

**CITY & BOROUGH OF JUNEAU**

Department of Parks & Recreation

155 S. Seward St., Juneau, AK 99801

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February 10, 2003

Dear Juneau Resident:

After having several planning meetings over the last few years, with individuals and groups to create a Master Plan for Fish Creek Natural Area Park, a fruition of these meetings will be presented at a special Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting, with public comment taken on February 26<sup>th</sup>.

The packet for this meeting is broken down into four different sections:

Section 1: Includes four maps, which consist of a Base Map, an Existing Conditions Map, a map depicting Ownership and Management and the existing Legal Constraints. All of these maps depict the current conditions of the park.

Section 2: Is a one-page list of existing and potential issues of the park.

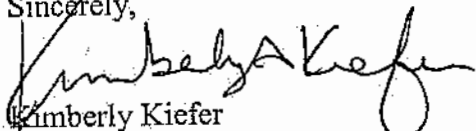
Section 3: Consists of three maps. These maps portray the current ideas for improvement - Bare Essentials, Recreational Upgrades and Habitat Restoration.

Section 4: Consists of drawings of a proposed ADA Route, Redesigned Parking Lot and a Footbridge.

Public Comment will be taken at this meeting. You may send email responses to [parks\\_rec@ci.juneau.ak.us](mailto:parks_rec@ci.juneau.ak.us) no later than Noon, February 25<sup>th</sup>, to be included in the meeting packet; or send us a letter to the City and Borough of Juneau, Parks and Recreation Department, 155 S. Seward, Juneau, AK 99801. For further information call the Parks and Recreation Department at 586-5226.

The meeting takes place on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2003, 6pm in the Assembly Chambers at City Hall, 155 S. Seward. Voting on this Action Item will take place at the regular Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 6pm in the Assembly Chambers. We hope to see you on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Kiefer

Parks and Recreation Director

155 So. Seward Street, Juneau, Alaska 99801-1397

# EXISTING / POTENTIAL ISSUES

## Fish Creek Natural Area Park

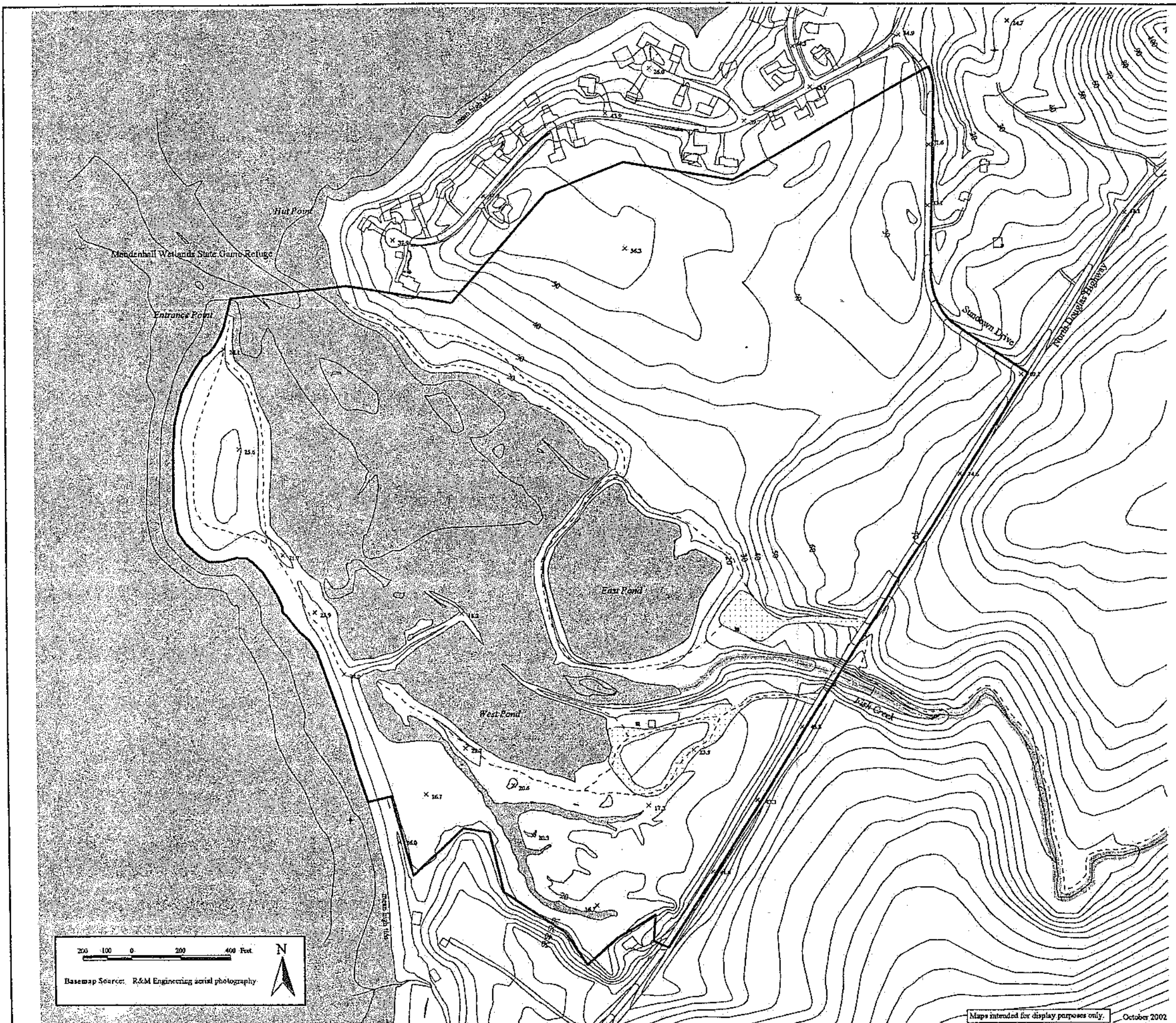
Public safety	Wildlife disturbance by dogs
Litter/sanitation	Vegetation/soil damage
Vandalism	Commercial tourism
Illegal highway parking	ADA accessibility
Heavy/excessive use	Maintenance/increased stock fishery
Hunting/crossfire	Stock fishery refuse
Visitor circulation/access	Camping
Dike erosion	Bear management
Cooperative management	Historical values
Development/maintenance funding	Protection of high-quality habitat
Juneau-wide usership	Development aesthetic/style
Highway sighting distance	Bicycle/horse access
Enforcement of park regulations	Other future uses: ballpark nature center community garden
Outdoor educational opportunities	

# Fish Creek Natural Area Park Base Map

The Fish Creek Natural Area Park Study Area, on Douglas Island in Juneau, Alaska, is comprised of approximately 153 acres of land, including 73 acres of the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge. CBJ acquired the remaining adjacent 80 acres to preserve open space and public recreation values for the people of Juneau.

Located at the mouth of Fish Creek, the natural area park is an estuary flanked by upland forest and peatland. An interface between land and sea, this place of ecological transition is productive habitat for a diversity of wildlife and fish species. This includes regionally significant habitat for spawning and rearing by several species of salmon that supports commercial and sport fishing. The area is also a local natural landmark of great interest and beauty.

Hikers, fishers, bird watchers, hunters, educators, and other outdoor enthusiasts use the Fish Creek area year-round. An old road and several one-way trails traverse the area. Well-worn, these pedestrian trails pass through forest and woodland en route to ponds, salt marsh, riverine gravel bars, tide flats, and ocean beach. Inasmuch, non-motorized, passive, and dispersed recreation in a natural setting has increased locally to the extent that it is considered by CBJ to be an important public need.



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**CITY & BOROUGH OF JUNEAU**  
**ALASKA'S CAPITAL CITY**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION**

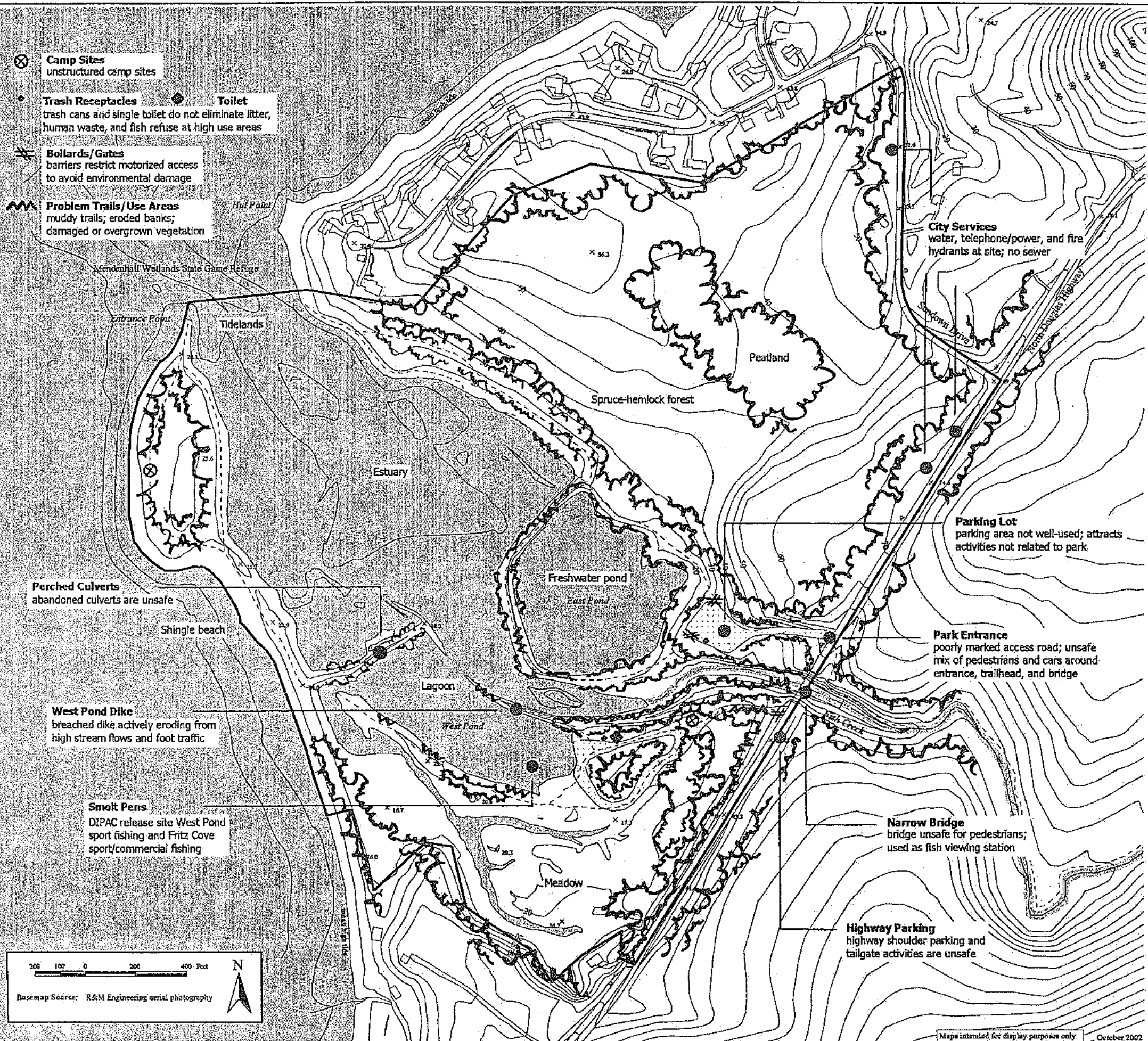
## Fish Creek Natural Area Park

# Existing Conditions

From its headwaters in the Eaglecrest basin on Douglas Island, Fish Creek flows seaward where it enters Fritz Cove. In 1996 the mouth of Fish Creek was designated the Fish Creek Natural Area Park. The park includes a portion of the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge and, together with the Fish Creek Conservation Area, protects high quality tideland, estuarine, riparian, and upland habitats associated with Fish Creek.

Recreational use of the park has created resource-people conflicts, resulting in degraded semi-primitive conditions. To enjoy certain park features, people and cars compete for space. Informal trails lace the area; some are routed poorly causing erosion and risking safety. Two diked ponds, remnants of an earlier gravel extraction operation, are rimmed with a dense regrowth of vegetation that restricts access. Old roadbeds appear to be a conduit for invasion of weedy exotic plants. The West Pond dike is breached and actively eroding gravel into the estuary. The pond is a DIPAC salmon stocking site, attracting heavy seasonal use that is a primary source of litter.

Consistent with the natural area park mandate, the site is managed lightly. The unstructured quality is attended, however, by poor conditions regarding litter, safety, and erosion that detract from the park's natural beauty and environmental quality.



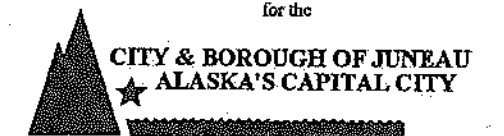
# Fish Creek Natural Area Park Ownership & Management

Fish Creek Natural Area Park Study Area boundaries enclose both City and Borough of Juneau lands and State of Alaska Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge land and water. It is bounded primarily by undeveloped CBJ land to the eastern upland side, State waters to the west, and private land north and south.

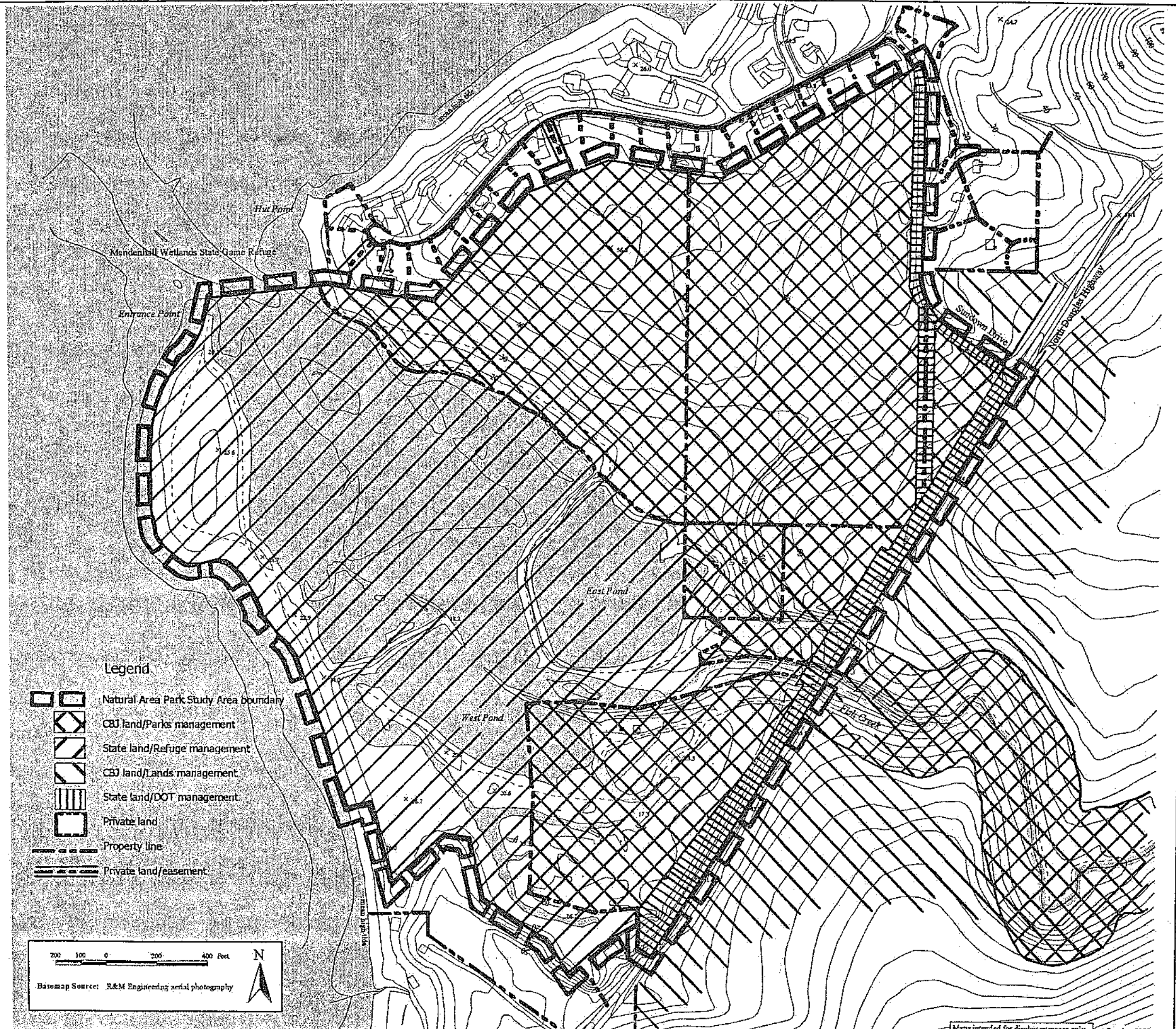
Joint CBJ and State ownership dictates that management is voluntary and cooperative, each entity upholding specific mandates that protect natural habitat and wildlife populations for their inherent and recreational values. The upland portion of lower Fish Creek is managed under CBJ conservation area status to protect native fish, fish habitat, and sport fishing opportunities. City, state, and federal ownership and management of upper Fish Creek lands has downstream management implications for water, fish, and wildlife. Adjacent residential areas require consideration of private property rights and issues affecting public safety, trespass, and encroachment.

Management of the Fish Creek Natural Area Park by CBJ specifically provides open space, access to water, and opportunities for light recreation in a semi-primitive setting. The park is a public resource managed for the entire community of Juneau.

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Maps intended for display purposes only. October 2002

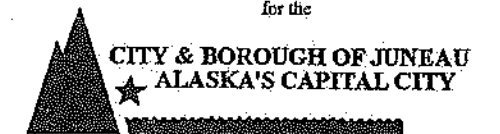
## Fish Creek Natural Area Park

# Legal Constraints

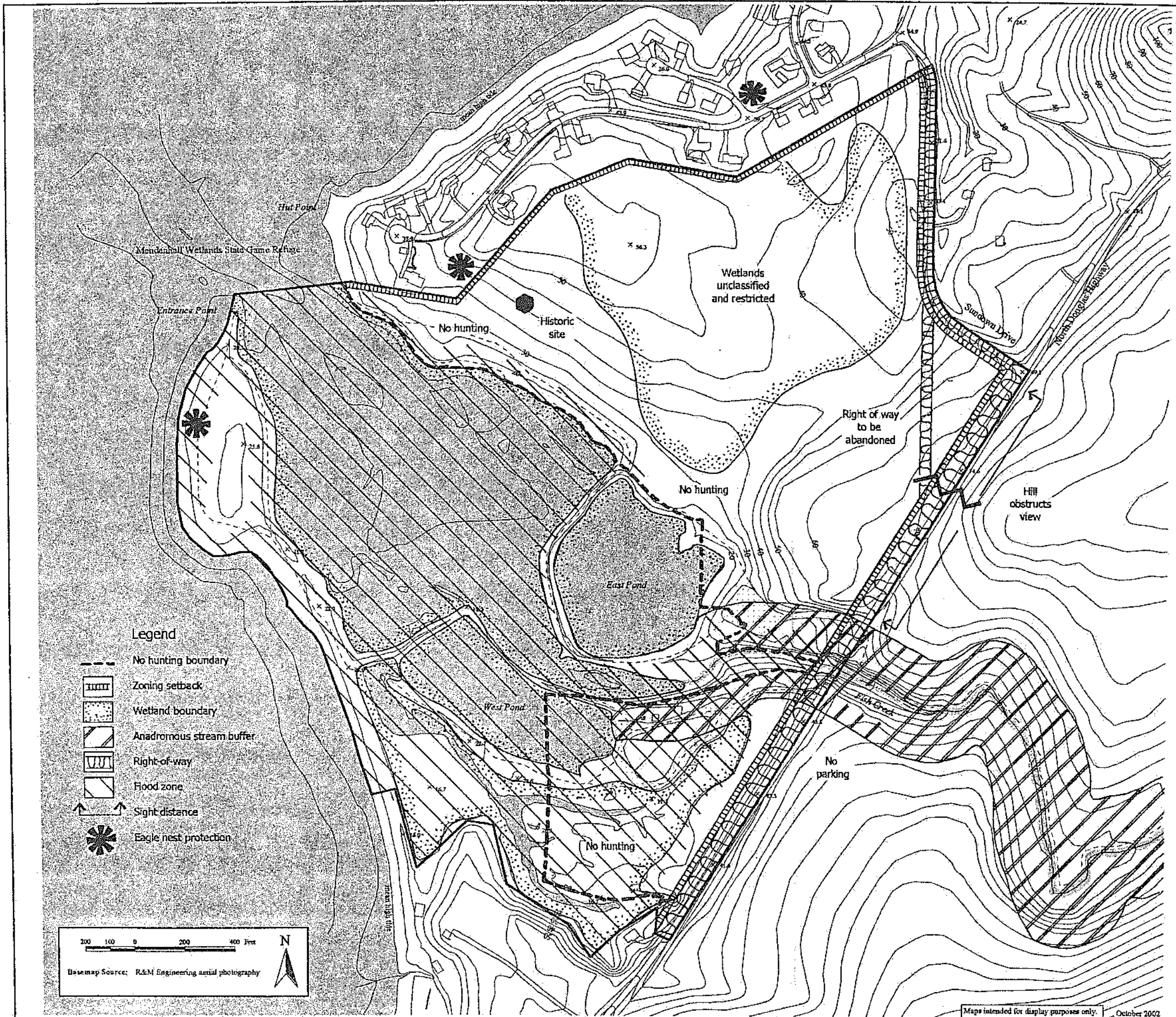
Fish Creek Natural Area Park principles provide the Juneau community with passive, nonmotorized recreation opportunities in a semi-primitive setting. Municipal, state, and federal laws and guidelines imbue subtle restraint on other activities and developments to encourage safety and protect significant recreational, scenic, and natural values.

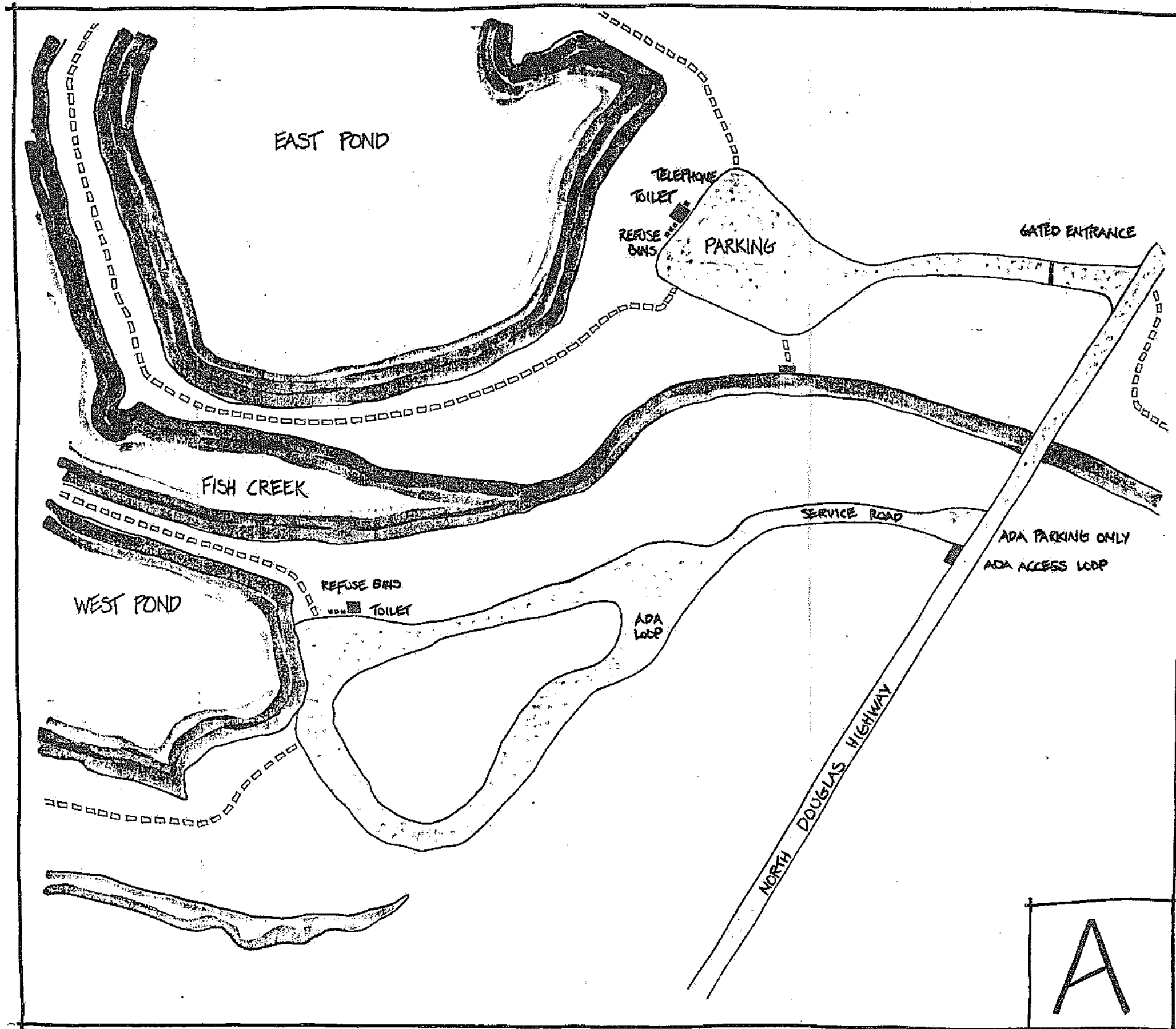
- Construction via conditional/special use permit process
- No construction within 200-foot setback to anadromous stream
- No construction within 330-foot setback radius from eagle nest
- No construction within 25-foot zoning setback at front property line
- Flood Zone V structural design criteria
- No hunting on CBJ park land
- CBJ lands provide access to State Refuge
- Preferred minimum sight distance of 950 feet for 45 mph highway speed
- Minimum of 8 feet parking distance from highway edge of pavement
- Minimum 10-foot landing depth at minus 2% slope for highway approach
- Wetlands functions and values determine permitted construction
- Historic site requirements

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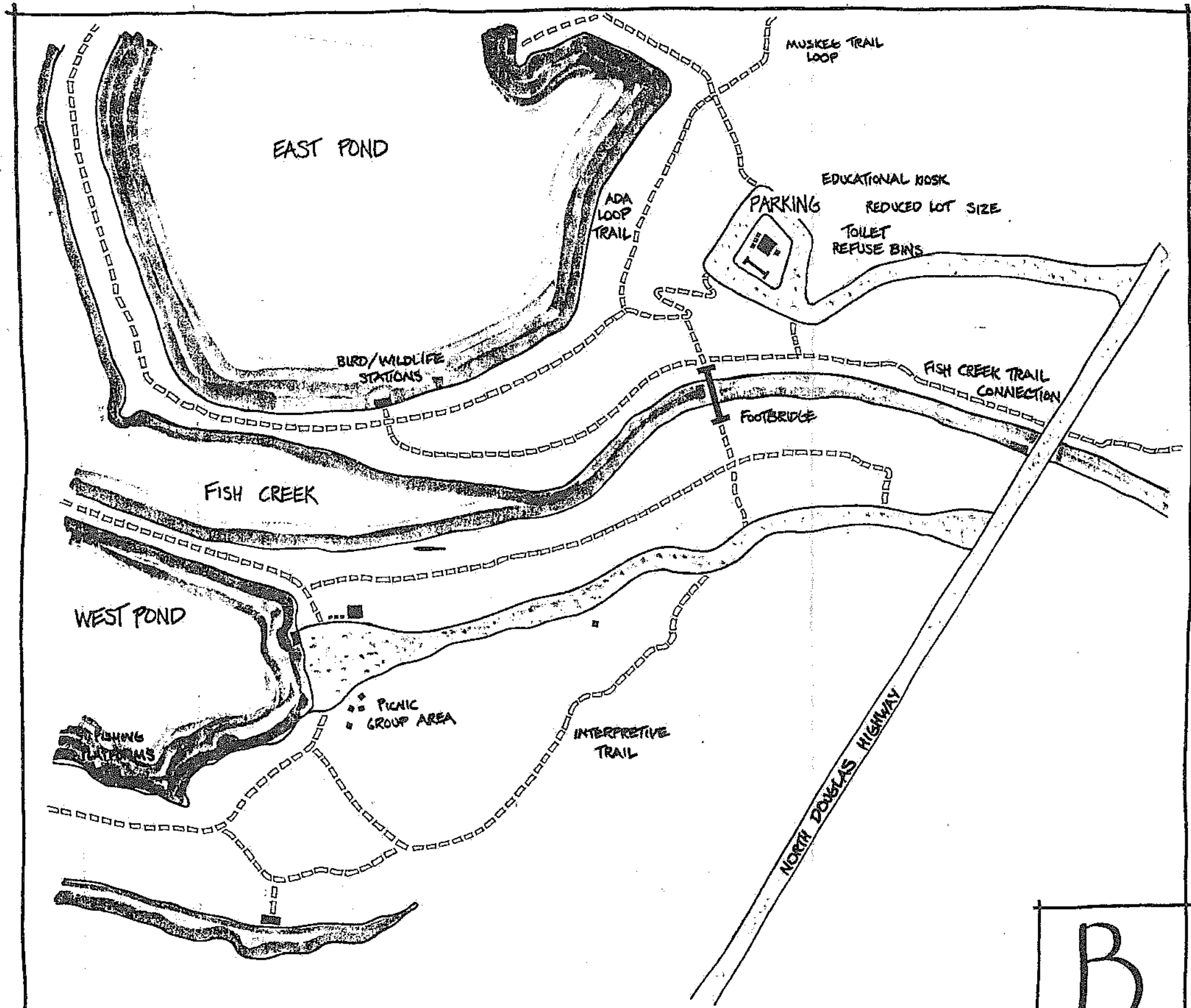
## FISH CREEK NATURAL AREA PARK

SAFETY, SANITATION, AND ACCESS ARE THE ESSENTIAL PARK DESIGN GUIDELINES. WHETHER AS STRUCTURES, MAINTENANCE, OR POLICY IMPROVEMENTS, LIMITED CHANGES OFFER SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PARK CONDITIONS TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC. PARK IMPROVEMENTS MAY INCLUDE:

- HARDEN SECTIONS OF TRAIL
- ESTABLISH WHEELCHAIR ACCESS
- GATED VEHICLE ENTRANCE
- ENFORCE "NO PARKING"
- INSTALL OUTDOOR TOILET
- ADD REFUSE-RECYCLE BINS
- INSTALL EMERGENCY PHONE
- BAN HUNTING IN ESTUARY
- MAINTAIN EXISTING TRAILS
- MAINTAIN SERVICE ROAD
- HIGHWAY SPEED CONTROL
- ENTRANCE SIGN
- FISH VIEWING PLATFORM

A

BARE  
ESSENTIALS



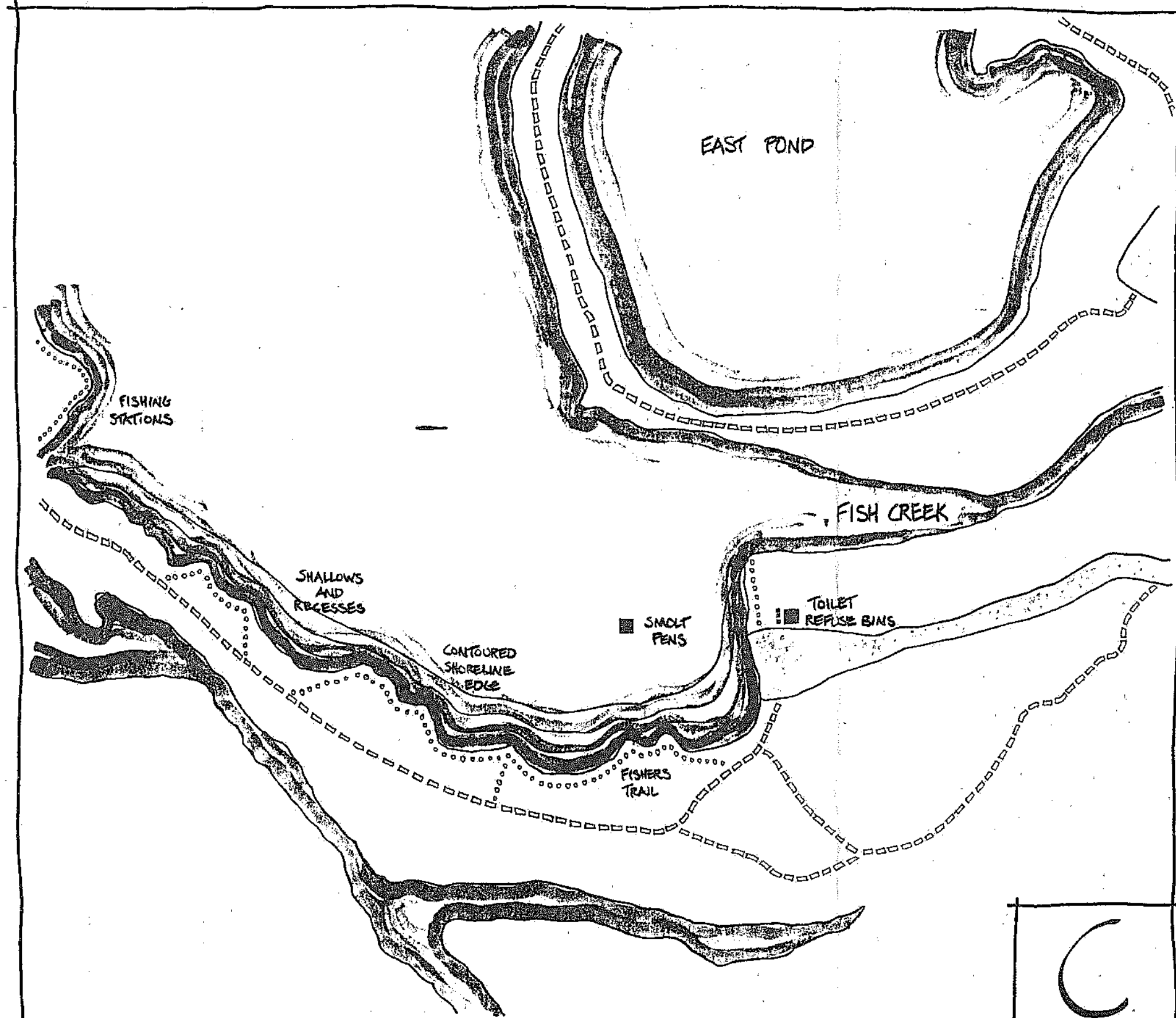
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## FISH CREEK NATURAL AREA PARK

FISH CREEK IS ECOLOGICALLY DIVERSE WITH MANY FEATURES OF INTEREST FOR HIKERS, FISHERS, STUDENTS, BIRD WATCHERS, ICE SKATERS, AND PICNICKERS. IT IS AN OUTDOOR DESTINATION FOR PEOPLE THROUGHOUT JUNEAU. TO MAINTAIN RECREATIONAL VALUES FOR ALL USERS, ONE OR MORE IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE:

- REDESIGN PARKING LOT
- INSTALL BENCHES/VIEWPOINTS
- ERECT FOOTBRIDGE @ CREEK
- INSTALL FISHING PLATFORMS
- CONSTRUCT TRAIL NETWORK
- ESTABLISH INTERPRETIVE ROUTE
- BUILD EDUCATION KIOSK
- GROUP GATHERING/PICNIC AREA
- BIRD/WILDLIFE STATIONS
- 
- 
- 
- 

## RECREATIONAL UPGRADE



## FISH CREEK NATURAL AREA PARK

THE ESTUARY AT FISH CREEK WAS DAMAGED EXTENSIVELY IN THE 60'S AND 70'S FROM DREDGING FOR ROAD GRAVEL. EXCAVATION CREATED TWO PONDS THAT APPEAR MINIMALLY PRODUCTIVE IN REGARD TO FISH OR WILDLIFE FOODS. EAST POND MAY PROVIDE RESTING HABITAT AND COVER FROM DOGS. BOTH POND BERMS ARE RAPIDLY ERODING. THE CHANGING RIVER MOUTH MORPHOLOGY PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE ESTUARY RECOVERY.

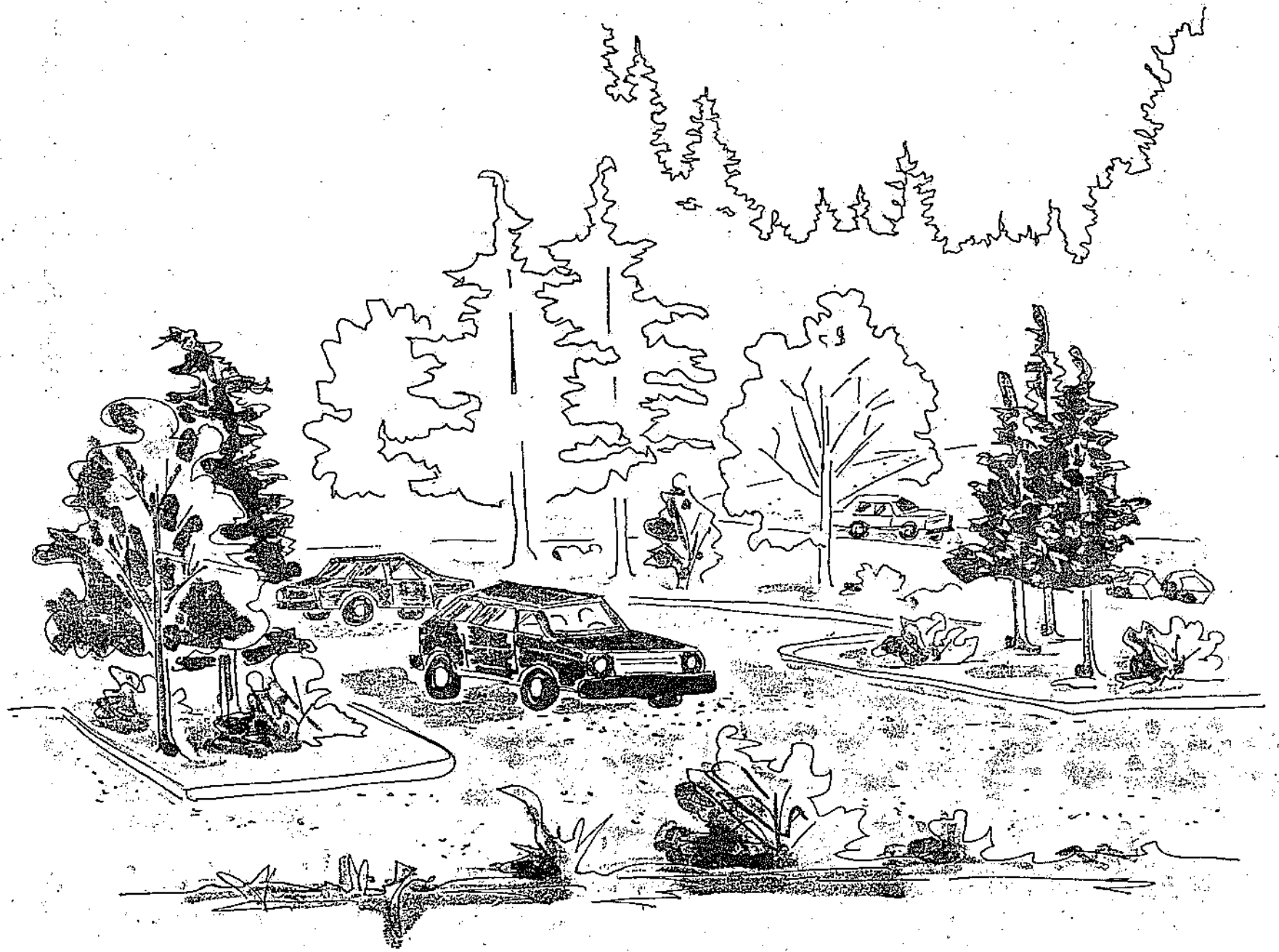
- CREATE EDGE SHALLOWS/CHO
- INTRODUCE LOG DEBRIS-MAMMAS
- CONTROL EDGE EROSION
- RESTRICT DOGS AT EAST POND
- REMOVE ASPHALT
- CONSTRUCT FISH LANDINGS

C

## HABITAT RESTORATION



**FOOTBRIDGE**



**REDESIGNED PARKING LOT**

# ADA ROUTE

