
MARINE PARKS FOR ALASKA

The International Connection

By Neil C. Johannsen, Chief of Planning, Alaska State Parks

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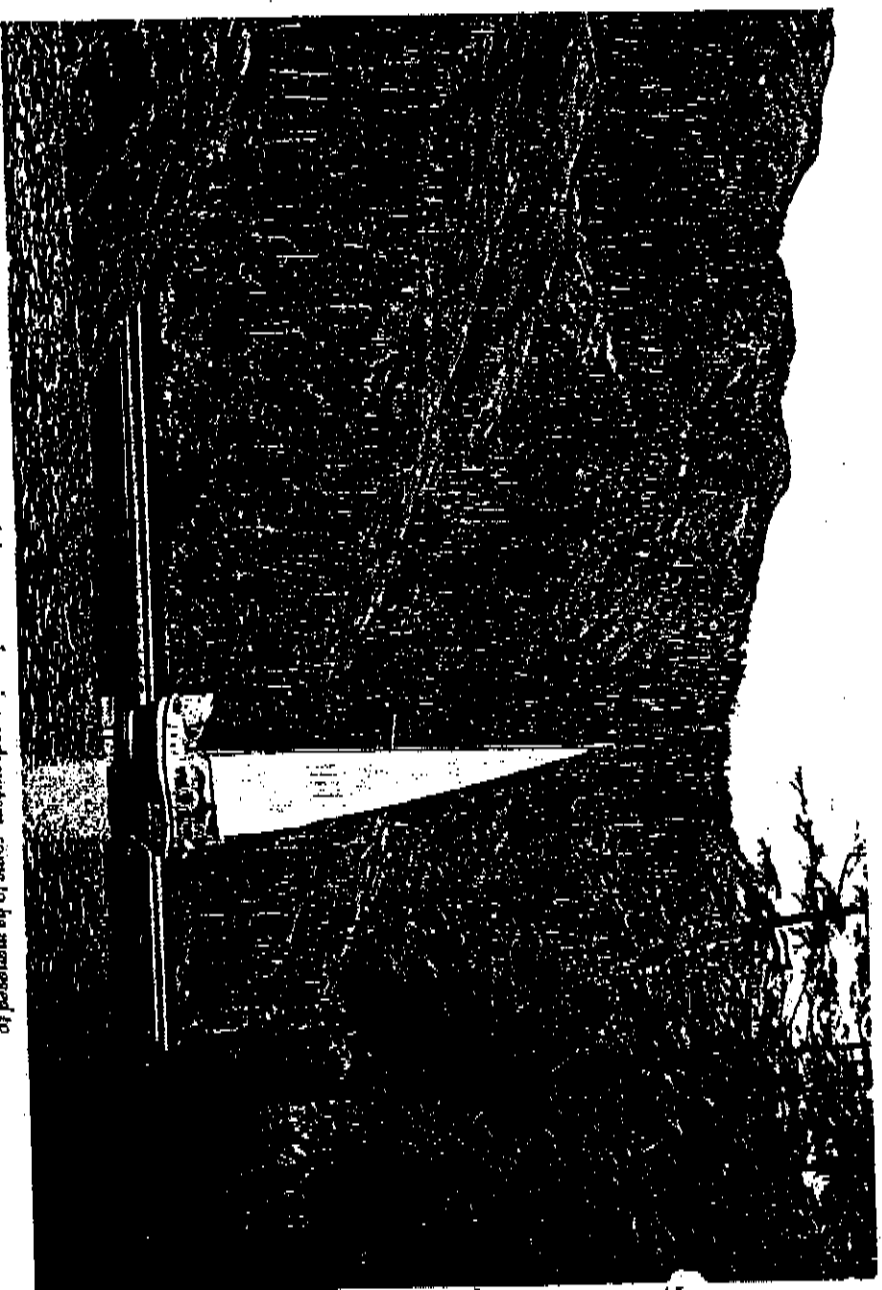
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An international system of marine parks and recreation areas, stretching from near Olympia, Washington, along southern Puget Sound northward to the Central Alaska coastline, is taking shape. The marine parks, being established in Washington State and British Columbia and planned in Alaska, are usually small in acreage and are located in protected bays and coves; some are situated on tiny islands and others are on the mainland. Planned for boaters and fly-in recreationists will be 163 marine parks —

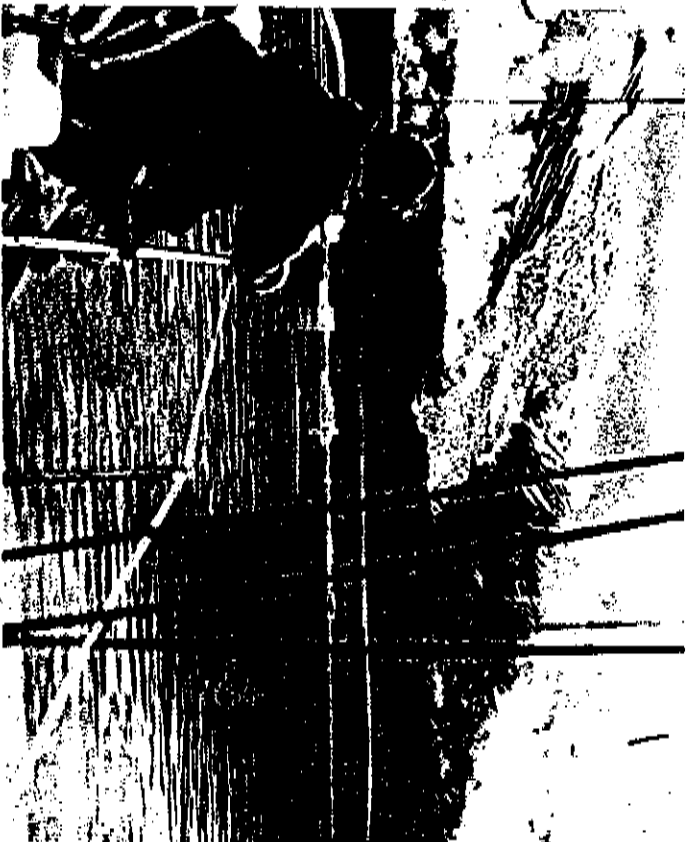
most an easy 1-day boat trip from one to another — spread over 1,600 miles of mostly protected waterways.

The legendary beauty of the Northwest Coast, coupled with the area's high per-capita ownership of boats and floatplanes, has resulted in increasing interest in efforts to create marine parks. Few governments in the world have a similar opportunity to leave open key portions of their ocean shoreline properties for public use. In Alaska, 54% of all residents participate in boating, a rate far higher than the



Top — Half a dozen units of the proposed marine park system, some to be managed to accommodate large numbers of recreational boaters, are located within an easy day's sail of this vista of the mountainous east side of Port Wells in northwestern Prince William Sound. (Neil and Betty Johansen)

Above — The sloop Nellie Juan inches through the narrow entrance of Disk Island lagoon, near the north end of Knight Island in Prince William Sound. As part of the proposed marine park system, the tiny anchorage will remain in as near a natural condition as possible. (Neil and Betty Johansen)



Sundium Glacier marks the site of a proposed unit of the marine park system on the south shore of Endicott Arm, off Stephens Passage, south of Juneau. Remains of the 1860 gold mining camp of Sundium can be found near the base of the glacier. (Nancy Stinnerman)

national average. Boat ownership in the Seattle area is the highest of any large city in the nation. Demand for boat slips in the Vancouver and Victoria areas is many times higher than the supply. A result has been that the state of Washington and the province of British Columbia are working hard to establish 99 marine parks stretching up the coast north from Olympia to a

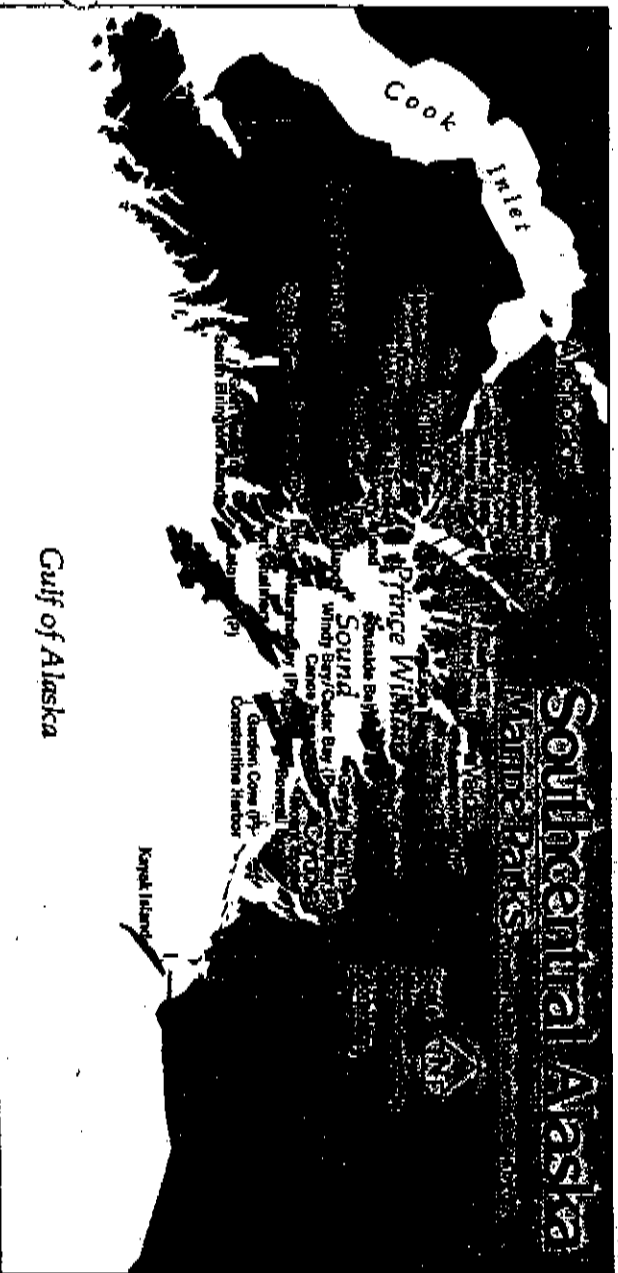
scant 5 miles south of the Alaska-Canada border.

And now Alaska has drawn plans to continue such marine parks up the coast to the northern Gulf of Alaska. Alaska's opportunity to tie into this international system had its genesis when the Statehood Act, drafted in 1958, included Section 6(a), which allows Alaska to select up to 400,000 acres of

national forest land, which in Alaska covers most of the convoluted shorelines of Southeastern and Prince William Sound. State selections from the U.S. Forest Service domain must be for purposes of community expansion and for recreational purposes. Alaska Governor Hammond and Attorney General Avrum Gross saw the legal opportunities afforded by the Statehood Act and agreed that the state use a portion of its land entitlement to build the last link in an international marine park system. With 85% of Alaskans residing near the coastline, public reception to the plan was enthusiastic.

Through 2 years of research and meetings with residents of coastal communities, the plans slowly took shape. The result was a decision to allocate 70,000 acres of Forest Service land to a comprehensive plan for the proposed marine parks. Selections for the system were filed with the Forest Service on December 19, 1977.

Overall strategy focused on the idea that numerous small parks would allow for a wider variety of accessible coastal environments than selection of just a few large areas. In addition, the theme used in British Columbia and Washington could be followed. Thus, within Alaska's marine parks, facilities such as docks, mooring floats, beach campsites, trails and toilets could be developed. The vast majority of these proposed Alaska parks are near well-



Gulf of Alaska

