

PROTECTING DENALI'S WILDLIFE AT THE BOUNDARIES

DCC TO HOLD FORUM ON THIS TOPIC - TUESDAY JUNE 29TH, 7:30 PM AT SHELDON CENTER

by Nancy Bale

DCC is pleased to sponsor a Forum on June 29th on the topic "Protecting Denali's Wildlife at the Boundaries." The Forum will be held at the Charles Sheldon Center behind the McKinley Village Lodge just outside Denali National Park.

We've invited three knowledgeable presenters - Tom Meier, Wildlife Biologist at Denali National Park, David James, Interior Region Supervisor at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Wade Willis, Director of the Science Now Project and a former Fish and Game biologist.

The varying mandates for wildlife management of the National Park Service and the State of Alaska have made communication between the agencies vital. A Memorandum of Agreement signed after Denali National Park was enlarged in 1980 stipulated that the two agencies must consult with one another about wildlife management issues they share, and must recognize each other's varying mandates. The state recognized, for instance, the decline in the Denali caribou herd and has not authorized hunting caribou in Unit 20C (Wolf Townships area) for decades. In addition, the state sets regulations for sport hunting in Denali's two Preserves, north and southwest of the park.

However, conflicts can occur between the state and federal governments at the boundaries or within preserves when state regulations conflict with federal management guidelines. Conflicts have been numerous and at times heated over the past year, typically involving disagreements over how to treat **predators** as they move back and forth between state and federal lands. On state lands, wolves and bears are often the targets of predator control programs designed to reduce their numbers through aggressive procedures such as shooting wolves from helicopters, and baiting or shooting bears while in dens.

We encourage our members to attend this forum, discuss the conflicts and how they affect Denali, and learn where there are potential areas of agreement and cooperation. ☞



The N., E. and W. boundaries of Denali National Park intersect with state Game Management Units, 20A, 20C and 19, as shown on the map above. The national park appears in dark shading on the lower left. The north-western park preserve is shown with cross hatches.



Denali's northeast boundary lands are depicted in this map. Recently the Alaska Board of Game voted down an NPS proposal to enlarge wolf buffer areas on state lands there. NPS does not usually request changes to state regulations on lands outside the park, and based their proposal on worryingly low wolf numbers in the park. We'll discuss this in more detail at the Forum.

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FROM THE BOARD

by Jean Balay

It has been a sad month in Denali. Our community has been devastated by the loss of a beloved individual.

In a community this small, the contributions of every person are so valuable. When we lose someone, particularly someone as involved as Phil Brease, we feel the void so strongly. The loss is huge, but it brings us together in our grief and our caring for one another. It seems odd that at times like this our sense of community is at it's strongest.

This is a time to remember not just Phil's contributions, but those of everyone around us. We are all parts that make up this great whole community. There is a lot we can learn from Phil's example about what it means to be an engaged citizen, and how valuable that engagement can be for everyone.

Phil Brease was the epitome of a good citizen, having a role and involvement on so many levels of community. On a purely individual level, Phil engaged us with his humor and knowledge. His dedication to his family and his career were his trademarks (along with lots of music).

Phil was a dedicated part of his family unit, giving love, support, and humor as needed. We are blessed to have the Brease family as part of our community, and were moved by son Michael's words at the memorial service. Barb is a dedicated advocate for wildlife and animal rights. Ana and Emily are smart young women with a wide range of interests. So many times in the past few weeks I have heard parents say that if their kids turn out as well as the Brease offspring, they will feel their work as parents has been successful. In our sadness at losing Phil, it helps to remember that so much of him remains here with us with this wonderful family.

Phil's influence is felt in the still larger community of the Denali Borough. He served on the school board and as a board member of the Panguingue Creek Homeowners Association. Both could be considered somewhat thankless tasks, but Phil tackled them earnestly and with the usual dose of good humor.

Phil's teaching and scientific influence has spread throughout the state and beyond. For more complete details on all his work in these areas see the article on page 6.

Amidst the sadness, the love for this place and it's people remains strong. Seeing so many people at Phil's memorial, we are reminded of how strong we can be, how each of us has something to contribute, but mostly we remember Phil and all that he gave and continues to give us. We will miss him, and hopefully will be able to follow in his footsteps as engaged and caring members of this wonderful community. 



Phil Brease with his family - from L, son Michael, wife Barbara, Phil, daughters Emily and Ana.
Photo courtesy Guy Adema

FROM THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

by Julia Potter

The arrival of the summer season at Denali brings to many a sense of fun and happy times. It is a time to enjoy the warmer weather with activities from hiking to splashing in the cold water creeks. For many visitors to Denali it's the excitement of a flightseeing tour, a bus tour into the park or maybe the backcountry trip of a lifetime. For others it may be the challenge to attempt to summit North America's highest peak, Mt. McKinley. Some efforts to challenge the heights of Mt. McKinley end in failure, a few turn tragic.

As tragic as it is to receive news of these fatalities and as much as I feel saddened by hearing this news of people I don't even know, I was even more upset and troubled to hear the news of a grizzly bear being shot and killed in the backcountry on May 29th.

What troubles me so much about the tragedy of the bear, unlike that of the climbers who took the risk knowing full well the dangers involved, was that the bear didn't have a choice, it didn't know the risk. It certainly didn't expect to be confronted with a firearm. The everyday risks like a pack of hungry wolves or an angry moose cow might be expected. Not a loaded firearm.

As tragic as the unexpected aspect of the incident was, what bothers me most is that humans are so far removed from the world of nature and from wilderness that when they encounter the wild nature of the world (and Denali) the tendency is to become fearful of something we should embrace and enjoy. Rather than remain calm and use the natural instincts we are all born with – namely our intelligence – humans are more likely to react just as the backpacker did – with a gun. When in doubt shoot first, ask questions later.

I can imagine being frightened at the sight of a grizzly bear running towards you. I would be. You would be. That is natural. Fear is a message. How we use our natural intelligence – our instinct - to deal with that fear, with that message is what makes us intelligent. A gun is not the answer. Guns were not invented for the purpose of warning something away. They were invented for one purpose – to kill.



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This incident brings to mind the question, if you are uncomfortable with nature and with wilderness, why are you in the backcountry of a six million acre park that has been set aside as a wildlife sanctuary? If you are so fearful of the natural world, why are you out there? And how can those of us who feel perfectly natural in nature communicate to others not so fortunate that there really is nothing to fear. That nature has its purpose. Nature is something to treasure, not shoot and kill. Humans do enough of that everyday all over the world in indirect ways with our trash and pollution and general disregard for the earth and its variety of resources.

All of these thoughts bring up the next set of questions with the foremost being why do humans (many of them) think humans are above the rest of the natural world. Is it because we are intelligent? This incident proved that theory wrong. Are bears less important? Is it truly worse for a human to die from a bear attack than for a bear to die from a human attack? I know that the humans think so. Has anyone asked the bears how they feel about this? No.

So I suppose that in the end I sure would like to see more people look at nature from a different perspective. Maybe see things from the bears' perspective. And if people can't manage to view things that way then I'll support the right to arm bears. It's only fair, don't you think? 

THANK YOU
MEMBER-DONORS

Taiga

Katherine Hennigan
John Adams

FUTURE OF WIND FARM, COAL PLANT HINGED ON GVEA MEMBERS' VOTE

by Cass Ray

\$460 MILLION DEBT CEILING TOUTED AS SIGNIFICANT FACTOR

Both the proposed wind farm near Eva Creek and the restart of Healy Coal Plant #2 could have been dead if the cooperative membership voted down deleting the debt ceiling from the bylaws of the Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA), a GVEA official told the dozen and a half members of the audience at a meeting at the Tri-Valley Community Center in Healy May 19. Moments later, however, Brian Newton, the utility's president and chief executive officer (CEO), said that if erasing the debt ceiling from the bylaws were defeated, the utility would begin re-educating the membership about the debt ceiling and the need for the proposed wind farm near Eva Creek and restart of Healy Coal Plant #2 and "figure out a way around it [the defeat of the deletion of the debt ceiling from the bylaws]."

There is, Newton said, a "contingent out there saying this"-that voting down deleting the debt ceiling from GVEA's bylaws is a "great way to stop coal." In the absence of updated emissions permits, and the utility's failure even to pursue them, environmental groups across the state, including DCC, oppose the restart of Healy Coal Plant #2, which has been moth-balled for ten years. GVEA was no doubt relieved when the vote came out in favor of abolishing that \$460 million debt ceiling.

Eva Creek Wind Farm's 'Number One Issue' is Bird Migration

The "number one issue" surrounding the proposed wind farm near Eva Creek, about twelve miles north of Healy, is its potential effect on birds, said Greg Wyman, one of the three GVEA officials hosting the May 19 meeting in Healy. The Eva Creek site is the "ideal location" for both capturing wind power and having a minimum impact on migrating birds, contends GVEA. Scheduled by the utility through the months between now and November is a field study of bird migration. From 1,000 feet away, there would be only minimal noise from the towers, contends the utility. Wyman, GVEA's manager of construction services, and Newton, president and CEO, were joined at the meeting by Mike Wright, vice president for transmission and distribution.

The wind farm near Eva Creek, a "once-in-a-generation opportunity," would be the largest wind power project in the state, declares GVEA's website. If the utility is not allowed



Artist's rendering of how a wind farm at the Eva Creek site, along the Ferry Trail, would look.
Photo courtesy GVEA

to pursue this type of project, it will never reach its goals for utilizing alternate energy, contended Newton.

Wind Farm near Eva Creek would be 'Expensive to Build'

Two of the top ways for the utility to hold down electric rates or even reduce them are the restart of Healy Coal Plant #2 and construction of the wind farm near Eva Creek, GVEA officials reported at the hour-and-a-quarter-long meeting in Healy. The 24-megawatt wind farm would afford the utility the addition of a "significant amount of renewable energy to its mix—at a very affordable cost," claims the utility's website. Although wind power is "expensive to build," concedes the website, "once built, it is a very inexpensive source of power." In fact, "aside from operations, maintenance, and low interest loan repayment costs," contends the website, "it's free."

One of the first matters emphasized to the audience at the meeting in Healy was that if the wind farm near Eva Creek were constructed, GVEA would not foresee having to raise its electric rates. Wind power would be expected to cost about the same as the present average cost of fuel, it was reported. The utility has applied for a \$93 million loan to construct the wind farm. That debt would be paid off in 17 years, GVEA contends.

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EVA CREEK WIND FARM - *continued from previous page*

Through the years the utility has applied for plenty of grants to construct a wind farm but has not been awarded them, it was noted. Present borrowing interest rates of less than two percent have made loans affordable.

Eight years ago, when energy consultants studied the potential for wind power, the Eva Creek area was identified as one of three potential sites in interior Alaska. Beginning the next year, seven meteorological wind monitoring towers were constructed. Three towers, erected early this year, included two towers, each 260 feet tall, near Eva Creek and another, 162 feet tall, on Walker Dome. GVEA reported that collected data indicated the site "stood out as an excellent resource," with wind power able to be generated 38 percent of the time.

'Ferry Trail' Would Become 'One Heck of a Road,' a 'Gravel Highway'

While the towers near Eva Creek would be built to withstand winds as strong as 140 miles per hour, the strongest wind experienced by the meteorological wind monitoring towers the past seven years was reported to be only 75 miles per hour. In August the utility aims to acquire a lease from the state for land for the project. As many as sixteen towers, each 16 feet in diameter and 260 feet tall, with 123-foot-long blades, on 40-foot-square concrete pads - GVEA contends they would mean footprints of only modest size - would be placed, eight on each of two ridges, near Eva Creek near Ferry. After all the site work is complete, as early as 2012, the sixteen towers could be erected within a month.

Which does not mean that logistics for the two years of overall construction would not prove complex. Specialized trucks and cranes are not available in Alaska and would have to be brought from Outside. It could cost \$100,000 to bring a crane to the remote site. Each tower would be in three pieces. Construction would include an intertie substation. Wyman said GVEA is 90 percent certain that access to the towers would be via the state-maintained "Ferry Trail," which would become "Ferry Rd.," noted a member of the audience at the May 19 meeting. That byway would have to be improved from the rail siding to the top of the ridge, about seven miles. Essentially that would mean building a "gravel highway," noted Wyman, who predicted it would be "one heck of a road." An underground line would carry power to the Parks Highway; then power would travel overhead. Twenty-five to fifty workers would be employed in the construction of the road, site, and towers, reports GVEA. 

While DCC supports and applauds the exploration and pursuit of alternate, sustainable forms of energy, given the proximity of the huge wind towers to the migration paths of many birds that call Denali home for part of the year, we are concerned about the

MARK YOUR CALENDARS !!

"ENERGY ALTERNATIVES FOR THE RAILBELT"

DCC ANNUAL MEETING - SATURDAY JULY 24, 2010 - 6:30 PM - NORDHAVEN IN HEALY

What will be the mix of conventional and alternative energies for the railbelt in 20-30 years?
What is being done in Alaska to promote the use of alternative energies? What are the barriers?

Come listen to

CHRIS ROSE

DIRECTOR OF THE RENEWABLE ENERGY ALASKA PROJECT (REAP)

Chris has been a key player in educating and advocating for alternative energy sources in the state of Alaska. We are very fortunate to have him as our speaker for the Annual Meeting. Stay tuned for more updates on this event. To learn more about his organization, visit <http://www.realaska.org>.

PHIL BREASE, STAR OF DENALI'S 'CHARISMATIC MEGAFUNA' PARK GEOLOGIST FOR 24 YEARS IS REMEMBERED AS 'EPITOME OF A PUBLIC SERVANT'

by Cass Ray

Phil Brease was the “main source of knowledge about geology here for so many years that it’s hard to imagine not having him here,” noted his longtime colleague, wildlife biologist Tom Meier. To Paul Anderson, Superintendent of Denali National Park and Preserve, Brease was “the epitome of a public servant.” The park geologist for twenty-four years will be remembered, added Anderson, as “the public face of the park’s science and research program--and for how he touched so many people.”

Brease “shaped countless young lives,” recalled Pam Sousanes, Denali environmental specialist, and her husband, Ken Karle, a hydraulic engineer. They cited “everyone from the seasonal technicians he encouraged to the volunteers and interns he mentored to the hundreds and hundreds of students he inspired.” Brease somehow managed to make “geology fans” of “the most unsuspecting listeners,” noted Guy Adema, Denali physical scientist and glaciologist and Brease’s supervisor.



Phil Brease in the teaching mode.

Photo courtesy Guy Adema

Steve Martin, former park superintendent in Denali and now superintendent at Grand Canyon, praised Brease’s “dedication to his work, the park, the park service, park visitors, and his communities.” Opined Linda Stromquist, coordinator of the park service’s regional paleontology program and of its abandoned mineral land program, and Brease’s colleague for many years, “Of all the ‘charismatic megafauna’ found in Denali National Park and Preserve, Phil Brease was the star.”

Brease, 61, died on May 12, while leading students on a hike in Healy. A celebration of his life at the Denali Visitor Center on May 21 drew hundreds of friends, colleagues, neighbors, and acquaintances.

NAMESAKE OF A DEVONIAN BRACHIOPOD

What Brease called his “long and unstable slope” toward Denali began after his graduation from Central Washington University. Among the many venues for his professional adventures were Washington’s Wenatchee National Forest, Idaho, the North Slope, and Glennallen. Some of his fondest memories were of designing and building sections of the Pacific Crest Trail in Washington’s Cascade Mountains.

In 1986 Brease became park geologist in Denali, and, as he later recalled, the job eventually evolved to include mining claim administrative duties, geologic mapping, geotechnical applications, establishing a glacier monitoring program, studying water and soil resources, and geo-educational outreach. He evaluated landslides and slumps, designed the park’s first roadside trail, and pursued paleontological investigations. In 1996 a newly discovered fossil, a Devonian brachiopod, was named in his honor, *Myriospirifer breasei*. As noted by Anderson, anyone who received an e-mail from Brease the past fourteen years probably is no stranger to that signature, “*breasei*.”

The namesake of that brachiopod also taught several field courses on local geology and paleontology, and, as Meier recalled, even taught a night course at the park on geology. “Field trips with Phil were accompanied by music and his humble, good-natured approach to challenges, and of course always were punctuated by Phil’s wry sense of humor,” noted Stromquist. “He managed to find the irony in every situation.”

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REMEMBERING PHIL BREASE - *continued from previous page*

Brease and Meier “both came to the park in 1986—he stayed, I went away for a while,” recalled Meier. “When I came back, I was amazed at all that had been done in clearing up the mining claims in Kantishna. It sounded like Phil had spent a lot of time in court and had come up with a lot of money to buy out claims, in addition to all of the reclamation work that had gone on.” Brease was a “brilliant witness for the park service during the trials for mineral claims” in Denali, noted Stromquist, recalling that the regional solicitor who litigated the cases “felt Phil’s testimony was responsible for favorable verdicts for the park service.”

IN UNCHARTED TERRITORY, EARNING DEFERENCE AND GRUDGING RESPECT

Brease’s mandate was to “balance the protection of Kantishna resources with resolving the ongoing, often contentious mining issues that brought about the lawsuits,” noted Sousanes and Karle, both of whom worked with Brease for many years. “Phil also was on the front line of balancing Jimmy Carter’s dream of acquiring national park lands in Alaska with the reality of taking rights away from hard-working miners who had been mining these lands for many years. That kind of balance required incredible patience, understanding, empathy, and a scientific background.” Brease managed to achieve the goals of the park service, added Sousanes and Karle, “while maintaining the integrity of park resources and the dignity of the miners.”

“While uniformed park service law enforcement rangers often encountered open hostility,” they noted, Brease “was treated with deference and grudging respect. What Phil was doing was uncharted territory, and Phil accomplished the task.” Anderson recalled that Brease “garnered respect, support, and cooperation in achieving the park mission from broad and diverse segments of park users, from Kantishna miners and resource professionals to co-workers, university faculty, and students of all ages and disciplines.” The park superintendent cited Brease’s passionate devotion to “better understanding and protecting this special place for all Americans today and for all those generations to come.” With his “unwavering enthusiasm for geology, for the park, and for science,” noted Anderson, Brease “inspired us all to greatness.”

Brease also was the backbone of the Water, Air, Geology, and Soils (WAGS) branch of the natural resources program in Denali, noted Sousanes and Karle. Geology, that “G” in WAGS, may have been Brease’s chief passion, they added, but his interests were far-reaching and covered all aspects

of the world of physical science. Brease was “a scientist in the truest sense of the word,” they noted, “always mapping, always measuring, and always asking more questions. From glaciers to earthquakes to fossils to dirt, he had his hands in it all.”

Speaking at the celebration of Brease’s life, Anderson noted that Brease “was a thread in the fabric of the park, which is made up of its natural and cultural resources and all those who work to gain more knowledge of what is here, educate others about its significance, and protect it for the future. Phil’s thread has broken, leaving a gap in that fabric. The fabric is still whole, and it will continue to function. Over time it will mend, but it will never be like it was before.”

‘BIG SHOES TO PHIL’ AND AN EXTRAORDINARY SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY

Adema, Brease’s supervisor, noted that Brease’s “love of life” left “a legacy that will continue to inspire,” and, reflecting the eyebrow-raising puns so beloved by Phil Brease, couldn’t resist adding that Brease “left big shoes to Phil.” Brease is survived by his wife Barbara, his daughter Ana (both also Denali employees), his daughter Emily, and son Michael.

If I, a co-worker of Phil’s for four and a half years, may be allowed a personal note, I, like so many others, am such a fan of all the musical Breases that I consider their considerable talents to be gifts to all of us. Hence, a year or two ago, when I discovered Sinatra’s version of the exquisite Sammy Cahn/Jimmy Van Heusen ballad, “All My Tomorrows,” I immediately suggested to Phil and Candace Mudge, his daughters’ music teacher, that the song might prove perfectly suited to his daughter Ana’s lovely, expansive style of singing. I handed off the Sinatra CD to Phil, and it may have been a year or more before I saw it again. The morning after Phil died, as I drove to the park, the tune came on my ipod: “Right now it may not seem like spring at all/We’re drifting and the laughs are few/But we’ve got rainbows planned for tomorrow/And all our tomorrows belong to you.” There’s no one who met Phil that did not benefit from the man’s extraordinary spirit of generosity, and for that, all of us always will be grateful. ☞



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STATE OF ALASKA SHOULD REVISIT DENALI WOLF DECISION

FAILURE TO CONFIRM AL BARRETTE MAKES VOTE ON PROPOSAL 63 A TIE

by Nancy Bale

More than three months ago, I testified before the Board of Game (BoG) in support of DCC's proposal to close additional areas in the wolf townships to wolf hunting and trapping, above and beyond what was already set aside. Testimony at the BoG described "a perfect storm" of factors arguing for state action to close more lands. These factors included a declining census of wolves in the park, increased impact of humans on wolf mortality and the **special and predictable vulnerability** of wolves in certain areas of the eastern Wolf Townships during winter.

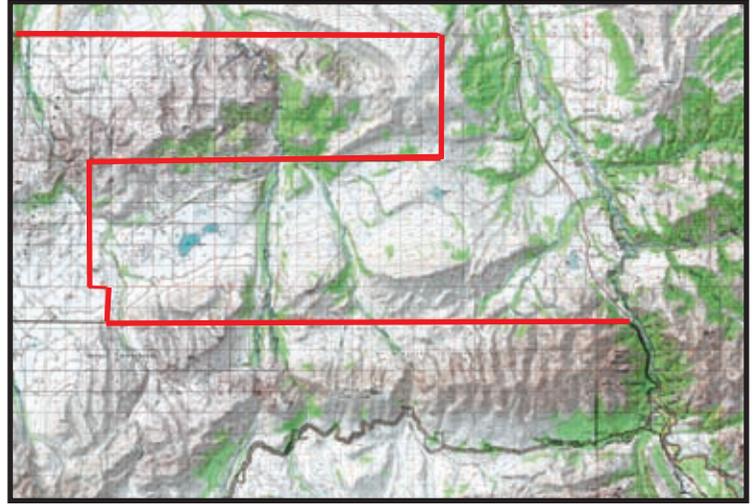
The BoG chose to vote on just one proposal to enlarge the buffers, Proposal 65 by the National Park Service. Their discussion of this issue was brief and sniffed at most of the points made in defense of enlargement. Although the Department of Fish and Game had a "no recommendation" position on the issue, the drift of opinion was negative, including the introduction of the issue by local Fish and Game Biologist Don Young.

'Viewability' and Financial value

The Board became bogged down in a discussion of whether "viewability" was a significant problem or affected by hunting or trapping outside the park, whether wolves in the park are actually in a natural state, and whether all the data actually "prove" anything. The financial value of Denali's wolves was dismissed by a single comment uttered by Chair Cliff Judkins, "I just don't feel that the argument they put forth really has any merit...the number of wolves is really insignificant to the wolf population in the state...I don't think the public that comes to Alaska is going to come here or not because they do or don't see a wolf...I don't think it's going to hurt the economic part at all...A lot of that is people getting themselves so stirred up...they don't know how to deal with it any other way."

'Subsistence' and 'limiting opportunity'

The BoG got into a convoluted discussion as to whether somehow the limiting of trapping was interference in subsistence activities, by removing or limiting reasonable hunting and trapping opportunities. New, as yet unconfirmed appointee Al Barrette spun this as a subsistence issue, and his argument was allowed to stand. It is our view that the "subsistence" argument for trapping and hunting of wolves in the Wolf Townships has little merit.



Shaded Relief map of the northeastern boundary lands showing the **Wolf Townships surrounded by Denali Park Lands**. The many ridgelines and valleys that traverse the boundary provide logical pathways for wildlife, who travel freely back and forth without regard to boundaries.

Made with TOPO

'A boundary is a boundary'

Discussion of the proposals to close additional state lands to wolf hunting/trapping brought out simmering frustrations over the federal presence in Alaska. These frustrations, really carried over from the time of ANILCA, were a **very** important factor.

After a unanimous negative vote on Proposal 65, the rest of the proposals to enlarge the buffers, including the data and arguments therein presented, were tabled and never considered. When the vote was complete, the Attorney for the Board of Game wondered out loud if the Board had sufficiently considered the economic impacts of their decision. However, no Denali tourism provider had appeared to argue for continuing the closed areas.

Proposal 63 - significant division

Despite its unanimous decision to rebuke any additional wolf buffers, the Board experienced significant division regarding whether to eliminate the existing closed areas. Ted Spraker, Ben Grussendorf and Stosh Hoffman voted in favor of retaining existing buffers. Spraker cited his regard for public opinion, a lack of controversy with the existing buffers, and presence of plenty of opportunity for trappers elsewhere. Elimination of the existing buffers passed by one vote. Al Barrette, Cliff Judkins, Teresa Sager Albaugh and Lewis Bradley voted for elimination, Ted Spraker, Ben Grussendorf and Stosh Hoffman against.

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STATE OF ALASKA SHOULD REVISIT WOLF DECISION - *continued from previous page*

The closeness of this vote (4-3) argues, in our minds, for reconsideration, in view of the legislature's decision not to confirm Al Barrette. Without Al Barrette, the vote would have been a tie, too equivocal a decision on this important issue.

The Precautionary Principle argues for retention of existing Wolf Buffers

As of this writing, the new regulations eliminating all wolf buffers from state lands adjacent to Denali National Park have not yet come into effect. The legal arguments around the vote are not settled. We hope to learn more in the next few weeks. Meanwhile, we argue that, given the current low numbers of park wolves and their vulnerability in the Wolf Townships during winter, opening yet more territory for the hunting and trapping of wolves makes little sense and is potentially very damaging.

Governor Parnell recently appointed a subsistence hunter and guide from Nenana, Nate Turner, to the Board of Game. His confirmation will not likely be considered before 2011. *✎*

DCC JOINS OTHERS IN APPEAL OF ALASKA RR HERBICIDE USE

Thanks to Becky Long of Talkeetna for the information in this article

Last summer 106 respondents statewide commented to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) in opposition to the Alaska Railroad Corporation's pesticide permit application to spray the glyphosate herbicide Aquamaster and the surfactant Agri-Dex on track locations between Bird and Seward, including 30 acres in the Seward yard. There were 17 public comments supporting the application. On April 30, 2010, the ADEC gave Permit #10-SOL-01 to the Alaska Railroad to spray. The permit is valid for 2 years and does allow for repeat spraying in one season. On 6/1/10 the public interest law firm Trustees for Alaska filed a Request for an Adjudicatory Hearing and a request for a stay of the permit on behalf of 7 community groups, the Native Village of Eklutna and 1 business. DCC was one of these community groups.

This is a statewide issue. Recently, Railroad Spokesperson Stephanie Wheeler said in a 6/8/10 KTNA Public Radio interview that the railroad hopes to incorporate this permit into a much broader herbicide application program throughout the railbelt. And other state agencies such as the Alaska Department of Transportation are watching the developments. **If spraying occurs, it will be ending the 1978 ban by then Governor Hammond on the use of herbicides by state agencies.**

The Request focuses on contamination of water by the chemicals. There are many ponds, lakes, streams, and wetlands within 100 foot of the tracks in areas the railroad intends to spray. In addition, there are private wells within 200 feet of the permit area not shown in the pesticide

application, and as the ADEC itself previously has observed, "any spray method ... would likely result in the proposed herbicides reaching waters of the state." New data have emerged in 2009 from the current US Environmental Protection Agency Reregistration Process of the herbicide glyphosate that shows contamination of surface water can both in the short and long term cause many human health impacts, and that glyphosate can have residual effects on fish and aquatic environments with the effects compounded by certain natural environmental conditions such as high sedimentation levels, temperature, pH levels, and water chemistry.

It is important to let the State Department of Environmental Conservation know your concerns. Comment by the deadline, **June 24th**. Information on where to send comments is below. *✎*

Email address for comments: Gary.Mendivil@alaska.gov

Mailing address: Gary Mendivil, Office of the Commissioner, ADEC, PO Box 111800, Juneau, AK 99811-1800



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HEALY GAS EXPLORATION - FINAL BEST INTEREST FINDING TO BE PUBLISHED IN LATE JUNE

by Nancy Bale

On May 19, 2010 DCC President Nancy Bale and Trustees for Alaska Attorney Vicki Clark met for an informal information-gathering session with Jonne Slemons, Petroleum Land Manager at the Division of Oil and Gas, Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The meeting, held at the request of Ms. Slemons, was to inform us that the Final Best Interest Finding for Healy Gas Exploration had been written and its release was pending. Issuance of a Final BIF typically involves a 20 day appeal period, and only those who commented on the Preliminary document have standing to appeal. The Preliminary Finding was put out in August 2005, and comments were submitted by DCC in October of that year.

DCC President Nancy Bale re-asserted that we as an organization oppose development in part of the 208,000 acres and have identified the sensitive lands we feel should be excluded. Points that we presented at the meeting included:

1. Local citizens' best interests are critical - this has been specifically recognized by the state.

Page 1-11 Preliminary BIF: “The revenue stream to the state from the proposed exploration license and any downstream production is not expected to significantly impact the overall oil and gas revenue of the state of Alaska. The best interests of local residents is therefore of critical importance to the best interest decision.”

2. A limited 20 day appeal period is inconsistent with the interests identified in #1 above.

Five years is a long time, and local citizens need more time to digest the changes in the Final BIF and provide intelligent comment. This will likely take more than 20 days. In addition, the appeal is only available to those with “standing” by having commented before. Locals who would like to comment now but have not already done so will be excluded from the process. We'd like to see DNR allow broader public comment and a longer comment period.

3. The State of Alaska, Division of Mining, Land and Water, recognized conflicting values on borough lands.

In the Final Finding on MLE Conveyance, the Division stated, “The borough is a prime tourist destination and the scenic beauty, recreational opportunities and wildlife protection is essential.” (p. 2). We note that Gas Development is inconsistent with state-recognized values throughout the Stampede townships west of Healy.

4. Land planning in the Denali Borough is in its early stages, and Gas Development has the potential to interfere with the orderly development of this young community.

Certain areas in the Denali Borough, especially those lands west of the Nenana River, contain most of the human settlement and residential/commercial development. These lands are still in the process of classification. Land planning is in its early phases. The compatibility of gas development with municipal development will continue to be a point of discussion and disagreement, and the protection of private property and the area's outstanding recreational opportunities will continue to be key priorities of local government. Local residents have legitimate concerns about the impact of the roads, wellheads and pipelines that go along with gas development upon their quality of life and the orderly development of their communities. This is why we have requested that the area available for exploration and development be limited.

DCC does not oppose gas development in the Denali Borough. Gas is a relatively clean fuel and would be preferable for use in the local community and statewide over, for instance, coal. Withholding certain key areas from Gas Exploration, however, will still provide the developer with ample areas in which to explore without unduly impacting the interests of local citizens and wildlife/public recreational opportunities in the Denali Borough. ☞

DENALI BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION CONTINUES LAND CLASSIFICATION PROCESS

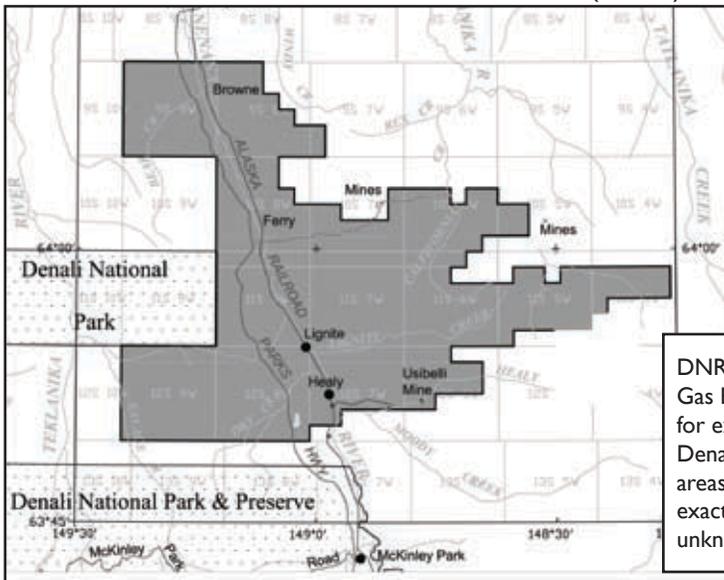
by Hannah Ragland

The planning process continues for the classification of land along Stampede Road. The formal process was initiated in May to classify lands received as part of the Denali Borough's Municipal Land Entitlement from the state. This selection, known as Panguingue B West, includes land to the north and south of Stampede between the George Parks Highway and the Panguingue Subdivision, ending near the gravel pit at Mile 1.7 on Stampede Road.

The gravel pit was the motivating factor to classify these lands, as it would need to be classified in order to maintain the permitting process for material extraction. The Denali Borough Code does not have a "Material Site" classification category, so instead it was proposed that the land be designated "Heavy Industrial." Classification as "Heavy Industrial" includes material extraction, but also includes "other uses that involve excessive noise, odors, danger of explosions, hydrocarbon release, or toxic wastes that make them incompatible with most other lands." DCC supports Mayor Talerico's recommendation, which is to create a new category, "Existing Material Site" for this and future gravel pit acquisitions. The planning commission also wants to hear public input about how the remainder of lands in Panguingue B should be classified. DCC and others have encouraged the Planning Commission to slow the process down, which they responded to by delaying a decision until more discussion could be had about revising the current code regarding land classification. ☞

DCC is happy to see this planning process take place, and will remain involved in the process to encourage adequate protection in this important wildlife habitat. Check the Borough website for updates and upcoming meetings.

PRELIMINARY GAS EXPLORATION MAP (2005)



DNR Map of the 208,000 acre area proposed for Gas Exploration in the Preliminary BIF. DCC asked for exclusion of areas west of the Nenana River. The Denali Borough Assembly, at one time, asked that areas west of the Parks Highway be excluded. The exact extent of the license area in the Final BIF is unknown at this writing.

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