



Recreation and Tourism on Alaska's National Forests

Background

Recreation and tourism-related industries continue as large contributors to the Alaska economy, with the total economic impact to the state valued at \$3.4 billion. Between Summer 1989 and Summer 1998, the total number of visitors to Alaska grew 86 percent, with an average growth rate of 7 percent. Since 1998 until 2009, the growth continued until the recent slight decline. The travel and tourism industry generates over 40,000 full time equivalent jobs, comprising 13 percent of all employment in Alaska.

Visitor arrivals to Southeast Alaska have grown, more than doubling from 473,000 visitors in 1985 to more than 1.0 million in 2009. An estimated 90 percent of visitors to Southeast Alaska arrive by large cruise ship. The growth of cruise ship travel to Alaska has afforded new possibilities to communities struggling for economic survival amidst declines in traditional industries, an example being Icy Strait Point in Hoonah.



The national forests within Alaska are a popular destination for residents and visitors. Some of the most visited sites in the state are on national forests. For example, the Mendenhall Glacier recreation area receives more than 425,000 visitors each year.

Importance of National Forest Recreation

The region participates in the Recreation Fee Program, and provides enhanced services as a result of payments coming back to the forest that generate those fees. The region is proud to partner with the Alaska Travel Industry Association, Alaska Wilderness and Recreation Tourism Association, and many others to provide services to those persons visiting and recreating on national forest system lands in Alaska.

Outstanding scenery and the undeveloped natural landscape character of Alaska are primary draws for Alaska's visitors. They are featured in virtually every Alaska promotion, and the need to actively manage these world-class scenic resources is increasing with the pressures from forest users and resource development interests.

Another indication of the growth in demand for forest-based recreational opportunities is evident in the growth in outfitters and guides trips and opportunities on the national forests.

Summary

The Alaska Region of the Forest Service will continue to provide unique and quality outdoor experiences to all recreation users, from the person kayaking to glaciers to the person riding the Whistle Stop Railroad.

More Information

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