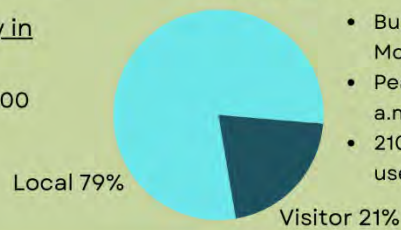
2021-2024 USE:

Average Users Per Day in Peak Season 2024:

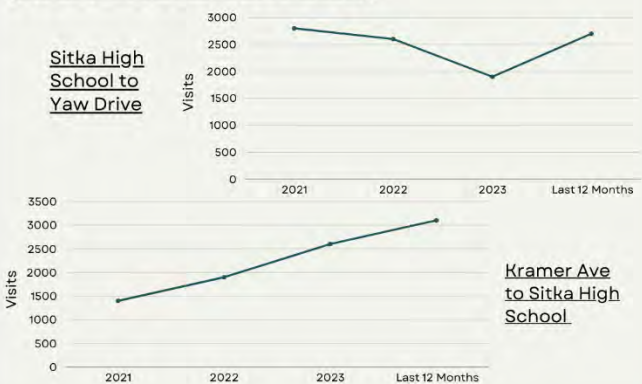
- Baranof Connector: 100
- Yaw Drive: 55

Sitka High School to Yaw Drive

- Busiest day on Monday
- Peak use at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- 2100 unique users



HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 6 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 14 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 3790
2024 (predicted): 2750

Cross Trail: Kramer Ave South to Indian River Trail

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage and Value:** The Sitka Cross Trail is a highly valued recreational asset that attracts both local residents, commercial users, and visitors.
2. **Strong Public Demand:** The trail is one of the more heavily used in the Sitka Trail system for hiking, running, biking, and other outdoor activities, demonstrating strong public demand.
3. **Balancing Usage and Preservation:** Trail condition and its generally wide path footprint do allow for higher allocations of use, however, general survey responses seem to focus on keeping it as a low-impact path and high value on solitude.
4. **Group Size Preferences:** Most sections of the Southern segments of the Cross Trail favored medium group sizes.
5. **Group Frequency:** Low to medium frequency of groups were preferred, with most areas slightly favoring lower group numbers per day.
6. **Bike Use:** This section of the Cross Trail heavily favored not allowing any commercial bike permits, particularly e-bike use.
7. **Guided Bike Use:** Permitting guided bikes (non-e-bikes) showed some interest in allowance.
8. **Vehicle Access:** Commercial vehicle parking at most access points was generally not favored, with Walk-In/Bike-In or Drop-Off favored in some locations.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
7	23

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Weekday use is preferred. (Weekend use is discouraged.)

Special Conditions

- No commercial bike and e-bike permits.
- Commercial vehicle parking allowed at Kimsham fields back parking lot, SHS parking lot when school is not in session. All other Cross Trail access point parking is for commercial use passenger drop off only.

Gavan Hill Trail Access



CONSIDERATIONS

- Connected to Sitka Cross Trail
- Connected to Harbor Mountain Trail Loop
- Connected to Forest Service owned land, where max group size is 7 visitors + 1 guide

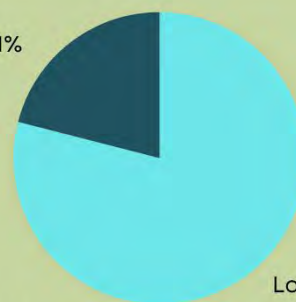
DESCRIPTION:

- Trail is 6 miles one way to Harbor Mountain Trailhead
- Gravel trail with wood bridges and wooden boardwalk sections throughout
- Used for hiking, hunting, backpacking, foraging, connection to other recreational areas
- Leads to Forest Service shelter on Harbor Mountain

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Monday
- Peak levels of use at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- 2200 unique users of the trail
- 36 users per day on average in peak season 2024

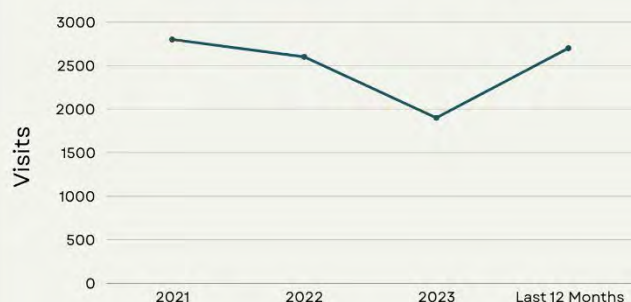
Visitor 21%



Local 90%

Split of visits by origin of user.

HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 6 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 14 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 3790
2024 (predicted): 2750

Gavan Hill Trail Access

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage and Value:** The Gavan Hill Trail Access and the Gavan Hill Trail are popular recreational resources, with peak usage occurring in June and July, exceeding an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 50 in 2024.
2. **Strong Public Demand:** Projected annual ADT for connecting trail systems to Gavan Hill is estimated to be under 50, with daily peaks surpassing 70 users.
3. **Balancing Usage and Preservation:** While the trail's capacity can accommodate increased use, CBS, as a governing body for connecting trails, must align permit allocations with USFS guidelines to ensure sustainable usage.
4. **Group Size and Frequency:** Respondents generally favor medium group sizes with low frequency.
5. **Preferred Time:** Most users prefer accessing the trail between 9 AM and 4 PM.
6. **Preferred Day:** Weekdays are the preferred day for trail use, accounting for 46% of total usage.
7. **User Patterns:** Daily traffic is relatively evenly distributed throughout the week, with slightly higher usage on weekends.
8. **USFS Allocations:** Max group size: 8

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
8	19

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Special Conditions

- No commercial bike or e-bike use allowed on or to approach of Gavan Trail
- Commercial vehicle parking allowed at Kimsham fields back parking lot, SHS parking lot when school is not in session. All other Cross Trail access point parking is for commercial use passenger drop off only.
- Proof of Additional Authorization for joint jurisdiction and/or property ownership is required before permit can be utilized.

Indian River Trail



CONSIDERATIONS

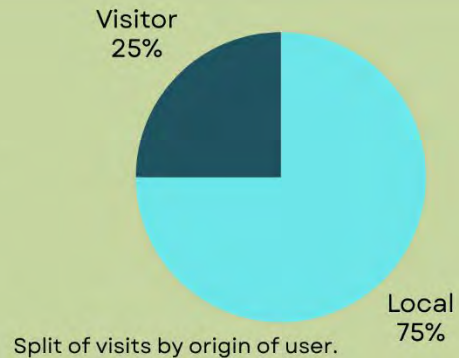
- Connected to Sitka Cross Trail
- Connected to Forest Service owned land, where max group size is 7 visitors + 1 guide,
- Concrete parking lot at trailhead

DESCRIPTION:

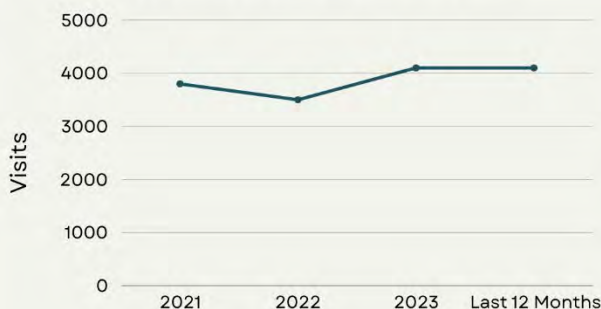
- Trail is 4.5 miles one way, 9 miles out and back
- Gravel trail with wood bridges and wooden boardwalk sections throughout
- Used for hiking, hunting, fishing, foraging, connection to other recreational areas
- Biking only allowed on first 1500 ft of trail

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Sunday
- Peak levels of use at 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- 4600 unique users of the trail
- 81 users per day on average in peak season 2024



HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 3 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 14 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 270
2024 (predicted): 500

Indian River Trail

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage & Demand:** Heavy daily use, increasing commercial interest, popular for various activities.
2. **Public Preference:** Prioritizes low-impact use and solitude, favors medium-large groups with moderate frequency.
3. **Bike Use:** Bike use is prohibited on Indian River Trail.
4. **Usage Patterns:** Peak usage during daytime hours, no strong preference for weekdays or weekends.
5. **Management:** Permitted by both City of Sitka and US Forest Service, with bike prohibitions on Indian River Trail.
6. **USFS Allocations:** Max group size: 8

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
8	23

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Special Conditions

- No bike or e-bike use allowed on Indian River Trail
- Commercial vehicle parking allowed at Indian River Parking Trailhead only, no parking at the end of Indian River Rd.
- Proof of Additional Authorization for joint jurisdiction and/or property ownership is required before permit can be utilized.

Thimbleberry Lake / Heart Lake Trail



CONSIDERATIONS

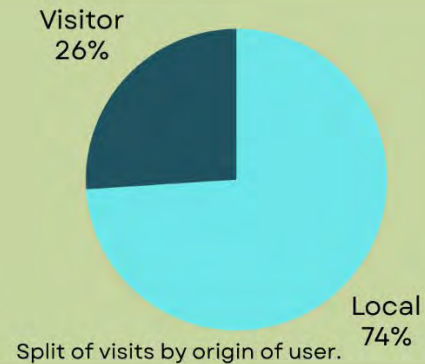
- Trail up to first waterfall is city owned, beyond that is Forest Service owned, with a group size limit of 14 visitors + 1 guide
- Two trailheads split traffic

DESCRIPTION:

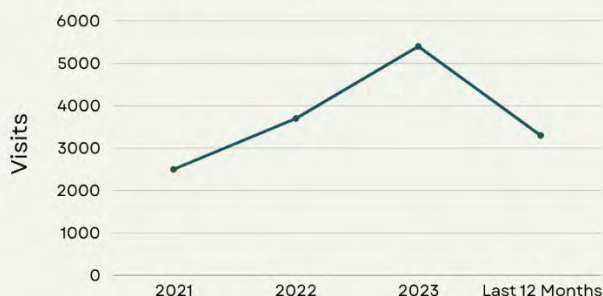
- 1.6 mile trail, with two separate trailheads, on Sawmill Creek Road and on Blue Lake Road
- Concrete parking lot off of Sawmill Creek Road and a few parking spaces on the side of Blue Lake Road
- Gravel trail with wood bridges throughout
- Used for hiking, fishing, foraging, ice skating in the winter
- Docks on each lake

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Saturday
- Peak levels of use at 3 p.m.
- 5000 unique users of the trail
- 100 users per day on average in peak season 2024



HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 4 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 14 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
 2023: 3790
 2024 (predicted): 2500

Thimbleberry Lake/ Heart Lake Trail

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage and Local Popularity:** The Thimbleberry Trail and Heart Lake is a heavily used trail in the Sitka system, particularly popular among local residents.
2. **Strong Public Demand:** The trail's high usage reflects strong public demand for outdoor recreation opportunities in Sitka.
3. **Balancing Usage and Preservation:** Management aims to balance trail use and preservation by limiting group sizes to medium or low levels and reducing group frequency.
4. **Commercial Bike Use:** There is a strong desire to prohibit permitted commercial bike use on the Thimbleberry Trail and Heart Lake.
5. **USFS Allocations:** Max group size: 15

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
7	24

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Special Conditions

- No guided or unguided bike or e-bike permits to be issued
- Proof of Additional Authorization for joint jurisdiction and/or property ownership is required before permit can be utilized.

Herring Cove/ Beaver Lake Trail



CONSIDERATIONS

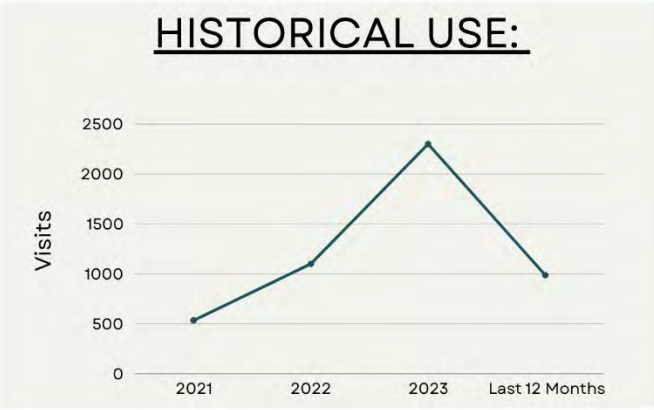
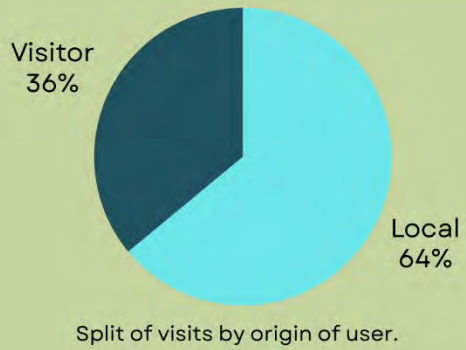
- Two starting points, Blue Lake Trailhead and Herring Cove Trailhead
- Connected to Forest Service owned land, where max group size is 7 visitors + 1 guide

DESCRIPTION:

- Trail is a 3.6 mile gravel loop with wood bridges and wooden boardwalks
- Used for hiking, hunting, fishing, foraging, connection to other recreational areas
- Biking is prohibited on the trail
- Small gravel parking lot at Herring Cove Trailhead and campground parking lot off of Blue Lake Road
- ADA accessible trail to the first waterfall starting at Herring Cove owned by the city

2021-2024 USE LEVELS:

- Busiest day of use on Saturday
- Peak levels of use at 12 p.m. and 2 p.m.
- 1900 unique users of the trail
- 106 users per day on average in peak season 2024



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 5 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 14 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 3790
2024 (predicted): 2500

Herring Cove/Beaver Lake Trail

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage and Value:** Herring Cove to Beaver Lake is similarly popular for use as Thimbleberry, though has a higher percentage of visits by visitors than Thimbleberry.
2. **Strong Public Demand:** High predicted commercial levels is largely due to one operator indicating a desired use for tours.
3. **Balancing Usage and Preservation:** Management desires focus mainly on keeping group sizes medium to low and frequency of groups low as well.
4. **Preferred Time:** Later afternoon peak use is different from other trail systems, however community survey results indicate a desire to allow permitted use between 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.
5. **Preferred Days:** Similar to other trails there is a preference towards permitted commercial use during the weekday and less on the weekends.
6. **USFS Allocations:** Max group size: 8

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
8	18

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Special Conditions

- Drop off/pick up services are preferred, parking of commercial vehicles in main parking area is discouraged.
- Proof of Additional Authorization for joint jurisdiction and/or property ownership is required before permit can be utilized.

Medvejie Trail and Lake



CONSIDERATIONS

- Medvejie Lake Trail is not an established trail and therefore is not regularly maintained
- Users must traverse through stream as the old bridge washed out

DESCRIPTION:

- Medvejie trail is 0.75 miles one way of infrequently maintained trail
- Used for hiking, hunting, foraging, and back country access
- Users must make their way through NSRAA hatchery land to get to trail
- Users get to trail by using Green Lake Road

RECENT LEVELS OF USE:

Current levels of use calculated by the same methods as the other assets in this list are not available for this one due to its remote nature.

HISTORICAL USE:

Historical data for this asset is not currently available.

COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 1 commercial permit issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 8 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 50
2024 (predicted): 150

Medvejie Trail and Lake

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **Limited Use Data:** As a more remote trail, we were unable to collect use data with sufficient confidence to publish or provide specific guidance.
2. **Mixed Use Preferences:** While Medvejie had the highest percentage of respondents selecting "No Allowed Use," a majority still favored medium group sizes and low frequency of use.
3. **Complex Use Considerations:** Use of this area is complicated by potential conflicts with NSRAA Hatchery operations and nearby caretaker housing.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
6	16

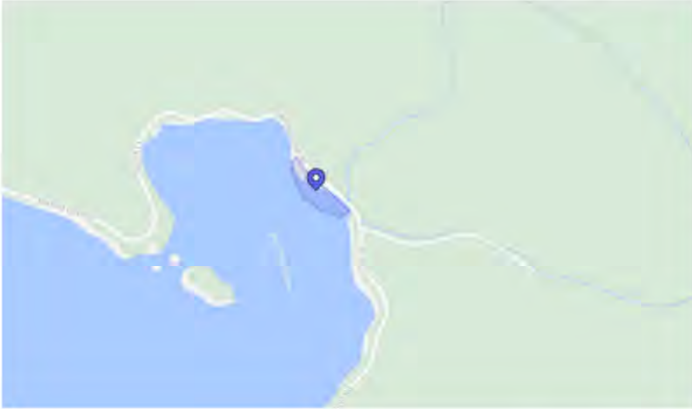
Special Guidance

- Preferred hours of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.
- All use will incorporate "Leave No Trace" practices into all activities in accordance with Appendix D: Leave No Trace document.

Special Conditions

- Guided and nonguided bike and e-bike use allowed on approach to Medvejie trail.
- Permit does not authorize any use or approach through the Medvejie Hatchery property and such permission must be obtained through NSRAA.

Herring Cove Beach



CONSIDERATIONS

- No separate parking lot from Beaver Lake trailhead for traffic
- Popular recreation spot for locals

DESCRIPTION:

- Herring Cove is an entry point for water access
- Launch site for boats, motorized watercraft, and kayaks
- Site is outside of town so experiences less traffic than in town launches

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Saturday
- Peak levels of use at 8 p.m.
- 3700 unique users

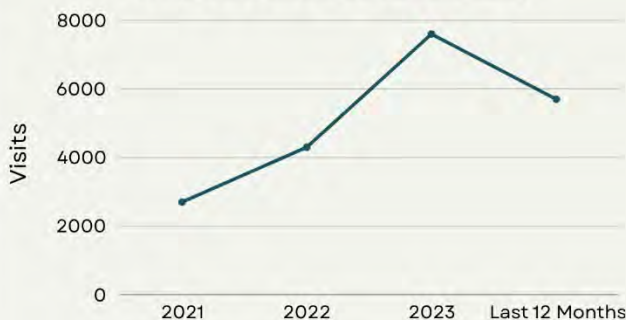
Visitor 16%



Local 84%

Split of visits by origin of user.

HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 2 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 10 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 50
2024 (predicted): 75

Herring Cove Beach

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage and Value:** Herring Cove Beach is a popular recreational resource used by locals for bonfires and small watercraft launches.
2. **Strong Public Demand:** The beach's heavy usage, particularly in the late evening, reflects strong public demand for water access recreation in Sitka.
3. **Balancing Usage and Preservation:** While the beach's condition could accommodate more use, survey respondents prioritize medium levels of use and group size to maintain the area's natural character.
4. **Group Size Preferences:** Medium group sizes are preferred for Herring Cove Beach.
5. **Group Frequency:** Medium group frequency is preferred for Herring Cove Beach.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
5	24

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Special Conditions

Blue Lake and Blue Lake Road



CONSIDERATIONS

- Blue Lake is a drinking water source for the city
- Blue Lake Road is closed in winter season
- Forest Service limits commercial use of the road too

DESCRIPTION:

- Lake access for kayaking and watersport recreation
- Swimming and motorized watercraft use is prohibited
- Popular recreation activities include paddleboarding, kayaking, and fishing

RECENT LEVELS OF USE:

Current levels of use calculated by the same methods as the other assets in this list.

HISTORICAL USE:

Historical data is not available for this asset.

COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 1 commercial permit issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 10 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 50
2024 (predicted): 50

Blue Lake and Blue Lake Road

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **Limited Data Availability:** CBS has limited data available to inform use on Blue Lake Road and on Blue Lake.
2. **Current Permittees:** There is currently only one permit that has been historically issued for this area.
3. **Management Priorities:** Most interested in medium group sizes with moderate frequency.
4. High approval in survey for allowed guided kayaks.
5. USFS Maximum Group size 8 and Maximum number of vehicles of 6 vehicles per day.

Commercial Carrying Capacity Blue Lake (Road / Lake)*

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
8	25 / 20

*The maximum groups per week for the road and lake are not additive; of the 25 maximum groups per week that could be permitted on the road, only 20 may use the lake.

Special Guidance

Special Conditions

- No fuel powered watercraft is allowed on Blue Lake.
- Electric powered watercraft maybe considered except for jet skis.

Green Lake and Green Lake Road



CONSIDERATIONS

- Green Lake road is used by city and hatchery staff in motorized vehicles, but is closed to public traffic
- Hikers and bikers need to be vigilant for car traffic

DESCRIPTION:

- Green Lake road is 7 miles of gravel road closed to public motorized vehicles leading to NSRAA hatchery and Green Lake Hydroelectric Project
- Used for hiking, walking, biking, foraging, hunting, back country access

RECENT LEVELS OF USE:

Current levels of use calculated by the same methods as the other assets in this list are not available for this one due to its remote nature.

HISTORICAL USE:

Historical data for this asset is not currently available.

COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 1 commercial permit issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 8 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
 - 2023: 50
 - 2024 (predicted): 150

Green Lake and Green Lake Road

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **Limited Data Availability:** CBS has limited data available to inform use on Green Lake Road and on Blue Lake.
2. One commercial permit operator with stated use only for Green Lake Road to Medvejje
3. Green Lake Road: Medium group sizes with low frequency
4. Very strong preference in allowing guided bikes and e-bikes on Green Lake Road
5. Green Lake: Medium group sizes with medium frequency
6. Very strong preference for allowing guided kayaks.
7. Very strong preference to not allow commercial jet ski use.

Commercial Carrying Capacity Green Lake (Road / Lake)

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
8	26 / 20

*The maximum groups per week for the road and lake are not additive; of the 26 maximum groups per week that could be permitted on the road, only 20 may use the lake.

Special Guidance

Special Conditions

- No commercial jet ski use is allowed.

Swan Lake



CONSIDERATIONS

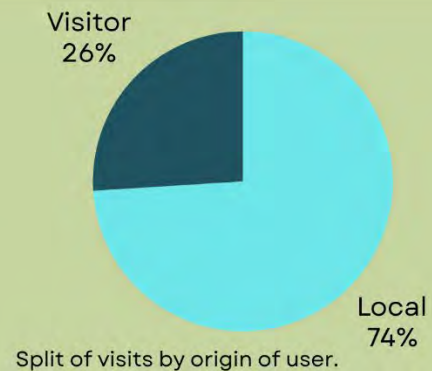
- Only street parking available
- Swan Lake is in a residential area
- Popular recreation spot for locals in town

DESCRIPTION:

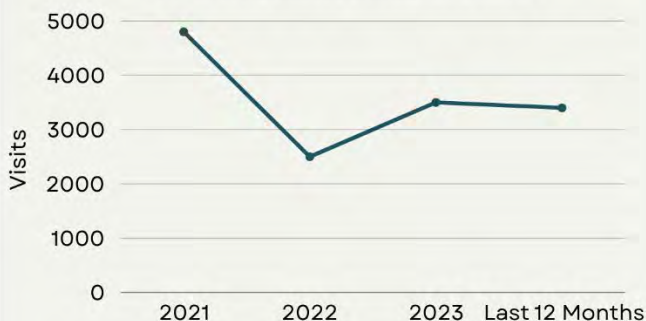
- Swan Lake consists of a dock and small park with benches
- Lake access for kayaking, swimming, fishing, watersport recreation, and ice skating in the winter
- Swan Lake has no parking lot

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Saturday
- Peak levels of use at 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- 2500 unique users



HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 2 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 10 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 50
2024 (predicted): 50

Swan Lake

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **Preferred Group Size and Frequency:** A preference for medium to small group sizes and low-frequency use was expressed, with no clear preference for specific days of the week when commercial use should be permitted.
2. **Guided vs. Unguided Kayak Use:** There is a general desire to allow guided kayak groups, with moderate approval for unguided kayak use.
3. **Historical Usage Patterns:** Historical use data indicates that the vast majority of year-round use is by local residents, with significant increases in nonresident use during the summer months.
4. **Public Perception of Kayak Use:** Survey data indicates some approval of kayak use, with higher approval for guided use.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
5	16

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Special Conditions

- Parking of commercial vehicles is prohibited and drop off/pick up services are preferred.

Eagle Beach (Back Beach)



CONSIDERATIONS

- Popular water access for locals
- Permits have been issued but not used to their potential
- Very close to residential property
- Limited parking in area

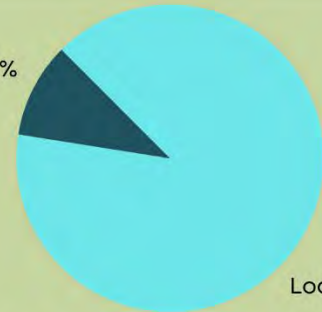
DESCRIPTION:

- Water access for kayaks, jet skis, motorized watercraft
- Parking lot has limited space and street parking can be crowded
- Beach is used as a gathering spot by locals

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Sunday
- Peak levels of use at 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- 2400 unique users

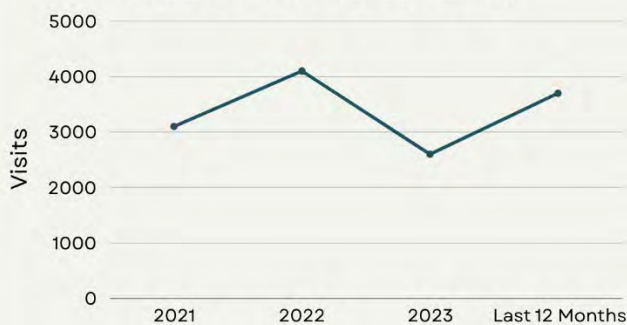
Visitor 10%



Local 90%

Split of visits by origin of user.

HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 2 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 10 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 50
2024 (predicted): 50

Eagle Beach (Back Beach)

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **High Usage and Local Demand:** Eagle Beach is a popular recreational resource used primarily by locals, with a significant increase in usage over the past two years.
2. **Growing Commercial Interest:** Permit requests for commercial activities on Eagle Beach have also increased, with permits granted for kayak and guided jet ski tours in 2024.
3. **Monitoring Commercial Use:** To date, neither permitted operator has submitted required year-end reports, limiting the ability to quantify actual commercial use.
4. **User Preferences:** Public sentiment leans towards medium to small group sizes and a medium to low frequency of use on Eagle Beach.
5. **Jet Ski Operations:** Public comments generally express disapproval of jet ski operations on Eagle Beach and other public areas, favoring restrictions to harbor launches only.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
5	18

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Special Conditions

Sitka Sound Islands



CONSIDERATIONS

- Remote nature of these islands makes management difficult
- Minimal to no man made structures or amenities exist
- Popular with locals for picnics and camping

DESCRIPTION:

- There are many remote islands that are owned by the city
- Crow Island, Calligan Island, Gagarin Island, Middle Island, Little and Big Gavanski Island are all islands that commercial permits have been requested for
- Popular kayak camping and boat camping spots

RECENT LEVELS OF USE:

Current levels of use calculated by the same methods as the other assets in this list are not available due to the remote and spread out nature of these islands.

HISTORICAL USE:

Historical data for these assets is not currently available.

COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 1 commercial permit issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 9 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
 - 2023: 40
 - 2024 (predicted): 25

Sitka Sound Islands

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **Limited Data Availability:** CBS has limited data available to inform use of most of the island groups near Sitka (Crow Island, Gagarin, Middle and Big Gavanski, Calligan Islands).
2. **Missing Reconciliation Reports:** The historical permit applicant has not submitted reconciliation reports for 2023 or 2024.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
6	18

Special Guidance

Special Conditions

- All use will incorporate "Leave No Trace" practices into all activities in accordance with the Appendix D: Leave No Trace document.
- Permits will not be issued for commercial use of Chaichei Islands, Parker Group, Gagarin Island/Clam Shell Beach Island.

Baranof Warm Springs



CONSIDERATIONS

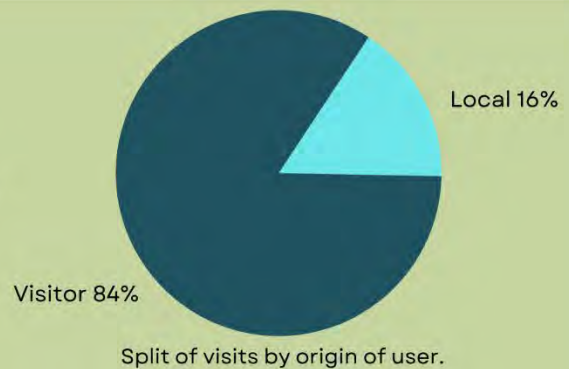
- Remote nature of this site makes management difficult
- Maintenance done by residents
- City owned area surrounded by private property

DESCRIPTION:

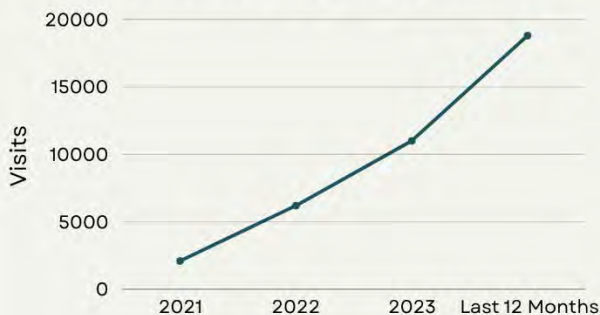
- Baranof Warm Springs is a remote recreation site on the east side of Baranof Island
- It consists of a short trail, boardwalk, dock, three tubs, and a picnic shelter
- Home to a small seasonal community

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Wednesday
- Peak levels of use at 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- 8700 unique users
- 259 average users per day in peak season



HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 16 commercial permits issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 12 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 361
2024 (predicted): 802

Baranof Warm Springs

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **Group Size and Frequency:** Management priorities are focused on group sizes and number of groups per day.
2. **Group Preference:** Medium to small group sizes are preferred, and low numbers of groups per day were most favored.
3. **User Management:** Managing health, safety, and outdoor etiquette has a high 1st and 3rd priority ranking.
4. **Baranof Warm Springs Usage:** The Baranof Warm Springs area has seen a remarkable increase in summer use, as well as permit applications. Most of the increase in permit applications over the past year is due to awareness efforts around permitting requirements.
5. **Permit Requirements:** USFS, Alaska State Department of Natural Resources, and CBS all require commercial use permits for this area.
6. **USFS Allocations:** Max group size: 20
Alaska DNR: 5 (+1 guide)

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
6	18

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Participation in the pre-season stakeholder and community meeting is highly encouraged.

Special Conditions

- All use will incorporate “Leave No Trace” practices into all activities in accordance with the Appendix D: Leave No Trace document.
- Bathing Instruction: Etiquette will be provided to all guests to address food and drink use, soaking times, where to wait when tubs/springs are full, and other considerations the permittee deems appropriate.
- Proof of Additional Authorization for joint jurisdiction and/or property ownership is required before permit can be utilized.

Goddard Hot Springs



CONSIDERATIONS

- Remote nature of this site makes management difficult
- Limited tub space can cause overcrowding to happen quickly

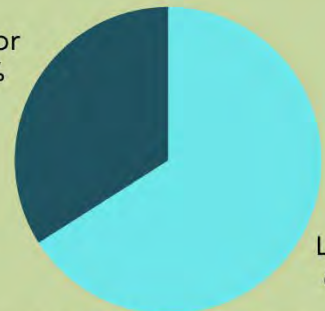
DESCRIPTION:

- Recreation site approximately 15 miles south of town
- Goddard Hot Springs consists of a boardwalk, walking trail, and two bath houses
- Popular recreation spot for locals

2021-2024 LEVELS OF USE:

- Busiest day of use on Sunday
- Peak levels of use at 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- 784 unique users in this time frame

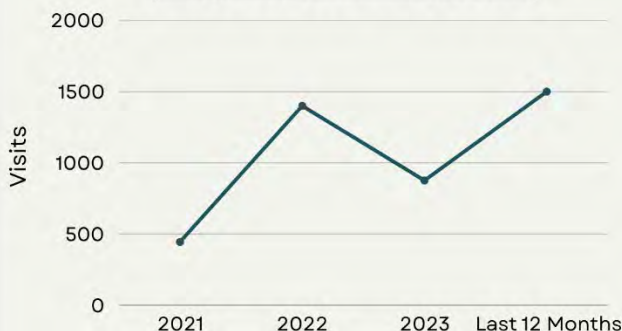
Visitor
34%



Local
66%

Split of visits by origin of user.

HISTORICAL USE:



COMMERCIAL LEVELS OF USE IN 2024:

- 1 commercial permit issued in 2024
- Maximum group size of 6 visitors
- Maximum Commercial Visitors:
2023: 0
2024 (predicted): 50

Goddard Hot Springs

Permittable Commercial Use

Findings from Carrying Capacity Analysis

1. **Current Use:** Current use data is not available.
2. **Commercial Use:** The majority of survey and public comment respondents preferred no allowed commercial use for Goddard. However, half of respondents selected at least small group allowances.
3. **Management Priorities:** Management priorities are focused on group sizes and the number of groups per day.

Commercial Carrying Capacity

Maximum Group Size	Maximum Groups per Week
4	10

Special Guidance

- Preferred times of use: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Weekday use is preferred. (Weekend use is discouraged)

Special Conditions

- All use will incorporate “Leave No Trace” practices into all activities in accordance with the Appendix D: Leave No Trace document.
- Bathing Instruction: Etiquette will be provided to all guests to address food and drink use, soaking times, where to wait when tubs/springs are full, and other considerations the permittee deems appropriate.

VII. Fee Schedules

COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL USE OF MUNICIPAL LANDS AND FACILITIES FEE SCHEDULE

FEES	ANNUAL	PER CLIENT
ALL PROPOSED CLIENT NUMBERS	\$400	\$5

SPECIAL USE AREAS BARANOF WARM SPRINGS AND GODDARD HOTSPRINGS

FEES	ANNUAL	PER CLIENT
ALL PROPOSED CLIENT NUMBERS	\$400	\$10

In accordance with Sitka General Code, Chapter 14.10.040, fees will be set in the Use Plan established by the City and Borough Assembly. The 2025 recommended fee schedule includes an Annual Fee and per client fee. The permit holder shall use its best estimate of the number of clients and days they will be guiding per each season. The \$250 annual application fee is non-refundable. All fees are subject to tax.



COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL LAND USE PLAN

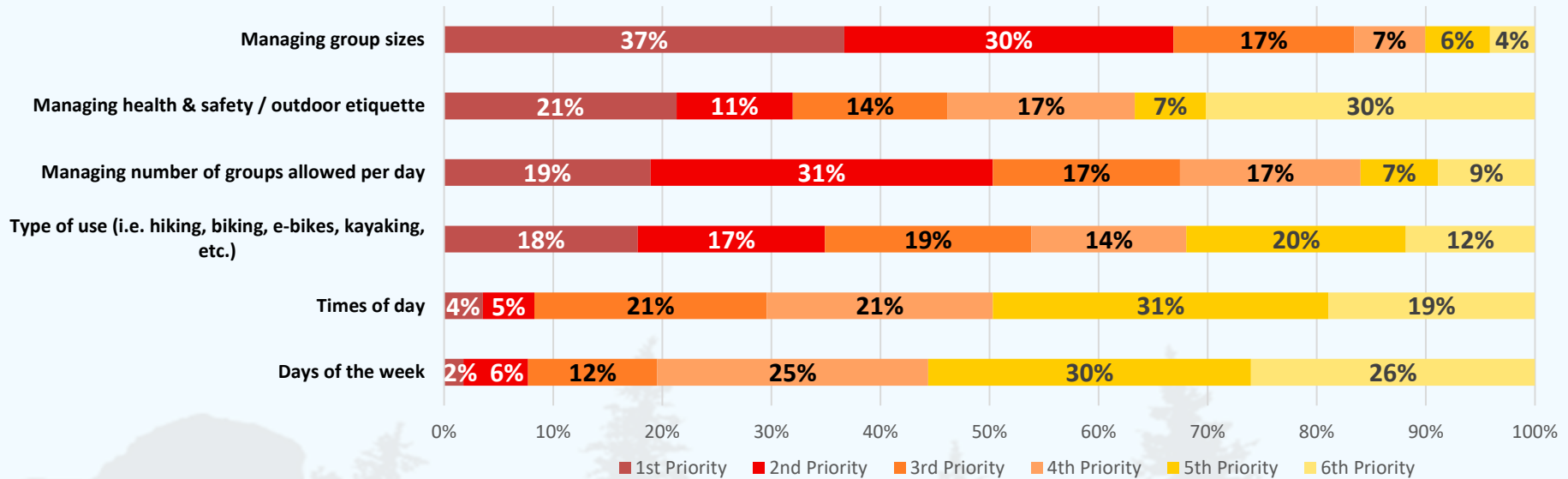
SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Respondent Data – 174 Responses

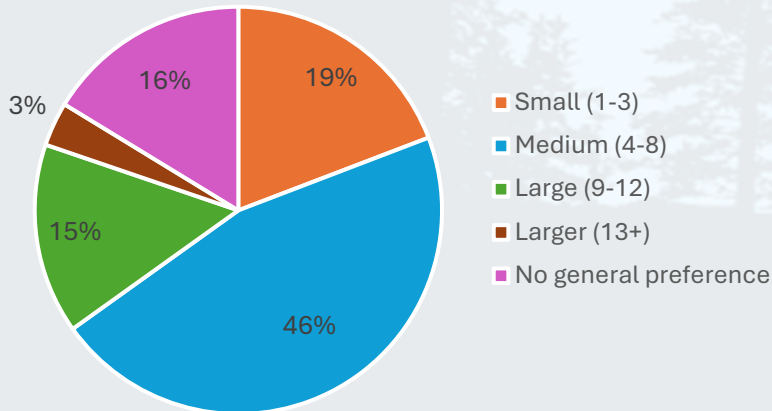
<p>Sitka is their primary place of residence</p> <p>93%</p>	<p>94%</p> <p>Primary use & interest in CBS rec areas is recreational rather than commercial</p>	<p>Respondents described their level of use of CBS rec areas as:</p> <p>56% High 27% Medium 16% Low 2% None/Infrequent</p>	<p>Ages were:</p> <p>18-24: 1% 25-34: 14% 35-44: 24% 45-54: 20% 55-64: 14% 65+: 27%</p> <p>Under/Over representation based on 2022 American Community Survey</p>
<p>78%</p> <p>Have lived in Sitka for more than 10 years</p> <p><2 years: 2% 2-5 years: 8% 6-10 years: 12%</p>	<p>Women Men NB split:</p> <p>60% 38% 2%</p> <p>Women Men split per 2022 American Community Survey:</p> <p>48% 52%</p> <p>Under/Over representation based on 2022 American Community Survey</p>	<p>White/Caucasian 92% Alaska Native/American Indian 9% Hispanic/Latino 5% Asian/Asian American 2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 1%</p> <p><i>Significant over-representation from White/Caucasian respondents, no respondents identified as Black/African American or Middle Eastern/North African</i></p>	<p>Highest areas of employment were</p> <p>26% Govt 15% Public Edu 11% Seafood 11% Arts, Sci. & Social 10% Healthcare 9% Tour Operations</p>

General Preferences

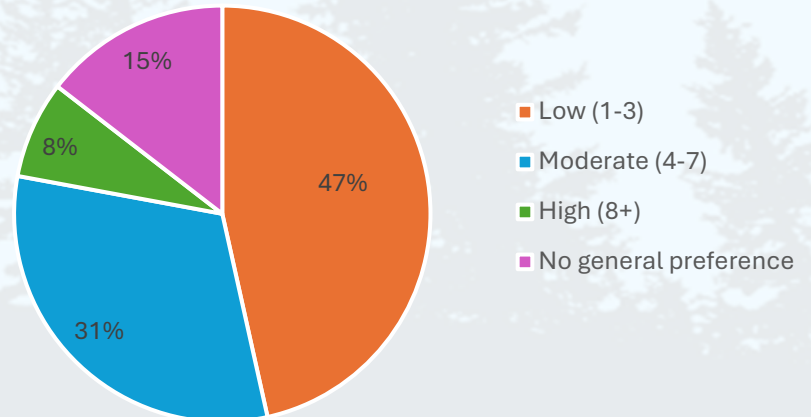
Management Priorities



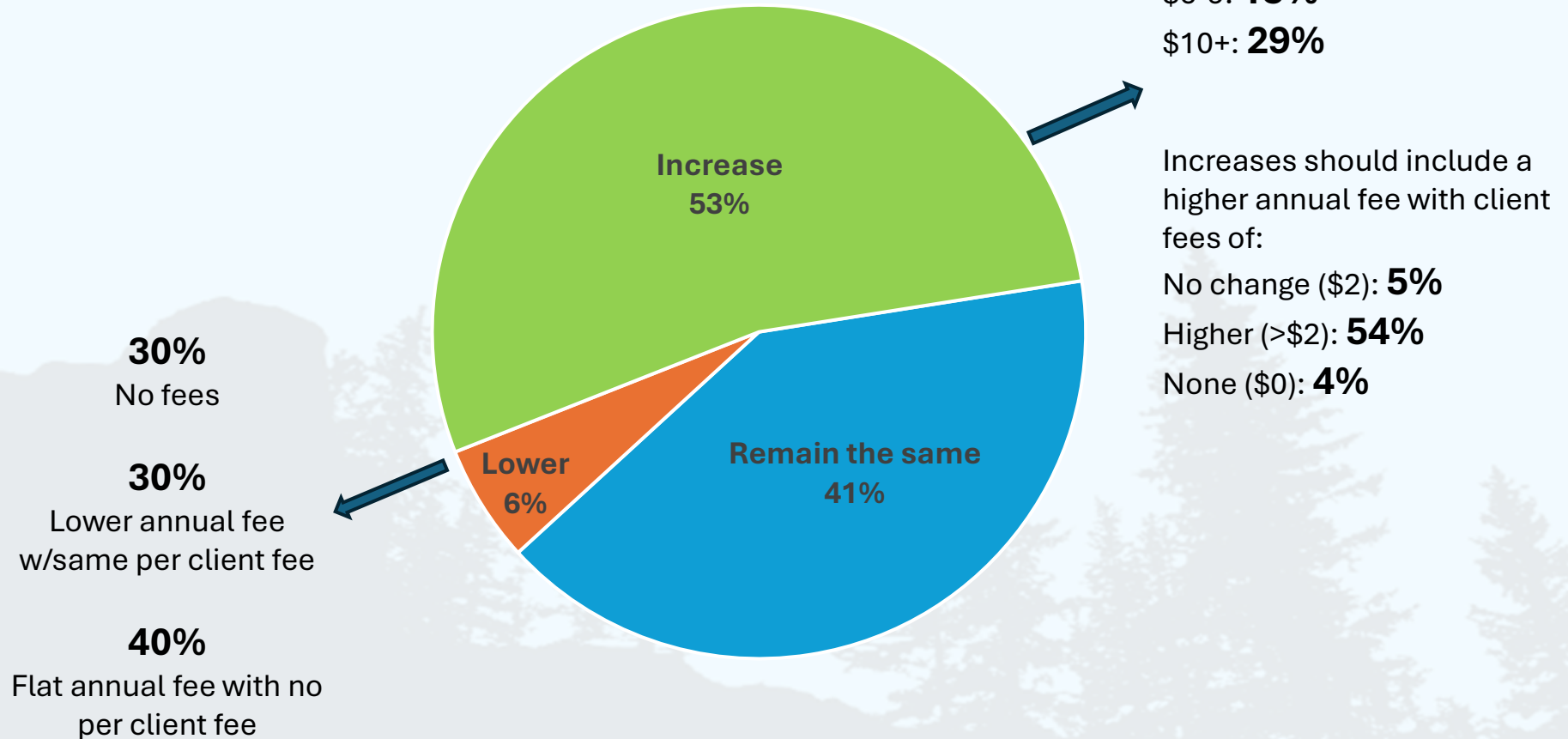
General Preference for Group Sizes



General Preference for Groups per Day



Permit fees should...



Weighted averages explanation

Group Sizes			
Small (1-3)	23%	16%	17%
Medium (4-8)	28%	43%	40%
Large (9-12)	11%	13%	10%
Larger (13+)	12%	17%	11%
No Allowed Use	26%	11%	21%
Weighted Average Group Size	5	6	5
Groups per Day			
Low (1-3)	36%	32%	30%
Medium (4-7)	28%	36%	34%
High (8+)	11%	20%	13%
No Allowed Use	25%	12%	22%
Weighted Average Groups/Day	4	5	4

- Weighted averages were calculated to help arrive at preferred Group Size and Groups per Day that were reflective of all responses
- The response rate (%) was multiplied by the upper number for each range (listed below), then added together for a weighted average
 - Group Sizes
 - Small: 3
 - Medium: 8
 - Large: 12
 - Larger: 13
 - Groups per Day
 - Low: 3
 - Medium: 7
 - High: 8
- Though the upper end of each range was used, this is somewhat mitigated by:
 - The highest ranges (Larger for Group Size and High for Groups per Day) being only one number higher than the next largest/highest range
 - Those who preferred “No allowed use” bring down the weighted average

Cross Trail



- As the largest, locally accessible trail system, particular attention was given to the Cross Trail in the survey
- Survey results were split into northern trail segments (shown in orange on the map) and southern trail segments (shown in purple on the map) with the center dividing point being the intersection of the trail with Kramer Ave.

Key Points

- On the whole, respondents were more supportive of commercial use on northern segments of the trail rather than southern segments
 - Weighted average group sizes were larger for northern vs southern segments, though groups per day were roughly the same
 - Higher percentages of respondents voiced a preference for “no commercial use” on southern vs northern trail segments
- Use of the trail by non guided bikes and e-bikes was generally not favored. The Northern segment was more favorable for allowing guided permits with less favorability for e-bike use in general
- Vehicle parking at trailheads appears to be a high concern for survey respondents

Northern Cross Trail Segments

	North Cross Trail Segments				
	Whole Cross Trail	Starrigavan to Cruise Dock Junction	Cruise Dock Connector to Cruise Dock Junction	Cruise Dock Junction to Harbor Mountain	Harbor Mountain to Kramer Ave. South
Group Sizes					
Small (1-3)	10%	10%	7%	9%	10%
Medium (4-8)	52%	33%	31%	40%	48%
Large (9-12)	15%	30%	32%	24%	16%
Larger (13+)	13%	17%	20%	15%	15%
No Allowed Use	10%	10%	10%	12%	12%
Weighted Average Group Size	8	9	9	8	8
Groups per Day					
Low (1-3)	33%	29%	26%	28%	32%
Medium (4-7)	40%	33%	32%	36%	40%
High (8+)	19%	29%	34%	25%	15%
No Allowed Use	8%	9%	8%	11%	13%
Weighted Average Groups per Day	5	5	6	5	5
Allowed Commercial Bike Use					
Guided Bikes	45%	51%	50%	50%	48%
Non-guided Bikes	30%	39%	41%	37%	37%
Guided E-Bikes	23%	32%	34%	31%	26%
Non-guided E-Bikes	10%	17%	15%	13%	11%
No Commercial Bike Use	50%	42%	42%	42%	43%

Allowed Access	Starrigavan	Cruise Dock Connector	Harbor Mountain Rd.	Kramer Ave. South
Walk-In / Bike-In	46%	46%	47%	50%
Vehicle Drop-Off	34%	37%	30%	35%
Vehicle Parking	16%	17%	11%	13%
Any Kind of Access	33%	38%	27%	23%
None	17%	14%	22%	21%

Times of Day for Commercial Use	Early Morning (7AM - 10AM)	Mid-Morning (9AM - 12PM)	Midday (11AM - 2PM)	Early Afternoon (1PM - 4PM)	Late Afternoon (3PM - 6PM)	Evening (5PM - 8PM)	Any Time	None
Whole Cross Trail	13%	45%	42%	39%	10%	2%	31%	14%

Days of the Week for Commercial Use	Weekdays Only	Weekends Only	Any Days	None
Whole Cross Trail	40%	1%	44%	15%
Average Across North Trail Segments	31%	0%	52%	17%

Southern Cross Trail Segments

Southern Cross Trail Segments									
Whole Cross Trail	Kramer Ave. South to Cascade Creek	Cascade Creek to Kimsham Ballfields	Kimsham Ballfields to Sitka High School	Sitka High School to Baranof St. Junction	Baranof St. Trailhead to Baranof St. Junction	Baranof St. Junction to Gavan Hill Junction	Gavan Hill Junction to Yaw Drive	Yaw Drive to Indian River Parking	
Group Sizes									
Small (1-3)	10%	14%	17%	18%	19%	20%	19%	18%	18%
Medium (4-8)	52%	45%	44%	42%	43%	42%	41%	42%	42%
Large (9-12)	15%	16%	12%	14%	13%	14%	14%	13%	12%
Larger (13+)	13%	12%	11%	11%	10%	10%	11%	12%	11%
No Allowed Use	10%	13%	15%	15%	15%	14%	15%	15%	16%
Weighted Average Group Size	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Groups per Day									
Low (1-3)	33%	32%	36%	37%	38%	39%	39%	38%	35%
Medium (4-7)	40%	41%	35%	34%	34%	35%	32%	34%	35%
High (8+)	19%	14%	15%	14%	14%	14%	15%	14%	15%
No Allowed Use	8%	13%	15%	15%	14%	13%	14%	14%	15%
Weighted Average Groups per Day	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Allowed Commercial Bike Use									
Guided Bikes	45%	44%	42%	43%	42%	42%	43%	42%	39%
Non-guided Bikes	30%	32%	30%	30%	31%	30%	30%	30%	30%
Guided E-Bikes	23%	21%	19%	19%	19%	18%	19%	20%	19%
Non-guided E-Bikes	10%	10%	9%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%
No Commercial Bike Use	50%	49%	51%	50%	51%	51%	50%	51%	53%

	Cascade Creek	Kimsham Ballfields	Sitka High School	Baranof St. Trailhead	Yaw Drive	Indian River Parking
Allowed Access						
Walk-In / Bike-In	48%	46%	50%	51%	51%	48%
Vehicle Drop-Off	30%	36%	35%	27%	28%	36%
Vehicle Parking	10%	18%	20%	9%	9%	20%
Any Kind of Access	22%	24%	21%	21%	19%	25%
None	23%	20%	20%	20%	21%	19%

Times of Day for Commercial Use	Early Morning (7AM - 10AM)	Mid-Morning (9AM - 12PM)	Midday (11AM - 2PM)	Early Afternoon (1PM - 4PM)	Late Afternoon (3PM - 6PM)	Evening (5PM - 8PM)	Any Time	None
Whole Cross Trail	13%	45%	42%	39%	10%	2%	31%	14%

Days of the Week for Commercial Use	Weekdays Only	Weekends Only	Any Days	None
Whole Cross Trail	40%	1%	44%	15%
Average Across Southern Trail Segments	35%	1%	41%	23%

Other Local Trails

	Harbor Mountain Road	Blue Lake Road	Green Lake Road	Thimbleberry Lake/ Heart Lake Trail	Gavan Hill	Indian River	Herring Cove to Beaver Lake	Blue Lake Campground to Beaver Lake	Medveje Lake Trail
Group Sizes									
Small (1-3)	17%	15%	13%	22%	26%	20%	23%	23%	23%
Medium (4-8)	41%	38%	43%	39%	38%	43%	41%	41%	35%
Large (9-12)	13%	15%	15%	14%	7%	9%	7%	8%	9%
Larger (13+)	11%	15%	15%	14%	10%	13%	12%	12%	11%
No Allowed Use	19%	15%	14%	12%	20%	15%	17%	16%	22%
Weighted Average Group Size	7	7	8	7	6	7	6	6	6
Groups per Day									
Low (1-3)	42%	37%	36%	39%	50%	38%	44%	44%	41%
Medium (4-7)	29%	34%	33%	35%	25%	37%	32%	33%	27%
High (8+)	12%	17%	19%	15%	10%	10%	8%	10%	10%
No Allowed Use	18%	12%	12%	12%	14%	15%	15%	13%	22%
Weighted Average Groups per Day	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	4
Allowed Commercial Bike Use									
Guided Bikes	54%	59%	64%	30%					
Non-guided Bikes	29%	32%	38%	16%					
Guided E-Bikes	31%	40%	47%	14%					
Non-guided E-Bikes	19%	19%	24%	8%					
No Commercial Bike Use	39%	33%	30%	64%					
Times of Day for Commercial Use									
	Early Morning (7AM - 10AM)	Mid-Morning (9AM - 12PM)	Midday (11AM - 2PM)	Early Afternoon (1PM - 4PM)	Late Afternoon (3PM - 6PM)	Evening (5PM - 8PM)	Any Time	None	
Average Across Trails	13%	35%	33%	27%	6%	1%	36%	21%	
Days of Week for Commercial Use									
	Weekdays Only		Weekends Only		Any Days			None	
Average Across Trails	39%		0%		39%			22%	

Key Points

- Respondents largely preferred medium group sizes with low frequency
- Guided bike use had fairly high approval levels except for Thimbleberry/Heart Lake
- Unguided Bike & E-Bike use had low levels of approval with markedly less approval for E-Bikes
- Most respondents preferred commercial use on these trails from 9AM – 4PM
- Respondents were evenly split between allowing commercial use on weekdays only versus any day of the week
- Many comments made were about concern/disapproval for bike use on the trails (primarily e-bikes) and emphasizing preferences for no commercial use in these areas. A few comments expressed a desire to see less restrictive use.

Water Access Sites

	Swan Lake	Crescent Harbor Boat Launch	Sealing Cove Boat Launch	Eagle Beach ("Back Beach")	Blue Lake	Herring Cove	Green Lake
Group Sizes							
Small (1-3)	23%	16%	17%	19%	16%	20%	18%
Medium (4-8)	28%	43%	40%	33%	34%	39%	33%
Large (9-12)	11%	13%	10%	11%	10%	11%	13%
Larger (13+)	12%	17%	11%	13%	11%	12%	11%
No Allowed Use	26%	11%	21%	23%	29%	17%	25%
Weighted Average Group Size	5	6	5	5	4	5	5
Groups per Day							
Low (1-3)	36%	32%	30%	30%	28%	33%	28%
Medium (4-7)	28%	36%	34%	31%	33%	35%	30%
High (8+)	11%	20%	13%	16%	13%	14%	15%
No Allowed Use	25%	12%	22%	22%	26%	18%	27%
Weighted Average Groups/Day	4	5	4	4	4	5	4
Allowed Commercial Watercraft Use							
Guided Kayaks	57%	82%	70%	69%	60%	76%	62%
Non-guided Kayaks	35%	48%	38%	42%	33%	43%	36%
Guided Jet Skis	8%	28%	25%	30%	10%	26%	11%
Non-guided Jet Skis	7%	19%	17%	19%	9%	17%	10%
No Commercial Watercraft Use	40%	16%	27%	27%	36%	21%	35%

Times of Day for Commercial Use	Early Morning (7AM - 10AM)	Mid-Morning (9AM - 12PM)	Midday (11AM - 2PM)	Early Afternoon (1PM - 4PM)	Late Afternoon (3PM - 6PM)	Evening (5PM - 8PM)	Any Time	None
Average Across Sites	11%	32%	28%	23%	6%	0%	38%	28%

Days of the Week for Commercial Use	Weekdays Only	Weekends Only	Any Days	None
Average Across Sites	29%	0%	42%	28%

Key Points

- Respondents largely preferred medium group sizes with medium frequency
- Guided kayak use had fairly high approval levels, unguided use had moderate approval levels
- Jet ski use, particularly non-guided, had lower approval levels. More respondents were supportive of guided jet ski use on saltwater rather than freshwater bodies
- Most respondents preferred commercial use at these sites from 9AM – 4PM
- There was no strong preference for days of the week when commercial use should be allowed
- Comments largely centered on disapproval of jet ski use. There were also several comments about ensuring that parking at water access points, especially harbors, is not over-used by commercial vehicles

Remote Areas

	Baranof Warm Springs	Goddard Hot Springs	Sitka Sound Islands
Group Sizes			
Small (1-3)	21%	23%	22%
Medium (4-8)	40%	27%	35%
Large (9-12)	5%	6%	6%
Larger (13+)	9%	6%	12%
No Allowed Use	25%	38%	25%
Weighted Average Group Size	6	4	6
Groups per Day			
Low (1-3)	48%	42%	41%
Medium (4-7)	21%	13%	20%
High (8+)	7%	7%	15%
No Allowed Use	23%	38%	25%
Weighted Average Groups per Day	4	3	4

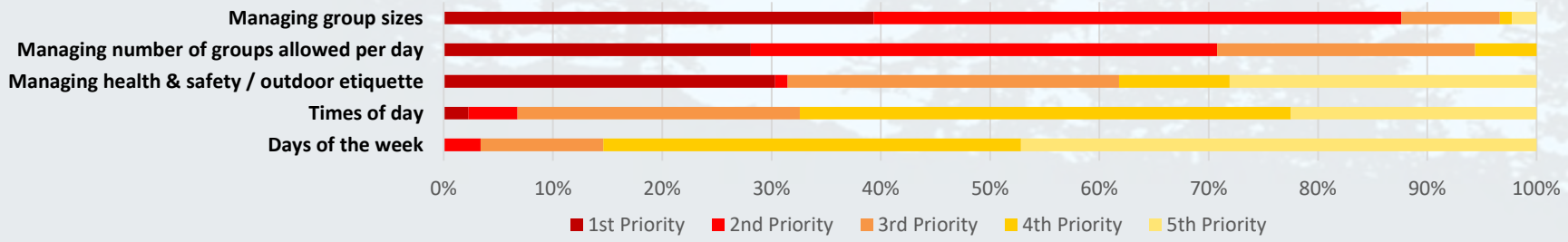
Key Points

- Respondents most preferred medium size groups for BWS & Islands, and no allowed use for Goddard
- Respondents most preferred low frequency of groups per day
- There was much higher approval for hours of commercial use from 9AM – 4PM, though higher levels of late afternoon – late afternoon were seen for these sites as compared to other recreational areas
- Strong management priorities for BWS are managing group sizes and number of groups per day
- Comments received were largely reinforcing a preference for no commercial use of these areas, with a few advocating for less restrictive use. Several also expressed a desire to see higher use fees at BWS and Goddard and/or fee revenue being dedicated to maintenance of these areas.

Times of Day for Commercial Use	Early Morning (7AM - 10AM)	Mid-Morning (9AM - 12PM)	Midday (11AM - 2PM)	Early Afternoon (1PM - 4PM)	Late Afternoon (3PM - 6PM)	Evening (5PM - 8PM)	Late Evening (7PM - 10PM)
Average Across Sites	33%	68%	73%	67%	30%	19%	16%

Days of Week for Commercial Use	Weekdays Only	Weekends Only	Any Days	None
Average Across Sites	31%	1%	36%	31%

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES FOR BARANOF WARM SPRINGS





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

March 2019



Commercial Use Allocation on Sitka Area Trails and Roads

Environmental Assessment

Sitka Ranger District
Tongass National Forest

Sitka, Alaska



Guided clients on trail near Sitka, AK

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INTRODUCTION

The Forest Service (FS) has prepared this Environmental Assessment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This Environmental Assessment discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action and alternatives. For this project, the responsible official is the Sitka District Ranger.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose and need for action is to consider commercial use on Sitka area trails, roads and in campgrounds managed by the Sitka Ranger District.

Commercial uses or activities are defined as “any use or activity on National Forest System lands: a) where an entry or participation fee is charged, or b) where the primary purpose is the sale of a good or service and, in either case, regardless of whether the use or activity is intended to produce a profit” (36 CFR 251.51).

The allocation of commercial use on area trails and roads is currently managed according to capacity levels derived from a 2006 capacity analysis and subsequent 2008 EA. Since implementation of the 2008 decision, changes to the recreation landscape in Sitka have ensued. Though Forest Service trail, road and facility maintenance budgets are trending steadily downward, cooperative efforts with partners including Sitka Trail Works (STW) and the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) have resulted in new and improved infrastructure. A National Forest System (NFS) trail was constructed (Herring Cove) and others have undergone major reconstruction efforts including Beaver Lake, Thimbleberry/Heart Lake and Harbor Mountain/Gavan Hill. The CBS managed Cross trail has been reconstructed and extended with several connector spurs incorporated to enable easy public access. CBS is expected to begin construction of the final phase of the project in 2019, which will see the trail extended from Harbor Mountain Road to the State of Alaska boat launch parking facility at Old Sitka and the Starrigavan Recreation Area complex.

A 2018 McDowell Group report highlights the growing importance of Alaska’s visitor industry in terms of job growth, and state and municipal revenues. Not surprisingly, the report indicates a steady upward trend of visitors to Alaska over the last several years. Attractions abound for visitors to Southeast Alaska and many visitors choose to experience public lands using the services of an outfitter/guide.

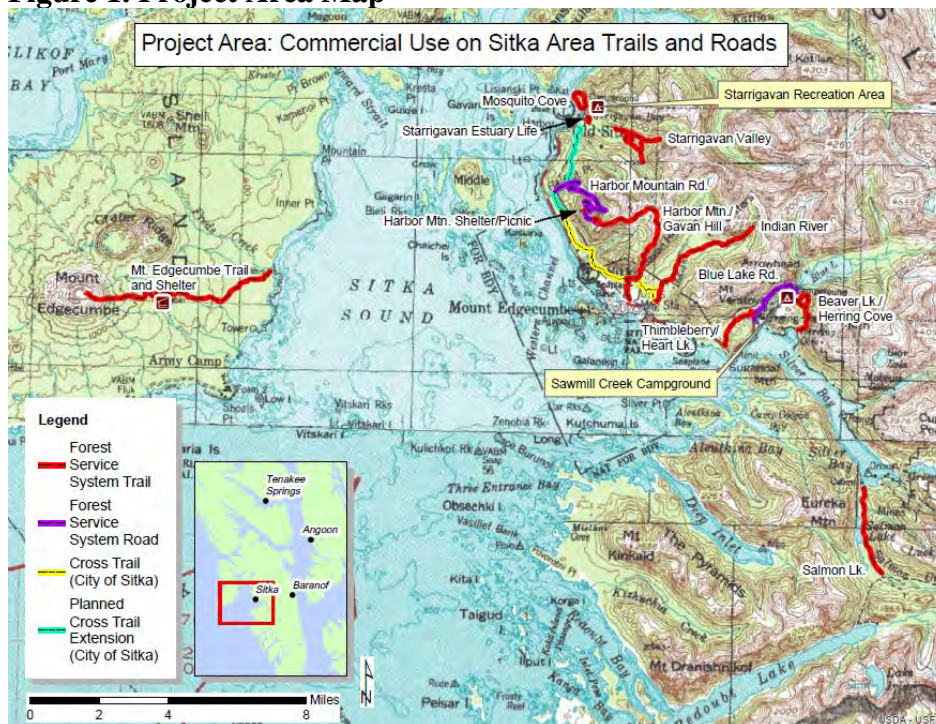
This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, 2016 (Forest Plan) and builds upon the 2008 outfitter/guide management plan to move the project area towards desired conditions described in the Forest Plan. A goal for recreation and tourism on the Tongass under the Forest Plan is to provide a range of recreation opportunities consistent with public demand, emphasizing

locally popular recreation places and those important to the tourism industry (Forest Plan, p. 2-4). Additional Forest Plan direction is to authorize outfitter/guide operations through the issuance of priority use permits (up to 10 years), whenever possible, supplemented with temporary permits. Priority use permits may only be issued if a proposed commercial use has been assessed through an environmental analysis. This action will consider the same trails, roads and activities as the 2008 EA and is expanded to include new trails and facilities in accordance with Forest Plan direction.

The project area includes the following NFS trails accessible from the Sitka road system: Herring Cove, Beaver Lake, Thimbleberry/Heart Lake, Indian River, Harbor Mountain/Gavan Hill, Harbor Mountain Shelter/Picnic, Starrigavan Estuary Life, Mosquito Cove and Starrigavan Valley Multi Use trail system. Trails remote from the Sitka road system, but also included within the project area due to their proximity to Sitka include Mount Edgecumbe and Salmon Lake. No commercial use is proposed on the Verstovia trail due to issues with legal parking availability and land ownership constraints. The Harbor Mountain and Blue Lake roads are part of the Forest Service transportation network in Sitka and are included in the project area in addition to the Mount Edgecumbe Shelter, Sawmill Creek Campground and Starrigavan Recreation Area.

Several of the road-system trails and trailhead parking areas lie on or traverse areas not owned by the FS. For some trails, the FS has a public use easement and is able to regulate activities occurring on these lands. In areas where no legal easement exists, the FS cannot authorize or manage commercial use. These jurisdictional trail segments without easements are identified on the maps in appendix A.

Figure 1. Project Area Map



PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action

The 2006 capacity analysis was used as a template for determining proposed commercial allocation figures. Monitoring data collected since 2008 provided recent use estimates of the trails, roads, and facilities considered under the proposed action.

Trails

Outfitter/guides may be allocated use on Sitka area trails in the following manner:

Up to 25% of the total capacity of each trail may be allocated for outfitter/guide use on some trails and 12.5% of total capacity on trails where a more conservative allocation is warranted. Examples of issues that would result in a relatively lower capacity allocation for certain trails include presence of rare and/or sensitive plant populations, proximity to another recreation asset such as a rental cabin, and high potential for wildlife displacement.

Current Forest Plan guidance is to generally allocate no more than one-half the capacity of a recreation opportunity to outfitter/guide operations.

Recreation capacity is defined as the number of people that can take advantage of the supply of a recreation opportunity during an established use period without substantially diminishing the quality of the recreation experience or the resources.

Outfitter/guide use would be allocated based on service days. A service day is defined as a day, or part of a day, on NFS lands for which an outfitter or guide provides services to a client (FSH 2709.14, 53.1e). One hundred service days, for example, would equal 100 guided clients on a given day. Although service days are based on the number of clients, guides are included in the group size maximums listed below.

Table 1. Existing and Proposed Allocation of Service Days on Sitka Area Trails

Trail Name	Existing Allocation May 1 – Sept 30 / (Max. Group Size) ¹	Proposed Allocation May 1 – Sept 30 / (Max. Group Size)	Proposed Allocation Oct 1 – April 30 / (Max. Group Size)
Herring Cove/Beaver Lake	2228 / (8)	3356 / (8)	926 / (8)
Thimbleberry/Heart Lake	4127 / (15)	4144 / (15)	1143 / (15)
Indian River	1032 / (8)	1554 / (8)	429 / (8)
Harbor Mtn./Gavan Hill	1032 / (8)	1554 / (8)	429 / (8)
Harbor Mtn. Shelter/Picnic	0	1492 / (8)	411 / (8)
Starrigavan Estuary Life	3095 / (20)	3108 / (20)	857 / (20)
Mosquito Cove	4127 / (20)	4144 / (20)	1143 / (20)
Starrigavan Valley	0	2238 / (15)	617 / (15)
Mount Edgecumbe	0	746 / (8)	206 / (8)
Salmon Lake	0	518 / (8)	143 / (8)

¹No existing allocation exists for the Oct 1 – April 30 time period

The allocations shown in the table above represent the total service days available for the specified season: May 1-Sept 30 (153 days), and October 1-April 30 (212 days). To aid understanding of what the allocations might mean on a daily basis, a per day hypothetical amount of commercial use can be established by dividing service days by the number of days in the season. However, in practice, actual daily commercial use may be more or less than a hypothetical daily quota. Group size limitations effectively keep daily commercial use levels within an acceptable range for management purposes and preserve the recreational experience for other users.

The maximum group pertains both to weekdays and weekends. Proportionally fewer days would be available for commercial use during the non-peak season due to reduced daylight hours and vegetative screening.

Most of the NFS trails and roads in the project area cross multiple land owners. The proposed action applies only to activities conducted on NFS lands or on Non-NFS lands where the Forest Service has been granted management responsibility. However, outfitter/guides permitted on NFS lands are required to comply with state, county, and municipal laws.

Herring Cove and Beaver Lake are two separate NFS trails, but lumped together under this proposal. The existing allocation was developed for Beaver Lake trail only -- Herring Cove trail hadn't been constructed yet at the time of the 2008 allocation decision.

Roads

Outfitter/Guides may be allocated use on National Forest System roads as follows:

Table 2. Existing and Proposed Allocation of Vehicles and Service Days

Activity	Existing Allocation May 1 – Sept 30 / (Max. Group Size) ¹	Proposed Allocation May 1 – Sept 30 / (Max. Group Size)	Proposed Allocation Oct 1 – April 30 / (Max. Group Size)
Blue Lake Road			
Vehicles	306	1019	235
Hiking/Biking	300 / (8)	300 / (8)	150 / (8)
Harbor Mountain Road			
Vehicles	459	969	208
Hiking/Biking	0	300 / (8)	150 / (8)

¹No existing allocation exists for the Oct 1 – April 30 time period

The allocation for trails and roads shown above include institutional outfitters (e.g., schools, youth groups, and therapeutic programs). Institutional outfitters are subject to the same group size requirements unless an exemption for a specific need is provided on a case-by-case basis.

Campgrounds and Dispersed Camping

There is no existing allocation of service days for overnight use at developed recreation facilities, or for dispersed camping off trails. Dispersed camping, where not prohibited by Forest special order, would continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis with one

exception. Outfitter/guides and institutional outfitters may use the Mount Edgumbe shelter on a first-come, first-serve basis. Commercial operators shall not displace unguided users at the shelter. During emergency situations, commercial groups occupying these shelters shall make space available for persons seeking shelter. In addition, institutional outfitters would be allocated use for two overnight recreation facilities as follows:

Table 3. Proposed Allocation of service days for Institutional Outfitters

Facility	Proposed Allocation May 1 – Sept 30	Proposed Allocation Oct 1 – April 30
Sawmill Creek Campground	225	200
Starrigavan Recreation Area	300	200

Maximum group size at the overnight facilities would be in accordance with posted limits. Occupancy of the overnight group sites at Starrigavan Recreation Area is limited to 20 people and the overnight group site at Sawmill Creek Campground, once constructed, is anticipated to accommodate 30 people.

Recreation Events

Recreation events such as running races that fall under the definition of commercial use require a special use permit. Number of participants, rather than service days, is the allocable unit for this type of use.

Table 4. Allocation of Participants for Recreation Events

Route Name	Proposed Maximum number of participants per event	Proposed Allocation Jan 1 – December 31
Herring Cove/Beaver Lake	150	150
Thimbleberry/Heart Lake	150	300 ¹
Harbor Mtn./Gavan Hill	150	150
Harbor Mtn. Shelter/Picnic	150	150
Mosquito Cove	150	150
Starrigavan Valley	150	300
Blue Lake Road	150	150
Harbor Mountain Road	150	150

¹Includes the short segment of Blue Lake Road between trailhead and Sawmill Creek Road

No allocation for recreation events is provided for Verstovia, Indian River, Starrigavan Estuary Life, Mount Edgumbe and Salmon Lake trails. Recreation event use on these trails would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

No Action

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. Priority special use permits could continue to be authorized for trails and roads covered under the 2008 commercial allocation decision. Temporary, one-year special use permits would be authorized on a case by case basis for all recreation facilities not covered under the 2008 decision.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE NO ACTION AND ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The environmental impacts of the No Action and Proposed action are described below. The discussion focuses on resources most likely to be affected by the alternatives.

Botany

No Action – Commercial activities would continue to occur as described above under the No Action alternative. Impacts to sensitive and rare plants or invasive plant risk would be similar to that described for the Proposed Action, except that the lower use allocation of the No Action alternative would result in less potential guided use, and therefore less likelihood of negative impacts. Permits will include stipulations to prevent impacts to sensitive and rare plants, and prevent the spread of invasive plants.

Proposed Action – Guided road and trail use under the proposed allocation will not have a significant impact on habitat of any rare or sensitive plant species that are known or suspected to occur in the project area, because outfitter guide permits will contain stipulations that restrict travel to established designated trails and roads. Guided trail use can potentially have beneficial effects by preventing off-trail or off-road excursions, unleashed pets, unauthorized plant collection, and other activities that may affect sensitive or rare plant habitat. As part of the permitting process, outfitter guides will be informed of their responsibility to avoid impacts to the known occurrences of sensitive and rare plants, including *Piperia unalascensis* on the Mt. Edgecumbe Trail and *Saussurea americana* near the Harbor Mt./Gavan Hill Trail, or any other sensitive or rare plants that may be documented in the future on or near the authorized trails and roads while a permit is active. Therefore, the Proposed Action may affect sensitive or rare plants in the project area, but the impact is expected to be negligible.

The overall risk of invasive plant establishment from the Proposed Action is low if all recommended mitigation measures in the project Invasive Plant Risk Assessment are implemented, and moderate if they are not or only partially implemented. This determination is based on the following:

- The current inventory of invasive plants indicate a few known infestations of high-priority invasive plants at road rights of way and trailheads.
- Current habitat vulnerability is low, and non-project dependent vectors present a low risk.
- Habitat alteration (exposure of mineral soil in off-trail or off-road areas) presents a moderate risk, but only in small areas that should recover to natural vegetation quickly.
- Increased vectors as a result of increased visitor use presents a moderate risk but can be mitigated by permit conditions for guided use.

Heritage and Cultural

No Action – Commercial activities would continue to occur as described above under the No Action alternative. Forest Service permits issued to commercial entities are defined as federal undertakings and as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Forest Service is required to take into account the effects of those undertakings on historic properties eligible to the National Register of Historic Places (NR) and to provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) with a reasonable opportunity to comment. The Forest Service archaeologists in the Heritage Resources staff ensure that the Forest completes the required Section 106 obligations are completed and reported in the required manner.

Proposed Action – Under the proposed action there is the potential for increased usage of the trails and roads by Forest Service permitted commercial entities and their clients. This increased usage has the potential of causing an adverse effect to extant historic properties by the aforementioned commercial entities and their clients. Typically, cultural resources are considered for eligibility to the NR when they are 50 years or older in origin. At least some of the trails and roads listed in this EA had their origins over 50 years ago. The majority of the trails roads proposed in this EA have not been evaluated for eligibility to the NR. None of the trails and roads have been evaluated as NR-eligible.

To fulfill the Section 106 requirements of this proposed undertaking it is necessary to evaluate those trails and roads which have not been previously evaluated to the NR, and then determine the potential impact of the proposal on any resources determined NR-eligible. The Section 106 process requires the determination and examination of the undertaking's entire area of potential effects (APE) for NR-eligible properties that might be impacted by the proposed undertaking. The APE is the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. Any NR-eligible historic properties in reasonably close proximity to the trails and roads detailed in this EA might be indirectly impacted by the Forest Service permitted outfitter/guide usage. Further, the Section 106 requirement is not limited to just federally managed lands. This EA notes that most of the NFS trails and roads in the project area cross multiple land owners. If the proposal has the potential to impact NR-eligible historic properties on non-Forest Service managed lands, both directly or indirectly, then that impact needs to be analyzed in addition.

In order to comply with Section 106, upon application (or renewal of an existing permit) for use of a road or trail which has not been evaluated for eligibility to the NR and the resource in question is 45 years or older in origin, prior to the issuing of that permit Forest Service archaeologists will complete the Section 106 process detailed in 36 CFR 800. The primary steps of this process are as follows:

- Identification of historic properties (§ 800.4)
- Assessment of adverse effects (§ 800.4)
- Resolution of adverse effects (§ 800.6), if necessary

If the results of the Section 106 process determine that NR-eligible sites will be adversely affected by the proposed undertaking the Forest Service will work with the required Section 106 consultation partners to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to those resources. Mitigation measures might include limiting the number of outfitter/guides allocation days more than originally proposed or the development of a historic properties management plan to ensure the resource in question is managed correctly in the future.

Recreation

No Action – Actual service days of commercial use on area trails and roads would likely continue to vary year to year, but the allocation of service days would remain no higher than current management levels. The rate of wear and tear on trails and roads by guided activities is expected to remain similar to existing conditions. Fees collected from commercial operators help fund maintenance of roads, trails, and facilities. This maintenance funding stream is expected to remain relatively flat under No Action.

Proposed Action – Recent trends illustrate the importance of the visitor industry to Alaska in general, and Southeast Alaska in particular. Statewide, visitor-related employment increased approximately 9% between 2015 and 2017 while other sectors including oil and gas, construction, professional and business services, and state government each showed a net loss of jobs in that same period (McDowell Group, 2018). Data from 2017 indicate the visitor industry is responsible for 23% of employment in Southeast Alaska, which is almost double that of Interior Alaska, the region closest in terms of percentage of total employment attributable to the visitor industry (McDowell Group, 2018).

The demand for commercial use of Sitka area roads, trails and campgrounds is likely to rise for the foreseeable future contributing to a combined overall increase in public (guided/unguided) use of FS managed infrastructure in the project area. An increase in the number of people engaged in recreational opportunities is expected to create proportionately more wear and tear on infrastructure, but the need for additional maintenance is not expected to be significant. Should resource concerns arise from natural events and/or use patterns, special use permit managers have the flexibility to reduce authorized use until concerns are addressed.

An increase in commercial use would result in correspondingly more fees collected by the FS, with those added dollars available for maintenance of trails, roads and facilities used by the commercial operators. At the same time, more commercial use would presumably create more employment opportunities and generate additional revenue for the state and local economy.

An unknown percentage of unguided recreationists may choose to spend less time using Forest Service managed trails, roads and campgrounds considered in this proposal, but displacement of the unguided public is not expected to be significant. Commercial group size restrictions and a cap on commercial use (not to exceed 25% of a total trail capacity) will minimize impacts on unguided users. Future projects including the Cross trail

extension and Katlian road could spread out or reduce use on the trails and roads proposed for commercial use.

Wildlife

No Action – Existing conditions would remain. Both guided and unguided use would continue on area trails and roads. No habitat would be modified.

Proposed Action – All outfitter/guide activities would occur on infrastructure already in use by the public and/or commercial outfitters and guides so animals are familiar with some level of human presence. Direct and indirect effects of both alternatives are similar in that habitat would not be modified. Habitats that are key to Management Indicator Species (e.g. nesting habitats, winter use areas or habitat that is considered a limiting factor) will not be modified or affected. No productive old growth habitat would be modified. The main potential effects are disruption of feeding/breeding/nesting habits of wildlife from human presence or disturbance connected to outfitter/guide activities.

AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONSULTED

- The Commercial Use Allocation on Sitka Area Trails and Roads project has been listed on the Tongass National Forest schedule of proposed actions since July 7, 2017.
- Government-to-government consultation letters were sent to the Sitka Tribe of Alaska May 31, 2017.
- Consultation letters were sent to Sealaska Corporation and Shee Atika, Inc. on May 31, 2017.
- Public Scoping letters were emailed via the electronic mailing list management service GovDelivery to 546 individuals, organizations, institutions, and industry representatives on July 7, 2017.
- Public Scoping letters were mailed to 7 individuals, organizations, institutions, and industry representatives on July 7, 2017.
- The Forest Service received written comments from Shee Atika, Inc. Sitka Trail Works, Inc. and Blain Anderson of Sound Sailing.

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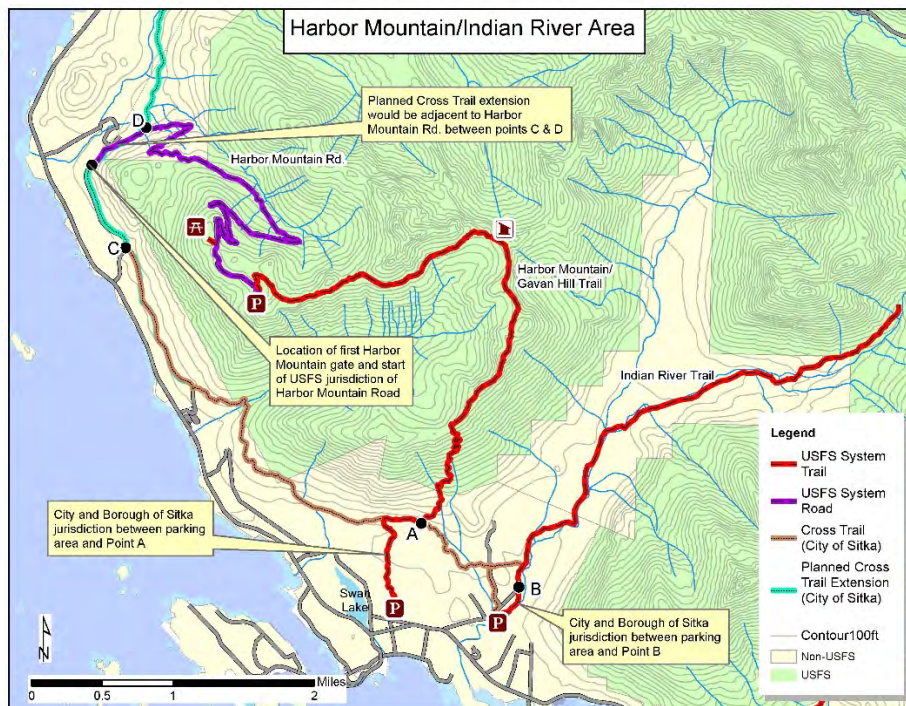
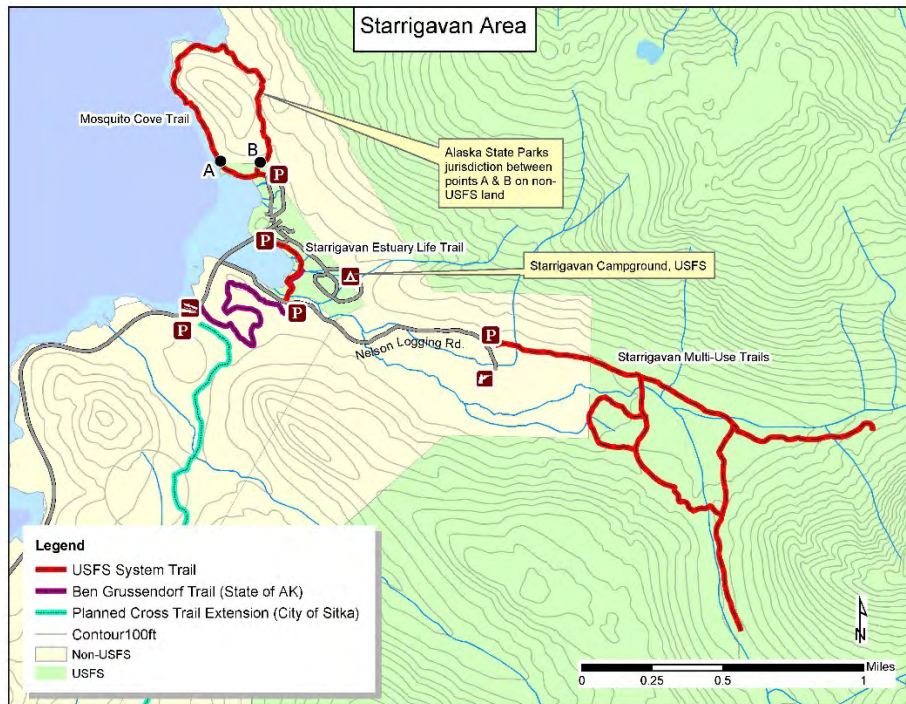
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APPENDIX A – ADDITIONAL MAPS





Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan

Appendix C: Considerations & Methodology for Determining Carrying Capacity

As the Use Plan continues to evolve, additional work to analyze and adjust carrying capacities for recreational assets will be essential to meet the plan's goals of prioritizing community quality of life, protecting natural and cultural resources, balancing competing uses, and making considerations for the visitor industry. This document captures key considerations to make, and methods to use, as carrying capacities are further studied and re-determined.

Key Considerations for Commercial Recreational Land Use Carrying Capacities

- 1) Physical Environment:
 - a) Site Characteristics:
 - i) Size, topography, vegetation, water bodies, and climate.
 - ii) Unique features (e.g., historical sites, scenic viewpoints, wildlife habitats).
 - b) Infrastructure:
 - i) Capacity of parking lots, trails, restrooms, and other facilities.
 - ii) Ability to handle waste disposal.
 - c) Natural Resource Constraints:
 - i) Water availability, soil erosion potential, and wildlife sensitivity.

- 2) Social and Cultural Factors:
 - a) Visitor and Local Community Experience:
 - i) Desired level of solitude, interaction, and activity intensity.
 - ii) Cultural and historical significance of the area.
 - iii) Tolerance for noise, crowding, and other disturbances.
 - iv) Economic benefits, social impacts, and potential conflicts with residents.
 - v) Cultural sensitivity to local customs and traditions.

- 3) Management and Operational Factors:
 - a) Monitoring and Evaluation:
 - i) Regular monitoring of visitor numbers, resource conditions, and user satisfaction.
 - ii) Adaptive management to adjust strategies based on monitoring data.
 - b) Regulations and Enforcement:
 - i) Clear and enforceable rules and regulations to protect resources and ensure compliance with issued permit and permit conditions.
 - ii) Adequate enforcement mechanisms to deter violations.

- 4) Economic Factors:
 - a) Revenue Generation:
 - i) Fees, permits, and other revenue sources.
 - ii) Economic impact on local communities.
 - b) Cost Recovery:
 - i) Costs of infrastructure maintenance, staffing, and resource protection.
 - ii) Balance between revenue generation and environmental sustainability.

Methods for Determining Carrying Capacity

- 1) Physical Site Capacity:
 - a) Consider the physical limitations of the site, such as trail width, slope, and type of trail surface.
- 2) Social Carrying Capacity:
 - a) Conduct surveys and interviews with visitors and local residents to assess their preferences and tolerance levels.
- 3) Managerial Carrying Capacity:
 - a) Consider the capacity of staff to manage visitor use, maintain facilities, and enforce regulations.
 - b) Assess the availability of resources for monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management.

Balancing Multiple Objectives

Determining carrying capacity involves balancing competing objectives, such as addressing resident concerns of overuse, protecting the environment, facilitating new business opportunities and economic growth, providing visitors with access to, and appreciation of, our beautiful natural surroundings, and administrative capacity. It's important to consider the trade-offs between these objectives and to develop a management plan that strikes a balance. By carefully considering these factors and employing appropriate methods, we are striving to develop effective carrying capacity strategies that ensure the long-term sustainability of an effective commercial recreational land Use Plan.



Following the [Leave No Trace Seven Principles](#), summarized below, can help us minimize those impacts. They can be applied anywhere, at any time, while taking part in recreational activities.

- **Plan Ahead and Prepare**

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass or GPS to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

- **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces**

- Durable surfaces include maintained trails and designated campsites, rock, gravel, sand, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- *In popular areas:*
 - Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
 - Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
 - Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- *In pristine areas:*
 - Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
 - Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

- **Dispose of Waste Properly**

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite, food preparation areas, and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food and litter.
- Utilize toilet facilities whenever possible. Otherwise, deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

- **Leave What You Find**
 - Preserve the past: examine, photograph, but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
 - Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
 - Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
 - Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

- **Minimize Campfire Impacts**
 - Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the environment. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
 - Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
 - Keep fires small. Only use down and dead wood from the ground that can be broken by hand.
 - Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

- **Respect Wildlife**
 - Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
 - Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, [habituates them to humans], and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
 - Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
 - Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
 - Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

- **Be Considerate of Other Visitors**
 - Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
 - Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
 - Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
 - Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
 - Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

These principles were established by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, and built on work by the US Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management in the mid 1980s. This relationship continues today and has been adopted by commercial operators, outdoor educators, not for profit organizations and many others worldwide. The principles are based on and informed by scientific research in the fields of recreation ecology and human dimensions of natural resources. The [science behind the principles](https://lnt.org/learn/science-behind-principles) on the Leave No Trace website: <https://lnt.org/learn/science-behind-principles>

Leave No Trace Seven Principles © 1999 by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics:
www.LNT.org.

Appendix E.

Historical Data Collection Methodology

Use numbers reported in the asset profiles were found using various methods of data collection including outside cellular data tabulation by the company called Placer.ai, commercial company records, and infrared trail counters placed at different locations. Placer.ai gave CBS reports about the use of different areas by providing packages of information about the geolocation of users from their cell phone data. This allowed CBS to obtain data about remote areas, specific sections of areas, and historical data about the use of an asset. Trail counters placed by CBS use infrared sensors to quantify the use of an asset. This data allows CBS to collect real time data in strategic places and validate some of the data from the Placer.ai reports. Placer.ai gave information on times of use, number of unique users of the trail, the split of local versus visitor trail user visits, and the historical number of visits for each trail.

Commercial levels of use in 2023 and 2024 were calculated from the commercial permits submitted by businesses. These permits do not require applicants to split up their predicted use of each individual asset they plan to use, rather they give a prediction of how many people they will serve in a season regardless of which asset they are using. Using these numbers creates a maximum number of users for each asset, however it is quite likely that the actual number for each trail is smaller as they are broken up into use for multiple trails.

For example, one company who wants to guide 300 people throughout the season and will take them either to Beaver Lake or Heart Lake report that they will possibly guide 300 people at both assets. However, in actuality, maybe only 100 were on Beaver Lake and 200 on Heart Lake. But for our purposes they would report, and we've reported here that there was a maximum of 300 people for both Beaver Lake and Heart Lake.

Cross Trail: Kramer Ave. North to Starrigavan

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Avg. Users Per Day	TRAFX	Jun. 10, 2024 – Nov. 4, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Cross Trail: Kramer Ave. South to Indian River Trail

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Avg. Users Per Day	TRAFX	Jun. 10, 2024 – Oct. 24, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Gavan Hill Trail Access:

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Avg. Users Per Day	TRAFx	Jun. 10, 2024 – Oct. 24, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Indian River

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Avg. Users Per Day	TRAFx	Jun. 10, 2024- Jul. 22,2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Thimbleberry Lake/ Heart Lake Trail

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Avg. Users Per Day	TRAFx	Jun. 10, 2024- Nov. 5, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Whale Park

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Herring Cove/Beaver Lake Trail

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Avg. Users Per Day	TRAFx	May 20, 2024- Nov. 23, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Herring Cove

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Swan Lake

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Eagle Beach (Back Beach)

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Baranof Warm Springs

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan.1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Avg. Users Per Day	TRAFx	Jun. 24, 2024 – Aug. 5, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024

Goddard Hot Springs

Data	Source	Dates
Busiest Day	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Peak Time	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Unique Users	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Local/ Visitor Split	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024
Historical Use	Placer.ai	Jan. 1, 2021- Nov. 23, 2024