

**Welcoming Remarks to the Sustainable Outdoor
Recreation and Tourism Workshop
February 23, 2010**

On behalf of the citizens of Juneau, it is my pleasure to welcome you our community and to thank you for your participation in this workshop.

While I have no expertise in sustainable outdoor recreation or tourism, that deficiency serves as no barrier to my offering a few observations this morning.

I was born and raised in Juneau. Juneau was a much smaller, more insular town than it is today. I'm sure the Forest Service may have used the word "outdoor recreation" here, but for the most part, "recreation" WAS "outdoor". Basketball was the indoor sport—everything else happened outdoors. People went hunting, fishing, swimming, camping. Today, Juneau has five times the population of my early childhood. It has been blessed with facilities, both public and private, that encompass swimming, a shooting range, indoor ice, tennis and racquetball, numerous fitness centers, and a field house to name a few.

Tourism had a different footprint as well. Passengers would arrive on one of the Canadian Pacific vessels (e.g. The Princess Pat, The Princess Kathleen) that would disgorge upwards of 200 passengers for a few hours—long enough to take a drive to the Mendenhall Glacier or visit the Territorial Capitol. Today the Port of Juneau receives nearly a million cruise ship passengers in the five month period between May and September (though we expect to see a dramatic decrease in cruise ship passengers during the course of 2010).

In short, the numbers of residents and visitors over time have increased dramatically—and, for the most part, our physical facilities have kept pace.

But there is still one constant: people love the out-of-doors. Residents of the area want to take advantage of what Southeast Alaska and the Tongass National Forest have to offer. They want to hike, to picnic, to hunt or photograph, to get to the back-country. And visitors are still drawn to the magic of

Southeast Alaska and they want to experience, how-ever briefly, the majesty of these surroundings.

What we see here in Juneau, I think, is also a manifestation of a shift nationally as well: the growing recognition of the critical role that outdoor recreation, however it is experienced, has on both our physical and mental health. Human beings need the out-of-doors.

Fortunately, in Southeast Alaska, both our residents and our visitors intuitively understand this. Whether this is one's home or simply a destination, Alaska offers great life-long memories of the outdoors.

For you who are public or private managers in outdoor recreation and tourism, there are a multitude of challenges.

Among them are three that come immediately to my mind:

- How do we most effectively manage competing and sometimes incompatible recreational uses (motorized versus non-motorized access)?

- How can we best disperse the impact of large numbers of visitors around the region in a way that enhances the individual experience, while protecting the resource itself?
- How can we best promote sustainable tourism in smaller communities in Alaska to help secure their economic future?

Let me conclude my remarks by taking a moment to thank the public entities, particularly the Juneau Ranger District, US Forest Service, for their long-time collaboration on local recreation projects with the City and Borough of Juneau and local partners like SAGA and Trailmix. Thanks to these folks and countless volunteers, Juneau has one of the greatest trail systems anywhere.

I wish you every success during the course of the next three days.

