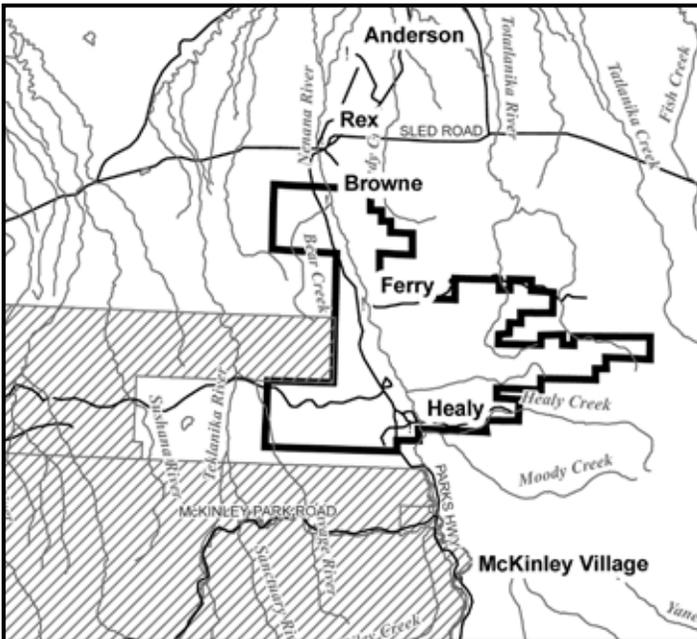


HEALY BASIN GAS APPEAL MOVES INTO COURT SOON

ORAL ARGUMENTS TO BE HEARD IN ANCHORAGE SUPERIOR COURT ON JULY 2, 2012

by Charlie Loeb



The Final Best Interest Finding, signed by then DNR Commissioner Tom Irwin, creates a 208,000 acre gas exploration area, enclosing the community of Healy and residential areas nearby, and approaching the northeast boundary of Denali National Park. We are appealing this Final Finding.

DCC's legal case challenging the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)'s Best Interest Finding for a Healy Basin Gas-Only Exploration License is at last moving into the courtroom. Judge Andrew Guidi will hear oral argument on the merits of the case on Monday, July 2 at 2:30 PM in Anchorage. The hearing is open to the public, and DCC invites and encourages members and supporters to attend. While the case will be decided on its merits, it will be helpful for the judge to see concerned community members in the audience.

The gas exploration that DNR approved in the Healy Basin could lead to enormous landscape impacts if future development unfolds as in other locations in the United States. Coalbed methane development (the most likely form of gas development in the Healy Basin) would convert the area into a large industrial zone with pipelines, roads, heavy truck traffic, well pads, drill rigs, compressor stations, and other infrastructure distributed across the landscape (and potentially residents' yards). Enormous amounts of groundwater would be extracted from coal seams and would require disposal, with unknown impacts on water quality and groundwater supplies (i.e., peoples' well water). Hydraulic fracturing – the now-infamous “fracking” technology – could be employed. The area included in the license could come to look, sound, and smell not like the peaceful rural landscape we know now, but more like an extensive industrial facility.

Purpose of Oral Argument

The oral argument in our lawsuit against DNR's decision will allow us to present the merits of our case to the judge. The legal process and discussion have gone on so long that all but those who are following the case carefully have probably lost track of the details.

continued on page 7

DCC vs. DNR

Monday, July 2, 2012

2:30 PM

Judge Andrew Guidi Courtroom
402 Nesbett Courthouse
825 West 4th Ave, Anchorage

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FROM THE DCC BOARD

by Nancy Bale

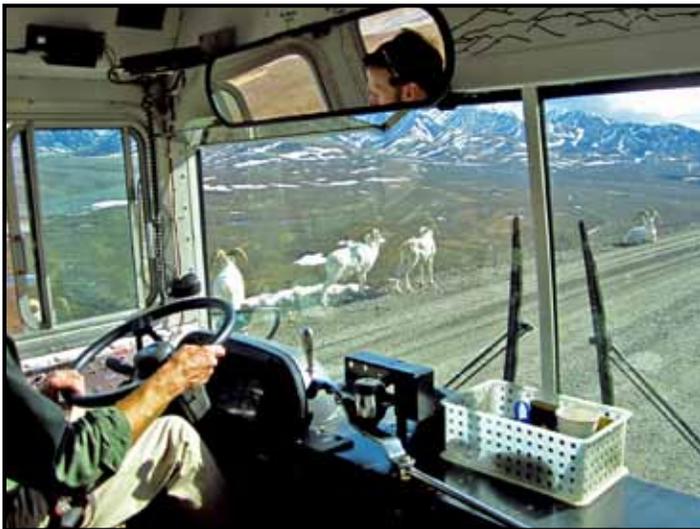
I recently had the good fortune to spend quality time out in Denali National Park at the 60th Reunion of Camp Denali. This lodge near Wonder Lake, where I spent so many summers cooking, baking and interacting with guests, was founded by Celia Hunter and Woody and Ginny Wood in 1952, when I was seven years old. Little did I know at the time what this piece of ground and the people associated with it would mean to me through the years. My time there began in 1974, when I cooked one season for Celia and Ginny, then again from 1976 until 1996, when I worked for Wallace and Jerryne Cole. Now the lodge is operated by the Coles' daughter and son-in-law, Jenna and Simon Hamm, who were our hosts for the 60th Reunion. Their generosity in sharing Camp with us was much appreciated.



Mountain Forget-Me-Not - *Eritrichium aretoides*, found on the slopes of Mt. Galen

We (more than two dozen of us, former staff and friends) had three full days at Camp, and two days on either side for transportation in and out. I brought a tiny digital camera and was snapping away like a cheechako throughout the stay. The three days of hiking were just glorious. It felt good to experience the variable weather, the carpet of flowers and the company of fellow hikers. Wildlife sightings from the bus were plentiful and close, including rams at Polychrome, a group of five wolves near Government Draw, and a bear near Stony who enjoyed a leisurely meal and a walk next to the bus.

One day, we drove back to Eielson Visitor Center where local artist and former Camp staff Ree Nancarrow attracted a small crowd as she spoke about the making of her quilt, *Seasons of Denali*, which hangs inside the visitor center. The quilt came alive as Ree spoke, discussing her techniques, her effort to include all the animals and plants that naturally occurred in the Eielson area and her work to place them across the quilt as they occur throughout the seasons.



Rams on Polychrome - We noted several instances of park mammals using the road corridor; sheep at Polychrome, a bear near Stony Creek and wolves on the road near Government Draw. Our guides and park staff were quick to remind us to maintain silence and stay within the bus during these encounters. That's Brian McCormick driving. *Photos on this page by Nancy Bale*

In the evenings at Camp, slide shows and old movies depicted the early days along with the evolution and changes that occurred there throughout the years. Karen Brewster, who spent several years talking to Ginny Wood about her life both at Denali and elsewhere, presented the book that resulted from this collaboration, titled *Boots, Bikes and Bombers*. Woody Wood spent an evening reminiscing with Jenna Hamm about his experiences in the early days of Camp. Wally and Jerri Cole showed a selection of slides from their many years running Camp Denali and North Face Lodge.

The mountain emerged every day, at least for a while.

It was difficult returning from such an idyllic trip into the world of lists, responsibilities, and predictable irritations. I look forward to returning for a possible Aircraft Overflights Council outing in early August and our third Stampede Summit in Healy on August 11th. Hopefully I can use some of that time to move on the ridges again, check for late wildflowers and experience the vastness. ☞

Nancy Bale

THANK YOU, MEMBERS

Your generosity is noted and appreciated, as we plan for Stampede Summit 3 and fund our Healy Gas administrative appeal (see article on front page). Our legal fees have mounted as this case has stretched out over a year and a half. While our attorney Peter Van Tuyn has been very generous with his fees and payment schedule, we do need to pay him. If you believe it is important to keep gas development out of the Wolf Townships and residents' backyards, please consider making a special donation to support DCC's Gas Legal Fund.

Forty-six donors have already given to our Legal Fund, some more than once. Donating is easy – just look for the link on the bottom right corner of the DCC website at www.denalicitizens.org. Donations between \$100 and \$500 would be particularly helpful, but any amount is very welcome. Thank you! ☞



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

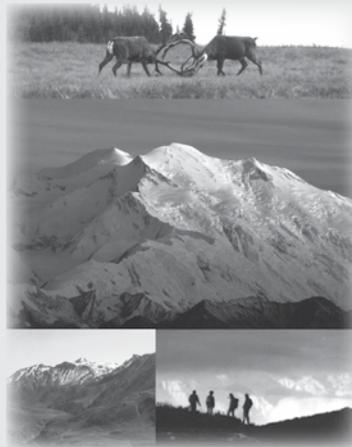
JOINED OR RENEWED SINCE LAST NEWSLETTER

MAJOR DONOR

- Jean Balay
- Nancy Bale
- Bob Barni
- Wallace & Jerryne Cole
- Jeff Forsythe
- Marisa James & Jon Paynter
- Charlie & Mary Loeb
- David McCargo
- Carol McIntyre & Ray Hander
- Jan St. Peters & Rick Weibel
- Kathy & Allan Toubman

SUMMIT

Cliff Eames



TUNDRA

- Stuart & Paula Barb
- Andrea Blakesley
- Alison Carlyle
- Stewart Cubley
- Sue Deyoe & Jeff Lebegue
- Brenda & Brad Ebel
- Daniel Geenblatt
- Dulce Havill & Chuck Klemer
- Vicky Hoover
- Sherry Lewis
- Chuck and Mona Lidgard-Bale
- Mark & Cheryl Lovegreen
- Fran Mauer
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- Gina Soltis & Ray Gary
- Jim Stratton
- Jessica Toubman
- George Wagner
- Erica Watson
- Robert & Karen Watson
- Dusty Whittemore

TAIGA

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Carmen Adamyk | Becky Irish & Terry Grabow |
| The Ambros Family | Cynthia Keef |
| Al Batten | Kirsty Knittel |
| Sandy Bauer | Chuck Lennox |
| Emily Becker & Dan Ruthrauff | Rosemary & Dennis McGlynn |
| Tina Brown | Kathy Milliken |
| Mike Cobbold & Annette Faurote | Eric & Kelly Oberg/Mass |
| Karine Dane | Barbara O'Donnell |
| Anne Eissler | Mary Pearson |
| Debra Ernst | Katherine Schake |
| Will & Linda Forsberg | Don Soileau & Denise Hanson |
| Sharyn Gerhardt | Mike Tranel |
| Tom Hautman | Lolita Valcq |
| Melanie & Kim Heacox | Larissa Yocum |
| Dianne Herman | Mary Zalar & Ken Whitten |

∞ Mark your Calendars ∞

STAMPEDE SUMMIT 3

Tri-Valley Community Center - Healy, Alaska

Saturday, August 11, 2012

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM

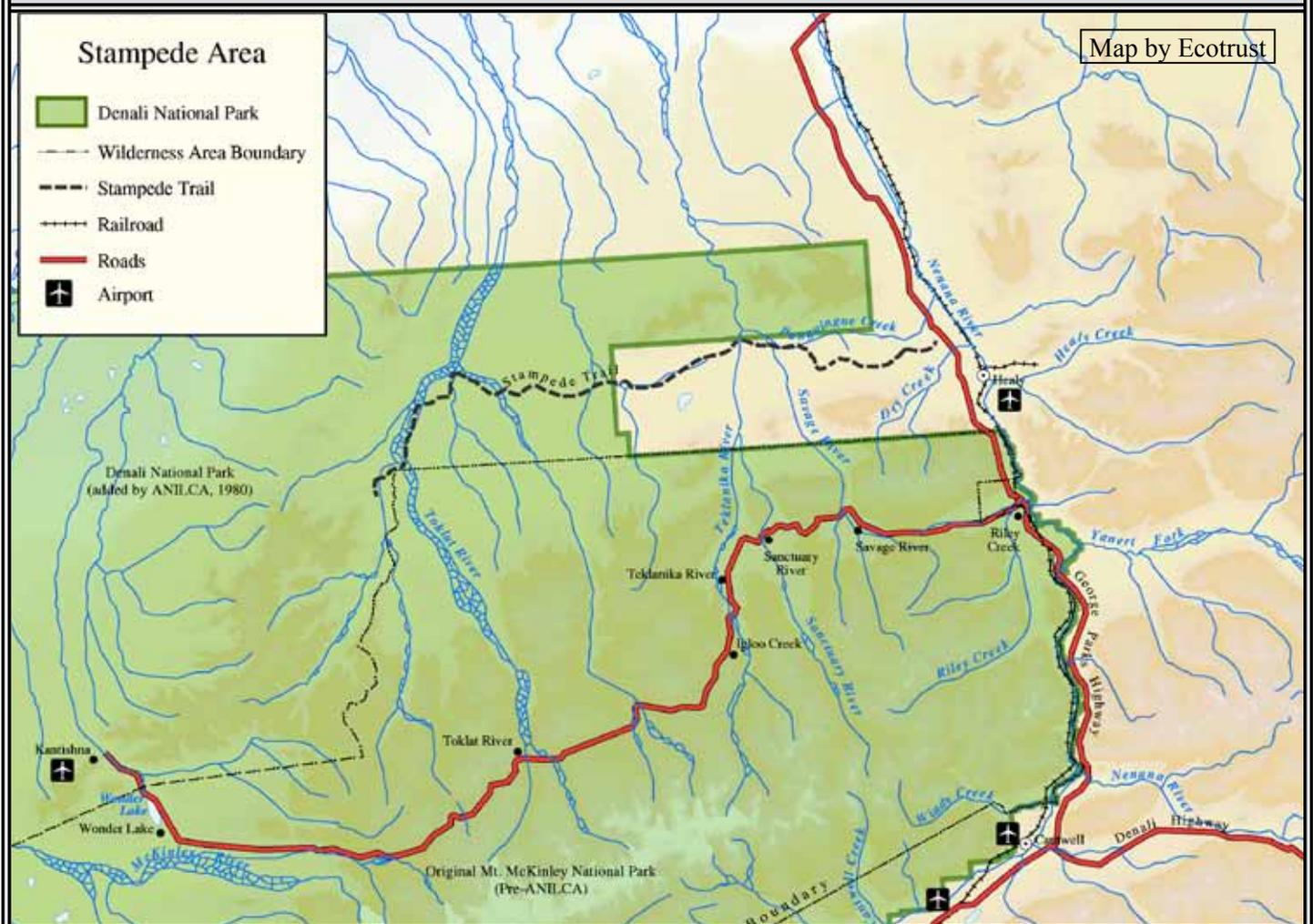
Catered Lunch provided

Why? - Our two past Stampede Summits clearly showed how much local citizens value the lands in the Stampede Townships and want to have a hand in directing their future. Stampede Summit 3 is intended to provide a forum for wide-ranging discussion about just that.

What? - There will be panel discussions among knowledgeable agency, government and scientific representatives. Topics will include: What is happening out in the Stampede now? What could happen in the future? What do we want and how can we obtain it? Time will be provided for discussion and questions.

Who? - We've invited local citizens, businesses and researchers whose focus is the Stampede Townships. Also coming are representatives of local and state government and agencies, with up-to-date planning information. All local citizens are invited.

REGISTRATION OPPORTUNITIES COMING SOON



DCC WELCOMES ANOTHER SEASON AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

THIRTY-PLUS ATTENDEES ENJOY DESSERT, DISCUSS THE MANY ISSUES WE ARE FACING

by Jared Zimmerman

The Denali Citizens Council members got together to share an evening of dessert and conversation at our Annual Meeting on May 28th. Over 30 members joined the board of directors to review the efforts of the organization over the past year and to get an update on the current issues facing the Denali community.

DCC President Charlie Loeb, pictured at the right, started off the meeting by thanking two women who have given so much to the organization over the past few years. Anne Beaulaurier stepped down from the board of directors this year after five years. Julia Potter recently stepped down as our Community Organizer, as life has taken her from Cantwell to Homer.

Julia, as DCC's sole staffer, worked hard to grow and maintain the organization. She also took a personal interest in development issues facing the Denali Borough. Julia was active in advocating for Scenic Byway designation for the Parks Highway, and she also served on the Chamber of Commerce and on the Borough Land Use Planning Commission. Julia left us with some wonderful hand-made hats that served as door prizes for some lucky DCC members.

The DCC board gave the membership updates on many of the issues the organization has been addressing

Nancy Bale detailed the DCC position on the Denali National Park Vehicle Management Plan, with the Final EIS due out this summer. She also shared a few details on the Denali Aircraft Overflights Advisory Council, which has been working for the past few years to develop Best Practices to protect the natural soundscape over Denali National Park.

Jared Zimmerman gave an update on the many energy development issues going on in or near the borough, including Healy Gas, the ASAP pipeline, restart of the Healy Clean Coal Plant, Underground Coal Gasification and the Susitna Dam Project.



Hannah Ragland relayed information from the Friends of Stampede group, which has been actively addressing issues in the Wolf Townships. The past year's work has included advocating for establishing a State Recreation Area along the Stampede Road, area cleanups and tracking development of scientific research infrastructure in the area.

Nan Eagleson shared details on a recent victory for conservation with the state Board of Game, as they decided this year to maintain the non-motorized hunt in the Yanert Valley.

We are excited that Hannah Ragland and Nan Eagleson have been elected to new terms on the board of directors. The board is still seeking individuals interested in filling a vacancy on our board. Contact President Charlie Loeb if you or someone you know is interested.

Thanks to everyone who was able to join us on a warm and sunny Memorial Day. And a special thank you to the Denali Education Center for hosting the event at the beautiful Sheldon Center.

It was a chance for old friends to see each other again, and for a lot of us to meet each other. We all enjoyed plenty of delicious dessert, root beer and wine. For everyone that we missed this year, we hope to see you next year!



Photos courtesy of Nancy Bale

SUSITNA-WATANA HYDRO PROJECT IN PLANNING PHASE

DCC SUBMITS COMMENTS TO FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION ON MAY 31, 2012

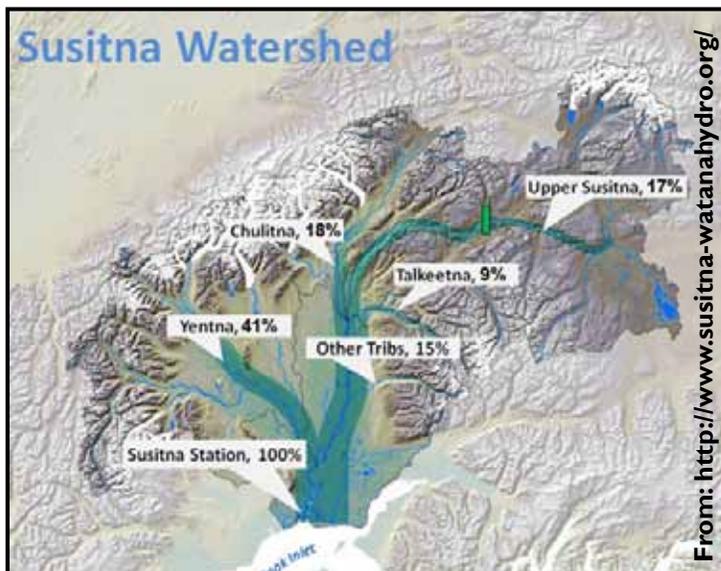
by Charlie Loeb

The proposed Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project has not been a central issue to the Denali Citizens Council because it falls somewhat outside of our core area of concern and because we have so many other issues central to our mission. Nonetheless, the project is enormous and cannot be ignored. The dam remains a high priority of the state government. If it moves forward it will have some significant spin-off impacts to the Denali Borough and possibly to Denali National Park and Preserve. DCC has called attention to these issues locally and was successful at getting a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) public hearing held in Cantwell back in March.

FERC completed an initial public comment period on the project on May 31, calling particularly for input about what studies are needed to thoroughly evaluate the impacts of the dam. DCC expressed general support for those organizations calling for studies related to the many unknowns about the project – impacts on fish, seismic concerns, sedimentation, true cost, etc. – but focused our comments specifically on those issues that are related to our mission and might be overlooked by others, including development impacts in the southern Denali Borough, recreational impacts along the Denali Highway and in the southeastern corner of the national park, and possible effects on subsistence.

DCC made the following points to FERC

- 1) Big game/wildlife studies should evaluate the impacts on wildlife that utilizes Denali National Park and Preserve, such as the Nelchina Caribou Herd. Because of the park's importance for wildlife-related tourism and research, the impacts of the hydroelectric project on Denali's wildlife need to be fully understood.
- 2) Socioeconomic analyses need to include a particular focus on likely land use and economic impacts in the southern Denali Borough. What will be the likely changes in population in Cantwell and surrounding area during construction and permanently? How much new housing and construction will be required? What local government expenditures would be necessary during construction phases and ongoing operation related to education, emergency services, and land use planning? These questions are potentially applicable to the northern Mat-Su Borough as well.
- 3) As a side issue of the above, we suggested that federal subsistence use be included in socioeconomic studies. Cantwell is a resident-zone community for the purpose of determining federal subsistence eligibility at Denali. If the population of Cantwell expands dramatically as a result of dam construction or future operation, there could be significant impacts on wildlife in national park areas.
- 4) Recreational use studies need to include evaluation of existing recreational uses along the Denali Highway as well as projections of how those uses would change if the dam were constructed. Existing and potential future use of the relatively unmanaged southeastern portion of Denali National Park should also be evaluated.



For Research

To read the state's description of the project and the planning process, look to the Alaska Energy Authority's dedicated website:

<http://www.susitna-watanahydro.org/>.

The Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives, based in Talkeetna, is the leading organization opposing the dam. The website address for the coalition is:

<http://susitnadamalternatives.org/>.

Finally, if you would like to browse all of the comments submitted to FERC, go to

<http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/search/fercgensearch.asp> and type "P-14241" in the search field for "Document Number."

DCC could use a volunteer who would like to follow this project for us. If interested, please call us at 683-3396, or write us at mail@denalicitizens.org.

Percentage of the total flow of the Susitna River taken up by its various branches. The Susitna-Watana Dam would sequester about 17% of the total flow.

JOINT PACIFIC ALASKA RANGE COMPLEX DRAFT EIS OUT FOR COMMENT

PROPOSED INCREASE IN "WAR GAMES OVER THE DENALI AREA" WARRANTS LOCAL CONCERN

by Hannah Ragland

The Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) Modernization and Enhancement project proposes to expand military training opportunities through increased flight space use and restrictions, and ground operations throughout Alaska. DCC submitted comments in support of the "No Action" alternative during the project's original scoping period, and intends to do the same for the Draft EIS.

Several components originally proposed have been deleted, but still in the Draft are actions that DCC was most concerned about during the scoping period, including increased nighttime use and lowered flight-ceilings over sensitive wildlife habitat north and south of the Denali Highway and potentially overlapping Denali National Park and Preserve. DCC is concerned about impacts to soundscape, which affect both recreational users and wildlife, and about safety. The Draft EIS minimizes consideration of the impacts of noise on wildlife, and states that use of identified noise sensitive areas (including areas over the Park and several locations along the Denali Highway) will be minimized, but not formally restricted.

The Denali Borough Assembly and Middle Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee passed resolutions in favor of the "No Action" alternative during the scoping period in early 2011. The Borough Assembly moved to resubmit this resolution at their June 2012 meeting. DCC intends to reiterate our concerns during the Draft EIS comment period, which closes on July 9, 2012. Visit DCC's website, <http://www.denalicitizens.org/?s=JPARC> to see our comments. Then, visit the JPARC EIS website at www.jpisceis.com for more information and to submit your own comments. ☞



HEALY GAS APPEAL TO BE HEARD ON JULY 2, 2012 - *continued from front page*

In brief, DCC spent years during the Best Interest Finding process trying to convince DNR that surface property in the Healy basin has great value to the local economy and to local residents, that gas exploration and development threaten those interests, and that wildlife habitat in the Wolf Townships is too important to be compromised for gas extraction, particularly when the gas resource is not thought to be of statewide importance. After repeatedly assuring us that they cared about DCC's concerns, DNR published a final Best Interest Finding at the end of 2010 that acknowledged none of the organization's well-supported contentions, even rolling back important mitigation measures that had been proposed in the preliminary finding.

While DNR has a lot of discretion in making decisions about where and how oil and gas exploration occurs on state land in Alaska, it must have a rational explanation for its decision. In its final Best Interest Finding, DNR did not explain why it could not consider a smaller lease area or more stringent mitigations, and offered irrational points as to why it rolled back protective mitigation measures. Unfortunately, this decision appears to be in line with DNR's new mission statement, which prioritizes resource development over other values. Thankfully the law does not sanction the type of unsupported and irrational decisions that DNR made here, as we will point out to the court at oral argument.

Over the years since this project was first proposed (in 2003), DCC has attempted to engage executives from Usibelli Coal Mine and staff from the DNR's Division of Oil and Gas in a discussion where we could craft a solution amenable to everyone. After all, DCC is not trying to stop gas development in the Denali Borough, we just want some sensitive lands left out of the license area and some stronger mitigations introduced to protect property owners from the impacts of any gas development that may occur. Given the sparse population of the Borough our solution doesn't seem that difficult. While DNR and Usibelli Coal Mine have not been willing to engage us in this conversation to date, we remain open to a reasonable resolution that is agreed to by all of these parties.

The oral argument will be the latest round of legal exchanges between DCC and Alaska DNR, as represented by state attorneys. Attorney and long-time friend of the conservation community Peter Van Tuyn is representing DCC, and has filed two briefs for the organization so far. You can read both briefs and the State's response brief on our website, following the links at the following link: <http://www.denalicitizens.org/healy-basin-gas-exploration-license-2/healy-gas-historical-documents-background/>. ☞

DENALI WOLF POPULATION REMAINS LOW

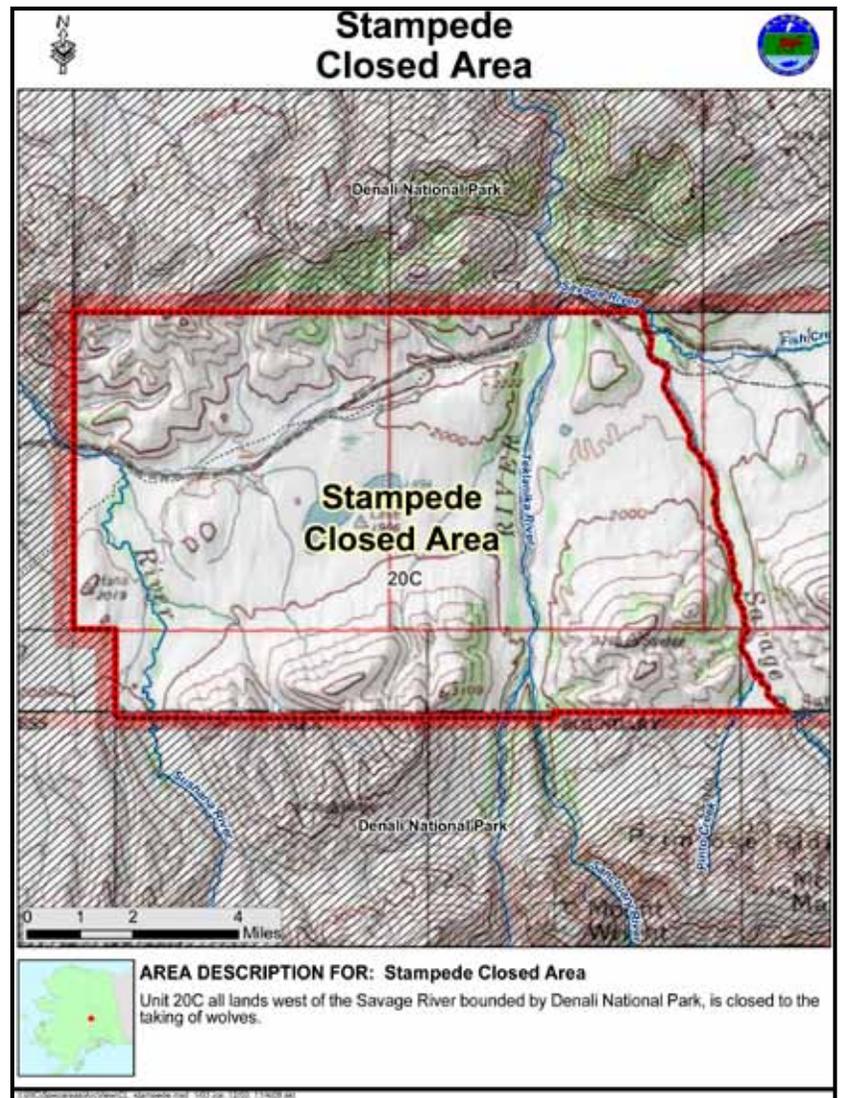
RECENT TRAPPING INCIDENT IN STAMPEDE TOWNSHIPS TAKES ALPHA FEMALE FROM GRANT CREEK PACK
by Nancy Bale

This past spring, the alpha female from Denali National Park's Grant Creek Pack was trapped on state lands along the Savage River not far from the north boundary, along with another wolf from the same pack. Because her body was partially scavenged before being retrieved by the trapper, it was impossible to tell whether this wolf was pregnant. Her loss, along with that of another female wolf from the Grant Creek Pack, threw doubt on whether the pack would produce young this year. Overall, the population of Denali's wolves has decreased over the last several years, as shown on the chart to the right. Some of this decrease is attributable to human takings at the boundaries of the park, particularly in the area of the Stampede Townships. DCC has been involved in policy discussions about this important area for many years, and we have brought proposals to the Alaska Board of Game that – if enacted – would protect wolves when they venture outside the park into this area.

Protection of Denali wolf packs outside park boundaries requires a high degree of communication and collaboration between the National Park Service and state wildlife authorities, including both the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Alaska Board of Game. In 2010 NPS attempted to collaborate with the Board of Game to obtain enhanced protection for park wolf packs as they venture out into the Stampede Townships. DCC and other conservation organizations also introduced proposals to enlarge the controlled use area (informally known as the “wolf buffer”) that existed at the time, which prohibited the taking of wolves within designated areas in the Wolf Townships and along the Nenana River corridor. The buffer in the Townships is depicted in the map on the right.

Philip Hooge, Assistant Superintendent for Resources, Science and Learning, and Tom Meier, NPS Wildlife Biologist, made the case for retaining and expanding the wolf buffer. They presented data from radio collaring studies showing that the take of wolves in the Stampede Area was increasing and could be affecting the likelihood of visitors seeing wolves (“viewability”) along the Denali park road. The BoG rejected their research, and after very briefly considering the proposals for enlarging the Denali wolf buffers, the Board of Game rejected them all, then allowed the existing buffers to expire, by a vote of 4-3.

NPS continues to study the movements of park wolves and is presently researching the viewability issue. There will be a presentation on NPS research in the Stampede Townships at Stampede Summit 3. Meanwhile, we at DCC sense a growing interest in restoring the Stampede wolf buffer abolished in 2010. After all, the vote was close. We will continue to work with all interested parties to float this idea. Meanwhile, if you would like to see the Denali Wolf Buffer in the Stampede area restored, visit and sign our petition at the DCC website, <http://www.denalicitizens.org>



The above map, by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, depicts the Stampede Closed Area, more popularly known as the Denali Wolf Buffer. This area, established by the Board of Game in 2002, was allowed to sunset at the BoG meeting in 2010 in a close vote, 4-3. At that time the BoG also decided not to consider this issue again until 2016. However, we at DCC think the subject can be reconsidered at any time, by a simple majority vote.

DENALI WOLF POPULATION REMAINS LOW *continued from previous page*

Pack sizes and wolf density estimates, Denali National Park and Preserve 2004 - 2012

(pack sizes in parentheses were not included in total or density estimate) *chart courtesy of Tom Meier*

PACK	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall
100 MILE	8	0																
ALDER CREEK															1			
BEARPAW	2	5	3	6	6	10	8	10	9	5	5	2	2	6	5	6	6	
BOOT LAKE								1	(2)	2	4	3	(3)	(8)	(9)			
CASTLE ROCKS	1	1	1	2	2	6	5	7	7	2	0							
CHITSIA	4	4	4	8	6	11	9	11	5	7	1	0						
EAST FORK	7	12	6	14	14	15	15	15	11	16	11	12	5	11	6	10	8	
GRANT CREEK	2	5	4	6	6	13	5	5	3	6	6	14	11	16	16	13	15	
HAUKE						4	4	4	3	0								
HERRON	8	8	8	3	3	0												
HOT SLOUGH							2	7	7	8	6	7	5	3	4	10	9	
HULT			1															
IRON CREEK											2	6	5	9	7	8	9	
KANTISHNA RIVER	5	2	2	7	7	1	1	1	2	5	2	6	6	8	0			
MCKINLEY RIVER	2	6	4	2	2	6	5	10	2	0								
MCKINLEY SLOUGH	7	8	8	10	10	8	8	15	15	14	11	15	14	19	18	15	14	
MCLEOD 2							4	6	2	0								
MOOSE CREEK											2	2	2	0				
MT MARGARET	9	7	6	10	9	11	6	7	3	2	2	5	0	0				
MUDDY	1																	
NENANA RIVER											2	6	2	5	4	7	4	
OTTER LAKE											2	2	2	3	0	7	0	
PINTO				6	6	5	3	10	4	0								
SAVAGE								2	2	6	0							
SOMBER						7	6	11	8	8	4	2	2	6	7	6	3	
STARR LAKE	7	7	7	9	9	3	3	6	4	3	3	6	3	3	3	2	2	
STRAIGHTAWAY	10	4	4	8	8	0												
TOKLAT SPRINGS	5	7	6	12	12	8	6	9	6	(5)	(1)	(3)	(3)	(3)	0		?	
TONZONA								(1)	(2)	2	2	1	0	0				
TOTEK HILLS								6	6	(4)	(3)	0	0	0	0			
TURTLE HILL		2	2	3	3	3	3	4	0									
TOTAL WOLVES	78	78	66	106	103	111	93	147	99	86	65	89	59	89	71	77	70	
AREA IN KM ²	16,061	14,630	14,630	15,367	15,367	17,439	17,439	17,757	17,757	16,607	16,607	17,061	17,061	17,994	17,994	17,994	18,340	
WOLVES/1000 KM ²	4.86	5.33	4.51	6.90	6.70	6.37	5.33	8.28	5.58	5.18	3.91	5.22	3.46	4.95	3.95	4.28	3.82	
EST WOLVES IN PARK*	84	92	78	119	116	110	92	143	96	89	68	90	60	85	68	74	66	
PACK	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall	spring	fall

* wolf estimate = the calculated wolf density projected across 17,270 square km of habitat within park boundaries, north of the Alaska Range

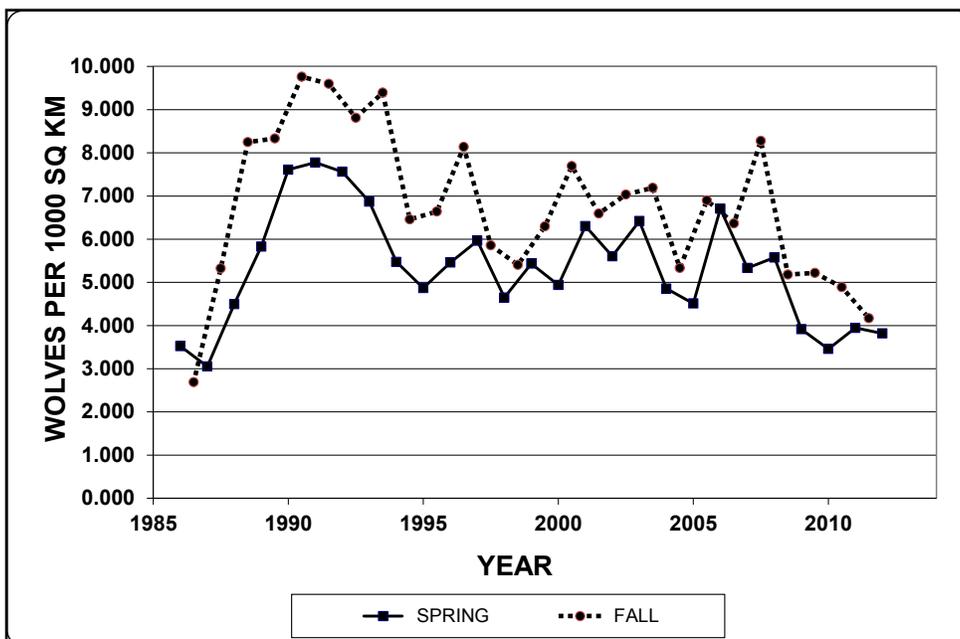


Chart at the left depicts density of wolves in Denali National Park and Preserve per 1,000 square kilometers, over the years since the 1980s.

Thanks to Tom Meier for providing this information

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

DENALI VEHICLE MANAGEMENT PLAN FINAL EIS DUE OUT AT END OF JUNE

We just checked with the National Park Service and learned that the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Denali Vehicle Management Plan will be released online on or around June 29, 2012 and paper copies will be available very soon after that. For those who wish to check online, go to the following link at the NPS planning site.

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=22494>

When the Final EIS is available it will be posted on the "Documents" tab at the above link. While it is true that NPS responded to public comment by introducing a daily limit in the Final EIS, we have many questions about how this limit was calculated and vetted. We have additional questions regarding the effectiveness of the adaptive management program to protect resources in this plan, its affect on the viability of other resource protection programs in Denali, and additional concerns regarding whether adequate protection for the Transit (or Shuttle) service has been provided. NPS is studying marketing scenarios that would better inform park visitors about the inexpensive Transit option. However, the follow-through for establishing more equitable marketing will occur during the development of the upcoming concession contract, something not as amenable to public scrutiny as NEPA processes. ☞



Photo courtesy of Kim Turnbull

OVERFLIGHTS COUNCIL DEVELOPES BEST PRACTICES OVER DENALI WILDERNESS

In the Denali Backcountry Management Plan (BCMP), the natural soundscape of the park was, for the first time, listed as a resource to be monitored and protected. Even before the BCMP was signed, Denali National Park had developed a sound monitoring program, and this program has grown and evolved over the years. Currently, NPS is developing a complete inventory of the natural soundscape, along with monitoring for motorized intrusions, including those from aircraft. This feedback has helped the Denali Overflights Advisory Council, composed of representatives from 12 stakeholder groups, to develop "Best Practices" for pilots to use, voluntarily, to help protect the natural soundscape of the park. Such practices are difficult to develop and test, but the Council has done some field work, consulted with pilots, and used several meetings for the difficult work of getting there. This summer, Best Practices were developed for the core Wilderness area between the entrance and Eielson, and consist of attempts to avoid highly sound-sensitive areas in the Wilderness core park. These practices have been codified and are posted on the Aircraft Overflights webpage at <http://www.nps.gov/denaliparkgmt/aoacmeetings.htm>. ☞

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT TOKLAT?

In 2007, DCC began to ask the question, why has the temporary bookstore at Toklat Rest Stop become less than temporary? The store was originally placed there as a temporary facility while the Eielson Visitor Center was being constructed, but when NPS decided not to have a bookstore at Eielson, the facility at Toklat was retained, using a Categorical Exclusion. We and several of our members disagreed with this action. The Toklat Rest Stop is zoned non-commercial in park planning documents and we felt that such a designation is appropriate. In fact, the current status of the bookstore, still housed in a tent, is somewhat mysterious....not permanent, but hardly temporary. We understand that NPS may be looking toward a larger scale planning effort focusing on the entire Toklat area, and that perhaps this issue will be addressed there. In that case, NPS should solve this dilemma using its own language from the Finding of No Significant Impact for the Toklat Rest Stop (2004); "The State of Alaska and other commenters requested that permanent facilities at Toklat, aside from toilets, would be roofed but otherwise open to the elements. NPS agrees that, unlike the temporary facilities necessary to replace the Eielson functions during visitor center construction, the permanent facilities at the Toklat Rest Stop will not include a bus dispatch office, interpretation office or structure for book sales." (FONSI, p. 4) ☞



Photo courtesy of Nancy Bale

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

HEALY CLEAN COAL PLANT RESTART FACES AIR QUALITY HURDLES & PUBLIC ATTACKS

In the last *DCC News*, we described our petition to the EPA, with fellow conservation groups National Parks Conservation Association, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, and Sierra Club, to ensure that the best available pollution control technology will be installed in this plant. Golden Valley Electric Association, the company responsible for getting the plant started, reacted to this petition by posting our email addresses on the web and encouraging folks to call us and complain that our delaying was raising their electricity rates. GVEA also arranged for a "rally" in front of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, a "rally" that most agreed was relatively tepid. We did receive a few calls and emails, and we've communicated with several folks to assure them that DCC is not interested in stopping this restart, and that it is simplistic, in this complex world of power generation, to accuse us of raising anyone's electric rates. We do ask that the plant live up to the highest air quality standard. Our door is open for more positive communications, in the face of the negativity GVEA is projecting toward us. Furthermore, we are ready to support a negotiated settlement that contains adequate safeguards for environmental and public health. ☞

ALASKA RAILROAD RECEIVES PERMITS TO SPRAY HERBICIDES

Although we opposed these permits, two of which allowed spraying in or near the Denali Borough, the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), predictably, granted them. With these permits the Alaska Railroad can now spray on 122 additional miles of track, including 38 miles of track between Gold Creek and Broad Pass. Our comments expressed concern that the railroad did not map out or list water sources adequately in their permit application. We were told that adequate care would be taken to avoid pollution of the many streams and areas of water along the track. ☞

ALASKA DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION PROPOSES SWEEPING REGULATORY CHANGES

About the same time as they approved the AKRR permit applications, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation proposed sweeping regulatory changes that would drop the permit application process in favor of a "Permit-by-Rule" system. Public comment on individual pesticide application projects conducted on state lands would be eliminated, although "notification" regarding certain aspects of the projects could be made. Any "registered" pesticide could be used, but we are not yet clear on what that actually means. Under the new regulations, the state would retain the authority and decision making power over individual projects, though it would be required to consider non-chemical scenarios before acting (an Integrated Pest Management approach). This profound change in regulations is being submitted to public comment, with a deadline of August 2, 2012. DCC is following this closely and will probably ask for an extension of the deadline, and, preferably, public meetings. We understand the problem of invasive weeds on state lands, and see this as an attempt to make control of invasive species easier. However, much is lost with these new regulations. DCC board member Barbara Brease is our point person on this issue. Contact her for more information. ☞

DCC NEWS

Join Denali Citizens Council and receive a subscription to *DCC News* published six times a year. A form is provided on the back of this newsletter. Or join on the web:
<http://www.denalicitizens.org>

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Denali Citizens Council is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to protect the natural integrity of Denali National Park and to promote a sustainable future for lands surrounding the Park.

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