



August 8, 2006

Paul Anderson, Superintendent
Denali National Park & Preserve
PO Box 9
Denali Park, AK 99755

Dear Paul,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Trails EA for the Savage Alpine Trail and Triple Lakes Trail. As a local park advocacy organization, many of whose members live in the gateway communities of Denali and work in the park in the summer, we have a strong ongoing interest in maintaining the natural integrity of Denali National Park and its Preserve lands and the special character of the public lands that surround the park.

Due to continued heavy use at the Savage River parking area, it is likely necessary to plan a trail from the Savage Rock for those that want to continue hiking upward. Too many years have gone by allowing social trails to develop.

The Triple Lakes trail has existed for many years as an informal trail thru the wilderness to link two hotels, as an easy get-away for park employees and as an educational tool for local organizations. Even though the Park hotel is gone, there are just as many, or more, individuals who now seek the chance to get away from the throngs at the Visitor Center and train station. This trail will continue to get used and will continue to develop re-routes through the boggy, muddy areas, unless it is closed permanently. The other option is to maintain the trail and put in boardwalks where needed.

Soundscape

In reviewing the EA for the Triple Lakes Trail, we recommend Alternative 2, but express concern with any motorized equipment used in the wilderness area. This area is much more quiet and remote than the Savage area. People that use the trail hopefully have the ability to hear all waterfowl, view moose and other wildlife without the intrusion of airplanes, helicopters, cars and other mechanized vehicles. In order to build the small bridges across Hines and Riley creeks as you suggest, some motorized equipment may need to be used. However, we ask that helicopters to sling loads either be used in April before the start of the season and after the ski season or in October or find a quieter, but efficient way of transporting needed materials.

The use of motorized equipment at the Savage trail is a different issue, since buses and airplanes are heard in this area frequently. Visitors walking this trail expect a completely different experience than those using the Triple Lakes Trail. However, we would still suggest the minimal noise level impact and either sling materials in during the least used period of the year or use no helicopters at all.

AKRR issues

Due to the recent Alaska Railroad application for permit to spray herbicides, we need to question what may be done about hiker's safety. There is a point where the Triple Lakes trail will cross the railroad ROW and we hope that NPS takes this into consideration when making comments to the DEC about the AKRR permit. If, indeed, the railroad IS issued a permit and does spraying in the Park, will the NPS have safety steps in place for the visitor that crosses the

tracks in this area? Currently there is no signage to tell people they will be crossing a railroad track and that it is not NPS property, but a railroad ROW. We suggest that visitor education be in place if this happens and even if spraying doesn't occur, that the visitor is educated about the Alaska Railroad and the railroad tracks within the Park's boundaries.

Cultural Resources

We are concerned that there has not been a full evaluation of cultural resources in these 2 areas, especially that of Triple Lakes area. We both know that there have been issues in that past of damage to cultural sights due to oversight of certain areas. We urge you to not let this happen. Please be positive that all areas in question are examined closely to make sure they do not contain heritage that is invaluable to the Park and its visitor. Could we suggest perhaps having a cultural resource representative on hand during the beginning construction period as one of the "quality assurance" personnel?

Wilderness Values

We agree that adverse impacts to soil and wilderness values will continue to worsen in these two areas if alternative 1 is chosen. We have very few issues with the installation of boardwalks over the marshy portions of the Triple Lakes Trail or the continuation of a trail beyond Savage Rock to ensure less impact of the wilderness.

We also urge the NPS to take measures to ensure that the Triple Lakes trail retains its winter usage quality and that local visitors to the Park in the winter will not be prevented from using the trail due to low overhead bridges. Hopefully there is a way to ensure that dog mushers, skijorers, skiers and those snowshoeing in the park can all continue to enjoy this trail.

Thank you again for accepting public comment. We look forward to the day these frontcountry areas are completed and usable to the public and the impacted areas are re-vegetated. We also encourage you to consider and use the willing and able local volunteers for trail work in these areas.

Sincerely,

Sue Deyoe
Community Organizer
Denali Citizens Council

cc: Mike Tranel, Steve Carwile, Chuck Tomkiewicz