



November 30, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing in response to the proposed land use near Stampede Road related to the ecological observation site, applied for by the National Ecological Observatory Network. Thank you for letting us know about this permit. Friends of Stampede was formed in October of 2010 (with many members involved in Stampede issues much earlier), and since then has worked to follow local issues and educate local residents, property owners, and others with interest in the Stampede corridor. We have received a number of comments from members about this issue, and I would like to share them with you for consideration as you make permitting decisions.

The ecological observation site itself has received little criticism from our members. We support the following requirements:

- DNR should guarantee that all construction is removed and the entire site be restored to its natural condition after the project is completed.
- Foundations and other infrastructure should be of a type that is easily removed after the monitoring project is completed, and plans for removal should be included in permitting documents.
- Considering the long recovery time for tundra sites, there should be minimal ground disturbance during the project.

What is clearly an issue for many members is the electrical infrastructure that would be associated with this project. For a project that would last only 5-7 years, installing permanent electrical lines, especially aboveground, seems an unnecessary obtrusion. We oppose extending electricity, even temporarily, to this site. The Stampede corridor is valuable to local residents, and visitors from around the world. Power lines constructed on the south side of the road would be visible for miles, and could open up the area to increased, and unplanned, development. Other ecological observation sites throughout Alaska will be run independent from the grid, and there does not seem to be any reason that this site needs electrical connection. If running electricity to the site *is* deemed necessary, any infrastructure outside the existing residential area should be removed upon completion of the project, underground installation should be prioritized, and/or the site should be located closer to the subdivision.

There have also been some questions raised about how existing access might be affected by the proposed boardwalk and other site infrastructure. There is trail traffic in that area, and any boardwalk constructed (if the site remains in the proposed location, or in another

location where regular use exists) could avoid conflicts by clearly marking the boardwalk, and providing ramps (or whatever is needed to allow crossing) for trails that run across the boardwalk or through/near the site.

Legislation is currently being considered that would create a Stampede State Recreation Area, including this site. Friends of Stampede support this legislation. Such a designation would help to ensure that future development in the Stampede corridor is done in a way that would not impact the area's wildlife and recreation values, clearly identified in the Tanana Basin Area Plan (and reiterated by the state's choice *not* to transfer this land as settlement lands via Municipal Land Entitlements). We hope that a State Recreation Area, or some other formal designation, will help to guide any future development in this area so it doesn't damage the values that so many local residents (and visitors) are thankful for. In the absence of formal designation, please keep in mind residents' hopes for future protection, and keep any development from greatly increasing use and infrastructure.

We would be happy to provide additional feedback if a new location or other alternatives are sought. Please continue to let us know about Stampede-related planning and permitting, and decisions related to this permit.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment

Hannah Ragland, for Friends of Stampede