

DENALI PARK ROAD EMERGES FROM THE SNOW FOR ANOTHER SUMMER

DENALI'S ONLY VEHICLE ACCESS RETAINS ITS UNIQUE CHARACTER . . . FOR NOW

By Nancy Bale

By the time the NPS road crew reaches Wonder Lake each spring, they've been at it for close to two months. They've dealt with deep drifts only a large blade can move and frozen culverts only a steam crew can dislodge. They've worked to reach and open Toklat Road Camp, then turned to the deep snows farther west, punching through the drifts, coping with spring runoff and watching for rockslides on the bluffs. It used to be that the crew didn't make it to Wonder Lake until late May. That timeline has accelerated in recent years, but even when finally opened, the road must rest and dry for at least a few days before heavy vehicles can travel across it.



Large equipment is often required to open the 90-mile-long Denali Park road every spring, as shown in this photo taken near Stony Creek. photo courtesy of Sue Deyoe

The summer season at Denali begins with the emergence of this unique 90-mile road, completed in 1938, built to the specifications of another era, and somehow still clinging to its primitive roots. The road crew works diligently throughout the summer maintaining a safe and comfortable surface, while adhering to strict design standards and policy prescriptions for this road.

Controversial from the beginning

Recent visitors may not remember that when it first opened, the Denali Park road facilitated the expansion of lode mining in Kantishna, as it was used by the miners to transport their heavy equipment to the gold fields. Such use sparked one of the first controversies surrounding the road - was it to be a quiet, scenic access road for park tourism traffic or an industrial link for heavy mining equipment? The two uses needed to cooperate, and did so through use of time and seasonal restrictions on the mining traffic.

When I first lived and worked in Kantishna, in the mid 1970s, miners still transported their rigs during the evening, the roar of their engines breaking the night silences. Then, stricter environmental regulations in the late 70s and early 80s effectively ended the era of mining. Larger vehicles still traveled at night, but they were carrying fuel or equipment for tourism lodges, not dredges and gold extraction equipment. Mining claims were sold to tourism developers. More and more buses appeared. Gravel became scarce. New controversies developed.

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FROM THE BOARD

Dear Friends and Members:

It is spring in Denali and that means you can count on a few things: eagles are returning to the area, with snow buntings and juncos not far behind them; the road crew is out plowing the Denali Park Road, preparing it for the summer season; and on warm sunny afternoons, locals may don t-shirts and think the days of winter are past, only to have their hopes dashed by an unexpected snow squall. Like others, I am enjoying spring, but also looking toward summer with a head full of questions. It seems there is a steady buzz of uncertainties and discussions, especially among those involved in tourism: *What will the summer be like? How many visitors will come to Denali? What will they choose to do while they are here? Will we have enough visitors to get by? How does your business look for the summer? How can we fill all our rooms and tours?* It is difficult to look beyond the repercussions this downturn might have in our community—its businesses, families, and economic health. But what strikes me is not how few people might travel to Denali this year, but what unbelievable growth has happened in the last few years here. Might this be an opportunity to re-evaluate our approach to tourism in the area?

In these tough economic times, Denali has again become a fairly remote, exotic vacation destination, out of reach for many travelers. For some who have lived around the park for decades, this summer may feel like a throwback to the past. Back to when there were fewer people, fewer buses, and a quieter Park Road. Back to the days before Denali saw over 400,000 visitors each summer and before those visitors were able to find a slice of Anytown, USA by grabbing a Subway sandwich at the park entrance. In 1980, there were 133 hotel rooms around Denali; in 1999, there were 1,720; as of 2008, there were 2,095 rooms plus another 1,000 accommodations in cabins, RV spaces and bunks. If the park and the park entrance areas have seemed busier in recent years, it's because they have been.

During the most recent growth spurt, there was a sense that visitor demand for accommodations would always exist and always grow. There were complaints about vehicle limits on the Park Road—cries that limits must increase from the 10,512 currently allowable trips over the road because this was *the* limiting factor to continued growth in Denali's industrial tourism. "If we build it, they will come" seemed to be the mantra of the era. This summer may be a harsh reminder that unchecked growth is unsustainable; the bigger we build, the harder we stand to fall.

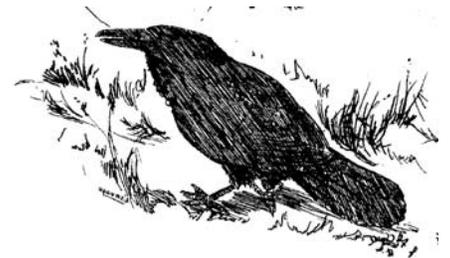
This year, businesses are tightening their budgets, discounting their rates and creatively working toward remaining viable through the tough going. It may not be the most economically lucrative summer on record, but visitors to Denali this summer stand to have an exceptional experience in the park. There are likely to be fewer crowds, fewer buses, perhaps fewer people in the backcountry, quality returning staff, and, if visitors venture off of the Park Road, they may even find it quieter. They have a better chance of experiencing the Denali National Park that we know to be so special, and of becoming advocates for its future. Quality does not always follow quantity.

I look forward to this summer, both as someone who works in the travel industry, and as a visitor to the park myself. It is certainly a challenge, and not just a little daunting, to look at the summer ahead and think about re-working aspects of the business for the assurance of a future. We might not have asked for it, but in this struggling economy we have an opportunity to re-evaluate the sustainability and carrying capacity of Denali's tourism. I hope we as a community can bring ourselves to have that perspective when looking at tourism as a whole as it relates to Denali National Park.

In no way do I necessarily hope for a slow summer. I often think about my neighbors and so many of our livelihoods that are directly tied with small businesses dependent upon summer visitors to the park. I am hopeful, however, that this summer might allow us all to consider the future direction of tourism in Denali and how we would like to guide it.

Sincerely,

Anne Beaulaurier



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

FROM THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

by Julia Potter

A recent letter to the editor in one of the local Alaska newspapers, regarding the restart of the Healy Clean Coal Plant, made reference to folks from California and other areas telling Alaskans what to do with “our environment.” I thought about this for awhile. Our environment.

I came to the conclusion that the environment is *ours*, not just mine or yours. It belongs to all of us. We all have a responsibility to take care of our environment. Hopefully, we are beyond the dark ages when we had no idea that breathing foul air gave us cancer or tuberculosis, or that poisoning our drinking water by pitching our human waste into it spread diseases like cholera. But some days I’m not so sure we are not still in the dark ages. Humans still think it’s okay to dump sewage into our oceans and rivers, or to continue burning fossil fuels without concern for the chemicals pumped into our air, our environment.



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

If we don’t take care of our environment, it will not take care of us. We will not have caribou to eat. We will not have moose or berries. When we make the choice to pollute our environment, we in turn have made the choice stating that the other components of our environment are not important. Our environment is also the environment of the caribou, moose and berries. Do we not care about these things? Are they not an important part of the Alaskan life?

Maybe the recent findings by the Environmental Protection Agency will send a wake-up call to those non-believers. The EPA is proposing to find that the current and projected concentrations of the mix of six key greenhouse gases - carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride - in the atmosphere threaten the public health and welfare of current and future generations. This could be the first step toward imposing limits on pollution linked to climate change meaning tighter rules for cars and **power plants**. Is it really too much to ask that HCCP adhere to regulations which protect our environment?

Nature has a wonderful sense of balance. That balance ensures that the lives of the caribou, moose and berries will continue. It is time to leave the dark ages once and for all, to understand that balancing our needs while protecting our environment is necessary. It’s our choice, our environment. ✎

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DENALI PARK ROAD RETAINS ITS UNIQUE CHARACTER . . . FOR NOW

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The park gets a public access shuttle in 1971

When the Parks Highway was completed past Denali National Park in 1971, NPS recognized that visitation would increase substantially, adding the pressure of additional private vehicles onto the park's rustic gravel road. As a response, NPS Director George Hartzog restricted private automobile traffic west of the Savage River, and the shuttle bus was born. It and the already existing tour buses became the two chief modes of transportation for tourists. The shuttle was to be free and supported by NPS, the tour would provide a paid experience.

Eventually, however, the cost of the shuttle system became burdensome, and in 1995 NPS announced that fees would be charged and that the park concessioner, ARA, would take over management of the shuttle bus system. In the early years, shuttle buses outnumbered the tour buses, but more recently, shuttle numbers have declined and tour bus numbers are pushing their statutory limits. The reasons are complex, related to the growing predominance of package tourism at Denali over the past three decades. Large blocks of tour bus seats are pre-sold, while the shuttle is designed to be a demand system. Some say that preferential advertising of the tour buses by the concessioner has promoted the decline of the shuttle. The shuttle concept, however, still provides the cheapest public access into Denali, access that must be available as long as private cars are prohibited.

ANILCA surrounds the Park Road with Wilderness - 1980

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed into law the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which expanded Denali National Park by 4 million acres and designated the core 2 million-acre Old Park as statutory Wilderness.

Because lands designated as Wilderness typically do not contain roads or permanent structures, an exception was made for the Park Road. NPS established a Wilderness exclusion zone 150 feet to either side of the road's centerline and surrounding all areas where structures existed or were planned. The mapping of this Wilderness exclusion, or Development Zone, set the boundaries for most of the park infrastructure we see today. It encompassed the campgrounds, rest stops, Eielson Visitor Center, and Toklat Road Camp. Even new infrastructure, such as the Savage River Rest Stop, in early stages of construction, must be built in a Development Zone.

Placing a Development Zone within designated Wilderness has led to inevitable conflicts. Increased traffic has led to



Polychrome Rest Stop - Shuttle, tour and private buses share one of the best views along the Denali Park Road. NPS is planning to remove chemical toilets and associated structures from Polychrome this summer.

photo courtesy of Kim Turnbull

noise, dust and crowded rest stops. Studies have shown that the animals exhibit avoidance behaviors. Maintenance activities for the rest stops and Eielson Visitor Center have become more complex. Commercial use, at Toklat Rest Stop, has added an additional incompatible use. Generator and bus noise bleed over into nearby designated Wilderness.

Maintaining road character - a central imperative

Maintaining the unique character of the Park Road has been a consistent policy at Denali, although sporadic attempts to widen and pave beyond the Savage River have occurred.

One of the central defenders of a rustic road was Adolph Murie, Park Naturalist in the 1930s and 40s.

NPS planning documents state that road character is an integral part of the visitor experience, enabling park guests to feel part of the Wilderness through which they travel. There are two elements - a gradual **transition** as the road travels west from urban to rustic, rustic to primitive, and a collection of safe but more primitive design features (the road winds a sinuous path over dramatic terrain, conforming to the terrain, engineered structures are designed to fit into the landscape, the surface is gravel and signage is kept to a minimum). The key components of road character have survived through all more recent planning documents, including the inclusive *Entrance Area and Road Corridor EIS of 1997*, the *Road Design Standards of 2007* and into the preliminary planning for a *Vehicle Management Plan*.

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DENALI PARK ROAD RETAINS ITS UNIQUE CHARACTER . . . FOR NOW

continued from previous page*photo courtesy of Kim Turnbull*

"...the road winds a sinuous path over dramatic terrain; alignment conforms to topography as opposed to overcoming it; variable width and grade as dictated by the terrain; engineered structures such as bridges . . . are used only when necessary to protect the resource and preserve road alignment; native materials are used in construction where applicable; the driving surface is gravel; signs and related items are kept to a minimum."

from **Road System Evaluation**, April 1994, p. 2-3

"Millions of acres and only one road"

Throughout its history the Denali Park Road has experienced calls for expansion. From Earl Pilgrim's request for a road up the Toklat from the Stampede Mine to Jeff Barney and Gene Desjarlais' request to build about seven miles of road to their private property on Spruce Creek - there have always been schemes.

Perhaps the biggest scheme was for a North Access loop, a road that would travel from the Parks Highway near Healy into Denali and join the existing road in Kantishna. This proposal, the pet project of Senator and then Governor Frank Murkowski, received quite a bit of both federal and state funding, but the opposition of park advocates and local people pushed the project to the sidelines. It lives on, though, in the hearts of some.

Given the pressures, it is astounding that this rustic, 90-mile road has managed to fend off most efforts to make it larger, longer and more modern. However, in our highly sophisticated culture, the existence of a simple, interpretive road in a national park will continue to spark controversy and require strong advocacy. **✎**

HEALY CLEAN COAL PLANT RESTART

COMMUNITY FORUM TO BE HELD IN HEALY

by Cass Ray

The proposed restart of the Healy Clean Coal Plant (HCCP) will be the topic at a community forum in Healy Thursday evening, May 14. Healy and Denali area residents will have an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns to Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) officials Brian Newton, president and chief executive officer, and Kate Lamal, vice president, power supply. The forum will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Windjammer Room of the Tri-Valley Community Center. Community residents who lived here during the first HCCP start, nearly a decade ago, and who have "done their homework" are encouraged to offer input that GVEA might find useful in determining whether to restart HCCP.

DCC's interest in a community forum with GVEA representatives was piqued on the evening of February 11. On that evening, a large crowd attending the meeting of the Denali Borough Assembly at the McKinley Park Community Center heard a brief presentation on the proposed restart of HCCP by a GVEA representative, and many were left disappointed, frustrated, and angry. After offering a brief statement on the proposed restart, the GVEA representative allowed the audience to ask a few questions and voice a few concerns, but he answered few of those questions and addressed few of those concerns. The detail contained in the questions and concerns indicated that residents were knowledgeable of the topic and had researched it. The GVEA representative reminded the audience that he was not an expert on all things related to the proposed restart but would relay questions and concerns to the GVEA officials who are. As the audience grew increasingly frustrated, angry, and outspoken, borough officials repeatedly insisted the assembly meeting was not the proper forum for a lengthy discussion of the proposed restart. Asking when a proper forum might be scheduled, members of the audience insisted that public notice of plans for the restart had been far insufficient. The response from the GVEA representative

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COMMUNITY FORUM FOR HEALY CLEAN COAL PLANT

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was that those interested in the proposed restart should have attended the January 26 meeting of the GVEA board in Healy. (The official minutes of that meeting show that at least ten Healy residents attended.)

Encouraging the scheduling of such a community forum is very much consistent with the mission of DCC, and, the evening of that February 11 meeting, DCC board members began exploring the potential for such a forum. Pursuing the scheduling of a forum, DCC insisted that whoever represented GVEA at the forum be someone who could answer questions and address concerns voiced by residents who had researched the topic and who knew the convoluted history of the HCCP project. DCC also insisted that the forum be held in Healy, since, although most of the power produced by HCCP would be sold in Homer and the Fairbanks area, Healy is the community that would be most affected by any negative environmental repercussions of restarting HCCP. To many, including DCC, it seemed logical, even obvious, that the first such informational forum regarding the proposed restart would be held in Healy. It was hoped that GVEA would agree.

DCC was aware that the closer to summer that the forum was scheduled, the busier, and thus less available, residents with a stake in the restart could be, and therefore hoped the forum could be scheduled as early as April. In fairness, already-scheduled community events in Healy and a meeting of the Denali Borough Assembly provided conflicts with some dates under consideration.

However logical or obvious it may seem to many that GVEA's first community forum on the proposed restart of the Healy Clean Coal Plant be held in Healy, the fact is that on March 23, GVEA hosted a forum at the public library in Fairbanks. It was a Monday evening, and few residents of the Healy and Denali area were able to attend. Still, several dozen people attended the meeting; the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* reported the library auditorium was "nearly filled." For one and three quarter hours, Newton, GVEA's president and CEO, answered questions from the audience. A person who attended and took notes reported to DCC that of the twenty people addressing GVEA's CEO, five seemed to favor the proposed restart, and fifteen seemed to oppose it. The audience was told that HCCP would be run "as is," meaning with the "clean coal technology" with which it originally was designed. If GVEA completed purchase of the plant from AIDEA (Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority) in late summer, eighteen to twenty-four months could be required to have it repaired and ready to operate. GVEA insisted that no new permits, air quality or otherwise, would be needed to restart HCCP. Neither would a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be required, claimed GVEA (the original EIS dates from sixteen years ago, 1993), and HCCP need not adhere to the more protective emissions standards adopted in the decade since its first start-up.

The environmental community has noted that HCCP's outdated technology was not designed to mitigate more recent health concerns regarding mercury and carbon dioxide emissions. If HCCP restarted with its stale permits, it would not be in compliance with the Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) provisions of the Clean Air Act. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations dictate that if a plant shutdown is considered permanent, restarting that inactive plant triggers PSD review, meaning new permits must be pursued. **✎**



The environmental community has noted that Healy Clean Coal Plant's outdated technology was not designed to mitigate more recent health concerns regarding mercury and carbon dioxide emissions. The plant, if restarted with its stale permits, would not comply with the Prevention of Significant Deterioration provisions of the Clean Air Act. *DCC Photo*

ALASKA YOUTH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

JUNIOR AT TRI-VALLEY SCHOOL, DENALI BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT,
LEARNS THE POWER OF OUR VOICE

By Noah Schieber

Alaska Youth for Environmental Action Civics Summit was more than just a chance to meet our Alaska State Legislature. It was an opportunity to learn how we, as students, can make a difference.

This year's AYEA Civics and Conservation Summit was held in Juneau in March and brought teens together from across the state. I represented the Denali Borough School District, thanks to Denali Citizens Council, which sponsored my travel, and Denali Chamber of Commerce, which paid for my tuition.

We learned about the legislative process and how youth can have a voice in Alaskan politics. After the summit one student commented, "I learned way more about the political process than I knew before; I actually feel like I have a good understanding of it, and I know how it can be used to further environmental action."

During the first three days, participants split into three groups. Each focused on a legislative bill; House Bill 70 was about providing Alaska-grown food in schools, Senate Bill 121 pushed for energy efficiency in buildings throughout the state, and House Bill 46 focused on stricter regulations for mixing zones. On the last day, participants met individually with the Senator and Representative from their region. I met with Senator Joe Thomas and Representative David Guttenberg, and shared those three bills with them.

We sat in on a House floor session and a hearing for HB 70. The climax of the summit was when the group met with Governor Sarah Palin's special assistant Joe Balash and got him to sign a renewable energy petition. The petition calls for special focus on renewable energy in the state.

The Summit concluded with a community dinner where AYEA teens presented several legislators with awards for doing good work for the environment, youth, or their communities.

At the summit, youth in high school, and some in middle school, came together and stayed in communal housing. All the participants stayed in a hostel that shared a common living room and kitchen. The time they spent together allowed them to share and enjoy their differences in culture. Strong peer bonding and great new friendships developed. Though there was an immense amount of politics to learn, there was also much to learn about living and working together.

Participants in this summit were given the opportunity to expand their boundaries. Some students surprised themselves, gaining the confidence and support needed to step up to the challenge of being an active participant and leader. As enthusiastic participant Tamrit Grewal of Dillingham said, "I learned about the bills and the environment and most of all I learned more about myself." This confidence allowed all of us to educate legislators about solutions and concerns we have regarding different difficulties and conflicts around the state.

In five action-packed days participants learned how to communicate with legislators, be leaders for activism in their communities, and, most importantly, became aware of how powerful their voices are for inciting change.

One participant summed it up best with the answer to this question: What do you consider to be the biggest impact from the training? "Our voice. I did not know that we citizens had the power and opportunity of involvement that we do."

When Sen. Lesil McGuire asked to meet us for 30 minutes to discuss her most recent bill regarding geothermal energy in Alaska, I realized legislators actually wanted to hear what we had to say.

I was also pleasantly surprised by the power of our voice. 



Noah Schieber (pictured above), a junior at Tri-Valley School in Healy, AK, attended this year's AYEA Civics and Conservation Summit in Juneau.

photo by Kris Capps

DENALI OVERFLIGHTS COUNCIL MAKES DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS SUMMER

By Nancy Bale

The Denali Aircraft Overflights Advisory Council held our fifth meeting in Fairbanks on April 7th, at the NPS administrative offices. All twelve members of the Council were present, along with several NPS officials, including Superintendent Paul Anderson, Backcountry and Wilderness Coordinator Joe Van Horn, Sound Monitoring Technician Jared Withers, and Researcher Guy Adema.

The Council is charged with developing voluntary measures to ensure the safety of pilots and passengers and to protect Denali's natural sound resources. The twelve Council members represent a diverse mix of Denali National Park users and advocates, including the Military, Civilian, Private and Commercial users of this space, and ground-based recreational, environmental and landowner constituents.

Denali Airspace – military presence

Council member Lt. Col. Scott Babos, USAF, emphasized again at this meeting that very little of Denali's airspace is used for Air Force training. The Susitna MOA, the nearest Military Operations Area, includes only a small southwest portion of the park. He indicated, however, that military overflights do occur in other areas of the park when aircraft are being transported between Anchorage and Fairbanks bases. These aircraft should be 2000 or more feet above ground level, however. Babos gave the council a number for any and all complaints about military aircraft noise over Denali, 1-800-JET-NOISE.

Representatives from the US Army Alaska were present at this meeting to describe their high-altitude training activities at Denali, which include using Chinook helicopters to fly in the National Park Service support camps on Mt. McKinley. At the time of this Council meeting, the Army had just finished flying these camps into the mountain, an activity that transports about 17,500 pounds of cargo.

Sound sensitive areas discussed

At our December meeting, the Council had established a Best Practices Working Group, a more informal collection of both Council members and other interested pilots and air services. The Best Practices Working Group met once in March to discuss sound sensitive areas at Denali and aircraft users' recommendations for how to deal with these areas. At this meeting a sound sensitive areas map provided the focus of discussion. The map was conceived by Council member Joan Frankevich and developed with help from Council members Nancy Bale, Nan Eagleson, Charlie Sassara and Brian Okonek, using information from NPS data and a number of other constituents.

The Working Group attendees discussed possible ways to mitigate aircraft noise in certain highly impacted areas of Denali. Many of the attendees stated that they already were doing as much as could be done to reduce their sound impacts, but during the meeting certain strategies for avoiding high sound impact areas emerged. These mainly involved changes of elevation and flight paths.

At our full Council meeting, members discussed specific strategies based on the Working Group's findings. These strategies included aircraft route modifications near the Summit of Denali, and alternate routes for aircraft flying into the park entrance area to reduce the noise imprint on Triple Lakes. Council members Tim Cudney and Suzanne Rust agreed to disseminate and refine these recommendations in consultation with the air services in their areas of operation.

NPS committed to try and help monitor the effects of any voluntary measures attempted this summer. Already, NPS plans to have a sound monitoring station near Triple Lakes, an ideal position to monitor any aircraft changes there. Effects of

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DENALI OVERFLIGHTS COUNCIL

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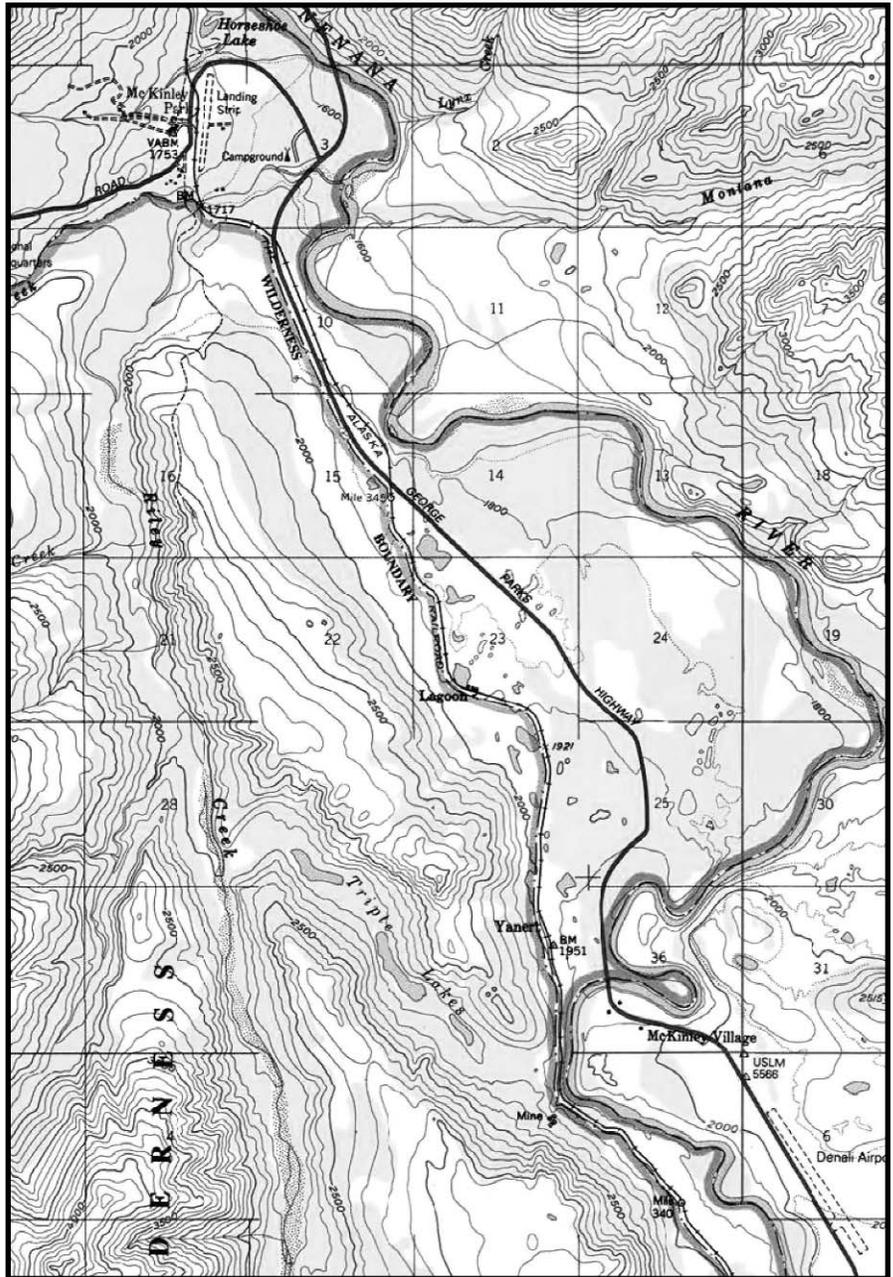
flight path changes in the vicinity of Mt. McKinley could potentially be monitored by NPS representatives along the climbing routes. Refinement of plans and processes continues.

Recommendations are voluntary

The above recommendations are the first that the Council has made. They will be voluntary. Suzanne Rust reminded members that whenever a change of route occurred, unintended consequences could happen, shifting the area of sound disturbance or creating safety problems. With this in mind, the Council cautiously went ahead with the recommendations above, and we look forward to their deployment in cooperation with NPS this coming summer.

In addition, the Council plans a “listening event” on July 17th north of Trapper Creek, with assistance from Council member Brian Okonek. Members will have the opportunity to listen to various types of aircraft at various altitudes, to judge relative impact to the human ear. And, NPS will continue to gather inventory on its soundscape through data collection at several points within the park this summer.

The Overflights Council will next meet on October 2, 2009. 



The entrance area of Denali National Park, showing the eastern park border; Parks Highway, the two local airstrips and associated infrastructure. In the summer this busy area contains a large number of people, vehicles and aircraft. Triple Lakes, shown on the lower left of the map, is a popular hiking destination with access points from two sides. Unfortunately it also is beneath flight paths of three local air services as they gain altitude for flightseeing excursions. *Map created using TOPO software*



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

STAMPEDE SRA BILL MOVES OUT OF SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Proposed legislation for the creation of the Stampede State Recreation Area, Senate Bill 108, moved out of the Senate Resources Committee in April. The bill now moves on to Senate Finance Committee in the next legislative session.

Two hearings were held on SB 108 in Resources on March 27 and April 10. The initial hearing of the bill by Resources on March 27 was overwhelmingly supported by members of Denali Citizens Council who called in to provide testimony to the committee. The bill was held over for further discussion and to give the committee members a chance to digest the testimony presented. On April 10, the bill was again considered and referred to Finance. While two issues were brought up, a right-of-way reservation by DOT and concerns about mineral resource exploration and extraction within the SRA, these concerns were addressed by James King, Director of State Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and Joe Hardenbrook, senior staffer for Senator Joe Thomas, to allow the bill to head to Finance with no attachments or amendments.

We were hoping the bill would be heard by Finance this session, but this was not the case with the session ending April 19. The next legislative session begins January 19, 2010. DCC will continue to work with Senator Thomas and Joe Hardenbrook to move the bill in the next session.

DCC is thrilled the bill has been referred to Finance. We would still like to see the lands surrounding 8-Mile Lake included in the proposed boundaries of the SRA and are hopeful the bill may be amended once it arrives on the floor of the Senate should it pass through the Finance Committee.

The support shown for this bill by DCC members who provided testimony, members who signed the petition in support of the SRA and local organizations (Panguingue Creek Homeowners Association and the Denali Chamber of Commerce) made a difference, noted by Senator French in stating that no negative comments were presented during the March 27 hearing.

DCC thanks Senator Thomas and Joe Hardenbrook for their continued efforts to see this bill through. We also thank Senator Hollis French for recommending DO PASS on the bill. 

STUDENTS SHOW THEIR SCIENCE SAVVY

This year's Denali Borough School District Science Fair was once again filled with interesting science projects from students throughout the Borough. Projects ranged from reports on black widow spiders to invertebrates found in the Nenana River, experiments on making lava at home and an investigation of whether vinegar has an effect on plant growth. Each year Denali Citizens Council joins other local judges from the National Park Service, Alaska Geographic, Denali Education Center, Alaska Mental Health, Usibelli Coal Mine, and others to determine first, second and third place projects as well as to select 11 grand prize winners who will go on to Fairbanks to compete in the Fairbanks Science Fair.

The criteria for judging is tough. Students are not only judged on the presentation of their project but are interviewed by the judges to determine the level of knowledge and interest each student has in relation to his or her chosen project. Judges also select projects which are awarded special category prizes which best represent specific criteria. Denali Citizens Council annually awards a prize for Best Project: Conservation. The award for Best Project: Conservation went to Liam, Hogan and Olivia Juhl of Healy. The three siblings joined together to complete a project titled *Home vs Homestead - Abundant Living in Alaska*. The project featured various aspects of a sustainable lifestyle including gardening, different methods of heating and ideas for the future. The Juhl siblings received a poster of the "Big Five" featuring the mammals and birds of Denali National Park and a book titled *Nature in a Nutshell for Kids*, which were donated by Alaska Geographic. 



BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

BUSH ADMINISTRATION RULE ALLOWING GUNS IN PARKS IS OVERTURNED

by Joan Frankevich

We have good news! As you may recall, before the Bush administration left office they finalized a new rule allowing individuals to carry loaded, concealed guns in national parks. DCC opposed this new rule as the previous rule stipulating guns be broken down and stowed in parks has worked well for decades. National parks are some of the safest places in the country. There is virtually no need for visitors to carry a gun in Denali for self-protection, and a gun could actually make things worse. It's not difficult to imagine a nervous visitor mistaking normal grizzly behavior as threatening and a gun being used unnecessarily. Many others also opposed the new rules because of concern allowing guns in parks would increase wildlife poaching, vandalism of historic resources, and gun-related accidents.

A lawsuit challenging the Bush administration rule was filed by the National Parks Conservation Association, the Coalition of National Park Rangers, and the Association of National Park Rangers. On March 19, the U.S. District Court ruled overwhelmingly in support of this lawsuit. The judge found that the Bush Administration's process was "astoundingly flawed" because they "abdicated their National Environmental Policy Act obligations" and "ignored substantial information in the administrative record concerning environmental impacts." The judge's ruling halts the change and requires the Obama administration to review the rule and indicate their course of action by April 20. **SO**



DCC NEWS

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