

DCC BOARD GATHERS FOR ANNUAL RETREAT

REVIEWING OUR VISION, PRESSING ISSUES, MEMBERSHIP AND PLANNING FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

by Jean Balay

Once a year, the board members of the Denali Citizens Council gather for a retreat in order to spend a day focused on the state of the organization and to chart a direction for the future. This year the retreat was held on Saturday, October 4 in Talkeetna, a good meeting point for board members from locations both south and north. All eight members of the board managed to attend despite some fairly treacherous driving conditions due to our first significant snow fall of the year.

In addition to the usual administrative review, we spent some time discussing revisions to the vision statement, which once finalized will appear in the next newsletter. We also reviewed what we anticipate will be the most pressing issues of the upcoming year: the future of the Stampede Road, the Park Road Capacity Study, gateway growth issues, gateway resource development issues, Backcountry Plan implementation, Kantishna and wildlife issues. Each board member was tasked with taking the lead on a given issue or issues. This strategy will allow DCC to have a better focus on the issues, and will hopefully take some pressure off our over-worked board president.



DCC Board & Staff: Back row (L to R) Jean Balay, Jared Zimmerman, Cass Ray, Julia Potter (Community Organizer) and Anne Beaulaurier. Front row (L to R) Nancy Bale, Joan Frankevich, Nan Eagleson and Jenna Hamm. *DCC Photo*

The board also spent some time discussing another important aspect of the organization - the members. The previous week, we had each contacted two or more members of DCC to discuss their concerns and suggestions. The membership has a wide range of concerns and most appreciates DCC for the work we do in getting information out and being an active participant in local issues. As a board, we are eager to encourage greater membership participation in the public process, and are concerned that we and the membership may be relying too heavily on the Community Organizer to be our sole representative at most public venues.

Throughout the upcoming year, we hope that DCC can continue to focus on the areas of greatest concern to our members, and that together we can work to protect the Denali region. 

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FROM THE BOARD

Dear Friends and Members,

I have loved living and working in the Denali area for over 20 years and it was almost 30 years ago that I enjoyed my first extended backpacking trip in the wilderness of Denali. There are still a few places on the face of the earth which can legitimately be called wilderness and solitude is a component of it. The designated wilderness of Denali provides incredible wildlife viewing opportunities and a stunning landscape to explore but the experience of solitude has been sadly compromised over the past several decades. A year ago, I was appointed to serve on the Denali National Park and Preserve Aircraft Overflights Advisory Council which was established to address growing issues surrounding air traffic in Denali Park. I represent backcountry users. Backcountry users come to Denali from all over the world thinking they'll have a wilderness experience but many find the level of air traffic is way beyond what they expected. In terms of negative comments received at the backcountry desk at Denali Park, aircraft noise is the most common. This is not a minor imposition but a fundamental compromise of the wilderness experience.

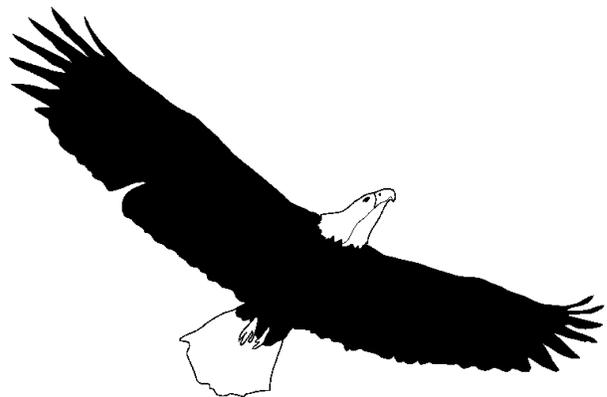
Denali National Park and Preserve was not set aside to be the economic engine for corporate tourism or for the local entrepreneur to exploit. In the continuing struggle over the proper uses of our natural heritage, Denali National Park is supposed to preserve our remaining sample of wilderness, and to protect wildlife and the necessary habitat to sustain healthy numbers of each species. Secondary to all of this should be consideration for tourism, road capacity for buses, and infrastructure which costs millions to accommodate the ever-increasing pressure from all the land-based cruise ship excursions. As I reflect upon my own employment this past summer and the programs I do in conjunction with local non-profit organizations, I recognize most of the newer programs have been developed to accommodate cruise ship passengers on packaged tours. Such programs provide an opportunity to, hopefully, educate visitors during their brief stay. However, I suspect they perpetuate the growing pressures of mass tourism.

There must be consideration of the public interest in the various uses of this park, but more importantly there must be consideration of the health of our wilderness and its natural inhabitants. Flightseeing, as a legitimate experience for many Denali visitors, is part of the overall pressure on this park. Actual regulations will not come out of the Aircraft Overflights Advisory Council, only recommendations, which, hopefully, will be agreed upon. In the wake of the Bush administration, we have all experienced first-hand what happens when industry is deregulated. When no regulations exist, whatsoever, regarding overflights in Denali, we all must hope for the best and rely on the integrity of all the players.

With all the effort presently underway regarding global economic concerns, one would hope the same effort could be put forth towards global environmental concerns. It is a great concern if our culture only values wilderness as a place to play or what economic benefits it may hold. New values and revitalizing old ones that led to the establishment of Denali National Park may be the unintended outcome of our various present "crises". As the Canadian artist Bill Mason said, "What wilderness should be doing is speaking to our souls and teaching us about being quiet...and respecting the world we live in."

Denali National Park still has the opportunity to maintain the essential components of wilderness but only if a whole lot of us make the good faith effort to constantly work towards those goals. 

Man Eagleson



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

FROM THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

by Julia Potter

With this newsletter we are beginning something a little different. During the DCC board retreat, our president thought it would be great for each of the board members to take a turn writing a *From the Board* message in place of the usual *From the President* message. Our first board member to step up is Nan Eagleson. Nan is very eloquent, speaks her mind and is a very down to earth kind of woman. We are fortunate to have her on the DCC Board.



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

In Nan's *From the Board* message she brings up some very good points about the transportation system within the park and tourism. I wholeheartedly agree with her comments regarding corporate tourism. Our national parks are not avenues from which to generate profit. It is sad to realize that greed motivates our economy, not only on a local level as seen along the Nenana Canyon corridor but also on a national level as evidenced by the recent financial crisis on Wall Street.

I strongly believe our parks to be national treasures. They were created to provide an opportunity to visit unique and unspoiled landscapes, to experience the beauty of our natural world, and to remind us that we as humans are not the only creatures who rely on the resources of the earth to sustain our lives. To exploit our national parks for economic gain goes against the very laws of nature.

If the tourism industry continues to pressure our national parks for increased visitation without any regard to the impacts created which in turn diminish the value of our natural resources, we may not have national parks worth visiting. In the end we lose. We lose our connection to the natural world. We lose our ability to step out of our everyday lives and see the bigger picture.

I believe we can have tourism without compromising the natural values and heritage of our national parks. The tourism industry needs to take a step back and see more than how many visitors they can cram onto a cruise ship, a bus or a train. The increased amount of trash, water and wastewater, air pollution, traffic, and noise impact the very resources they promote to the visitor. It's time for the tourism industry to take a good hard look at the impacts they create and make the decision to be good stewards of our national parks rather than just revenue generators. ♪

THANK YOU

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

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SPECIAL THANK YOU TO

Linda Barb & Steve Hinshaw
Mr. & Mrs. Earl C. Barb

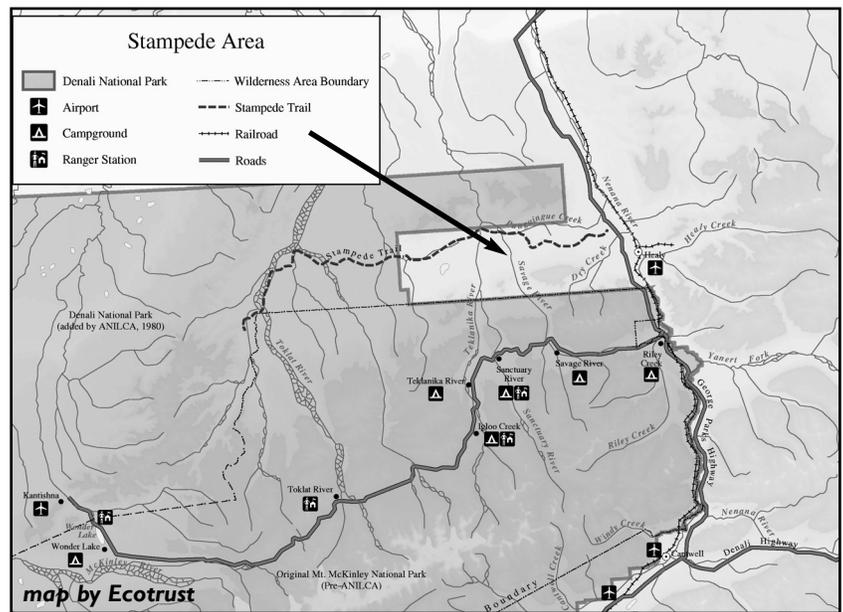
THE WOLF TOWNSHIPS - TIME FOR MORE PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THESE LANDS

by Julia Potter

Denali Citizens Council has long advocated for management of the Wolf Townships that will balance habitat protection, recreational uses and a growing tourism industry without compromising the values and qualities of the greater Denali National Park ecosystem. As with many of the issues DCC is involved with, the Stampede Trail and Wolf Townships are steeped in a long and controversial history.

The Past

The Wolf (or Stampede) Townships, enclosed on three sides by Denali National Park, occupy more than 85,000 acres. They were “created” with the passage of ANILCA which left out this obvious gap in the northern additions of the park.



The ecological importance of these townships has been recognized for decades. Denali’s General Management Plan (1986) noted the importance of this area as winter habitat for one of its signature mammals, the caribou and the wolves who follow them. The townships contain two large lakes that serve as habitat for migratory and resident waterfowl. Unique soils and land forms associated with permafrost are present throughout the area and are providing important data for researchers. DCC has long argued that the Wolf Townships require strong protection to preserve these important values, while allowing some human uses that are not compatible with national park standards.

The Stampede Trail, a winter haul route, was constructed in the 1930’s by Earl Pilgrim to transport ore from Stampede to Lignite and the railroad as an alternate route rather than using the park road. Since that time several projects to improve or extend the trail have come and gone. Following Alaska statehood a pioneer road project was initiated in the 1960’s. The Stampede Trail was the one and only completed project of the ARC (Alaska Road Commission) and following the one and only wheeled vehicle trip by the project engineer, the road quickly reverted to bog.

The attraction of so-called North Access into Denali through the Wolf Townships has spawned several studies and initiatives. A Congressionally-mandated feasibility study was completed in 1997. Another Congressionally-mandated study, the North Access Reconnaissance Study (aka North Denali Access Route Reconnaissance Study), began in 2001. This latter study considered several alternative routes into the national park from the Parks Highway, among them the Stampede Trail. In 2006 the Final North Denali Access Study recommended against further work on the project.

Most local residents remember when Governor Frank Murkowski attempted another improvement project in 2005. At first the project was slated as an “improvement” project but it soon became evident that it was an attempt to extend the road not just to the Savage River, but to the boundary of the park at the western end of the Wolf Townships. The state legislature initially appropriated \$5 million in funding for the project. Amid concerns and opposition to the project an additional \$9 million in the state budget for 2007 was defeated. After Governor Murkowski left office, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities withdrew its permit applications and suspended work on the project.

The Present

The Stampede Trail and Wolf Townships have become a popular destination for residents and visitors to the Denali area. A great diversity of users enjoy this area. Hikers, dog mushers and birders use the road and nearby tundra. ATV tours, horseback rides, dog sled tours and jeep safari tours provide tourism opportunities, with the greatest concentration of tourism in the summer. The release of the “Into the Wild” movie created renewed interest in the Stampede Townships and in the bus where Chris McCandless spent his final weeks.

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WOLF TOWNSHIPS - *continued from previous page*

Recent Land and Resource Development Initiatives

Resource development proposals for the Wolf Townships remain on the table. Usibelli Coal Mine applied for a lease to explore for shallow gas (coal bed methane) in 2003. In 2004, the State of Alaska abolished the shallow gas program and Usibelli submitted a new application for a gas only exploration license. A Draft Best Interest Finding was completed with the comment period ending October 31, 2005. The license area includes hundreds of acres in the Wolf townships. DCC has urged the State of Alaska to spare this area, given its important wildlife, habitat and tourism values. The state has yet to release a Final Finding on gas exploration.

The Denali Borough has selected lands surrounding 8-Mile Lake, the terminus of the paved portion of the Stampede Trail. These lands are currently in State ownership, classified as wildlife habitat and public recreation in the Tanana Basin Area Plan (TBAP). In order for these lands to be conveyed from the state to the borough they must be reclassified, hence DNR is seeking to amend the TBAP. DCC submitted comments against amending the TBAP classification and conveyance of lands around the 8-Mile Lake area. We felt that retaining these important lands in state ownership would best protect their important habitat and tourism values. We do not expect any action from DNR until after the new year.

In December 2006, Denali Borough Assembly member David Evans introduced a resolution supporting the creation of the Stampede State Recreation Area. The resolution passed in January 2007. Legislation was introduced by Representative David Guttenberg (HB241) and Senator Joe Thomas (SB173) in March and April 2007, respectively. HB241 was heard in the House Resources Committee in March 2008. Time ran out for public testimony although Mayor Talerico, Borough Assembly Chair Armeda Bulard, and State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Director James King managed to make comments. Reaction from committee members was not favorable. Committee members expressed concerns about effects on private landowners, allegedly heavy-handed management by State Parks and the problem of fees. Representative Guttenberg and Senator Thomas have indicated, however, that they are willing to re-introduce an SRA bill in 2009 if the community still supports it.

The Future - We Support Creation of a State Recreation Area

While DCC remains optimistic about the future of the Stampede and Wolf Townships, we recognize that pressure to develop land and resources in this relatively accessible piece of state land will continue. Borough land entitlements and the Usibelli gas exploration and development project are only the latest in a continuous string of proposals for projects that could threaten the important ecological values of the townships. If, however, a State Recreation Area could be established, encompassing most state lands west of privately developed land in the Stampede, the community, through an Advisory Board and a Management Plan, could guide land management to allow compatible uses of the area while still protecting critical wildlife habitat.

There are roadblocks. In recent years, the Northern Region of the State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation has experienced significant lack of funding support from the State Legislature. An article this past summer in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner noted that the Northern Area lost \$65,000 to budget cuts in 2002, while statewide funding was cut by approximately \$200,000. Since that time state parks has gone to "passive management" which basically means there is no designated caretaker for bathrooms or host of the grounds. In addition to passive management, the Division of Parks has contracted with private managers, which has worked in some areas but not in others. On a more optimistic note, last year State Parks received a boost in funding and this year received \$5.5 million - the most money it has seen in 23 years. Brooks Ludwig, superintendent for the Northern Division of Parks, and park officials statewide are drafting a budget proposal for fiscal year 2010. They are requesting funding to reinstate park rangers to the sites the public values most. It is uncertain if funding will be available for other sites. They currently have a \$53 million backlog of deferred maintenance.

As we see it, what is needed is activism on the part of local citizens to support creation of an SRA and to assist in developing a management plan for this area. Maybe it's time for a Stampede Summit 3 to review the issues, determine a plan for the future and put that plan into action. We would appreciate hearing your thoughts on the future of the Stampede and Wolf Townships. If you would like to be more involved in this issue and the future of the area, contact Julia at the DCC office at 907-683-3396 or mail@denalicitizens.org 

COUNTING SHEEP AT DENALI

LONG-AWAITED CENSUS COVERS 13 OF 17 UNITS IN THE PARK

by Anne Beaulaurier

This summer, the National Park Service took on an ambitious but necessary research effort: a complete Dall's sheep census of 17 units between the Nenana River and the Muldrow Glacier in Denali National Park. According to the park's ecologist, Laura Phillips, the general estimate for sheep in this northeastern area of the park has been about 2,000 individuals since at least the early 1980s. Prior to this summer, the last comprehensive survey of this area was conducted in 1996, resulting in 1,904 individuals within the same 17 units.

This year's survey commenced on July 14th, and was scheduled to last one week. The survey design primarily utilized fixed wing flights, augmented by ground counts to get a more accurate breakdown of sex and age classes. Ground surveys were also used to provide a basis of comparison for determining the accuracy of aerial surveys. National Park Service staff conducted ground counts on July 9-10 on Igloo Mountain, Sable Mountain and two on Cathedral Mountain. With rain, wind and low visibility precluding flying on many days, the last aerial survey wasn't flown until August 25th, with a total of only six days of productive counting. In the end, the research team surveyed 13 of the 17 units, for a total of 1,526 sheep.

While this most recent census concluded with four units left uncounted, the recovered number is very similar to the number gathered in those same 13 units in the 1996 survey (1,563). At this point, it is unclear whether there will be an effort to complete or redo the census next summer.

While it would be easy to look at the numbers from this year and say the population may not have changed much since 1996, there are some considerations: There is currently no standard protocol for sheep monitoring in the park and variations in data collection may lead to results that are not so easily compared from year to year. Variations in the timing of the survey and the amount of time spent searching by air, for instance, may lead to significant differences in the results. To address this concern, the park service will be working with the Central Alaska Network to develop protocols for monitoring Dall's sheep as part of the Inventory and Monitoring program. A network-wide protocol will not only allow for the comparison of multi-year data in Denali, but also ensure the ability to compare data and trends with results from other Alaska parks.

We applaud the park's effort to develop a better understanding of the wildlife populations protected by its mission, especially given the long duration between sheep surveys in recent years. Sheep were outfitted with GPS units during the summer of 2007

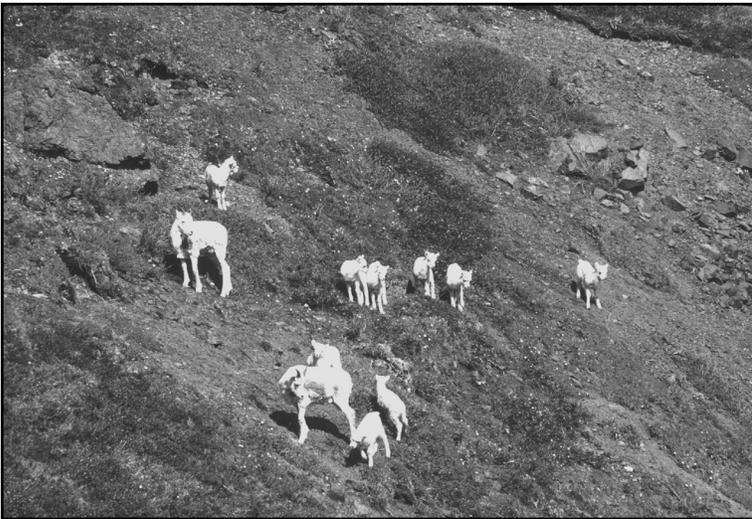


Photo courtesy of NPS

as a component of the Road Capacity Study. Some of the resulting data confirmed the countless observations over the years regarding their sensitivity to vehicle traffic on the park road. The park would stand well to consider both the results from this summer, along with the movement and behavior data from 2007, and anecdotal notes from long-time park visitors when considering the overall health of the sheep population. As noted by Tom Walker in the March-April 2008 *DCC News*, sheep seem to be less often seen from the park road now than 20 or 30 years ago. Could the park's sheep be shifting their ranges further away from the park road because of increased bus traffic? Are there fewer sheep in the entire survey area? Because of weather and time constraints, we do not know how many more sheep might or might not have been counted in those remaining four units. We are making strides in our understanding, but there are still important questions without answers.

The park service viewed the survey this summer as a pilot effort, and the experience will help direct the development of a network-wide protocol. Developing a strong protocol that is repeated regularly may be what is needed to get reliable data that draw us closer to understanding the health of our Dall's sheep population. ❦

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF THE PARK ROAD?

IMPORTANT VEHICLE MANAGEMENT EIS IS IN ITS EARLIEST STAGES

by Joan Frankevich

Consider the following questions about vehicles on the Denali Park Road: What size and type of bus should travel the park road? Should tour and shuttle buses be combined into one system? Should the current limit of 10,512 vehicles per year be increased?

Park planners are evaluating these important questions and others in the ongoing Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The outcome of this plan is of great consequence and will determine the future use of and impacts on Denali for many, many years to come.

Denali is unique among national parks. Park managers instituted an innovative and mandatory public transportation system back in 1972. Since that time private vehicles have been mostly excluded and visitors travel primarily by shuttle or tour bus. This far-sighted decision is widely praised for protecting the wildlife viewing opportunities that exist today.



A shuttle and a tour bus stop to view Dall's sheep near Polychrome Pass. When private automobile traffic was excluded in 1972, NPS established the Visitor Transportation System (the shuttle) to provide low cost transportation in lieu of private vehicles.

The initial public comment period requesting ideas (called "scoping") for the Vehicle Management Plan recently ended. DCC submitted scoping comments which included the following points:

- ❧ The plan must protect the fundamental mandate to provide inexpensive public access along Denali's road. It requires a flexible system whose main purpose is transportation, not a tour.
- ❧ Maintaining road character (as previously defined by NPS) is critical, especially maintaining the simplicity of the road and its surroundings. DCC is concerned that increases in the number of buses will lead to road widening and more roadside amenities that would ultimately diminish road character.
- ❧ In addition to using the Road Capacity Study to determine carrying capacity for the road, DCC believes additional variables such as road character, natural soundscape, and wilderness character must be included.
- ❧ Although the road corridor is excluded from Wilderness designation, traffic on the road impacts the surrounding Wilderness. Impacts to the Wilderness must be considered including values such as natural soundscape, an unimpaired view, and the sense of solitude a backcountry visitor within view of the road has the right to expect.
- ❧ Consider having the Visitor Transportation System (VTS/shuttle) pick up visitors at McKinley Village and Nenana Canyon hotels, similar to what the tour buses currently do.
- ❧ Day tours to Kantishna lodges should be capped or eliminated to help protect the rural character of this region. These day tours are not a type of access guaranteed under ANILCA.
- ❧ The plan needs to include data regarding the structural capacity of the road to accept current and future bus loads. DCC does not favor increasing the 10,512 vehicle cap and believes current use may already be beyond prudent carrying capacity.
- ❧ Finally, DCC urges NPS to keep in mind that it is not a park purpose to maximize visitor access, but rather to provide access that is compatible with park purposes.

Get involved. More information on the Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan EIS can be found at the link below. **»**

<http://www.nps.gov/dena/parkmgmt/roadvehmgteis.htm>

AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHTS COUNCIL MEETS AT DENALI

FALL COLORS AND FIELD LISTENING EXPERIENCES COMPLEMENT THE TWO DAY MEETING

by Nancy Bale

The third meeting of the Denali Aircraft Overflights Advisory Council was held September 7 - 8, 2008 at the Murie Science and Learning Center in Denali National Park. Fall was in high color and the weather mild, enabling members of the group to learn more about sound monitoring in the field from Denali Park Sound Technician Jared Withers.

Wilderness and Soundscape

The first day's deliberations began with introduction of Dan Billman, a replacement for FAA representative Jim Edwards. Dan, who is still "processing into" his position on the council, sat in the audience for this meeting. He will be a full member at the next meeting in Anchorage scheduled for December 4, 2008.

On Day One of the meeting, the council considered core laws and policies under which NPS operates and what the park is required to do to protect resources.

Several members, including Sally Gibert, Joan Frankevich and Nancy Bale, presented information on the NPS Organic Act, Denali enabling legislation, the Wilderness Act, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, and the Denali Backcountry Management Plan.

The Denali Backcountry Management Plan (2006) recognized soundscape as a resource to be protected, and established an implementation plan to monitor the park soundscape for indicators and standards of soundscape health. The indicators and standards for a healthy soundscape vary across several management areas in the plan, depending on park purposes for each area. Standards for the core 2 million acre park are more stringent, in view of its designation as Wilderness under the Wilderness Act. In contrast, the plan provides for higher levels of mechanized sounds in several areas adjacent to Mt. McKinley, including glaciers where planes provide access, and in areas near Cantwell where snowmachines have been commonly found in winter.

ANILCA provides some exceptions to typical NPS management in Alaska Parks, including access, in some cases, by airplanes and snowmachines for traditional activities and access to inholdings. At this time, NPS allows airplane landings on some glaciers south of the Alaska Range, both for access to climbing and as a part of flightseeing excursions. These landings are managed through concessions-type permitting in contrast to overflights, where NPS currently has no regulatory authority. As a result, the Charter of the Overflights Advisory Council has directed the council to recommend "voluntary measures" only for assuring safety and protecting resources at Denali.

Soundscape Monitoring Plan

On Day Two, Jared Withers, Sound Monitoring Technician from Denali National Park, described in detail the sound monitoring program at Denali National Park. Monitoring focuses on the summer months at this time. NPS is in the midst of an equipment transition. The new equipment is smaller, has better memory and has more reliable battery backup. To provide information on the key indicators of soundscape health, the stations gather systematic audio recordings. Data are later downloaded and subjected to further analysis in the lab. There are some areas of the park where soundscape measurements have indicated exceedances of backcountry plan standards. A problem for the council is how to attribute a specific cause in these exceedances; for example are they caused by tourism overflights or general aviation?



Sound monitoring in the field - Several members of the council enjoyed an interesting and informative session with Jared Withers and NPS assistants Adrienne Lindholm and Jenni Burr. Jared (above right) is holding the newest state-of-the-art sound monitoring equipment.
DCC Photo

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AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHTS COUNCIL - *continued from previous page*

NPS representatives Guy Adema and Karen Fortier gave additional information on how NPS gathers data on backcountry use and impacts of overflights upon ground users. While Denali has over 400,000 visitors per summer, the number that spend at least one overnight in the backcountry is limited to protect resources. In addition the park has inconsistent information on day users, folks who get off the shuttle bus and spend a few hours in the backcountry. Fortier indicated that comment cards turned in by backcountry users in Denali contain about 50-100 comments per year regarding overflights. Adema discussed measures that NPS is taking to monitor their use of aircraft and helicopters in research and enforcement and to develop ways to limit that use.

Council continues to seek background information

Council members discussed ongoing data gaps toward the end of the meeting. Members requested more information on the possible role of general aviation in the soundscape at Denali. Some council members questioned the long term viability of certain sound standards. Air services have been unwilling to reveal data on their overflight numbers. As adjournment neared, council member Charlie Sassara threw out the question to pilots in attendance, "Do you think there is a problem?" Perhaps an exploration of his question will prompt productive dialogue at the next meeting. At least one pilot expressed willingness to adjust flight paths to avoid most commonly visited backcountry areas. Solutions to soundscape impacts at Denali remain complex, but this council provides the best possible forum for bringing disparate views into one room. Look for announcement of our next meeting in Anchorage, December 4, 2008. ☞



Overflights Council deliberations involved active dialogue with the public.

Although the meeting agenda contained formal time slots for public comment, the council engaged in almost continuous dialogue with the general public at the meeting. Several attendees were pilots who had specific questions and concerns regarding park science and policy.

Photos: (L) Council members Brian Okonek, Scott Babos, Tim Cudney, Sally Gibert and Suzanne Rust, (R) Court reporter types transcript while members of the public look on. Jared Withers, NPS Sound Technician is seen on the right side of the photo. DCC Photos



Denali Aircraft Overflights Advisory Council

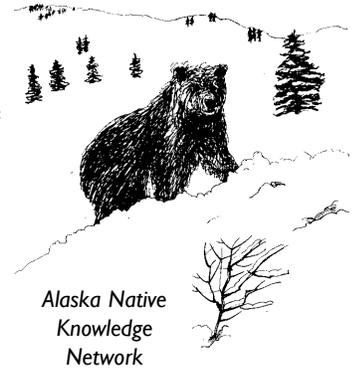
All twelve members of the Council attended the fall meeting at the entrance area of Denali National Park and Preserve, in the Murie Science and Learning Center Dining Hall. Pictured here, from the left are: Erika Bennett, Tom George, Brian Okonek, Scott Babos, Tim Cudney, Sally Gibert, Charlie Sassara, Suzanne Rust, Nan Eagleson and Joan Frankevich. Not pictured are Nancy Bale and Dan Billman (in process of being approved to replace Jim Edwards as FAA representative).

DCC Photo

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

DENALI SUBSISTENCE RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET IN NOVEMBER

The Denali Subsistence Resource Commission will be meeting on Friday, November 14, 2008 at the Murie Science and Learning Center. The meeting will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The commission will consider a range of issues related to subsistence hunting and fishing within the 1980 additions to Denali National Park and Preserve. The agenda will include an update on the temporary closures of areas in the ANILCA park additions in the Cantwell area to off-road vehicle (ORV) access by federally qualified subsistence users. DCC has concerns about potential impacts and how NPS will monitor those impacts. Other items slated for the agenda include the Federal Subsistence management program and upcoming subsistence research projects. Opportunities for public testimony will be provided. Look for member updates with additional information on this meeting.



BUSH ADMINISTRATION PLAN THAT WOULD INCREASE SNOWMACHINE TRAFFIC IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK STRUCK DOWN IN COURT

Yellowstone National Park has long been the center of controversy over the use of snowmachines for winter recreation. The National Park Service went through environmental review (with public input) to develop a plan that would allow access and also protect park resources. However, the final Winter Use Plan increased the daily limit of snowmachines inside the park to 540 without regard to impacts on resources like wildlife, air quality and natural sounds. In response to this Plan, six environmental organizations, including NPCA, the Wilderness Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, the Winter Wildlands Alliance and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, sued the National Park Service in Federal Court.

In his decision, Judge Emmett Sullivan (who also presided over the recent Ted Stevens trial) stated, "NPS fails to explain how increasing snowmobile usage over current conditions, where adaptive management thresholds are already being exceeded, complies with the conservation mandate of the Organic Act ... NPS also fails to provide a rational explanation for the source of the 540 snowmobile limit." Holding NPS accountable for acting on exceedances of adaptive management standards is one of the very important results of this case. In Denali, adaptive management standards (desired future conditions) are the basis of NPS implementation of the Backcountry Management Plan. This decision makes it more likely that action to protect these standards will occur.

SOUTH DENALI BOY SCOUT ACCESS PROPOSAL CHANGES FROM BRIDGE TO PRIVATE ROAD

Locals were concerned last year when the Boy Scouts of America proposed to gain access to their 2,200 acres around Blair Lake (purchased from the Mat-Su Borough in 2001) by building a bridge across the Chulitna River less than 2 miles from the existing Chulitna River Bridge. When the bridge project ran out of steam, the Boy Scouts negotiated with local private landowners Alaska Hotel Properties (Princess) and Denali Sun-Glo Trust (Sonny Kragness, once a miner in Kantishna) to use an existing private road for access to their property. DCC members are familiar with this road, which was built by Kragness and provides access to the Mt. McKinley Princess hotel, on a ridge above the Chulitna River. Turning access from the Parks Highway onto the road is abrupt with no turning lanes. Traffic in the summer is already busy, providing access to the hotel and a private subdivision nearby. Adding access to the Boy Scout Camp, expected to be a large development that will serve thousands per summer, will increase pressures on this two lane paved road. As part of the deal, Princess will obtain 20 acres of Boy Scout land and a private horse operation will be able to lease another 10 acres. This transfer of land for commercial purposes must be reviewed by the Mat-Su Borough, however, because the original sale contained a restriction obligating the Boy Scouts to use the entire parcel for recreation to benefit only non-profit organizations.

Our concerns: 1.) These developments are occurring very close to the new South Denali Visitor Center and Denali State Park. Their scale and scope could have long term impacts to the resources of the area and the experience of visitors. 2.) Details about the horse operation are unknown but cumulative impacts to resources and local private property owners must be considered. 3.) The Boy Scouts should show a good faith effort to clean up and remediate damage done on both the east and west sides of the Chulitna River when they did research on the now-defunct bridge project last year. 4.) Turning safety where the access road meets the Parks Highway will eventually be a concern. DCC submitted comments in October. A hearing before the Mat-Su Assembly will be held in early 2009. If you would like more information call Nancy Bale at 907-277-3825.

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

DENALI BOROUGH ELECTION OFFERS SEVERAL CHOICES

On November 4, 2008, Denali Borough citizens will go to the polls. Along with the election of Alaska State House Representative, Alaska Senator and Representative and the President, there are several local choices. The offices of the Mayor and four seats on the Denali Borough Assembly are up for election, along with six seats on the Denali Borough School Board. Three local citizens will be vying for the office of Mayor, incumbent David Talerico, Teresa Chepoda Usibelli and John Winklmann. South District candidate Armeda Bulard is running unopposed; West Central District will be a contest between Gerald Pollock II and Vickie Lausen; North District incumbent Eileen Holmes is running unopposed for Seat I; and the other North District Seat, G, is open with no candidate filed.

In addition, three propositions will appear on the ballot: Proposition 1 - proposing an "opt out" from the Alaska Public Offices Commission disclosure requirements for DB officials and creation of a Denali Borough specific form; Proposition 2 - an appropriation of \$400,000 from the Denali Borough Permanent Investment Fund to balance out the Borough Landfill Closure Fund; and Proposition 3 - initiating an enhanced 911 surcharge fee for both wire line and wireless phones within the Denali Borough.

To learn more about the election, call the borough office at 683-1330. And, remember to VOTE !!

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT ADDS CANTWELL AREA

The 109th Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) has a new count area added in proximity to Denali National Park with the first ever Cantwell Christmas Bird Count. With the Denali Park Christmas Bird count now planning on its 17th year, it will be interesting to compare the count circles and have an added snapshot of winter birds in the Denali area. Jill Boelsma is the compiler for the new Cantwell CBC and can be reached at 768-2266. Nan Eagleson is the compiler for the Denali Park CBC and can be reached at 683-2822. The dates will likely be December 27 and 28, 2008. Stay tuned for more information.

USGS REPORT FINDS ALASKA GLACIERS ARE RECEDING

The United States Geological Survey recently released a report entitled "Glaciers of the Alaska Range," the latest chapter in a larger professional paper that compiled data from satellite images, photographs and geospatial measurements on all Alaska's glaciers. According to the USGS website, "This professional paper (USGS Professional Paper 1386-K) is available in print and online at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/pp/p1386k/> It is the 8th volume to be published in the *Satellite Image Atlas of Glaciers of the World* series; the other seven volumes are available in print and online at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2005/3056/>. More than 100 glaciologists from the United States and other nations have collaborated with the USGS to produce these 11 volumes." The report states, "About 5 percent (about 75,000 km²) of Alaska is presently glacierized, including 11 mountain ranges, 1 large island, an island chain, and 1 archipelago. The total number of glaciers in Alaska is estimated at >100,000, including many active and former tidewater glaciers. Glaciers in every mountain range and island group are experiencing significant retreat, thinning, and (or) stagnation, especially those at lower elevations, a process that began by the middle of the 19th century."



DCC NEWS

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