

February 19, 2013

David Hite, Resource Specialist  
Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Mining, Land and Water  
3700 Airport Way  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

Dear Mr. Hite,

On behalf of the board and over 300 members of the Denali Citizens Council, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the request by NEON, Inc. for an approximately 10 year lease and public easement for a research station west of Healy, Alaska. We are happy that NEON and the State of Alaska have been ready and willing to discuss details of the original request, listen to citizen concerns, and modify the project to address those concerns.

In general, we are happy with adjustments made by NEON, Inc. to their plans for providing power and access to their site. These changes reflect their originally-stated goal of having a minimal impact on the landscape during their tenure (approx. 7 years, we hear) and, after they are finished, leaving a minimal trace of their activities.

1. **Power to the site** – we support the running of buried power cable along the Stampede Road until very close to the site, then across the tundra for the remaining distance to the site. This is a better option than either overhead power lines or running a power corridor off-road through part the Panguingue subdivision. The permit should specify that power lines will be buried throughout, using the most tundra-sparing methods (even local volunteers, who will likely be willing to assist if best practices indicate hand-digging a trench for power conduit and line. The permit should also specify that all power lines installed above the western terminus of the Panguingue Creek subdivision be judiciously removed after project completion.
2. **Boardwalk to site** – we agree with Friends of Stampede that the least intrusive, most easily removed materials, such as the boardwalk design from the Toolik Station, be installed preferentially, and that the boardwalk be only as wide as absolutely necessary for walking access to the site. Existing trails which the boardwalk will intersect should be provided with a way to cross it that is safe and environmentally protective.
3. **Use of vehicles** to cross the tundra for servicing the site should be limited to winter and the number of passes minimized through permit stipulations. We know from experience that it does not take much motorized travel, even when the ground is frozen and has snow cover, to create a “trail.” We are assuming that during everyday operations, the NEON employees will access the site by foot only and that this will be a stipulation of the permit. Of course there could be times when motorized access in summer is unavoidable. In that case, the permit should stipulate use of

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DCC Board

Nancy Bale  
Barbara Brease  
Nan Eagleson  
Charlie Loeb

Brian Napier  
JJ Neville  
Hannah Ragland  
Erica Watson

the most vegetative-sparing type of vehicle and limit the vehicle weight and the weight allowed to be carried.

4. We are not sure what has been arranged for parking, when employees of NEON access the area by driving up the Stampede Road in private vehicles or supply vehicles. Because most access in summer will be by foot from the edge of the road, the permit should stipulate a safe and non-damaging parking area along the Stampede Road for employee vehicles. Parking should be limited to a small number of vehicles.
5. We support the camouflage painting of structures, minimization of sound and noise pollution, and best practices for dealing with human waste.
6. **Reclamation** - The permit should stipulate firm criteria for removal of all infrastructure when the site has finished its mission, including power conduit and cable, boardwalk and all other infrastructure, with a schedule for monitoring of completion stipulated. Re-vegetation, if needed, should use native plants (no grass-seeding).

Thank you again for being cognizant of local needs during the adjudication of this permit. We are aware that other permitting needs to be accomplished also, and will follow the process. We at the Denali Citizens Council are supportive of NEON, Inc.'s mission and look forward to enjoying its presence in the local community. If you would like to discuss any of the above points with me, you may call me at 907-244-2510.

Sincerely,

/s/ Nancy Bale

DCC Board of Directors