



Implementing Denali's Resource Stewardship Strategy: Achieving desired conditions for park resources



Denali's Resource Stewardship Strategy will guide how the park manages its resources, including Dall's sheep.

When Charles Sheldon's envisioned a national park to protect the Dall's Sheep and other wildlife and their habitat near the tallest mountain in North America in the years prior to 1917, he couldn't have known what challenges would face the expanded Denali National Park and Preserve 90+ years later.

In late 2009, Denali's new strategic document, the Resource Stewardship Strategy (RSS), was approved by the Alaska Regional Office. The RSS provides guidance for the research, resource management, and resource education programs of the National Park Service (NPS) at Denali over the next 20 years.

Denali is the second unit in the National Park system—and the first park with extensive natural resources—to complete an RSS. Thus, Denali's RSS document may serve as a prototype for other large parks managing extensive natural and cultural resources.

Denali has long recognized the importance of information-based decision making, as well as the need to increase the public's understanding of park issues, through a science- and scholarship-based approach. Denali has operated using its Resource Management Plan (1998), but in 2001, the NPS instituted a new planning process through its 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).

What is a Resource Stewardship Strategy?

The RSS is a bridge between the desired conditions in a park's General Management Plan (GMP) and the goals and implementation actions determined through park planning. In the RSS process, parks identify *indicators* of resource condition, establish *targets* for each indicator, and assess the *current condition* of these indicators. "Comprehensive Strategies" are developed to fill any gaps in resource knowledge; to determine indicators and targets, if unknown; to determine resource condition; and to plan studies or research that help the park achieve or maintain desired conditions.

The scope of an RSS is the desired conditions of the park's natural and cultural resources, and the desired conditions for visitor experience that directly depend upon resources conditions. The RSS provides the park with a strategy for investing both human and fiscal resources in the stewardship of park resources. It also reports accountability toward attaining and maintaining desired resource conditions in the park.

Development and updating Denali's RSS

Denali's RSS team followed the national guidance for RSS development, but adopted new approaches for Denali's extensive natural resources. Denali's RSS is a document that will be reviewed and updated at periodic intervals, incorporating new findings and understandings.

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.
