

Chapter 3—The Planning Process

The NCS loosely adopted a planning framework known as Experience Based Management (EBM) (Manfredo 2002). EBM follows a general planning framework, but modifies it to focus on the needs of the users. The EBM planning framework emphasizes understanding the needs of the users, in this case people involved in research, education, and recreation activities. After these needs are understood, a system is developed to best allocate available resources to meet the needs of the users. A critical component of the EBM process is the development of a monitoring plan to ensure the goals of the allocation system are met. The monitoring plan provides the basis for criteria to judge both acceptable and unacceptable conditions and appropriate management strategies for each.

Determination of Desired Vision

The desired vision for the NC was developed by examining existing literature and other information about the area, surveys of UAF faculty, staff, and students regarding their NC use, meetings with key individuals, and meetings of the NCS.

Inventory of Existing Information

Fesler (2001) completed a history of the North Campus under the direction of Dr. Richard Boone, Associate Professor of Biology and Wildlife. This document provided a detailed history of the NC, including land use agreements pertaining to it and interviews with individuals from the UAF and Fairbanks community who played a role in the history of the area. The study was critical for a comprehensive understanding of the diverse uses of the NC, and especially the history of research use. This report was used to develop a preliminary list of research, education, and recreational activities in the area. As part of this process, taped interviews with key individuals relevant to the NC were archived in the Oral History section of the UAF Rasmuson Library.

Previous work on the North Campus provided guidance for the development of this plan. One such document was the UAF Skarland Trail System Management Plan (Todd 2000), which provided information on trail use from a community survey and public meetings, trail system expansion recommendations, trail system management and signage guidelines, and zoning recommendations. For example, the plan called for completion of the Midnight Express loop, a signage plan, continued maintenance on ski trails, enacting a "ski only" designation on ski trails, providing adequate trails for walking in the winter, developing a commuter trail from West Ridge to Yankovich Road and designating the ski trails in the Arboretum as ungroomed. While the Skarland Trail System Management Plan was never officially adopted by UAF, the NCS was directed to review the plan and incorporate its suggestions as appropriate. The information provided in the draft plan formed the basis for many of the trail recommendations put forth in the current planning effort.

Other relevant documents include a North Campus management plan apparently dated 1988, but with authors unknown, and a study by Ottenheimer (1988). The latter study contained the following statement, "While apparently in past years conditions were such that, in effect, anyone could (and did) do anything they wanted here, it has become somewhere between highly desirable and essential that some coordinated planning be done." These documents evaluated the condition of the trails, and other characteristics of the area, such as wildlife corridors, water resources, and soils. Several recommendations were made, many of which still stand, although with different levels of allowed impact. Examining the current conditions of the trail system, it also appears that some of the recommendations of these plans were not followed. Many of the recommendations were quite specific, such as no further widening of the narrow trails (defined as less than ten feet) with a corresponding map of the trails that met this definition. Thus, it would appear that lack of specificity was not the issue. More plausibly, the recommendations were not adhered to because there was no management plan to monitor the

conditions on the North Campus.

Research-related Interviews

In May 2002, Dr. Patricia Holloway, Associate Professor of Plant, Animal and Soil Sciences, conducted a survey of individuals with UAF email addresses. A request for information on past and present uses of the North Campus was sent to all current student, staff, faculty and administrative email accounts (@uaf.edu). Units with special addresses (i.e. @gi.alaska.edu, @ddc.uaf.edu) were not directly accessed because address lists were not available. This effort provided a wealth of information on the diversity of uses that occur on the NC and its importance to research, education, and recreation. The May 2002 email survey provided an initial list of research, and efforts were made to contact individuals not included in the initial survey that were known to be conducting research in the NC. Additions to this list of uses continue to be made based on public meetings, additional historic research and personal interviews. The goal is to develop the most comprehensive list as possible of all research, education, and recreation activities. This work resulted in a preliminary list of 33 individuals or entities, across several institutes/departments, conducting research on North Campus (see Table 3.1).

TABLE 3.1—Institutional Home of Researchers with North Campus Research Projects

Institute/Department	n
Geophysical Institute	6
Institute of Arctic Biology	13
School of Natural Resources & Agric. Sciences	6
International Arctic Research Center	2
Other	6

The information obtained for research sites varied in detail. Personal contact was made with those researchers for which more detail was needed. Some were contacted in person, while fourteen individuals were sent a letter and map soliciting information on their research in the North Campus. A template of the letter and an accompanying map are found in Appendix D.

Identification of Issues

From June 2002 through early spring 2003, the NCS met with groups representing different activities and uses (e.g., research, running, skiing,) and administrative areas (e.g., safety, campus maintenance, road construction) to assess their interests and responsibilities on the NC and to identify potential conflicts. The meetings provided valuable information from which to assess current uses and determine how the NC may meet the needs of the users. Key issues relating to research, education, and recreation identified through these meetings are presented below:

Research:

- Vandalism and intentional or unintentional destruction of research equipment and plots
- Disturbance of research plots by other researchers, recreational users, UAF and community school classes, and the public
- Access to research plots
- Environmental manipulations that were conducted as part of past research (so current research is not biased)

- Number and size of structures for research (e.g., satellite dishes, towers)
- Access to utilities
- Environmental and visual impacts from research (e.g., clearings, roads, flagging, fencing, structures, vehicles in the area)
- Removal of equipment and site restoration after completion of research project
- Liability to UAF resulting from user injured by research equipment

Education:

- Access to the NC from main campus, including safe access by bus
- Impact of large groups on ski trail grooming and ground cover/vegetation
- Expansion of the West Ridge infrastructure as it drives the necessary circulation and parking.
- Disturbance of class laboratory research areas by other users (e.g., protecting areas used for classes)
- Environmental disturbance by large groups
- Removal of instructional equipment, materials, and site restoration following class use

Recreation:

- Trampling of groomed ski trails by walkers and dogs
- Trail access for walkers and walkers with dogs in winter
- Ensuring multiple use trails remain on the North Campus
- Multi-use commuter corridors for travel to core campus
- Trail lighting for commuting and skiing
- Access to the North Campus from many areas on campus, particularly Lower Campus, and the surrounding area
- Access to the North Campus, and specifically Smith Lake, from Sheep Creek Road
- Environmental effects of trail construction
- Environmental effects of recreation use
- Trail width
- Trail surface (including flattening and improvements in wet areas)
- Appropriateness of special events, such as the Equinox Marathon, UAF cross country running races, and Nordic ski races
- Liability to UAF resulting from recreation users getting injured
- Liability to UAF resulting from volunteers conducting trail maintenance and improvements

Special Management Areas

Importantly, the North Campus incorporates six specific parcels of land that are currently subject to special management restrictions or guidelines. Each has its own history and special management characteristics (Appendix E). The areas are:

- 1) UAF Arboretum
- 2) UAF Biological Reserve
- 3) Smith Lake
- 4) College International Geophysical Observatory (CIGO)
- 5) UAF Rifle Range
- 6) Ballaine Lake

Issues of concern include:

- Conflicts with Arboretum policies and management (Wood, 1967)
- Biological Reserve concerns over security and trespass, as well as Tanana Loop extension impact on research
- The Fairbanks Experimental Farm and Georgeson Botanical Garden are not located on North Campus but are adjacent to the area; use within the North Campus area that impacts these areas should be taken into account. Management plans are being developed for both entities; the NCS and MPC should have input into the plans.
- The College International Geophysical Observatory (CIGO) has specific management requirements that could impact uses on NC (Townsend, 1985).
- Infrasonic receiving sites
- Smith Lake Wildlife Preserve
- Rifle range use and maintenance
- Ballaine Lake multiple use management by UAF, Alaska Department of Transportation and Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Student interest in re-opening the campground on the West Ridge area of North Campus

General:

- A parking area along Sheep Creek Rd. or Miller Hill Rd. to allow access to Smith Lake.
- The area of private property along the north side of the North Campus may require special considerations
- Expansion of main campus into North Campus such as road improvements, trails, parking lots, buildings
- Trails maintenance, management, signage, erosion, width
- Potential conflicts between Regent's policy creating a Smith Lake Preserve and trails construction in that area
- Dogs on campus and UAF, Fairbanks North Star Borough policies

- North Campus accessibility, ADA compliance

Spring 2003 Public Meetings

Because the issues listed above reflected the views of specific organizations and individuals, the NCS also sought input from a broader cross section of stakeholders through a series of public meetings held in spring 2003. Three meetings were held on April 5-7, 2003 at the UAF Wood Center, the Noel Wien Library of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and the UAF Geophysical Institute to gather information relating to the issues identified by the NCS. Seven 4' x 6' posters displaying this information were developed for the public meetings. Four of the posters related to value statements that were developed for the NC, and three related to specific issues of concern in the NC (see Appendix F).

Attendees were encouraged to write comments on the posters with Post-it notes or give verbal comments to subcommittee members present. In addition, surveys with questions regarding the issues were passed out to those in attendance. The surveys could be returned by campus mail for those not able to complete it during the meeting. In addition, printouts of the posters were available to take with the survey. Surveys, and the printouts of the posters, were also distributed to those not able to attend the public meetings but who were known to have a strong interest in the North Campus.

Results of Public Involvement Meetings

An eight-page, self-administered survey and printouts of the posters were distributed to those attending the meetings. The survey consisted of 40 questions with a Likert Scale response format; i.e., a response scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree or highly acceptable to highly unacceptable. The Likert Scale response format allows for systematic tabulation of results and comparisons across questions (see Appendix G).

The survey had several subcomponents. The first section of the survey presented hypothetical scenarios with a series of questions regarding each hypothetical scenario. The next sections included a series of specific questions about walking on ski trails, issues revolving around permafrost, maintenance acceptability of different ski trail allocations, the T-Field Road and lighting ski trails.

It is important to note that those who completed the survey were self-selected. The sampling frame consisted of only those who attended the meeting or obtained a copy of the survey outside the meetings. Therefore, while the surveys may be representative of those who attended the meetings, statements generalizing these results back to the broader population of UAF faculty, staff and students or the Fairbanks community cannot be made.

There were 338 comments written on the Post-it notes and attached to the posters at one of the meeting locations, written on the survey posters and returned to the committee, or written on the survey and returned to a committee member. The 338 written comments could be placed in 733 categories with different topic areas (i.e., some comments could be placed in more than one topic area). Comments related to trails made up the largest category (24% of comments) followed by comments related to skiing, research, trees, access, walkers, dogs, parking and lights (see Table 3.2).

TABLE 3.2—Category of Written Comments

Category	Count	Percent
Trails	175	23.9 ^a
Ski	74	10.1
Research	50	6.8
Trees	36	4.9
Access	33	4.5
Walkers	29	4.0
Dogs	28	3.8
Parking	28	3.8
Lights	24	3.3
Vehicles	21	2.9
Smith Lake	19	2.6
Loop Road	15	2.0

a. % is of the 733 categories. See Appendix G for all comments.

Analyses of the survey data included:

- Frequency analysis of survey responses, and
- Cluster analysis of survey responses.

A few key results are as follows:

- There was a high level of support for placing woodchips along trails.
- Approximately 90% of respondents to the survey found it unacceptable to allow unlimited wheeled motorized access in the winter.
- Of several scenarios of ski trail changes, keeping the trail system at the status quo had the highest level of support.
- Of potential segments of trails to add lights, the unlit portion of the T-Field road was cited most often.

Using a technique called cluster analysis, the respondents to the survey were placed into groups based on similarity in response patterns across questions. Based on a subset of questions selected regarding certain issues, three groups emerged from the cluster analysis: a group that seemed to focus on recreation (44% of respondents) a group that was supportive of research and was favorable toward recreation issues (44% of respondents), and a group that was favorable toward walking (especially in winter) and allowing dogs on trails in winter (12% of respondents).

Key management implications from the meetings are as follows:

- Those attending the meetings expressed a desire for a range of activities to take place in the North Campus; no one activity dominated the opinions expressed.
- In general, restrictions on use were not favored.
- In contrast, specific restrictions to ensure that uses were compatible with the value of protecting the natural integrity

of the North Campus were acceptable.

The input gathered at the meetings suggests a balanced approach to the management of the NC that preserves many of the uses of the area. The full report from the meetings is found in Appendix G.

Last modified on October 22, 2004 by [Computing & Communications](#)