

January 27, 2004

Superintendent Paul Anderson
Denali National Park & Preserve
PO Box 9
Denali Park, Alaska 99755

Dear Superintendent Anderson,

We are writing regarding the 12/27/03 article in the Anchorage Daily News about snowmobile use for traditional activities in the park additions. Denali Citizens Council is very concerned by the Park Service stance portrayed in this article. We realize this is a complicated issue and difficult to portray accurately to the public, especially when filtered through the lens of the media. Our intent is to ensure that the public has an accurate understanding of the law and NPS policies, and to prevent future confusion. We offer the following comments with the objective of assisting NPS in clarifying any misunderstanding this article may have created.

DCC believes ANILCA allows a narrow exception for snowmobile use to access traditional and customary activities such as subsistence and sport hunting, fishing and berry picking (as outlined in the Senate report accompanying ANILCA) and for travel between homesites and villages. While we agree there is a need to further clarify the meaning of traditional activities for the park additions, it is not as though there is no guidance from Congress on what it intended. We completely disagree with the NPS statement as portrayed in the article, that traditional activities can include “almost anything.” Moreover, this statement is contrary to the definition NPS adopted for the Old Park. Section 1110(a) of ANILCA applies equally to both the old and new park. When applied to the new park the outcome may vary slightly due to differences in allowed uses, but the base definition should be the nearly the same. A completely different interpretation does not make sense and is contrary to previous NPS positions.

Recreational snowmachining is a relatively new activity in the park additions and one we believe is illegal. While NPS acknowledged this and accurately stated “snowmachining as an activity in itself” is not allowed, to then continue with instructions on how to get around the law and make recreational use appear to be legal by suggesting what to say, is irresponsible. Furthermore, why NPS would voluntarily tell the press that enforcement by park rangers is “unlikely” flabbergasts us. The longer illegal use continues unchallenged the harder it will be to discontinue. For the Park Service to encourage this illegal use makes little sense.

We hope that you can clarify the NPS position on this issue. To that end, we request the following:

- Provide a written response to DCC outlining the park's current policy.
- If different than related in the 12/27/03 article, clarify your policies on snowmobiling in the park additions to the public.
- Define *traditional activities* for the Park additions the same as for the Old Park, a definition that we feel conforms to the intent of ANILCA.

In addition we hope that NPS can find a way to increase its monitoring and patrolling of snowmachine activity in the park additions.

Thank you for your time and effort regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bale
Denali Citizens Council Board President

DCC Board and Staff

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