



City and Borough of Sitka
Parks & Recreation Committee ▪
100 Lincoln Street ▪ Sitka, Alaska 99835

The Honorable Governor Bill Walker

By email: governor@alaska.gov

Dear Governor Walker:

The Sitka District State Park position is one of only two positions proposed to be cut in the entire State Park system. The members of the City and Borough of Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee, who represent the many citizens in Sitka regarding recreation issues, request the single Specialist position (PCN) at Sitka's State Parks be restored for the FY 2016 budget.

Sitka District has several noteworthy historic sites and major visitor destinations. Castle Hill SHS and Old Sitka SHS are National Landmarks and thus considered significant not only to Alaska as the 1867 Russian Transfer Site but to the Nation as well. Castle Hill is one of the most visited and treasured historic State Park sites in Alaska.

Sitka's eight State Parks (four on the road system) are operated with one of the smallest budgets statewide. The \$80,000 net budget after receipts is one of the most cost efficient Districts when analyzed as cost per number of visitors, number of parks and revenues generated. One Natural Resource Specialist collects fees and coordinates many volunteer hours for maintenance activities. Cutting this position will result in no park management, no event scheduling, no fee collection, no restrooms or facility maintenance, no garbage removal, and no bear or daily patrol for Sitka's eight parks.

Further, Halibut Point State Recreation Site shelter reservations and special use permits have already been issued this season for more than 5,100 users in 43 groups including schools, church groups, ANB/ANS, Rotary, Moose Lodge, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, and many others. Castle Hill State Park is the site of the Alaska Day involving more than 1,000 participants and is visited daily by hundreds of visitors from tour ships. Two Commercial Tour guides use Castle Hill for visitor tours. Eliminating Sitka State Parks funding will seriously compromise all these uses and many others on a year-round basis and eliminate fee revenues.

"Passive management" for parks and trails in an urban setting, on the road system, with active year-round use due to moderate winter temperatures is impractical and will result in heavier, more significant impacts to park infrastructure than elsewhere in the State where the season is limited by winter. Without the position and with continued heavy use, park infrastructure will rapidly fall into disrepair and develop public safety issues. The actual costs to the State will be substantial since the loss of the position also represents the abandonment and loss of millions in State capital investment in park facilities and trail infrastructure. When oil prices rise again, the State will be unable to recoup these losses or afford the deferred maintenance and repair costs.

Turning over the State Parks to the National Park Service, the City of Sitka, or the Forest Service is highly unlikely due to inconsistency with their missions and these agencies' respective budget shortfalls.

The Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee fully understands the dire financial straits that the State is in. However, this is a request that you direct the DNR Commissioner and Director Ellis to fund the only State Parks employee in Sitka and instead implement an across the board reduction to all State Park Districts and the Central Office which accomplishes the \$500,000 required cut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Ken Corson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

Ken Corson, Chair and Members of the Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee

Cc: Senator Bert Stedman
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins