

MARK YOUR CALENDARS - IT'S SPRING AND TIME TO MEET!

The DCC Annual Membership Meeting is approaching, along with migratory birds and park employees. Note that we are changing the location this year and headed back to our long-time venue at the McKinley Community Center. We love the Sheldon Center too; we just couldn't get the dates to work there this year. This is a great opportunity to catch up on the issues facing Denali, as well as to have fun with friends and fellow members at the start of a new season. Everyone is welcome, whether you are a member or not. If you are curious about Denali Citizens Council and wish to know what we do, this is a great opportunity to find out. See you there!

DENALI CITIZENS COUNCIL ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

SUNDAY, MAY 18

6:00 PM – PRE-MEETING BIRD WALK

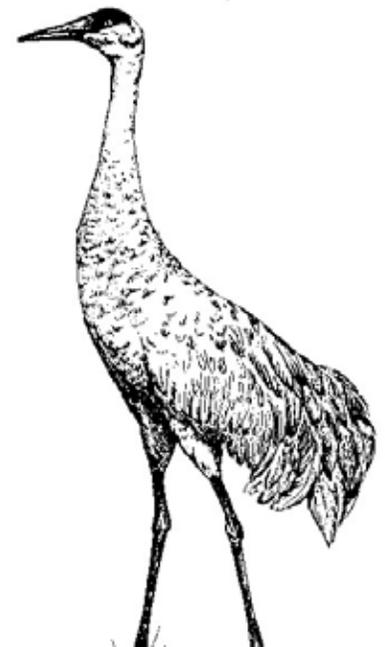
WITH NAN EAGLESON

7:00 PM – DESSERT SOCIAL AND ANNUAL MEETING

MCKINLEY COMMUNITY CENTER

DESSERT! MUSIC! DOOR PRIZES! IMPORTANT ISSUES!

For more information and directions, call 907-244-2510



DCC BOARD ELECTION

The Denali Citizens Council election for Board of Directors is taking place over the next month leading up to the Annual Membership Meeting. For the first time this year, the election will be entirely internet-based except for anyone choosing to vote at the Annual Membership Meeting. Two candidates, Nancy Bale and Erica Watson, are running for 3-year terms. There is also an opportunity to recommend additional candidates for vacant board seats. Fliers have been sent to current members with more information on how to cast your vote. Please cast a vote, to show support for your organization.

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FROM THE BOARD

Charlie Loeb

This issue of the DCC News marks my last contribution as DCC President and board member. My family is leaving Alaska for Oregon, and it is time for me to pass leadership of the organization to others. I have tried to leave Denali before and always failed, so don't assume I am gone forever!



Mary, Tevi and Charlie at Savage River
photo courtesy of Charlie Loeb

planning for the “municipal land entitlements,” as these Borough lands are called. Some great strides have been made in the ensuing years, including the creation of a basic planning tool in Borough code – which the Planning Commission has now been trying to revise for years – and the removal of some of the most sensitive lands from the Borough’s entitlement. The threat of a commercial strip someday stretching from Glitter Gulch to Healy has subsided significantly. While I certainly can’t claim credit for this result by myself, I would like to think I helped.

What really matters to you? Our community is so small that you cannot assume someone is looking out for your issue. Even if DCC seems to be aware of it, we may not have the capacity to get deeply involved. I encourage all of you not to hesitate about jumping in. Not only do we need to replenish DCC’s board members and volunteers, but there are public committees, commissions, the Borough Assembly, and other institutions that need volunteers who care. Worried about the gas pipeline? There is a public advisory committee for that. Concerned about the impacts of major developments like Healy Homestead? There are often seats available on the Borough’s Planning Commission. Unhappy with the national park’s implementation of the Backcountry Management Plan, or the final Vehicle Management Plan? We’ve got a board seat at DCC waiting for you. Get involved, you are needed. 🐾

I became involved in local issues for the same reasons most people do – I was worried about something that mattered to me. In my particular case, shortly after coming back to Denali in 1996 as branch manager of the Alaska Natural History Association (now Alaska Geographic), I found out that the Denali Borough was set to acquire state land along the Parks Highway through parts of Nenana Canyon and much of the way to Healy. Since the development in “Glitter Gulch” had become so atrocious in the past decade, I was worried we were about to see a continuation of the strip (with some topographically-imposed interruptions) leading up to and through this incredibly scenic canyon gateway to the national park. Hardly anyone seemed to be aware of the threat.

So I got involved, joining the Denali Borough’s Land Use Planning Committee to work on



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

SO LONG, CHARLIE

Nancy Bale

This January, our esteemed President and fellow board member, Charlie Loeb, told us he would be leaving the board this May, to join his wife Mary in their new home, Eugene, Oregon, where she already works as a physician. Their daughter Tevi will be completing elementary school in Talkeetna, and will leave Alaska with Charlie shortly after our Annual Membership Meeting on May 18th.

As Charlie would tell you, he isn't finished with all he'd wanted to do in Alaska. However, we can firmly attest to the many wonderful things he started and nurtured along. Not only did Charlie dig into the difficult work of municipal community planning as the Denali gateway was experiencing unprecedented growth, he lent his considerable talents to the National Park Service during the development of Denali's Backcountry Management Plan. He directed the public radio station, KTNA, in Talkeetna, and contributed his voice to programming and fundraising there.

The most important thing to know about Charlie, though, is his volunteer spirit and his willingness to work long, unpaid hours for organizations and causes he feels are worthwhile. When I became President of DCC, he provided a tremendous amount of background assistance to me, helping me to plant my feet firmly on the ground of non-profit advocacy work. He helped organize the first Denali Summit back in the spring of 2001, when leaders and community citizens met to develop a vision for our area. Many of the attendees at that Summit still reside in our community and contribute their talents to DCC. He guided me through the murky waters of grant writing. He emceed and facilitated our Stampede Summits. Right now, Charlie is helping edit newsletter articles and finish up the DCC Board Election flier. He developed the current DCC website. All of this was gratis. Not only this - Charlie was a tireless volunteer in his present home town of Talkeetna. Two examples out of many; he put long hours into fundraising for a community playground and spent time mentoring the very successful 'Battle of the Books' team at Talkeetna Elementary School.

I'm not sure what we at the DCC Board are going to do without Charlie Loeb. He is one of those folks who do the work of two or three people. In fact, it's thanks to Charlie's efforts in building the DCC board that we are as prepared for his exit as we are. I am proud of our involved and committed board members - Barbara, Sarah, Nan, Brian, Hannah, Michael and Erica. I do hope you will come to our Annual Meeting and help us give Charlie a rousing send-off.

So long, Charlie. Perhaps you and the family will move back to Alaska (we know you'll visit), but wherever you go, the community will be richer. ☞

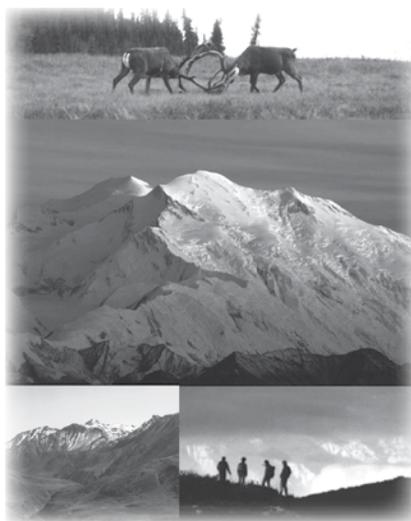
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HEALY HOMESTEAD OPEN HOUSE IS SMOOTH, BUT TROUBLING

PRINCESS SEASONAL EMPLOYEE HOUSING UNVEILED IN HEALY

Brian Napier

After months of hearsay and a watchful eye toward the constant motion at the Holland America-Princess sites, Denali area residents were given the opportunity to meet the staff and tour the facilities at the Healy Homestead in late March. Attendees were greeted by eager staffers at the front desk, including many of the division managers, and were ushered to the newly remodeled employee recreation hall. Fact sheets were presented cataloguing the improvements and conscientiousness of Holland America-Princess staff—a clear effort to put the best foot forward. Notable and extolled efforts to address the increase in employees include additional on-site security personnel, installation of a new fence along the northern and western property boundaries, a remodeled recreation hall, and contacts with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to address concerns of pedestrian safety. The Housing Manager that provided my tour stated that Holland America-



Holland America-Princess representatives answer questions at Healy forum in April.
photo courtesy of Erica Watson

Princess has a long-standing policy of performing background checks on all of its employees, a zero-tolerance policy for alcohol abuse or criminal activity, and provides daily trips to and from the park. The Housing Manager went on to say they make volunteer opportunities available to enhance appreciation of and integration into the community and greater Denali area. I was curious and asked what Holland America-Princess was going to do with all the freed-up space at the McKinley Chalets now that the employee housing has been relocated. The Housing Manager said that the relocation of

employee housing allows for a redesign

of the former employee area into a more esthetically pleasing riverfront, complete with better views and accessibility for its guests. Appreciating the openness, the veggie trays and preparedness with which the Holland America-Princess staff greeted attendees, I had to take a conscious step back from the gracious hosts to put it all into perspective.

Holland America-Princess will be increasing its 600 residents in Healy to approximately 800 this summer with its recent acquisition of McKinley Chalets from Aramark and relocation of that employee housing to Healy. This action will almost double Healy's year-round population of 1,021 (US Census, 2010). While Holland America-Princess has followed the regulations applicable to its Healy property and has opened its doors for dialogue, the fact remains that it is a for-profit corporation, beholden to its shareholders and not so beholden to the residents of Healy. Instead, any assurance of quality of life rests squarely on the shoulders of Healy residents, who must decide to be involved in community planning in order to stave off undesirable development. There are also a number of other large seasonal employers in the greater Denali area, including the Denali Visions 3000 Corporation, which owns and operates the Denali Salmon Bake, Prospector's Pizza, and 49th State Brewing Company, and houses many of its employees in ATCO trailers, RVs and wall tents. Based on location, size, and notoriety, it is easy to single out Holland America-Princess, but conversations that favor improving employee housing conditions and community quality-of-life must consider the whole view.

The Housing Manager at Holland America-Princess who gave my tour is right when he says that its employees have more opportunities and better housing than most seasonal employees. He is also right when he says that Holland America-Princess is not responsible for general pedestrian safety and community planning. As I left the cookie tray and the Healy Homestead I saw the mirror turned back on its holder. I pondered; what will we do with what we see?

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Continued concerns lead to second meeting

On Wednesday, April 16, Holland America-Princess (HAP) representatives restated their company's commitment to partnering with the Healy community and providing safety and recreational resources for the 800-or-so employees who will be housed at the Healy Homestead this summer. HAP representatives made the following commitments regarding the presence of its employees in the Healy community this summer:

- HAP will provide an employee to coordinate activities for employees (to give them options for productive activities in Healy).
- Will work with the community to develop service projects that would benefit Healy.
- Will provide a fire ring in the Healy area to encourage people to have fires in a more controlled setting than Dry Creek.
- Will use visuals in training to orient employees about trespassing, based on community feedback.
- Will conduct bi-weekly garbage clean-ups in the Healy area.
- Will participate in a Mayoral Task Force to plan for pedestrian safety.
- Will extend its private security presence to include Hilltop and Ranch Roads.
- Will install stop signs at all housing exits.



The forum was moderated by the Tri-Valley School government class and hosted by the library. The teens who took part did a great job emceeding and asking panelists questions, submitted by community members earlier in the month.

However, many attendees didn't feel satisfied by the answers provided by the panelists, and would have preferred a more interactive conversation. We urge our members to remain vigilant and monitor promises made at the meeting. 

A portion of Healy Homestead employee housing.
photo courtesy of Barbara Brease

DENALI BOROUGH RECEIVES MORE LAND AS PLANNING STALLS TO KEEP OR SCUTTLE LAND CLASSIFICATION BECOMES A MAJOR DEBATE

Hannah Ragland

In early March, the State of Alaska issued a public notice to announce its decision on parcels of land it plans to convey to the Denali Borough. In the 1990s, when the Denali Borough first commenced the process of requesting and receiving land from the state, local residents began to plan for Denali Borough-owned land. For those still paying attention, not a lot has changed. The Borough has received thousands of acres from the state through the Municipal Land Entitlement (MLE) program. Despite years of discussions at Planning Commission meetings, little has been accomplished to move forward in the planning process. Instead, in the first months of 2014, the Planning Commission moved to scrap years of work revising the Borough's land classification ordinance.

Latest transfer of land could finalize Denali Borough-owned Lands

The Borough office received notice of the state's most recent decision on what lands to transfer to the Borough just a few days before the regular March Assembly meeting. Lands considered for transfer to the Borough include parcels north and south of the Panguingue Subdivision, along the Parks Highway around Broad Pass, along the Denali Highway near the upper Nenana River, close to Anderson, and around Boulder Creek. When the Assembly met, Mayor Clay Walker had already requested that the state extend the short comment period, but had been denied. Because the Assembly would not meet again

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before the comment period was over, members agreed to attend the Planning Commission meeting the following week. At that meeting, a resolution was drafted that included both the Planning Commission and Assembly comments and concerns, including:

- The public notice included a variety of errors that need to be corrected.
- The Borough would like to link land recently transferred in the Slate Lake area to parcels near the Panguingue Subdivision, and requested that the state reconsider whether lands to the north of the Panguingue Subdivision would be included (the State immediately denied this request since the lands are classified in the Yukon Tanana Basin Area Plan with uses that suggest the land be retained in state ownership).
- The Borough rescinded requests for lands in remote areas of the Denali Borough (the Boulder Creek parcel), to allow for additional land requests in the future. Of particular interest to the Borough are more accessible lands selected by the Alaska Railroad or Mental Health Trust Authority if those agencies do not end up with them.

Although several potential changes remain to be determined, the land offered by the state represents a near-final decision on which lands will be conveyed to the Borough.

Land Use Planning initiated from Gravel Pit controversy

The current process of revising Title 4 (the land management chapter in borough code) stems from an announcement in 2010 that an existing gravel pit, located east of the Panguingue Subdivision, needed to be classified prior to extracting additional gravel. Classification is a planning tool, outlined in a portion of Title 4, which is meant to guide the management of land owned by the Borough by categorizing land based on its intended use. At the time, the only classification category that would fit this use was “Heavy Industrial.” Public outcry against this classification quickly ensued due to the material site’s proximity to residential land, and the controversial nature of uses allowed under this classification such as “excessive noise, odors, danger of explosions, hydrocarbon release, or toxic wastes that make them incompatible with most other land uses.” Those opposed to the “Heavy Industrial” classification did not question the process itself, but suggested that the list of classification categories was inadequate. As a result of public involvement, the Planning Commission eventually created a new classification category of “Existing Material Site.” This resolved the question of gravel pit classification, but opened a can of worms about the process used to classify Borough-owned land.

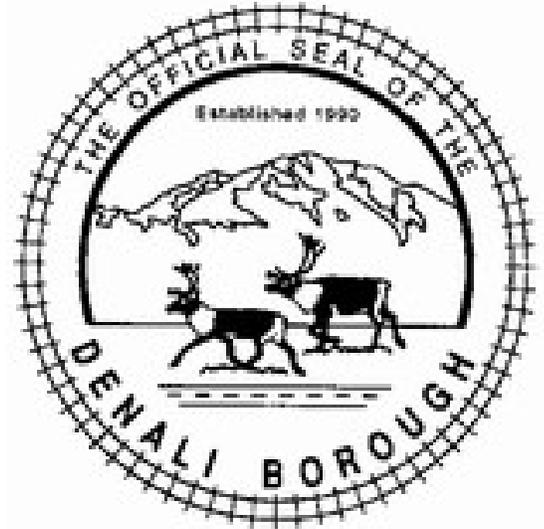
A fresh start or avoiding hard decisions?

After initiating the revision of code related to land classification, the Planning Commission has trudged through the entirety of Title 4, quickly realizing that all of the code related to Borough-owned land was interrelated. Since 2010, portions of Title 4 have been on the agenda of every Planning Commission meeting. Numerous revisions have been proposed, more recently focusing on semantics and filling in definitions. The Planning Commission has considered up to sixteen draft versions of individual chapters within Title 4. Then abruptly, at the January meeting, it was suggested that there was an unnecessary overlap between parts of code related to classification and parts of the code that require the mayor to create Management Plans for parcels of Borough-owned land. At subsequent meetings, it was suggested that authority for creating management plans be shifted to the Planning Commission, replacing the classification chapter in its entirety. While the approval process for the newly proposed Management Plan mirrors that of classification, a significant aspect is missing: specific terms used to define management intent and uses.

Planning for valuable local land is at stake

DCC has closely tracked the evolution of MLE planning in the Denali Borough. We have encouraged citizen involvement, but have found it difficult to engage in the drawn-out process of Title 4 revisions. We agree that the revision process needs to come to a conclusion, but are dismayed that to do this the Planning Commission has moved backwards in the process, rather than forward. The classification process has so far only been used to confirm uses or intentions of parcels that existed when the State held the land, such as material sites. While there is not a clear definition of how the mayor’s Management Plan would overlap with classification, this is no reason to eliminate one or the other. Instead, the Planning Commission should move towards finalizing the revisions to Title 4, retaining the classification procedures the Planning Commission has worked so hard to define. Only then will we know whether the system needs to be redefined, and how the development of a Management Plan fits into the process. We see no reason that the Planning Commission and Mayor cannot work on this simultaneously.

Lands valuable to local residents for a variety of reasons are included in the growing list of Borough-owned land, including areas throughout the Denali Borough. One Planning Commissioner, who would like to see classification retained, recently suggested that the classification process is similar to planning for home construction. Classification is analogous to naming different rooms in the house, whereas a Management Plan involves more specific planning for what type of furniture goes in each room, which of course would be determined by whether the room is a kitchen, bedroom, etc. In this analogy, classification would guide how Borough land is to be managed, or whether it is sold, leased, or left undeveloped, by identifying the overall vision for the area. This overall vision would then provide guidance for specific Management Plans and actions. DCC sees no reason that both planning tools should not remain, but agree that there should be a more clearly defined relationship (i.e. timelines, approval process) between classification and the development of Management Plans. The Planning Commission has committed to a work session before its regular May meeting, where it will experiment with using both planning tools. Members of the public are encouraged to participate in the process. 



NPS RELEASES HORSESHOE LAKE TRAIL FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Michael Raffaeli

At the end of February Denali National Park and Preserve released a FONSI for the Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Additions and Improvements to the Horseshoe Lake Trail. The trail is one of the most popular trails near the Denali Visitor Center in the entrance area and is used by thousands of visitors every summer. The NPS has chosen to extend the Horseshoe Lake Trail around the lake as well as along the Nenana River. NPS will also be rehabilitating social trails that have developed over time and are a source of resource damage. Small signs will be placed to discourage visitors from using social trails, particularly the trails that make their way onto the peninsula where the active beaver lodge is located.

DCC participated in early scoping activities two years ago and many of our concerns and suggestions were incorporated into the Action Alternative of this EA. The NPS received 7 comments on the plan and all, including ours, were supportive of the preferred alternative. DCC's comments on the final EA centered around three topics: habitat, safety and visitor experience. One of our suggestions on safety was incorporated into the FONSI and adopted as a mitigation measure. All of our comments were addressed noting that the NPS management may choose take our comments into consideration at a future time if conditions warrant further action. We will keep vigilant to see how the habitat conditions and/or visitor experience are affected.



Horseshoe Lake
NPS photo

Both the EA and FONSI, along with maps, can be found under the hot link "Document List" at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectId=39552>. DCC's comments can be found on our website at <http://www.denalicitizens.org/2014/01/dcc-submits-comments-on-horseshoe-lake-trail-improvements-and-additions-ea/>. 

DCC CONTINUES TO MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION OF DENALI'S VEHICLE

Charlie Loeb

As the season for buses approaches, the DCC board of directors has been meeting with Superintendent Don Striker about our ongoing concerns with the Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan, or VMP, which was finalized in 2012 prior to Striker's arrival at the park. DCC's problems with the plan have not changed since 2012, but we felt it important to communicate directly with the new Superintendent who will be implementing many of the provisions over the next few years.

Transit System is a core concern

The first of these meetings was held in February and focused exclusively on the pieces of the plan related to the "transit" system – the green buses that have been called the "Visitor Transportation System" or the "shuttle buses." DCC has remained very concerned that the Vehicle Management Plan (VMP) continues and exacerbates the dynamic that has been in place since the shuttle system became part of the concession contract in 1994, in which the idea of the buses as "transportation" or "transit" as opposed to a "tour" has eroded. We pitched the following general themes:

- The transit system should be thought of as a public service, not as a commercial service even if we happen to be delivering it via concession contract at the moment
- The transit system has lost its firm allocation of road capacity as a result of the VMP, and the plan does not adequately ensure the continued viability of the system.
- NPS first needs to provide basic access to the park. The flexibility needed to do this successfully may be at odds with the VMP's vision to maximize bus occupancy.
- Denali needs a constituency of supportive, passionate park visitors to be successful in its mission over the long haul. These visitors are most likely to be Alaskans and locals who often come to Denali. The system has discouraged these

individuals from coming to the park, and it will take some time and effort to win them back.

We elaborated several ways to address these issues either within plan implementation or by establishing long-term goals. Among the highlights, we recommended setting a "least cost" standard for shuttle ticket pricing, monitoring departure wait times on transit with an eye toward establishing a "Departure Wait Time" standard to accompany the "Hiker Wait Time" already in the plan, retaining and



Shuttle bus passengers enjoy the view from Stony Hill
photo courtesy of Charlie Loeb

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VEHICLE MANAGEMENT PLAN

expanding services that are attractive for day-hikers and overnight campers (for example, keeping the camper bus), and leveling the playing field in terms of the marketing and booking of transit and tour options. Most of the items covered were suggested in DCC's comments on the Draft and Final Vehicle Management Plan, but we never received responses that made us feel our comments were understood or addressed.

We question NPS approach to road capacity

A second meeting is scheduled in early May to discuss capacity of the park road, which was a major concern of the Vehicle Management Plan. For this topic, DCC has consistently raised questions about whether the plan's adaptive management system, developed on the basis of traffic modeling, represents a prudent change from the fixed regulatory capacity (10,512 vehicles per day past Savage River Check Station). While we are amenable to using new monitoring data and modeling tools to redefine capacity and better distribute vehicles – and to fix known inconsistencies in capacity management – we have been very skeptical of the park's ability to effectively utilize adaptive management to limit traffic growth and worry

the softer tools in the framework will be subject to abuse. NPS's tardiness in monitoring and reporting on the indicators and standards in the Backcountry Management Plan has done little to increase our confidence. Specifically, we intend to discuss:

- The 160-bus daily limit appears to be too high based on information presented in the plan.
- The 10,512 regulation should not be removed without replacing it with something equally firm, and not until NPS has developed some experience in monitoring to ensure standards are being met at existing capacity. (To some degree this is occurring anyway, as NPS has not yet initiated the regulatory change.)
- DCC is concerned about the capacity and commitment of NPS to the monitoring program, and about the impacts on wildlife and wildlife-viewing of the proposed expansion in traffic.
- The plan has no explicit limit on growth of Kantishna day tours other than the adaptive management standards for the road west of Eielson, many of which are not meaningful for this stretch of road.
- DCC is concerned about NPS holding to the VMP's assumption that no infrastructure changes would be necessary to implement the plan; DCC would like to see a stronger commitment to this premise.

In addition, NPS is on the verge of releasing a report on the first two years of monitoring so that we can see how well the real world data reflecting existing conditions matches the predictions of the traffic model, and we hope to discuss those results with the Superintendent. Superintendent Striker has been attentive to our concerns so far, but it remains to be seen if these conversations influence future management of vehicles on the park road. 



Buses parked at the Eielson Visitor Center
photo courtesy of Charlie Loeb

HB 77 (SILENCING ALASKANS ACT) - R.I.P.

Brian Napier

On April 3rd the Senate Resources Committee read last rites to House Bill 77, stating the proposed legislation would not receive further attention this session. As you may recall from the last *DCC News*, this bill, sponsored by the Parnell administration, would have made important changes in permitting, water reservations and land management, changes that purported to increase efficiency but cut corners and limited public process. The Alaska Dispatch reported, “[HB77] died a quiet death”. After a very fiery, impassioned, and robust turnout of opposition, Senate Resources Committee Chair Cathy Giessel (R-Anchorage) stated there was no resolution on HB 77 and that she could not justify spending more time on the issue. Many Alaskans and environmental groups felt that the proposed legislation was vague and put too much power in the hands of the state government. In both the 2013 and 2014 legislative sessions, HB 77 received a large volume of opposition. In 2014 alone, the Senate Resources Committee received 6 hours of testimony and 1,500 letters in opposition. DCC member involvement was felt throughout the process, especially when DCC board member Sarah Bartholow, who testified before the Senate Resource Committee, appeared in an article by the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*. While HB 77 is dead for the 2014 legislative season, DCC will continue to monitor for signs of life related to this issue in coming legislative sessions. ☞

STAMPEDE SRA BILL, HB 148, GETS KEY SUPPORT NO ACTION IN THE 28TH LEGISLATURE, HOWEVER

Nancy Bale

Although HB 148, legislation to establish the Stampede State Recreation Area, failed to get a hearing during the 28th Alaska Legislature, it did garner important support from State Parks Citizens Advisory Boards throughout the state. In an email to the House Resources Committee (where it was scheduled to be heard), Jeremy Douse, the chair of the Northern Area State Parks Citizens Advisory Board, re-iterated this support and the importance of such a recreation area. We thank the advisory boards for their interest and support. The email to the Resources Committee is quoted below:

Dear members of the House Resources Committee,

On February 15th I e-mailed you a resolution of support for House Bill 148, "An act creating the Stampede State Recreation Area". That resolution was unanimously supported by members of the Northern Area State Parks Citizen Advisory Board (CAB). The resolution of support attached to this e-mail is meant to show you that there is support for HB 148 from CAB's across the state. Six CAB chairs from various parts of the state have agreed to sign this resolution because they believe HB 148 is good legislation. House Bill 148 meets the mission of the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation as well as the wishes of local Healy residents and will benefit both Alaskans and visitors to our great state. I realize that the session is almost over but it took a fair bit of time to coordinate the statewide support that this letter exhibits. Please consider showing your support of HB 148 and pass this legislation before the session is over. Thank you for your time and the work that you do.



*Sincerely,
Jeremy Douse
Northern Area State Parks
Citizen Advisory Board Chair*

The resolution is posted on the DCC website at <http://www.denalicitizens.org/?p=3333> ☞

Alaska Native Knowledge Network

HCR 17 PROMOTED IMPORTANT WOLF PROTECTION NEGOTIATIONS

Barbara Brease

In 2014, the second year of the 28th Alaska Legislature, Representative Andy Josephson (D-Anchorage) introduced House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 17, and soon gained a co-sponsor, Representative Sam Kito III (D-Juneau). The resolution encouraged Governor Sean Parnell to negotiate with the United States Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to secure a permanent wildlife buffer conservation easement east of Denali National Park and Preserve. In return, the federal government would transfer an equal-valued federal easement, property, asset or funds to the State of Alaska. HCR 17 received a referral to the House Resources Committee, but was not heard this session. The 28th Legislature has adjourned, and Josephson's resolution will have to be re-introduced in 2015, when the 29th Legislature begins its two-year run. Meanwhile, all of the Alaska House seats are up for election, including Representative Josephson's.

Importance of HCR 17

DCC supported HCR 17 because of the steep decline in wolf sightings by visitors in Denali National Park. The decline in wolf numbers and viewability followed the removal of the Stampede Closed Area in the Wolf Townships in 2010. This "wolf buffer" established by Alaska Board of Game regulation in 2002, prohibited the killing of wolves on state lands west of the Savage River and along the Nenana Canyon.

In 2010 (the year in which the state removed the no-take wolf buffer east of the park), wolf viewing success for the park's 400,000 visitors was estimated by NPS staff at 45%, declining to 22% in 2011, and then to 12% in 2012. The 2013 wolf-sighting result, released in November by Denali National Park, reflects a further decline, down to just 4%. Such a decline in wolf viewing success is unprecedented. Scientists know that the killing of wolves (particularly breeding wolves) in the area we know as the "Wolf Townships" decreases wolf numbers and viewability in the park, and alters wolf behavior.

A commercial predator hunt located adjacent to the park boundary takes advantage of habituated park wolves as they cross the park boundary on winter forays onto state lands. Liberal bag limits and easy access into the area makes the wolves extremely vulnerable to trapping and shooting.

Another consequence of wolf trapping just outside the park is the increase in sightings of wolves bearing trap hardware and injuries. In the winter of 2007- 2008, many people saw one wolf with a gaping throat wound from a broken snare still around his neck. A second wolf with a snare was also seen in the park, as was another wolf with a trap clamped to its foot. Such sightings have a detrimental effect on public opinion of trapping and wildlife management. Additional images of park wildlife in traps and snares results in negative press for Alaska and affects the visitor industry.



NPS Photo

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HCR 17 PROMOTED IMPORTANT WOLF PROTECTION NEGOTIATIONS

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Benefit to the Ecosystem

DCC has historically supported the establishment of a Stampede Closed Area that will protect the natural integrity of the park by closing to hunting and trapping areas of the Wolf Townships frequently used by Denali wolves. We believe that natural predator-prey relationships are critical to protecting a naturally functioning intact ecosystem in Denali National Park and Preserve.

Exchange would be in Alaska's Best Economic Interest

The wolves of Denali National Park and Preserve have an integral role in the health of Alaska's economy. Denali is a primary destination for a majority of tourists who travel to interior Alaska and one of the main reasons they come is to see wildlife in its natural habitat. Tourists directly spent 2.42 billion dollars in Alaska during 2012-13. By providing protection for park wolves when they cross the park boundary, the state will help to sustain and grow the tourism economy in Denali National Park.

HCR 17 promoted negotiations that would facilitate the State of Alaska transferring to the U.S. Department of Interior a permanent, no-take wildlife (wolves) buffer conservation easement northeast of Denali National Park, in exchange for the federal government transferring a like-valued federal property, asset or funding to the State of Alaska. By the willingness to negotiate such an exchange, the State of Alaska would be protecting state tourism while gaining federal assets. This would be a win/win for the State of Alaska, Denali National Park and the Denali Borough.

Passage of HCR 17 would have demonstrated to Governor Parnell and Secretary Jewell that state legislators believe it is important to protect the natural assets that bring visitors to Alaska, and would have been a powerful push toward negotiations. We thank Representatives Josephson and Kito for recognizing the value of living Denali wolves, and wish them well in the upcoming elections.

What you can do to encourage this conversation:

Ask State of Alaska and U.S. Department of Interior to work together to create a permanent protective buffer for Denali's wolves on state lands along the northeastern borders of Denali National Park. Ask for this "win-win" solution: that the State of Alaska transfer a permanent, no-take wildlife buffer conservation easement east of the national park to the federal government, in exchange for the federal government's transferring a like-valued easement, or federal surplus property, or purchase value, to the State of Alaska.

Write to:

Governor Sean Parnell: <governor@alaska.gov>

Don Striker, Denali National Park Superintendent Don Striker: <don_striker@nps.gov>

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell: secretary@ios.doi.gov

Copy:

Jon Jarvis, National Park Service Director in DC: <jon_jarvis@nps.gov>

Joel Hard, NPS Alaska Deputy Regional Director: <joel_hard@nps.gov>

Cora Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game: cora.campbell@alaska.gov

Joe Balash, Commissioner, Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources: joe.balash@alaska.gov 



NPS WILDLIFE REGULATIONS GET STRONG LOCAL SUPPORT

COMMENTS REFLECT OPPOSITION TO UNETHICAL HUNTING PRACTICES IN DENALI

Nancy Bale

The National Park Service, in its efforts to keep unethical state-approved game harvesting practices from NPS Preserve lands throughout the state, recently invited public comment on a set of temporary regulations prohibiting these practices on all of its lands where hunting is otherwise allowed. Given the importance of managing for diverse and natural wildlife populations rather than hunter opportunity, the Service felt it important to institute these regulations throughout its land-holdings in Alaska. They will, hopefully, be in effect on Denali's Preserve lands this hunting season. After an initial round of public hearings, the Service extended the comment deadline to April 5th. We and others sent alerts to our members stressing the importance of supporting NPS.

We were heartened to receive copies of many of our members' comments. They provided sound and knowledgeable input to the Service. One of our long time members, Gina Soltis, a local resident, allowed us to publish her comments, which are quoted below. We expect that the Service will adopt these temporary regulations, which prohibit spotlighting black bear sows and cubs in their dens, baiting grizzly bears, and extending the wolf hunting season past April 30th. Several commenters encouraged the Service to be even more restrictive with its hunting regulations. Alaskans will have the opportunity to submit another round of comments when NPS eventually promulgates permanent wildlife regulations for preserves and refuges. Stay tuned. 🐾

March 31, 2014

To Alaska NPS

I am so grateful that the NPS is there to step up to the plate to do the right thing in the Denali National Park Preserve lands.

The plainly stated goal of the AK Board of Game - the meat locker approach - is so contrary to not only NPS goals, but contrary to why so many Alaskans live where they do. We love living where humans have not manicured the wilderness and the wildlife - where the natural cycles can exert their influence on populations.

We are dismayed that there is very little control over people that either have no regard for the natural cycles, or more obviously want to destroy them. I am of course referring to the trapping attacks on the Denali wolf packs.

My husband and I live in Denali's back yard, just outside the northeast point of the park. Please continue the sensible steps you have taken in Alaska's wildlife management.

With hope that the State of Alaska will come to their senses,

Gina Soltis



photo courtesy of Gina Soltis

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

DECLINING SUPPORT FOR SUSITNA-WATANA DAM

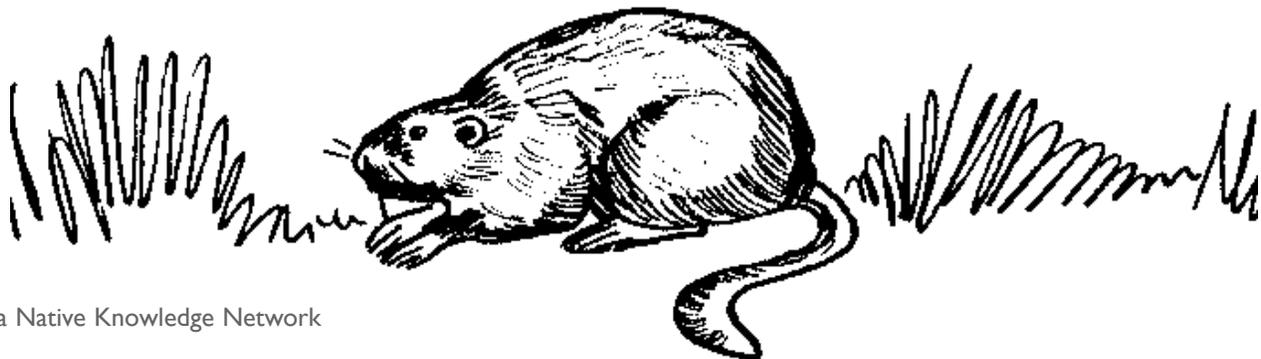
The proposed Susitna-Watana hydroelectric project ran into stiff headwinds in the Alaska legislative budget process this year. While backers sought \$120 million to advance the multi-billion dollar project, Governor Sean Parnell initially proposed only \$10 million because of concern that lack of access to Native landholdings precluded much needed work. The governor was persuaded to raise that request to \$42.7 million, and an access agreement was negotiated during the session with a working group composed of 6 village corporations and Cook Inlet Region, Inc. However, the Senate only approved the initial \$10 million for the capital budget, while the House approved only \$20 million. At press time, the final budget amount is not certain, however it is likely to be much smaller than what was originally sought. The net effect of the underfunding is to signal that interest in Susitna-Watana is waning as the obstacles and expense to the project become clearer, and as other mega-projects compete for shrinking funds while the State grapples with oil tax revenue that is \$2 billion shy of covering budgeted expenses.

DENALI OVERFLIGHTS ADVISORY COUNCIL CHARTER IS RENEWED

The Denali Overflights Advisory Council was originally chartered in the year 2007, by then-Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne. Its twelve members represent a variety of stakeholder groups, including pilots, local residents in areas affected by Denali aircraft overflights, environmental groups, the state of Alaska and the Federal Aviation Administration. DCC director Nancy Bale was a member of the council during its first term of 6 years. Her seat represented local environmental groups. The charter was recently renewed for another six years and there will be a call for nominations soon. The Council meets two to three times a year, and considers voluntary measures to mitigate and ameliorate the impact of motorized sounds from aircraft on the park soundscape. It works closely with park administration and scientists, particularly Davyd Betchkal, NPS Soundscape Scientist. Council membership is diverse and provides opportunities for people who might not ordinarily associate to collaborate toward developing meaningful solutions. You can view some of the work product from the Council at the website <http://www.nps.gov/dena/parkmgmt/aoac.htm>. The work is interesting and challenging. Those who would like more information on this position, with an eye to a possible nomination, may contact Nancy at nancy@denalicitizens.org or by telephone at 907-244-2510. Residence in the local community is not required.

COMING SOON - MEMBERSHIP SURVEY: TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

In the weeks leading up to our Annual Meeting (scheduled for Sunday, May 18th, 7 PM, McKinley Community Center), we will be sending you an invitation to complete a survey about how you think DCC is doing. We also want to know what you, as members, want DCC to focus our energies on in the coming year and beyond. The survey will take approximately ten minutes. The answers you provide to the survey will help us prioritize our efforts to protect wilderness, wildlife and way-of-life for the greater Denali area. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful answers and as always your continued support. If you do not have email, please let us know by mail or phone (907-244-2510) and we will send you a paper survey. Paper surveys will also be available at the Annual Meeting. Members who complete the survey will be entered into a drawing for a door prize at the Annual Membership Meeting.



DCC BOARD ELECTION - CANDIDATES' STATEMENTS

To vote for candidates in the DCC Board Election, go to www.denalicitizens.org, and follow the links on the homepage. Current DCC members should have received a 5-digit validation code in the mail. If you did not receive your code or would like to vote on a paper ballot instead, please write nancy@denalicitizens.org or call 907-244-2510 and we will provide a code or ballot as needed. You may also vote in-person at the Annual Membership Meeting (see page 1). The following incumbent candidates are running for 3-year terms.

Nancy Bale



I arrived at the entrance to Denali National Park in August 1971, at a time when Denali National Park was still Mt. McKinley National Park. Soon after I arrived the Parks Highway was completed, connecting our sleepy community to the major urban centers of Alaska. Then, recognizing that pressure for access would increase, the National Park Service instituted the shuttle bus, a free service until 1994. Nine years after I arrived, ANILCA changed the park's name to Denali and more than

doubled it in size. My attachment to the Denali area remained strong throughout these changes, and I understood early the importance of strong advocacy for park values. Since joining the DCC Board in 1999, I've been able to put that advocacy to work. I am pleased with the role DCC plays in our community and I'm proud to be a candidate for DCC Board in 2014.

Erica Watson



This summer marks my 10 year Denali anniversary, which comes as both a surprise—like many, I never intended to stay put for so long—and an honor, as I feel privileged to call this place home. I've worked in and around the park in several capacities, and have spent the last several years focused on studying nonfiction writing through UAA. I believe DCC's role in our community extends beyond conservation advocacy into the realm of

research, journalism, and providing a venue for meaningful discussion on the issues we face. I hope to continue serving DCC in developing and improving our outreach, communication, and visibility, and to examine how our values and connections to place fit into the larger picture of environmental advocacy work.

DCC NEWS

Join Denali Citizens Council
and receive
a subscription to the DCC News,
published six times a year.

Editorial Board

Nancy Bale
Teresa Floberg
Charlie Loeb
Hannah Ragland

Contributors

Barbara Brease
Nancy Bale
Charlie Loeb
Brian Napier
Michael Raffaelli

Letters and submissions are welcome.
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Phone: (907)683-3396
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*Don't miss an issue of **DCC News**. Write to us at mail@denalicitizens.org,
 or call us at 907-683-3396 and let us know your new address.*

JOIN US

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.
 Please join by filling out this form and mailing it to the address below.

Your contribution is tax deductible

- Major donor (\$126 & up)
- Summit (\$125)
- Tundra (\$75)
- Taiga (\$35)

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

If you have a different address in winter/summer, please include both addresses.
 Make checks payable to Denali Citizens Council and send to the address below.
 Members receive our newsletter and other print material and email updates.

PO Box 78
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 Alaska
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