



*Request for Proposal Response:
Hillside Cemetery 2024*

July 30, 2024

Alaska Natural Burial
PO Box 220112
Anchorage, AK 99522

Primary Contact, authorized to make representations on behalf of this proposal:
Rachel Bernhardt, Founder and Board President
907-360-7136



July 30, 2024

Municipality of Anchorage: Real Estate Department
4700 Elmore Road, 2nd Floor
Anchorage, AK 99507

Re: Request for Proposal – Hillside Cemetery 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to present our response to the Request for Proposal regarding Heritage Land Bank Parcel 2-156. Alaska Natural Burial has been interested in Parcel 2-156 since 2021, with the goal of establishing and operating a conservation burial ground on the property. Being a nonprofit, Alaska Natural Burial requests disposal of HLB parcel 2-156 by non-competitive sale. At a time when Anchorage is in critical need of cemetery infrastructure, we believe this is a reasonable request as Alaska Natural Burial will be responsible for the planning, construction, operations, and perpetual maintenance of the property – a responsibility that would otherwise fall on the taxpaying public for a new municipal cemetery.

Our intention is to operate a natural burial cemetery on the site while preserving the integrity of the existing ecological features. This type of natural burial relies on affordable, low-density burial, restricting the use of large monuments or gravestones so viewsheds remain uninterrupted and the land can serve the community as a multi-purpose space and as wildlife habitat. Our vision has earned the support of the area community council. Preservation of this hillside parcel as green space is the best use for this land according to area, district, and regional plans. We are ecstatic about the recent announcement of the new Potter Marsh Watershed Park and look forward to collaborating with Parks and Recreation to ensure a seamless recreational experience for all visitors to the pocket of urban forest that includes Parcel 2-156. Such collaboration secures our ability to preserve the existing habitat and wildlife corridor between Potter Marsh and the Chugach Mountains. Being a certified conservation burial ground ensures we are held to the highest standards. Our vision for this parcel is for it to become a community asset for generations to come, setting an example and redefining standards for cemetery development in urban areas throughout the state of Alaska.

Thank you so much for providing this opportunity and for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel Bernhardt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rachel" being more prominent than the last name "Bernhardt".

Rachel Bernhardt, Board President and Founder of Alaska Natural Burial
PO Box 220112
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Experience and Qualifications of Development Team

Development Team Structure

Alaska Natural Burial is an Alaskan nonprofit entity, recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. At this stage of organizational development, Alaska Natural Burial has no paid employees. Fulfilling the organization's Mission, Purpose, and Values is the responsibility of our volunteer Board of Directors.

Mission: It is the mission, duty, and purpose of Alaska Natural Burial to provide environmental conservation and stewardship, as well as equitable access to recreational green space and natural burial.

Core Purpose: Honoring the cycles of life and death through sustainable practices and environmental conservation.

Core Values

-Community and Connection: Natural burial cemeteries are socially and ecologically significant places, providing the opportunity for communities to connect with nature.

-Sustainability: Cemetery infrastructure creates an environmental legacy for future generations.

-Service: It is a privilege to be of service to our community and to serve as land stewards.

-Respect: Access to respectful and meaningful deathcare is a human right for the deceased and the bereaved; respect for each other and the natural world is at the core of the conservation burial cemetery model.

Operational considerations for this organization will be overseen by a Program Director, who will support staff in performing functions related to grounds maintenance, interment activities, administrative support, and education/outreach. Additional staff will be brought on as needed to support organizational growth. Guidance regarding the conservation and sustainability initiatives of the organization will be obtained through active and ongoing partnerships with local groups including other nonprofits, NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), educational institutions, government organizations, and/or with the establishment of a sustainability advisory committee.

Key Team Members

Rachel Bernhardt is the founder and President of the Board of Alaska Natural Burial. A lifelong Alaska resident who grew up in south Anchorage, Rachel holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from UAA and a Master of Business Administration from UAF. She has dedicated her adult life to working in the nonprofit sector, initially with economically marginalized community members and families experiencing homelessness. More recently, over the past eight years, she has worked in the field of postmortem

anatomical donation, collaborating with bereaved families and local deathcare professionals throughout the state. Rachel has extensive experience in leading the development of new programs, facilitating collaboration between agencies and organizations, and building relationships with community stakeholders. She will be deeply involved in the planning, design, and operation of Alaska Natural Burial's conservation burial cemetery. Recently, Rachel opened Flameless Cremation Services LLC, a small business providing family-centered care and water cremation for animal companions in southcentral Alaska. She also serves as the board secretary for the Alaska End-of-Life Alliance, a nonprofit collective dedicated to educating, advocating, and supporting Alaskans in end-of-life care. Rachel's commitment to her community and improving deathcare experiences for the dying and the bereaved is rooted in enhancing access to diverse deathcare infrastructure.

Julie Raymond-Yakoubian is the Vice President of the Board of Alaska Natural Burial. She holds a Master of Arts in Northern Studies and a Doctorate in Anthropology, and has spent over a decade working with Indigenous communities across Alaska. Julie is an End-of-Life Doula, Home Funeral Guide, and ritual specialist. She also serves as the Vice President of the Alaska End-of-Life Alliance and has experience serving on other nonprofit boards as well as working for nonprofit organizations. Julie has extensive experience working with both bereaved families and individuals pre-planning for end-of-life. She has almost two decades of experience writing and managing grants.

Amy Franz is the Treasurer of the Board of Alaska Natural Burial, where she leverages her extensive experience in financial management and fiduciary oversight. A lifelong Alaskan and passionate outdoor enthusiast, Amy combines her love for the environment with her professional expertise. Holding a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a focus in Accounting and certification as an Internal Auditor, she brings over a decade of experience managing multi-million-dollar projects and funds. Her leadership skillfully balances fiscal responsibility with a commitment to environmental stewardship, guiding the organization with both dedication and purpose.

Keary Warner is the Secretary of the Board of Alaska Natural Burial and has a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from UAF. A lifelong Anchorage resident, Keary has dedicated much of her career to furthering the missions of local nonprofits.

Sage Stoneking is a board member of Alaska Natural Burial. With a background in programming, Sage is studying anthropology and art history at UAA. She has a strong desire to promote dignity in death and excels at translating technical knowledge.

Charlie Kidd is a board member of Alaska Natural Burial. He is a family law attorney with the Alaska Native Justice Center, having earned a Juris Doctor from Georgetown University Law Center and a Bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

Development Team

Alaska Natural Burial's Board of Directors

Landscape Architect: Elise Huggins of Earthscape

Advisors and Consultation with the following:

- Jack Goodnoe, landscape architect and natural burial cemetery expert
- Arborist at Community Forestry 101
- Congregation Beth Shalom
- Rabbit Creek Community Council
- Conservation Burial Alliance's Operators Group
- Global Green Burial Alliance's Board of Directors
- MOA Parks and Recreation
- Heritage Land Bank

Engineering and construction work will be awarded to licensed, bonded, and insured firms based on bid costs, experience, and the firm's commitment to sustainable practices.

Development Team Experience

Alaska Natural Burial intends to be the first conservation burial ground in Alaska. The collective experiences and skills of our Board make Alaska Natural Burial uniquely qualified to fulfill the mission of our organization and meet the expectations of this RFP. In addition to the collective skills of our Key Team Members (above), Alaska Natural Burial's Board President has spent the last several years immersed in the national green burial movement, including spending a week living and working at a natural burial cemetery in Washington state. She is an active member of the Green Burial Council, the Conservation Burial Alliance, and the Global Green Burial Alliance. Alaska Natural Burial has representation at every national natural burial cemetery operators' forum and at annual conferences. We've formed special connections with the leadership at the Global Green Burial Alliance, Bellefontaine Cemetery in Missouri, Herland Forest in Washington, and Life Forest in New Hampshire, who generously and freely share their expertise and lessons learned on everything from cemetery management software to arboretum certification.

Proof of Financing

Without legal rights to the property, and before any official negotiations about land ownership, our ability to secure financing from conventional routes at this early developmental stage is hindered. We have yet to pursue any type of grant funding for the same reason. However, we have identified potential grants that may be a good fit including the Recreational Trails Program grants through Parks and Recreation and the matching grants available for the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area program.

Alaska Natural Burial intends to successfully fund this project in part by taking measures to reduce costs, including potential cost-sharing and the use of volunteer labor and services.

- *Cost-sharing* is a discussion worth having with the appropriate municipal departments as plans for the Potter Marsh Watershed Park progress over the next five years. Certain program elements common to both projects, like parking areas and trailheads along the same half-mile section of Golden View Drive, may be redundant. A single lot and trail access point may be a way for both projects to reduce costs and minimize the extent to which the existing ecosystem must be disrupted. There may be other options for cost-sharing in trail construction, maintenance, and wayfinding—we are open to these discussions.
- *Volunteer labor and services* are another means by which Alaska Natural Burial can reduce the overall direct and soft project costs. Professional services, such as those offered by a landscape architect, may be graciously donated. Other activities, like trail building, are excellent opportunities to engage enthusiastic community members in supporting this new project.

Despite our lack of advertising or solicitation, we already have 36 individuals interested in making pre-need arrangements the moment we are willing to accommodate such requests.¹ Alaska Natural Burial is also very fortunate to have a generous Board who give freely of their time and personal financial resources. We feel confident that, if selected, community support (including pre-need sales, volunteer labor and services, and Board contributions) will contribute a significant portion of the required funds to complete the proposed developments.

¹ Since drafting this sentence and the associated financial projections, this figure has risen to 39

Development Proposal

Business Plan

The Municipality of Anchorage is facing an imminent shortage of affordable cemetery space. The business plan proposed by Alaska Natural Burial outlines the installation of a conservation burial ground on HLB Parcel 2-156 that will meet the area's need for affordable cemetery space while preserving the parcel as urban forest for the benefit of the area's wildlife and recreational use by the community.

Industry History and Outlook

In early American history, caring for the dead was a family- and community-centric activity. The modern funeral home industry emerged during the Civil War,² with widespread adoption of embalming occurring during the early twentieth century. As the modern funeral home became more commonplace, the industry has grown increasingly consumptive and wasteful of nonrenewable resources.



Figure 1: Environmental impact of the conventional funeral and cemetery industries^{3,4,5,6,7,8}

² Faust, Drew. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. 2009

³ Scientific American. *Eco-Afterlife: Green Burial Options*. 2008.

⁴ Huffington Post. *Green Burials Reduce Your Impact After Death*. 2011.

⁵ Funeral Consumer Alliance. *Don't let the mortician turn you into a biohazard*. 2015.

⁶ Green Burial Council. *Disposition Statistics*. 2021.

⁷ The Order of the Good Death. *Embalming*. 2021.

⁸ Cremation Association of North America (CANA). *Environmental Impact of Cremation*. 2020.

As consumers become increasingly concerned with the far-reaching health and environmental impacts of such practices, natural funerals and burials are becoming increasingly popular. This was first evident in the increased popularity of cremation (the current cremation rate in the US is approximately 55%),⁹ and more recently with the emergence of natural burial.^{10 11}

Local Cemetery Infrastructure and Outlook

There are three cemeteries in the Municipality of Anchorage area, none of which permit natural burial:

1. Anchorage Memorial Park Cemetery in downtown Anchorage has been an affordable option for generations. However, they are nearing capacity and will be unable to serve at-need clients by the end of summer 2024.
2. Angelus Memorial Park in south Anchorage has abundant space available but is a prohibitively expensive option for many families.
3. Fort Richardson National Cemetery¹² on JBER (use is restricted to veterans and their spouses with very narrow exceptions for other family members).

Cemetery projects in Eagle River and Girdwood have recently been proposed. They both rely on using HLB land and would be constructed, operated, and cared for in perpetuity by the Municipality. A multi-million dollar bond would be required to initiate these projects. Such a bond was voted on by the residents of the Municipality in April 2024 and it did not pass.¹³

Cremation Conversion

Cremation Conversion refers to a known effect in communities with access to natural burial cemeteries. When provided access to a natural burial option, would-be cremation consumers *convert* to natural burial. Those who choose cremation, either because of perceived reduction of environmental impact, price, or impact on family, are more likely to choose natural burial (with proper education about available services and the true nature of environmental consequences).¹⁴ In other words, natural burial is a substitute for cremation. Industry-predicted increases in cremation rates can therefore be understood as a potential increase in natural burials in places where it is presented as an option. In a survey of natural burial cemeteries, 45% of the interments were for decedents who would otherwise have chosen cremation.¹⁵

⁹ Cremation Association of North America (CANA). *Environmental Impacts of Cremation*. 2020.

¹⁰ National Funeral Directors Association. *Trends in Funeral Service*. 2021.

¹¹ Quartz. *We've mastered weddings - but the funeral needs a lot of work: Inside the new death industry*. 2017.

¹² US Department of Veterans Affairs. *National Cemetery Administration: Fort Richardson National Cemetery*. 2021.

¹³ Earley, Wesley. APM. *Supporters of Anchorage-area cemeteries ... \$4M bond fails..* April 2024.

¹⁴ IBIS World. *Industry Report 81222: Cemetery Services in the US*. June 2021.

¹⁵ Green Burial Council. *Green Burial Survey Results*. 2015.

Market Demand and Detailed Description of Customers

Detailed Description of Customers

The primary target market for natural burial consists of residents of the southcentral region who are engaged in end-of-life planning. This includes individuals aged 65 and older who are approaching retirement and completing wills and advanced directives, as well as individuals who may be facing a terminal diagnosis (e.g., patients entering hospice care). As previously discussed, natural burial is a popular choice among those who would have otherwise chosen cremation. The top reasons people choose natural burial,¹⁶ in order of ranked importance, are:

1. minimizing impact on the environment
2. desire to go back to old traditions
3. reduced cost
4. spiritual or religious reasons
5. do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos

Market Demand

Cemeteries are critical pieces of urban infrastructure and there is inherent demand for burial space in all communities. Anchorage Memorial Park is rapidly approaching capacity and will be unable to facilitate further at-need interments within months. Currently, 130-200 people are buried there annually.¹⁷ Not only is there an immediate need for affordable cemetery space in Anchorage, but that need will only increase in upcoming years. Though Anchorage's overall population is expected to remain relatively stable, the number of residents in the 65-74 age group is growing as the community ages.¹⁸ By 2036, 17% of the total population will be age 65 or older, up from 12% currently.¹⁹

Beyond playing a critical role in providing essential urban infrastructure, Alaska Natural Burial expects to meet market demand by being:

- Affordable in a local market with only one other option, and in an industry where prices can vary by over 745%
- Straightforward and transparent with our fee structure (a Washington survey found only 51% of funeral establishments made their pricing readily available on their websites)²⁰
- The first provider of natural burial services within the Municipality of Anchorage
- The first certified conservation burial ground in Alaska

¹⁶ Green Burial Council. *Green Burial Survey Results*. 2015.

¹⁷ ADN. *Funerals in Anchorage are being delayed more than a year during covid*. September 2020.

¹⁸ Alaska Department of Health. *Alaska Death Dashboard 2014-2021*.

¹⁹ Alaska Economic Trends Magazine. *Population projections for 2019 through 2045*.

²⁰ NPR. *Despite Decades-old Law, Funeral Prices are Still Unclear*. 2017.

Site Utilization

Alaska Natural Burial's primary goals are to conserve this parcel of land, maintain the wildlife corridor that it currently provides, and welcome community use for recreation. In this case, Natural burial will be a tool to accomplish these objectives while also providing the organization a source of revenue and an opportunity to engage with the community.

The facility grounds will be designed with attention to the multi-purpose intentions for that space including encouraging the participation of family and loved ones in interment procedures. Involvement in rituals, such as interment, helps to connect people with each other and with the Earth, including the living landscape the burials become a part of. The property will include multiple trails with built-in redundancies for visitor control, providing privacy for an interment in one area while allowing visitor access to other areas. Trail redundancy is also important to minimize threats to wildlife by guarding against displacement behaviors caused by noise and other human activities.

Land stewardship is a central component of Alaska Natural Burial's core values. However, pending completion of the Ecological Impact Assessment, it is difficult to discuss specific measures for land management as these will be dependent on, and designed specifically for, the ecological features of the property discussed therein. Research, conservation, and effective natural resource management depends on these quantitative and ecologically specific representations that establish baseline property conditions. Development and implementation of best practices will be guided by the Ecological Impact Assessment. For example, conservation goals might include specific measures for protecting habitat like planting native flora to facilitate local pollinator diversity, removing invasive plants, or limiting activity in certain sensitive areas.

Alaska Natural Burial has been very deliberate in its site selection process. Over the course of several months, we researched public and private real estate, even going so far as to investigate parcels not currently listed for sale and those not appropriately zoned for use as a cemetery. The list of suitable parcels became smaller when we eliminated those which did not meet the Municipality's standards regarding parcel size and required street access for cemeteries. The list was further refined when we incorporated the Green Burial Council's certification standards and eliminated for consideration those parcels which may be more appropriately used for housing (which is so desperately needed in the community). Functional considerations for appropriate land included reviewing the suitability of soil and slope features. In the end, Parcel 2-156 stood alone as the ideal location for development of a natural burial cemetery.

Project Costs and Pro Forma

Our estimated project costs include reasonable assumptions about site conditions based on previous studies. We’ve used the Girdwood Schematic Report²¹ as a starting point, adjusting for our smaller size and narrower scope to arrive at a preliminary summary of project costs as follows:

Table 1: Project Costs including soft costs and contingencies

Description	Estimate
Phase 1	
Parking Area and Vehicle Access	\$137,925
Buildings and UTV	\$49,918
Improving/Constructing Pedestrian Trails	\$290,761
Landscape Architect	\$13,000
Planting Native Vegetation	\$8,000
Subtotal:	\$499,604
Construction Contingency (25%), Engineering and Construction Mgmt (35%)	\$299,762
Total for Phase 1	\$799,366
Phase 2	
Improving/Constructing Pedestrian Trails	\$41,200
Subtotal:	\$41,200
Construction Contingency (25%), Engineering and Construction Mgmt (35%)	\$24,720
Total for Phase 2	\$65,920
Phase 3	
Improving/Constructing Pedestrian Trails	\$42,436
Subtotal:	\$42,436
Construction Contingency (25%), Engineering and Construction Mgmt (35%)	\$25,462
Total for Phase 3	\$67,898
Phase 4	
Improving/Constructing Pedestrian Trails	\$43,709
Subtotal:	\$43,709
Construction Contingency (25%), Engineering and Construction Mgmt (35%)	\$26,225
Total for Phase 4	\$69,935
Grand Total:	\$1,003,119

²¹ MOA. Girdwood Cemetery Schematic Report. 2016.

Reasonable and conservative assumptions have been made in constructing a preliminary Pro Forma for Alaska Natural Burial. Our estimation of the number of annual at-need burials assumes 50% of Anchorage Memorial Park’s current burial rate. Regardless of a person’s stance on natural burial, we believe at least 50% of would-be Anchorage Memorial Park families are likely to choose Alaska Natural Burial simply for financial reasons. The number of annual burials increases over the years to match the projected population of residents over 65 years of age. We have been conservative in listing additional sources of revenue, making no assumptions about grants, fundraising, cremation conversion, interment of urns, or any other program service-related fees. Our year-one pre-need sales figure reflects the current number of individuals (as of July 2024) who are ready to pay to reserve their future interment site once we are prepared to offer such arrangements.

Table 2: Pro Forma with project revenues and expenses

	price per unit	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Revenues						
Preneed (preoperational waitlist)	\$1,100	\$39,600	--	--	--	--
Preneed reservation	\$1,100	--	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$1,100
At need (casket/shroud)	\$3,200	\$320,000	\$355,200	\$393,600	\$435,200	\$489,600
Donations (Board & community)	--	\$10,710	\$10,710	\$10,710	\$10,710	\$10,710
Fees for scattering or animal burial	TBD					
Other monument/memorial revenue	TBD					
Other program service fee revenue	TBD					
Grants and fundraising	--					
Expenses						
General and Administrative Expenses	--	-\$1,913	-\$2,000	-\$2,060	-\$2,122	-\$2,185
Volunteer trail crew	--	--	--	--	--	--
Staff (program director and operations manager)	--	-\$160,000	-\$164,800	-\$169,744	-\$174,836	-\$180,081
Perpetual Care and Maintenance Fund	--	-\$32,000	-\$35,520	-\$39,360	-\$43,520	-\$48,960
Total		\$176,397	\$164,690	\$194,246	\$226,532	\$270,183
<i>Balance of Perpetual Care and Maintenance Fund</i>		<i>\$32,000</i>	<i>\$67,520</i>	<i>\$106,880</i>	<i>\$150,400</i>	<i>\$199,360</i>

Products, Services, and Pricing Structure

Alaska Natural Burial will offer at-need interment services, including burial of human remains in caskets or shrouds, or of ashes in urns. The price structure will be simple and straightforward, and intended to be as affordable as possible while still covering the organization’s costs, providing revenue for land stewardship, and making a meaningful contribution to the Perpetual Care and Maintenance Fund. At least 10% of interment revenue will be placed in this endowment fund to ensure long-term maintenance of the site. Proceeds from burial activities will support program costs and ongoing stewardship efforts.

Other conservation cemeteries have prices in the \$2000-\$4000 range (for burial space only). There is evidence that consumers are willing to spend more on natural burial space both because of the added conservation value and because total funeral expenses for natural burials are typically lower than average (because there is no embalming and caskets are optional).²² That said, Alaska Natural Burial intends to adopt a straightforward pricing structure that is affordable.

Table 3: Sample fee structure

Service	Fee
Burial for casketed or shrouded body \$1,100 for the grave reservation,* \$2,100 for the interment services (including grave preparation, GPS and/or Epitrace ²³ marker, optional small headstone)	\$3,200
Burial for ashes in urns \$600 for the grave reservation, \$600 for the interment services (including grave preparation, GPS and/or Epitrace marker, optional small headstone)	\$1,200
Ashes Scattering** and Animal Interment***	TBD

*“Public law prohibits the actual sale of cemetery land, there is no conveyance of title or land ownership involved in the reservation of a gravesite. Such reservation is essentially a ‘lifetime easement’ which guarantees the reservation-holder exclusive use of the gravesite.”²⁴

**The permissibility of scattering ashes is something that requires further conversation after the completion of an *Ecological Impact Assessment*. The natural burial operator community has mixed feelings about the practice, acknowledging the symbolic importance for families but also recognizing that human and animal ashes have the potential to harm local flora and alter soil pH. We may designate a specific ‘garden’ area for scattering ashes. There are amendments²⁵ that can be added to ashes, to temper the potentially detrimental effects of introducing concentrated ashes (mostly calcium and phosphate) to a single location.

***We receive frequent inquiries about whether interring beloved animal companions will be permitted. We recognize that municipal codes prohibit burying animal remains in a human cemetery but are open to reserving a portion of Parcel 2-156 for this purpose. This requires further discussion.

²² IBIS World. *Industry Report 81222: Cemetery Services in the US*. June 2021. IBISWorld.com

²³ AssetTrac. *Assettrac for cemeteries, crematoria, and natural burial*. 2024.

²⁴ MOA. *Anchorage Memorial Park*. 2021.

²⁵ Let your Love Grow. *How it works*. 2024. <https://letyourlovegrow.com/pages/how-it-works>

The final fee structure will be decided upon by the Board when more information is available. If it is decided that the fees need to be higher, we will be diligently looking for solutions to ensure no potential users are priced out of the cemetery market within the Municipality of Anchorage. One way of ensuring access for all, popular with other conservation burial grounds, includes a provision for providing deeply discounted services offset by a designated fund into which other families and organizations can donate.

We may also consider carrying a supply of funeral goods, including natural material caskets and shrouds. The 2021 IBIS Industry Analysis suggests cemetery revenues come primarily from burial plot sales (26.6%) and interment services (23.1%), but a significant portion also comes from sales of funeral goods (22.7%).²⁶

Revenue Projection and Funding Sources

Without taking into account the anticipated effects of cremation conversion, if Alaska Natural Burial acquires half of Anchorage Memorial Park's 200 annual adult burials at \$3,200 each, this would result in an anticipated \$320,000 in annual revenue. Additional sources of revenue will include urn burials, scattering, and other services we may provide. Engaging with the community in an educational capacity, for example by offering nature walks, plant identification, birdwatching, or other nature-based activities, will bring in additional revenue to support our mission. This is commonplace in other conservation burial grounds and with other organizations like the Alaska Botanical Garden²⁷ and the Eagle River Nature Center.²⁸

Overhead costs can be covered, at least partially, through the use of community volunteers as is common in other conservation burial grounds. For example, at Prairie Creek,²⁹ graves are hand-dug by a group of volunteers known as the Society of the Pick and Spade. Site maintenance, land restoration, trail work, and other conservation initiatives are all jobs that can be performed by dedicated volunteers rather than paid staff. We plan on pursuing any and all grant opportunities that may help us further our mission and we will welcome donations from the community and local businesses. After the completion of the *Ecological Impact Assessment*, we will discuss the potential for families to sponsor a bench or other feature in honor of their loved one, or to purchase an engraved paving stone.

Perpetual Care and Maintenance

The primary mechanism for long-term protection of the site after the cemetery reaches capacity is use of the Perpetual Care and Maintenance Fund. For the active lifespan of the cemetery, at least 10% of all interment-related fees will be placed into an endowment fund, the proceeds of which may not be accessed until after the cemetery is full. This will enable Alaska Natural Burial to continue to care for the

²⁶IBIS World. *Industry Report 81222: Cemetery Services in the US*. June 2021.

²⁷ Alaska Botanical Garden. *Upcoming Events and Workshops*. 2024.

²⁸ Eagle River Nature Center. *Public Programs*. 2024. <https://www.ernc.org/public-programs.html>

²⁹ Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery. *Volunteer*. 2024.

existing gravesites in perpetuity, continue to fulfill our commitment to maintaining the existing habitat, and create a safe and accessible space for community recreation.

A conservation easement, deed restriction, or other legally binding and irrevocable agreement is required as part of our anticipated certification³⁰ as a conservation burial ground. Having this kind of arrangement with a governmental organization or another nonprofit provides an added level of operational oversight and protection of the land, further solidifying efforts to conserve and steward the parcel in perpetuity.

As the cemetery nears and reaches capacity, Alaska Natural Burial plans to identify another parcel of land (perhaps in the Anchorage area, or perhaps outside) to establish a second conservation burial ground site. The majority of the administrative and operational staff and equipment would likely be relocated to this second location at that time, though the equipment required to care for Parcel 2-156 in perpetuity, and the resources to continue engaging with and educating the public, will remain on-site. At minimum, the level of attention and maintenance activity would mirror community expectations for municipal park maintenance without full-time staff on-site.

³⁰ Green Burial Council. *Cemetery Certification Standards*. 2021.

Level of Return and Benefit to the MOA

Anchorage Memorial Park, historically Anchorage’s most affordable cemetery, is at capacity and will be unable to serve at-need clients by the end of the summer. Anchorage has not seen a new cemetery since the establishment of Angelus Memorial Park in the early 1950s. Simultaneously, Anchorage’s population has increased, especially among the 65 and over age group. Over the next 15 years, residents in that age bracket will comprise an estimated 17% of the total population.³¹ Other local efforts to expand cemetery infrastructure include projects in Eagle River and Girdwood. Both projects depend on using HLB land, and would require Anchorage voters to approve a multi-million dollar bond to support the cemetery development. Construction, ongoing maintenance, and perpetual care would then become the responsibility of the Municipality. Anchorage voters failed to support such a bond during the most recent election in April of 2024.³²

Quantitative Public Benefits

The most immediate and obvious quantitative benefit to the Municipality of Anchorage is Alaska Natural Burial’s plan to design, build, and operate a cemetery in Anchorage, for the benefit of all of the residents of the Municipality. Because a cemetery located in Anchorage would likely serve people from the MatSu Valley and Kenai Peninsula in addition to municipal residents, the tax burden of a new, Municipality-run cemetery would fall disproportionately on Anchorage area homeowners. Alaska Natural Burial could provide this service without burdening the taxpayers for the cost of construction, operations, maintenance, and perpetual care. In the absence of Alaska Natural Burial, the Municipality will be facing an immediate need to plan, fund and construct a new municipal cemetery. While Alaska Natural Burial recognizes and supports the efforts of other community cemetery projects, it's impossible that either of the current projects under consideration will be funded or completed within the required time frame. A non-competitive disposal of Parcel 2-156 to Alaska Natural Burial would provide the community with the needed infrastructure without the Municipality incurring any further costs. Alaska Natural Burial would be responsible for the planning, construction, operations, and perpetual maintenance.

Further economic and community benefits of this project include preservation of forest land. The Anchorage Forestland Assessment found that the Anchorage area has lost about half of its original forest through residential development and road construction. Each acre of mixed conifer and deciduous forest protects surface water quality through the intercepting of 544,561 gallons of stormwater runoff, absorbing 78 pounds of air pollutants, and sequestering 33 tons of carbon dioxide. The estimated annual value of this benefit is \$6,314 per acre.³³

³¹ Alaska Economic Trends magazine. *Population statistics for 2019 - 2045*.

³² AKEOLA. *On Anchorage-area cemeteries and cemetery funding*. Rob Jones. July 2024.

³³ MOA. *Anchorage Forestland Assessment and Management Plan*. Scott Stringer, Municipal Forester, MOA P&R.

Qualitative Public Benefits

Qualitative benefits, broadly, include providing the community with outdoor space, supporting health and wellness, and supporting ecosystems, biodiversity, and local wildlife.

More specifically, non-economic community benefits include:

- Non-timber forest products such as morel and bolete mushrooms, chaga, edible berries, and diamond willow
- Outdoor recreation with connectivity to the existing social trail systems. Currently there is no formal signage or a parking area which limits public access. Parcel 2-156 will be part of a larger, linked trail network, the proposed Potter Marsh Watershed Park, covering approximately 300 acres of land.³⁴
- Cultural resources (including the historic Moen trail) located on the land of the Athabaskan Dena'ina people, have been archaeologically identified in the project area from 1,000 to 1,500 years ago.³⁵
- Recreational use of the trails helps to address public health and the obesity epidemic, and to provide an area for safe and accessible exercise.
- The area is a critical wildlife corridor for large mammals like moose and bears, as well as smaller mammals like lynx and wolverines. Moose are especially heavy users of the area as they are driven to lower elevations by winter snow accumulation. Being near Potter Marsh, the property is also important to migrating and breeding birds.
- The act of interring human remains in a manner that supports decomposition processes sequesters an estimated 25 pounds of carbon per burial.³⁶ Conversely, flame crematories are energy-intensive to operate and emit, on average, 534 pounds³⁷ of carbon dioxide into the air per cremation. Conventional burial introduces embalming fluid, burial vaults, and caskets with toxic varnishes and metals into the soil. The high-density configurations of most conventional cemeteries are also typically installed as monocultures requiring the heavy use of pesticides and herbicides.

Land usage is an important point to elaborate upon as communities don't typically engage with conventional cemetery spaces in the same way they engage with other park land. In promoting the non-funerary use of the grounds, Green Burial Council research lists other favorite activities, in order of reported importance, including: walking/hiking, meditation, birdwatching, family gatherings, educational opportunities, and picnicking.³⁸

³⁴ Great Land Trust. *Press Release: Potter Marsh Watershed Park Project Moves Forward ...* 2024.

³⁵ MOA. *Potter Marsh Watershed Community Forest Proposal*. 2022.

³⁶ Green Burial Council. *Disposition Statistics*. 2021.

³⁷ Cremation Association of North America (CANA). *Environmental Impact of Cremation*. 2020.

³⁸ Green Burial Council. *Green Burial Survey Results*. 2015.

Alaska Natural Burial plans eventually to grow beyond our core activities of interment and stewardship. Some ideas include:

- Hosting community classes and collecting a small fee for attendance. Offerings could include birdwatching, edible mushroom foraging, or native and invasive plant identification .
- Natural Burial Grounds can be popular destinations for school field trips and hiking groups. An open invitation to the community will be extended to encourage use of the land for non-consumptive activities.
- Inviting community groups to use our space for their organization’s purposes. For example, Girl Scouts may carry out a Gold or Silver award project,^{39,40} or local beekeeping groups could establish hives and sell honey.⁴¹ This could be especially beneficial to the cemetery’s conservation efforts if the interests of the group are specifically aligned with our stewardship needs, for example, eradicating invasive species.⁴²
- External capacity building to expand conservation infrastructure, by developing close working relationships with other nonprofit agencies, private entities, or with statewide and interstate consortiums.

³⁹ Gibbons, Whit. Tuscaloosa News: *Ecoviews – Environmental stewardship a hallmark of the Girl Scouts*. 2020.

⁴⁰ Griffith, Glenn. Saratogian: *Girl Scout Cadette leads project to restore historic cemetery*. 2020.

⁴¹ Willens, Kathy. Seattle Times: *Cemetery beekeeping, honey operation buzzes among graves*. 2016.

⁴² Alaska Invasive Species Partnership. *About Us*. 2021. https://alaskainvasives.org/?page_id=440

Consistency with Adopted Plans and Ordinances

Consistency with Laws and Regulations

HLB Parcel 2-156 meets municipal requirements⁴³ regarding size, zoning, and location for cemeteries:

- Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) requires cemetery land to be zoned for Public Lands and Institutions (PLI)
- The parcel must be at least five acres in size and have access to a street designated as collector capacity or greater
- There are no statutory restrictions regarding the permissibility of natural burial, or requiring the use of more conventional methods for final disposition of human remains

Alaska Natural Burial's plans for development and operations meet municipal requirements⁴⁴ for cemeteries:

- Burial density will not exceed 1500 burials per acre of land⁴⁵
- Platting for cemetery burial plots will be done in accordance with the abbreviated platting procedures of AMC 21.45.125
- The height of any structures on the property will not exceed 35 feet
- Refuse collection containers and facilities will be bear-resistant and enclosed by a fence on at least three sides
- Lighting will be installed in a manner that prevents glare onto adjacent streets and residential properties
- A buffer of native vegetation will be visible from the roadside given a planned 25-foot setback. If there are areas where vegetation is insufficient to serve as a visual buffer, we will plant additional native vegetation for privacy
- Areas not devoted to buildings, structures, drives, walks, parking, etc. shall be planted with visual enhancement landscaping exclusively composed of native vegetation.

Consistency with Adopted Plans and Potter Marsh Watershed Park

Adopted regional, district, and neighborhood plans⁴⁶ include:

- Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan
- Hillside District Plan
- Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan
- Anchorage Climate Action Plan

⁴³ AMC 21.40.020, AMC 21.50.140

⁴⁴ AMC 21.50.140, AMC 21.500.140, AMC 21.45.080

⁴⁵ Per Green Burial Council standards, we will not be exceeding 400 burials per acre

⁴⁶ All referenced plans can be accessed at <https://alaskanaturalburial.org/moreinfo.html>

- Potter Valley Land Use Analysis
- Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan
- Anchorage Forestland Assessment and Management Plan

Additional documents reviewed⁴⁷ include:

- Potter Marsh Watershed Community Forest 2022 proposal
- Anchorage Memorial Park White Paper
- Letters of support from Community Forestry 101 LLC and the Rabbit Creek Community Council
- Written comments provided by the Rabbit Creek Community Council regarding previous plans and projects⁴⁸
- Alaska's Department of Fish & Game response regarding concerns about local wildlife
- Site studies and abandoned development plans from 1977 to the present
- HLB 2024 Annual Work Program and 2025-2029 Five-Year Management Plan⁴⁹

Development of Parcel 2-156, along with the contiguous 300 acres, for uses in accordance with municipal goals has been considered previously, but these attempts have been consistently abandoned. The hillside green space, including Parcel 2-156, is more valuable to the Municipality as undeveloped land.

- This south Anchorage location is not suitable for higher-density housing due to its distance from commercial centers and public transit
- Development of residential housing would require the construction of roadways which would concentrate runoff, focusing it into fewer sub-drainage basins and disrupting existing drainage patterns⁵⁰
- Development would close the wildlife corridor that currently exists between Potter Marsh and the Chugach Mountains

The Potter Marsh Watershed Park will ensure that the urban forest surrounding Parcel 2-156 will remain wild forever.⁵¹ Consideration of trail continuity and the experience of would-be recreators has always been a priority. The goal is for casual trail users to pass between the park and cemetery properties without noticing that they've done so, because the properties are so cohesive. We are eager to stay informed of the ongoing development of this project, especially as it moves through the master planning process at Parks and Recreation.

⁴⁷ All documents can be accessed at <https://alaskanaturalburial.org> unless otherwise noted. See APPENDIX II.

⁴⁸ Rabbit Creek Community Council responses on previous plans and projects. See APPENDIX II.

⁴⁹ MOA. *HLB 2024 Annual work program & 2025-2029 Five-year management plan*.

⁵⁰ 2006 Legacy Pointe Subdivision Watercourses. Watershed Management Services. See APPENDIX I.

⁵¹ Great Land Trust. *Press Release: Potter Marsh Watershed Park Project Moves Forward...* 2024.

Consistency with HLB and Development Priorities

The *HLB 2024 Annual Work Program and 2025-2029 Five-Year Management Plan* ensures that “Open space, conservation and preservation opportunities are considered in HLB development projects where those opportunities are in the best interest of the citizens of the Municipality of Anchorage.”⁵² Consistent with HLB’s stated goals for developing the site, Alaska Natural Burial’s vision for Parcel 2-156 will:

- Use sustainable practices and materials for planning and minimally developing the parcel so that basic cemetery infrastructure needs are supported while minimizing the extent to which the ecosystem is disrupted
- Collaborating with the area residents, the Rabbit Creek Community Council, and Parks and Recreation to ensure the recreational experience of trail users reflects a seamless transition from one parcel to the next
- Provide equitable access to interment services for people from all income levels

Alaska Natural Burial believes that, while Anchorage needs to develop housing, this location is not suitable for that purpose, especially for the medium- to high-density housing that would most effectively address Anchorage’s housing shortage. The best, most valuable use for Parcel 2-156 and the surrounding parcels is that they be preserved as community green space and wildlife habitat. We argue that our proposal to operate a conservation burial cemetery on Parcel 2-156 is consistent with this plan.

⁵² MOA. *HLB 2024 Annual work program & 2025-2029 Five-year management plan*.

Description, Scope, and Scale of Project

Existing Site Conditions and Current Uses



Photo 1: Winter and spring at Parcel 2-156

HLB Parcel 2-156 (“Legacy Pointe tract B2”) is a 9.6 acre parcel, currently zoned as PLI (Public Lands and Institutions), which is suitable for use as a cemetery. Access to the property is via Golden View Drive, which runs along the length of the eastern property line. Vacant land surrounds all other sides of the parcel. The parcel slopes downhill from Golden View Drive (between 1% to 18% slope, or maximum grade of 10.2°), with the steepest areas along the southern border of the property. The property features scenic vistas from many points overlooking Potter Marsh, Cook Inlet, and the Anchorage skyline.



Figure 3: Existing conditions - vegetation



Photo 2: Existing conditions - site character and social trails

Summary of Previous Studies: Hydrogeological Features

This property is contiguous with other vacant properties which together comprise approximately 300 acres of boreal forest on the hillside of south Anchorage. Numerous geotechnical investigations and site plans have been conducted over the past few decades as properties changed ownership and various development options were considered. This compilation of information has been integral to our initial assessments of the existing hydrological, geological, and ecological features.

Geology: Soil Classification and Depth to Bedrock

Test pits dug throughout the area demonstrate that there are occasional areas where shallow bedrock is encountered. Test pits along the south portion of Golden View Drive encounter high density cobble at depths of 5 to 7.5 feet. Many pits were dug to depths of 15 feet without encountering bedrock. Excluding wetlands, soils were classified as well-draining. Key surficial geology identified within Parcel 2-156 includes morainal deposits (primarily glacial till) consisting of intermixed gravel, sand, silt, and clay.⁵⁴

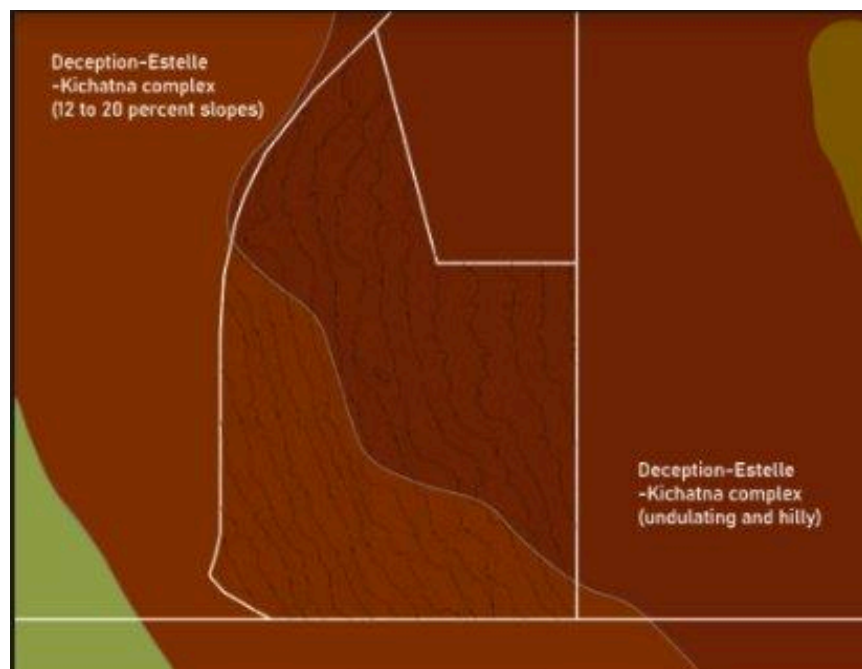


Figure 4: Existing conditions - soils description⁵⁵

Hydrology: Groundwater, Wetlands, and Drainage

Test pits encountered occasional spring activity, though no groundwater was noted in test pits along Golden View Drive. The drainage pattern of the slope south of Golden View Drive is divergent (with several sub-drainage basins radiating outward); most of Parcel 2-156 drains to Potter Marsh except the southernmost border which drains to a ravine and Potter Drive. No critical wetlands exist on Parcel

⁵⁴ Site studies and abandoned development plans from 1977-present. See APPENDIX I.

⁵⁵ USDA. *Web Soils Survey*. 2024. <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

2-156. Outside the borders of the parcel, to the northwest of Moen Trail, are three, very small areas that have been classified as low-value wetlands.⁵⁶

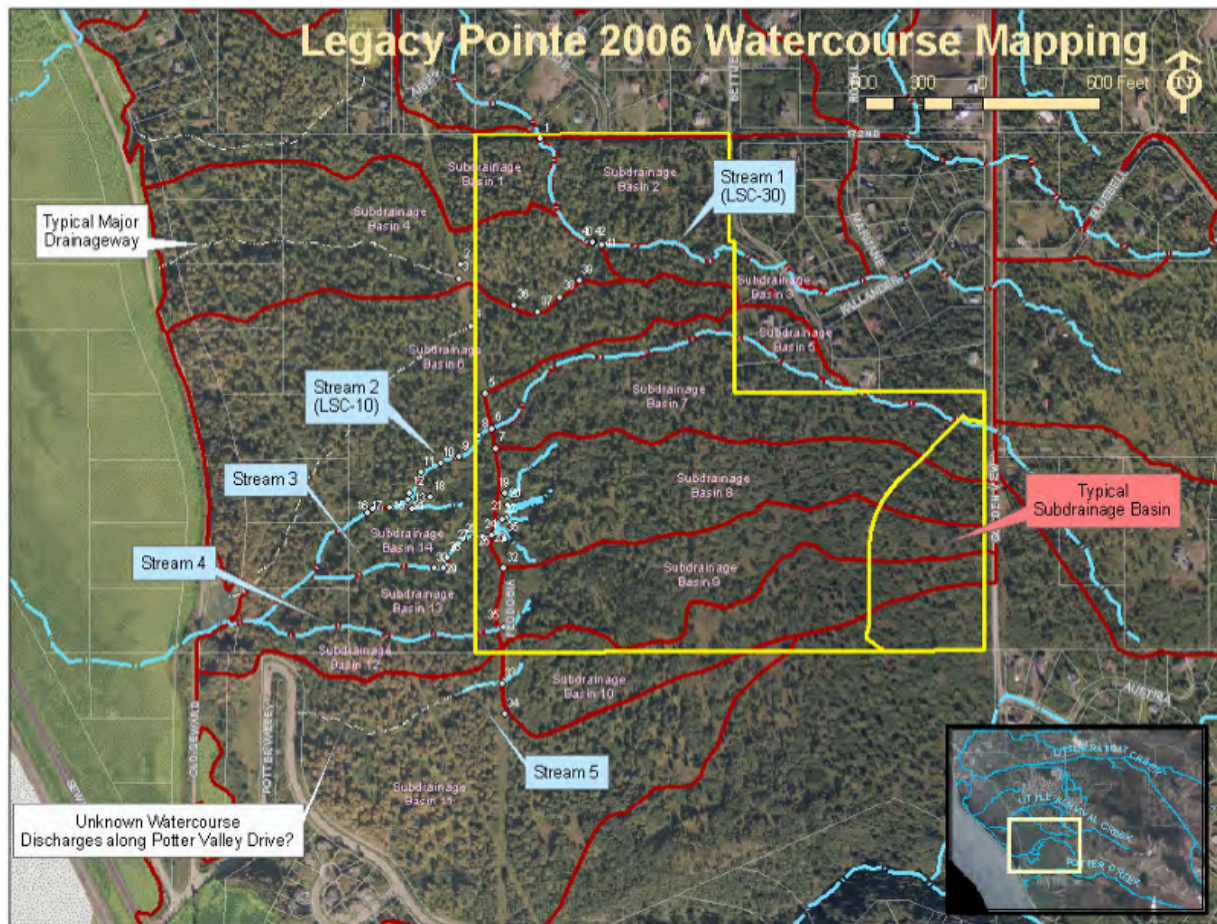


Figure 5: Mapped watercourses and subdrainage basins from a 2006 study

Hydrogeological Compatibility

Well-drained soil is desirable for natural burial as poorly drained soil creates anaerobic conditions which inhibit decomposition processes. Depth-to-bedrock becomes an issue for natural burial at depths of less than 4 feet; areas with bedrock above 4 feet deep will not be platted for use as grave sites. Moderately sloping conditions, up to about 15%, with well-drained soil are ideally suited for natural burial. Steeper slopes, beyond 18-20%, become difficult for equipment to navigate and limit pedestrian access.⁵⁷ Flat sites may be more prone to flooding, a condition routinely experienced by many cemeteries in the Lower-48.

⁵⁶ Site studies and abandoned development plans from 1977-present. See APPENDIX I.

⁵⁷ Personal Communication, Jack Goodnoe, experienced cemetery landscape architect. 2020.

Installation of a septic system requires on-site drainage fields be at least 6 feet above bedrock and have at least 4 feet of cover; therefore, the minimum depth-to-bedrock for septic accommodation may not be met, restricting construction to non-plumbed facilities on site (i.e. Porta-John).

Conceptual Site Plan and Proposed Uses

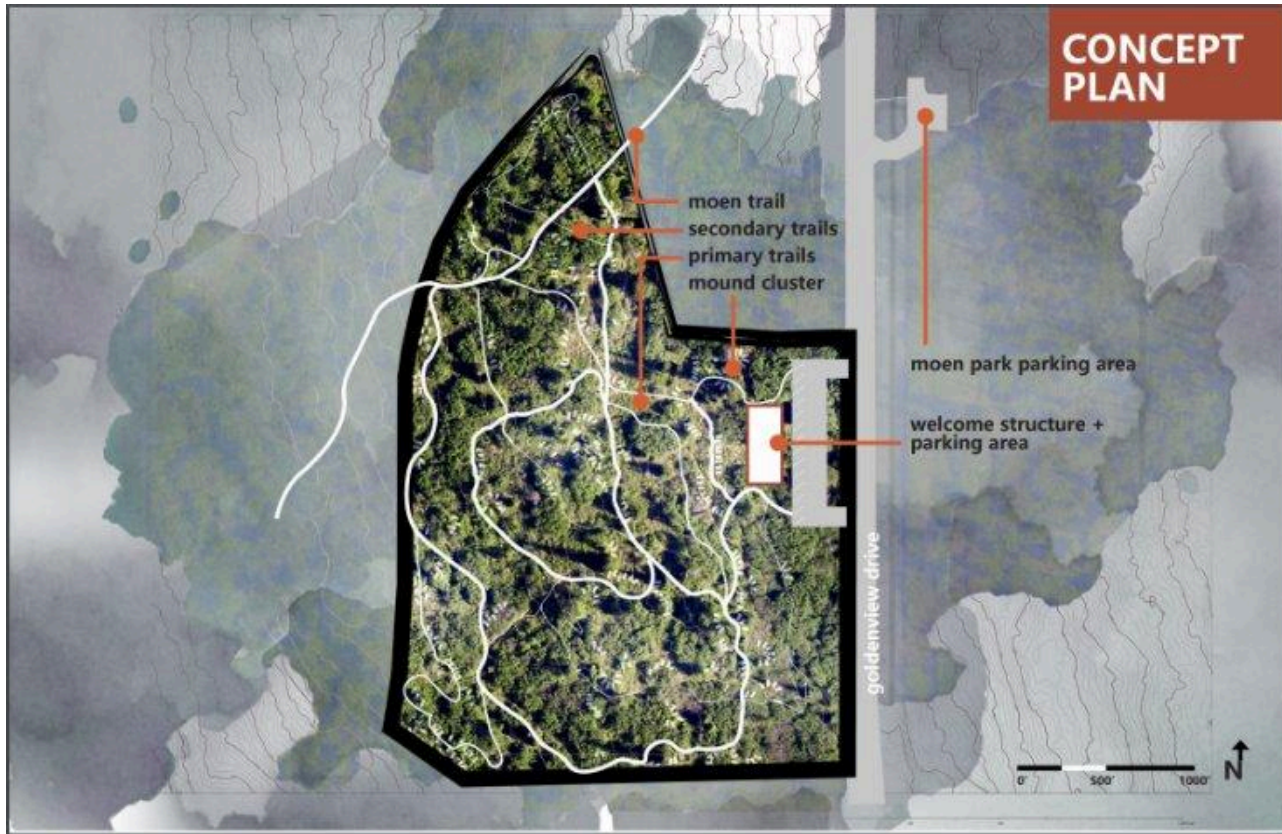


Figure 6: Concept plan

Gross Acreage and Proposed Uses

Planned development is minimally invasive to prevent disruption to ecosystems and existing users of the trail systems. Wherever possible, social trails within the 9.6 acre parcel will be improved for safety and accessibility, rather than creating new trails. Priority will be given to maintaining connectivity with the hillside's existing trail systems, which extend beyond the boundaries of Parcel 2-156, for the benefit of recreational users.

We plan to construct a modest structure to house staff offices and provide a family reception area, with an attached or detached structure for housing interment equipment and other maintenance supplies. A driveway and small parking area will be installed to provide access for staff and patrons from Golden View Drive. The number of parking spaces is yet to be determined, as discussions about shared parking spaces with Moen Park and/or Potter Marsh Watershed Park continue. Whatever the final decision on

size, permeable surface driveways, parking areas, and walkways will be installed using GeoBlock (or a similar product) wherever possible to minimize impact to existing drainage patterns.

Water or spring activity is not always predictable based on surface conditions. At the time of gravesite excavation, if too much spring activity is discovered, the site may be deemed unsuitable for interment and refilled. Water seeping into prepared gravesites is not an uncommon cemetery problem and is easily remedied by pumping the water out of the grave prior to the interment.

Maintenance and Operations

All of the cemetery's maintenance activities and standard operating procedures will be detailed in the Maintenance and Operations Manual. This manual will be used by all staff, contractors, cemetery patrons, and volunteers to ensure all site goals, policies, and best practices are followed. The manual is informed by the Green Burial Council's *Certification Standards for Conservation Burial Grounds*⁵⁸ and the Ecological Impact Assessment (with the included Natural Resources Inventory and Sensitive Area Analysis) that will be completed prior to beginning any construction or improvements.

Vehicular traffic will not generally be permitted beyond the parking area to ensure the safety of pedestrians, minimize the extent to which we need to widen and fortify the park trails, to preserve the continuity of the trails across parcel boundaries, and to minimize noise pollution. This means site maintenance and grave preparation will be performed without the use of heavy equipment whenever possible. Cemetery processions will involve the deceased being transported on a non-motorized cart or carried by hand. We plan on having a UTV (utility task vehicle) or golf-cart-style vehicle to facilitate access for people requiring assistance during graveside services or visitations. The vehicle will only be operated by trained staff of Alaska Natural Burial.

The site contains an abundance of existing native vegetation. Because Alaska Natural Burial intends to avoid disturbing the local ecology wherever possible, we may alter existing vegetation only when required for safety or access, removal of invasive species, or to plant native vegetation where needed. There should be no need to provide supplemental watering or install irrigation to support native vegetation.

We will not be installing an above-ground columbarium as these are generally not considered to fit within the scope of minimally-invasive conservation burial ground practices. There will be additional restrictions on the size and nature of cemetery markers. Because upright markers and large monuments will be prohibited, we will offer alternatives such as small GPS markers, unobtrusive stones, or a memorial planting where families may choose a tree, shrub, or other plant from a list of approved native species obtained from trusted sources with nursery certified stock. Burial vaults will not be used.

⁵⁸ Green Burial Council. *Cemetery Certification Standards*. 2021.

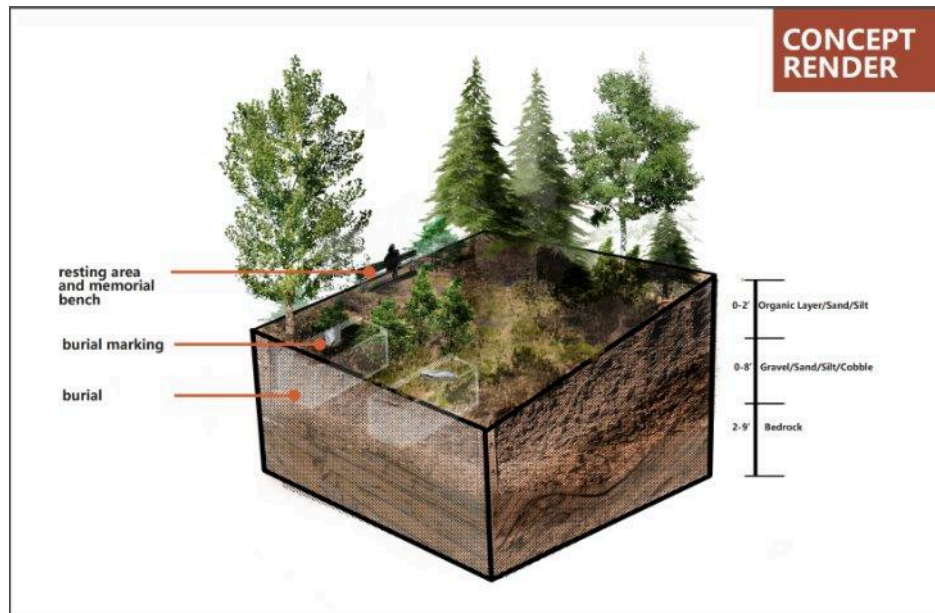


Figure 7: Concept render - natural burial

Anchorage Memorial Park prepares around 80 grave sites in advance⁵⁹ to allow for burial in the winter and to accommodate religious groups that require expedient burials. This practice of pre-digging is common among natural burial cemeteries; the graves are sometimes backfilled with wood chips for easier winter excavation. There are also ground thawing devices and other methods for performing year-round interments. Decisions about Alaska Natural Burial's practices regarding wintertime preparation will be made at a later date following further research and will be revised as needed with time and experience.

The intersection of Rabbit Creek Road and Golden View Drive becomes very congested during the morning and afternoon hours, coinciding with Goldenview Middle School's hours of operation. Cemetery visitation typically occurs on weekends and holidays and should not contribute significantly to peak-hour traffic. Care will be taken not to schedule afternoon interments to coincide with the afternoon school release time. There have been a handful of discussions in the past several years about roads and traffic patterns in this area. The intersection at Rabbit Creek Road and Golden View Drive is congested at times, especially with the added school traffic. Valid concerns have been raised about the safety of pedestrians and bikers along Rabbit Creek Road. There is also concern about the Golden View Drive and Rabbit Creek Road being the only means of entering or exiting the area by vehicle. With wildfires becoming an increasing concern for the area's residents, there are discussions being held about extending Mountain Air Drive to Rabbit Creek Road and improving the connection between Romania Drive and Portugal Place (over Potter Creek and through the ravine) so Golden View Drive is more easily accessed via Potter Heights Drive and Potter Valley Road. Any road improvement decisions in the area would be of interest to us, and we plan to keep an eye on the issue.

⁵⁹ MOA. *Girdwood Cemetery Schematic Report*. 2016.

Construction Mitigation Plan and Circulation Plan

Though our plan for developing Parcel 2-156 is essentially to develop it as little as possible, the installation of infrastructure to support operations (e.g., driveway, parking area, and a small structure) may be visible from Golden View Drive. Because Parcel 2-156 lies along the distal portion of Golden View Drive, it is unlikely that construction will impact most area residents, except those that reside along Romania Drive or Bulgaria Drive.

In general, vehicular traffic in the area is very light with a small uptick during typical workday commuting hours. However, the intersection of Rabbit Creek Road and Golden View Drive can become very congested when the school day concludes at Goldenview Middle School. Because construction activity is more likely to occur when school is not in session, this may not be a source of conflict.

The use of motorized vehicles will be restricted beyond a driveway and parking area. The exception to this will be a UTV or golf-cart type vehicle used on occasion by cemetery personnel for maintenance and interment activities. This vehicle may also be used to transport patrons with limited mobility or endurance. Another notable exception to prohibiting motorized vehicles would be during the active construction that will occur during Phase 1. Appropriate measures will be taken to secure the area while using motorized vehicles to mitigate the risk of injury to would-be trail users in the area. Interment services will require families to either hand-carry the remains or use a hand-drawn cart which we will have on site.

Wherever possible, we intend to improve existing social trails rather than constructing new trails, and they will remain unpaved. The trail system will have built-in redundancies for visitor control, for example, to provide privacy for an interment in one area while allowing other visitors alternate routes to other areas. Trail redundancy is also important for minimizing threats to wildlife, mainly in the form of guarding against displacement behaviors.

Throughout the design process attention will be paid to the multi-purpose intentions for the space. It is especially important that community members visiting this urban forest for recreational purposes be able to easily navigate the unpaved trails that crisscross the hillside, ideally without recognizing that they may be passing in and out of the border between Alaska Natural Burial and the planned Potter Marsh Watershed Park.

There have been tentative discussions, regarding parking lot capacity and park access, to coordinate a plan for sharing this infrastructure for users of Moen Park, Alaska Natural Burial, and the planned Potter Marsh Watershed Park. Understandably, no single project is enthusiastic about clearing trees to maximize parking access, though it is recognized that there are occasions during which overflow parking would be beneficial (e.g., during a birthday party at Moen Park, or an especially well-attended interment at Alaska Natural Burial). These conversations will continue as this plan progresses.

Expected Lifespan and Estimated Project Cost

Alaska Natural Burial plans on an expected active cemetery lifespan of nearly 30 years. That is to say, in 30 years we expect to have reserved 100% of the available grave sites. Some of those reservations may be pre-need reservations, where burials may not occur for some time.

Because Parcel 2-156 is 9.6 acres and our planned burial density averages 300 burials per acre, the parcel's capacity is 2,880 burials. If we acquire approximately half of Anchorage Memorial Park's existing business (which would be 100 burials per year), it gives us an active lifespan of 28.8 years. This does not take into account burying cremated remains, scattering ashes, or any other activities.

There are some areas where burials will not be permitted, for example, in identified sensitive areas, setbacks, trails, parking areas, where depth-to-bedrock is too shallow, or where buildings are located. Due to the unavailability of these spaces, the burial density may be as high as 400 per acre in some areas. This is acceptable as long as the average density remains at or below 300 per acre.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Green Burial Council. *Cemetery Certification Standards*. 2021.

Table 4: Itemized project costs for Phase 1

<u>Itemized Phase 1</u>				
<i>Item Description</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Est Quant</i>	<i>Unit Price</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
<u>Parking Area and Vehicle Access</u>				
SWPPP	LS	1	\$5,000	\$5,000
Clearing and Grubbing	Acre	0.4	\$40,000	\$16,000
Classified Fill and Backfill (Type II)	Ton	1000	\$22	\$22,000
Classified Fill and Backfill (Type II-A)	Ton	1000	\$22	\$22,000
Leveling Course	Ton	200	\$48	\$9,600
Geotextile drive and parking lot	SF	4000	\$3	\$12,000
Traffic Markings	LS	1	\$5,000	\$5,000
Parking Lot Lighting	LS	1	\$20,000	\$20,000
Standard Sign	LS	1	\$20,000	\$20,000
Vehicle Gate	Ea	2	\$2,500	\$5,000
Survey Crew	Hour	5	\$265	\$1,325
			Total	\$137,925
<u>Buildings and Vehicles</u>				
Portable, prefab "Denali" cabin 12x20	Ea	1		\$15,695
Portable, prefab shed 10x16	Ea	1		\$6,775
Landmaster AMP UTV	Ea	1		\$27,448
			Total	\$49,918
<u>Landscape Architect</u>	Ea	1	Total	\$13,000
<u>Planting Native Vegetation</u>	Ea	1	Total	\$8,000
<u>Improving and Constructing Pedestrian Pathways</u>				
SWPPP	LS	1	\$8,000	\$8,000
Clearing and Grubbing	Acre	0.6	\$40,000	\$24,000
Construction Survey Measurement	LS	1	\$15,000	\$15,000
			Total	\$290,761
			Subtotal Phase 1	\$499,604
			Construction Contingency (25%), Engineering and Construction Mgmt (35%)	\$299,762
			Total Phase 1	\$799,366

Project Timeline

Phasing Details and Timeline

Cemetery development will occur in phases. The first phase will encompass the majority of infrastructure including the structures, driveway, parking area, and the construction of (or improvement of existing) trails. It will also include establishing 25 foot setbacks along planned roadways, structures, and parking areas and conducting an Ecological Impact Assessment study with included Natural Resources Inventory and Sensitive Area Analysis. This is where we will establish baseline conditions, stewardship objectives, and institute a plan to reevaluate at regular intervals.

Table 5: Cemetery phasing summary

Phase	Construction Year	Development
1	2026	Plan for cemetery burial plots according to abbreviated platting procedures. Plant native vegetation as needed, especially in areas of 25 foot setbacks to serve as a visual buffer. Construct driveway, parking area, and a section of trails along which interments will occur. Install structures for offices, reception, and equipment storage. Initial developments will be concentrated on approximately one acre of property.
2	2028	Construct or improve trails across three acres of property, expand the area where interments are permitted.
3	2037	Construct or improve trails across remaining acres of property, expand the area where interments are permitted.
4	2055	As the cemetery exits its active lifespan, the organization may begin accessing the Perpetual Care and Maintenance Fund to honor the ongoing commitment to site maintenance and land stewardship and adhere to the terms of the conservation easement.

Table 6: Detailed project timeline

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
November 2021	Alaska Natural Burial holds initial conversations with HLB during our site selection process, identifies Parcel 2-156
Nov 2021 - June 2022	Alaska Natural Burial scours publicly available information to assess suitability, conducts preliminary feasibility studies
June 2022 - Jan 2024	Alaska Natural Burial meets with HLB, presents to HLB commissioners, attends and participates in HLBAC meetings
May 2024	Potter Marsh Watershed Park gains Assembly approval
June 17, 2024	RFP Issued for Parcel 2-156
July 31, 2024	RFP Responses due
August 2024	RFP Review Committee with subsequent publication of scoring, notification of results, and intent to negotiate
January 2025	Great Land Trust’s Potter Marsh Watershed Park finalizing purchase, Parks and Recreation estimated 5-year park planning process begins
January - February 2025	Alaska Natural Burial hosts open house, provides community presentations, gathers feedback
Aug 2024 - June 2025	Contract negotiations on the Development Agreement, Appraisal of Parcel 2-156, Ecological Impact Assessment is conducted
June 2025	Development Agreement signed between Alaska Natural Burial and HLB
July - Dec 2025	Platting, finalize site plans and secure engineering/construction firms
2026	Phase 1 construction/improvements
2028	Phase 2 construction/improvements
2037	Phase 3 construction/improvements
2055	Phase 4 construction/improvements
2055 and beyond	Parcel 2-156’s active cemetery lifespan comes to an end as all gravesite reservations have been made. Infrequent interments will occur as reservation-holders age and die. Perpetual Care and Maintenance funds become available. Continue to engage with community in non-cemetery activities.

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Appendices

APPENDIX I: Prior studies referenced

Prior studies involving Parcel 2-156 (and the approximately 300 acres of urban forest surrounding it) are listed below and can be accessed at <https://alaskanaturalburial.org/moreinfo.html>. Those cited directly in this RFP Response are underlined.

Triad Engineering documentation pertaining to a proposed subdivision. Includes detailed information about financial and environmental barriers to development, especially for the collector road and to bring utilities to the parcels.

- 2018 Subdivision Final Analysis
- 2018 Subdivision Preliminary Comments
- 2018 Subdivision Collector Road Concept
- 2018 Legacy 0.3 acre lot cost estimate
- 2018 Legacy 0.3 acre concept estimate notes

Property descriptions of the large hillside parcels between 2012 - 2015, in the context of a potential consolidation.

- 2014 Memo re Potter View Disposal Scenarios
- 2012 Legacy Pointe Subdivision re AWWU
- 2013 Plat of Legacy Pointe Tracts B1 & B2 (including HLB Parcel 2-156)
- 2015 Property Info re ARDSA consolidation
- 2015 Map re ARDSA Consolidation

2005 - 2006 work to develop a senior living community, including information on soils, depth to bedrock, groundwater, and nearby well information.

- 2006 Senior Community Map
- 2006 Legacy soils location map
- 2006 Legacy depth to bedrock
- 2005 Legacy well study - well location
- 2006 Lantech Legacy Pointe survey
- 2005 Legacy well study: Hydrogeologic Evaluation by Terrasat Inc. prepared for Goldenview Land Co.
- 2006 Subdrainage basins: Legacy Pointe subdivision watercourses
- 2006 Shaw AK wetlands delineation report

1998 - 2002 appraisal and studies

- 2002 Kincaid & Riley appraisal investigating AMHTLO and GCI tracts
- 1998 Shannon & Wilson geotechnical/soils study

1977-1983 Zoning and Muni soils log from test sites along Goldenview Drive, Soils study from 1977

- 1983 Muni soils log
- 1977 Hydrogeologic studies by Alaska Testlab for Potter Property
- 1983 Zone PLI

APPENDIX II: Relevant Regional, District, and Neighborhood Plans; Letters of support; White papers and other opinions

All of the following documents are referenced in this RFP Response and can be accessed at <https://alaskanaturalburial.org/moreinfo.html> unless otherwise noted.

Regional, District, and Neighborhood Plans

- Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan
- Hillside District Plan
- Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan
- Anchorage Climate Action Plan
- Potter Valley Land Use Analysis
- Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan
- 2023 Potter Marsh Watershed Community Forest Narrative

Letters of support from

- Rabbit Creek Community Council
- Arborist at Community Forestry 101

White papers and other opinions

- Anchorage Memorial Park White Paper 2017
- ADF&G's response addressing concerns about wildlife (especially bears) disturbing graves
- Written comments provided by the Rabbit Creek Community Council on previous plans and projects⁶¹

⁶¹ Rabbit Creek Community Council. <https://communitycouncils.org/servlet/content/27.html>

APPENDIX III: Green Burial Council Standards for Conservation Burial Grounds

<p style="text-align: center;">Green Burial Council Cemetery Certification Standards <small>Revised and adopted January 5, 2020</small></p>				
	Standard	Hybrid Cemetery	Natural Burial Grounds	Conservation Burial Grounds
1.	Accurately represent earned level of GBC certification in marketing materials, websites, and conversations with the public, clients, and the media.	✓	✓	✓
2.	Provide clients and families with the opportunity to participate in the burial and ritual process, in keeping with state law and with these standards.	✓	✓	✓
3.	Accept for burial only decedents that have not been embalmed or those embalmed only with GBC-approved, nontoxic chemicals.	✓	✓	✓
4.	Prohibit the use of a vault (partial, inverted, or otherwise), a vault lid, concrete box, slab or partitioned liner in the burial plot.	✓	✓	✓
5.	All burial containers, shrouds, and other associated products made only of natural, biodegradable materials.	✓	✓	✓
6.	Develop a <i>Maintenance and Operations Manual</i> to be utilized by all staff members, contractors, and volunteers to implement site goals, policies, and best practices.	✓	✓	✓
7.	Establish an endowment fund to ensure the long-term maintenance of the site by setting aside at least 10% of all burial plot sales.	✓	✓	✓
8.	Conduct an <i>Ecological Impact Assessment</i> , starting with a property baseline document that includes existing ecological conditions and sensitive area analysis. Update periodically to assess future property/habitat conditions and plant inventory.		✓	✓
9.	Restrict access and burial operations within sensitive areas as identified in the <i>Ecological Impact Assessment</i> .		✓	✓
10.	Use operational and burial practices that have no long-term degradation of soil health, plant diversity, water quality, and ecological habitat.		✓	✓
11.	Limit the type and size of memorial markers so that they do not impair the ecological conditions and aesthetic of the natural cemetery landscape.		✓	✓
12.	Site conditions as identified in the <i>Ecological Impact Assessment</i> and sensitive areas analysis, will restrict burial density on the property; therefore, Natural and Conservation burial grounds will have limits to allowable burial density. For Natural Burial, the cemetery's average density shall not exceed 500 burials/acre. For Conservation Burial, average density shall not exceed 300 burials/acre. Burial density of sensitive areas may be transferred to less restricted areas on the property to maximum densities of Natural Burial - 600/acre, Conservation Burial - 400/acre.		✓	✓
13.	Establish and apply strategies that conserve, preserve, enhance, or restore the historic native or natural habitat and flora of the region.			✓
14.	Conserve or restore a minimum of 20 acres, or 5 acres if contiguous to other protected land.*			✓
15.	Operate in conjunction with a government agency or a nonprofit conservation organization that has legally binding responsibility for perpetual monitoring and enforcement of the easement.			✓
16.	Guarantee preservation of the burial ground by deed restriction, conservation easement or other legally binding and irrevocable agreement that runs with the land and is enforceable in perpetuity.			✓

*All existing certified burial grounds not meeting these changed standards shall be grandfathered and allowed to maintain their current GBC classification.

Figure 8: Green Burial Council: Cemetery Certification Standards⁶²

⁶² Green Burial Council. *Cemetery Certification Standards*. 2021.

APPENDIX IV: Precedent Studies

There are 11 certified conservation burial grounds in North America. The model has successfully been implemented in a variety of climates. In each cemetery, individual Ecological Impact Assessments guide conservation objectives and uniquely shape cemetery policies.

1. *Salt Springs Island Natural Cemetery* in Salt Spring, BC, Canada
2. *White Eagle Memorial Preserve* in Goldendale, Washington
3. *Casper Creek Natural Cemetery* in Galena, Illinois
4. *Preble Memory Gardens Cemetery* in West Alexandria, Ohio
5. *Kokosing Nature Preserve* in Gambier, Ohio
6. *Foxfield Preserve* in Wilmot, Ohio
7. *Baldwin Hill Conservation Cemetery* in Winthrop, Maine
8. *Ramsey Creek Preserve* in Westminster, South Carolina
9. *Carolina Memorial Sanctuary* in Mills River, North Carolina
10. *Kings Mountain Preserve* in Blacksburg, South Carolina
11. *Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery* in Gainesville, Florida

Despite the differences in climate and conservation goals, there are similarities that serve as a source of inspiration for Alaska Natural Burial. First and foremost, conservation burial grounds more closely resemble what we would recognize as unpaved walking trails through native habitat or parks with limited built infrastructure.



Photo 3: A modest pavilion at Kings Mountain Preserve

When interments occur, the excavated soil is returned to the grave site. This creates a mounded appearance in the first couple years, though the soil settles over time. Families may choose to decorate the site with found objects from the surrounding area, within the limits of cemetery policies. In general, all interment sites are expected to be reclaimed by nature over the years.



Photo 4: Recent interments at The Forest Conservation Burial Ground, Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, and Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery

Whenever possible, graves are excavated by hand. Family participation is welcomed when lowering the body and filling the grave. Bodies are unembalmed and may be enclosed in a shroud or casket made from natural fibers.



Photo 5: Interments at Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery

Cemetery policy restricts the size, shape, and materials allowed for headstones. Generally, they must be flat against the ground and naturally shaped; cemetery patrons will be able to locate gravesites, but other recreational trail users may not recognize they are passing a grave. In addition to, or in lieu of headstones, graves are commonly marked with GPS survey markers.



Photo 6: A small headstone at Kings Mountain Preserve



Photo 7: GPS-marked graves at Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery

Instead of large monuments or headstones, families may elect to sponsor other conservation-oriented features like birdhouses, bat houses, or trail/game cameras.



Photo 8: One of the 15 birdhouses for bluebirds at Carolina Memorial Sanctuary

Motorized equipment is used sparingly in conservation burial grounds. Even in extreme environments, graves can be excavated by hand.



Photo 9: Graves are hand-dug in Utqiagvik⁶³

⁶³ Naiden, Alena. KTOO: *When death arrives in Utqiagvik, volunteer gravediggers answer the call.* 4/6/22.



Photo 10: Remains can be transported by a non-motorized cart⁶⁴



Photo 11: An electric UTV for site maintenance and for transporting patrons to gravesites when needed⁶⁵



Figure 9:
A small cabin and shed are sufficient to house cemetery offices and maintenance equipment⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Kinkaraco. *The Kinkara-Kart Processional*. 2024.

⁶⁵ Landmaster. *AMP 4x4 Crew*. 2024.

⁶⁶ Better Built Buildings. *Our Buildings*. 2024.