



# Denali's Resource Stewardship Strategy: Planning for the future of park resources

**Denali is preparing a Resource Stewardship Strategy to guide how the park manages its resources, including Dall sheep, to ensure the park maintains the desired condition of these resources.**

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*The Resource Stewardship Strategy serves as a bridge between the qualitative statements of desired conditions established in a park's General Management Plan (GMP) and the measurable goals and implementation actions determined through park strategic planning.*

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A few of the challenges Denali faces in the coming decades are increased visitation, new development and access near park boundaries, global warming, global contaminants, introduced species, changes in hunting pressure, and wildlife management control issues near the park.

How will Denali address these challenges? The National Park Service (NPS) has directed each park to develop a Resource Stewardship Strategy (RSS) as a 15- to 20-year program planning document. During the development of an RSS, the park will assess whether natural and cultural resources, as well as visitor experiences, are being managed to meet the desired conditions specified in the park's General Management Plan (GMP). Denali has taken the initial step by starting the development of an RSS.

#### **What is a Resource Stewardship Strategy?**

In 2001, the National Park Service instituted a new planning process through its NPS Management Policies, which changed the principal program document for resource management from the Resource Management Plan to the Resource Stewardship Strategy (Director's Order 2-1).

The RSS serves as a bridge between the desired conditions in a park's GMP and the goals and implementation actions determined through park strategic planning. Through the RSS process, parks identify indicators of resource condition, establish targets for each indicator, assess current indicator

values, analyze the difference, if any, between current conditions and desired conditions, and develop "comprehensive strategies" based on science and scholarship to achieve or maintain desired conditions.

The scope of an RSS is limited to two aspects of desired conditions established in a GMP—the desired conditions of resources (both natural and cultural) and the desired conditions for visitor experience that directly depend upon resource conditions.

#### **Steps in a Resource Stewardship Strategy**

The RSS includes a "getting started" phase, in which documents, team participants, and a timeline are organized, and four other phases. During Phase 1, a park reviews its GMP and other documents for desired conditions, and summarizes knowledge about park resources. Phase 2 includes meetings of the RSS team, subject matter experts (SMEs), and stakeholders; selection of indicators and target values; and analysis of gaps between current and desired conditions. In Phase 3, the comprehensive strategies are developed and peer-reviewed by subject matter experts, and in Phase 4, the RSS is released.

Denali's team for the development of its RSS consists of natural and cultural resource team co-leads, writers/editors, and staff members representing facilities management, resource protection, and interpretation.

## Denali's Fundamental Resources and Values

(1) wildlife populations, wildlife habitat, and the processes and components of the park's natural ecosystems,



(2) wilderness character and wilderness resource values,



(3) scenic and geologic values of Mount McKinley and surrounding mountain landscape,

(4) visitor enjoyment and inspiration from observing wildlife in its natural habitat and other natural features,



(5) opportunities for wilderness recreational activities and enjoyment of wilderness,

## Denali's Other Resources and Values

(6) subsistence resources and opportunities,

(7) historic, archaeological, and ethnographic resources, and



(8) scientific research, education, and interpretation about natural ecosystems and geological features and processes.



### Phase 1: List Denali's resources and values

In fall 2006, Denali staff reviewed documents (enabling legislation for the "old park," Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act or ANILCA (1980), and Denali's GMP (2006)) to list Denali's resources and values (see panel at left). Fundamental resources and values reflect the park's purposes and significance. Other important resources and values are those which the park is mandated by Congress to protect, but are not the reason the park was established.

The desired condition for each value is derived from the documents reviewed. These desired conditions serve as the foundation for the remainder of the Resource Stewardship Strategy planning process.

### Phase 2: Develop indicators and standards

Key to the Resource Stewardship Strategy is the development of indicators (what should the park measure?) and standards (what level of the indicator is the target value?) to evaluate resource conditions. The goal is to determine if the park is maintaining or achieving the desired conditions. The indicators and standards will be used to plan the park's research needs (known as comprehensive strategies, see Phase 3) for the park's resource stewardship.

To help brainstorm the indicators and standards, Denali invited subject matter experts to a half-day workshop in mid-September at the conclusion of the Alaska Park Science Symposium. Discussions with resource professionals and park stakeholders will continue in early 2007.

### Phase 3: Create comprehensive strategies and prepare and review RSS

Park resource personnel will synthesize information about indicators and standards to assemble comprehensive strategies for achieving or maintaining the desired condition of each resource and value.

Comprehensive strategies will also be developed to gather basic data that is missing but needed to understand the natural variability of the park's natural resources. The comprehensive strategies will be scrutinized in peer-review by subject matter experts.

### Phase 4: Complete and implement RSS

The RSS will be revised and completed by the end of September 2007. Once the park superintendent approves Denali's RSS, it will replace the Resource Management Plan (1998). Existing specific park program plans such as the Subsistence Management Plan, Museum Management Plan, Bear Management Plan, and other implementation plans will continue to provide the details for day-to-day operations, but may need to be fine-tuned by the direction in Denali's RSS.

Following the timeline in the comprehensive strategies, funded items will proceed through project planning and NEPA compliance. At 5-year intervals, park staff will review and adjust the RSS.

## Time Line for Denali's Resource Stewardship Strategy (RSS)

September 2006 - December 2007

- Compile list of park resources and values
- Begin consultation with resource experts

January - February 2007

- Share RSS information in public meetings
- Brainstorm indicators and standards

February - March 2007

- Develop indicators and standards

April - May 2007

- Draft comprehensive strategies
- Incorporate support documents
- Prepare draft document

mid-June - mid-July 2007

- Review draft document (internal review)

Late July 2007

- Edit and print draft of RSS

August 2007

- Review comprehensive strategies (peer-review by subject matter experts)
- Incorporate final edits
- Prepare summary document (with photos)

September 2007

- Review RSS (park management)
- Prepare documents for layout and printing

October 2007

- Complete layout and printing
- Distribute document
- Begin implementing RSS

During each of the phases, information about Denali's Resource Stewardship Strategy will be available on the Denali website: [www.nps.gov/dena](http://www.nps.gov/dena)

### For more information

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