

## **3.0 CHAPTER THREE ISSUES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Uses and activities that may have the potential to affect the physical, biological, or cultural use of coastal resources upon which recreational uses depend, and that have the potential to have a direct and significant impact on important habitat, are described below as issues of local concern. The issues are followed by a set of goals and objectives. The goals describe long-range purpose and intent and the objectives are more specific and shorter-term, measurable statements of intent.

Anchorage is Alaska's largest city and is a major gateway to recreational opportunities in the southcentral region as well as statewide. Public access to coastal resources, for both seasonal and year-round use, is critical to the Anchorage quality of life, local recreation, and the tourism economy. It has been an essential goal and element of the MOA CMP since the 1970s. The local recreation and tourism economy relies heavily on the natural features found in Anchorage's coastal zone, including the diverse fish and wildlife resources, scenic views, open spaces, natural resource areas, and clean air and water.

Acres of greenbelts and more than 120 miles of trails, provide access to the coast through the many parks and natural areas. The fish and wildlife resources of the Anchorage coastal zone draw upon the diverse habitat of the region, and these resources are important to local residents and visitors. There are areas of particular importance or sensitivity, such as fish spawning and rearing habitat, and bird habitat, where fish and wildlife use should be protected in a reasonable manner.

There is community-wide commitment to making Anchorage a safe and healthy place to live, with a high quality of life, a thriving, sustainable, broad-based economy that is built in harmony with the natural resources of the region and supported by efficient infrastructure.

This commitment is documented as a matter of local concern in a number of locally adopted plans, including: *Anchorage 2020*, the *2005 Draft Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreational Facilities Plan*, the *1997 Anchorage Areawide Trails Plan*, the *2005 Draft Long Range Transportation Plan*, the *1990 Utility Corridor Plan*, the *Girdwood Area Plan*, and the *Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan*.

For example, according to the *APNRF*:

“Since the 1920s Anchorage residents have planned, protected and treasured parks, natural areas, and places of recreation and conservation.”

In addition, the Design and Environment section of *Anchorage 2020* is directly implemented through the MOA CMP.

#### **3.1.1 Issues of Local Concern**

- (1) The natural features of the coastal zone are an important asset for attracting and retaining businesses like the growing information technology sectors. This business sector is very mobile and has a great degree of flexibility when locating new businesses. Quality of life in the community in which they locate is very important.

- (2) Natural resource areas and open spaces are valued by Anchorage residents for fish and wildlife, and plant habitats. The corresponding ecological functions and values of these habitats contribute significantly to create a livable, dynamic, and economically viable city.
- (3) The connection between the urban setting and the natural environment are important to residents, businesses, and visitors. This has been documented in a number of local plans.
- (4) There is a natural link between development activities in upland habitats and the effect these uses and activities can potentially have on riparian habitat and important wetlands located downstream.
- (5) Important habitat may be negatively and cumulatively impacted by poor-quality development and construction practices.
- (6) Encroachment into sensitive wetlands, into the upper reaches of the watersheds, improper development within floodplains, and inadequate construction setbacks from shorelines and stream banks can pose direct and significant cumulative and secondary impacts to the water quality of the marine waters, streams and lakes thereby negatively impacting important habitat.
- (7) There are a number of creeks and streams of local concern that are valued for their recreation potential and important biological productivity. These include: Campbell Creek, Little Campbell Creek, Chester Creek, Fish Creek, Furrow Creek, Potter Creek/Potter Marsh, Rabbit Creek, Little Rabbit Creek, Ship Creek, and Glacier, California, Virgin, Fire, Carol, and Meadow Creeks.
- (8) All of the freshwater creeks and streams within the MOA coastal zone flow into the coastal waters of Cook Inlet.
- (9) Anchorage has experienced local water quality problems due, in part, to historical connections between non-point source runoff from construction sites and septic systems and the stream systems.
- (10) Natural colonization and importation of non-native and invasive species are beginning to appear and proliferate in the MOA. There are species with the potential to out-compete native species.
- (11) There are uses and activities that are economically or physically dependent on a waterfront location. These uses and activities must be given priority. These uses and activities are located primarily in the lower Ship Creek Valley and within the Port of Anchorage.
- (12) Of mid-sized cities, Anchorage is uniquely endowed with a spectacular and dramatic coastline to which public access to its recreation resources, including the scenic resources, is still possible.
- (13) Adequate, safe, and maintained access to the coastal land and water resources, upon which a number of activities and uses depend, is essential to sustaining and enhancing future economic growth and development.
- (14) Adequate, safe, and maintained access to coastal land and water resources is an important component of the quality of life valued by residents, businesses, and visitors.
- (15) There have been a number of public-initiated efforts to acquire and improve access to coastal resources such as the Fish Creek Estuary, Lake Otis, and Rabbit Creek Greenbelt trail that demonstrate local concern and commitment to both the recreational values and

habitat values of resources in the MOA coastal zone.

- (16) Public access to streams, lakes, and the coast must be retained as land is subdivided or developed.
- (17) There is a need to address random and/or informal or unorganized public access via easements or undeveloped trails through, or adjacent to, coastal resources.
- (18) There is competition for the few, and quickly declining, remaining undeveloped, or underdeveloped lands, which results in an increased pressure on marginally suitable and unsuitable lands.
- (19) Marginally suitable and unsuitable lands often include those areas with wetlands, intertidal and mudflat conditions, and seismic and avalanche hazard areas.
- (20) The Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge (ACWR) is an important natural resource area and local natural feature of the Anchorage coastal zone. A large representation of wildlife species can be found in the ACWR and adjacent coastal sections, and in similar environments for both Eagle River-Chugiak, and Turnagain Arm, providing both opportunities for scientific study and education, as well as tourism.
- (21) Potter Marsh is a well-known section of the ACWR and is popular for bird viewing. Thousands of visitors stop to view wildlife at Potter Marsh and other accessible coastal sites, including Ship Creek, adjacent sections off the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, and sections of Turnagain Arm.
- (22) Sport and resident fish species, essential to residents and visitors, rely upon continued stewardship of Anchorage's urban streams and lakes.
- (23) The half million-acre Chugach State Park, bordering the Anchorage Bowl, Eagle River, and Girdwood valley, provides hiking, climbing, mountain biking, skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing opportunities, but access opportunities need to be expanded and improved and wildlife corridors need to be maintained as hillside-to-coast connections.
- (24) Salmon rearing and spawning habitats are very susceptible to the addition of sediments to stream bottoms. The salmon streams within Anchorage's coastal zone may be vulnerable to cumulative impacts that can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over time. Many uses by themselves do not represent an intolerable change in the biologically productive streams and lakes, but when considered cumulatively could have an adverse effect to the local fisheries. Similar cumulative impact concerns exist due to the long term filling of freshwater wetlands.
- (25) Alaska has experienced a rapid warming since the 1960s. Annual average temperatures have warmed up to 1.8°F (1°C) per decade over the last three decades, and winter warming has been as high as 3°F (2°C) per decade. This warming trend may adversely effect fish and wildlife habitats and biological productivity. The condition of waterways, watersheds, and coastal ecosystems affect the availability of clean water for not only habitats but for human consumption.

### 3.1.2 Goals and Objectives

#### **Goal 1 To encourage the protection of important fish and wildlife habitats, high value wetlands, and riparian zones.**

- Objective A Identify and designate important habitat areas in the MOA coastal zone.
- Objective B Develop enforceable policies for those activities occurring on uplands within the important habitat areas in order to minimize adverse downstream effects.
- Objective C Develop enforceable policies to protect the riparian zones of important habitat areas.
- Objective D Develop enforceable policies that promote the retention of natural stream banks and shoreline habitat for fish and wildlife resources within the designated area.

#### **Goal 2 To encourage development and construction practices that minimize adverse impacts to the important habitat within the MOA coastal zone.**

- Objective A Develop enforceable policies for those activities that have the potential to alter the hydrologic conditions, resulting in adverse impacts to important habitat.
- Objective B Develop enforceable policies for those activities likely to result in erosion and impact local streams and lakes.
- Objective C Develop enforceable policies that address the cumulative impacts to fish and wildlife habitat that can result from the creation of additional impervious surfaces.

#### **Goal 3 To give high priority to, and preserve space for, water-dependent uses and activities requiring direct access to water.**

- Objective A Develop enforceable policies where priority of use is given to water-dependent and water-related uses over other uses.
- Objective B Develop enforceable policies for the siting and design of uses and activities located on or adjacent to streams, lakes, and marine waters.

#### **Goal 4 To promote and maintain access opportunities to coastal areas for purposes of recreation, tourism, coastal development, and transportation and utilities.**

- Objective A Establish siting and design criteria for the location of uses or activities immediately adjacent to marine areas, streams, and lakes, so as not to preclude future public access to the resource.
- Objective B Promote pedestrian-oriented waterfront activities, consistent with public safety and security.
- Objective C Work with the state of Alaska, MOA, and landowners to develop access improvements at the Port and Ship Creek.

**Goal 5 To enhance and maintain public access to the coastal resources for recreation purposes and enjoyment of important habitat resources.**

Objective A To plan for and retain access routes and points, including natural open spaces, that link neighborhoods, existing and planned greenbelts and parks, existing and planned trails, and open spaces to and within coastal waters, streams, and lakes.

**Goal 6 To encourage full participation by the citizenry, landowners, MOA departments, and state and federal agencies, in coastal land and water resource use and development decisions within the MOA coastal zone.**

Objective A Develop a coastal management program that addresses issues of local concern.

Objective B Coordinate the goals and objectives of the coastal management program with other land use, facility, and development plans of the MOA.

Objective C Merge policies in this plan amendment with MOA permit actions and/or Title 21 to ensure consistent plan implementation.