

To: Hal Meyer
Department of Natural Resources
3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, AK 99709

Re: Land Use Permit Application

Dear Mr. Meyer,

On behalf of the Board and 250+ members of Denali Citizens Council, thank you for the opportunity to comment on Alaska Travel Adventures (ATA) land use permit application for mile 11 of the Stampede Road. Denali Citizens Council (DCC) has been interested and concerned with activities and development along the Stampede Corridor since 1974. We promote sustainable development in the Denali Park area, responsible land use and work to preserve the natural integrity of Denali National Park and Preserve.

We have a few concerns with the application and plans for ATA's photo safari. We find it interesting that ATA already has this tour on their website as does Alaska Railroad when the permit has not even been issued yet.

- The projected traffic numbers for these tours at 3 round trips per day with 6 vehicles per trip over a season of 100 days, would see an increase of 800 extra vehicle trips, a 45% increase in traffic, on the Stampede Rd to Eight-mile lake. Past Eight-mile Lake the projected increase grows to over 200% of what occurs there now.
- This tour will be making use of an ATV-only type road from mile 8.5 to mile 11. We don't worry too much about the chip-sealed portion of this road, although the increased traffic load would have to have an impact on maintenance of that section. The worry is destruction of the state land area. This area is used by hunters in the fall, bicyclists in the summer as well as hikers and dog teams in winter. It is known as a "trail" and was never intended as a road. If there is an overly rainy summer season, it will definitely impact this trail. As you can imagine, an increase in traffic of 200% in this area will affect the tundra
- .We understand that DNR has no jurisdiction in the Panguingue Creek subdivision, through which the tour travels, but we would still like to express our concern about safety in this area. There are a number of families with small children, a number of people with dog teams, there is a guided horse tour that crosses the road at times and of course, the residents using this road for the daily commute to and from work. We share the concern of the residents that this huge increase in traffic might result in an accident(s).

DCC Board and Staff

Nancy Bale, President
Jean Balay
Land Cole, Vice President
Allen Cornelison, Treasurer

Nan Eagleson
Joan Frankevich, Secretary
Grady Wilson

Linda Paganelli, Issues Coordinator
Sue Deyoe, Winter Community Organizer

- The application asks permission for a “fire-ring” at the turnaround area at mile 11 of Stampede Road. As you know, there are many summers that fire danger is high, all across Alaska. It is a matter of great concern to us that the tour company would be allowed to pose such a fire danger to our area. The application states that the company would have a fire extinguisher on hand. Who will monitor this situation? What about ashes not extinguished properly?
- In that same vein, we are hopeful that you make it clear that firewood needs to be hauled in and no trees in the area can be harvested, if there truly is to be a fire-ring.
- The company states that all waste will be disposed of properly, but as you know, there is bear danger in many areas. Residents of that area have had problems in the past with bears in backyards and becoming acclimated to humans as a result of obtaining food. What is the plan when a bear walks in to the camp area while visitors are there?
- What is the plan to pump out the port-a-johns that are to be used? Several homeowners are already clearly upset with visitors in that area who don’t properly dispose of toilet paper or bury waste. Pumping trucks may be unable to travel past mile 8.5, because of their size and weight.
- Will someone from your staff be monitoring the camp at mile 11 for violations?
- To mitigate possible damage we recommend cutting the number of permitted tours in half for the first season. Throughout the season, impacts from the tours would be assessed and this assessment would become the basis for renewal of the permit. DNR should maintain contact with local citizens as part of its monitoring activities.
- The use of motorized vehicles in Alaska’s backcountry is a potentially serious problem for the state. At present these activities are poorly monitored and their impacts inadequately controlled. Cooperative agreements among state agencies are needed in order to provide regulation and monitoring of this type of activity. The introduction of new motorized uses into a given area is a serious matter, one that is not presently being treated as such.

Thank you for allowing the concerned citizens of the area involved to comment on this application. We appreciate your time and attendance at the local Borough meeting and the time you have spent answering questions and concerns of all affected.

Sincerely,

Sue Deyoe
DCC Community Organizer

cc: ATA officials
AKRR
Superintendent, Denali National Park and Preserve