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# ***CORDOVA COMMUNITY TOURISM PLAN***

## ***ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR POSITIVE TOURISM GROWTH IN CORDOVA & THE LOWER COPPER RIVER WATERSHED***



PREPARED BY THE CORDOVA CHAMBER OF COMERCE,  
TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ADOPTED BY THE CORDOVA  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AUGUST 15, 2002

March 2, 2003

Christopher Beck & Associates

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This report was prepared for the Cordova Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Advisory Committee by Christopher Beck & Associates, an Anchorage-based consulting firm. CBA, assisted by Cheryl Van Dyke, worked as staff to the Cordova Chamber of Commerce and its Tourism Advisory Committee. CBA was hired to do this work by the Copper River Watershed Project, with funding from grants by the Alaska Conservation Foundation, Resources for Community Collaboration, the City of Cordova, Leighty Foundation, and First National Bank Alaska.

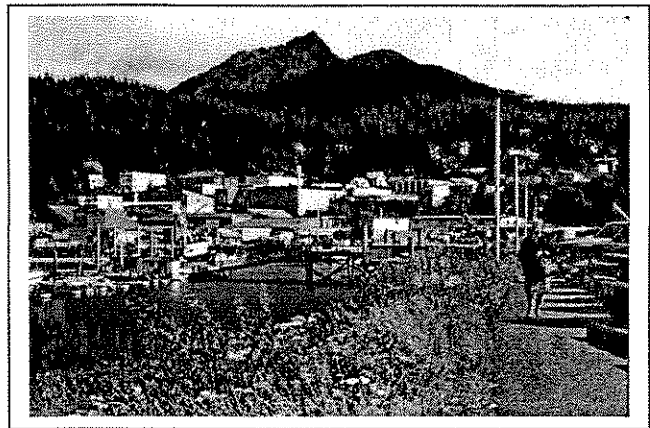
# I. CORDOVA TOURISM PLAN - SUMMARY

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## BACKGROUND: CRUISE SHIPS, MEETINGS, COMMITTEES

*"I agree we want to diversify the economy. People need decent jobs, and we're too dependent on commercial fishing. It's not that people are opposed to tourism, they just want to see it done right." (Cordova Resident at 1998 Community Tourism Meeting)*

In 1998, the Copper River Watershed Project released a report entitled "Making the Most of Copper River Resources: Options for Tourism in Cordova and the Lower Copper River Watershed". The report provided a framework for "doing tourism right" in Cordova, and identified choices and tools for the community. As the report was being developed, Norwegian Cruise lines announced plans to send an 800 person cruise ship to town, starting summer 1998.



This news sparked passionate debate about the likely impacts of tourism on Cordova. The cruise ship visited again in summer 1999. Then Norwegian reconfigured its boat, and quit coming to Cordova. After these two summers, most residents agreed the cruise ship brought neither the great benefits nor problems that supporters and critics had predicted. This experience also led to broad agreement that the community should take a more proactive role in guiding tourism growth.

During winter and spring 2000, a Tourism Advisory Committee was formed under the umbrella of the Cordova Chamber of Commerce. This new committee was designed to continue the efforts of the "ad hoc tourism committee" that worked on cruise ship issues during 1998 and 99, supported by the City Council, the City's Port and Commerce Development Advisory Board, and the Copper River Watershed Project. In 2001, the Tourism Advisory Committee prepared a more detailed Tourism Marketing Plan, and has worked since that time to implement plan recommendations.

## WHY A TOURISM PLAN? PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The original tourism report and subsequent marketing plan were prepared with extensive community input. The marketing plan was approved by the tourism committee, and reviewed by the Cordova City Council as part of a successful request for funds for marketing. However, all this work has not been brought together into a single package, nor submitted to the City Council for formal approval. That is the objective of this document. An adopted community tourism plan provides three main benefits:

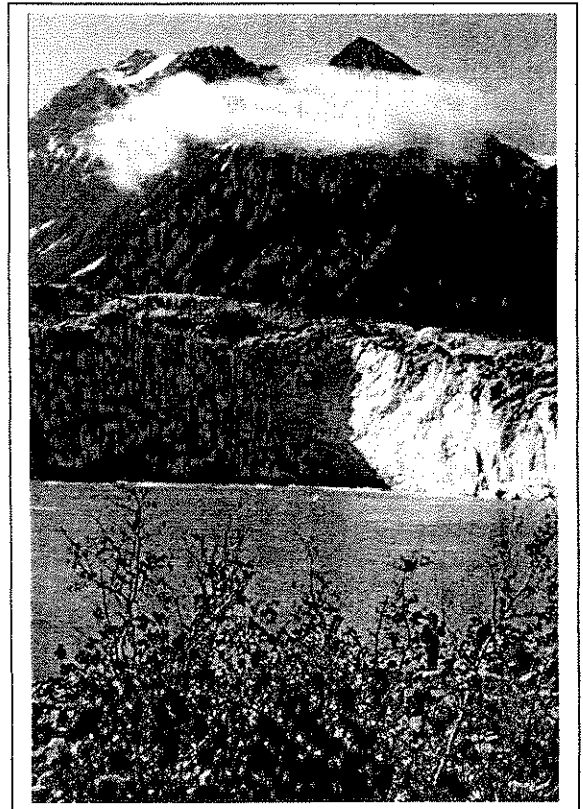
1. A Way to Get Organized for Community Action The plan sets broad community goals, and then outlines and prioritizes specific actions to reach these goals, and identifies resources to get these tasks done.
2. A Means to Find Common Ground Cordova residents occasionally have differences of opinion regarding tourism and other development issues. The planning process provides a way to craft strategies acceptable to people of many different viewpoints. This in turn allows the community to get past arguments and on to action.
3. Fund Raising Public and private grants are a good way to pay for tourism-related projects – from events, to interpretation or trails. The odds of getting such funding are much higher if the community has completed and adopted a plan.

## SUMMARY OF INTENT: VISION STATEMENT AND GOALS

### A. Cordova Tourism Vision Statement

Surveys of visitors conducted over the last several years found what residents already know: Cordova's great strength as a tourism destination is that it is an unspoiled destination, a real town in a spectacular natural setting. Consequently:

*Cordova should aim for modest numbers of high value, low impact visitors, including independent travelers, Alaska residents, smaller cruise ships and small groups of package travelers. The community, including businesses and residents, the City, the Chamber of Commerce, and groups like the Copper River Watershed Project, the Eyak Corporation, the Eyak tribe and the PWS Science Center, should work together to take actions so that in the future, tourism brings more benefits to the community, while strengthening and not harming those qualities that make Cordova a great place to live (and to visit).*



## **B. Community Tourism Goals**

### **Expand and diversify Cordova's economy.**

- Promote year-round tourism: strengthen summer visitation and encourage more visits in the fall, winter and spring
- Work toward steady tourism growth; avoid dramatic spikes and valleys
- Emphasize forms of tourism that can be sustained over the long term

### **Maintain a healthy, productive, natural environment.**

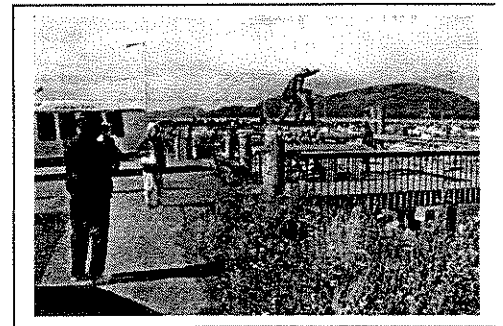
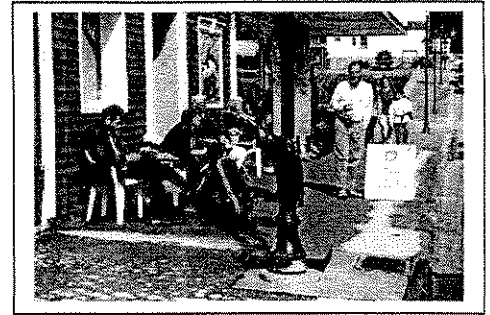
- Protect natural systems that support fish and wildlife habitat, commercial fishing, subsistence

### **Maintain quality of community life.**

- Focus on improved attractions such as trails and sidewalks that directly benefit residents
- Maintain the small town qualities that make Cordova a unique place to live and visit

### **Improve Cordova's fiscal health and public infrastructure.**

### **Keep the community informed and involved in tourism decisions.**



## **WHO TO INVITE? TARGET MARKETS TO ACHIEVE GOALS**

- Alaska Residents And Their Friends And Relatives, particularly from Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau. The majority of visitors year round to both Kenai and the Mat-Su are Alaskans. In winter, Alaskans are Cordova's strongest potential market.
- Independent Travelers Compared to large boat cruise travelers, independent travelers stay longer, spend more and spread their spending further through the community.
- Small Tour Groups Small, organized groups of 10-100 tourists, like the groups brought by Cruise West, are a good match for Cordova's attractions, and tend to be high value, low impact travelers.
- Visiting Friends and Relatives "VFR's" can be a small but important component of community visitors. A number of Alaskan communities make special efforts to encourage VFR travel.

### **"Learning-Focused Travelers"**

One promising sub market is the set of people who want to learn as they have fun. This market segment includes both independent and small group tours, such as groups like Elderhostel or college alumni tours. This is one of the fastest growing segments of the overall travel marketplace, and offers one of the best target markets for achieving Cordova's tourism goals.

- Smaller Cruise Ships (100-1000 people) Smaller cruise ships, in modest numbers, can provide a reliable flow of visitors, and also help market the community. The potential downsides of cruise visits can be minimized as long as numbers don't exceed community carrying capacity. Based on a consideration of harbor and town capacity, this is judged to be no more than 1 boat a day, no more than 4 times per week.
- Business/ Conference Travel Even with Cordova's currently modest conference facilities, the town can host small conferences, an important source of revenue for local businesses. Targets include Alaskan-based trade groups, government agencies, and businesses. This segment could expand if meeting facilities improved.

## SPECIFIC ACTIONS – TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Specific actions and strategies to achieve the goals and attract the target markets listed above are summarized below. Categories include developing Cordova's market image, carrying out promotion activities, developing attractions and events, improving the community's tourism management structure, and monitoring tourism's local impacts.

These recommendations will be carried out by the same combination of groups that have worked on tourism issues in the community over the last 5 years. These include the City of Cordova, Chamber of Commerce, the Copper River Watershed Project, the Cordova District office of the USFS and individual businesses, and community volunteers. These Cordova –based groups will work in partnership with out of town partners such as the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Alaska Travel Industry Association.

### A. Marketing Program

The overall goal of the marketing plan is to capitalize on Cordova's status as a town unspoiled by tourism, to achieve economic goals by sustaining what makes Cordova special. One travel writer has referred to this as the "micro-brewed beer" strategy, where a town works to bring in smaller numbers of discerning, higher spending visitors. Specific current priorities in this category include those listed below:

<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>
1. Develop and carry out simple cooperative marketing/branding program, focused on in-state residents and small travel groups. Develop standardized format for print advertisements, tied to current City work to develop new logo.	Tourism committee/local tourism businesses, with CRWP
2. Maintain communications, good relationships with existing package visitors to Cordova, such as Cruise West; and with new prospects, including other small cruiseship companies	Mayor with assistance from Tourism Committee
3. Continually update and improve website; market website to broader audience.	Chamber Staff, with consulting assistance
4. Continue to take advantage of free/low cost opportunities to post information about Cordova, Cordova events	Chamber staff (with help from past directors)

5. Events: expand marketing, coordinate with access partners (airlines, marine highway), combine/improve events.	Chamber staff with community volunteers
6. Improve distribution of collateral material outside of Cordova, including tourism brochure, tourism itineraries.	Chamber staff
7. Arrange for familiarization tour –early summer 03. Work with tour planners, tourism organizations such as ATIA, ACVB	Local tourism businesses, with CRWP
8. Maintain memberships & active role in travel organizations.	Chamber staff

**B. Attraction Enhancement Strategies:**

Action	Lead
1. Develop self guided, interpretive town walk, with associated simple brochure and signage.	Tourism committee/local tourism businesses, working with CRWP
2. Develop “Welcome to Cordova” signs	City with Tourism Committee assistance
3. Develop interpretive information, programs, package tours that make it easier for visitors to understand and enjoy the historic link between Kennicott/McCarthy and Cordova	CRWP, working with City Museum Staff, partners in McCarthy & Kennicott
4. Strengthen & perhaps combine existing events: Shorebird Festival, Iceworm Festival, Salmon run	Chamber, with community partners
5. (longer term) Work towards creation of a multi-purpose community/visitor center	City of Cordova, with community partners
6. (longer term) Improve “edge of town” attractions, including wildlife and bird viewing, glacier viewing, trails	Tourism Committee, working with USFS, Eyak
7. (longer term) Improve walk from harbor to downtown	City with Tourism Committee assistance
8. (longer term) Work to offer ski lift rides during summer	9. Ski Club, City

**NEXT STEPS/HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED?**

This draft plan has been reviewed and approved by the Chamber of Commerce. The next step is to present it for approval by the Cordova City Council. The table of contents of the full community plan is listed on the following page. The remainder of the document gives more detail on recommendations, as well as providing background on tourism trends, and providing an inventory of local tourism resources.

If you have questions or comments about this document, please contact Debi Olzenak at the Chamber, or Kristin Smith at the Copper River Watershed Project.

***THANKS FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE FUTURE OF CORDOVA!***





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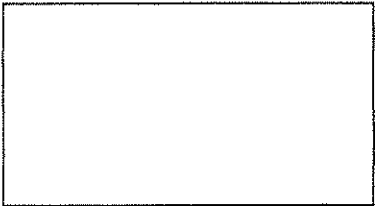
## II. ACTIVITIES SINCE 1998 REPORT

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Over the last 5 years, the community of Cordova made a significant investment of time and money to plan for tourism growth, and increase tourism benefits in the Cordova area. Parties active in this process included the Chamber of Commerce, the Copper River Watershed Project, the City, and many individuals, including residents, businesses and property owners. Most of this work was coordinated and carried out by a tourism committee formed jointly by these three parties. Christopher Beck & Associates (CBA) worked throughout this process, under contract to the Chamber and the Copper River Watershed Project. Some of the most important outcomes of this work are listed below:

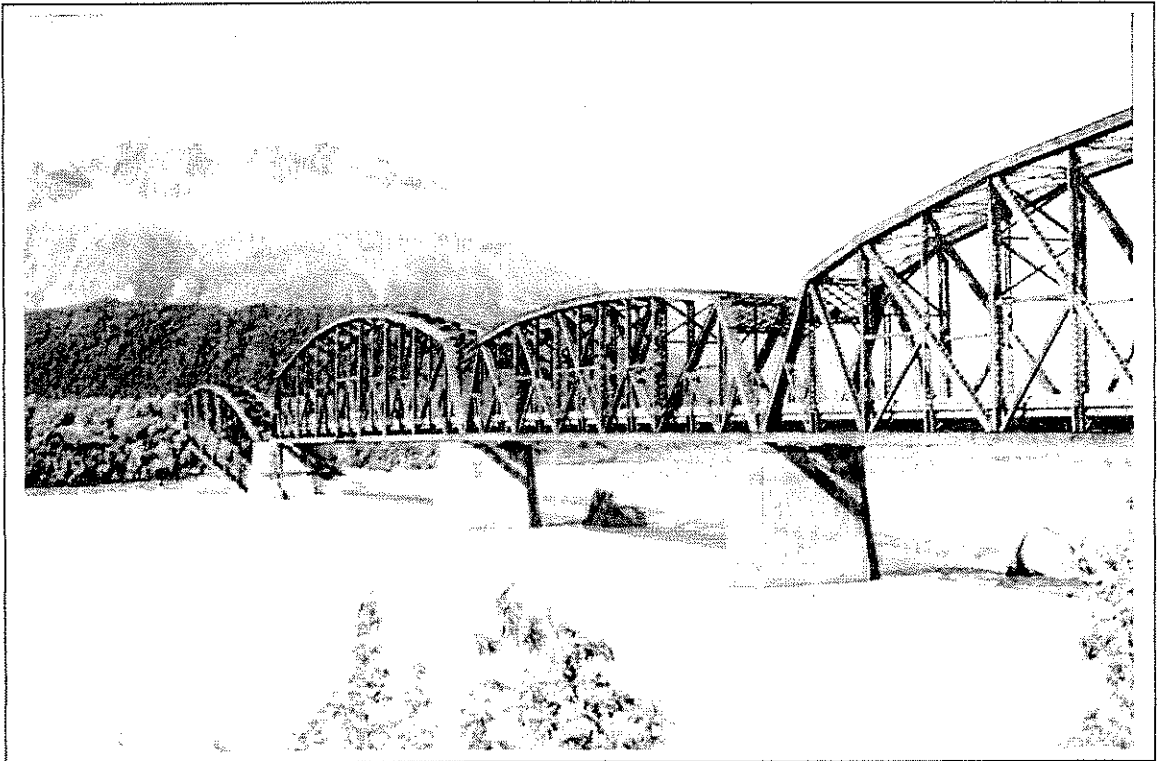
### A. Projects since 1998

- Production of a community tourism brochure (25,000 copies, color)
- Improved community web site ([www.cordovachamber.com](http://www.cordovachamber.com))
- Substantial influence on the USFS Chugach Forest Plan, affecting tourism and recreation opportunities on lands surrounding Cordova
- Visitor Itineraries Brochure
- Surveys of Norwegian Cruise Line visitors regarding their impressions of the town and reasons for traveling there. (Note: visits limited to 1998, 99)
- Tourism Resources Inventory - 3-ring binder for working with travel agents, tour planners
- Cordova Shoppers guide to art, crafts & other locally produced products
- "Making the Most of Copper River Resources: Tourism Resources and Options" (April 98) This document provides background information on tourism trends, and presents a framework for guiding tourism growth to meet community goals. This existing tourism plan is a continuation of the work started with that document.
- Projects in progress: a self guided community walking tour with interpretive signs; a set of small graphics for use



in promotions; a program to attract Anchorage residents using low cost advertisements in newsletters and programs of arts and conservation groups and professional organizations.

- “Cordova Tourism Marketing Plan” (Jan 2000) This document incorporates results of an extensive series of community and tourism committee meetings. Specific products include those listed below. (see chapter V for details):
  - goals: a consensus view about amount, type and character of tourism desired in Cordova
  - marketing strategy: a set of actions to attract and satisfy target markets.



*The “Million Dollar Bridge” – one of the points of interest along the corridor between Cordova and McCarthy Kennicott*

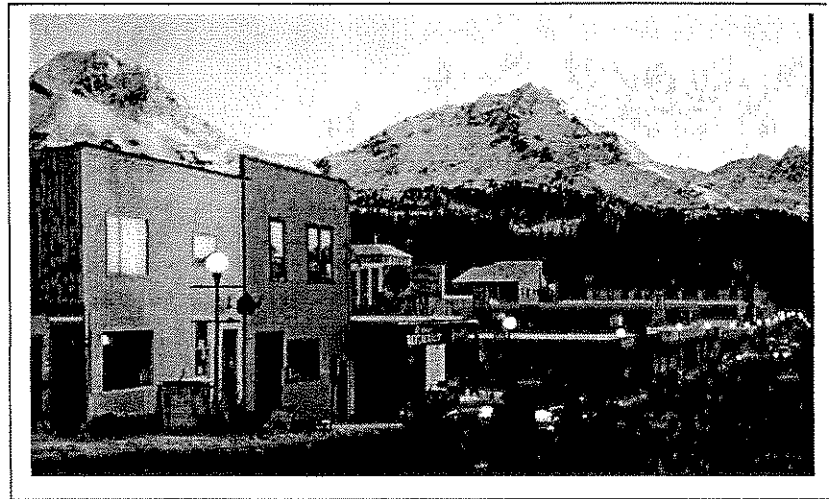
### III. INSIGHTS FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES

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Several Cordova tourism businesses were interviewed by Christopher Beck & Associates during late summer and early fall 2001, with an additional round of discussions in Spring 2002. Interviewees were asked about trends in their business and their opinions about marketing ideas, improvement of attractions and actions to increase tourism benefits. General sentiments expressed were that citizens of Cordova need to agree on general goals for tourism, and then take appropriate steps to reach these goals, including improved amenities and better marketing.

Business owners noted their numbers of tourism clients have remained relatively stable, following an initial decline after the Norwegian Cruise Line boats stopped coming to town.

They said that guests tend to be people seeking more active, participatory vacations, with between 50-100% arriving as independent travelers. "The visitors who make it to Cordova enjoy going where most people can't". Most businesses noted that the majority of their clients came from out of state, and an average of about 10% were visiting friends and relatives.



*Cordova businesses indicated that they will continue to change with the visitor industr. Most said they were not seeking dramatic growth, with a focus on quality over quantity.*

When asked to prioritize marketing ideas for the community, businesses rated an upgraded community website as the highest priority, noting that most travelers perform initial research on the Internet these days. Investing in marketing efforts to promote community events like the Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival and the first salmon were rated very highly. Marketing for in-state tourists also ranked very highly. Businesses noted that Anchorage holds a vast, untapped market for visitors, and that marketing there would be relatively inexpensive. Marketing for small groups was ranked as a medium priority, with some businesses highly favoring them, and others noting past experiences that didn't work well. Cooperative advertising with other towns in the region received mixed ratings, and is something that should be discussed further.

The idea that received the most widespread support from businesses was an improved Chamber of Commerce, with staff to implement marketing strategies.

Regarding changes or improvements to attractions, several businesses interviewed said they thought Cordova already has what it needs to appeal to visitors, and that most efforts should focus on marketing. Among suggestions for priorities for expanding or improving attractions were cannery tours, designed to route visitors safely through the building while educating them. Interpretive signs at the harbor were also suggested as a way to inform tourists without having them 'go down to the dock and ask questions.' A welcome sign on Main Street was suggested as a good way to let visitors know the community is glad to have them visit.

Business owners also noted concerns about the future of tourism in the Cordova. An out-of town tour boat operator said, "There need to be some decisions made within the community. What type of tourism do they want? Small ships? Large ships? No tourism at all? If Cordova wants tourism, it needs to show the welcome mat by encouraging the kind of activity it wants. Promotion shouldn't occur until the community has reached some consensus about what it wants."

Another boat charter operator said, "There should be a level playing field. Local operators have to pay 6% sales tax for entire trips, even if only one day is spent in Cordova. Out of state operators don't have to pay the tax. This is keeping people from visiting Cordova, or from using local operators. It's cheaper to leave from Whittier, so that's what people do."

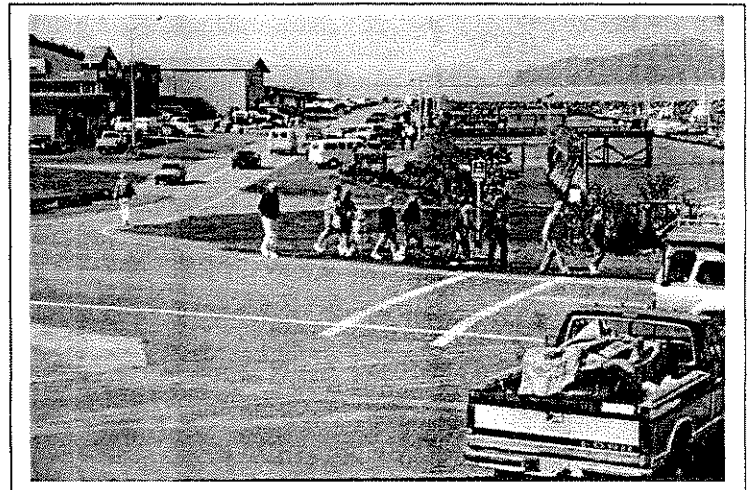
## IV. OVERVIEW OF TOURISM RESOURCES

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This is the first of two chapters that provide the context for tourism strategies. This chapter looks at the “supply” side of the tourism picture, reviewing the attractions Cordova offers as a place to live and visit. This information is taken from the community’s tourism brochure. While presented in enthusiastic, persuasive tone, this description nonetheless provides an accurate overview of the area’s attractions. The following chapter sums up the “demand” side, looking at trends at the national, regional and local scale to better understand what people seek in a destination.

This information helps the community better understand communities opportunities and challenges. This assessment initially occurred as part of the preparation of the 1998 Tourism Report, and then in subsequent meetings and discussions.

Cordova is blessed with amazing natural beauty, energetic and creative citizens, and a cozy town atmosphere. Its ‘off the beaten track’ qualities make the town ideal for the selective visitor. Access to Prince William Sound, the Copper River Delta, the Copper River itself, the Chugach Mountains and the Gulf Coast situate Cordova in the heart of an active traveler’s dream. Its unique cultural and natural history has the potential to place the town on sophisticated visitors’ radar screens.



*Visitors on the short walk from the harbor to Main Street.*

### WHAT CORDOVA HAS NOW <sup>1</sup>

#### History

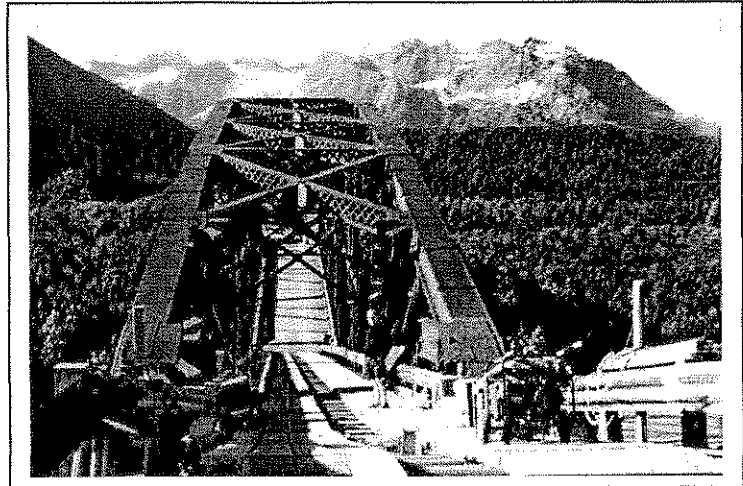
For thousands of years, the Cordova region has been a productive home and crossroads for Native peoples. By kayak, foot and dugout canoe, the Eyak, Tlingit, Alutiiq, and Aleut cultures formed villages, traded, and built a rich life based on a deep knowledge of the land and sea. An ancient village site hugs the shore of Eyak Lake, at the edge of current-day Cordova.

In the late 1700’s, European explorers sailed in, searching for riches, empire, and the fabled Northwest Passage. Today’s maps still echo the voyages of Captains Bering, Cook, Humboldt and Fidalgo, with place names like Zaikof Bay, Hinchinbrook Island, Valdez and Cordova.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Cordova Community Tourism Brochure

Modern Cordova burst to life at the turn of the century, following discovery of an immense copper deposit in the Wrangell Mountains. For 27 years, Cordova boomed as the terminus of the Copper River and Northwestern Railway. The train ran 196 miles from the Kennicott mine to tidewater, crossing the Copper River at the Million Dollar Bridge. When the mine closed in 1938, Cordova turned back to more enduring resources – salmon, shrimp, clams, crab, and herring.

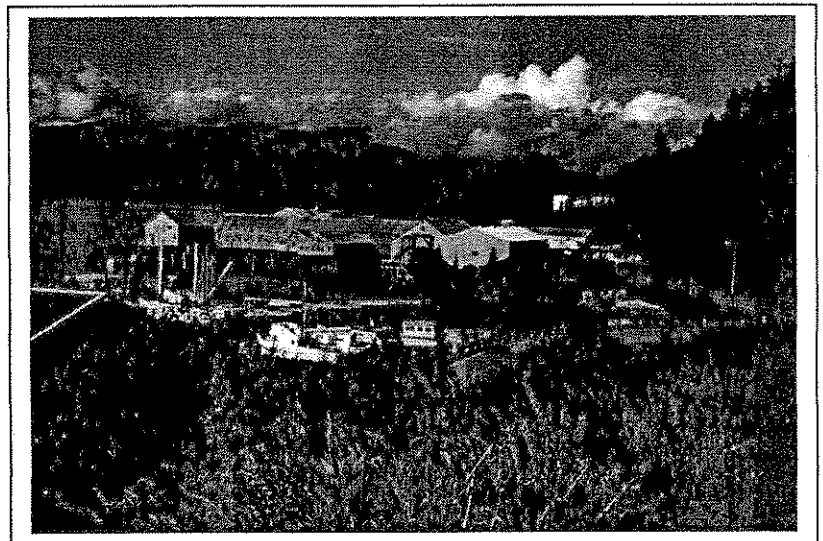


*The Million Dollar Bridge provides striking, tangible evidence of the magnitude of the copper mining 150 miles up the Copper & Chitina Rivers (copper is the english word for chitina). This bridge offers both a window into one dimension of the region's history, and great views of Childs Glacier.*

### **Commercial Fishing**

Cordova is a fishing town and proud home to the world's finest salmon! Cordovans move with the rhythms of the fish. In early spring the community shakes off the winter doldrums and the season begins. In May, gear is checked, driveways fill with nets being mended, and the drift gillnet fishing fleet heads out to the Copper River flats in search of king and sockeye salmon. In summer, purse seiners ply the Sound in search of pink and chum salmon. In the fall, the fleet harvests silver (coho) salmon.

Renowned for their unparalleled flavor, color and quality, Copper River red and king salmon are treasured throughout the world (but perhaps most all by Alaskans who can't wait for that first warm season BBQ).



*Cordova's fishing industry is an aspect of the community that interests many visitors. Creating interpretive signs and tours around the harbor and cannery buildings can provide education about, and support for, Cordova fish products.*



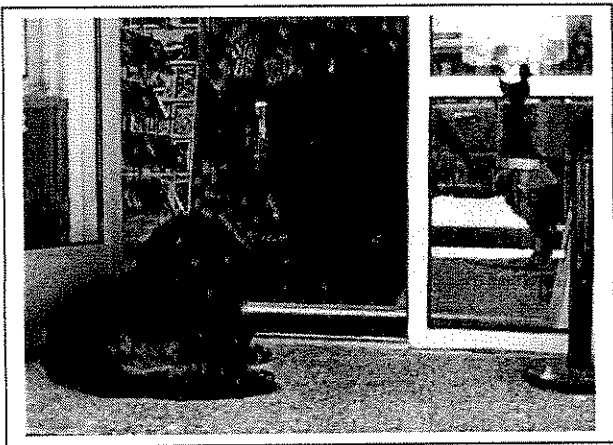
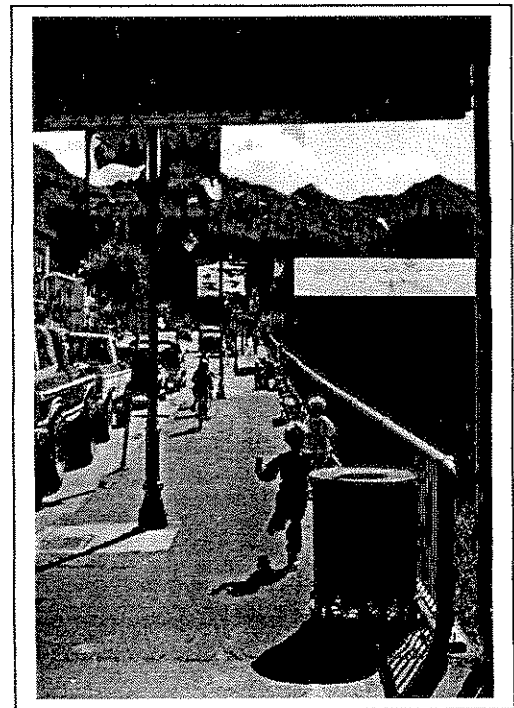
## A Place to Learn

Cordova offers an unusual opportunity to get “behind” the postcards, to understand the place being visited. Visitors can learn firsthand about the epic migration of shorebirds, or how scientists use genetic codes to track wild salmon. The region’s rich ecological resources have made it a living laboratory, a center for scientific research helping to unravel the mysteries behind the scenery.



## A Real, Lively Community

It’s the people that make Cordova. Characterized by independence, curiosity, and enthusiasm for spirited debate, Cordovans are an interesting and lively bunch. From fiddle playing to quilting and fine art, Cordova’s population is diverse and talented. This tradition includes famed Alaskan artists Sydney Lawrence and Eustace Ziegler, who lived here during Cordova’s booming copper days. Another defining feature is a link to the land – Cordovans fish, hunt, pick berries, smoke salmon and pickle octopus.

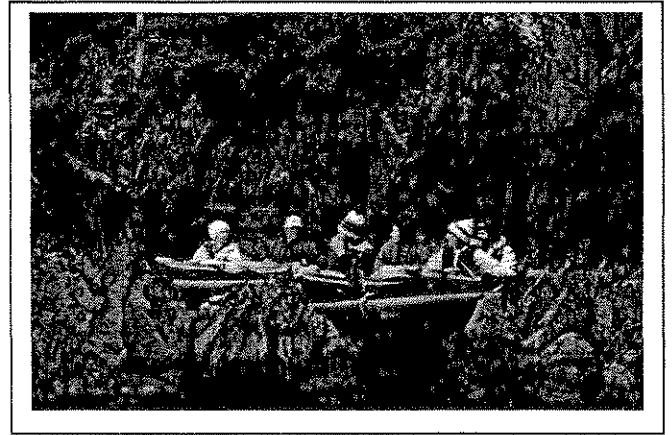


*A comfortable, friendly atmosphere makes Cordova a great place to live and visit. Strolling through town, having a cup of coffee, is a great way to get a sense of the creativity and uniqueness of the people who live here.*

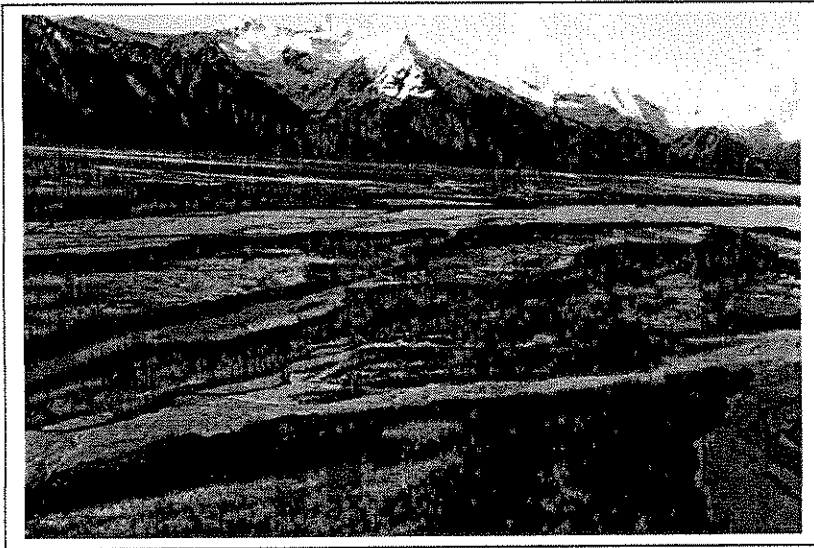
## Gateway to Wilderness Adventure

One can raft a whitewater river, kayak near a raft of otters, hike a rainforest trail, take a charter boat, or catch an ocean bright salmon in and around Cordova. Visitors can plan a new adventure every day, rent gear, and enlist the services of skilled local guides. Cordova is gateway to four unique environments:

**1.** *Prince William Sound:*  
The fiords, intricate bays and islands of Prince William Sound make up one of the globe's most spectacular marine environments. Above the coastline rises an equally amazing alpine world of forested hillsides, glaciers, and rocky spires. The Sound is an accessible wilderness, a place that can be comfortably explored by kayak, cruise ship, charter boat or plane.



*Kayaking is a sport that continues to gain popularity, and Prince William Sound is renowned for its excellent kayaking opportunities. Cordova's proximity to the Sound is ideal for active visitors.*

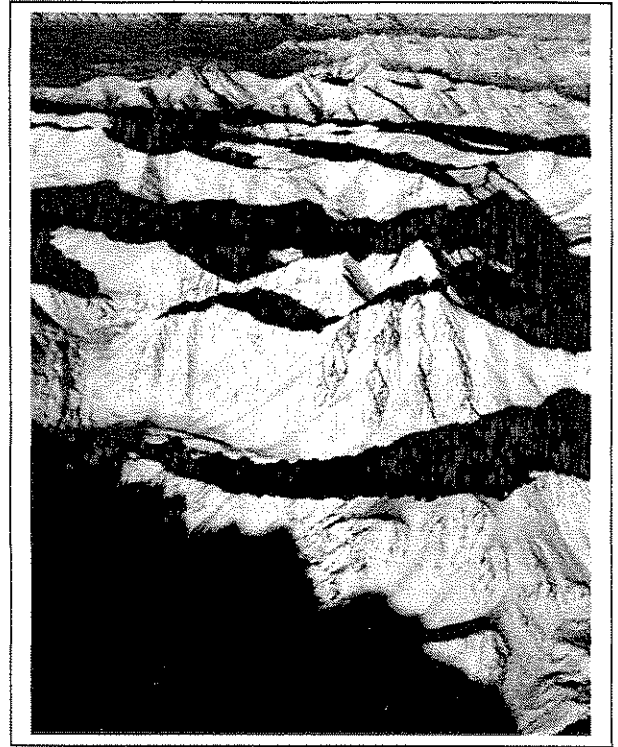


**2.** *Copper River Delta:*  
The Copper River delta is the crown jewel of North America's wetlands. The 700,000 acre delta, the largest wetland on the Pacific Coast, is home to black and brown bear, moose, mountain goats, and tens of thousands of waterfowl. The delta is a magical world, where visitors can see eagles, trumpeter swans, dusky Canada geese and beavers. One can hike, boat, float, drive or fly to experience this incomparable meeting place of land and water.

*The Copper River delta is a stunning year-round attraction, offering visitors a dramatic vista that is always offering up a new surprise – an eagle, a swan, the slap of a beaver's tail, an unexpected view to a glacier.*

### **3** . *The Copper River Watershed and Chugach Mountains:*

The mighty 275 mile Copper River begins on the north slope of the Wrangell Mountains in Alaska's interior. The river flows through tundra and boreal forest, cuts a mile deep canyon through the Chugach Mountains, squeezes between two glaciers, and emerges in the rich estuaries and saltwater smells of the Delta. Visitors can travel to the end of the Copper River Highway and watch the Childs Glacier calve huge icebergs into the turbulent Copper River. Travelers can also visit and explore the beautiful, rugged landscape that links Cordova with Kennicott/McCarthy, by boat, raft or air.



*The Chugach Mountains and Wrangell St. Elias National Park are spectacular places that call to the rugged adventurer. Cordova can provide a safe and welcome "home-base" for wilderness visitors.*

### **4** . *North Gulf Coast of Alaska:* Stretched between the Copper River Delta and Glacier Bay National Park is one of the world's most remote, dynamic and spectacular stretches of the coastline – a place where surfers add their tracks to the footsteps left in the sand by wolves and bear. The Wrangell St. Elias Range forms the towering backdrop to this wave-swept coast. A land of untouched wilderness and raw power, Alaska's "Lost Coast" beckons to the serious adventurer.

## SUMMARY OF EXISTING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

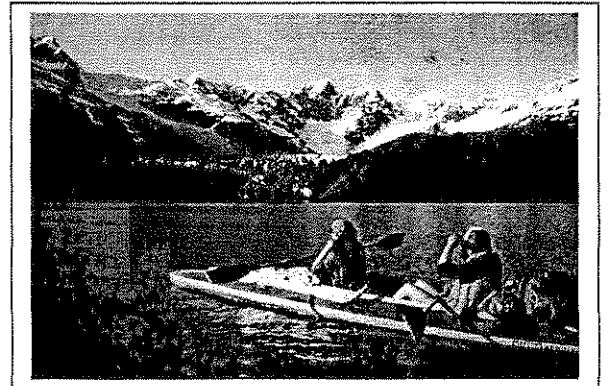
### Cordova's Tourism Strengths:

- small town atmosphere in the middle of a wild place
- unique history (native culture, mining, fishing)
- jumping off point for diverse recreational opportunities (mountains to ocean)
- Compared to many Alaska communities, Cordova has good access – with a large airport, and regular daily air service
- Cordova is off the beaten path of Alaska tourism. Compared to communities like Juneau or Ketchikan, relatively few tourists currently come here. The town has an unspoiled quality very much appreciated by most visitors.

### Cordova's Tourism Weaknesses:

- opportunity rich/developed attraction poor: like many Alaskan communities, Cordova has relatively few developed attractions to meet the needs of those travelers who want structured, packaged experiences
- rainy weather can intimidate potential visitors, and might limit tourists' stay.
- limited access: it can be expensive and require more advanced planning to get to Cordova.
- community has mixed views about the future of tourism
- currently minimal cooperative tourism marketing

People travel as tourists for a host of reasons: to experience unusual, memorable environments and the creatures that live there; to meet people; to take part in adventure and activities; to learn, grow, and relax; for comfortable lodging and good food. High quality attractions - scenery, wildlife, culture, adventure - are at the heart of a community's success as a tourism destination. These attractions must first draw people to visit, and then satisfy them when they arrive.



*Visitors who travel to Cordova won't be disappointed in their search for memorable experiences and interesting people.*

The particular attractions of a place also have a great deal of influence on the numbers and types of visitors. Although many of the experiences sought by visitors will always be provided by private businesses, many key attractions - parks, trails, campgrounds, museums; information centers - are provided by the public sector through community action. This gives communities an important tool for influencing the amount and character of tourism growth.

Overall, Cordova has a strong foundation of established and potential attractions, and a growing base of businesses that help make these more accessible and understandable to visitors. The next section of this report looks trends in tourism demand, to better understand how these draws mesh with visitor interests.

## V. OVERVIEW OF TOURISM TRENDS

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### A. NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL TRENDS<sup>2</sup>

*Summary:* National and global trends show a steady increase in number of travelers. Several of the market segments Cordova is targeting – adventure travelers, learning based travelers - are growing faster than the market as a whole. These trends increase the potential for Cordova to attract these high value sub-markets. At the same time, it is clear that competition for travelers is stiff and continuing to increase.

- *Overall Growth* Tourism has grown phenomenally over the last 2 decades. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism is the fastest growing and largest industry in the world, generating some \$3.5 trillion in expenditures. The WTTC now estimates that the travel and tourism industry:
  - comprises 11% of global GDP (US\$3,575 billion)
  - generates 8% of total employment or 1 in every 12.4 jobs worldwide
  - supports 200 million jobs worldwide
- *Total International Arrivals* to the United States grew at an average rate of 4.5 percent between 1989 and 1998, with 635 million people visiting outside their home country in 1998. This total is predicted to average 4.2 percent annually through 2010, when international travelers should reach one billion. The US share of international travelers in 1998 was 46.4 million arrivals. Twenty-one percent of these arrivals indicate that they visit a unit of the National Park system, so visits by international travelers to the units of the Nat'l Park system is predicted to increase from 9.7 to 11.7 million between 1998 and 2003.
- *Rapid Growth in Domestic Travel* The US population grew about 9 percent between 1990 & 1998, while travel by Americans grew 36 percent. The number of Americans age 55 and older increased by 9% while their travel grew nearly 50 percent. Pleasure travel volume grew by 45 percent in the same 10- year period, growing from 620.5 million trips to 897.6 million trips. While it increased 4.1 percent from 1997 to 1998, the long-term outlook for total US resident travel indicates growth averaging 1.6 percent through 2001.
- *Changes in Demographics* "The changing demographics of the US population will be the driving force behind travel & tourism over the next twenty years. The age 45 to 64 year old group will increase by 55 million persons from 1997 to 2010, a 47 percent growth rate. By about 2010 the Baby Boomers should start retiring in

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<sup>2</sup> Sources for this information include: Talkeetna Tourism Issues & Needs Workbook, prepared by Christopher Beck and Associates for the community of Talkeetna, March 2002; presentations by Luther Probst and Ray Rasker of the Sonoran Institute; a report Strategic Marketing Analysis and Planning, for Alaska prepared by Nichols-Gilstrap Inc, Nov 2000, for the AK Dept. of Community and Economic Development, a study Outlook For Travel And Tourism In 2000 prepared by Tom Wade, for the National Park Service; Juneau Tourism Plan Working Paper, CBJ and Egret Consulting, Summer 2001 (online at <http://www.cbjtourism.com/>)

earnest.” (by Tom Wade/NPS). Baby boomers are buying second homes, and spending large sums to have more comfortable versions of the outdoor experiences they enjoyed in their 20’s.

- *Transfer in Wealth:* the baby boom is inheriting and spending today the huge sums carefully saved by their more frugal, depression era parents.
- *Global Competition* The tourism industry – like fishing, timber industries - competes in an increasingly global market. Improvements in transportation, accommodations, guide services, etc. make it easy to travel comfortably anyplace in the world, for about the same cost as a trip to Alaska. As stated in the Nichols-Gilstrap Report, “. In the 1990’s, many countries that previously had no significant tourism business began to focus an increasing share of their economic efforts on stimulating visitation to their regions. Examples include Vietnam, Cuba, China, Albania and the nations of Central America. Since the vast majority of Alaska’s tourism business comes from residents of other states and countries, it is important to note that many countries (and states) that previously ignored tourism are now targeting out-of-state and out-of-country travelers in their marketing efforts.”
- *Changes in Technology* improving communications and information technology allow businesses and individuals to work where they want to, instead of being required to remain in the major metropolitan areas. Changes like the development of the Internet give even small, remote businesses access to clients.
- *Amenity-Driven Growth* Retirees, people still working and footloose businesses are increasingly looking for opportunities to purchase second homes or relocate to small towns with a high quality of life. During the 1990’s, the places with the fastest growth rates in America were small towns in the western US, to communities offering residents, employees and business owners, the pleasures of small town life and great access to the out-of-doors. This trend, in turn, has created increasing economic opportunities in these locations.
- *Shorter Trips* As the pace of American life continues to increase, average trip length steadily declines. In the past 8 years, weekend trips by Americans have jumped by more than 40 percent.
- *9-11 Terrorist Attacks/Global Economic Slowdown:* The events of September 11 provide graphic evidence of the both the strengths and fragility behind the growth of tourism. In the immediate wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, bookings for air travel and other trips declined dramatically. Data from the Travel Industry Association on national and international travel show that tourism was declining before 9-11, and then fell even more dramatically thereafter. While many people predicted sustained declines in travel, as time has gone by, and no additional major terrorism events took place, many Americans are seemingly slipping back into pre-Sept 11<sup>th</sup> patterns. Summer 2002 travel was slightly off Summer 2001 levels, and some sectors have jumped ahead of visitation levels a year earlier.

## B. STATEWIDE TRENDS – CHANGES IN ALASKA TOURISM

- *Slowly Growth, After a Decade of Remarkable Growth* As the table below shows, out-of-state visitors to Alaska has continued to grow, but at a declining rate.

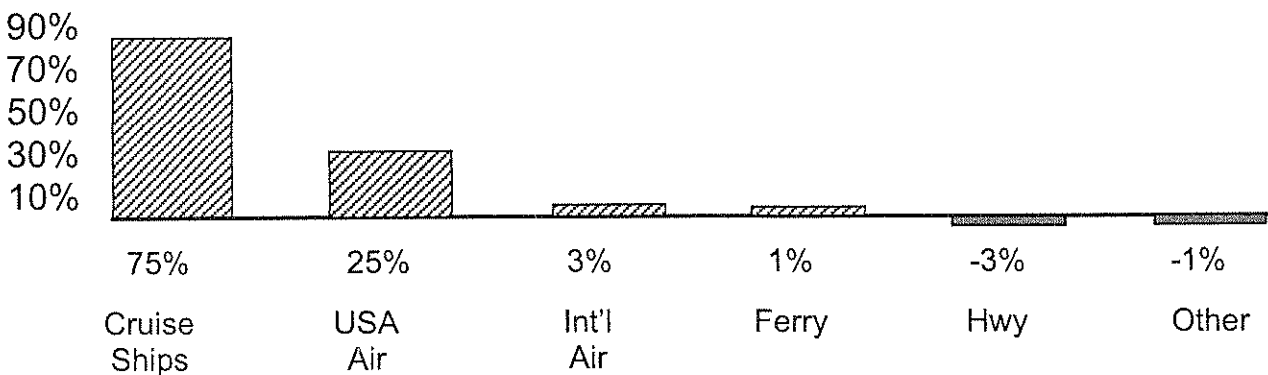
Year	<u>Total Summer Visitor Growth Rate</u>	<u>Cruise Visitor Summer Growth Rate</u>
1996	10.1%	18.7%
1997	5.3%	16.5%
1998	3.8%	10.0%
1999	3.0%	6.0%
2000	2.0%	5.0%

PRELIMINARY EST.

Source: Alaska Visitors Statistics Program, Cruise Line Industry of America (CLIA). Note: Between 1995 and 1999, CLIA statistics indicate that passenger growth (demand) increased at 5.9 percent annually. At the same time, however, new ship berths (supply) increased at an average annual rate of 7.7 percent.

- *Cruise Industry Up, Other Segments Flat or Declining* The chart below tells a strong, simple story. Ignoring the handful of arrivals by motorcoach, the only source of out-of-state visitor growth in the last 5 years was the cruise industry. Visitor arrivals by ferry, highway, & international air all declined from 1999 to 2001. The slight increase in arrivals by domestic air is also attributable to the growth in the cruise segment.

COMPOSITION OF SUMMER ALASKA VISITOR GROWTH: 1995-1999



Source: Alaska Visitors Statistics Program, State Office of Tourism

- *Cruise Industry Competition* As shown above, the cruise industry has experienced strong growth in recent years. Between 1995 and 1999, CLIA (Cruise Line Industry Association) statistics indicate that passenger growth (demand) increased at 5.9 percent annually. At the same time, however, new ship berths (supply) increased at an average annual rate of 7.7 percent. This supply/demand imbalance has made it increasingly difficult for a number of ships to increase the rates that they charge and the percent of beds they fill. In summer 2002, this trend became more visible, as cruise visitation to Alaska grew but prices dropped significantly.

- *Why the Decline in Non-Cruise Visits to Alaska?* Many explanations are offered for the stagnation of travel to Alaska from sectors other than the cruise market. Clearly, one major factor is the decline in marketing dollars. While funding for Alaska's generic marketing program dropped, the cruise industry spends \$50-60 million annually to promote cruising to Alaska.

**COMPARING STATE TOURISM MARKETING BUDGETS**  
Alaska Cooperative Marketing Budget Drops, Competition Increases

	1991/92	1999/00 (In millions)
Arizona	\$5.7	\$8.8
California	\$4.1	\$13.2
Nevada	\$5.7	\$9.4
Montana	\$5.8	\$6.8
Utah	\$4.0	\$4.8
Washington	\$2.2	\$3.9
Alaska	\$10.5	\$4.2

Source: TIA-Survey of State Travel Offices

- *Variation in Spending by Type of Traveler* The chart below shows the spending patterns of different types of visitors. This particular comparison, between cultural/heritage and "average tourists", is less important than the broader point, which is the impacts (positive and negative) of different types of visitors vary greatly.

**DIFFERENCES IN SPENDING – TRAVELERS IN THE U.S.**  
Time & Money Spent Varies Greatly By Traveler Type

	Cultural/Heritage Tourists	Average Tourist
Length of Stay/Days	13	3.5
Amount Spent during Stay	\$1,534	\$389
Propensity to Shop	59%	39%

Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation



## C. REGIONAL TRENDS –PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND & THE COPPER RIVER BASIN

*Summary:* Trends affecting the future of tourism in the Prince William Sound and Copper River regions are conflicting. Some trends suggesting that tourism use will grow substantially, with these regions evolving from “pass-through” areas to places with expanded facilities and services where more visitors stop and spend time. Other trends suggest that tourism will grow quite slowly, if at all.

- *Continued Growth in Visitation* The number of travelers visiting Southcentral Alaska, continues to grow, particularly the substantial numbers passing through Prince William Sound on large cruise ships. Anchorage is the State’s most visited tourism destination. And use is also growing more slowly, but steadily, in PWS, including sportfishing, day sightseeing boat tours, and kayaking. But as the previous section described, while visitors on large cruiseships continues to increase, “non-cruise related business in Alaska grew only 2.1 percent between 1995 and 1999. This growth rate was approximately 45 percent below the U.S. average.” (NGI)
- *Investment in Tourism Attractions* Anchorage, Seward, Whittier and Valdez are all strongly committed to tourism. Each community is making major investments in marketing and facilities that will drive tourism growth. Examples include the SeaLife Center in Seward and the Native Cultural Center in Anchorage.
- *Growth in Cruise-Related Land Tours* As mentioned above, the numbers of cruise ship passengers coming to Alaska continues to grow. Of particular significance for the Copper River basin area is the opening of a new Copper Wilderness Lodge by Princess Tours, in May 2002. This facility stayed full all summer and is expected to add rooms next year. The experience in the Talkeetna area suggests that where one cruise line is successful, competing companies are quick to follow.
- *\$ for Investment* Regional and village Native Corporations with an explicit interest in tourism investments have large capital funds to invest. Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) has acquired Kenai Fjords Tours, Stan Stephens Charters and Mariah Charters, and built or acquired hotels in Denali, Seward and Talkeetna. Following a period of aggressive investments, CIRI has now backed away from plans to sustain or expand facilities at Growler Island and in Whittier. As a result of recent and likely near-term land sales, Chenega and Eyak Corporations will also have millions of dollars available for investment in tourism.
- *Access improvements* - Infrastructure improvements, particularly the Whittier Road, will make the Prince William Sound area more accessible, increasing market awareness and use. The state is currently studying improved ferry service in the Sound, and road or trail improvements along the Copper River. Planning continues for construction of a road north from Cordova to Shepard Point, with a deep water port facility to follow. Of all the different actions that might be taken affecting tourism, changes in access are likely the most powerful.

## D. SUMMARY - LOCAL TRENDS AND THE FUTURE IN CORDOVA

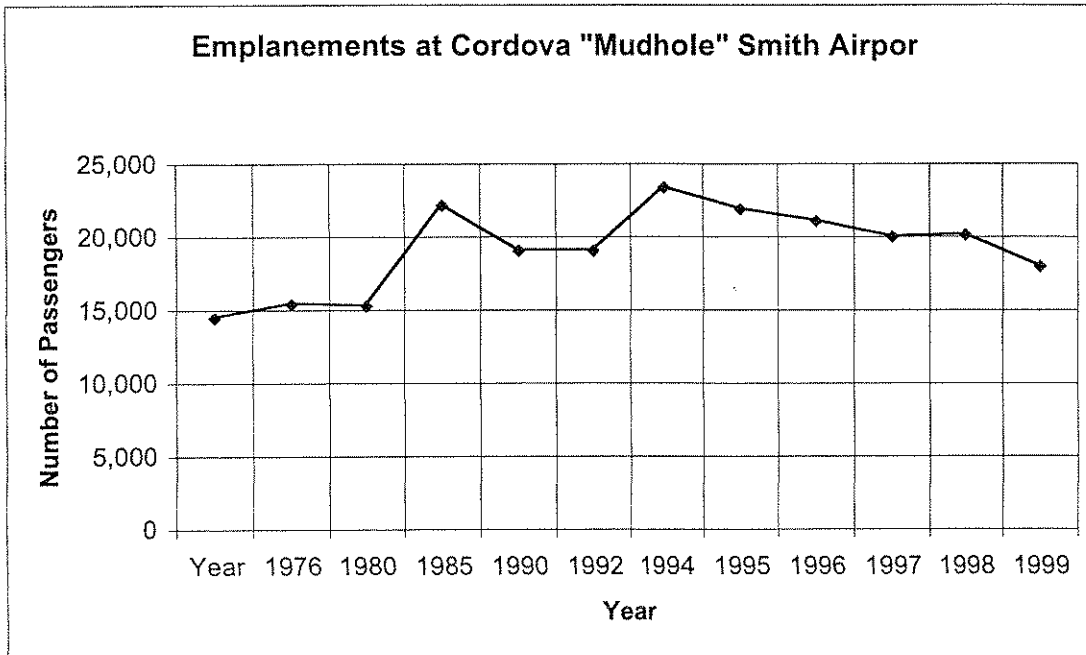
*Summary* - In the last 10 years, many western US small towns – places like Cordova that are located away from major metro areas and are small, attractive communities on the edge of great outdoor environments – experienced significant tourism and population growth. Cordova by contrast has seen a relatively stable level of tourism in recent years. Few people currently visit the area, despite its ample natural tourism resources. Current trends indicate that tourism levels will likely remain stable without greater marketing efforts by the community.

- *Untrammelled by Tourism* - “Undiscovered and unspoiled” are common clichés in tourism marketing. The lower Copper River is rare in that the area genuinely deserves these overused descriptions. Despite its accessibility and attractions, few people visit Cordova and the Copper River delta. Fewer than 10,000 visitors annually, perhaps as few as 5000 people, currently visit Cordova, in a state with over a million and a half annual out-of-state visitors.
- *Tourism Resources A Perfect Gateway Community?* Alaska is full of beautiful places with relatively little tourism, so caution must be used in reaching conclusions about the likelihood of rapid tourism growth in “just another beautiful Alaskan small town”. Looking on the “supply side”, it is clear that Cordova and the lower Copper River have a bounty of natural and cultural assets - a rich history, an attractive walkable small town, mountains and glaciers, strong salmon runs, fishing, and rich bird life. Access by air is good, and access by ferry could be much improved. Cordova provides an uncommonly convenient base for experiencing several distinct natural environments: Prince William Sound, the Copper River delta and river, the Gulf of Alaska coast, and the Chugach and Wrangell Mountains.
- *Tourism Market Demand* In addition to assessing innate tourism attractions, predicting future growth requires consideration of market forces - the “demand side”. While Cordova has great potential, the most visible recent tourism trends in Cordova show tourism declines. Norwegian Cruises and Stan Stephens Charters stopped sending tour groups to the area in the late 1990s, and Princess backed away from plans to build a major hotel at the Childs Glacier overlook.
- *Specific Recreation and Tourism Use Trends* Data on tourism and recreation activity in Cordova is very limited. Some general trends in local tourism-related activities and industries in Cordova are listed below. Travel in and out of Cordova remains relatively constant, while sportfishing and museum visitation have risen. Deer hunting in the region has decreased in recent years. More details about each of these indicators are listed below:

### Museum Visitation

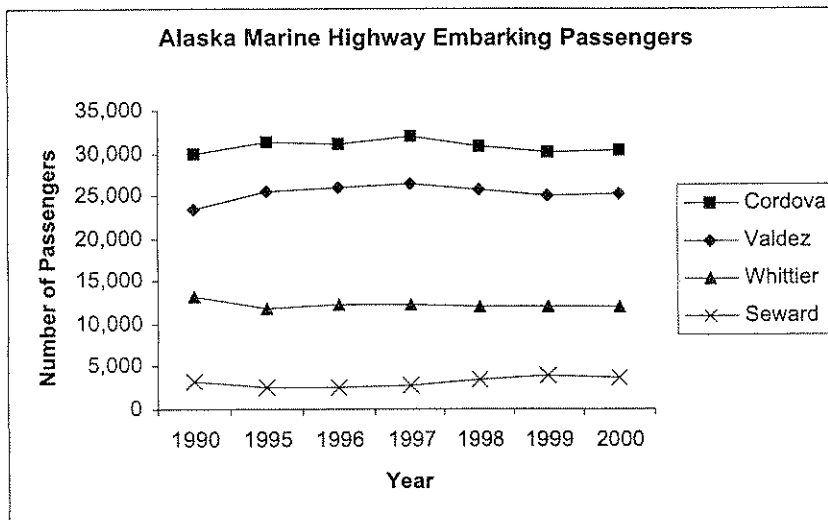
Museum visitation has steadily risen from about 2,000 visitors in the 1980s to 5,500 in the mid-1990s, and 6,300 in the year 2000. There was a two-year peak in 1998 & 1999 when Norwegian Cruise Lines visited Cordova, with annual visitation levels of 12,800 and 11,000 respectively.

Airport Traffic



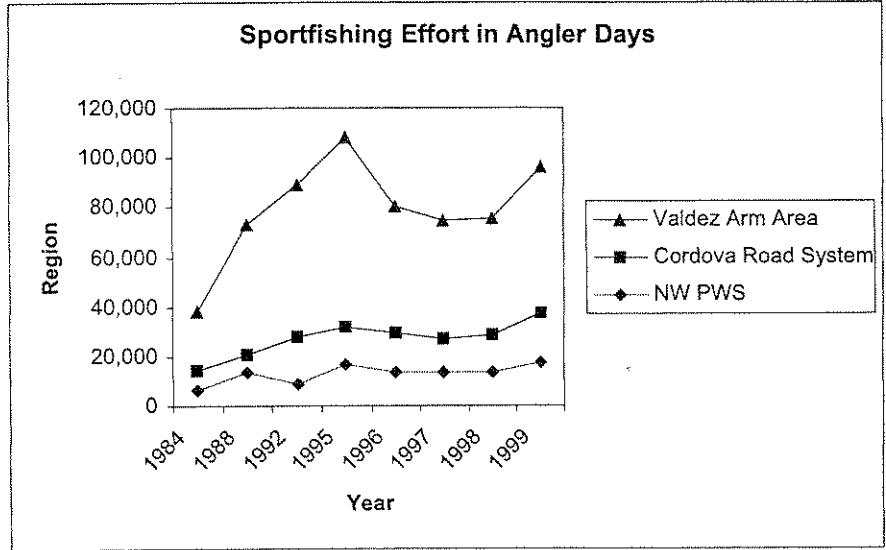
Source: Federal Aviation Administration, Terminal Area Forecast: [www.apo.data.faa.gov/faatafall.HTM](http://www.apo.data.faa.gov/faatafall.HTM)

Ferry Traffic



Source: Alaska Marine Highway System 1998, 2000 Annual Traffic Volume Reports State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Alaska Marine Highway System-465-8863 (Juneau).

Sportfishing Activity



Source: ADF&G Area Mgt. Reports, 2000. The Prince William Sound Region includes the Prince William Sound Mgt. District.

Deer Hunting in ADF&G Game Management Unit 6

<b>1995-96</b>	<b>1996-97</b>	<b>1997-98</b>	<b>1998-99</b>	<b>1999-00</b>
1,726	1,926	2,525	2,908	2,265

Source: ADF&G, Harvest Summary 2000.

## **VI. COMMUNITY GOALS & ACTION PLAN**

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The preceding sections reviewed Cordova's tourism assets, and trends in visitation. This section builds on this information to present goals and specific tourism strategies. This information reflects dozens of community meetings, and countless phone calls, letters and emails over a three year period.

Public attention on local tourism issues comes from the fact that tourism mostly takes place on community streets, sidewalks and docks; or on public lands and waters, where people earn a living, or go for an afternoon hike, or weekend getaway. This high level of community interest in tourism— either supporting or concerned about growth – makes the progress slow and at times painful. Ultimately, however, this investment makes for a solutions that work. As the Nov 2000 report Nichols Gilstrap Inc to the state says, *“If one of the ultimate goals for Alaska tourism is a sustainable reliance on visitor spending for boosting the Alaska economy and supporting desirable amenities, then an accompanying goal should be to manage visitor flows in such a manner that they do not destroy the overall natural setting or Alaskans' quality of life.”*

This chapter has been developed to help Cordovans take advantage of opportunities, and to identify and help achieve community goals. Recommendations for action based on community goals are included in the second section.

### **Community Goals**

Community goals were developed by Cordova residents and businesses during community meetings. The following goals will direct all community tourism planning efforts:

#### **Goal: Expand and diversify Cordova's economy.**

- Promote year-round tourism; strengthen summer visitation and encourage more visits in the fall, winter and spring
- Work toward steady tourism growth; avoid dramatic spikes and valleys
- Emphasize forms of tourism that can be sustained over the long term

#### **Goal: Maintain a healthy, productive, natural environment.**

- Protect natural systems that support fish and wildlife habitat, commercial fishing, subsistence

#### **Goal: Maintain quality of community life.**

- Focus on improved attractions such trails and sidewalks that directly benefit residents
- Maintain the small town qualities that make Cordova a unique place to live and visit

#### **Goal: Improve Cordova's fiscal health and public infrastructure.**

#### **Goal: Keep the community informed and involved in tourism decisions.**

## Action Plan

Actions to achieve these goals focus on the four areas listed below. Specific strategies are outlined in the following pages. Detailed timelines are located in Appendices 1 & 2.

1. MARKETING AND PROMOTION
2. ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS
3. TOURISM MANAGEMENT
4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### 1. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

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As previous sections have made clear, marketing is likely Cordova's most fruitful tourism development strategy. The foundation of any market program is a clear understanding of the qualities of a destination to promote, and the markets to target. These two topics are addressed below:

**A. Goal: Clarify a Market Image/"Brand" for Cordova and the lower Copper River**  
Cordova needs to match the success of the local salmon industry, and develop a more vivid, memorable market identity for tourism. Past marketing slogans, including the current phrase "Alaska's Hidden Treasure", haven't quite captured what makes Cordova a unique, special place to visit and live.

*Action Strategy (status – in progress)*

A first step to developing a marketing slogan is to describe the unique qualities and attractions that will draw desired visitors to Cordova. This is done below. The objective here is to help answer the question: what are Cordova's strengths, what to emphasize / protect / improve? (Complete this sentence - "I want to go to Cordova because.. \_\_\_\_\_.")

A productive work session was held on this topic with the tourism committee. Suggestions for a marketing slogan, based on that meeting, are presented in Appendix 4.

- Cordova is a place where economic, quality of life and conservation goals come together, a place that reaps significant economic rewards, for example, by maintaining the quality of the watershed that supports salmon.
- Cordova is a real community, a working town, home to the Copper River commercial fishing fleet: "we sell salmon not T-shirts". What visitors seem to most appreciate about our community is that it is unchanged and unspoiled by tourism. We want to keep it that way.
- Cordova resides at the gateway to four spectacular natural worlds: the Chugach & St. Elias Mountains, the Gulf Coast of Alaska, the Copper River Delta, the protected waters of Prince William Sound. Each offers a lifetime of exploration & wonder.
- You can't drive to Cordova. Only a handful of cruise ships visit our town. We've got a good thing going - we're easy to reach by commercial jet plane. At the same time, for those who want to get away from the crowds, we're off the beaten track of Alaska tourism

- Cordovans are lucky enough to live in the midst of a rich, still healthy wild place, a place to experience world famous salmon runs, stunning spring bird migrations, sea otters floating in the harbor; eagles, swans, herons flying through town; & with luck, bears & whales.
- Learn while you play. Cordova's remarkable natural & cultural history invites you to get behind the postcards. Learn about the phenomenal delta ecosystem. Find out how copper helped build a railroad, how commercial fishing makes a town, and the rich story of 10,000 years of Native history.
- Great local art and crafts, featuring materials, images and stories of the Copper River. We're proud of our artists - talented local musicians and craftspeople, internationally known painters. Annual events include our Winter Iceworm & Spring Shorebird Festivals.
- Visit Cordova for the best of both worlds: the pleasures of a sophisticated small town (comfortable lodging, good food, bookstores, shops) with great adventures right out the door. Walk on a glacier, take a float or motor trip along a river, fish fresh or salt water, hike through a rainforest.
- Planned Growth. Come see a community that's figuring out a way to keep this a great place for you to visit, and for us and our kids to live.

**B. Goal: Define market targets that focus marketing dollars on the types of visitors that bring the most benefits to Cordova, and the fewest problems.**

*Action Strategy (status – done)*

Define target markets. Conclusions on this topic are presented below.

- Alaska residents and their friends and relatives, particularly from Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau. The majority of visitors year round to both Kenai and the Mat-Su are Alaskans. Definitely in winter, and probably in summer, Alaskans are Cordova's strongest potential market.
- Independent travelers - Compared to cruise and other package travelers, independent travelers stay longer, spend more and spread their spending further through the community.
- Small tour groups Small organized groups of 10-100 tourists, such as alumni travel groups, are a good match for Cordova's attractions, and tend to be high value, low impact travelers.
- Smaller cruise ships (100-1000 people) - Smaller cruise ships, in modest numbers, can provide a reliable flow of visitors, and also help market the community. The potential downsides of cruise visits can be minimized as long as numbers don't exceed community carrying capacity.
- Visiting Friends and Relatives - "VFR's" can be a small but important component of community visitors. A number of Alaskan communities are making special efforts to encourage VFR travel.
- Business/ Conference Travel - Even with Cordova's currently modest conference facilities, the town can host small conferences, an important source of revenue for local businesses. Targets include Alaskan-based trade groups, government agencies, and businesses.

**C. Goal: Produce a set of coordinated informational and promotional materials for immediate use.**

*Action Strategy*

- Define Cordova tourism marketing theme with slogan and images, such as typeface and logos. (see previous two sections, Appendix 4)
- Create graphic materials to accompany advertising (standard typeface, graphics for print ads, eventually use for poster (for use in sporting goods stores, restaurants, travel agents).
- Use the slogan on all promotional materials, with electronic versions of all logos available to local businesses via the community website.
- List a comprehensive description of Cordova travel services - access, accommodations, activities (rates, contacts, etc.). (DONE)
- Compile options for itineraries for 2- 7 day visits (DONE)
- Distribute the itinerary package to travel agents, tour planners.
- Prepare a standard package/press release to share with tour planners, travel agents.
- Collect quotes and comments about Cordova by third party observers (e.g. favorable words in Alaska Magazine, in Lonely Planet Guide, recent Extreme Ski articles).

**D. Goal: Plan for distribution of existing and creation of future promotional collateral materials for use within the next five years.**

*Action Strategy:*

- Hire an agent to assist with the distribution of existing brochure (DONE summer '02)
- Expand distribution of other collateral material: Shopping Guide, and list of goods and services, itineraries.
- Print more existing brochures (currently 16,000 remain, in future may use more rapidly).
- Print cheaper "rack cards" for broader distribution.
- Begin the next-generation community tourism brochure, including local advertisers, listings of goods & services.
- Create a promotional video (DONE?).

**F. Goal: Make better use of paid print, electronic media and other advertising.**

*Action Strategy:*

- Improve generic Cordova print advertisements, using smaller ads than in past years, and relying in part on references to Cordova's improved web site. Two types of candidates:
  - a. Traditional paid magazine/travel planner ads:
    - Milepost (missed summer 2000?)
    - Anch Conv. & Visitors Bureau
    - State Vacation Planner
  - b. Non-traditional free/low cost ads in Alaskan newsletters, small circulation/special interest publications



## 2. ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS

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Chapter IV and Appendix 1 of this report describe attractions in Cordova and the lower Copper River area. Based on that review, Cordova could be described as “opportunity rich/developed attraction poor”. Below is a preliminary list of attractions that - if improved or developed - would greatly strengthen tourism in the region. This list reflects ongoing meetings and discussions in the community. Cordova needs to continue to review and refine this list, to match community goals for the pace and scale of tourism growth, and goals for type of travelers.

### ***Nature-Based Attractions & Activities***

The region possesses a wealth of potential natural and cultural/historical attractions, appealing to a wide spectrum of visitors. Programs and facilities to explain and provide easy access to these resources - especially for visitors looking for more structured experiences such as cruise ship passengers or tour groups - are quite limited. Based on preliminary market target goals, key improvements that the community might aim for include:

- *Wildlife Viewing* - visitors come with high expectations for seeing wildlife. The Cordova area might better meet these expectations through a combination of improved trails and boardwalks, continued good management of habitat, and by providing guidebooks with visitor information on the best season, time of day and places for seeing wildlife<sup>3</sup>. Locals shouldn't underestimate visitor's joy in seeing eagles and otters.
- *Glaciers* - better access to more glaciers, both for up-close viewing of several different ones and possibly the opportunity to walk on a glacier. A particularly important opportunity is developing better opportunities for travelers to visit Sheridan Glacier, due to its proximity to town.
- *Camping* - a tenting and possibly an RV campground near town, and one or more campgrounds on the road system. USFS and Eyak might cooperatively meet this need.
- *Trails* - more and improved hiking and biking trails. A range of trails is needed, from short easy strolls near town that give less ambitious visitors a chance to feel like they've been in a rainforest, or alone along the coast, to energetic hikes in the region for a variety of part or full day trips.
- *Natural History* - better interpretation of natural history: written & graphic materials, guided nature walks, classroom programs, and traditional facilities such as a visitors center, museums or interpretive facilities. The PWS Science Center, and research programs conducted by EVOS and the USFS are significant, untapped assets. Great progress can be made without pouring concrete. The “value-added” concept as applied to tourism means using information to make the visitor experience more fun, more memorable. In Costa

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<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Bettes of Alaska Village Initiatives points out that in Hollywood visitors are content to see “the homes of the stars”. Alaska should use this model, and provide better information on habitats & habits to help fill time when creatures themselves aren't visible

Rica, for example, the state trains taxi cab drivers about tropical flora and fauna - everyone's a guide. Visitors need better stories about what they see in the landscape.

- *Winter Attractions* - Bringing tourists to anyplace in winter Alaska is a challenge, and Cordova's variable winter weather is particular hurdle. Fall, winter and spring tourism is growing around the state, however. Between ice skating, walking, boating, lift-served, telemark and heli-skiing, snowmobiling, and even winter boat/wildlife tours, the area has much to offer.

### ***Culture/History-Based Attractions & Activities***

- *Culture/History/Art* - The comments directed at natural history apply equally if not more to culture, history and art. The region's history - from Native life, European exploration, copper mining, commercial fishing, even the oil spill - are scarcely visible. The museum does an admirable job, but much could be done outside the museum doors to engage visitors in a more active, interactive way. Particularly absent is information about Native history, including art and crafts, use kayaks, subsistence practices<sup>4</sup>.
- *Indoor Attractions* - one or more places where visitors could spend an enjoyable afternoon when the weather is bad. Equally important, a comfortable, flexible modern facility to accommodate small conferences and meetings. Visitors might help subsidize the new multi-purpose center currently being considered by the community.

### ***Events***

Special community events such as festivals offer an inexpensive way to expand the reasons for tourists to visit a town. They can be particularly appealing to visitors interested in learning more about a place, by providing a chance to celebrate together with residents something of special interest to them - like the annual return of salmon in Cordova. Cordova's two major existing events are the winter Iceworm celebration and the spring Shorebird Festival.

Perhaps most important in this category would be creating of a stronger salmon-related event, possibly combining the Salmon Jam and Salmon Run. This would be a way to link visitors to commercial fishing, and might even help in marketing salmon. Another possibility is an expanded fishing derby (fishing derbies are very popular in other communities such as Seward and Valdez; Cordova had held salmon derbies in the past).

### ***Infrastructure & Access***

Transportation facilities are essential to allow visitors to get to their destination, and, once there, to get around and see and experience the area. In the Cordova/lower Copper River region, air service, the airport, ferry service and the dock, pedestrian

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<sup>4</sup> The Alaska Tourism Marketing Council's most recent survey of prospective visitors to Alaska found that Native and Cultural history was ranked highest of all attractions as a reason to visit Alaska (ATMC, 1996 Images of Alaska). This was a surprise as most typically such attractions are important, but always secondary draws. More discussions are needed with Native people in the community to determine interest, if any, in sharing cultural resources.

walkways, trails, and the road system are essential components of infrastructure for access. Other kinds of infrastructure -- museum, visitors' center, rest rooms, medical and emergency facilities, public utilities, etc. -- also provide essential support for tourism. Priority infrastructure projects for discussion and action include:

- State Ferry. Work to get improved service, by collaboration with the City's lobbyist, and contributing to and monitoring the State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' (DOT/PF) regional transportation planning project now nearly complete.
- Shepard Point road and dock. The Native Village of Eyak is continuing to evaluate this project. Tourism planning should take account of the possible existence of the dock in the future: the dock will change the way cruise ships land passengers and therefore the controls and restraints the community could exert, and it will change the transportation system for visitors into the community and place different requirements on parking, traffic, and pedestrian uses downtown. Similarly, requirements for cruise ship passenger use must be factored into design of the dock and the parking near it, and the separation of cruise ship passengers from log and other cargo handling areas around it.
- Air Service. Work to maintain the federal subsidy supporting regular commercial jet service, and work to expand passenger capacity on through flights.

**A. Goal: Establish priorities and develop attractions and events in town that are desirable for tourists and locals alike.**

*Action Strategy – Near Term:*

- Enhance Odiak Pond Gazebo and add restrooms. (DONE)
- Build the Whitshed Road Bike Trail, Wayside, and Camper Park.
- Develop a self guided, interpretive town walk, with associated simple brochure and signage. The walking tour route should connect points of interest & businesses (IN PROGRESS).
- Develop interpretive information, programs, package tours that make it easier for visitors to understand and enjoy the historic link between Kennicott/McCarthy and Cordova (IN PROGRESS).
- Create and install decorative town welcome signs, as a priority for summer 2003.

*Action Strategy – Longer Term:*

- Develop a tent campground facility for visitors, and one for longer-term campers at the Whitshed Road site.
- Operate the Ski Hill in summer, through a capital projects coordination with the City.
- Complete efforts to bring the CR&NW Train Engine back to Cordova from Bering River.
- Develop a strategy to design, build and operate a Community Center/Conference Space/Interpretive center. Components will include:
  - 150 to 300 seats
  - high quality conference facility ("sophisticated")

- linked to science center site (tied to harbor fill project)
- includes rent paying office space
- different markets/different use than from planned Eyak Center
- \$12,000,000 facility, have \$700,000 committed
- Improve the Harbor-to-Downtown walkway, focusing on safety and ease of use.
  - phase 1 – standardize curbs
  - phase 2 – designate a walkway devoid of obstructions
  - phase 3 – reconstruct the harbor stairway
- Initiate a Natural History/Environmental Education Program (with assistance from the Science Center, tourism operators, ANHA, USFS, and AWRTA).
- Improve “edge of town” attractions, including wildlife and bird viewing, glacier viewing, trails

**B. Goal: Enhance and arrange daily transportation to out of town attractions.**

*Action Strategy:*

- Enable Sheridan Glacier Access, with trails and a comfortable viewing area.
- Establish Wildlife Viewing Areas along the road corridor.
- Utilize public land management to plan for a diversity of accessible recreation and tourism environments, from wild to developed.
- Continue the church bus tour on Cordova’s road system.

**C. Goal: Improve access to Cordova from within Alaska.**

*Action Strategy:*

1. Lobby to improve Alaska Marine Highway ferry service (work with legislature, ongoing DOT/PF regional transportation plan).
2. Work with local charter air services to establish regular air links from the Cordova area into McCarthy, Wrangell St. Elias National Park area

### 3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

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#### **A. Goal: Develop a structured tourism organization anchored on community input, that will guide tourism in Cordova and the Lower Copper River area.**

##### **Starting Point: Management Options**

A number of different models for community tourism organizations exist around the state. Most such groups are focused exclusively on promoting tourism. The two most common models, Chambers of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureaus are described below:

*Chamber of Commerce* - Cordova and Dillingham are both communities with Chamber of Commerce organizations, with a board of directors, small budgets coming from membership and occasional grants, and one paid staff person. In each community, the Chamber director is responsible for a variety of activities, including tourism related tasks. In both towns, community efforts to undertake more active tourism programs have required establishing new independent groups, with the Chamber participating, but not taking the leadership role.

*Convention and Visitors Bureau* - Most of the larger communities in Alaska have Convention and Visitors Bureaus solely devoted to promoting tourism. The Valdez CVB, described below, gives a good example of a typical convention and visitors bureau structure and mission. These groups typically receive regular funding from a portion of the bed tax collected in the community.

*Other Models* - The major alternative to the organization models described above are organizations responsible for both "the tourism throttle and the brake". This is the approach taken by the tourism organization in Haines. In that community, the city funds a full time tourism director position. The tourism director has the challenging job of balancing actions to grow tourism and guiding tourism growth to serve goals such as maintaining community quality of life.

*Lessons Learned*- Experiences around Alaska show that communities that want to be involved in tourism need a full time person devoted to the task, working with a committee that represents a variety of key voices from throughout the community. Towns that have relied on part time or volunteer staff struggled.

##### *Recommendations - Action Strategy:*

- Establish a Tourism Committee to work with the Chamber, City, Copper River Watershed and other groups on tourism issues in Cordova (DONE)
- By fall 2002, adopt goals and strategies to guide this group
- Work with the City Council, the Chamber and the CRWP to allocate sufficient resources to the tourism organization to carry out its mission. Establish a clearer, and more predictable funding level.
- Maintain and strengthen the Chamber of Commerce and Copper River Watershed Project partnership.

Case Study: Valdez Convention & Visitors Bureau

Structure: Private non-profit. While receiving funding from a city sponsored bed tax, the organization is not part of the city government.

Mission: "encouragement and promotion of tourism and tourism-related activities, convention business, travel by the public to and through Valdez, and to maintain a continuing interest in the well being of visitors to the area."

Staff: 3 full time staff people

Management: 9 person board of directors, elected by membership. Board then elects president, VP, Sec/Treasurer. A number of committees work on specific topics.

Budget: \$408,554 (1996); 448,000 (1998).

Funding ('98): City bed tax: \$350,000, advertising/project fees: \$58,450, membership: \$12,000, fundraisers \$25,550, grants: \$2,000.

Summary: Active, effective group.

## 4. MONITORING, EVALUATION, EDUCATION

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Two programs are needed: one is the collection of information about changes in tourism (e.g., the number and types of visitors coming to town each year) and also indicators of tourism's impacts on community goals (e.g., economic and environmental health). The second program addresses the dissemination of this information

### MONITORING PROGRAM

The research associated with this report can form a baseline of tourism data that could be continued into the future. Information is also needed to track impacts of tourism on community goals, for example, keeping track of tourist spending.

Indicators of tourism's contribution to the community can be measured in tangible ways. Statistical information like that presented in Chapter IV and Appendix 2 can be easily obtained, and will give annual indication of the tourism trends in Cordova. Information should be updated annually to provide reference for tourism planning decisions.

#### **A. Goal: Identify and track indicators of tourism's impact on community values, and create standardized ways to measure them.**

##### *Action Strategy:*

- Identify concrete, measurable indicators for each community goal, and collect information on changes in these indicators. Examples include:

##### *Economic Diversification:*

- Number of business licenses in town.
- Annual income of existing and new businesses.
- Number of clients for existing and new businesses.

##### *Maintenance of a healthy, productive, natural environment:*

- Air and water quality measurements in winter and summer months each year.
- Number of trail and river users annually.
- Amount of money given to local community groups by visitors annually.

##### *Maintenance of quality of community life.*

- Number of resident and non-resident visitors at destinations such as trails and kayak campsites per year.
- Traffic density in downtown during summer months.
- Resident complaints to tourism organization about quality of life problems.
- Amount of money spent by visitors to support facilities enjoyed by locals, e.g. museum, harbor and ski hill.
- Average land values and rents each year.

##### *Improvement of Cordova's fiscal health and public infrastructure.*

- Annual revenues for services provided locally.
- Revenue earned from tourism taxes / fees quarterly.
- Assessment of necessity and quality of public infrastructure annually.

#### **Part 2: Evaluation and Education Program:**

Marking the progress of the Tourism Plan's implementation will be important in evaluating what positive and negative impacts result directly from local tourism decisions.

Information about tourism effects, particularly its positive effects, is often not widely available. Residents will tend to focus on the times a tourist did something dumb, caused a delay in traffic, etc., and not be aware of the jobs tourism creates, or the revenues tourism brings to a community. To deal with the issue, communities like Nome and Unalaska have run regular radio spots telling residents what tourism does for the community.

**B. Goal: Evaluate effectiveness of tourism plan implementation in meeting community goals.**

Action Strategy:

- Establish benchmarks for reaching desired changes in the community.
- Set thresholds for acceptable negative change to the community.
- Analyze data from the monitoring program in an annual tourism trends report.
- Compare actual tourism trends with projections, and change strategies that fail to meet community goals. (That is, outcomes fall beneath the threshold for acceptable change.)
- Allow room for new ideas to address desired changes that have not yet occurred.

**C. Goal: Educate visitors about community goals, to foster respect for guidelines and restrictions.**

Action Strategy:

- Highlight community goals in promotional materials.
- Provide adequate interpretation through signage and brochures so that visitors understand what is requested of them.

**D. Goal: Educate Cordovans about the positive outcomes that result from tourism and also meet community goals.**

Action Strategy:

- Distribute regular newspaper and radio press releases to remind locals how tourism benefits the community.



***APPENDIX***

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# **APPENDIX 1.**

## **CORDOVA REGION TOURISM RESOURCES**

### **Lakes, Rivers, Mountains**

- *Mountains:* Prince William Sound is characterized by mountains rising directly from tidewater – from the mussel and starfish-covered rocks at the water’s edge. The Chugach and Kenai mountains, with peaks frequently exceeding 5000 feet, frame the Sound’s north and western sides. Marcus Baker, at 13,176’ the tallest peak in the Chugach, is located just 15 miles from tidewater in Harvard Arm.
- *Glaciers:* One of Alaska’s biggest collections of tidewater glaciers is concentrated in the Port Wells/College Fjord area. This is Prince William Sound’s primary cruise destination. Childs Glacier is another waterfront glacier, in this case fronting onto the lower Copper River with an easily accessible vantage point.
- *Sheltered waters:* Prince William Sound is remarkably pacific for a water body of its size and latitude. Secure anchorages and welcoming beaches delight sailors, boaters and kayakers. “Prince William Sound has an intricate, convoluted shoreline 2500 miles long - longer than the coast of California. There are enough bays, coves, bights, nooks and crannies for a lifetime of exploration” (Lethcoe - Cruising Guide to Prince William Sound).
- *Comfort and Wilderness:* Unlike inland wilderness, where exploring the backcountry often requires the hard work of getting around by foot or ski, one can experience the joys of this area while cruising comfortably in a boat, or sitting (albeit paddling) in a kayak.
- *The Copper River Delta:* east of the Sound is the broad expanse of the Copper River delta. The Copper River emerges in this area, having carved a dramatic canyon through the Chugach Mountains from interior Alaska. Alluvial material from the river has built up one of the largest wetland areas in North America. The delta is divided into a relatively accessible west half, and a wilder, more topographically-varied eastern half.
- *Weather:* Cordova provides a taste of SE Alaska weather in Southcentral. The change in precipitation over the short distance between Anchorage and Cordova is remarkable: Anchorage averages 18 inches of precipitation annually, Cordova averages 167 inches.

### **Fish and Wildlife**

- The Copper River Delta is a prime stopping point for migratory birds. Hundreds of thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl use the delta extensively in the fall and spring.
- Prince William Sound supports a diverse and largely healthy marine and terrestrial ecosystem. The entire Sound offers good opportunities to see otters, seals, sea lions, killer whales, humpback whales, bald eagles, and occasionally black and brown bear.
- Bird life in the nearby Sound is also abundant, including cormorants, murrelets, pigeon guillemots, oystercatchers, harlequin ducks, kittiwakes and gulls.

- An early season run of king and red salmon make the Copper River world-renowned. A decent run of silver salmon also makes its way up-river.

### **Parks, Refuges, and Special Designations**

- Copper River Delta: Although a part of the Chugach National Forest, the Copper River Delta maintains a unique management status. In order to protect the area's remarkable bird life and other special characteristics, this area is the only section of any national forest where, by law, protection of natural resource values must be given equal weight with extractive activities such as timber harvest or mining.

### **Cultural Resources**

- Historically, the region is the meeting ground distinct Native groups:
  - *Supiak*: Southcentral subset of the coastal Eskimo groups found in Alaska. Others include the Yup'ik of Bristol Bay, and the Alutiiq in Kodiak.
  - *Coastal Eyak*: Distinct group linked to the interior Athabascan people, tied to trade and movement along the Copper River. Eyak villages were traditionally located on the east shore of the Copper River Delta.
- A series of European explorers have left remnants of their travels and activities in the region. In one short period in the late 1700's, the world's leading colonial powers - French, Spanish, Russians and English – each claimed the area for their king/queen and homeland, and then sailed off to other adventures. European exploration and colonial expansion accounts for the diverse names found on the maps today (from Valdez to Hinchinbrook to Zaikof).
- In modern history, mining, trapping, commercial fishing and fur farming have all left their impacts on Cordova.
- The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill in 1989 made an indelible mark on the people of the region. Perhaps the most notable event in recent history for the area, the oil spill impacted every aspect of lifestyle, environment, and economy in Prince William Sound. Commercial fishing, particularly for herring, was devastated. Perversely, the global publicity generated by the spill ultimately led to significant expansion in recreation and tourism use.

# APPENDIX 2

## TOURISM TRENDS

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Understanding trends in tourism in the lower Copper River and in eastern Prince William Sound first requires a consideration of tourism trends around the state and world.

This information, presented in the following section, is largely based on the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program (AVSP), a state-funded program investigating the number, demographics, activities and other characteristics of out-of-state visitors to Alaska. The full survey process associated with the Visitors Statistics program was conducted in 1985-86, 1989-90, 1993-94, and 1999-2000 (AVSP I,II, III and IV). Between years when the full survey process was done, a limited survey determined the numbers of out-of-state visitors by trip purpose to Alaska as a whole, without any further desegregation by region or other characteristics.

### 1. National & Statewide Tourism Trends

#### US Resident Pleasure Travel Volumes: 1984-1995

The volume of pleasure travel in the United States rose 4% in 1995, to 809.5 million person trips, accounting for 69% of all US resident travel. Pleasure travel volume has grown 50% since 1985. Over half of pleasure travelers travel to visit friends and relatives (51%), another third for entertainment (33%), and 16% for outdoor recreation. (AK Visitors Association, US Travel Data Center)

Total U.S. Domestic Travel Volume in Millions of Person Trips*	
1994	941
1995	966
1996	967
1997	999
1998	1004
1999	987
2000	998
A person-trip is one person traveling 50 miles (one way) or more away from home and/or overnight. A trip is one or more persons from the same household traveling together.	
Source: Travel Industry Association of America; Travelscope®	

#### Out-of-State Visitor Volumes: 1985-1989

The following table shows the steady growth in out-of-state travel to Alaska.

While overall numbers have continued to grow, the rate of growth has been variable. In general terms, the rate of growth was relatively slow from 1985 to 1989, more rapid from 1990 through 1994, and then slowed again in recent years. As is described in the following material, this recent slowing is concentrated in the independent travel sector; package travel, particularly cruise travel, has continued to grow rapidly.

### Total Out-of-State Visitors to Alaska 1980-1997

Year	Visitors	Annual Growth	Average Annual Growth
1980	500,000		
1985	725,000		1985-89
1989	808,600		average 4%/year
1990	880,000	9%	
1991	925,300	5%	
1992	900,000	-3%	1990-94
1993	1,047,000	16%	average 8%/year
1994	1,121,000	7%	
1995	1,166,000	4%	
1996	1,200,000	3%	1995-present
1997*	1,250,000	4%	average 4%/year

Source: AVA Overview of the Visitor Industry, 1997.

### Trip Purpose and Season

As the Table below shows, four out five travelers visit Alaska during the summer (May - Sept.). Off-season travel to Alaska is growing, primarily in the spring and fall shoulder seasons. However, summer travel continues to grow more rapidly than travel in fall/winter/spring.

Travelers are classified into the five trip purposes shown below. Vacation Pleasure (V/P) travelers make up the largest and fastest growing segment of the market. The rate of growth of travelers visiting friends and relatives is largely tied to the rate of growth of the state's population, and consequently has been relatively stable over the last 10 years. Likewise travel for business generally tracks the health of the state economy, and declined between 1985 and 1989, and then picked up substantially between 1989 and 1993.

### Out-of-State Visitors by Trip Purpose and Season 1985-1994

	1985-86		1989-90		1993-94*	
	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter
Vacation/Pleasure Visitors	272,600		331,200	21,800	510,300	28,200
Visiting Friends/Relatives	77,200		82,500	38,000	78,000	40,800
Business and Pleasure	36,800		46,000	28,400	44,700	19,000
Business Only	44,600		37,300	85,200	70,000	90,900
Seasonal Worker	17,600		15,200	5,000	10,100	4,600
Total Visitors	448,800		513,500	178,400	713,200	183,500

Source: AVSP III Summer 93 Arrivals, summary table IV; AVSP III Winter Fall 93-94 Summary Table III.  
note: these figures are inconsistent with the previous table due to changes made in the AVSP survey process).

## Tourist Characteristics - Package & Independent Travelers

Alaska's "average" out of state vacation/pleasure tourist is a composite of two main categories of travelers: *independents*, who make their own travel arrangements, primarily while traveling, and *package* travelers, who make and pay for their travel arrangements in advance.

### Summer Vacation Pleasure Travelers Characteristics of Package and Independent Markets

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Package Mkt.</i>	<i>Independent Mkt.</i>
Age	55 years old	<u>younger</u> - 43 years old
Gender	47% male/53% <u>female</u>	more men than women (55% to 45%)
Employed	46% employed	<u>more likely to be employed</u> (58%)
Avg. Income	high	<u>higher</u> (>\$60,000/yr/household)
Party Size	2.2 people	the same
Length of Stay	6.7 nights	<u>stay longer</u> (11.8 nights)
Repeat Visits	1 in 10 repeat	<u>more likely to return</u> (4 in 10 repeat)
Percent of AK Mkt*	57% of visitors (fastest growing)	28% of visitors (and declining)
Profile (pop tourism psychology)	likes <u>structure</u> , socializing & group activity; "adventure with handrails"; minimum hassles	likes <u>flexibility</u> ; gives up certainty & ease of travel arrangements for more customized, in depth experience

*Source:* AVSP, Summer 93 Vacation/Pleasure Arrivals, Table III-B. \*The additional 14% of the market is a hybrid - the "inde-package market. This group has demographics between the other markets. They stay longer and spend more than either group.

Compared to the overall U.S. population, average visitors to Alaska are wealthier, better educated and older. As the figure above shows, Alaska's visitors can be roughly categorized into two general categories. One is the generally older, disproportionately female and retired group that seeks more passive, comfortable, and predictable trips. The people often depicted in advertisements for Alaska - a silver haired, vigorous looking couple in their early 60's - give a representative image of this group. Independent travelers are younger, more likely to be male and employed, and tend to stay longer and seek more active experiences. As is discussed further in this report, the lines between these traditional categories are beginning to soften as the baby boom ages and starts taking cruise trips, package travelers spend part of their trips as independents, and many older people remain fit and adventuresome into their 60's and beyond.

### Three Key Changes: Trip Duration, Party Size, Package vs. Independent Markets

*Trip Duration:* The average trip to Alaska is 10.2 days, down from 12 days in 1989. This trend reflects a nation wide trend towards shorter, more frequent trips. This change reflects increases in the average hours worked per year, declines in paid time-off, and increasing numbers of two wage earner families.

*Party Size:* Historically, few families have visited Alaska, but demand for family travel is growing around the world. Established tour companies such as Maupintour that historically excluded kids are now actively seeking family business. The Alaska cruise

industry is dropping prices, in part to broaden appeal to families. Multi-generational trips are also increasingly popular.

*Travel Type:* In recent years a gap has opened between the growth rates of independent and package travelers. Package travel, dominated by the cruiseship market is the fastest growing portion of the Alaska travel market, growing 86% between 1989 and 1995, an average annual rate of approximately 11% (AVA). This rapid growth reflects discounted cruise prices, increased capacity, heavy marketing, and growing appeal of cruising to the large baby boom market, to younger, more active travelers and more families. Independent travel is growing, but at a much slower pace, approximately 4%.

### Visitor Mode of Entry

Cruise ship was the dominant entry mode for summer vacation pleasure (V/P) visitors in 1993, followed by domestic airplane. The percentage of vacation/pleasure visitors arriving by domestic air grew between 1985 and 1993, while the share of cruise ship and highway entry modes declined. This change reflected the growing popularity of cruises that end or begin by air, and the growth of independent travelers. More recently the percentage of travelers entering by cruise boat is believed to have increased a percentage of all vacation/pleasure travelers.(McDowell AVA Conference Presentation, Fall 1997)

### Summer Visitor Entry Mode

Entry Mode	1989	(% of total '89 entries)	1991	1993	1995	(% of total '95 entries)	% change 1989-95
Domestic Air	312,700	(51%)	386,300	443,600	508,300	(52%)	+63%
Int'l Air	18,400	(3%)	18,800	14,500	13,300	(1%)	-28%
Cruise Ship	152,200	(25%)	194,000	247,000	283,500	(29%)	+86%
AMHS	27,000	(0.4%)	29,600	29,100	27,000	(0.3%)	0.0%
Highway	98,400	(16%)	97,800	112,000	135,000	(14%)	+37%
Total	608,700		726,500	846,200	967,100		+59%

Source: Alaska Visitors Association - A Comprehensive Overview of the Alaska's Visitor Industry, 1997.

*Highway "Rubber Tire" Visitors* - The percentage of travelers coming to Alaska by car and/or ferry is small (14%) and declining as a percentage of all entry modes. Highway visits grew during the first half of the 90's but have recently declined (see Valdez section following for details). Possible reasons include decreasing spending marketing Alaska, often mediocre roadside services within the state relative to Canada and other competing destinations, and the national trend towards shorter trips. Meanwhile in-state motorhome and auto rental companies are thriving.

Constituting the largest single entry mode for visitors to Alaska, the cruise industry is a large factor in deciphering tourism trends. From 1995 – 1999, cruise passengers made up 75% of visitors to the state, compared with 25% arriving through domestic air, 3% via



international air, and about 1% on the highway system (Source: AVSP). Therefore, it is helpful to view trends in tourism through indicators in the cruise industry. The following table demonstrates how tourism growth rates in Alaska are slowing dramatically, both within and outside of the cruise industry.

### Visitor Growth Rates in Alaska

Year	Total Summer Visitor Growth Rate	Summer Cruise Visitor Growth Rate
1996	10.1%	18.7%
1997	5.3%	16.5%
1998	3.8%	10.0%
1999	3.0%	6.0%

Source: Strategic Marketing Analysis and Planning for Alaska Tourism, from AVSP and CLIA

Cruise passenger volume in Southeast Alaska leapt from about 200,000 in 1990 to about 400,000 in 1995, and nearly 600,000 in 1999. The steady increase is evidence to the large boom in cruise activities in the early 1990s. While still increasing in the late 90s, cruise passenger growth began to taper off. Source: Economic Impact of the Cruise Industry in Southeast Alaska McDowell Group, Inc.

*International Visitors* - International travelers make up a small, growing segment of the Alaska market (8% in 93, current estimates may be as high as 10%).

International travelers are particularly sought after travelers. They tend to stay longer and spend more than domestic travelers, and to seek out adventures off the beaten track. Over 50% of the people going to the Valley of 10,000 smokes in Katmai, for example, are international.

### Visitor Satisfaction

Surveys taken between 1985 and 1993 show a slight decline in visitor satisfaction, from very high to just slightly less. This small change was concentrated in younger, wealthier, independent males. Cruise/package visitors were the most satisfied with their trips.

### Tourism Marketing

Marketing activities are critical to tourism success. Cooperative marketing is particularly important for smaller businesses. The budget for Alaska's cooperative marketing program - key to luring independent travelers - has dropped by half in the last 10 years. Since 1987, Alaska has gone from 4th to 27th in the nation in statewide marketing (AVA April 98). Meanwhile, private sector marketing for package cruise travel is very well funded.

## Visitor Spending

Despite the popular image of rich travelers who casually spend \$500 or more per day, typical visitors are frugal. As the table on the following page shows, average total in-state expenditures for travelers to Alaska are \$90 per night spent (\$780/trip), which gives a sense of the tight constraints within which any tourism product must be planned. Independent travelers spend more per trip more on average than round trip cruise package passengers, however, independent spending differs little from *average per port* spending by round trip cruise passengers. Half to three-quarters of cruise ship passengers take day tours at each port. Spending on such tours (flight-seeing, raft trips, city tours, etc.) makes up the large majority of cruise tourist in-state expenditures, with the remainder spent on food and beverage, gifts and souvenirs. The biggest Alaska spenders are package tourists who combine cruising with land tours (e.g. cruise to Seward, rail to Denali), and independent travelers who buy package tours in Alaska (e.g., a overnight trip to fish in Cordova, or see bears at Brooks Camp).

Information from a 1996 study in Juneau (McDowell) gives an additional perspective on typical expenditures. As the adjacent table shows, cruise ship passengers averaged an expenditure of \$98/person, while independents spent an average of \$425 per person. The higher number for independents reflects their tendency to stay multiple days in town, and therefore spend more, particularly on lodging and food.

**Visitor Spending in Juneau in 1994**

Type of Traveler	Number Visiting	Avg \$/person
Cruise Ship Passengers	380,000	\$98/person
Cruise Ship Crew	163,000	\$18.5/person
Independent Out of State	64,000	\$425/person

## Average Spending by Alaska Out of State Visitors

Travel Type	Package				Inde-pendent	Inde-Pkg
	Round -trip	Cruise/Air	Cruise/Tour	Other Tour		
Total In-state Expenditure/Trip	\$256	\$325	\$1,137	\$1,056	\$827	\$1,179
Avg Trip Length	6.7 days	6.7	11.5	11.5	11.8	15.8
Expenditure/Day	\$38	\$48.5	\$98.9	\$91.8	\$70	\$75.6
Avg Expenditure/Port	\$64-85					

1993 AVSP Expenditures Table III-G, Average intended trip length: AVSP Arrivals, Table III-B. Cruise/Air refers to trips where travelers go directly from plane to boat (or the reverse) without intervening travel time. Cruise tour refers to trips where a portion of the trip is by boat, and the remainder on ground (e.g., by bus or train to Denali or Fairbanks). Average trip length for Cruise tour and "other tour" is an estimate by the authors. Expenditure per port is based on the typical cruise that stops in 3 or 4 ports on a week long trip. Actual expenditures in any given port vary due to differences in available excursion and shopping opportunities, and length of stay. In Cordova, expenditures are likely to average \$40/person.

## Tourism Activities/Tourism Destinations

The list of most popular attractions includes both places that are notable for their convenience, (e.g., Portage and Mendenhall Glaciers, Totem Poles) and outlying locations that have good access, spectacular scenery including glaciers and wildlife, and are extraordinarily well known (e.g., National Parks like Denali and Glacier Bay). There is growing interest in active, self directed contact with unique natural and cultural environments (adventure tourism/ecotourism), but relatively few visitors want to be any less comfortable or secure in their pursuit of these interests.

### Alaska Out-of-State Travelers - Most Visited Attractions

1989 <i>Vacation/Pleasure Visitors</i>	1993 <i>Vacation/Pleasure Visitors</i>	<i>All Visitors</i>
1. Inside Passage (203,000 - 57%)	1. Inside Passage (370,500 - 59%)	1. Inside Passage (387,200 - 46%)
2. Mendenhall Glacier (178,000)	2. Ketchikan Totems (314,900)	2. Portage Glacier (370,000)
3. Glacier Bay (165,000)	3. Mendenhall Glacier (310,300)	3. Mendenhall Glacier (331,800)
4. Skagway Historic Gold Rush District (157,400)	4. Skagway Historic Gold Rush District (282,500)	4. Ketchikan Totems (331,800)
5. Ketchikan Totems (154,800)	5. Denali/McKinley (270,000)	5. Denali/McKinley (301,200)
6. Portage Glacier (145,500)	6. Portage Glacier (263,000)	6. Skagway Gold Rush (296,700)
7. Denali/McKinley (144,700)	7. Glacier Bay (245,500)	7. Glacier Bay (256,400)
8. Anchorage Museum of History & Art (103,900)	8. Sitka's Russian Church & Dancers (180,600)	8. Anch Museum of History & Art (216,300)
9. U. of A.-Fairbanks (100,200)	9. Alaska Pipeline (173,200)	9. TransAlaska Pipeline (200,700)
10. TransAlaska Pipeline (93,300 - 26%)	10. Anchorage Museum (168,000)	10. Sitka's Russian Church & Dancers (186,000 - 22%)

Source: ASVP-89 Patterns Opinions and Planning, table IV-B-7. AVSP-93, Table III-L; Table I-L.

### 1994 to 2000 Comparison of U.S. Domestic Travel

- The overall U.S. domestic travel volume (997.6 million person-trips in 2000) represents a six percent increase from seven years ago, reflecting similar (6%) growth in the total U.S. population during the same period. Although person-trips have increased by six percent over the past seven years, household trip volume in 2000 (557.4 million trips) increased by only two percent.

- In 2000, leisure travel volume is up nine percent from 1994, while business/convention/seminar travel volume shows little change from 1994.
- The greatest change in the demographic profile of travelers from 1994 has been, not surprisingly, the rise in household income levels. Travelers' average annual household income has increased from \$50,700 in 1994 to \$63,100 in 2000. Also, education levels of travelers have risen. Now, more traveling households have a college degree or higher versus 1994 (57% vs. 53%).

Source: Travel Industry Association Domestic Travel Report, 2001 Edition; Travel Industry Association.

## 2. Regional Tourism Trends

This section drops down to the next geographic level of tourism analysis, looking at trends in tourism in the Southcentral Alaska region. This region encompasses the Copper River, Prince William Sound, Anchorage, Kenai and Mat-Su Borough regions.

### a. Southcentral Alaska Region Trends

#### Southcentral Alaska Visitor Volumes: 1985-1993

Southcentral Alaska is the most visited of 5 major regions of Alaska, visited by 68% of all summer visitors. Southcentral Alaska's share of total out-of-state travelers was stable between 1989 and 1993. During this period SW lost "market share" while travel to Denali increased.

#### Summer Out-of-State Visitors to Five Regions of Alaska (all visitors) (and percentage of all visitors traveling to each region)

	Summer 1985	Summer 1989	Summer 1993
Southcentral	282,900 (66%)	356,400 (68%)	569,300 (68%)
Southeast	258,500 (60%)	307,700 (60%)	502,800 (60%)
Inter./North	189,000 (44%)	180,500 (35%)	295,100 (35%)
Denali	144,200 (33%)	175,200 (34%)	301,200 (36%)
Southwest	29,200 (7%)	42,200 (8%)	47,100 (6%)
<b>Alaska Total</b>	<b>431,200</b>	<b>521,100</b>	<b>836,900</b>

\*the sum of visitors to each region exceeds the "Alaska Total" because some travelers visit more than one region; numbers in parenthesis are % of annual total; source: ASVP 85,89, 93 Patterns.

#### Trip Season

In Fall/Winter/Spring 1993/94, 183,500 visitors came to Alaska (for all travel purposes), of which 146,300 or 80% visited Southcentral. By comparison, only 29,900 or 16% of all FWS travelers visited Southeast. One of five Southcentral travelers came between October and April. The next most visited region is interior/north where 13% of annual visitors come in non-summer months. Southcentral's winter visitors include business and conference travelers and a small but growing group of vacation-pleasure tourists. Most of this off-season travel occurs in the "shoulder season" months of April and October.

## Characteristics of Southcentral Alaska Visitors

The table below shows how V/P visitors to Southcentral Alaska compare to the average statewide visitors to Alaska, and also to visitors to Southeast. Southcentral visitors make up two thirds of all state visitors, so they are similar to the average statewide visitor. Southcentral visitors characteristics are most obvious by a comparison against visitors to Southeast, the state's second most visited region, and the region with the highest percentage of package (cruiseship) travelers.. Relative to the cruiseship-dominated Southeast, Southcentral visitors are younger, more likely to be employed, and stay longer.

## Characteristics of Southcentral Out-of-State Visitors

Characteristic	Southcentral	Southeast	Statewide
Age	52	56	52
Gender (% male)	51%	46%	50%
% employed	49%	40%	47%
average income	\$59,700	\$60,200	\$59,200
length of stay in AK	12.1	8.8	9.5
% package travel*	37%	67%	44%

source AVSP Summer 93, Patterns table III-R, and Table IV-AA. For all travel purposes, Patterns Graph II-D

## Visitor Entry Mode

Domestic air is the primary entry mode for visitors to Southcentral Alaska. Since 1989, a growing percentage of visitors have come by cruiseboat via Seward. International air declined in the early 90's due to changes in technology and flight routes which eliminated the need for refueling stops in Anchorage en route between North America and Asia.

## Entry Mode of Out-of-State Visitors to South Central Alaska

Mode	1989	1993	(1993-Statewide)
Domestic Air	52%	48%	(41%)
Cruise Ship	19%	23%	(42%)
Highway	17%	18%	(11%)
Marine Hwy.	8%	6%	(4%)
Int'l Air	1%	5%	(2%)

Source AVSP 93 Patterns table IV-H, Arrivals table III-A; AVSP 89 Patterns, table V-B-1

## Travel between Regions

Southcentral Alaska, specifically Anchorage, is the hub of state travel. For example, as is shown on the table on the following page, in summer 93, 88% of the people visiting SW also went to Southcentral Alaska. This suggests that growth in tourism anywhere in Alaska tends to result in increased visitation in Anchorage. This also suggests the opportunity available to communities like Cordova to tap into tourists traveling virtually anywhere in Alaska.

## Travel Between Regions

Percent of visitors who went to regions below who traveled to other regions					
	Southeast	Southcentral	Interior/No.	Southwest	Denali
<i>Also Visited:</i>					
Southeast	--	63%	73%	26%	70%
Southcentral	56%	--	93	88	99
Interior/North	38	55	--	34	79
Southwest	1	6	4	--	3
Denali McKinley	41	65	87	34	--

Source AVSP 93 Patterns, table IV-O

### Summary of Growth in Regional Communities and Destinations

As the map below shows, in 1989 Vacation/Pleasure summer out-of-state visits to Valdez, Whittier, Seward and Homer were clustered in the vicinity of 60,000 to 90,000 annual people. By 1993, summer visitation levels had grown 40% in Valdez, 78% in Homer, and a remarkable 231% in Seward. Out of state visitors to Whittier, by contrast, grew only 10%. The number of tourists to Cordova grew substantially (61%) but total numbers remain quite small.

### Summer Out-of-State Visitors Southcentral Alaska Communities

Community	1989	1993
Whittier	69,100	75,700
Valdez	78,000	109,700
Homer	60,300	107,600
Cordova	9,100	14,800
Seward	89,800	208,300

Source: AVSP 89, 93 - V/P is Vacation Pleasure travelers, the largest category of out-of state visitor trips.

Note: the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program is based on a select sample of out-of-state visitors to Alaska. This survey provides quite reliable data on characteristics of statewide travelers as a whole, and also for large subsets of total travelers, such as visitors to Southcentral Alaska. Accuracy falls off where AVSP data are used to reach conclusions about destinations visited by relatively few visitors, such as Cordova. This happens because the sample size becomes very small.

Among vacation/pleasure tourists, Portage Glacier is the most visited attraction in the SC area, and among all tourists, the most visited attraction statewide. Portage's attraction comes from convenient access, proximity to Anchorage and an established tourist "pipeline", and a high quality visitor center. Fastest growing SC vacation/pleasure attractions are easy to reach, affordable, and attractive to a mix of markets, including V/P, business, VFR and residents. Examples include:

- *College Fjord* where visitors nearly tripled since '89. Rapid growth here was spurred by large cruise boats and day tours. (Cruise lines have added College Fjord area as a substitute or addition to the very popular Glacier Bay area, where use is restricted.)
- *Kenai Fjords/Prince William Sound* (use more than doubled since '89) - rapid growth supported by expansion of day tour boat services, aggressive marketing.

Southcentral Alaska offers very little opportunity for learning about Native cultures and Alaska history. By contrast, in Southeast Alaska, history and culture-based attractions receive very high levels of visitation. Examples, and the numbers of 1993 summer V/P visitors, include:

Ketchikan Totems (314,500 visitors), Skagway's Historic Gold Rush District (282,500 visitors), and Sitka's Russian Church and Dancers (180,600 visitors).

The previous material focused on out-of-state tourism trends and statistics. The remainder of this section looks at indicators of total visitation to the lower Copper River/ Prince William Sound region, including resident travelers. There is no systematic evaluation of resident tourism demand comparable to the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program. A sense of the magnitude of activity can be pieced together, however, through interviews with individual businesses, and visitation statistics from specific destinations. While not covered well in state tourism records, resident recreation demand makes up a significant portion of all recreation/tourism demand in Alaska. The table below presents estimates of the percentage of resident vs. out-of-state participation in select tourism activities.

**Resident Percentage of Recreation/Tourism Activities**

Activity	Percent Resident	Data Source
Sportfishing - Angler Days	66%	ADF&G surveys
Remote hunting & fishing lodges	<10%	interviews with operators
Day Boat Cruises (e.g. Kenai Fjords)	30-40%	interviews with operators
Overnight Cruise Boats	<5%	interviews with operators
Visits to Kenai Fjords National Park	25%	NPS user surveys
Visits of State Parks on Kenai Peninsula	75%	Div. of Parks user surveys

Source: CBA

Resident demand for tourism products increases directly with declines in required spending and time. For example, residents make up a significant percentage (approximately 30%) of relatively affordable day boat tours, but less than 5% of the clients of more expensive fishing lodges.

Population in Alaska is projected to grow slowly over the coming 5-10 years. For this reason, tourism demand directly associated with residents, and also with people visiting friends and relatives is likely to grow more slowly than other forms of travel, and represent a declining share of all tourism activity. With statewide employment projected to grow at a tepid 1% annually, out-of-state tourism associated with businesses - and business travel - is also expected to grow slowly.

**National Parks**

Use of National Parks in the greater PWS project area has grown steadily in the last 10 years. Visitation to Kenai Fjords National Park, primarily due to increased day cruise boats, has grown faster than any other National Park in Alaska. A 1991 survey of Kenai Fjords Park users by the University of Idaho found that one quarter of park visitors were Alaskan residents.

**Visitation to National Parks**

Park	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Kenai Fjords	75,557	66,115	107,041	108,130	189,712	209,516	230,657
Wrangell St. Elias	33,221	35,976	38,973	42,229	45,335	50,146	54,430

Source: National Park Service

## Chugach National Forest

Use of Chugach National Forest by both residents and out-of-state visitors is shown below. Changing activity levels for this combined group is led by trends for out-of-state visitors, but also reflects generally similar resident interests. Fastest growing activities are more passive activities like day tours and visiting visitor information centers. The slower, but still increasing activities in fishing and cabins/camps is driven by residents and out-of-state visitors.

### Recreation Visitor Days - Chugach National Forest (in thousands)

Activity	1988	1994	1996	Trend
Camping, Picnicking	177.6	176.5	163.8	slow decline
Mechanized Travel & Viewing Scenery (tour boats, tour ships)	780.1	1319.3	2005.7	<b>Rapid Growth</b>
Hiking, Water Travel	166.6	144.2	142.9	slow decline
Winter Sports	31.8	30.0	31.3	flat
Resorts, Cabins, Camps	49.6	62.7	61.2	<b>growth, recently flat</b>
Hunting	66.7	21.8	22.6	<i>decline, recently flat</i>
Fishing		100.7	107.3	<b>growth</b>
Wildlife Observation	2.2	8.6	9.8	<b>growth</b>
Visitor Centers, Tours & walks, gathering forest products	66.0	113.0	145.3	<b>Rapid Growth</b>

Source: USFS and CBA

### Public Use Cabins Chugach National Forest 1991-97, By Ranger District

District (cabins)	avg. nights & (people per night)	Annual Cabin Use - Number of Nights Rented (number of people)						
		1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Glacier	108 (1.8)	639 (1133)	726 (1188)	760 (1353)	689 (1249)	759 (1395)	753	772
Seward	135 (2.5)	2280 (5844)	2423 (6440)	2562 (6989)	2549 (6242)	2433 (6200)	2,348	2,349
Cordova	64 (1.2)	1341 (1442)	1382 (1486)	1346 (1523)	1141 (1256)	1144 (1369)	1,225	1,271
Total		4260	4531	4668	4379	4336	4326	4392

Source: CBA & USFS

USFS Public Use Cabins remains strong, but growth is limited by capacity. The more popular cabins - those with good access and/or good fishing - are used virtually every night all summer, and receive some winter use. Less convenient/attractive locations generate only spotty use.



## Angler Days of Effort Sportfishing in Alaska, SC, and Prince William Sound Region

Year	Statewide Effort	South-central	Total PWS Effort	PWS % of statewide
1986	2,0714,12	1,518,712	64,251	3%
1987	2,152,886	1,556,050	81,221	4%
1988	2,311,291	1,679,939	84,971	4%
1989	2,264,079	1,583,547	95,247	4%
1990	2,453,284	1,745,110	105,739	4%
1991	2,456,328	1,782,055	113,062	5%
1992	2,540,374	1,889,730	113,418	4%
1993	2,559,408	1,867,233	104,577	4%
1994	2,719,911	1,966,985	122,330	4%
1995	2,787,670	1,985,539	138,194	5%
1996	2,733,008	1,948,892	131,881	5%

Source: ADF&G, Fisheries Data Series No. 97-29, Nov 97. ADF&G Fishery Mgt Report 96-4, Sept 1996.

PWS sportfishing effort, measured in angler days, more than doubled between 1986-96. In 1996, in Southcentral Alaska, residents fished 67% of total angler days, out of state residents made up 33% of Southcentral fishing.

Harvest levels of deer, moose, bear and other species commonly hunted in region has remained relatively constant over the last 5 years (ADF&G - Wildlife Conservation Division).

### b. Copper River/ Prince William Sound Region Trends

#### AMHS Prince William Sound – Embarking Passengers

Port	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Seward	3,171	2,492	2,545	2,819	3,437	4,044	3,746
Whittier	9,954	9,248	9,637	9,393	8,669	8,097	8,285
Valdez	10,395	13,773	13,757	14,256	13,653	12,874	13,197
Cordova	6,453	5,842	5,211	5,414	5,077	5,088	5,075

Source: Alaska Marine Highway System 1998, 2000 Annual Traffic Volume Reports State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Alaska Marine Highway System-465-8863 (Juneau).

As local residents are quick to point out, ferry service in PWS leaves much to be desired, both for residents and visitors. Businesses complain that the ferry competes for sightseeing tourists; residents justifiably complain that timing of trips (which often arrive and depart in the middle of the night) is a major barrier to increased use. The Alaska DOT/PF recently adopted a transportation plan for this region calling for much improved ferry service. The approved “fast ferry” plan would create much more convenient and quicker service, and will likely lead to expanded use of the system by visitors, which will in particular benefit Cordova.

Cordova and Valdez have daily commercial air service. The flights to Valdez tend to be unreliable during winter, due to the short runway constrained by mountains, and the frequently inclement weather. Cordova, by contrast, has a large WWII vintage airport, and daily service by an Alaska Airlines jet linking Anchorage, Yakutat, Juneau and other

SE communities. The slow but steady drop in emplanements shown below reflects the general slowing of Cordova's economic life, particularly fishing, over the last decade.

**Emplanements**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Cordova	23,877	23,285	22,104	20,696	19,869	20,648	20,354

Source: FAA, Office of Airport Planning and Programming 800 Independence Ave. SW Washington DC 20591 202-267-8739; FAA Airport Division, Anchorage Federal Office Building 907-271-5438.

**Sportfishing**

The greater Prince William Sound area is a popular fishing destination, particularly for Alaskans and particularly for halibut and other bottom fish and late summer silvers. As mentioned above, the region offers good fishing, but generally is not considered a top fishing destination relative to other parts of Alaska. Active management by the state Dept of Fish and Game has greatly increased sportfishing resources in more accessible portions of the region. Hatchery enhancement increases the size of natural runs, and introduces species not commonly found in the area such as sockeye and Chinook salmon.

**Sport fishing effort in angler days in the Prince William Sound area of Southcentral Alaska**

<i>Region</i>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
NW PWS	6,123	13,868	8,980	16,548	13,124	13,511	13,752	17,265
Cordova Road System	8,196	6,994	19,222	14,918	16,456	13,842	15,039	19,907
Valdez Arm Area	23,605	52,108	60,952	76,429	50,896	47,516	46,571	59,080
Other Areas	19,624	12,001	24,264	30,299	16,972	26,210	17,141	26,195
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,548</b>	<b>84,971</b>	<b>113,418</b>	<b>138,194</b>	<b>97,448</b>	<b>101,079</b>	<b>92,503</b>	<b>122,447</b>

Source: ADF&G Area Mgt. Reports, 2000. The Prince William Sound Region includes the Prince William Sound Mgt. District.

**Hunting**

The Prince William Sound area offers popular hunting for the species commonly found in the forested coastal regions of Alaska including black bear, Sitka black tailed deer (introduced into the Sound in the early century), waterfowl, and lesser numbers of moose (also introduced, into the Copper River Delta), brown bear, and mountain goats. Access is good to popular coastal hunting areas by boat and floatplane. A few areas have road or trail access, including the Copper River delta, and on Montague Island.

Harvest levels of deer, moose, bear and other species commonly hunted in region has remained relatively constant over the last 5 years.

## Deer Hunting, Game Management Unit 6

1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
1,726	1,926	2,525	2,908	2,265

Source: ADF&G, Harvest Summary 2000.

### b. Local Tourism Trends

This section outlines tourism trends in Cordova & the Lower Copper River.

#### Tourism Profile

An Alaska magazine article in 1998 called Cordova one of "Alaska's last unspoiled small towns" - a place where "the pace of life is still based on the seasons and salmon runs rather than the work week"(Alaska Magazine, Feb 98). Unlike just about any other small, attractive coastal Alaskan town, relatively few tourists visit Cordova. Annual visitation is a magnitude below typical coastal communities: less than 10,000 annual total visitors, including both in and out-of-state travelers. By contrast, out-of-state travelers alone account for 100,000 or more visits to road accessible, coastal towns like Valdez, Seward, Haines and Homer, and over half a million out-of-state travelers visit Juneau, Skagway and Ketchikan each year.

Cordova offers the unusual combination of the pleasures of a sophisticated small town (shops, restaurants, little league, history, a collection of superb artists) and right-out-the-door access to a spectacular wilderness. The town itself is an attraction, with great views over its harbor and commercial fishing fleet, and many buildings remain from the town's boom days as a port for copper coming by rail from Kennicott. Cordova is a gateway into eastern Prince William Sound, the Copper River Delta, the narrow, wild stretch of land running along the Gulf of Alaska, and the rugged Chugach/St. Elias Mountains. The town provides visitors a base for a variety of outdoor activities. Fresh and saltwater fishing are primary draws, along with hiking, birdwatching, river floating. Relative to other Alaskan towns, Cordova has done minimal marketing. Recently the City of Cordova, Chamber of Commerce and the Watershed project have begun renewed efforts to plan for and market tourism.

#### Attractions/Tours

Major in town attractions include the Cordova museum, Chamber of Commerce visitor information center, a walking tour, the PWS Science Center and the US Coast Guard cutter *Sweetbriar*. The town invites exploration on foot, with a collection of attractive historic houses, stores, restaurants, a book store, galleries, library, pool and great views. Near town attractions include: a good system of USFS trails, including several boardwalks and interpretive displays on the delta, Mt. Eccles ski hill, Eyak Lake. Out of town tours and excursions include the popular bus tour through the delta to the Million Dollar Bridge and Childs Glacier, approximately 15 charter fishing/sightseeing boats; two flightseeing companies; and kayak, bike and raft rentals and tours. The USFS operates 8 public use cabins in the area. Cordova currently is not a destination of many package tours. Several companies float the Copper River and spend a day or night in town at the end of their trip. Several fly-out fishing/hunting companies offer multi-day trips to nearby private camps, cabins and houseboats, such as the fishing and hunting areas on the Tsiu River east of the Copper River.

## **Accommodations/Restaurants**

1 relatively large hotel (50 rooms) plus 3 other small hotels for a total of less than 100 hotel rooms; approx. a dozen B&Bs; 1 small RV park; approximately 10 restaurants - less than half of which stay open year round.

## **Events**

Major events include annual shorebird festival in May, winter Iceworm Festival, irregular salmon derbies, and the Copper River Salmon Run.

## **Tourism Projects - Under Construction/Planned/Under Discussion**

- *Copper River Trail* - Bike and hiking trail proposed by the State Division of Parks, to follow the railroad ROW from Chitina to the Tiekel River. State Parks has done preliminary field work and held public workshops to test the desirability and feasibility of this proposed "world class trail". Funding for this \$20 million plus project would be pursued through the state's standard capital improvements review process.
- *Cordova Center* – The City has hired an architectural firm to do a site feasibility analysis and assess options for this proposed multi-purpose community building. The specific program for the facility is being determined through this process; preliminary ideas focus on local needs such as space for community gatherings, performing arts, library, cultural and historical information, and conference space.
- *Shepard Point Road/Deep Water Port* - Cordova currently lacks a deep water port. The Native Village of Eyak and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are making plans to build a road from town north to a potential port site at Shepard Point. \$8 million is currently available to build this approximately \$13 million project. Most of these funds came from the Exxon Valdez oil spill legal settlements. An additional \$5 million is being requested through the State's Transportation Improvement Plan.
- *Bering River Timber/Road Access* - Chugach Corporation has considered building a road into timber holdings in the Bering River area east of the Copper River. Environmental work was completed in 1998 and 1999. This project would open road access to a large wilderness area with many recreation and tourism attractions. Chugach has put the project on hold.
- *Copper River Road/Ferry improvements* – Two high speed ferries were recommended as part of the DOT/PF Prince William Sound/Copper River regional transportation study.

## **Marine Tourism Facilities**

Cordova has a small boat harbor with slips for 840 boats, up to 70 feet in length. Unlike the other three study area communities the harbor is not full. About 660-700 slips are assigned, with 80% of these taken by commercial fishing boats. Transient dock space is available, which is available for use by smaller cruise boats and the lightering craft expected to visit Cordova during summer 1998. During the summer, Cordova has three stops per week by the State Ferry MV Bartlett.

## **Numbers of Visitors**

No current, reliable data is available on total visits to Cordova. Local residents believe tourism is growing, but total numbers remain relatively small. Alaska Visitor Statistics Program data show a total of 11,100 out-of-state visitors in summer 1989, rising to 17,200 in 1993. However, data from air and ferry arrivals, and anecdotal judgments of residents suggest that these

numbers substantially overestimate visitor numbers<sup>5</sup>. Figures below give some indication of magnitudes and rates of visitor growth.

**Air Visitors**

The table below shows that total emplanements at the Cordova airport - including residents, visitors, and travelers coming for business. Emplanements have grown slowly over the last 25 years, although dipped slightly in 2000. Summer emplanements average about 1000 people more than typical winter months. If all of this additional increment were due to tourism - which is unlikely - total summer visitation by commercial aircraft would be about 4000 people.

**Cordova "Mudhole" Smith Airport - Annual Emplanements**

Year	Air Carrier	Air Taxi	Commuter	Total
1976	10,628	0	3,897	14,525
1980	15,084	1215	285	15,369
1985	13,078	0	2,188	15,266
1990	17,962	1760	4,155	22,117
1992	13,305	0	5,785	19,090
1994	10,366	0	8,653	19,019
1995	12,548	0	10,894	23,442
1996	12,233	0	9,674	21,907
1997	11,511		9,565	21,076
1998	10,904		9,081	19,985
1999	11,160		9,015	20,175
2000	11,096		6,899	17,995

Source: Federal Aviation Administration, Terminal Area Forecast (APO-TAF data)  
<http://www.apo.data.faa.gov/faatafall.HTM>

**Cordova "Mudhole" Smith Airport - Emplanements by Month**

	1996	1997
January	1,418	
February	1,337	
March	1,522	
April	1,498	
May	2,169	
June	2,151	
July	2,296	
August	2,718	
September	2,284	
October	1,743	
November	1,477	754 in/863 out
December	1,190	871 in/804 out
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,803</b>	

source: 1996 data: Eyak Native Corporation Tourism Analysis, 1997 Todd Haley, 424 3278

**Ferry Visits**

<sup>5</sup> The reliability of Alaska Visitor Statistics Program data drops for lightly visited destinations, due to small sample sizes.

Ferry visits have dropped in the last 10 years. Between 1988 and 1994, disembarking passengers remained steady in the 6000-6600 person range, but fell by approximately 1500 visitors in 1995 and 1996. Locals credit this decline to inconvenient ferry schedules.

Seasonal ferry use patterns are similar to air passenger arrivals. In the peak months of May through August, there are twice the number of average numbers of ferry passengers as come in winter (average passengers in Sept, Nov, Dec, Feb, March, April are 282; average passengers May - August are 653). Even if all this summer increase was due to tourists, this would total to only about 1500 travelers. An AMHS study (1992) found that on the Valdez Cordova link, 70% of ferry passengers are Cordovans, 10% seasonal workers, and 20% visitors from out of state (Eyak Corporation Report).

1995 Ferry	Passengers Embarking	Passengers Disembarking
January	0	0
February	208	187
March	319	347
April	150	399
May	413	677
June	769	868
July	1072	940
August	911	784
September	372	231
October	0	0
November	225	209
December	298	323
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4737</b>	<b>4965</b>

Source: Annual Traffic Volume Report - 1995, AMHS & the State DOT/PF

### Cordova Historical Museum

Visitation to the Cordova Historical Museum has grown steadily over the last 10 years, nearly doubling between 1986-96. These numbers include both out-of-town and resident visits.

### Visitors to Cordova Museum

YEAR	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	TOTAL
1986	221	682	1004	209	2,116
1988	262	645	1326	345	2,578
1990	411	765	1534	415	3,125
1992	443	509	1857	705	3,514
1994	608	1255	1726	452	4,041
1995	458	882**	2067	548	3,955
1996	905	1897	2358	741	5,901
1997	634	1216	2896	936	5,682
1998	1047	4330	6502	906	12,785*
1999	1288	3948	4890	853	10,979*
2000	1076	1562	2931	740	6,309

Source: City of Cordova Historical Museum \*Norwegian Cruise Lines

## Spending on tourism marketing

Community	Ketchikan	Kodiak	Mat-Su	Nome	Sitka	Valdez	Cordova
Annual tourism budget	\$582,926	\$149,000	\$218,000	\$202,450	\$194,000	\$441,000	\$10,000
Hotel / motel tax %	6%	6%	5%	4%	4-6%	6%	0%
% of bed tax to tourism	Set annually	65%	96%	0%	100%	100%	NA
Annual visitors (estimates)	350,000	50,000	300,000	20,000	150,000	150,000	<10,000

## Sportfishing

Sportfishing in the Cordova area has grown at the same steady rate as sportfishing throughout the Prince William Sound area. In 1994, fishing areas along the Cordova road system and in the Eastern PWS area had approximately the same percentage of all PWS angler days as they did in the 80's. Total numbers of angler days are up by about 100%. This increase is driven by a combination of increasing saltwater charters, road-side fishing, and fly-out fishing tied to the community's several fishing tour operators.

## Childs Glacier Visitor Statistics

The USFS maintains records on visitation to its viewing area/campground at Childs Glacier at the end of the road system east of Cordova. Visitation is estimated by the volunteers who staff this facility for the Forest Service. Figures show a modest increase in people, driven by growing numbers of bus tourists.

Year	Raft (people)	Buses/People	Cars/People	Total People
1991				3618
1992	44	25/287	1887/5661	6272
1993	22	29/330	1658/5484	7018
1994	44	52/645	2538/4764	6701
1995	128	73/1089	2467/6958	8337

Source: USFS

Information on the numbers of rafters floating the Copper River is sketchy at best. Unlike the Alsek/Tatshenshini River system further east, the Copper River is not wholly within a National Park or National Forest. As a result, commercial operators and private parties do not register with these agencies, and no regular counts are kept. People familiar with the river guess that there may be an average of 4 to 6 parties floating the river per week, totaling to 200-600 people floating the river each season. Use includes private parties and guided commercial trips.





## APPENDIX 3

# OPTIONS FOR CORDOVA MARKETING SLOGAN

Notes from Tourism Committee Meeting:


1. wildlife: eagles, shorebirds, otters, bear, moose, Copper River salmon (“salmon to slalom”)
2. unique attractions: in-town ski lift, ice skating (Eyak Lake, Sheridan Glacier), Copper mining history, N. America’s largest estuary (the delta), glaciers, trumpeter swans,
3. real community - a fishing town; friendly, authentic, original, down-to-earth,
  - “an intimate coastal community – Cordova”;
  - “unspoiled and working to stay that way” one of Alaska’s last coastal towns as yet unspoiled by tourism
4. Science & education, Smart place, People – PWS Science Center, other science/education facilities, art, tradition of lively political debate (include the famous anecdote of 1 vote margin in race for mayor)
5. best of town & nature - lively social, artistic and political life, wilderness out the back door
6. access - isolated but accessible
7. other ideas:
  - “where Alaskans go on vacation”
  - Link notion of high quality fish, with high quality place. Quality not volume. A few good fish/looking for a few good tourists
  - Find words that acknowledge the irony of promoting an unspoiled town, that express a bit of hesitation about inviting in visitors. Communicate the town’s sophistication.
  - Understated sales pitch. Avoid heavy sell.

### PRESENTATION - IMAGES/GRAPHIC STYLE

The concept discussed by the committee is to develop a handful of simple, striking, understated, small images (small enough to be used as inexpensive print adds, baseball/playing card size, about 2 \_ x 2 \_). These images should represent some of the most compelling features of the town and vicinity, in a graphic style recognizable across the room. Aim to make each image sufficiently interesting to work as a graphic for a poster, card or coffee mug. Perhaps start with just 2 or 3, and add a new one annually.

See the samples on the following page for a crude illustration of this concept.

(this is supposed to be a bird)

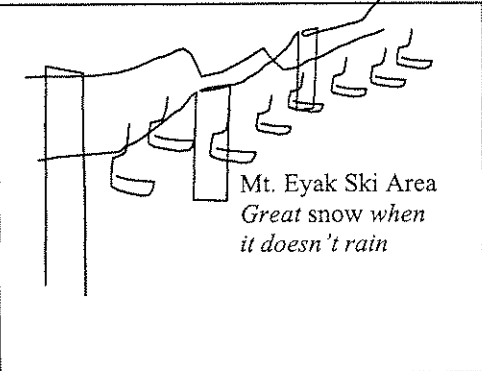


**Cordova Alaska**  
North American's Largest Coastal Estuary  
[www.cordovachamber.org](http://www.cordovachamber.org)




*Oncorhynchus*

**Cordova, Alaska**  
Copper River Salmon – World's Best





Mt. Eyak Ski Area  
*Great snow when it doesn't rain*

**Cordova Alaska**  
America's Oldest Operating Ski Lift

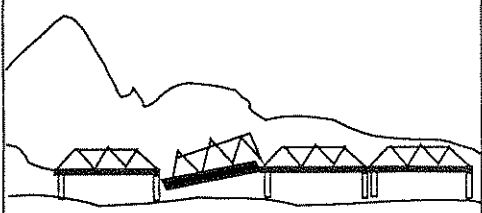


Traditional Kayak

**Cordova Alaska**  
10,000 years of Native History

	
Prince William Sound	Copper River Delta
	
Chugach/Wrangell	Gulf Coast

**Cordova Alaska**  
Gateway to 4 Worlds  
[www.cordovachamber.org](http://www.cordovachamber.org)



*Remains of rail link from heart of the Wrangells to tidewater at Cordova.  
(you can't drive to Cordova)*

**Cordova Alaska**  
Million Dollar Bridge

## **Marketing Statements – Categories from Other Communities**

- descriptive statements, of place, of activities - most
- commands - see Las Cruces
- description of what the visit will do for you - see California
- statements with two meanings - see Idaho

### *Other Places:*

Idaho - Come back to life in Idaho (and, of course, Famous Potatoes)

Pocatello - We're not exactly a resort town, but don't tell the locals.

Colorado - They'd rather be in Colorado (statement accompanies images of people not having fun, e.g. crowds getting on a commuter train, 4 people squeezed into an inflatable pool)

South Africa - A World in One Country

Montana - Big Sky Country

California - Find Yourself Here

Oregon. Things Look Different Here.

Texas - It's Like a Whole Other Country

Yukon – Canada's True North

### *New Mexico Towns*

Tucumcari – You'll be Amazed at What You'll Discover

Cloudcroft – Playland of the Four Seasons

Portalis – Warm Heart of the Sunbelt

Clovis – Expand your Horizons

Roswell – Down to Earth Place to Visit... Out of This World Place to Experience

Las Cruces – Come For The History, Stay For The Fun

Genuine Gallup – Keepers Of Hope

Angel Fire – It's All Up Here

### *Alaska Places*

Fairbanks – the Golden Heart of Alaska

Copper Valley – Nature's Centerfold

Dillingham – Nature's Front Porch

Homer – Halibut Capital of Alaska

Undiscovered, Unforgettable Unalaska (Uncommon History, Unbelievable Sportfishing)

Juneau - Where adventure runs wild

Kodiak – Alaska's Emerald Isle

St. Paul Island – Remote. Wild. Unbelievable.

There's no place like Nome

Haines – The Alaska of Your Dreams

Sitka – Part Tlingit, part Russian, Totally Beautiful

Skagway – Gateway to the Klondike

Ketchikan – Alaska's Native Cultural and Sportfishing Capital

### Recommendation (“the envelope please”)

- © A Working Town in the Heart of the Wilderness
- © A Comfortable, Coastal Community - Cordova
- © Wild Salmon, Civilized town
- © Home of Copper River Salmon

### Other Ideas:

- Small town with a Wealth of Culture and Wilderness
- Cordova and Copper River Salmon – There’s Nothing Like It
- Nice place to visit, but you would want to live here
- A great place to live (and we don’t mind if you visit)
- The real thing
- Small town, big wilderness
- A lively fishing town in a wild
- Why are we telling you about how great our town is?
- Home to Wild Copper River Salmon
- Home port for the Copper River Salmon Fleet
- Mix it up with our exotic
- Opinionated People,
- Only thing we agree on is the Quality of Copper River Salmon
- Cordova - Gateway to 4 Worlds, and a decent place to have an espresso
- An Island of Civilization in a World of Natural Magic
- Master debaters
- too nice to keep to ourselves
- What is it about this town?
- Find out why we’re glad we live here?
- (something about sharing, first person statement....)
- You ‘Otter’ Visit (just kidding)